

Trailblazers, leaders among the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2022

Trailblazers in the pool, on the diamond, on the pitch, and on the links are among the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2022.

Included this year are champion swimmer Janice Jones (Shepp), rugby player Marco Di Girolamo, baseball advocate David Giroux, and, posthumously, Colin Nisbet, founder of the Highlands Golf & Country Club.

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's (ASHOF) Class of 2022 was announced at the June 7 Council meeting, where they were heralded as pioneers, trailblazers and builders in their respective fields.

The first inductee to be announced was Di Girolamo who was hailed as "among the elite players in rugby across the globe.

He first took up the sport at the age of 15 and has represented Canada 21 times, including at the 2003 Rugby World Cup, the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, and the World Games in Japan.

He has been a member of the Aurora Barbarians rugby club since 1993, where he was named Player of the Year 10 times, leading the club to five straight league championship titles and three Provincial cups.

As President of the Aurora Minor Baseball Association (now known as the Aurora King Baseball Association, or AKBA), David Giroux was recognized as a Builder in the local baseball community.

The ASHOF said the Association tripled in size under his leadership and raised thousands upon thousands of dollars to keep costs low for participants. He was also recognized as one of the founding members of the York Simcoe Interlock Baseball Association and as one of the founders of Sport Aurora when it was established in 2005.

"With his diligence, knowledge and drive, Dave worked together with the Town of Aurora staff to establish, plan, and build a second full sized diamond and finally opening the Stewart Burnett Diamond in August 2010," said the ASHOF. "Dave took Stewart Burnett as 'his baby' devoting many evenings and weekends dragging the diamond, repairing the pitching mound, or filling in and patching the base lines and home plate."

His work has gone beyond the traditional diamond fare, founding BlastBall to encourage kids as young as five to enjoy healthy activity.

Also inducted in the Athlete category is swimmer Janice Jones (nee Shepp) who holds several swimming records.

She began her athletic career in 1958, placing second in the 100-metre Breaststroke at the Summer Nationals and placed Third in the Commonwealth Trials Swim-Off.

She finished the decade the following year by setting a record in the same category at the Pan American Trials in Brantford and was awarded a Silver Medal at the Pan American Games.

In 1991, she began her work as a local sports builder, joining Masters Swimming, where she has continued to set records and collect medals.

"Jan has lived in Aurora since 1973 and lends her experience and voice regarding state-of-the-art aquatic facilities in our community," said the ASHOF.

Rounding out the Class of 2022 is Colin Nisbet, who is being inducted posthumously into the Aurora Hall of Fame as a Builder in the field of golf.

At the age of 63, Nisbet, who counted greenhouses as his primary business, started a new chapter purchasing the neglected Aurora Golf Course and transforming it into the Highlands Golf and Country Club.

The club expanded under his leadership in 1952, doubling the size of the nine-hole course.

After selling Highlands in 1956, he set his sights eastward with a series of smaller courses.

Colin S. 'Pop' Nisbet's passion for golf and his decision to purchase the initial golf course forever changed the face of golf in the Town of Aurora.

The Class of 2022 will formally enter the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's annual induction dinner this fall.

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