

Leafs legend Mike Palmateer gets call to Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



By Jake Courtepatte

When Mike Palmateer once more donned the blue and white at the 2016 Centennial Classic Alumni game, he brought the same style of play that made him a fan favourite in his years with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Wearing the exact same equipment he wore in his final NHL game in 1984, the 62-year old was faced with a penalty shot from Detroit Red Wings alumnus Tomas Holmstrom, and made an awkward-yet-incredible diving save to keep the game scoreless. With an aching back and knees that plagued him throughout his professional career, he left the ice immediately afterwards, but to cheers from old and new fans alike.

"It's certainly a save I've made a few times in my life," said Mr. Palmateer. "You're just trying to read him. I stayed with him, which is pretty good because he made a move on me pretty quick. If he goes upstairs on me it's in but it's all about the second effort. It was kind of nice to go out like that."

"It's funny how things feel natural?you think the game well but you don't move like you think you can."

Mr. Palmateer, who has lived in Aurora for the past thirty-or-so years and once owned the Jersey Joe's restaurant on Yonge Street, made a career out of haphazard saves.

His time with the Leafs is highlighted by sprawling saves, often making an ordinary save look like something off of the highlight reel.

Born in Toronto, he was drafted by his hometown team with the 85th pick in the 1974 NHL Amateur Draft, spending the next three

seasons as the club's starting goaltender after helping the Marlies to the Memorial Cup championship.

Plagued by bad knees, an injury-prone season in 1979-80 saw Palmateer traded to the Washington Capitals, before finishing his career as a Leafs once again in 1984.

The 58th-ranked Leaf of all time moved his family to Aurora upon retirement, turning to real estate and business ventures with his popular restaurant.

"I am very pleased and honoured to learn of my induction into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame," said Mr. Palmateer. "I have many terrific memories of my professional hockey career but I deeply value all the wonderful memories and experiences spanning over 30 years of living and working in Aurora."

Mr. Palmateer is one of four inductees into this year's Aurora Sports Hall of Fame class, all inducted under the "Athletes" category. Mr. Palmateer has been inducted to the ASHoF alongside Dan Thompson, a record-breaking swimmer, William Fleury, a pioneer in the Canadian cricket community, and Bob Wall, who was the first captain of the Los Angeles Kings in 1967.

"I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to raise my family in such a remarkable place," said Mr. Palmateer. "Thank you for this honour from the town that will always be home to me, my wife Lee and our daughters Courtney and Tess."

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

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.