

Gardners are a family first in Aurora Sports Hall of Fame

By Jake Courtepatte

For the Gardners, the game of hockey is a family affair.

Drafted eighth overall by the Montreal Canadiens in the 1972 NHL Entry Draft, Dave Gardner was a staple of the game for two decades. He passed that passion on down to his son, Ryan, who was a household name in the mouths of Swiss hockey fans up until his retirement only a few seasons ago.



Photo by Karen Merk

Now, both find themselves as part of the incoming class of 2019 in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, the first father-son duo to earn the honour.

I'm really honoured to be part of the 2019 Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductees, along with my son Ryan and other inductees,? said father Dave. ?Looking forward to celebrating a great evening with everyone.?

?What a great feeling to receive a call from the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame that you are not only being inducted, but with your father,? said Ryan. ?I was totally speechless. Can't wait for the evening and meeting the other inductees. I'm thrilled.?

One could say it was in the Gardner blood to find success on the ice: Dave's father, and Ryan's grandfather, Cal, earned a pair of Stanley Cups with the Maple Leafs back in their heyday.

Dave himself is a veteran of 350 NHL Games, while Ryan's resume includes the likes of four Swiss League titles, a five-year stint with Team Canada at the Spengler Cup, as well as a World Championship silver medal.

Ryan ended his famed Swiss career, where he managed to play over 1,200 games, after the 2014-15 season while playing with SC Bern. These days, he can be found helping the younger generation reach his level of success, operating as a skating coach with The Hockey Club in Aurora.

Interestingly enough, the father and son duo took entirely different paths to making hockey their careers: Dave made massive splashes at the junior level while skating with the Toronto Marlboros, part of an offensive-heavy lineup that also featured the likes of Mike Murphy and Steve Shutt.

Ryan went undrafted in the NHL after an average junior career, instead choosing to carve his path in European hockey, after spending time in Switzerland when his father played there in his twilight seasons.

So engrained he became in the Swiss culture, he suited up in the red and white of the Swiss national team for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, something that he called ?a great honour.?

As for Dave, he has stepped on Russian soil just once: suiting up in the red and white of Team Canada in the 1979 Izvestia Tournament.

The Gardners are two of three athletes inducted into this year's Aurora Sports Hall of Fame class, alongside one member each into the ?Coach? and ?Builder? categories.

Joining the Gardners are star gymnast Travis Romagnoli in the athlete category, as well as Ducks Swimming founder Reg Chappell in the coaching category, and longtime PGA volunteer Jim Clark as a builder.

The Auroran will next highlight the career of Mr. Clark.

Held annually at St. Andrew's College, the ASHoF Induction dinner is one of the most spectacular nights of the year in the Aurora sports community. This year's dinner will be held on November 7, and more information can be found at www.aurorashof.ca.