

Longtime TV host McClenny lands in Aurora Sports Hall of Fame

By Jake Courtepatte

The face of Aurora sports for many years, sports personality Lowell McClenny has been added as the fourth name inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2015.

Acting as the president of Aurora Minor Hockey (AMHA) in the 1970s, he made his first foray into the local television sports scene when he was put in touch with Steve Mitchell, Aurora Cable's station manager.

"I suggested putting a sports show on the air to give a voice to the local athletes in the area," Mr. McClenny recalls. "Steve really bought into that."



And so, Sports Beat was born in 1982. It would become a passion of McClenny's for over a quarter of a century despite going in blind with no broadcasting experience.

"It was hit and miss, a lot of hit and miss," said McClenny.

At the time, Aurora Cable was just hitting its stride. The humble beginning of Sports Beat was in a family home on Yonge Street, repurposed to have administrative offices on the main floor and the production room in an old bedroom upstairs.

His first on-air guest was journalist Steve Buffery, then writing for the Aurora Banner and now a sports reporter with the Toronto Sun.

Tapings of the show were done on Sunday afternoons, and ran five or six times throughout the week, with the inexperienced McClenny learning as he went along, producing and hosting at the same time.

The inexperience, however, did not reach to the sports part of the business. Aside from his role as AMHA president, McClenny was an executive member of Aurora Minor Lacrosse, as well as a play-by-play announcer for minor sports, the Junior A Aurora Tigers, as well as the St. Andrew's College hockey team.

His involvement with minor sports is what brought him to focus Sports Beat on the young, local talent in Aurora who would get a thrill out of being on television.

"I wanted to give them an outlook," said McClenny. "A huge hit in the community was the fact that not only did we interview local sport organization executives, but we interviewed local kids on the show. This was ever so popular and it gave these kids a chance to be on television. This part of the show got bigger as we started to interview out of the studio as equipment became more modern and mobile."

He estimates that until the show went off the air in summer of 2008, several thousand guests had the chance to see themselves on television.

McClenny is inducted as the recipient of the very first Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Media Award, hereon presented to "someone who has made a major impact on the world of sport media during their lifetime at either the local or national levels," according to a press release.

As a lifelong Aurora resident, McClenny certainly appreciates the recognition.

"My parents grew up here, I grew up here. I know a lot of people in Aurora, a lot who I've met through my show. It's nice to be recognized."