

Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2021 welcomed by Council

They hit the ice and the grass, built local sports from the ground up, and shared athletic success stories on our airwaves ? and now they are set to be inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame as the Class of 2021.

Inductees in the Athlete category are NHL star Steve Vickers and Canadian tennis champ Brendan Macken and, in the Builder/Contributor category, Lois Thompson of the Aurora Diggers softball team and broadcaster Colin Graham.

?Colin had many, many years of involvement with the Aurora Minor Hockey Association, very well-known in that particular sport,? said Stephen Forsey of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame. ?In fact, the Town in 1985 awarded him what was then the Bob Harman Memorial Award for Sports Involvement, a very gracious recipient of that and certainly lots of contributions. He served for a time as the President of the Aurora Minor Lacrosse Association in 1983 to 1991 and many of you will know that he hosted the Aurora Sports Beat television show with honoured member Lowell McClenny for 25 years, certainly a well-known face in the community.?

Thompson, he said, has a name that is synonymous with softball in the community, and was instrumental in the development of the club's house league program.

?She has contributed a lot and she has done everything in that sport from organizing fields and permits and getting umpires and referees and just arranging finances,? said Forsey. ?She was a terrific and continues to be a terrific supporter of that sport. She has also served as a Board member on the Provincial Women's Softball Association for more than 25 years. [The House League development] allowed the sport in the Town to grow quite a bit. Her contributions as a sporting volunteer were recognized by the last administration for Town Council and they bestowed on her a 40-year volunteer recognition award. That is significant and we are pleased to welcome Lois Thompson as an Aurora Sport Hall of Fame inductee.?

Another long-time Aurora resident, Steve Vickers began his 10-year NHL career with the New York Rangers and stayed with the team for a decade.

?Those of you who follow hockey as I do, know that is quite an anomaly to have all of your career in one spot,? said Forsey. ?He was such a good player that in the 1972 ? 73 season, he won the NHL Rookie of the Year, which is the Calder Memorial Trophy. An unknown fact about Steve's playing in the NHL, in 1972, he was actually the first rookie to score a hat trick in two consecutive games and that is quite unusual. An excellent player, certainly played on some very good lines and some good teams. He was actually a two-time participant in the NHL all-star games.?

In the immediate post-war years, the eyes of many tennis fans across the country were on the Brendan Macken, who died last March in his 97th year, as he began his storied career in tennis ? one which took him around the world ? and back to Aurora.

?Brendan was a long-time resident of Aurora as well, owned a business here in the early years and then later moved his family,? said Forsey. ?In 1950, he was the Canadian Open Men's Singles Champion and then he also was part of the doubles team and did very well in that regard, but he was also the top-ranked singles player in Canada in the years 1946, 48, and 52. His contributions to the sport of tennis are well-known and he was inducted into the Canadian Tennis Hall of Fame in 1981.?

The inductees were applauded by Council members, particularly Councillor Wendy Gaertner who added a tidbit on Thompson: ?Lois conducted bingos at our local bingo hall to support the Diggers and I can tell you that is not an easy job. I don't know when she had any free time at all and I thank her.?

The Class of 2021 will be inducted into the Hall of Fame at a formal dinner set for November 18 at the Royal Venetian on Industrial Parkway South and tickets will be on sale soon.

?Congratulations to all the inductees,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas. ?I am looking forward to November ? I know everyone is ? and

maybe the most important part has been skipped over: the fact we're looking at having an in-person dinner and that is very, very exciting. I think the word needs to get out there and I think everyone in this Town will be very excited to have an in-person event. Obviously, we have our fingers crossed, we're all hoping that's exactly where we're going to be. I am confident we will be and it is going to be a great, fun evening.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter