

Bain, Doolittle land in Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



By Jake Courtepatte

Connections past and present marked the inductions of both basketball coach Robert Bain and late ex-NHL linesman Loring Doolittle into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, made official at the annual induction dinner last week.

Passionate about both hockey and his hometown, where his legacy is forever cemented in Loring Doolittle Court, friends and family were given the opportunity to share the legacy behind the name with the hundreds of guests in attendance.

An emotional Claire Doolittle took to the stand to remember his late older brother, along with Loring's daughter, Cathy.

"When I was growing up, Loring was my idol," said Claire. "Every kid in Aurora watched (CBC's) Hockey Night in Canada. Foster Hewitt would come on, and Loring had the honour of working alongside everybody involved."

He recounted Loring's relationship with fellow linesman George Hayes, the first official to work one thousand games in the NHL.

"Foster would always start his broadcast by saying 'these teams don't like each other, you know. Doolittle and Hayes are gonna be busy.'"

Standing on the podium beside the portraits of new and former Hall of Fame inductees, Claire was driven to tell a story when he saw the face of ex-NHLer Bob Wall, an inductee to the 2017 class.

"Bob and I went to high school together in Aurora," recalled Claire.

When Loring's career took him to the west coast after the NHL's expansion into California, he and Mr. Wall met up once again when Mr. Wall was playing with the Los Angeles Kings.

"The story I got from my brother was, he came up and nudged Bob Wall and he said 'any crap from you tonight and you're going back to the bush league in Lake Wilcox,'" said Claire, referring to the Oak Ridges community.

With both mom and dad, and five other siblings, watching that game in the famed Los Angeles Forum, Claire said the hometown connection was something special.

"It was the opening game for the LA Kings, and I thought about it?there are ten players on the ice and three officials?two of them were from Aurora."

Above all, Claire said he looked up to his older brother for his leadership.

"Whenever he'd come back to town, he'd go to public speaking events, at churches, banquets, minor hockey, everything."

For Mr. Bain, the hometown connection also runs deep in his blood. It was former head chair of Sport Aurora that certified his coaching license through the National Certified Coaching Program (NCCP).

"As a matter of fact, he certified virtually all the coaches at York University. What that program has done for coaching in Canada is insurmountable."

"There is now a leg to stand on for coaches with that program, and nights and honours like this are proof."

Yet despite almost forty years of coaching including multiple titles with the Yeomen, Mr. Bain said he was "shocked" to be standing at the podium.

"It's a tremendous honour, I actually didn't believe it when I got the phone call," said Mr. Bain. "I thought it was a joke. My players over the years have played several pranks on me, and I'm the kind of guy who always gets caught."

Yet Mr. Bain said it was exactly his relationship with his players that have helped him earn his second hall of fame induction. ?I can't thank my players enough, I'm very, very proud of my players,? said Mr. Bain. ?I recruited on three things?you had to get into York, you had to be skillful, and last but not least, I tried to recruit players with good character.?

He also made sure to thank his family in attendance, including his wife Linda, who spent many years volunteering with the York Yeomen.

?She did everything at York for a while, she was the video person, she did timing and scoring, and I helped her run the high school tournament at Christmas when we had one.?

Lastly, he thanked and gave praise to not only the volunteer staff and students that have assisted him over the years, but the volunteers that helped put together the sixth annual induction dinner.

?I had no idea what this event was about. What an incredible evening. My wife and I are shocked at the grandeur of the whole event?I'm extremely impressed by the quality of the people inducted before me.

?I watched Dave Morland play at the Canadian Open, when I worked as a statistician?to be inducted with someone as famous as that?wow.?

Mr. Doolittle and Mr. Bain join triathlete Paolina Allan and pro golfer David Morland IV as this year's class of inductees into the Hall.