

Sports Hall of Fame welcomes Class of 2022



It's a natural human element to make comparisons. We often relate an experience to another of its kind, as if to reveal to our minds things we had not seen prior, to form either a robust conversation or a daunting one.

In this case, it was the tale of all tales as it normally is with the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, Induction Celebration Dinner last Thursday at Royal Venetian Mansion.

As you sat eating in the room while listening to David Pilkey play the piano for everyone in attendance, unlike last year, the left half of the hall filled up with people rather quickly: a great thing for a wonderful night of simply celebrating individuals that gave everything they had to the betterment of their sports and to this Town they have flawlessly represented.

Following an hour and a half of mingling, it was time to turn attentions over to the other side of the Venetian to honour this year's inductees.

The latest inductees entering the Hall this year were introduced by Hall of Fame president Javed Khan, who also introduced the future Hall of Famers whose names will, one day, be well known in the future.

First to be honoured, following words from MPPs Michael Parsa and Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Mayor Tom Marakas and sponsors, and emcee Rod Black, was the sportscaster's fellow-Winnipegger Janice Jones.

Jones, who initially joined swimming more for safety than the love of the game, most notably broke the Canadian Masters record for 100-metre breaststroke at the Pan American Trials in Brantford, Ont.

The Hall of Fame narrated and showcased a video for each inductee. In Jones' video, viewers were able to see Jones in her youth and were able to learn about her journey through interviews from former coaches.

?I want to thank, first of all, the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame and all of the wonderful volunteers that I met who made this possible. Just a wonderful group of people and I thank you very much. And I also would like to thank those of you who are sitting in the room tonight, who volunteered in Aurora who made this a wonderful sporting community,? Jones began.

?Ironically, I'm here tonight partly because I was trying to volunteer. When the Town identified the need for another swimming pool, they asked for a consultant to do a feasibility study and this consultant asked for input from residents. I thought this was

something I could do. Yes, I had been a competitive swimmer, yes, I've been a coach, but I also taught every level of swimming. I have also taught aquatic programs and did a few years of those called synchronized swimming ? it's now called ?artistic swimming.' I had an understanding of a whole broad spectrum of aquatic users and I absolutely knew we needed a 50-metre pool for everyone in Town.?

This was throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and Jones said she had never met people part of her Committee up until that evening. Part of the team was Kelly Hughes, who ultimately nominated Jones.

Reflecting on her career, Jones said had a friend who flew out from Vancouver, B.C., to witness her induction. Surrounded by love, Jones was extremely grateful to be nominated.

Next to be honoured was dedicated volunteer in Dave Giroux.

Giroux has been a long-time leader in the baseball community for decades. Giroux, who came over from Dalhousie, N.B., originally got into baseball in Newmarket and grew the program from there.

He began the Junior Rookie Division and, alongside others, he founded the York-Simcoe Interlock Baseball Association. In August of 2010 he spearheaded the development of Stewart Burnett Park and was a catalyst in the merger between two organizations in 2014 now known as the Aurora-King Baseball Association.

For 30 years, Giroux had spent countless hours maintaining baseball diamonds and developing young minds.

Emotional in his speech, Giroux said he loved every minute of it.

?The building of Stewart Burnett and the process of going through that, the staff had my back. The process of going through that, for Council and the Mayor to move forward. But it wasn't something that was an easy process, I can guarantee you that? I look forward to the new Council and their commitments to sports groups. Because that's what truly makes Aurora the best home to be,? Giroux said.

?There were many nights I wasn't around. I'm sure that's why we're still married 27 years later,? he said, thanking his wife. ?She got her own programs while I was out having fun on my three-wheeler. But, there were a lot of late-night phone calls. She'd be in bed for hours. We'd have executive meetings that would have second executive meetings in the parking lot for hours [all] to try and make the sport better for the kids. And all those hours that were put in, I don't have any second thoughts. To be standing here tonight to be recognized by your Town, as a builder of your community, is an honour. I can't say how important it is to be a part of this all.?

Coverage of induction of the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame's Class of 2022 will continue next week with Colin S. ?Pop? Nisbet and Marco Di Girolamo.

By Robert Belardi