

Palmateer, Wall, Thompson named to Sports Hall of Fame

By Brock Weir

Homegrown heroes on the ice, in the pool, and even on the cricket pitch are set to be inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame as the Class of 2017.

Hockey stars Mike Palmateer and Bob Wall, along with gold medal-winning swimmer Dan Thompson and cricket pioneer William Fleury were announced as the latest installment of Honoured Members at this week's Council meeting on Tuesday night.

Former Toronto Maple Leaf Mike Palmateer joins the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in the 'Athlete' Category.

Born in Toronto, Mike joined the Toronto Marlboros at the age of 12, serving as goalie until they brought home the Memorial Cup Championship in the 1974/75 season.

A short time later, he made his NHL debut, joining the Toronto Maple Leafs for the 1976/77 season where, in the following year, he posted 34 wins with five shutouts in 63 games, becoming key in the Leafs' making the final four in the quest for the Stanley Cup. In all, he played in 365 NHL games before retiring to Aurora, becoming active locally in coaching and business.

'I am very pleased and honoured to learn of my induction into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame,' says 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.'

Oak Ridges-native Bob Wall joins Palmateer in the 'Athlete' category.



Dan ThompsonWall got his hockey start in Aurora, playing with the Aurora Bantams (All-Ontario Champions) and Aurora Midgets between 1957 and 1959.

At 16, he was drafted to play with the Hamilton Red Wings Junior A Team and was awarded Rookie of the Year. While still with the Red Wings, the team won the Memorial Cup Championships in 1962. Following the 1967 NHL expansion, Wall was drafted to the newly-minted Los Angeles Kings where he served as the team's inaugural Captain. From there, he played for the Edmonton Oilers from 1972-1973, the San Diego Mariners from 1975-1976 before retiring to Aurora in 1977 where he coached local hockey teams through 1981.

'My childhood dream was to play in the NHL,' says Wall. 'I was given the chance to play hockey in Aurora and that is where I was discovered, so to be in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame is a fantastic honour.'

Off the ice, the Class of 2017 is honouring swimmer Dan Thompson, also in the 'Athlete' category.

Born in East York in 1956, the Aurora resident mastered butterfly events in the 1970s and 80s, garnering numerous medals, including gold, competing in the World Student Championships, the Pan Am Games, and the Commonwealth Games.

In 1980, he became a Canadian Olympic hopeful, set to compete in the water at that year's Summer Olympics and serving as Captain for the Canadian Olympic Team, but that dream was cut short following the international boycott of the Moscow games.

A Masters swimmer, Thompson became a member of the Aurora Master Ducks Swim Club and set numerous records in the pool, including Short Course and Long Course individual and relay at both the Masters and Canadian levels.

A former CEO of Skate Canada, he has served as a Board Member of the Canadian Amateur Swimming Association and as an athletes' representative on the Board of the Canadian Olympic Association.

All three men have fostered up and coming Aurora athletes in their retirement, paving the way for athletes making their marks in the

pool and on rinks around the world who, in turn, are paving the way for the hockey and swimming stars of tomorrow.

"It is nice to be recognized in your own community for accomplishments that you've had along the way," said Mr. Thompson. "I have had a very active high performance career in swimming but I have also continued to be involved in the sport not only from a leadership point of view, but also as a master swimmer.

"For me, it has been a life of learning and I just think sport can contribute in so many ways to having balanced, healthy, active lives."

Although cricket hasn't enjoyed as enduring popularity in Canada as hockey and swimming, however, the same can also be said of William Fleury, who is being honoured posthumously for his contributions to cricket.

Also being honoured in the "Athlete" category, Fleury was born to a prominent Aurora family in 1865 and quickly became a natural on the cricket pitch both here at home and in Newmarket. By 1883, Fleury was at Upper Canada College, becoming an emerging star in what was, at the time, considered the "National Sport" in the young nation.

"From 1883-1887, he played for various teams until the age of 22 when, as a left-handed batsman, he was chosen to represent Canada as a member of the Gentlemen of Canada touring the US, Ireland and England," say ASHOF organizers. "He continued to play cricket locally and internationally as a member of the Gentlemen of Canada, Toronto Zingari, until 1895."

Between 1907 and 1908, Fleury both coached and played with the Canadian Zingari, taking on British teams, still fully immersed in the sport at the age of 45."

Fleury died in 1946.

Looking over the slate of 2017, ASHOF's Nancy Black says that while Aurora has always been a hockey town, the inductees show multiple facets of sport in our community. Each of their stories are unique and different and, this time around, with swimming and cricket, two new sports will be part of Hall of Fame.

The four members of the Class of 2017 will be inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame at a special dinner at St. Andrew's College on November 8, once again hosted by TSN's James Duthie. Tickets are available online at www.aurorashof.ca.