

SPORTS

bruns.sports@gmail.com • January 10, 2007

Reds' volleyball women clinch top spot in AUS



Jonathan Hudon / The Brunswickian

by Bruns Staff

UNB's Varsity Reds women's volleyball team returned early to Fredericton, missing New Year's to train for a lengthy road trip after being off-court for nearly thirty days during exams and the Christmas break. The ladies visited CBU in Sydney for a 7 pm Friday match, continuing to Antigonish early Saturday morning to play STFX at 1 pm.

Their match up against CBU proved fruitful, and UNB once again plucked a win off the tree of victory. Although they didn't start well, they managed to scrape out a tight first-set win to go up 1-0. In the second game, UNB pumped a little harder and pulled ahead 18-11; they carried the set away with 25 points to CBU's 15, and led the match 2-0. Down again in the third set with a repeat of the first set's poor play, UNB found CBU all over them with a huge early lead. CBU cruised to their only easy victory, forcing the game into a fourth set.

However, the V-Reds rallied, and dashed CBU's hopes by stealing 9 final points in the fourth set. They took the game 25-16 and the match 3-1.

As far as lines go, the game offered coach John Richard breathing room, as eleven of the twelve dressed UNB players saw floor time, including rookie setter Katie Mathers, a Fredericton native, for whom this would be the first action of her university career. After joining the team in late November, Mathers finally had a chance to prove her mettle

alongside right-side hitter Jill Blanchard, who was named AUS Player of the Match, and third year player Christina Ross, who ranked as the team's top passer, sending off 2.32 on 25 attempts.

So the Christmas break has helped the Reds solidify their effort, even if they were a little shaky in this game. Richard sees their progress as part of a pattern: "I thought we were real up and down at CBU, but we did a much better job than first term defending against their strong middle attack. Bottom line is, after we lost our focus in that third set, we were still able to get out of there with a win."

Saturday's match against STFX proved more challenging, with UNB squeaking out on top in sets of 23-25, 25-22, 22-25, 25-20, and 21-19. "STFX was such a long battle, and full credit to them for being so aggressive and playing so well," says Richard. The tight match started with the evenly matched teams ping-ponging back and forth with little progress, but in the middle of the set UNB had a chance to pull away. Some sloppy defensive plays lost them the chance and ended up costing the V-Reds the first set 25-23.

With each set becoming an individual battle, UNB finished late to win their second set and tie the match. They warred on in set three, STFX finishing strong and late, up 2-1 in the contest. In answer, the Varsity Reds opened up a small gap midway through game four, and held it to win a 25-20 fourth set and force the fifth, in which UNB beat

STFX to 8 points. They actually held 13-10 and 14-11 leads, but STFX fought back again to tie the game at 14-14. The Varsity Reds had "match point" a total of eight times, at 14-11, 14-12, 14-13, 15-14, 16-15, 17-16, 18-17, 19-18 and kept STFX from gaining even a single match point, before finally winning 21-19 on their ninth chance with a loud kill by Blanchard.

"I thought two of their swingers were pretty much unstoppable for us most of the afternoon," said Richard. "But again I love our 'fight' and thought we just found a way to win, despite not having our 'A' game. I can't say we were terrible either, though, as I felt at times we played very well - we had to even compete with how well they were playing on [our] other side."

The ladies now have a league record of 9-4, and they sit in first place in the AUS rankings. The first term not only turned out to be a successful session "on the court" but in the classroom as well for the Varsity Reds. The Varsity Reds had eight players attain a 3.5 GPA or greater before Christmas, with an overall team average GPA of 3.4 for the first half. This included three players achieving a 4.1 GPA or higher.

The Varsity Reds now face one of their biggest weekends thus far, hosting third-place Acadia Axewomen Saturday at 6 pm, and second place Moncton on Sunday at 1 pm. The following weekend, UNB will travel to Moncton to complete the home and home series on Saturday, January 20th at 7:00pm.

Whats on this week

Basketball (M)
ACA @ UNB. Sat @ 8 pm. LB Gym
SMU @ UNB. Sun @ 3 pm. LB Gym

Basketball (W)
ACA @ UNB. Fri @ 6 pm. LB Gym.
SMU @ UNB. Sat @ 1 pm. LB Gym.

Hockey (M)
U de M @ UNB. Wed @ 7 pm.
Aitken.
UPEI @ UNB. Sat @ 7 pm. Aitken.

Volleyball (W)
ACA @ UNB. Sat @ 6 pm. LB Gym



Passing the political puck: buying athletes' opinions

by Sheah Gaston

As a journalist, I have the ultimate freedom of speech. I'm free to say whatever I want, to write whatever I want. But my free speech has to fit within the unofficial guidelines of the paper I write for or I might find myself suddenly unemployed. What does this have to do with sports, you ask? Well, I found myself asking the same question when I read a CBC news article on recent roster changes to the Saint John Sea Dogs' lineup. How much of an athlete's life can a team pay to own? If managers and coaches can't claim control over an athlete's personal life, can they dictate that athlete's political views and public actions?

If I were to ask you what professional hockey players do, you'd probably give me some variation of "they chase a black piece of rubber with a stick while on skates." You probably wouldn't think of the endless PR. You'd think making political statements would be the job of politicians, lawyers, TV evangelists, movie stars, possibly the Dixie

Chicks - but minor league hockey players?

This is exactly the question former Sea Dogs player Dave Bouchard had answered for him when he found himself decommissioned quicker than you can say "penalty for refusing to sign a Canadian flag the team planned to send to Afghanistan in December." Whether he planned for it or not, Bouchard's actions were soon interpreted as his way of making a statement about his opinion on Canada's involvement in the Middle East.

Some, like Dave van de Wetering, see Bouchard as a hero spurred on by the unfaltering courage of his convictions. "The Dixie Chicks... took certain backlash, which this player may also get, but he's willing to accept it," he said. But Bouchard didn't do a very good job accepting the backlash when he tried to avoid being fired; he told coach Jacques Beaulieu that he thought his name had already been signed by somebody else - not exactly the act of a selfless hero.

Obviously, Beaulieu didn't believe the excuse either, and saw Bouchard's failure

to sign as one more piece of evidence for an allegedly bad attitude that had him on his way to Cutville anyway. What's interesting, though, is Beaulieu's main argument: "Morally," he said, "we have standards with this hockey team... if Dave doesn't believe in it, that's fine. But he won't be a part of it. He won't be a part of this organization."

We normally see athletes as being relatively free to have whatever morals they want. We're encouraged in this view by people like Jose Canseco, around whom swirls a dense cloud of alleged bad morals: he's been arrested several times, twice for domestic violence against two different wives. And his managers didn't say boo, because he was a good player. For them, Canseco's playing mattered more than his public image.

Beaulieu, however, clearly stated that his players' skill in the game, or even their team spirit, are not the most important things. Bouchard "could have been one of our best players, our first round pick." He'd still be fired. As far as the Sea Dogs' management is concerned, a player's ability

to meet the team's "moral standards" is most important.

I'm not saying that firing a player for bad morals is necessarily a bad thing; but whose morals is Beaulieu required to live up to? It's not as if recent evidence has come to light of some unwholesome fetid; Bouchard, if he made any statement at all, simply showed that he disagreed with Canada's foreign policy, which people do every day, more vocally than he did - and they don't always get fired for it. So what gives?

It all comes down to issues of image. Beaulieu wanted to portray politics that aligned with those of the province of New Brunswick and Bouchard wasn't playing along. So, in the end, Beaulieu didn't feel he was getting what he paid for. And what he paid for was—as importantly as skill—political savvy. Today's professional athletes should beware. Their coaches have bought their silence as well as their skill.

For more information visit www.cbdc.ca

Being the fastest animal on earth doesn't help to protect their nest sites from development

But you can... Peregrine Falcon Climb-a-thon

Saturday, February 10, 2007

Help raise money for Peregrine Falcon habitat

Contact the Nature Trust of New Brunswick at:
457-2398

or naturetrust@ntnb.org

For more info: www.naturetrust.nb.ca
hosted by UNB's Rock and Ice Club & the Nature Trust of NB

YOUTH IN ACTION

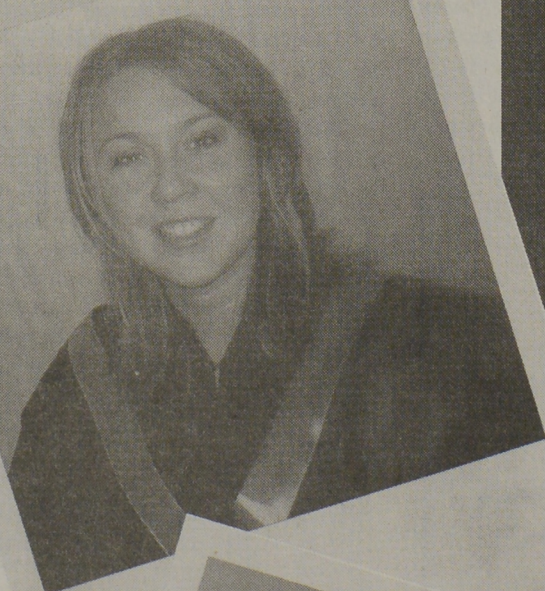


“ I found two jobs thanks to **Youth In Action!** ”

- Marie Soleil Thériault,
Past Participant

“ I met my future employee at the **Youth in Action!** Networking Banquet ”

- Stéphane Haché, SH Electric



Attention!

Looking for smart, young individuals who want to return to the Chaleur region after their studies.

YOUTH IN ACTION

is a weekend of workshops and conferences that will help the participants either open their own business or find a job in the Chaleur region.

MARCH 23 & 24, 2007
Gowan Brae Golf and Country Club

Please note that travel and accommodation expenses will be covered by CBDC Chaleur for the 20 chosen participants.

To Register www.youth.chaleurcbdc.ca

For more information, please contact Jonathan Tower at (506) 548-5951 or jonathan.tower@cbdc.ca