

COLUMN AS I SEE 'EM

Making the grade

Academic pressure high for university athletes

Jody Grant S&L Editor

Earlier this week, I interviewed Jennifer Jones (see article page 19), a national curling champion who also attends the U of M. My lengthy discussion with Jones really opened my eyes about the hectic lives athletes like her live. As I sat down and listened to her describe her schedule, I was stunned. Suddenly, I have a whole new respect for Bison athletes or any other athletes who somehow manage both sport and school at the same time.

I don't know about the rest of you out there but I'm busy enough trying to keep my grades up without having to worry about games, tournaments, practices and various competitions as well. Most Bison athletes practice or play every day regardless of how many tests and/or assignments they might have. Sports require extreme amounts of dedication and it amazes me how these student athletes can handle the commitments and with such successful results. Every year, a long list of academic all-Canadians is released and every year there are many Bison athletes on the list who keep their grades high despite their busy schedules.

Another thing that boggles my mind is how they can keep up with, in some cases, a full load of classes even with all the travelling they do. Recently, many U of M teams have been out of town participating in the multitude of tournaments that characterize the pre-season. Almost every weekend, the teams see action in a different part of the country. The whole hassle of getting notes from classmates, talking to profs regarding special arrangements and rearranging the due dates of tests and assignment must be stressful in itself, never mind just finding the time to study.

Some of the athletes, especially the ones that don't receive scholarships or awards even hold down part-time jobs to help pay for their tuition fees. I can only imagine the pressure that such students feel, being constantly on the go and trying to find two free minutes somewhere to pick up a book.

What about a social life? Aside from hanging out with teammates after games, when do they find the time to actually enjoy some much needed rest and relaxation? That is, if it's even possible! I pity the girlfriends, boyfriends, relatives and friends of these athletes because any time with them is probably limited to the short, hello/goodbye-type conversation.

To all the athletes out there who can relate to what I've heard from Jones I salute you. You're a special breed and I don't know how you do it!

Sports

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1994

Breakthrough weekend

Two game sweep raises hopes in race for Cup

Chris Cyrenne

The look on Bison head coach Mike Sirant's face was one of optimism and relief. With Saturday's 4-3 victory over the Lethbridge Pronghorns, the Manitoba Bison hockey team completed its first weekend sweep in two years. Friday night, the Bisons proceeded to knock off the Pronghorns 7-5 on the strength of Scott Stephenson's two-goal performance.

For Sirant, the two game sweep (over the defending CIAU champions, no less) was a hard earned accomplishment long overdue. "It's satisfying to get that first sweep. With the parity in this league, it's

not an easy thing to do."

Bisons' forward Roger Boychuk, who contributed two goals and an assist in Saturday's night victory, described the enthusiasm prevalent in the Manitoba dressing room following the pair of wins: "To come out against the defending champions and be able to get four points out of the weekend just feels tremendous and has got everyone on this team excited."

The four point weekend could signal a turning point for the Herd. Despite possessing one of the most talented rosters in the entire CIAU, the team's inability to put together back to back

victories had left them toiling in statistical mediocrity prior to the successful weekend. The Bisons' record now stands at 6-4-2, leaving them in good position to move into the upper echelon of the Canada West conference standings.

There is, however, perhaps some reason for concern among the Bisons. In both games, Manitoba jumped out to an early lead, only to let Lethbridge close the gap and make the final score interesting. Saturday, the Bisons built a 4-1 advantage on Boychuk's two goals and single markers from Larry Woo and Jon Rempel. Midway through the second period, with the momentum clearly on Manitoba's side, it appeared victory was safely in hand. However, it took some late third period heroics from goaltender Dale Baydock to persevere the win as Lethbridge pulled to within one goal.

Coach Sirant felt that despite the Bisons' inability to put away the Pronghorns, successfully defending the lead accomplished enough. "We proved to ourselves that we can play with a lead. There was some doubt because of previous games in which we let the opposing team come back to tie us. This is a big step forward for our hockey club."

Indeed, at times during the past weekend's games, Manitoba displayed flashes of brilliance (witness Woo's picturesque goal from centerman David Stech) that left many shaking their heads. How could a team of this calibre, it was wondered aloud, find itself in the middle of the Canada West standings? What the Bisons have to prove is that they can build on this weekend's success and thereby make everyone in the nation take notice of this potential powerhouse hockey team.

Judging by the attitude of the Bison players following Saturday's night victory, they are ready to make that step. As Boychuk describes, thanks to this weekend's sweep, it is a step that will now be taken with confidence. "It's become clear that with the talent we have on this hockey team, we have the potential to go all the way."



Rob Christie

I'll take that: Scott Stephenson helps his team

Up to the challenge

Baptiste has lived up to some lofty expectations

Adele Novak Toban Staff

spotlight

Ever since grade nine, Darryl Baptiste was expected to be the best potential college basketball player available. Without a doubt, the second-year point guard has lived up to those expectations. Last year as a freshman, the Bison basketball player was a GPAC all-star and the rookie of the year for the conference.

"He lived up to every one of his expectations because he was pretty much the most sought after high school player graduating out of grade 12," explained Bison men's basketball coach, Rick Suffield. "He was heavily recruited by teams from Atlantic Canada, Canada West and Ontario."

With such a successful season last year, expectations are high for Baptiste this year but that doesn't seem to bother him as he explains, "I don't feel any pressure. I feel that if I'm good enough to have a good year for one year then I should be able to carry it over to the next." And carry it over he has. So far this season, the science student was an all-star at the Golden Bear

Tournament on Nov. 3 and the leading scorer in Fargo on Nov. 12.

Suffield feels that what makes the 19-year-old such a great player is that he's extremely quick with the ball, makes good decisions and has a great work ethic. Above all, he is versatile in that he is good defensively and offensively. "He's got it all," says Suffield.

In the summers since grade eight, Baptiste has been on the provincial team and for the past two years was part of the Canada Games. Suffield is impressed how Baptiste thrives on a challenge.

"If you put him against a good player and say we need someone to shut him down he will accept that challenge," the coach explains. As Baptiste becomes an older player, he expects that to be a big part of his role.

"I want more responsibility. Not in the sense of governing the team, but when we're playing a top team. I want to have the main role of guarding their best guy," expresses Baptiste.

In the future, Baptiste hopes to have the chance to play on the national basketball team and get into the field of environmental science.



Neil Bird

Keep your distance: Baptiste charges into the future with confidence

WIKES UP

Men's Ice Hockey

Nov. 26 at 7 p.m. at Max Bell vs. Brandon.

Women's Basketball

Nov. 25 at 6:15 p.m. in Bison East Gym vs. Winnipeg.