

CIS tournament format needs overhaul

JARED BOOK
THE CONCORDIAN

SPECIAL TO THE BRUNS – All the talk around U.S. college sports this month has been about March Madness, the single-elimination 65 team men's basketball tournament as well as the women's tournament. However, aside from the Final Four, there is also the Frozen Four, which, if you can't fathom a guess is the men's hockey championship south of the border.

The Frozen Four has taken some of the storylines away from the big tournament because for the first time since the tournament expanded to 16 teams in 2003, the No. 16 seed (in this case Bemidji State – who have actually won six lower division titles) has advanced to the national semi-final.

That kind of story can never happen in Canada. Why, you ask? Because the CIS uses an outdated, potentially complicated round robin format.

The way the current tournament works north of the border is that the six qualifying teams are split into two pools of three teams each. Each team plays two round robin games, and the result allows for a championship game between the winners of each pool.

This works out great when there are two 2-0 teams. However, this year, Pool B, which had McGill, Western and Saint Mary's, had all three teams finish 1-1. In the end it was Western, armed with a 7-2 win against the Huskies in the pool's final game, that advanced to the final thanks to their

goal differential, despite Western losing to McGill in their other round robin game.

Call me old-fashioned, but tournaments of this magnitude should never be decided on goal differential – at any stage.

Thankfully, there is a solution: expand the championship to eight teams and have a single-elimination tournament in the exact same format as the current men and women's basketball championships.

People will immediately say no to this idea for several reasons. They will say the CIS field isn't deep enough to have eight teams in a tournament. They will also say that hockey isn't supposed to be decided in a single game format. To the first one, I call BS. To the second, I say why not? The championship game is a one game championship.

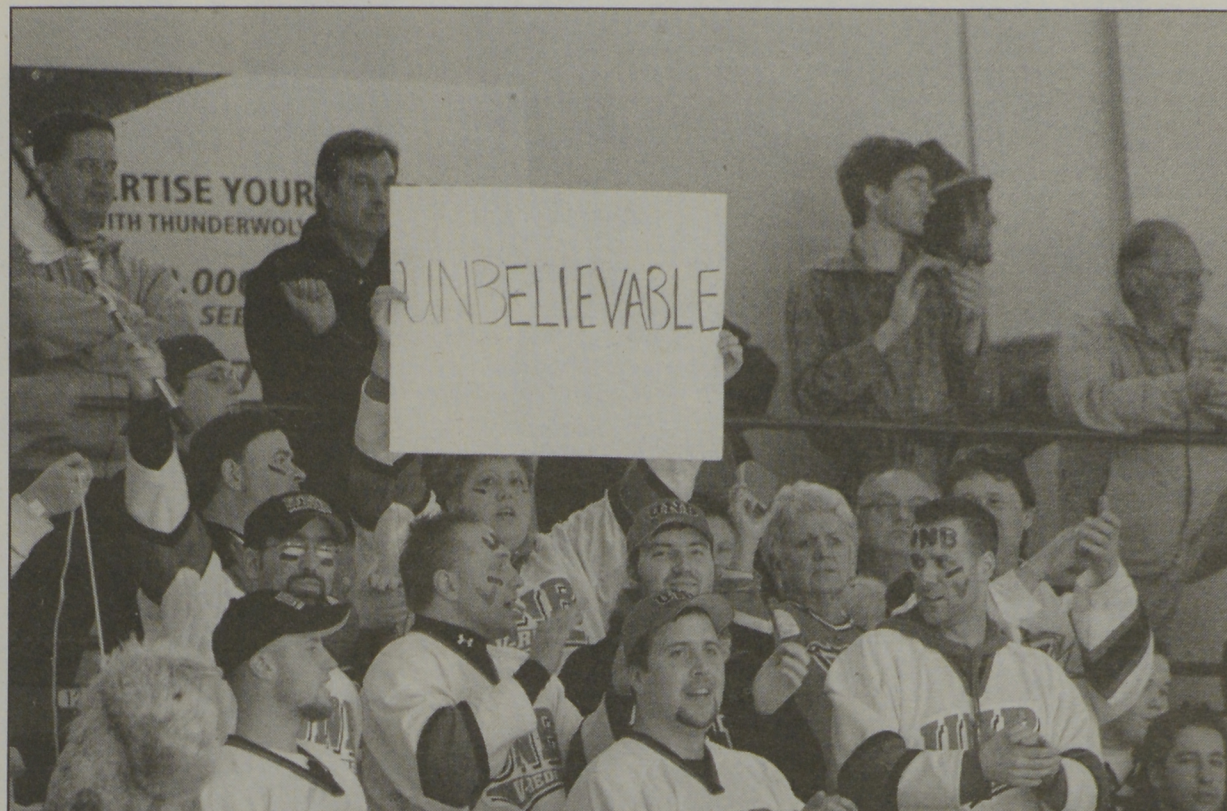
To prove my first point, I will use numbers. You have been warned.

There are 33 teams in CIS men's hockey and 27 teams in CIS women's hockey (my proposal also stands for the women's tournament which currently has the same format as the men's tournament and that 27 includes UdeM which begins play next year).

Which means, with six teams, 18.2 per cent of men's teams and 22.2 per cent of women's teams make it to the championships.

Currently, that ranks them 2nd (women's) and 7th (men's) out of the eight major championships in terms of championship spots to total teams in action. Note that the four sports used for this are hockey, basketball, soccer and volleyball. Football is a different beast altogether.

With news that both the men's and women's basketball tournaments will be expanding to 16 teams (the women's next year, the men's looks



Mitchell Bernard / The Brunswickian

Some faithful V-Reds fans traveled to Thunder Bay to watch their team win its second University Cup in three years. Would a format change bring more excitement, and more fans, to the annual event?

to be changing after 2009-10 if the coaches have their way), that would put them both at 37.2 per cent compared to their current 18.6 per cent.

There is no reason hockey couldn't add two more teams. Again, allow me to use the men's tournament as an example. This year, you had the customary two spots to the Atlantic conference, two to the Ontario/Quebec conference, one to Canada West and one to the tournament host.

There is no reason not to think that Canada West couldn't have added another team and the same to the Atlantic conference this year. If you put in a provision that the extra

spots get distributed based on who is hosting the conference, there will be no real problems.

If you expand to six teams on both sides, and taking into account the additions to the basketball ones, this would rank men's hockey 5th (24.2 per cent) and women's hockey 3rd (29.6 per cent).

Yes, the women's number is a bit high (giving eight spots to 27 teams) but men's volleyball currently gives eight spots to 28 teams, including a three-team Atlantic conference. No one complains about that.

People will complain that having four of the five top spots in percentage going to hockey and basketball is

unfair, but guess what? Those are the ones that most people want to watch on television. Sure, Sportsnet lucked out with the drama in the Western-Saint Mary's game and the lopsided Western win that put them in the next day's final. But this format will give the television partner two true semi-finals where fans just have to worry about who wins and not how many goals one team has to win by to have a chance at the final.

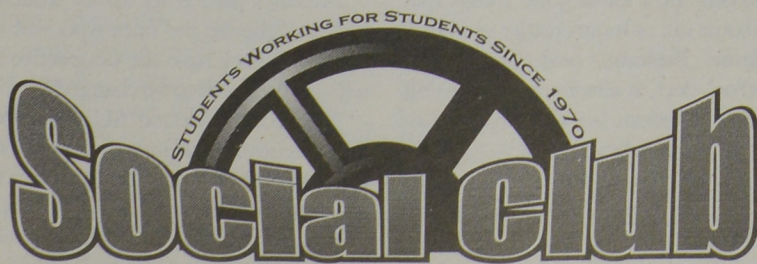
Maybe it's just me, but it's a matter of time before this gets introduced. After all, the only goal differentials that should matter are the ones on the scoreboard when the final buzzer sounds.

Dr. Richard E. Lee Optometrist

406A Regent St. 458-1580
(2 buildings past Harvey's Hamburgers)
New Patients Welcome

NOTICE

College Hill Social Club
Annual General Meeting
Sunday April 19
2:00 p.m.
In The Club
Members Only



BRONWYN GALLAGHER (TEXTILES MAJOR)

PHOTOGRAPHED BY FELLOW STUDENT CHANTAL ARSENAULT (PHOTOGRAPHY MAJOR)

**"Who knew
learning
could be so
much fun!"**

Isn't it time you discovered
the benefits of a college
education? For program
information, including
our Bachelor of Applied
Arts degree offered in
partnership with UNB,
call 453-6491.

New Brunswick College
of Craft and Design
Fredericton

