

SPORTS & LEISURE

Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame to honour McCauley

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Staff Writer

Although likely known more for his career as a National Hockey League official, the late John (Gus) McCauley will be one of nine new inductees into the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame this weekend in New Westminster, B.C.

The Georgetown resident enters the Hall in the veterans' category, in acknowledgement of his combined box lacrosse accomplishments on and off the floor, two decades after his passing at the age of 44.

His youngest son, Blaine, will be on hand for the ceremony Saturday evening, along with Brampton's Dean McLeod, who served as general manager for the senior Excelsiors' team that won the 1980 Mann Cup with the charismatic McCauley as head coach.

McLeod recalled trying to persuade McCauley to take over the slumping Excelsiors midway through that 1980 campaign, and after finally succeeding, the team just squeaked into the post-season with a 4-16 record.

Upset best-of-7 series victories over Peterborough and Brooklin were followed up by a five-game triumph against the visiting New Westminster Salmonbellies to clinch Brampton's first Mann Cup in nearly a half-century, touching off a rousing celebration.

"I'll never forget the ride on the fire truck around Brampton afterward and how Gus made sure to have the kids around to experience what winning a championship is all about," said McLeod.

"Accomplishing something like that with your best buddies was special. That's the effect that Gus had. When I run into people from Brooklin and Peterborough, they insist it was a fluke that we won, but the players really wanted to play for John and I doubt there's another Mann Cup winner that's done it with a record less than .500."

Joining McCauley in the 2010 class of Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame inductees is Excelsiors' goalie Barry Maruk, who was MVP for the 1980 Mann Cup champs.

'Gus' began playing with Brampton Minor Lacrosse at the age of four and



Georgetown's John (Gus) McCauley poses with the Mann Cup in 1980 after he coached the Brampton Excelsiors to the national lacrosse championship. (Below) McCauley as a player for the Excels in the mid-1960s. Submitted photos

as a 14-year-old, was an integral part of the Jr. A team that won the 1959 Canadian championship, the first of his three Minto Cups.

In 1963, Oshawa Green Gaels' coach Jim Bishop wanted to add McCauley to the roster for a run at the Minto as a late-season pickup—against the wishes of his players.

"Bishop told his players that they wouldn't win it without Gus and that was the end of the debate," added the 65-year-old McLeod, who shares the same birthday with McCauley.

"Sure enough, the Gaels won the first of seven straight Minto Cup championships and Gus was outstanding, providing experience and leadership to a very young team."

Although an affable sort with a sharp sense of humour, Gus's toughness

was legendary.

During a Jr. A lacrosse game in Alderwood in 1962, McCauley was in the process of scoring on one of his trademark overhand bounce shots on the power play when future NHLer Ken Hodge delivered a vicious slash that knocked out seven of the Excelsior star's teeth in what McLeod says is one of the most violent acts he's ever seen in lacrosse.

"Hodge got a five-minute penalty and Gus refused to go to the hospital. Guys were picking up his teeth off the floor," the longtime GM said.

"It happened in the first period, so who comes out at the start of the second period with his mouth full of cotton? He played the final 40 minutes and went to the hospital later on to have the roots ripped out. There was very little that bothered him and he always worried

about everyone else before himself."

In his three years with the Brampton Major Excelsiors from 1966-68, McCauley scored an incredible 321 goals and 282 assists in 139 regular season and playoff games.

He was a star high school football player at Central Peel in Brampton and an NHL goaltending prospect who, as a peewee, often practised with the Jr. B squad. But knee injuries dashed McCauley's big-league aspirations as a player, although he did live up to his promise of making it to the NHL—albeit as a well-respected referee who officiated over 500 games from 1970-81.

In 1978, he was named defensive coach for the Canadian men's field lacrosse team for the world championships in England, despite having no experience with the outdoor game.

Canada was throttled 28-4 by the U.S. in the preliminary round, forcing McCauley to change his strategy, telling his players that "to win they had to intimidate the U.S. by using a few box lacrosse tactics, a good slash here and there," McLeod said.

The Canucks defeated the Americans 17-16 in a thrilling overtime contest to claim the world field crown, which has become known as "The Miracle in the Mud."

McCauley's Excelsiors lost in the 1981 Mann Cup to New Westminster in his fourth and final appearance in the Major national championships, although he did guide the 1983 Brampton peewees to another Canadian title.

He ascended to the position of NHL Director of Officiating in 1986 until his sudden death in June of 1989 following complications from gall bladder surgery.

His number 8 jersey was permanently retired by all three Excelsior OLA clubs after his death and an annual youth tournament in his name has been held in June in Brampton for the past 18 years.

His wife Irene, a longtime Catholic board school trustee, died in 2007.

Oldest son Wes has also become an NHL referee, while Blaine was head coach of the Halton Hills Jr. B Bulldogs' team that won the Founders Cup Canadian championship this past August. Nephew Brent is the referee-in-chief for the Canadian Lacrosse Association.





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