

Tigers' governor, lacrosse pioneer named to Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of '23



Pioneers and capacity builders in Canada's two national sports are among the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2023.

Announced by the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame (ASHOF) before Mayor and Council at Tuesday's General Committee, this year's honorees include golf builder Laurie Buckland, hockey player Charles Leeming, lacrosse player Frank 'Pete' Machell, and NHL player and Aurora Tigers owner Jim Thomson.

'The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame is thrilled to unveil the highly-anticipated 2023 Class of Inductees, showcasing exceptional individuals who have made significant contributions to the world of sports and brought immense pride to our community,' said the ASHOF. 'This esteemed group of honorees represents a diverse range of sports and embodies the values of excellence, dedication and sportsmanship.'

Laurie Buckland was described a 'renowned figure' in the sports community. Born in Whitchurch-Stouffville, he moved to Aurora in 1965 and immediately became involved in the world of golf.

'With an illustrious career spanning 21 years, Laurie excelled as a professional golfer, showcasing his talent and dedication to the sport,' said ASHOF of the late Buckland. 'Beyond his achievements on the golf course, Laurie made significant contributions off the fairways. He co-purchased the Aurora Tigers Junior A team, demonstrating his commitment to fostering the development of young athletes. As the director of sports for Highlands, Laurie took on the responsibility of overseeing various sports disciplines, including golf, tennis, squash, fitness, and aquatics. His mentorship and guidance impacted the lives of many aspiring athletes, leaving an enduring legacy within the community.'

Buckland was also hailed for his work with Thomas McBroom collaborating on the design and construction of King's Riding golf course in 1984, one of the many 'testaments to Laurie's visionary approach and dedication to advancing the sport of golf.'

Another owner of the Aurora Tigers, incumbent team governor Jim Thomson is being honoured both for his leadership with the Tigers and for his years on the ice in the NHL.

'Jim's illustrious career as a professional hockey player spanned across renowned leagues such as the NHL, IHL, OHL, and AHL, where he showcased his exceptional skills and dedication,' said ASHOF. 'In addition to his achievements on the ice, Jim is the current proud owner of The Aurora Tigers Junior A Team, a team that has brought joy and excitement to the local community. Furthermore, he serves as a motivational speaker at Dreams Do Come True, inspiring others with his powerful message of perseverance, respect, fair play, and courage. Jim's emphasis on these values is a testament to his character and his desire to uplift and empower individuals both on and off the ice.'

'Through his unwavering commitment and dedication to the sport and the community, Jim Thomson has left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire generations of athletes and dreamers. His contributions serve as a shining example of the profound impact that passion, hard work, and strong values can have on shaping lives.'

Kettleby native Charles Leeming made his mark in provincial hockey before bringing his passion for the game home to Aurora.

“With a lifelong connection to Aurora spanning over seven decades, he has become an integral part of the community,” said ASHOF. “Charles’ athletic prowess shines brightest on the hockey rink, where he achieved remarkable success, earning several Provincial Championships throughout his career. His sporting endeavours extended beyond hockey, as he actively participated in fastball, baseball and softball from 1957-1977, showcasing his versatility and passion for multiple sports. In 1963, Charles and his team emerged victorious as All Ontario Champions, a testament to their exceptional skills and dedication.

“His achievements and dedication serve as an inspiration to aspiring athletes, embodying the values of perseverance, sportsmanship and excellence. His remarkable journey is etched into the sporting history of Aurora, leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.”

More than 75 years after his death, Frank “Pete” Machell is being recognized for his pioneering work on the lacrosse field, having been “recognized as one of Eastern Canada’s greatest lacrosse players.”

“From 1913 to 1921, he led the Aurora Lacrosse Club to consecutive victories, securing the championship title in the Metropolitan Cup Series,” said ASHOF. “His exceptional talent as a lacrosse player continued to shine, as he consistently ranked among the top ten league scorers in 1922, 1923, 1925, 1926, and 1927, solidifying his status as a force to be reckoned with. In 1932, Frank achieved the pinnacle of success by becoming a Mann Cup Champion with the Brampton Excelsiors Senior A team. This prestigious accomplishment further solidified his position as a distinguished figure in the world of lacrosse.”

The Class of 2023 will be honoured at an Induction Dinner set for Thursday, November 2, at the Royal Venetian Mansion at 400 Industrial Parkway South.

For more on this year’s inductees, those honoured in previous years, and for this fall’s dinner, visit aurorashof.ca.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter