

Sports Hall of Fame is a family affair for Stemmler



By Jake Courtepatte

This November, the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame will be inducting a second Stemmler into its hallowed halls.

Karen Stemmler, Olympic downhill skier, will join her brother Brian, a member of the 2013 class of inductees.

"I was completely thrilled and honoured when I received the news about being inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame," said Stemmler, "with not only my amazing brother, but so many other talented athletes from Aurora."

Stemmler is this year's lone inductee into the Athlete category of the Hall. Former Maple Leafs bench boss Mike Murphy, Chicago Blackhawks assistant coach Mike Kitchen, and Sheldon Galbraith, a legendary figure skating coach, were all inducted into the Coaches.

Like her brother, Stemmler is a downhill specialist, her career highlight coming in 1984 when she competed at the Olympic Games in Sarajevo. She won the Junior Canadian Ski Championships at the age of 17 in Lake Louise, Alberta, earning a handful of top five finishes on the World Cup Downhill circuit.

Stemmler said she was 'thrilled, honoured and humbled' upon hearing of her induction.

'I know that Brian was among the first group and I've always been proud of my little brother's accomplishments. To join him is amazing - it warms our hearts to know we're from such a great town.'

The Stemmler's history in York Region is a long one: in Karen's youth, the family moved from King City to Kettleby, where she attended Aurora High School. She bought her first house in Aurora at 25, before moving to Toronto after getting married four years later.

Though Stemmler retired from professional skiing in 1988, she maintains a presence in the skiing community through camps and events across North America with her former teammate, Lisa Savijarvi. The pair maintained the business on a full-time basis throughout the next two decades, but have slowed down since having kids.

That is not to say Stemmler has left the sport: all three of her kids ski out of their home club of Georgian Peaks in Collingwood.

We have an old log ski chalet at the bottom of the hill and our three children are ski racing in the same programs that Brian and I did as children with our parents,' said Stemmler. 'The only difference is that I'm trying to make sure my children won't become 'professional' ski racers. I know the danger, the traumatic injuries that can happen with the sport. Let's just say that I'm not encouraging a higher level, but it's fun to see our children competing for fun in what I believe is the best family sport ever!'

Stemmler said she is 'really looking forward' to this year's induction dinner, once again emceed by Aurora's James Duthie of broadcasting fame.

Next week, The Auroran will highlight Galbraith's path into the Hall.

Held annually at St. Andrew's College, the ASHoF Induction dinner is one of the most spectacular nights of the year in the Aurora sports community. This year's dinner will be held on November 2.

More information can be found at www.aurorashof.ca.