

## Bennett helps build Centennial Classic rink

By Eamonn Maher  
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Sunday's Centennial Classic at BMO Field in Toronto was the culmination of three weeks of long days for local resident Tim Bennett, who was part of the ice crew tasked with turning a soccer pitch into an NHL-regulation-sized outdoor rink.

Bennett has worked for several years as a facility operator at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex and was asked by another Georgetown native, National Hockey League vice president of hockey operations Rod Pasma, if he'd be interested in joining the ice crew for the construction and dismantling of the Centennial Classic playing surface.

Granted a leave by the Town of Halton Hills, Bennett's work stint began on Dec. 17 and save for a couple of days off at Christmas, the crew was usually on the job under ice-making guru Mike Craig for 12 hours daily.

Bennett estimates he walked about 20 km per day and helped with the flooding process, while also clearing the creases and pegging the nets during the NHL regular-season game between the host Maple Leafs and the Red Wings, as well as the Alumni contest the previous day between the two Original Six clubs.

The first thing the (ice crew) guys said to me was, 'Whatever you know about ice-making, forget about it because everything is completely differ-

ent here, the 47-year-old said.

Just the learning experience I've gotten from these guys is fantastic. We as fans just get to see the finished product on game day, but to see the process that goes into it is amazing. They have everything down to a tee. I'm just following around like a lost puppy. Can't say enough about the respect I have for what these guys do.

For the most part, the weather



Georgetown's Tim Bennett poses with Toronto Maple Leafs mascot Carlton the Bear during construction of the Centennial Classic rink at BMO Field. Submitted photo

co-operated with the ice-makers as there has been little sunshine over the past few weeks - except of course it appeared for Sunday's main event, pushing back the puck drop by a half-an-hour to prevent the painted on-ice logos from melting.

A high temperature of 10C one day

last week forced the crew to crank up the chilling equipment and a significant snowfall the next day meant several hours of shoveling for Bennett and his colleagues, who did get to play a game of shinny when the surface was ready.

He added that the various contractors on the project almost in unison stopped what they were doing when the ice-making started.

It really is like a circus production and basically controlled chaos, Bennett said of the NHL/BaAM Productions project.

People think we flood it like a pool, but it's not like that at all. When we lay down the water, it's like one-32nd of an inch at a time, and we need to build it to at least two inches. It's a long, long process, so when the Red Wings came out for their practice and commented on how good the ice was, it really meant a lot.

Given Bennett's connections to hockey and arenas in general, he said the assignment has been thoroughly rewarding. His brother Adam played in the NHL with Chicago and Edmonton, while late father Keith, at one point coach of the Jr. A Raiders, and mom Gail were heavily involved with youth hockey in Georgetown. Grandfather Ed Pries managed Memorial Arena for several years and his wife Madeline ran the snack bar, and their son, Wayne Pries, served a term as Ontario Minor Hockey Association president.



Owen Sound Attack backstopper Michael McNiven was almost unbeatable last week, collecting a pair of shutouts and just one goal against. Photo by OHL Images

## McNiven OHL player of week

After stopping 73 of 74 shots over three games, netminder Michael McNiven of the Owen Sound Attack was named the Pioneer Energy Ontario Hockey League Player of the Week, posting a 3-0-0-0 record with two shutouts.

The 19-year-old from Georgetown has regained the league lead in goals-against average (2.16) and save percentage (.922) after being the final cut of the three goalies in the evaluation camp for the Canadian

entry currently playing in the World Junior Hockey Championship in Toronto and Montreal.

The Attack had won seven straight games heading into its home tilt Wednesday against the division-leading Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds.

The 6-foot-2, 200-pound McNiven, a former Georgetown Jr. A Raider and Montreal Canadiens prospect, has an 18-7-1-0 record in his third year in Owen Sound and now has nine career shutouts.

## Blue Fins shine at Central meet

Younger members of the Halton Hills Blue Fins had strong showings at the recent Central Region Team Championships meet, ei-

ther as a personal best, earning a medal or participating in one of the finals. Following are their accomplishments: Continued on page 25

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