

Hockey Update

The UPEI Hockey Panthers are flying high as they head into the AUAA college hockey finals against the Moncton Blue Eagles. After losing the opening game of the playoffs, the Panthers caught fire and roared past the UNB Red Devils and the Acadia Axemen to earn a spot in the finals. The winner of the series will head for Toronto to participate in the national tournament for the CIAU Hockey Championship.

Moncton enters this series as a long time rival of the Panthers and some of the best hockey in PEI has been played between these two clubs. The last time these two teams met in the final was two years ago, and the Panthers won in two straight games.

It will be a tough bash to repeat a two game sweep against the nationally ranked Blue Eagles, but the way UPEi has been

playing lately, anything's is possible. The team has appeared to be invincible in its last 4 games,

scoring a pile of goals and getting key goaltending when it has been needed. The Panthers scored 15



Photo by Sue Rigney

goals in two games against the Axemen. Acadia was tied with Moncton for first place in the overall standings and they lead the entire league in goals-against.

For the sixth straight year, the AUAA champion will either be UPEI or Moncton. The key to the Panthers winning their third championship is simple. They must continue to play the way they did against UNB and Acadia. That is, they must get good goaltending, take advantage of good scoring chances, and stay as far away from the penalty box as possible.

Moncton took 3 of 4 games from the P's this season, but the playoffs is an entirely different time of year. It is a time where, suddenly, everyone plays to their potential and everyone works together for the win. The Blue Eagles will be seeing an entirely different Panther team this week, and they had better be ready for them or else they too will fall to the same fate as the UNB Red Devils and the Acadia Axemen.

By the time this is printed, the opening game will have already been played. Game 2 will be in Moncton, as will Game 3, should it be necessary. There will likely be a strong showing of Islanders at the games in Moncton as there were 20-25 people who made the long trip to Acadia University last weekend. The 2,000 or so Acadia fans were keyed up last weekend, as they were confident that their team would rebound with two wins and take the series. The Axemen were



Photo by Sue Rigney

treated to loud cheers and music when they came on the ice and loud chants arose from the crowd every time Acadia made a good play. However, 4 Panther goals in the first period quickly silenced their chants and cheers and by the late stages of the 3rd period most of the noise in the Acadia Arena came from a small group of fans sitting behind the Panthers bench.

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