

March 18, 1993 Special Issue

CIAU

THE FINAL EIGHT

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE JOURNAL

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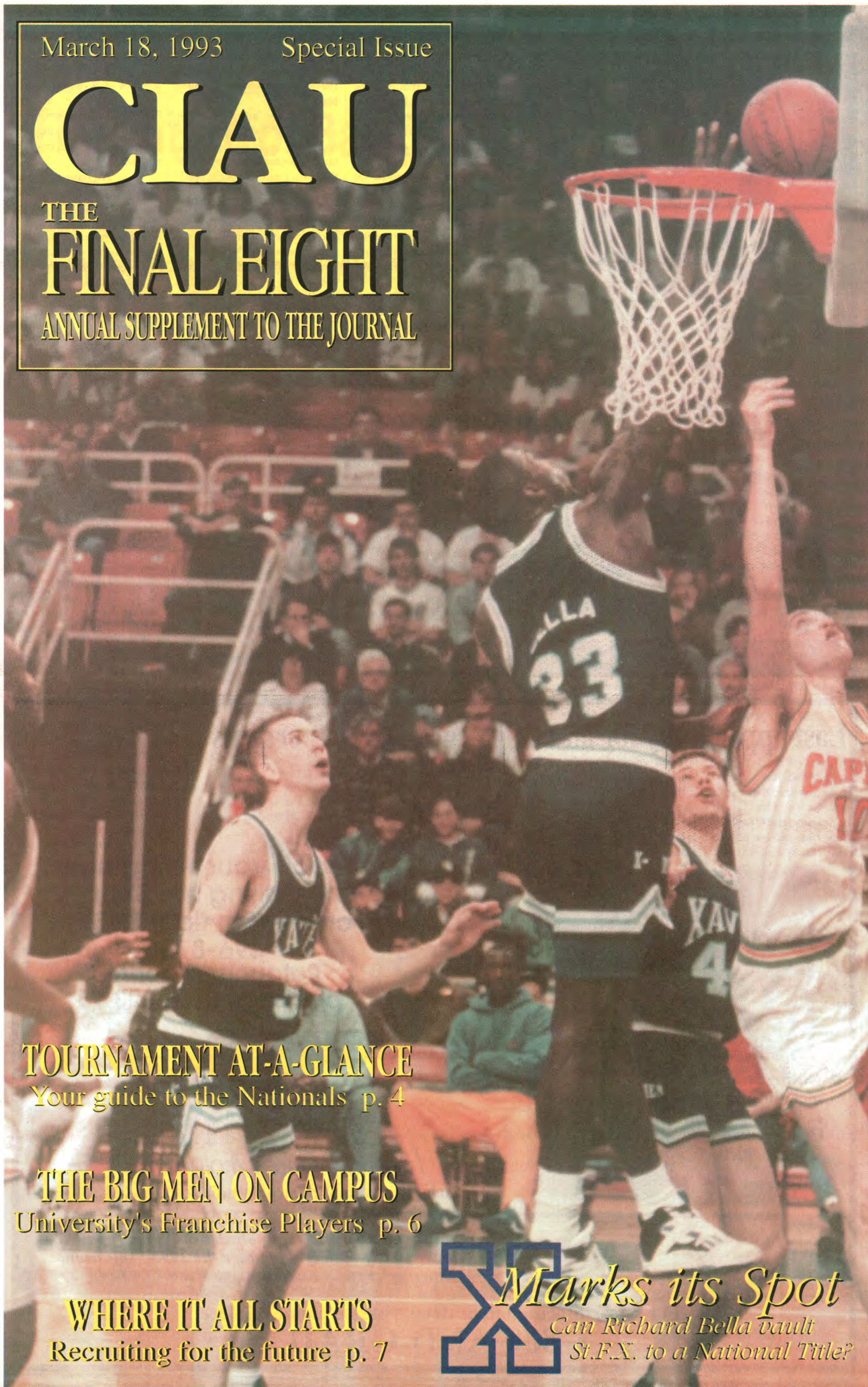
WHERE IT ALL STARTS

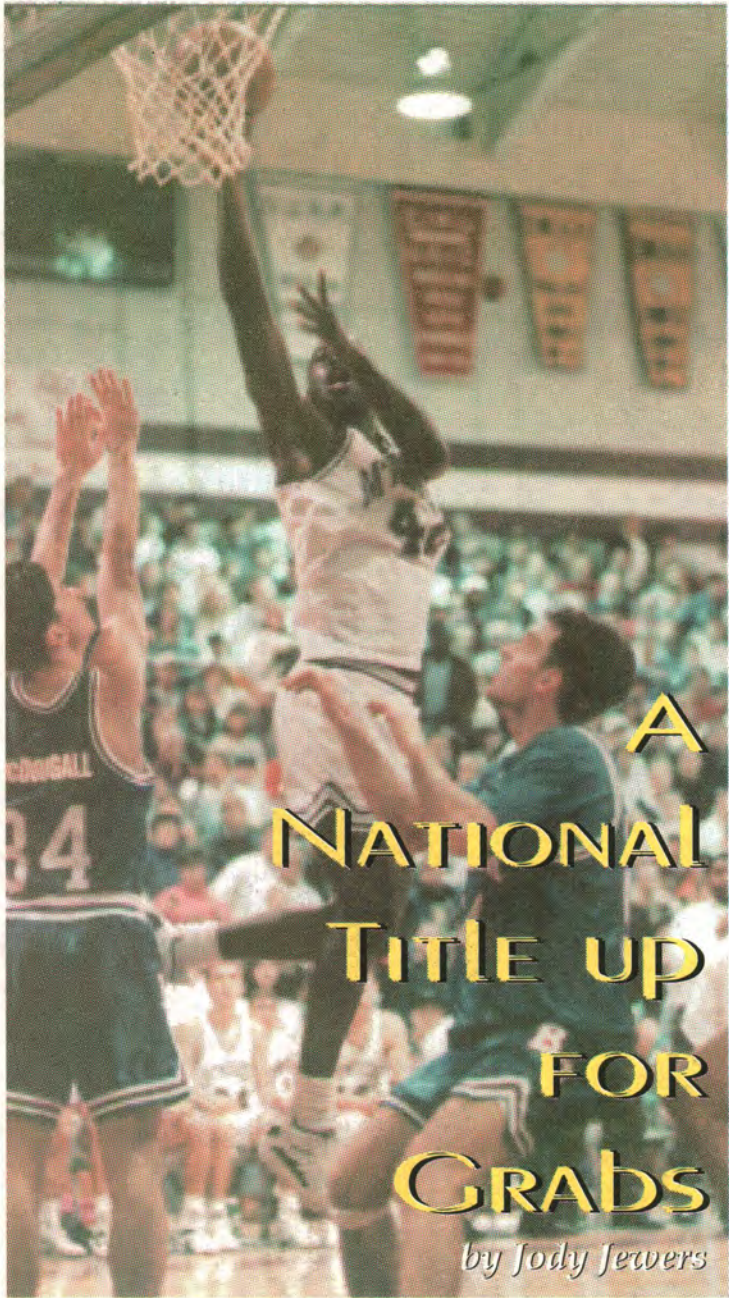
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Marks its Spot

*Can Richard Bella vault
St.F.X. to a National Title?*





**A
NATIONAL
TITLE UP
FOR
GRABS**

by Jody Jewers

Surprisingly enough, most of the coaches of the teams participating in the 1993 CIAU men's basketball championships agree on who the favourite is - there isn't one.

"In looking at all eight teams, I think it's the most open its ever been," commented Joe Raso, head coach of the #5 seed McMaster Marauders. "There's a lot of parity in the rankings, especially within our conference where we came out of some tough competition in our league."

"We've played in front of big crowds and on a neutral court this season so our chances are just as good as anyone's," added Raso, who is competing in his first-ever national tournament.

Five schools in this year's tournament (Winnipeg, St. F. X., Calgary, McMaster, and Ottawa) have never won a national title while the other three (Concordia, Brandon, and Western) have combined for three championships in the last four years. However, history apparently does not mean much once the game starts.

"Every team is capable of playing well on a given night," noted Jerry Hemmings, whose Brandon Bobcats won their 11th Great Plains Athletic Conference title in seventeen years under his tutelage. "We might be considered somewhat

of a Cinderella team since we beat Winnipeg but I don't think there is any one dominant team."

"Our advantage, in some ways, is that we are the underdog," said Western Mustangs' mentor Craig Boydell of the team's number-eight seeding. "I'm not claiming we shouldn't be the underdog, we are young but it's not that we had these couple of flash in the pan wins and that's it, too."

"We're kind of like babes in the woods," according

**Our
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Western Mustangs'
Craig Boydell
of the team's
number-eight
seeding.**

to Calgary Dinosaur coach Gary Howard. "None of the boys on our team have ever been to a national tournament. I guess you could call us new kids on the block; the University of Cal-

gary hasn't had a team back there since 1976 so it's real hard for me to assess."

Bill Wedlake, the head man of the #2-seeded Winnipeg Wesmen, likes his club's odds going into the weekend.

"We have good balance and we are far from being a two-person team," Wedlake said in reference to two of his more notable players in Jeff Foreman and seven-footer Norm Froemel. "If people are looking at us as being a two-person team they are going to be drastically mistaken."

"We don't have real keys (to success)," offered Ottawa Gee Gee boss Jack Eisenmann. "We usually have five guys in double scoring and we rely on a good overall team effort. We tend to shy away from having team leaders," said the third-year coach, whose troops throttled the Mustangs 88-48 to win the OUAA championship.

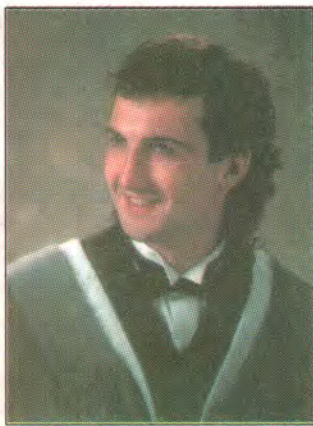
Steve Konchalski of St F. X. is in his sixth nationals and realizes the need to stay focused.

"I think the key was the AUAA's," remarked the 18-year veteran. "In the nationals there's a lot of hoopla and media attention so you must stay focused and eliminate the distractions."

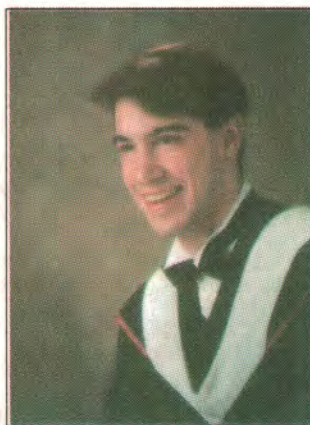
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METRO GETS X-CITED

The St. Francis Xavier X-Men will carry the hopes of a province into this weekend's Final Eight.

by T. Paul Woodford

The St. Francis Xavier X-Men ended an eleven year title drought with a convincing 84-71 win over the Saint Mary's Huskies in the Atlantic Universities Basketball Conference championship game last Sunday at Metro Centre. The X-Men last won the AUBC title in 1982.

The win was only St. F.X.'s second triumph in six matchups against Saint Mary's this season. The Antigonish squad squeaked into the playoffs on the last day of the season with a 71-67 victory over the Dalhousie Tigers and got to the conference final with a miracle three-point buzzer beater to down Cape Breton 72-69.

The weekend tournament was a showcase for St. F.X. centre Richard Bella who scored points and hauled in rebounds. Bella was named playoff MVP.

On Sunday, the X-Men jumped out to a 10-0 lead and never looked back. The Huskies missed their first eight shots but closed the gap to 20-16 with nine minutes left in the opening half. However a 20-8 run by St. F.X. gave them a comfortable 40-24 lead at the break.

Xavier scored the first six points of the second half to virtually sealed SMU's fate.

"As it turned out we got the first three or four hoops of the second half. If they got the first four hoops of the second half it's an eight point game. That gave us breathing room and took their crowd out of the game," said St.

F.X. coach Steve Konchalski, whose team outrebounded the Huskies 50-30.

The cold shooting Huskies began dropping their shots in the second half only to have Xavier match them hoop for hoop.

"It was disheartening," said Saint Mary's centre and AUBC MVP Will Njoku. "We couldn't stop them, our shots were falling but it didn't mean anything because they were always getting two at the other end. It just seemed like they couldn't do anything wrong today; I've gotta give them credit they played a tough game."

Bella was a one man wrecking crew for the X-Men with 29 points and 20 rebounds. Guy Mbongo meshed 19 and grabbed 11 boards, while Blair White added 12 for the winners.

Njoku paced the Huskies with 22 points on cool 12 for 23 shooting and snagged 11 rebounds. Fifth year guard Jason Darling scored 19 while Jeff Baltzer and Richard Sullivan chipped in with 10 points each.

"X just put together a hell of a game today," summarized Darling, after playing in his final game as a Husky. "They took it to us inside and that opened up their outside game and their guys were hitting their shots. I found that we were a bit cold, I don't know if it was nerves or what but the shots weren't falling. It just wasn't our day I guess."

Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush praised the play of Bella.

"They were pretty fired up and Bella is still a man among boys and he was just not about to be denied today. I've gotta congratulate him for coming to play that way, he had the best game I've ever seen him have," said Quackenbush.

St. F.X. point guard Brian Lee



ROBIN HARVEY/JOURNAL

MEMBERS of the St.F.X. X-Men and Saint Mary's Huskies battle under the boards at Sunday's AUBC Championship game. St.F.X. downed SMU 84-71 to win their first league title in 11 years.

felt his team's defence was the key to victory.

"Our defence was really the key today. We stopped them and were hyped when we got to the other end. It's a great feeling, the guys came out to play and we were prepared," said the Ottawa native.

Quackenbush said he will be rooting for the X-Men at this weekend's Final Eight.

"I hope they do very well because that would make a statement about our conference and obviously that statement has to be made year after year for anybody to hear it. So I wish them

the best of luck and I hope they win it," said Quackenbush, who was named AUBC coach of the year last week.

On Saturday, the Capers battled back from a nine point halftime deficit to tie the game on Jim Charters' three pointer with four seconds left. Just when overtime looked inevitable, St. F.X. rookie Jason Hirtle canned a three point attempt from the suburbs at the buzzer.

Bella paced the X-Men with 23 points and 13 rebounds. Brian Lee had 14 points and Mark Corrigan 12.



Will Njoku

Future looks bright for Saint Mary's

by T. Paul Woodford

While last Sunday's 84-71 loss to the St. Francis Xavier X-Men was no delight for Saint Mary's fans, they can take solace in the fact that the Huskies should be a solid team for years to come.

The Huskies got strong performances from their freshman class at the AUBC championships which gave fans a glimpse into the future. Six-foot-five forward Jason Medford continued his strong play into the post-season while Dwayne Hemmings lived up to his pre-season billing with a two solid outings.

"In a couple years those guys are going to be all-stars for sure," said SMU point guard Richard Sullivan. "I mean they have so much talent, I wish when I came in I had that much talent. They're gonna be big players, I

hope they learn from this experience and become better players because of it."

SMU guard Jason Darling donned the maroon and white for the last time on Sunday.

"I can't complain about anything, I've had a great time here and it's been the best experience of my life. I love Saint Mary's and I can't say enough about the program," offered Darling.

Despite Sunday's loss, Saint Mary's centre Will Njoku gave his teammates credit for a strong season.

"We lost today but I have to give our team a lot of credit because we were 1-5 at one point and a lot of people thought we were finished," said Njoku. "We're young yet we've learned a lot and many of these guys are going to be together for at least three more years so watch out."

CIAU

final 8

BASKE

Concordia Stingers

4 Jean Pierre Remier	F
5 Raphael Tyrrell	G
10 Dexter John	G
12 Eric Corej	C
14 Emile Bigelow	F
15 Benoy Jacob	G
22 Frederic Arsenaault	C
23 Patrick Sullivan	G
31 Emerson Thomas	F
32 Robert Ferguson	G
33 Gaetan Prosper	F

National Ranking: 1
Head Coach: Jon Dore
Years as Head Coach: 4
Champions - QSSF
 (defeated Bishop's 2-0 in best of three final)
 Overall record: 23-6
 QSSF record: 12-0
 Last CIAU title: 1990
 Key Players: John (18.7 ppg, 5.0 rpg), Thomas (16.5 ppg, 6.5 rpg)
Coach's Comments: "Our scoring is spread out over a bunch of guys and normally our high scorer is any one of four people. If the scoring is spread out it is not as important for one player to have a big game. We feel that if four of our starters have good games then we can win."



Winnipeg Wesmen

4 David Korpela	G
10 Rob Derksen	G
11 Thor Olesen	G
12 Rhett Turner	G
13 Matt Hannay	F
14 David Zagordo	G
15 Prentice Lenz	G
20 Jeremy Rattai	F
21 Jeff Foreman	F
23 Richard Hunt	F
24 Chris Chartier	F
25 Norm Froemel	F

National Ranking: 2
Head Coach: Bill Wedlake
Years as Head Coach: 8
Wildcard entry
 (lost to Brandon 2-1 in best of three GPAC final)
 Overall record: 29-6
 GPAC record: 10-2
 Last CIAU title: n/a
 Key Players: Foreman (20.5 ppg, 9.6 rpg), Froemel (13.8 ppg, 10.7 rpg)
Coach's Comments: "We're very disappointed that we didn't win our own conference. It was a kick in the butt and woke us up. We didn't play well because we had that crutch that if we didn't win we had a good shot at a wild card and our record proves that."



Calgary Dinosaurs

10 Ian Minniffee	G
11 Tony McDougall	G
12 Richard Bohne	G
14 Kieron Warren	G
15 Jeff Smith	F
20 Hugh McKenzie	G
22 Jamie Mulholland	G
24 Sandor Kiss	G
32 Mark Loria	F
34 Craig Newman	G
40 Stephane Rochet	F
44 Richard Dibb	F
50 Bill Lavergne	F

National Ranking: 3
Head Coach: Gary Howard
Years as Head Coach: 19
Champions - CWUAA
 (defeated Saskatchewan 2-0 in best of three final)
 Overall record: 23-9
 CWUAA record: 13-7
 Last CIAU title: n/a
 Key Players: Minniffee (17.1 ppg, 3.2 rpg), Smith (16.3 ppg, 8.6 rpg)
Coach's Comments: "We feel fortunate that we're able to represent our league since there are five other teams in our league that could've been making this trip. I think we deserve to be there but in terms of how we're going to do, we're going to try and give a good accounting of ourselves."



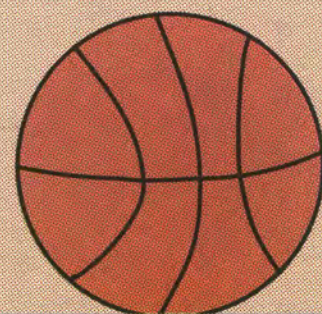
Brandon Bobcats

00 Euan Roberts	C
4 Keith Vassell	G
10 Jerome Gaines	G
12 Dave Brown	G
14 Jason Scott	G
20 Mike Thomas	F
22 Doug Scotchburn	G
24 Ray Tyghter	F
30 John Fry	G
34 Danney Hamilton	F
50 Roy Cousins	F
52 Jim Lamond	F

National Ranking: 4
Head Coach: Jerry Hemmings
Years as Head Coach: 17
Champions - GPAC
 (defeated Winnipeg 2-1 in best of three final)
 Overall record: 25-9
 GPAC record: 8-4
 Last CIAU title: 1989
 Key Players: Thomas (22.8 ppg, 6.0 rpg), Vassell (19.3 ppg, 6.7 rpg)
Coach's Comments: "We've won 14 of our last 16 games and we split with Concordia but we haven't had the opportunity to play other teams. It's always a good tournament and the key is to get by that first game."



TBALL NATIONALS



McMaster Marauders

4 Marc Sontrop	G
5 Kannin Ossi-Tutu	G
31 Andrew Gillis	G
32 Jeff Zownir	F
33 Derek Howard	G
34 Sheldon Laidman	G
42 Shawn Francis	F
43 Charles Benjamin	G
44 Paul Maga	F
45 Cesare Piccini	F
52 Jack Vanderpol	C
53 Lance Postma	F
54 John Hogeterp	F
55 Andrew Peters	G

National Ranking: 5

Head Coach: Joe Raso

Years as Head Coach: 1

Wildcard entry

(Lost to Western 95-85 in OUAA West semi-final)

Overall record: 19-10

OUAA West record: 12-2

Last CIAU title: n/a

Key Players: Vanderpol

(18.6 ppg, 14.9 rpg),

Howard (16.7 ppg, 2.6 rpg)

Coach's Comments:

"Vanderpol has to be consistent on the boards for us to win and if he can score that's a plus.

We're going to have to get a good team effort and balanced scoring. If five guys are in double digits for us, we can win."



St.F.X. X-Men

12 Brian Lee	G
13 Jason Hirtle	G
20 Merrick Palmer	G
21 Joe Odihambo	G
25 Aristide Ngulibet	F
30 Sean McLean	F
32 Mike Clarke	F
33 Richard Bella	C
35 Guy Mbongo	F
42 Mark Corrigan	G
44 Blair White	F
45 Sean Clarke	F

National Ranking: 6

Head Coach: Steve

Konchalski

Years as Head Coach: 18

Champions - AUAA

(defeated Saint Mary's 84-71 in AUAA final)

Overall record: 19-13

AUAA record: 12-8

Last CIAU title: n/a

Key Players: Bella (17.6

ppg, 11.3 rpg), Lee (12.9

ppg, 5.8 assists/game)

Coach's Comments: "First of

all I think defence was the key

in the AUAA's and will be at

the Nationals. There will be a

lot of hoopla and media

attention so it is important that

we stay focused and eliminate

the distractions."



Ottawa Gee-Gees

4 Rod Lee	G/F
5 Bobby Brown	G
10 Tim Mathieson	F
14 Greg Maillet	F
21 Steve Kokeij	G/F
24 Vince Smyth	F
25 Mike Milne	F
30 David Bajurny	G
32 Clarence Porter	F
33 Chris Lemcke	F
35 Royston Holverkirk	G
42 Paul Holmes	G
44 David Reid	G
53 Shawn Turnau	G
55 Edward Weltz	F

National Ranking: 7

Head Coach: Jack Eisenmann

Years as Head Coach: 3

Champions - OUAA East

(defeated Toronto 87-67

in OUAA East final)

Overall record: 24-11

OUAA East record: 9-3

Last CIAU title: n/a

Key Players: Lee (13.4

ppg, 4.6 rpg), Porter

(15.0 ppg, 8.6 rpg)

Coach's Comments: "We're

going to give it everything we

have and do our best. We

believe we have as good a shot

as anybody else, although no

one else thinks we do."



Western Mustangs

11 Peter Schmidt	G
12 Stephan King	G/F
14 Blake Gage	G
15 Brendan Noonan	G
21 Aaronn Czaja	G
22 Hugh Bell	G/F
23 Mike Lynch	G/F
33 Brad Campbell	F
34 Jason Meskis	C
35 Dave Kleuskens	C/F
44 John Vermeeren	C
45 Martin Harris	G
55 Nigel Rawlings	G/F

National Ranking: 8

Head Coach: Craig Boydell

Years as Head Coach: 3

Champions - OUAA West

(defeated Brock 68-64 in

OUAA West final)

Overall record: 20-10

OUAA West record: 8-6

Last CIAU title: 1991

Key Players: Lynch (21.3

ppg, 6.6 rpg), Campbell

(17.6 ppg, 5.8 rpg)

Coach's Comments: "We have

the rightly earned underdog label

but at the same time we have

beaten Concordia on their home

floor and lost to them in overtime

on a neutral floor and we've

beaten four other teams who have

been in the top 10."





McMaster's Jack Vanderpol (McMaster Athletics)

St. F. X.'s Richard Bella (Ralph A. Rosere)

Guelph's Tim Mau (G. McEachern photo)

SMU's Will Njoku (C. MacMillan/Journal)

Over the past 15 years only one CIAU basketball team has won a national title without an all-Canadian in the lineup. This year may be an exception.

Franchise Players: The Keys To Victory?

by T. Paul Woodford

Franchise players - you can't win without one. Or so it seems. Conventional wisdom dictates that in order to win a national basketball title a team must have at least one marquee player. A look at the top university teams over the past five seasons reveals just how important dominant players are.

Last season Brock was led by Gord Wood, in 1991 John Stifelmeyer paced Western and in '89 Brandon's attack was spearheaded by shooting guard Joey Vickery—all were all-Canadians. Between 1980 and 1989, when Victoria and Brandon owned the title, all-Canadian lists were led by players from those teams.

This year stands out as an exception as many of the nation's best players will watch from the sidelines. Upsets over Guelph and Brock have prevented three time all-Canadian Tim Mau and

OCAA all-star Brian Bleich from making the trip to Halifax. The Winnipeg Wesmen may be the most top-heavy team at this year's tournament, they boast two potential all-Canadians in seven foot Norm Froemel and GPAC MVP Jeff Foreman.

Last season Wood was the backbone of the national champion Brock Badgers. An off-season head injury has caused Wood's production to tail off to a meager 9.3 ppg after leading his team with 20.7 ppg last year. The six-foot-eight native of Paris, Ontario has been a mere shadow of his former self and the Badgers have not been the same powerhouse since. Without Wood leading the way the Badgers failed to win the OCAA West and will not be in Halifax to defend their national title.

One team that seems to prosper without a dominant player is the Concordia Stingers. The Montreal school won the national title in 1990 with a collection of unknowns. Dur-

ing that season, the Stingers did not even have a single player on the Quebec Conference all-star team. No other team has won the national title in the past 15 years without an all-Canadian in the lineup. Not surprisingly, Concordia head coach John Dore doesn't feel it takes big name players to win a national title.

"In 1990 we won because we had a good team and we didn't necessarily have the most talent or the best talent but we played well as a team. I think in order to win the national championship it's going to be the team that puts it together the best on that final weekend," says Dore.

Concordia aside, history would seem to favour teams that floor at least one dominant player. Big name players to watch for at this year's Final Eight include St. Francis Xavier's six-foot-nine centre Richard Bella, forward Mike Thomas of Brandon, centre Jack Vanderpol of Brock and guard Mike Lynch of Western.

Coaches to push for wildcard reform

by T. Paul Woodford

There are two things which can be counted on every year at the CIAU Final Eight. A team will be crowned national champions and people will complain about wildcard selections.

At present six representatives, one from each conference, constitute the top ten committee. They submit lists of their top ten which are compiled into overall rankings. Six conference winners as well as two wildcard teams will make the trip to Halifax.

It seems the only teams pleased with the wildcard selections each year are the two fortunate recipients. Some complain about the choice of wildcard teams while others just don't like a system that awards second chances to two teams who fail to win in their conferences during crunch time.

Saint Mary's coach Ross Quackenbush doesn't seem to like anything about the current format.

"I just don't see how the system works," says Quackenbush, "and I don't see that it can work. The six guys across the country only get to see the teams in their own neighbourhood play a lot. Plus they are very geographically oriented, they vote for the teams in their area. Without seeing all the voting sheets from week to week my sense is that people tend to vote according to where they're from."

"I just think the system has gotta be changed somehow. It's not working; it's quite clearly too political," adds Quackenbush.

By defeating the heavily favoured McMaster Marauders in the OCAA West semi-final the Western Mustangs really didn't gain anything on their rivals from Hamilton as both teams will make the trip to Halifax. To win the national title, Western may have to beat McMaster a second time.

Western coach Craig Boydell, who also heads the Canadian Coaching Federation, says there is growing support among CIAU coaches to put an end to free rides to the Final Eight.

"I think the coaches are overwhelmingly in support of teams winning their way there. No one likes the wildcard system and one of the major motions that will be addressed at our meetings in Halifax is to do away with the wildcard system. We want some kind of system where teams can play their way in," said Boydell.

One alternate system would group the six conferences into three regions, Quebec-Atlantic, OCAA East-OCAA West and GPAC-Western Canada. The loser of the conference finals would play to determine who goes to Halifax. Each region would get a wildcard two out of every three years. For instance if the Eastern and Ontario regions were to get wildcards this year, Brock would play Toronto and Saint Mary's would play Bishops with the winners advancing to Halifax. Next year the OCAA and the Western Canadian regions would receive wildcards.

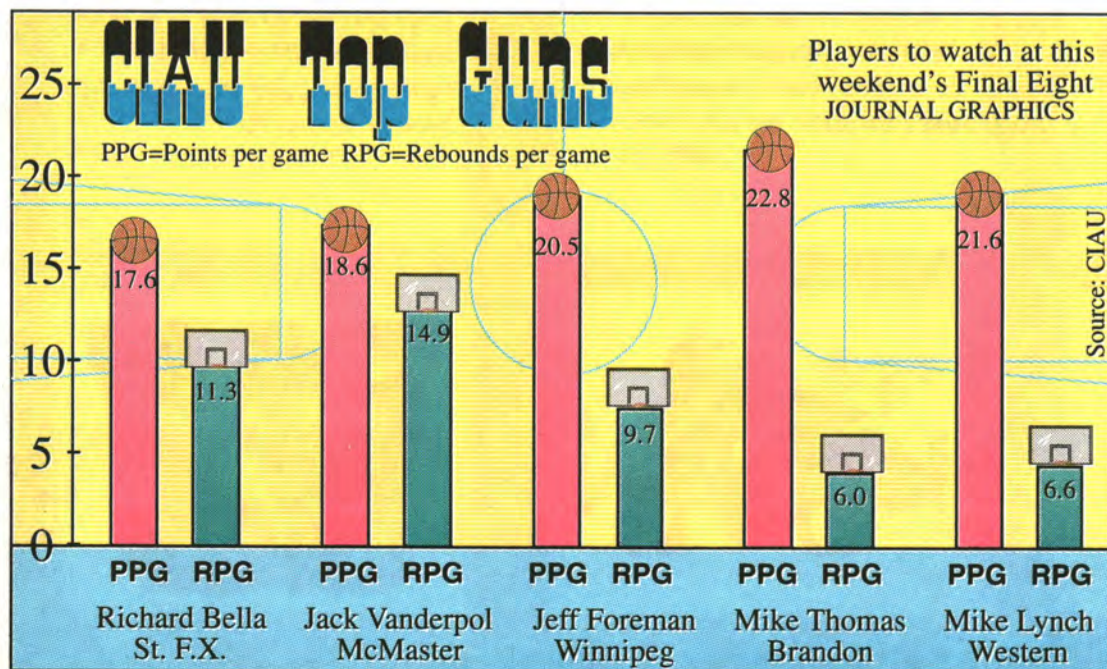
Another scheme would continue with the current ranking system but have the top ten rankings done by computer analysis. Lynn Sutherland, program leader of the Alberta Research Council's Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence team says such a computer program could be designed in one of two ways.

"You could interview some experts, perhaps the six people who currently rank the teams, and ask them what factors they use. From that you could get a computer to do the same thing but with greater precision and accuracy. That's called an expert system.

"Another way would be statistical modelling where you would look at a number of performance measures which would be less emotional. It would compare important factors using various statistical techniques," explains Sutherland.

"With such a program you would want to go back to previous years to test the accuracy of the program," adds Sutherland.

In the past the Alberta Research Council has done work predicting the outcome of the Grey Cup for CBC and has assisted volleyball coaches to choose when to substitute players.



RECRUITING The Future of Basketball

by Jody Jewers

While most would argue that the national men's basketball championship is won on the hardwood at the Metro Centre, the real battle may begin long beforehand when head coaches from across Canada battle to recruit high school prospects.

The recruiting process seems simple at first glance, but upon further examination is a complicated mixture of scouting, academics, finances, and public relations. All of these factor prominently into an athlete's decision to attend one school over another.

"I'm really not sure just yet," admitted Daniel Williams, a Grade 12 student at Saint Patrick's High in Halifax and a member of the 1993 provincial AAA boys championship team. "Mount Saint Vincent has approached me for basketball but McGill has talked to me about playing football for them so I'll have to wait and see."

"We have several guys who are graduating this year and there's some good talent there," said Williams' coach, Hugh McDonald. "Hopefully some of those guys will get on to university and at the very worst a small college."

The chain of events that leads athletes like Williams to university campuses begins by travelling from gym to gym to survey the talent pool from which to pick. Most Canadian hoop mentors agree the number of prospects fluctuates yearly.

"We're limited locally and it varies but from Manitoba there are maybe three or four kids who can crack a university lineup," noted Jerry Hemmings, head coach

at Brandon University. "Our focus has been mainly on southern Ontario because of the bigger population base and more kids."

"Although the talent pool has dropped we've done very well," offered Winnipeg's Bill Wedlake, "and because of that people are recognizing us and some may say 'Hey, I want to play there.'"

"It varies but I'm only one guy in terms of having an opportunity to get out and get around," said SMU boss Ross Quackenbush. "As well there's

coaches are limited financially and must make the most of selling the school and their program.

"We don't have any kind of athletic scholarship here and basically people come on their own hook," admitted Craig Boydell of the University of Western Ontario in London. "It's my own philosophy anyway but we know we've got to get the maximum amount of mileage out of things that have to do with people really committed to the team and not just themselves."



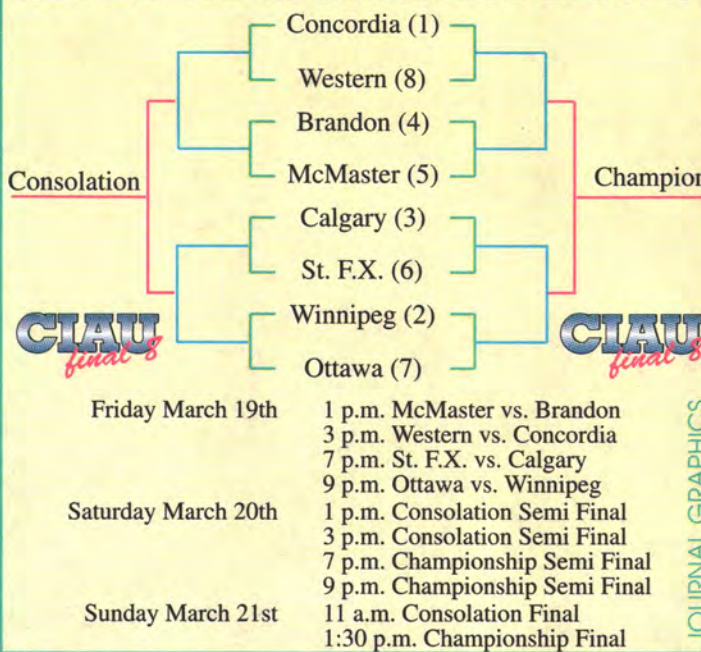
C. MACMILLAN/JOURNAL
Jason Medford of Saint Mary's was one of many heavily recruited players from Southern Ontario, considered a "hotbed" of talented University prospects.

a conflict with our season and the high school season so that limits your opportunities."

As far as what is offered to these budding stars, Canadian

"We don't try to build a wall and not try to get kids but the reality of it is that without full-ride scholarships it's a very expensive proposition for mom

CIAU Tournament Draw



and dad to send their boy to the University of Calgary," said Dinos coach Gary Howard.

"Kids from B.C., Manitoba, or Saskatchewan who are good enough to play for us are probably good enough to play for schools in their own province and they have provincial scholarships which, if they come to Alberta, they lose that scholarship for two years. Right away that's a lot of money out of the pocket," added Howard, in his 19th season at the helm.

"We wish we had scholarship money because it would probably make our job a little bit easier," commented Ken Murray, coach of last year's CIAU champions from Brock University in Saint Catherines, Ontario. "The only thing we tend to offer an athlete is one, to try and put together the best possible playing schedule that we can and we pack our place for our games so they have an opportunity to play for large crowds, great media coverage for our school so there's a lot of perks they might not get if they went somewhere else."

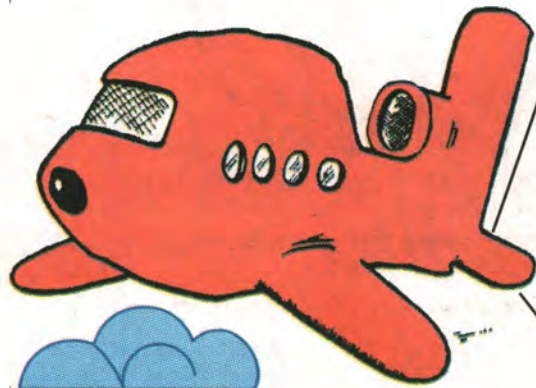
One of the big concerns amongst CIAU coaches is the allure of American colleges with deeper financial backing and a higher profile to Canadian kids. The proximity of most schools to the U.S. border has had a damaging effect on recruiting. "More kids going to the U.S.

has been a big problem," stated Hemmings. "Before we have depended on kids who are in need of financial assistance and now in Ontario alone, the number of kids is based on need, not quality. We can't be a feeding ground to the Americans."

"I'm talking to kids now that are in Grade 10 in the hopes that they'll keep our university in mind when they graduate," remarked Murray. "I'm finding that we have to do it sooner and sooner and one of the reasons why is because of the American schools. The American border is only twenty minutes away from us."

"More and more American coaches are coming across now and are trying to lure some of our better players across and it's an ongoing battle so I find that if we can get to the kids early enough, then maybe we can start getting them to think positive about Canadian basketball and about our university."

"We're trying to make sure that these kids stay in Canada," continues Boydell. "There's kids going out of the country for all the wrong reasons and it's a major issue with us because we think that basketball around the country now has really improved."



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THE PARTY CRASHER

by T. Paul Woodford

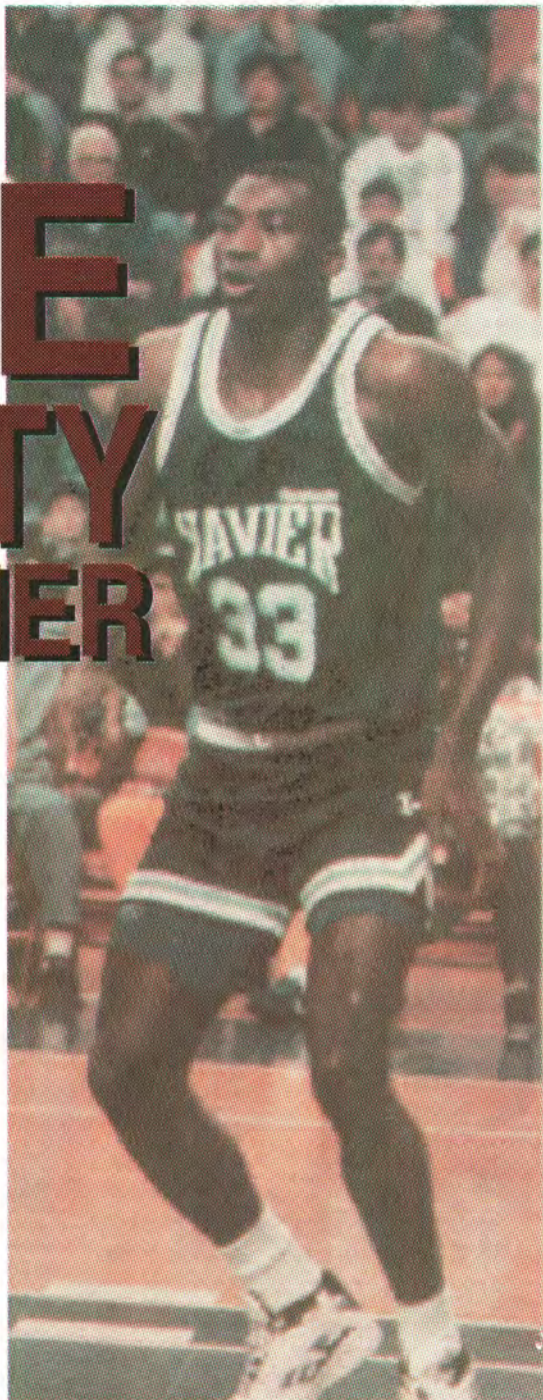
Don't be surprised if St. Francis Xavier centre Richard Bella has a sore back by the end of this weekend's Final Eight. The muscular native of Bangui, Central African Republic will carry the weight of the X-Men offence on his capable shoulders, just as he did at last weekend's Atlantic Conference playoffs.

Bella averaged 17.6 points and 11.3 rebounds per game this season but those numbers don't reflect his strong play over the past ten games. His once anemic shooting has suddenly become the centrepiece of his extensive arsenal. He has added a spin-around jump shot to his repertoire that makes him virtually unstoppable. He scored 52 points and hauled in 33 rebounds in Xavier's two playoff wins at Metro Centre last weekend. Bella was named playoff MVP.

St. Francis Xavier coach Steve Konchalski says Bella's leadership has meant more to the X-Men than his offence and rebounding skills.

"His turnaround jump shot has made a big difference in his game but the biggest factor is his work ethic. He's not a vocal person by nature so he has to lead by example. When your six-foot-nine shot-blocker is diving on the floor for loose balls, which he has been doing all year, it displays great leadership," says Konchalski.

For Bella, it was be-



King Richard- When six-foot-nine inch basketball machine Richard Bella is on his game you can be sure of one thing, the only people partying after the game will be he and his St. F.X. teammates.

just so big and strong that it's hard to stop him," says Njoku, this season's Atlantic Conference MVP.

The 235 pound Bella is a wall of muscle under the backboards and has monopolized the glass on some nights this season. While he is a sea-

wanted to get them to North America to play basketball and go to university," says Konchalski.

The result was a three player recruiting bonanza for Konchalski. Bella came to Antigonish in January 1989 along with countrymen Aristide Nguilibet and Guy Mbongo. None of them spoke any English upon arrival. The three studied English at Dr. John H. Gillis High School in order to attend St. F.X. in September.

Bella was still a raw talent when he arrived at St. F.X., says Konchalski.

"His size and athleticism were obviously there but he was a raw talent and didn't really have the basics, I mean he had only been playing the game for a few years. He has worked awfully hard to become the player he is today," says Konchalski.

The mission for Bella and his underdog teammates this weekend will be to crash the party being held by teams from the rest of the country. But of course the X-Men will be the hometown favourites at Metro Centre. Is it possible for a host to crash his own party? Stay tuned.

ing double and triple teamed under the basket that convinced him to develop his short range shooting.

"When you play and you have three guys around you you have to do something so that's why I worked hard on my jumpshot," said the extremely soft-spoken Bella.

The respect Bella has earned from his teammates is immense.

"Richard Bella is an incredible ballplayer and I think he's underrated," said Xavier point guard Brian Lee. "When he's on his game there is not a big man in this country that can play with him."

Will Njoku of the Saint Mary's Huskies says Bella's incredible strength compensates for his shortcomings.

"His game has certainly become a more all around game but I think what he lacks in agility and finesse he makes up for in brute strength. He's

soned veteran of the university game the fourth year Economics student didn't start playing basketball until his late teens.

"I played soccer first and didn't start playing basketball until I was 18 or 19 years old. I was 6'6" and my brother said I was too big to play soccer so I started to play basketball," says Bella who has three brothers and four sisters.

He quickly excelled at the sport and represented C.A.R. at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. The tiny nation has a population of about three million and is slightly larger than Labrador. With only one indoor gym in the entire country, their Olympic program wanted its players to develop their skills abroad. Konchalski, who was in Seoul as an assistant coach with Canada was approached by Bella's coach.

"His coach approached me and said he had some players he wanted me to see. He

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