

## Aurora native named Trainer of the Year by Ontario Hockey Association



**By Jake Courtepatte**

After earning the OJHL Trainer of the Year award for his work with the Newmarket Hurricanes, Drew Laskoski has been recognized provincially with the Ontario Hockey Association's Trainer of the Year trophy.

The OJHL and OHA Trainer of-the Year awards are awarded to the trainer, therapist or equipment manager that is judged to be the best at his profession for his or her member club throughout the course of the regular season, while past experience and time served will be taken into consideration.

Laskoski has spent the better part of three decades working with junior hockey clubs across York Region, taking up the position as trainer with the Schomberg Cougars Junior C club after graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from the University of Waterloo.

His first taste of the Newmarket club came in 1987-88 with the Junior B 87's, taking the reigns as the club's head athletic therapist. After two seasons, Laskoski continued his education at Sheridan College with a diploma in Sports Injury Management, while also taking up the position as the University of Toronto Varsity Blue's trainer for one year.

He then returned to the 87's for six more seasons, watching the team transition to the OHL Junior A level, before joining the division rival Stouffville Spirit in 1997. After nine years with the Spirit, he returned to his Newmarket roots in 2007, while also taking up the position as president of the Ontario Athletic Therapist Association.

His on-again, off-again tenure with Stouffville and Newmarket led him back to the Spirit in 2012, before returning to the Hurricanes last year amidst a front-office shakeup.

His 28 years of experience, combined with being a 'go-to' trainer for the OHL for events like last December's Central Canada Cup All-Star Challenges, earned him the title as top trainer for the first time in March.

It was then the OJHL that sent his name and story into the OHA, the provincial governing body of hockey, where he was given the honour once more.

Upon learning of his recognition, Laskoski said he was "very surprised and honoured."

"We don't do this kind of thing for the recognition, but when they do throw us a bone it's nice," he said.

When asked why he has devoted so much of his time to the Newmarket organization, he expressed a need for continuity, as he has

been with the club since its beginning stages.

?It just makes sense to me to be there. I enjoy it ? it's right in my hometown, I can easily get to the rink, and to be able to offer a superior service to our players is really great.?

As a Certified Athletic Specialist, Laskoski is the founder and co-owner of Upper Canada Sports Medicine. During this summer's Pan Am games, he aimed to bring his practice to international attention, providing his services to athletes in wakeboarding, waterskiing and beach volleyball. He was on the host medical team at the 1999 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, a role he relished.

?Because I was out of province, I was free-floating?I ended up covering eight or nine different sports. It was a great experience, and challenging.?