

Canadian tennis pioneer lands in Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



By Jake Courtepatte

As a major force in Canadian tennis for over forty years, Ken Sinclair lands himself in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame as one of two inductees in the 'Builders' category.

He joins Alan Dean, a champion for the disabled athlete, and volleyball star Mark Heese as the organization's class of 2015.

Mr. Sinclair was instrumental in the development of the Timberlane Tennis and Country Club, a prestigious club that opened its doors in 1988 on Vandorf Sideroad. During his travels abroad as a tennis star, he was quite impressed by a certain club he visited in Austria, and decided to incorporate many of its features into Timberlane.

'It was the separation in the layout of the courts, the reception and treatment of members - including the way the tennis director ensured that members had court time and people to play with, the niceties of the interior, the dining room used by corporate members, and generally the feeling of the space that impressed me,' said Mr. Sinclair when Timberlane first opened its doors.

He and his wife Betty designed the clubhouse themselves, on 23 acres and featuring a patio that fully wraps around the octagonal clubhouse.

'We wanted a space that would stand out from other clubs,' said Betty.

It soon became the venue for a number of high-profile tournaments, including the Gordon Trophy match for players over the age of 45 against competitors from the United States, and the 1990 Von Cramm Cup, a world tennis championship for men over 60. Betty said they were 'very proud' of the progress with the club.

It was also in 1990 that the club ventured into philanthropic work, when the first annual Timberlane Charity Classic was held to raise funds for Aurora's van for the disabled. Almost \$28,000 was raised that first year, and continued annually for twelve years raising a staggering \$270,000 for the Town of Aurora.

By the time Timberlane became a reality, Mr. Sinclair had already built himself quite a reputation in the tennis community. As the newly-crowned director of special events for Tennis Canada, he was put in charge of finding a new major sponsor in 1978. With a goal of turning the Canadian Open into a world-class tennis event, a deal fell into his lap when he competed in the Canadian Seniors Championship and defeated Paul Pare, Chairman of Imperial Tobacco.

Pare invested half a million dollars into the tournament in the first year of the sponsorship, launching Canadian tennis to the world stage.

Mr. Sinclair held that position of chairman of the Canadian Open until 1983, and was a major player in the building of the first tennis facility on York University's campus in the 1970s.

?It changed the Canadian Open,? said Betty. ?It went from a tournament mostly played by Canadian players to one that attracts players from all over the world.?

Prior to building Timberlane, Mr. Sinclair founded the highly-successful All-Canadian Academy in London, vaulting him into the Canadian Tennis Hall of Fame as a builder in 1996. His playing partner of many years, Lorne Main, has worked as a tennis pro at both locations.

The two hold the record for most men's doubles titles.

Betty said Ken is 'very happy' with his second induction into a Hall of Fame.

?It's quite an honour for him, it means a lot.?

The induction dinner, an annual event that attracts a large portion of the sporting community in Aurora, is set for November at the new location of St. Andrew's College.