

Hall of Fame inductee Thompson committed 'life-long' to the pool

By Jake Courtepatte

A fifteen-year break from the pool was not enough to stop Dan Thompson from shattering records.

The former national swim team captain, and eleven-year Aurora resident, has put the Aurora Master Ducks Swim Club on the map after racing to numerous records at the Masters world and Canadian levels.

'(Master Ducks founder) Nancy Black cornered me in Longo's one day,' said Mr. Thompson. 'It's hard to say no to Nancy! I hadn't swam for almost fifteen years.'

Mr. Thompson is the second of four inductees into this year's Aurora Sports Hall of Fame class to be highlighted by The Auroran, all admitted under the 'Athlete' category.

Born in the summer of 1956, Mr. Thompson competed in butterfly events around the country and internationally throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, winning two silver medals at the 1979 Pan Am Games in Puerto Rico.

His strong performance earned him the captaincy of the national swim team program, a title he held for three years leading to the opportunity to represent Canada at the 1980 Summer Olympics.

He was prevented from participating due to the international boycott of the Moscow Games.

Upon his move to Aurora in 2006, despite leaving the pool behind many years before, Mr. Thompson's countless experience at the Pan Am Games, Commonwealth Games, and World Student Games helped him make an immediate impact with the Master Ducks.

First entering the record books in 2009, Mr. Thompson earned both the Canadian and World records in the short course 50-metre fly in the 50 - 54 age level. His success translated into a pair of records at the 55 - 59 level four years later, once again toppling the 50-metre fly time as well as the 100-metre fly.

In March of this year, he continued his dominance of the short course by setting a new record for ages 60 - 64 in the 50-metre fly. Two of his long course records also remain standing today.

Mr. Thompson's long list of accomplishments don't end in the pool: he also has served as the CEO of Skate Canada, as well as a Board member of both the Canadian Amateur Swimming Association and the Canadian Olympic Association.

As for the future of swimming in Aurora, Mr. Thompson sees the Ducks program continuing to grow at a rapid pace: and a need for the available facilities to match it.

'I see the need for a 50-metre pool,' said Mr. Thompson. 'It's the sign of a world-class community and that's Aurora! The Ducks program will continue to grow as long as we can get pool time, and that's why it's so important that all stakeholders get more water space.'

And Mr. Thompson sees himself as one of those stakeholders for a long, long time.

'My commitment to swimming is life-long. It's a great sport: great people who are leaders in the Canadian sport community at all levels.'

'I'm going to be that 90-year old guy who loves to swim and feels blessed to be part of this great community!'

Mr. Thompson has been inducted to the ASHoF alongside Mike Palmateer, a prolific goaltender for the Toronto Maple Leafs, William Fleury, a pioneer in the Canadian cricket community, and Bob Wall, who was the first captain of the Los Angeles Kings in 1967.

'Aurora is a fabulous place to live,' said Mr. Thompson. 'I feel fortunate to live in a community that encourages active healthy living no matter what your age. I hope my story encourages all Aurorans to participate in sport and recreation to experience the joy of sport for life.'

The Auroran will highlight the careers of Mr. Palmateer and Mr. Wall over the next few weeks.

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 8, and more information can be found at www.aurorashof.ca.