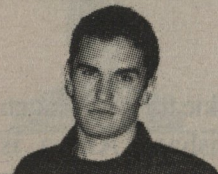


SPORTS

UPEI player wins national award



Ryan Gallant
Managing Editor

For only the second time since its inception, a UPEI student has won the Gail Wilson Award, a Canada-wide athletic decoration that recognizes athletes who display exceptional human qualities on and off the field, while playing an essential role in the overall performance of their team.

Maureen O'Connor, a fifth year English Honours student has played on the UPEI Field Hockey team for all of her five years here, after graduating from Bluefield High where she played an integral role on her High School team. Now 22, O'Connor has become an



anchor on the UPEI squad, leading her team by example and forming the foundation of a core defensive unit in the backfield. Her passion for the game has proved instrumental in motivating teammates in the dressing room and getting the job done on the field. She cites demonstrations of teamwork, "Practices and games when my teammates and I are going full out – pushing through drills, hammering the shots on net, losing track of the number of sprints we are doing... wishing we could just stop the insanity, but knowing deep down that it is making us better athletes.", as being some of her proudest moments.

While proud of her accomplishments in the sport, O'Connor also expressed concern for the state of the game today, most notably the lack of respect that the sport receives from some members of the public and from the sport programs of some universities. In Central and

Western Canada, Field Hockey has a strong presence in university sport and has experienced much success, however in the Atlantic region there is a trend of cutting in field hockey programs. As a result the sport has been thrown in jeopardy across the nation, as a league cannot sustain viability with divisions in only West and Central Canada. There are club status Field

Hockey teams at UPEI, SMU, Acadia, Dal and UNB, however, the only Atlantic university that retained its varsity Field Hockey status was SMU.

"Because of a lack of funding within universities" says O'Connor, "many teams are not able to compete against each

other at the AUS and CIS level." It is this unsupportive attitude from universities that see fit to allocate athletic funding only to certain teams that frustrates people like O'Connor. "The players are there" she says; "The talent is there – but the funding is not." What concerns her most is the fact that many players graduating from High School may have no team to play on if they choose to come to an Eastern Canadian university. "Field Hockey is a sport that combines quickness, agility, accuracy, power and most of all – hard work. [It concerns me] that talented and serious athletes in Atlantic Canada... may not have a team to play on next year."

It is puzzling in itself to hear that Field Hockey funding is dwindling in the Atlantic Provinces, as it seems to be phenomena unique to this jurisdiction. It is a vibrant sport throughout the rest of Canada, perhaps as a result of more support from the university administration at those schools.

Although spectator numbers are often limited to friends and family here at UPEI, the fact that games are held off-campus could be attributed as a major factor of this. After all, Field Hockey is second to only soccer in the world in terms of participation and involvement. The fear is that five years down the road, or even in the next two or three years, the athletic talent like that of O'Connor, a three-time AUS All-Star, four-time Academic All-Canadian, a UPEI Captain, and now winner of the Gail Wilson Award, will have no choice but to stop playing or to opt for a university outside of the Maritimes.

Next year O'Connor intends to continue her studies at Carleton University in Ottawa in pursuit of an MA in Applied Language Studies. She says this award feels like a perfect way to cap off her Field Hockey career here at UPEI. After the award ceremony in Edmonton last week, where O'Connor received the Gail Wilson, she cited the players she has played with and against, as well as her coaches as being the source of her inspiration. "I am grateful for having had the opportunity to play such an amazing sport with such outstanding athletes, coaches and friends."

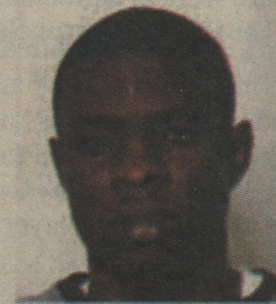
Hopefully young athletes will be able to say the same here at UPEI for years to come.

Players of the Week

UPEI's Engen Nurumbi and Leslie Bradshaw, of the Men's Basketball and Women's Soccer teams respectively, have the honor of being the *Cadre's* Players of the Week. At press time, Bradshaw had only allowed one goal in two very defensive games for the Panthers at the soccer nationals, and her outstanding goalkeeping throughout the regular season also helped to lead the Panthers to a first place finish.

Nurumbi, a rookie, will be called upon to support an injury-plagued Panther squad on the courts, and should he be able to maintain the tremendous play he had in the off season, the Panthers are very well off indeed. Playing under huge expectations for a rookie, look to Nurumbi to continue his torrid pace and help a strong basketball team to a spectacular finish.

Congratulations once again to the Players of the Week.



Engen Nurumbi



Leslie Bradshaw