

## Sports Hall of Fame welcomes five new inductees for 2017

The Halton Hills Sports Museum Hall of Fame will bring in five new inductees at its 11th-annual ceremony on Thursday, June 22 at the John Elliott Theatre in Georgetown.

The 2017 inductees are: Noreen Atkinson (builder, softball, fast-pitch), Jonathan Cornwell (athlete, motorcycle racing), Hugo Dittfach (athlete, thoroughbred horse racing jockey), Michael Mitchell (athlete, tennis), Gaby Szanto (athlete, track & field, sprint canoe kayak).

Tickets are \$30 each and are available by contacting Glenda Nixdorf at 905-873-1360 or email info.hhsm@bell.net

This year's guest speaker is former Jr. A Raider and professional hockey player Mike Knoepfli.

A reception will be held at 6 p.m. with the awards ceremony at 7 p.m. Below are profiles of each inductee:

### NOREEN ATKINSON

Forty-five years of umpiring experience from local rural diamonds to world championships and Atkinson still witnesses plays she's never seen before or comes across situations that aren't covered by the rule book.

An elite-level catcher as a youth, she was recruited at age 12 to work Kinsmen Girls Softball League games. Atkinson soon moved up to the Georgetown Men's Industrial League and worked her way through the ranks to become a Softball Can-



ada Level 5 official, later achieving International Softball Federation certification.

She participated in several Canadian championships as both an umpire and supervisor.

The 56-year-old holds a master's degree in education and officiated at international tournaments including the 2007 Jr. Women's World Championship in the Netherlands, the 2012 Women's World Championship in the Yukon and the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto.

Atkinson received the Jim Bradford Memorial Award in 2008 as the Ontario-based umpire who best exemplifies the characteristics of leadership, an educator and evaluator.

She was also a member of the Softball Canada's Officials Development Committee (ODC) and continues to conduct umpire clinics locally and around the GTA.

### JONATHAN CORNWELL

Whether it was on the road, ice, dirt or short track, the 55-year-old Cornwell's prowess on two wheels is directly attributed to a strong family tradition of riding motorcycles.

The Kingston, Ont. native's grandfather rode British bikes following the Second World War and his father Norm, a mechanical engineer who died when Jon was just 17, instilled in him a deep passion for racing and a knowledge of how the machines worked.

Inducted into the Canadian Motorcycle Hall of Fame in 2011, Cornwell won several Canadian champi-

onships in multiple disciplines such as 250cc expert, mostly in the 1980s as a Georgetown resident.

He regularly competed in the U.S., qualifying for four national championships there, and in European spiked-tire ice and endurance events.

Retiring from professional competitive racing in 1994, the GDHS grad joined Swedish suspension manufacturer Ohlins on the World Superbike Circuit, contributing to the victories of several riders.

Cornwell now calls Erin home and works for Ohlins as its U.S. road racing technical manager. He is considered by his peers as one of the most knowledgeable suspension technicians in North America.

### HUGO DITTFACH

A refugee from East Germany after the Second World War who arrived in Canada with no knowledge of horse racing, Dittfach was working in a Calgary restaurant when a diner suggested that the young busboy had a suitable body type to become a jockey.

Having spent time in a concentration camp in Poland, he burst onto the thoroughbred racing scene in western Canada as an 18-year-old in the mid-1950s,



taking on more mounts than any of his competitors before moving to Ontario.

Hustlin Hugo went on to have a 33-year career as a jockey and won more than 4,000 races, highlighted in 1991 when he received the Avelino Gomez Memorial Award for his achievements and contributions to the sport.

His resume' includes a Queen's Plate in 1991, five Prince of Wales Stakes titles and four Valedictory Stakes wins, 4,092 second-place finishes, 6,113 thirds, \$13,506,502 in earnings working out to \$398 per start out of 33,905 rides.

Dittfach earned the Sovereign Award in 1975 as Canada's best jockey and was inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 1983, ranked 67th amongst the world's top jockeys of all-time. He became a horse trainer in 1990.

### MICHAEL MITCHELL

An All-American and team captain at NCAA Division II West Texas State University, Mitchell has also contributed extensively to the sport of tennis as a builder during his decades-long involvement as a coach and mentor at the university and local levels.

The 56-year-old Sudbury native moved to Georgetown at the age of two and grew up playing on Georgetown's Gordon Alcott courts. He re-



mains as a coach and mentor with the Halton Hills Tennis Club.

In 1991, Mitchell warmed up against any local youngsters he could find as an amateur in preparation for a match against Canada's top singles player at the time, Daniel Nestor, whom he led 3-0 at the Sun-Life men's national championship before bowing out 6-3, 6-1.

He went on to coach at York University and was named Ontario University Athletics coach of the year three times, guiding the Yeowomen to a provincial championship in 2003 and for the men's squad in 2005, 2007 and 2009.

Mitchell also was appointed head coach for Canada at the World University Games in Serbia in 2009.

Described as an aggressive serve-and-volley player, Mitchell won the Canadian Senior Men's (over-35) Outdoor Championships doubles title in 2000 with partner Alan Trivett of Brampton.

### GABY SZANTO

High-jump records began to fall in Szanto's wake as a teen in her native Hungary and she continues to excel at international Masters competitions in both track and field and sprint canoe/kayak.

She competed for Hungary professionally from 1981-87 and still



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