

# SPORTS & LEISURE

## Q and A with Fan 590 broadcaster Dan Dunleavy

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

That voice you'll hear on the radio calling play-by-play during the upcoming World Junior Hockey Championships in Buffalo got its start in the Acton studio of the local community TV channel some 30 years ago.

Dan Dunleavy, a Georgetown District High School graduate, has been on air in many capacities for the Fan Radio Network for the past 19 years and is likely the best utility player in Canadian sportscasting, with hockey, soccer, lacrosse, Summer and Winter Olympics, curling, skiing and daily news duties on his resume.

The 45-year-old Burlington resident rises at 3:15 a.m. to be the news anchor of the Fan's new *Andrew Krystal in the Morning* show, also sometimes engaging the oft-controversial Krystal in on-air banter.

In the past year alone, Dunleavy called his first NHL game in California, was the ubiquitous host of the Fan's 2010 Winter Olympics coverage, while stepping in as a last-minute replacement to do play by play of the women's hockey gold medal game and the men's bronze matchup.

He can also be found on Rogers community TV as play-by-play man for the OHL's Mississauga St. Michael's Majors.

A Niagara College broadcast graduate, Dunleavy played Jr. B soccer in Georgetown with the Falcons and has become the radio voice of Toronto FC as well after many years with Toronto Rock lacrosse.

During a rare week off from the airwaves, Dunleavy recently dropped by *The Independent & Free Press* office for a chat.

**IFP: Are you the busiest sports broadcaster in the GTA?**

**DD:** I don't know if I'm busier than (fellow Fan 590 on-air host) Roger Lajoie, but I'm busy. My thing's the play by play and I constantly want to get better at it. Every time I get a chance to do play-by-play, I told my program director at the Fan (Don Kollins) that I'd call an egg rolling down a hill. I'll do it and try to make it sound exciting. Some people might say you're over the top, but it doesn't matter. You are who you are.

**IFP: With the World Juniors approaching, is this your favourite time of the year, and not necessarily because it's the Christmas holidays?**



Fan 590 announcer Dan Dunleavy, an ex-Georgetown resident, will be calling the World Junior Hockey Championship games from Buffalo. Photo by Eamonn Maher

**DD:** This is the big carrot at the end of the year. It's hard to describe what this tournament means to me because it's everything as far as opportunities to call a major event. Outside of that, because we're in our eighth year of it for Jack Miller and I, it's become such a tradition now, to lose it would be like a girlfriend leaving you and you're wondering why. But at some point, you know it could happen. It means so much more than what I can do to, hopefully, showcase what I can do with play by play. It's another year where basically the same journalists get together no matter where the tournament is—the Gare Joyces of the world and Pierre McGuire and Gord Miller of TSN, and all the TSN people who run the tournament from a broadcast point of view. As the radio guys, it's just Jack and I. We're kind of the two little guys while this giant TSN runs the tournament. No one's fooling anyone. TSN made this tournament.

**IFP: You called a game for the Buffalo Sabres last year in Anaheim and are scheduled to do another in Ottawa on Jan. 25. Is that your dream job?**

**DD:** Rick Jeanneret, who is probably

the best in the business, doesn't do the west coast road trips any more. This year that west coast trip fell during the World Juniors and I knew this would happen: I was offered to do a couple of Sabres' games in Alberta— Calgary and Edmonton back-to-back at the end of December. But it's the World Juniors and I can't believe I'm telling an NHL team that I can't do it, but I really can't. I would never walk away from that tournament unless I was offered a full-time NHL opportunity somewhere and I could never to that to The Fan. That's my home and that's our tournament, for Jack and I.

Thankfully, the Sabres called back and asked me to do the Ottawa game in January. I went to school with Rick's son Mark, who's now doing the games for the Sabres' AHL farm team in Portland, Maine, and I'm sure Mark will get every opportunity to fill his dad's shoes. Mr. (Sabres' president Larry) Quinn is considering all the other options out there. Now I'm just watching a lot of Buffalo and Ottawa games on the NHL TV package to get prepared.

**IFP: Career highlight?**

**DD:** It sounds corny to say, but every

day's a highlight. I'm pretty sure if you asked most guys if they wanted to work at The Fan and get paid for it, life's pretty good, covering sports. These past Winter Olympics in Vancouver were something special. My first NHL game, working with Harry Neale as well, I had to pinch myself there a little bit. Wow, this is who I grew up listening to and laughing at and learning from, everything you'd want from a colour commentator and analyst and he still does it so well for the Sabres. He was such a gentleman, introducing me to every Sabre. They were so nice to a one-and-off guy that I have a ton of respect for that organization.

**When did you know you wanted to be a sportscaster?**

Georgetown District High School. There was a course called current events, I think, which at the time sounded like an easy course to take, but then we went to the cable station in Acton, and we were charged with putting together a TV show. As soon as I walked in the door—I think it was cable channel 12 or 14— when I saw the cameras, the studio and the control room, at that moment I knew what I was going to do. Somehow I was going to be connected to this because nothing else was interesting me. That's also when I realized I wasn't going to be a 9-to-5 guy.

**IFP: Your bio says that you've been a big soccer fan all your life and then you're the radio voice of Toronto FC.**

**DD:** Doing TFC games over the last two years has been a blast. Growing up playing soccer here in Georgetown for the Falcons, I was never a great player, but I really understood the game and I was good enough after not making the Falcons for a couple of years to finally make the team and then stick. Just having an impact on a game even as a sub, coming in and scoring a big goal. I always felt I could coach the game, just because sometimes those who aren't the best players still understand it to the point where you can coach. In a way, when you're calling a game, you're seeing it through the coach's eyes.

I never expected to be able to call professional soccer on the radio in Canada. That came out of the blue. But (Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment) wanted the games on the radio to increase the reach of their product and it's gone over really well.

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