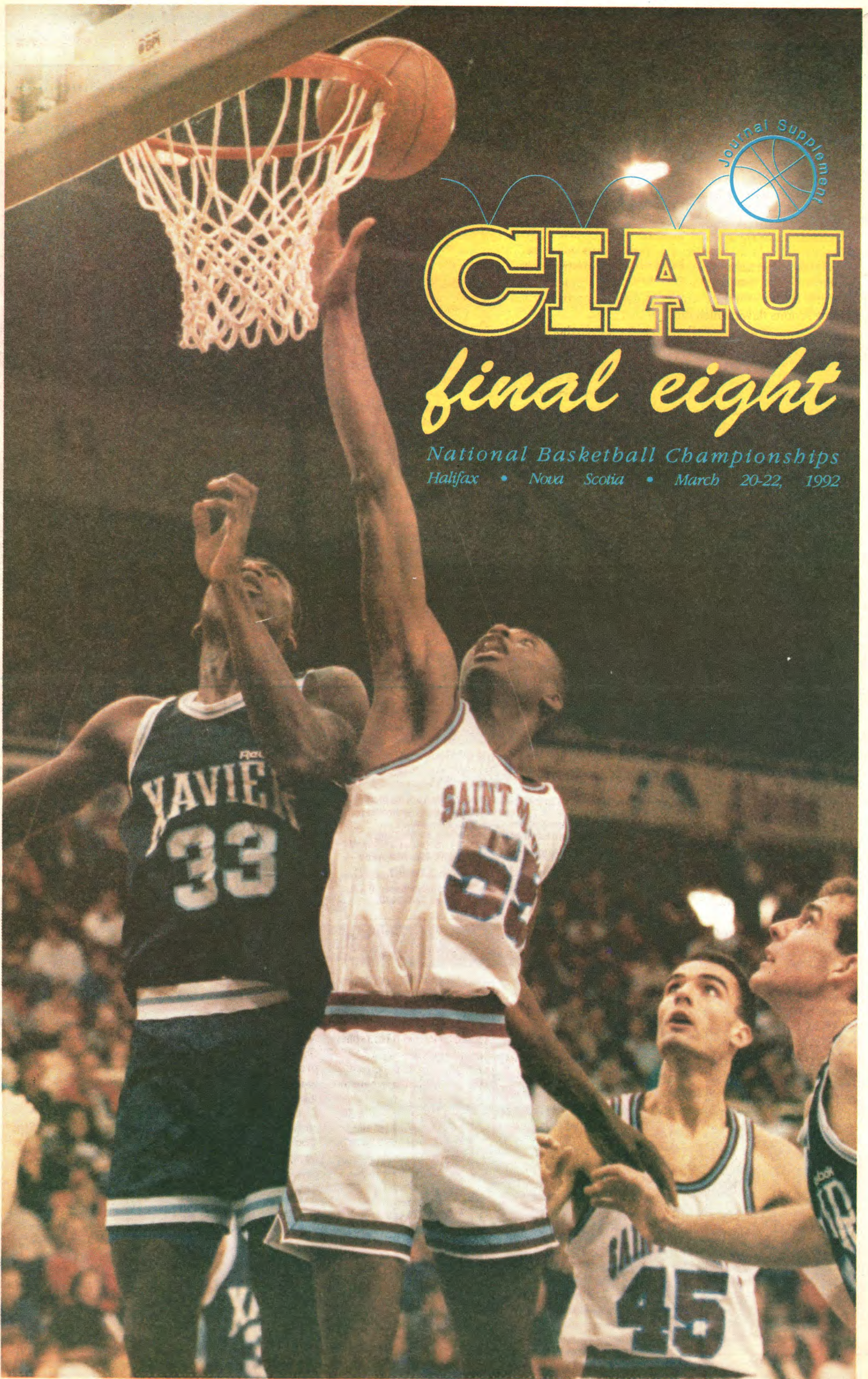


Journal Supplement

# CIAU

## *final eight*

*National Basketball Championships  
Halifax • Nova Scotia • March 20-22, 1992*



Huge crowds expected as . . .

## Metro heats up for Final Eight

by T. Paul Woodford

The Saint Mary's Huskies will carry the hopes of metro into this weekend's CIAU Final Eight National Basketball Championships at the Metro Centre.

Brock Badgers, champions of the OUAA West Division, enter the tournament as the number one ranked team while the hometown Huskies are seeded sixth in the eight team event.

Action begins Friday at 1:00 p.m. when the Badgers meet the eighth seeded Laurentian Voyageurs. Second ranked Winnipeg Wesmen and seventh ranked Concordia Stingers will meet in the other afternoon match at 3:00 p.m.

The fourth ranked Brandon Bobcats, one of two wild card entries, will face the Canada West Champion and fifth ranked UBC Thunderbirds at 7:00 p.m. The Huskies will take to the court at 9:00 p.m. when they take on the Guelph Gryphons, who enter as a wild card for the second consecutive year. If the Huskies should defeat the Gryphons they will face the winner of the Winnipeg-Concordia game Saturday night at nine o'clock.

"I think we can expect three tough games," said Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush. "Anybody that's there has proven that they are capable of winning games so we're going to have our work cut out for us."

Acadia coach Dave Nutbrown, whose Axemen have represented the AUAA at the nationals for the past three years feels the Huskies offence could give them an advantage in the national tournament.

"I think anything can happen, they certainly can score. I don't think anybody will play them any tougher at the defensive end of the floor than we did today," said Nutbrown.

Nutbrown said fans can look for higher scores and more open games than they saw in last weekend's AUAA championships. He noted that much of the reason for the lack of offence in SMU's 57-52 win over Acadia was the familiarity each team had with each other from going head to head six times this season.

"It's amazing when you go to the nationals, how your game opens up, because you play teams who don't know your tendencies as well and you can't cheat on things," said Nutbrown.

Ticket sales for the Final Eight have been brisk and tournament chairman Bill Robinson is expecting large crowds for both of Friday's doubleheaders.

"We're expecting at least

six thousand for Friday afternoon's doubleheader and we should have somewhere near eight thousand for Friday night," said Robinson who has been Chairman of the Final Eight Committee for the past six years.

"Since I've been involved with the nationals this is probably our best advance sales which reflects the growth of the tournament. I mean today there has been a lineup at the box office since nine o'clock this morning," said Robinson from his downtown office yesterday.

Robinson is hoping the hometown Huskies will draw even better crowds than Acadia and St. F.X. have gotten over the past few years.

"We've had tremendous support from the Acadia and St. F.X. fans the past few years and we hope the people of Halifax will rally behind Saint Mary's this weekend. I have great expectations that the university community will really come out and support the Huskies," said Robinson.



GRANT MACEACHERN

The University of British Columbia Thunderbirds (shown here against Acadia) will be one of eight teams vying for the CIAU national men's basketball championship this weekend.

Attention Alumni-

You are invited to join Saint Mary's University Alumni Association at their pre-game and half time receptions this weekend at the CIAU Men's Basketball Championships being held at the Halifax Metro Centre.

Reception: March 20, 1992 7:00-9:00pm and half-time Concourse level, behind section 6. Cash Bar.

Come out and support the Huskies! For more information, call the Alumni Office at 420-5420.

**Saint Mary's University**

### CIAU Basketball

#### Nationals '92

## Huskies - We're There!!!!

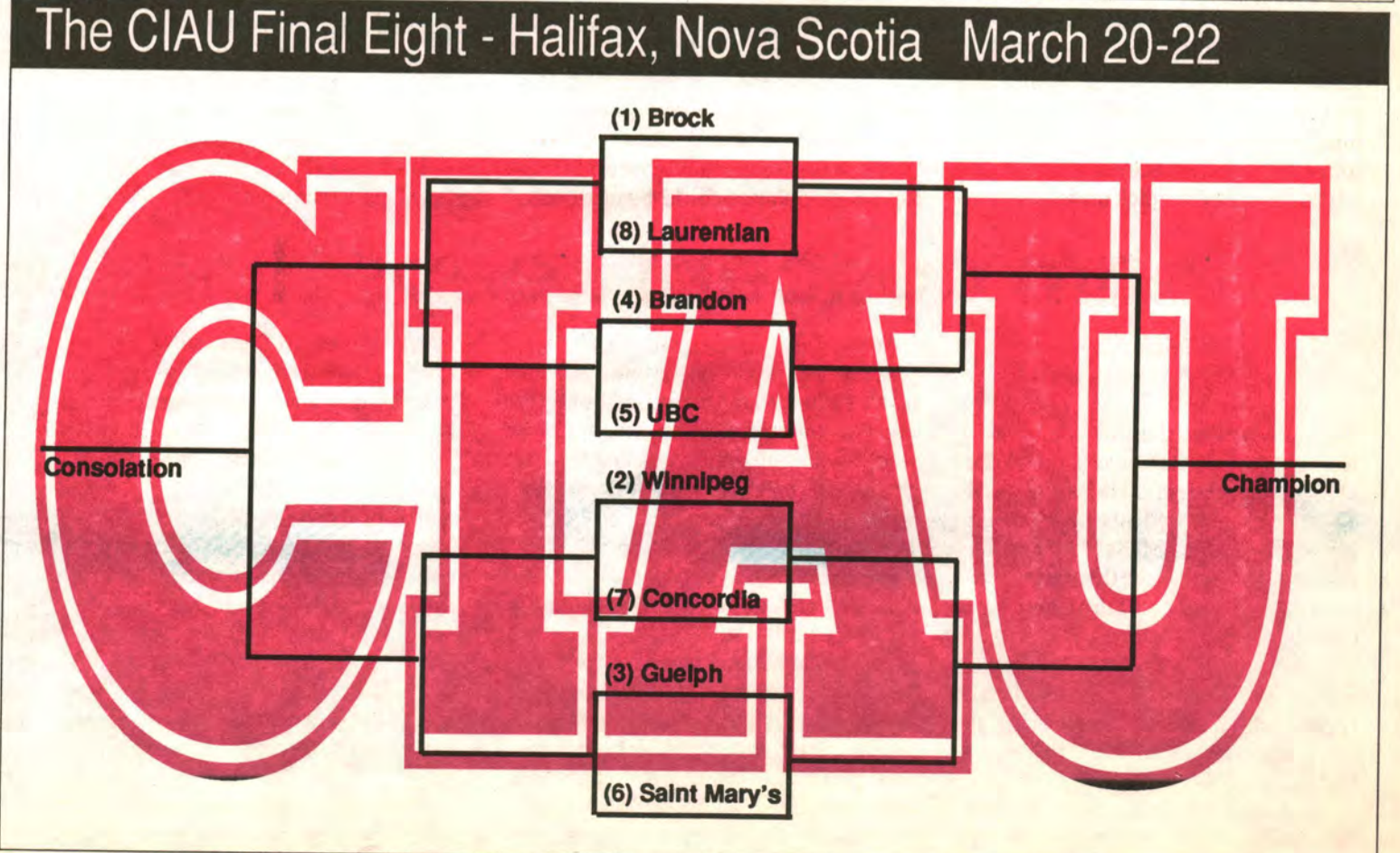
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Guelph Gryphons

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DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS & RECREATION

CIAU FINALS HISTORY	
1991 - At Halifax	Western 78, Guelph 69
1990 - At Halifax	Concordia 80, Guelph 62
1989 - At Halifax	Brandon 74, Victoria 73
1988 - At Halifax	Brandon 81, Acadia 68
1987 - At Halifax	Brandon 74, UBC 66
1986 - At Halifax	Victoria 70, Waterloo 61
1985 - At Halifax	Victoria 79, Waterloo 77
1984 - At Halifax	Victoria 70, Brandon 62
1983 - At Waterloo	Victoria 63, Waterloo 52
1982 - At Victoria	Victoria 74, SMU 60
1981 - At Waterloo	Victoria 81, Acadia 70



# THE HUSKIES ARE BACK!

**TOP OF THE HEAP:** After a five year absence from the AUBC winner's circle, the Saint Mary's Huskies have mused their way to the top again.

by T. Paul Woodford

Jubilant ruled supreme at the Halifax Metro Centre last Sunday as the Saint Mary's Huskies captured their first AUBC title in five years with a thrilling 57-52 win over the Acadia Axemen in front of 6,500 fans.

The Huskies came back from a 10 point halftime deficit in an exhilarating 57-56 win over St. Francis Xavier on Saturday before quelling a late game rally by the Axemen in Sunday's championship game.

"Holy smokes," exclaimed tournament MVP Will Njoku in an ecstatic SMU dressing room, "I have never won a championship before in my life. This one was for my father who passed away and never got to see me do anything in basketball, my family and myself. I'm really proud of the team and I'm really glad to be a Husky today."

Senior forward Brian Thompson extended his playing career by seven days with the win.

"After five years of hard work and dedication for a goal and a dream like this to pay off is just more amazing than words can say," said Thompson.

The fact is, the Huskies didn't have to say a thing to express what they were feeling, the ear to ear grins on their faces told the whole story. After 20 regular season and two playoff games they had reached the top of the AUBC podium.

"It's just the best feeling in the world, I can't even describe it. For my whole life this is just the greatest feeling I've ever had, it's just amazing," said point guard Richard Sullivan.

SMU 57, Acadia 52

The Huskies held the Axemen scoreless for over six minutes late in the first half and led 30-21 at intermission. Acadia jumped back to within two points five minutes into the second half but the Huskies refused to crack under the pres-

sure of the experienced Wolfville squad.

SMU led 53-44 with 2:22 left before a pair of three-pointers by Acadia's Eric James made it 53-50 with 1:07 left. James had a chance to tie the affair with 35 seconds left but had his three point attempt bounce off the front of the rim and into the hands of Njoku. Clutch free throws by Thompson and Sullivan sealed the Saint Mary's win.

Acadia's downfall was undoubtedly their poor shooting. The Axemen shot a miserable 31% from the field compared to the Huskies 47%.

"The big difference today was that we just didn't shoot the ball very well, we were 7 for 34 at halftime and you've gotta make shots," said Acadia coach Dave Nutbrown. "The ball just didn't go in the basket at the free throw line or in the perimeter when we needed it, that's the game of basketball. That's good play on their part and maybe it wasn't our day out there."

Despite the loss Nutbrown could find no fault with his team's effort.

"If the score was 87-82, maybe we didn't work hard enough at the defensive end of the floor. But when the score is 57-52, I have never met a player who shot the ball and tried to miss. It was effort on both sides, we just didn't get the ball to go in the basket," added Nutbrown outside of a sombre Acadia dressing room.

Brian Thompson paced the Huskies with 20 points on 8 for 11 shooting. Njoku meshed 10 points, grabbed nine rebounds and registered four rejections. Jason Darling added 8, Jeff Baltzer struck for 7 while Sullivan chipped in with 6.

Point guard Eric James led the Axemen with 13 points and 8 rebounds, Kevin Lee hit for 12 while Stafford Lowe finished with 10.

"Definitely the key to our whole weekend was our defence," understated Thompson. "Even when we missed shots on offence or they came back we really stuck to it and played defence. Defence is what wins championships and we just proved it right here this weekend," said Thompson.

Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush explained that the Huskies' tough defence could be attributed



JIM YOUNG/JOURNAL

Saint Mary's guard Richard Sullivan is pressured by St. F.X.'s Danny McFarland during semifinal action in the AUBC championships at the Metro Centre last weekend.

to nothing more than their hustle.

"There aren't a lot of X's and O's when it comes to defence. Basically it's just hustle your buns off, so we don't spend a lot of time on the technical aspects of defence in practice," said Quackenbush.

SMU 57, St. F.X. 56

Jason Darling's three-point bomb from the top of the key with 30 seconds left brought down the house and provided the Huskies with the winning basket in their thrilling come from behind victory. It was as if Darling's three-point rainbow had fallen from heaven.

It looked like there would be no joy in SMUville with 7:52 left when the X-Men held a comfortable 52-41 lead. Things looked bleak as SMU had one foot in the grave but the Huskies would not go gentle into that good night. They raged on and scratched and clawed their way back into the game, allowing St. F.X. only 4 points the rest of the way.

SMU's aggressive man to man defence took centre stage in the last 30 seconds as the Huskies didn't allow the X-Men a quality shot. Njoku blocked two shots in the dying seconds to help preserve the win.

## Team concept keeps Huskies afloat

by T. Paul Woodford

The scene typified the philosophy which has kept the Saint Mary's Huskies afloat all season. As senior forward Brian Thompson accepted his player of the game award after SMU's 57-52 win over Acadia last Sunday the throngs of SMU supporters shook the Metro Centre with chants of Brian-Brian. Thompson quickly transformed those chants into S-M-U, S-M-U as he led the crowd in the chorus which will no doubt bring the Metro Centre to life again this weekend.

Thompson was shifting the spotlight from himself to his team. He, like

the rest of the Huskies, take much more pride in the accomplishments of their team rather than their personal triumphs. Last weekend's Atlantic Universities Basketball Conference title has given them more reason than ever to be proud.

Soon after their emotional 57-52 win over Acadia in the AUBC Final last weekend the Huskies began thinking about a national title.

"As soon as we won the AUAA's I was thinking about this weekend right away," said Thompson before the Huskies practice yesterday. "Last weekend was great but I think this weekend's just gonna be great. The guys are really excited about playing this weekend.

We're not going in thinking we're underdogs or anything, we're just gonna give it our best shot. Call me crazy but I think we have a legitimate shot at it."

The Huskies have learned how to win, they have learned to put the team ahead of themselves, for the betterment of the team and each other. When it comes to the Huskies, the sum is easily more than the parts.

It may be the high scorers on the Huskies roster who grab the headlines but Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush says within the team all players recognize each others contributions.

"The big green monster could come out and some of the other guys

could get jealous because it's always numbers that get headlines. But they don't, within our little group we know that you're getting the job done, you may not be getting the headlines, but we know," said Quackenbush.

Guard Jason Darling explained the intangibles which have led the Huskies to victory this season.

"The intangibles that make us a winner are Jeff Baltzer diving on the floor for loose balls, William Njoku getting tough rebounds when they're crashing the boards and Richie taking control and not turning the ball over. Those are the things that win games," said Darling.

**Brock Badgers**

National Ranking: 1  
Champions: OUA West Division  
Defeated Guelph Gryphons '79-76 in conference final.  
Overall Record: 26-7  
OUAA Record: 11-3  
Key Players: Gord Wood, 6'8" Forward (20.9 ppg, 10.1 rpg), Brian Bleich, 6'8" Forward (15.9 ppg, 8.4 rpg).  
Coach: Ken Murray (7<sup>th</sup> year)  
Coach's Comments: "The team that wins the nationals this year will be the team that peaks at the right time. There has been no one dominant team this year so all eight teams have a legitimate shot at it."

AISLE ROW SEAT  
CIAU Basketball

**Laurentian Voyageurs**

National Ranking: 8  
OUAA Central champion  
Defeated Toronto Varsity Blues 2 games to 1 in conference final  
Overall Record: 17-16  
OUAA Central Record: 10-5  
Key Players: Norm Hann, 6' Guard (27.1 ppg, 2.6 rpg), Brad Hann, 6'1" Guard (13.3 ppg, 3.3 rpg)  
Coach: Peter Campbell

AISLE ROW SEAT  
24 6 123

**Winnipeg Wesmen**

National Ranking: 2  
Champions: Great Plains Athletic Conference  
Defeated Brandon Bobcats 2-1 in best of three conference final.  
Overall Record: 24-16  
GPAC Record: 10-8  
Key Players: Jeff Foreman, 6'8" Forward (20.0 ppg, 7 rpg), Norm Froemel, 7'0" Forward (16.0 ppg, 8 rpg).  
Coach: Bill Wedlake (3<sup>rd</sup> year)  
Coach's Comments: "There's no pressure on us because we were #10 two weeks ago and we fell behind a game to Brandon plus we had to play in Brandon which is an extremely tough place to get a win out of so we have had to deal with pressure ever since the start of the playoffs."

AISLE ROW SEAT  
CIAU Basketball

**Concordia Stingers**

National Ranking: 7  
Champions: OUA East Division  
Defeated Ottawa Gee Gees in conference final.  
Overall Record: 21-7  
OUAA Record: 14-1  
Key Players: Dexter John, 5'10" Guard (21.7 ppg, 5.0 rpg), Ernie Rosa, 6'5" Forward (17.3 ppg, 8.2 rpg)  
Coach: John Dore (3<sup>rd</sup> year)  
Coach's Comments: "Dexter John has had a great year for us and he can score as quickly as anyone in the country. I think we've had a fairly balanced team throughout the year. We have five or six guys capable of scoring twenty points on any given day."

AISLE ROW SEAT  
24 6 123

# THE CIAU NATIONAL GHT

### UBC Thunderbirds

**National Ranking:** 5  
**Champions:** Canada West Athletic Association  
 Defeated Victoria Vikings 2-0 in best of three conference final.  
**Overall Record:** 23-12  
**CWUAA Record:** 14-6  
**Key Players:** J.D. Jackson, 6'5" Guard (23.3 ppg, 5.8 rpg), Jason Leslie, 6'6" Forward (15.8 ppg, 8.2 rpg)  
**Coach:** Bruce Enns (6<sup>th</sup> year)  
**Coach's Comments:** "It's been sort of an up and down year for us but we still have a great ballplayer in J.D. Jackson. Every time we step on the court somebody's trying to do something special to him."

AISLE ROW SEAT  
 24 6 123  
 CIAU Basketball

### Brandon Bobcats

**National Ranking:** 4  
**Great Plains Athletic Conference runner-up** (wild card entry)  
 Lost to Winnipeg Wesmen 2 games to 1 in GPAC final.  
**Overall Record:** 21-9  
**GPAC Record:** 13-5  
**Key Players:** Keith Vassell, 6'4" Guard (19.3 ppg, 6.2 rpg), Dave Nackoney, 6'4" Forward (18.1 ppg, 4.8 rpg)  
**Coach:** Jerry Hemmings (15<sup>th</sup> year)

AISLE ROW SEAT  
 24 6 123

### Guelph Gryphons

**National Ranking:** 3  
**OUSA West Division runner-up** (wild card entry)  
 Lost to Brock Badgers 79-76 in division final.  
**Overall Record:** 19-8  
**OUSA West Record:** 11-3  
**Key Players:** Eric Hammond, 6'8" Center (14.2 ppg, 6.1 rpg), Tim Mau, 6'8" Forward (13.6 ppg, 12.1 rpg)  
**Coach:** Tim Darling (6<sup>th</sup> year)  
**Coach's Comments:** "We haven't played a man-to-man defense in about two months so everyone who has played us has been concerned with taking our big people like (Eric) Hammond and (Tim) Mau out of the game. Our guards have stepped up and played well because other teams are basically saying we have to beat them from the perimeter."

AISLE ROW SEAT  
 24 6 123  
 CIAU Basketball

### Saint Mary's Huskies

**National Ranking:** 6  
**Champions:** Atlantic Universities Basketball Conference  
 Defeated Acadia Axemen 57-52 in AUBC final.  
**Overall Record:** 21-8  
**AUBC Record:** 14-6  
**Key Players:** Brian Thompson (22.9 ppg, 5.3 rpg), William Njoku (18.3 ppg, 9.9 rpg)  
**Coach:** Ross Quackenbush (3<sup>rd</sup> year)  
**Coach's Comments:** "Basketball strategy has dictated that we go inside first, that's our first look because we've got good people inside who can score and then it depends on what the defense wants to do and if they double or triple team, we kick the ball outside."

AISLE ROW SEAT  
 24 6 123

Six conferences come calling as...

## Nation's best hits metro

by Jody Jewers

Eight of the best university men's basketball teams in Canada are converging on Halifax for the 1992 CIAU national championships set to go this weekend and all have travelled a long and tough road just to get here.

Aside from the AUAA champion Saint Mary's Huskies, the Winnipeg Wesmen, Guelph Gryphons, Brock Badgers, Brandon Bobcats, Concordia Stingers, Laurentian Voyageurs, and British Columbia Thunderbirds have escaped their respective conferences unscathed.

The Wesmen and Bobcats took to the court in the

Great Plains Athletic Conference Final, which went down to the wire as the Bobcats took game one before the Wesmen stormed back to win two straight and the GPAC crown.

Although they are #2 in the country and are favored going in, the Wesmen have already faced pressure situations and have gotten used to it.

"There's no pressure on us because we were #10 two weeks ago and we fell behind a game to Brandon (in the GPAC final)," remarked Winnipeg coach Bill Wedlake when asked about the pressure of a national final. "Plus, we had to play in Brandon which is an extremely tough place to get a win out of so we have had to deal with pressure ever since the start of

the playoffs."

The growing amount of parity in the CIAU can be proved through a close examination of the top ten rankings. There have been at least a half-dozen teams that have at some point been number one and this makes it all the more harder to pick a favorite.

"The tournament this year is very wide open," observed Guelph Gryphons' bench general Tim Darling, who is more than qualified to make such a statement, especially since his team has reached the championship game each of the past two seasons.

"I think UBC would be the sleeper team because guys like J.D. Jackson and Jason Leslie have played very well. Brock has been tough this year and St.F.X. have been fairly stacked over the past few years. We played Acadia up here and beat them on a last-second shot so we know what they're like but it's hard to find one dominant team," said the sixth-year coach, whose charges were narrowly defeated 79-76 by the #1 Brock Badgers in the OUAA West final.

Other conference winners who have had to do some fine tuning in the wake of roster shuffles have found the going a little rougher.

"We lost a couple of people from last year's team that caused us to struggle a bit over much of the year but when it came down to the end, I thought we were the best team in the league," said British Columbia boss Bruce Enns, who is in his sixth year with the Canada West champions. "We executed pretty well offensively and defensively and the rest of the guys started to pick



GRANT MACEACHERN

Kevin Lee (44) of the Acadia Axemen goes for the layup against the UBC Thunderbirds during last year's CIAU quarterfinals. UBC once again won the Canada West title, beating Victoria.

up the slack and are starting to follow (Canada West MVP J.D.) Jackson's lead," observed Enns, whose team ousted perennial Final Eight contestants Victoria in two straight games.

"Ottawa was fairly competitive but I think we had too much depth for some teams," offered OUAA East champ Concordia coach John Dore. "I don't think our league was the best in the country by any stretch of the imagination. We'll be relaxed going in and we'll try and have some fun. Certainly we'll look to try and win but we'll let the chips fall where they may," offered Dore,

whose troops downed the Ottawa Gee-Gee's for the conference title.

The three Ontario conferences also take part in the Wilson Cup, a tournament not only designed to determine who goes to the nationals, but who can get bragging rights as the best squad in the OUAA, something that is taken seriously by participating teams.

"The media have hyped this up for most of the year and there is television coverage so people are being very serious about it," said Darling of the cup, which has been around since 1908. "Not only does it determine bragging rights for the OUAA, it also provides as an excellent tune-up for a national championship and that's all we've been thinking about so far," added Darling in a conversation prior to their OUAA West title game.

The Badgers and Stingers hooked up in this season's Wilson Cup final, with the Badgers taking the title. Concordia defeated OUAA Central winners Laurentian 83-76 in the other semi-final.

The Voyageurs secured their berth in the nationals by downing the Toronto Varsity Blues in the Central championship two games to one.

The tournament begins on Friday afternoon with all four quarterfinal matchups taking place, followed by consolation semi-finals Saturday afternoon. Championship semis go that same night and both the consolation and national title games will be played Sunday afternoon.

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# Metro Centre to host nationals until 1998

by Jody Jewers

Halifax now has even more reason to lay claim to being the "Basketball Capital of Canada", thanks to the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union, who recently named Halifax as the site of the annual national men's basketball championships from 1992 until 1998, ending speculation as to whether the site would be moved.

The Metro Centre has held the Final Eight since 1984, when it was moved from the University of Waterloo, and has attracted hundreds of thousands of fans during its eight-year stint, including 30,000-plus fans each of the past two years and 7,124 fans for last year's semi-final game between the Guelph Gryphons and the Acadia Axemen.

However, these impressive numbers do not even come close to the record-setting attendance set in 1979 for the championship final between Saint Mary's and Acadia. 11,000 fans jammed the Duke Street building to witness the contest, won by the Huskies and also marking the last time an Atlantic school has captured a national title.

The reputation of the tournament organizing committee, headed by Saint Mary's alumnus Bill Robinson of the Nova Scotia Sport Heritage Society, as being an efficient and knowledgeable group who have successfully pulled off an event of this magnitude has not gone unnoticed, especially by some of the teams who will participate in this year's event.

"In the seven years that I've coached at Winnipeg we've

thought of Halifax as a great place for the finals," noted Bill Wedlake, head coach of the Great Plains Athletic Conference champion Winnipeg Wesmen. "We've had a great time there and there is no better place to host a championship than Halifax. The community support is just tremendous and the people there do a first-rate job of organizing and preparing for it."

"There are pros and cons to it (having the tournament in Halifax)," remarked Ken Murray, coach of the nation's top-ranked team from Brock University in Saint Catharines, Ontario. "I'm happy for the people of Halifax who have done a great job in planning the event. They are very experienced and capable of running a tournament such as this and they do a first rate job every year out. Although there is a soft spot in me that would like to have the tournament in Ontario, I have no qualms with the tournament being in Halifax."

Extra travel costs and the lengthy stay of the CIAU's in Halifax as opposed to other locales are points that have been raised by some teams, but none have called into question the spirit and enthusiasm surrounding the weekend-long tournament which has made an indelible imprint on the basketball community.

"I enjoy going to Halifax every year," said Guelph Gryphon coach Tim Darling, whose troops have reached the finals the last two years running. "We've been there the last three years and Halifax has given us tremendous support.



The Halifax Metro Centre will once again play host to the top eight men's basketball teams in the nation this weekend. The structure, opened in 1977, has hosted the CIAU Final Eight since 1984 and will continue to do so until at least 1998.

I don't think anyone has a stronger group of people around and Bill Robinson has done a great job. The only thing I might be concerned about is the duration in that seven years is a long time (to host) but I've been very impressed with the job they've done."

University of British Columbia coach Bruce Enns, whose team has to travel the furthest (four hours by plane) has a great deal of respect for the fan support for the showcase of the university hoop season.

"Halifax people love basketball maybe more than

any other city that we have played in in this country," said Enns. "As a player and as a coach, as a performer you want to have an audience and the audience in Halifax is second to none, no doubt about that."

"It makes things a little bit tougher for us because we have to come the four hours, which is very expensive for us and it's a very long trip so it's difficult for western teams go out there but I'm very happy about Halifax and the reason being is that you're always going to have a great audience so I'm very supportive about that decision," added Enns.

"We love coming down there," noted OUAA East champion Concordia Stingers' head coach John Dore. "We've been down to X(avier) this year and Dalhousie. We've been at the Dal tournament for the past three years and we're going to the Acadia tournament next year and I think we have great fan support in Halifax."

"I have a lot of friends down there and I think it's great. It (the Metro Centre) is a tremendous facility and Bill Robinson and the organizing committee do a really good job in putting on a first-class event."

## Huskies-Gryphons matchup should be war in the paint

by T. Paul Woodford

The AUBC champion Saint Mary's Huskies will face the daunting task of upending the powerful Guelph Gryphons in opening round play at the CIAU Final Eight this Friday night at the Metro Centre.

The experienced Gryphons will be making their third consecutive appearance at the Nationals while the youthful Huskies will be appearing in the eight team event for the first time since 1987. Guelph has lost the championship game in each of their last two Final Eight appearances.

The strength of the Gryphons will clearly be big men Eric Hammond and Tim Mau. Hammond, a 6'9" centre led the Gryphons with 14.2 ppg while Mau scored 13.6 ppg and hauled in an impressive 13 rebounds per game.

The Huskies have very little knowledge of the Gryphons entering Friday's game.

"We don't know that much about them, really," said SMU guard Richard Sullivan. "We just know about their two big guys, Mau and Hammond. Other than that, we don't

know much about them."

"We're just gonna take it one game at a time and if we play our game we should be alright. We've just gotta play hard and test the waters early in the game to see what they have and to see what their strengths and weaknesses are," added Sullivan.

Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush feels the Huskies will be able to contend with Guelph's size.

"Guelph is big, they have three guys 6'8" across the front, but I think we're big enough to contend with that. Our guys are ready and I think that they realize that they're on the edge of doing something special and I think they know what they have to do in order to make it happen," said Quackenbush.

Quackenbush is pleased the Huskies will be playing a tough opponent in the opening round.

"It may be to our advantage to play one of the tougher teams early

### THE STARTING FIVE

Starting lineups for Friday's opening round game between Saint Mary's and Guelph.

Guelph					Saint Mary's				
	Yr.	Ht.	ppg	rpg		Yr.	Ht.	ppg	rpg
Eric Hammond	5	6'9"	6.6	14.2	Brian Thompson	5	6'5"	22.9	5.3
Tim Mau	4	6'8"	13.6	13.0	Will Njoku	2	6'8"	18.3	9.8
Rich Wesolowski	1	5'10"	14.2	1.9	Richard Sullivan	3	6'0"	11.1	2.0
Brent Barnhart	4	6'9"	10.8	4.9	Jason Darling	4	6'3"	8.3	2.2
Humphrey Hill	1	6'0"	10.7	2.8	Chris Lawrence	1	6'4"	3.2	2.9

because by the time they get to the second round they will be more accustomed to playing in the Metro Centre. We've just come off playing two games there so we should be pretty comfortable," said Quackenbush.

Guelph coach Tim Darling is entering the game with virtually no knowledge of what he's up against.

"Boy, I wish I knew something about Saint Mary's. The only thing I know is that Njoku is a solid player, I've seen him play before. I also know that Thompson is a super player, every one I've talked to has had nothing but praise for him. I know Saint Mary's must be

pretty good to beat St. F.X. and Acadia back to back," said Darling.

The best player matchup will pit SMU's Will Njoku against Guelph's Hammond for control of the glass. Both players have a flair and flamboyance which should make the matchup extremely entertaining.

Sullivan says the Huskies are hungry for a national crown after capturing the AUBC title last weekend.

"We're getting greedy, we won AUAA's but now we want more. The season is still not over and our goal is still not accomplished," said Sullivan.

# TOP DOGS

**LEADING THE PACK:** Brian Thompson and William Njoku lead a pack of Huskies hungry for a national title.

by T. Paul Woodford

For senior forward Brian Thompson, it's one last kick at the can. For sophomore sensation Will Njoku, it's a chance to display his immense talents in front of a national audience.

When the Saint Mary's Huskies take on the best university basketball teams Canada has to offer at the CIAU Final Eight this weekend, it will be Thompson and Njoku who will carry most of the offensive load for the Huskies.

Thompson led the AUBC in scoring this season with a 22.9 ppg average and was named the league's most valuable player. The 6'5" Finance major is also a good bet to garner All-Canadian recognition at Thursday night's All-Canadian banquet.

Thompson's university basketball career has relied on his deft shooting touch. The guy nails pull up jump shots with a degree of grace and ease which leaves people in awe of the scoring phenom.

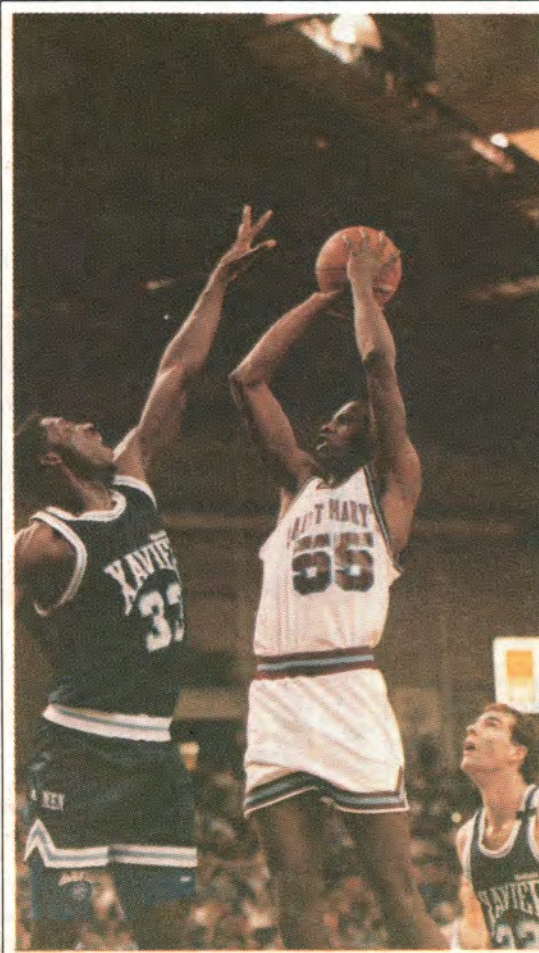
go all the way," said Thompson.

"I just think if we go out and play how we are capable then we'll be satisfied. Because if we play how we're capable, we can play with any team in Canada. I'm very confident about that," said Thompson.

Njoku falls into that rare breed of player who alone can be worth the price of admission. When he's not dazzling fans with his immense and seemingly unlimited talent, Njoku is entertaining them with his on-court antics. Njoku plays the game with a flair and intensity which has made him a fan favorite during his two years at Saint Mary's.

"William sort of seems to understand that in order for him to play well he has got to inject some emotion into the game," said Quackenbush. "He just keeps making his mind up to take his game to another level. (Last) weekend was the best I've ever seen William play."

Njoku put together an



JIM YOUNG/JOURNAL

Saint Mary's centre Will Njoku's flair and enthusiasm for the game have made him a favorite of Huskies fans.



JIM YOUNG/JOURNAL

Brian Thompson led the AUBC in scoring with a 22.9 ppg average and was named conference MVP this season.

**“I just keep thinking about this weekend, I haven't slept at all for the last week because I keep thinking about how great it could be to go all the way.”**

-AUBC MVP Brian Thompson

Last weekend's AUBC title was a just reward for the hard working Thompson, says Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush.

"I'm happy for all the guys but especially so for Brian because it was his last shot. He's worked really hard and he's done everything we've wanted him to do this year so if anyone deserves it he does," said Quackenbush.

For Thompson, the Husky express will reach the end of the line after this weekend's national tournament. It only seems fitting that one of the classiest players in the AUBC will end his career at the biggest tournament in the country. As the curtain on Thompson's career draws to a close, he knows exactly how he wants the script to end.

"Definitely the script would end with a national title and a packed house. I just keep thinking about this weekend, I haven't slept at all for the last week because I keep thinking about how great it could be to

impressive set of games last weekend and was named MVP of the AUAA championships. According to Quackenbush, Njoku's flashes of brilliance are appearing more frequently than earlier in his career.

"When he was younger, in high school or when he was a freshman, he would show flashes of brilliance. Now he's doing spectacular things much more often and more consistently. He's really done a great job, I'm just licking my lips. He'll be so good by the time he's done, it's scary," added Quackenbush.

Scary for his opponents perhaps. Njoku, a 6'8" centre with an attitude, is an imposing and sometimes intimidating figure. He is the Huskies leading shot blocker and routinely rejects four to six shots a game. Just as memorable for the fans are his frequent displays of emotion. Njoku can pump his teammates or fans up with his antics just as easily as with a dunk or a rejection.

"I do those sorts of things mostly to get the team and the fans going. It just keeps me focused on the game and I don't concentrate on anything

but the game.

If I portray a showboater, I don't mean to. It's just me trying to enjoy the game and trying to make it more fun for myself. I think it's good in a way because it makes me relax and hopefully it relaxes the guys around me. This weekend's gonna be the same, I'm just gonna play my game," said Njoku.

When the Huskies battle for a national title this weekend they will have one huge factor in their favour - Njoku. Because where there's a Will there's a way.

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**Athlete of the Week**



**WILLIAM NJOKU**

This week's Labatt's Blue Athlete of the Week is William Njoku of the men's basketball Huskies. The 6'8" center from Halifax was named playoff MVP as the Huskies defeated Acadia and St.F.X. to win the AUAA title.