

Decades on the rink lead Alex Ansell to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



Ansell received his Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal from Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown in November 2012)

By Jeff Doner

For over 30 years, Alex Ansell has played a major part in growing and promoting the sport of hockey for all ages in Aurora.

For his tireless work, effort and dedication, Ansell was recently named as one of six inductees into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame (ASHoF) as a builder/contributor.

"I'm honoured and very humbled by it, because when you do these things, you don't do it for recognition or anything, you do it because you want to and you enjoy it," he said. "That's what it's all about."

Ansell's hockey story in Aurora goes back to 1975 when he and a friend first started the Aurora Oldtimers Hockey League as a member and player.

Around the same time, Ansell took over as secretary-treasurer of the York Oldtimers League, a position he held for over 30 years.

As the years went on, Ansell facilitated the growth of the Aurora Oldtimers League from six to 30 teams and over 500 players.

The League has since split up into four divisions to offer something for everyone: 40 plus, 50 plus, 60 plus and 70 plus.

"At first we only had the over-35 division and nobody ever thought we would end up with an over 50, 60 or 70," he said. "We tried to grow with the times, the ages and there were more guys wanting to play from the early ages as well. It has come a long way and I guess it has helped a lot of guys to keep them in shape."

"They haven't actually got to the over- 80's yet, that's not far away though. I have no doubt. There's a lot of guys right now that are 75-plus and playing."

At 78 himself, Ansell no longer plays on the ice, but is still heavily involved in the game that he has been a part of his whole life.

"I played all the way up into college," he said. "Not at the university level, but until I graduated from college and when my son came along and started playing over 10 years after I graduated, I got back into hockey and I just continued on from there."

A lot of his most recent work has come through the Optimist Club of Aurora, where he has been a charter member for 29 years, and has contributed to a number of youth oriented sports programs. He said he is now getting to the point where he is seeing a lot of kids who have come up through the minor leagues and now playing for the Oldtimers.

For the past 18 years, he has been coordinator of the Optimist Skills Competition of the Aurora Minor Hockey Showcase Tournament, and he has been a coordinator and organizer and player for teams in the Canadian Senior Games.

His accomplishments and contributions have also won him recognition and awards with other groups.

In 2009, he was inducted into the Canadian Adult Recreational Hockey Association Hall of Fame as a builder, he was awarded the Bob Harmon Memorial Award from the Town of Aurora, he was a recipient of the Sport Aurora Volunteer Recognition Award, and was awarded with a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2011.

Ansell also encouraged others to get involved and see what they can do to help out in their community.

?I think it's important, but people work in many different venues,? he said. ?I think that was shown at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in that there are people from all fields of volunteerism and that I think is pretty significant.?

As for being inducted into the ASHoF, Ansell said he appreciates being recognized, but that all the hard work is not about the awards.

?I was surprised, but I knew that the nomination had gone in. I know basically all the people that supported it, but certainly it's never something that you expect.?