

Recognition coming from all directions as Steenhorst joins Aurora Sport Hall of Fame

By Jake Courtepatte

Ben Steenhorst's soccer career began in 1958, joining the provincial team for seven years.

Playing on the team as one of the older and more experienced players, Steenhorst was offered the opportunity to transition into a coaching role.

But, he says that after a two-goal performance in the next game, management changed their tone.

"After that, they figured they would keep me around," joked Steenhorst.

Over the last six decades, Steenhorst has learned to juggle both athletic and managerial roles. He was one of the building blocks of the Aurora Youth Soccer Association.

Former Aurora Mayor John West approached Steenhorst with the idea to create the club, using a piece of land that is now the Aurora Leisure Complex.

They funded the Youth Soccer Club with money from bingo games hosted. Steenhorst recalls that one corner of the field was quite unbalanced, sloping about three metres. With a lack of funds to fix the problem, Steenhorst and his brother convinced a construction company working on a subdivision across the street on Industrial Parkway to level the ground for the field.

"We didn't have much money for it at all," said Steenhorst. "We had to make due."

Along with holding the title of President of the AYSC, Steenhorst also served as a director of Senior Soccer York Region, a manager for the Ontario Soccer Association, as well as a senior member in a number of other groups and organizations.

Not one to sit idly by, Steenhorst was playing soccer regularly until the age of 72.

Despite his long tenure as a leader in Aurora minor sports, Steenhorst says he was "shocked" to hear he had been chosen for the Hall of Fame.

"It's a good thing I was sitting down!" said Steenhorst.

On top of that, he is also being nominated into the York Region Soccer Association's Hall of Fame later this month.

Now 77 years old, he says he's "not as mobile as he used to be". But just last year, he was involved in a game at BMO Field in Toronto, with the West Rouge Blues "Oldtimer Soccer Club".

The club has also taken Steenhorst to all corners of the globe, playing tournaments and exhibitions along the way.

"We used to travel to Thailand and compete in an Oldtimers tournament there," said Steenhorst. "People would come from all over the world?Germany, England, United States?we'd make stops in the Philippines, Honk Kong, Bali?it was quite an experience."

"We've been here, there, and everywhere. Soccer's been good to me that way."

These days, Steenhorst might pop his head in at the AYSC offices a couple times a week, or sit in on a board meeting. His commitment to youth soccer remains unwavering.

"I'm glad the club's doing well. They're doing a good job there."