

# HALL OF FAMERS GRATEFUL FOR OPPORTUNITIES COMMUNITY OFFERS

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Growing up in Georgetown, Cristy Nurse always considered herself lucky to be able to play so many different sports. She excelled at them, but she never really considered pursuing one of them to an elite level.

When she arrived at the University of Guelph, where she played on the Gryphons' basketball team, she started to question her decision to play multiple sports. Suddenly, she was competing against players who had dedicated themselves solely to basketball, spending hours refining their dribbling and shooting.

In her rookie season, the team program gave brief descriptions of each of the players. Nurse's profile read, "She's not much now, but we're hoping good things will come."

"I couldn't have known at the time, what would come, sooner rather than later, was the end of my basketball career," said Nurse at the Halton Hills Sports Museum's Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Nurse continued to explore her sporting options, and discovered rowing. In a sport where each stroke requires the use of 98 per cent of all your muscles, her diverse sporting background was now an asset.

"All of a sudden, with that multi-sport background, I was able to go from sitting in a boat for the first time to a world championship podium in four years." Nurse would go on to win six world championship medals and represent Canada at the 2016 Olympics.

While many of Nurse's fellow inductees did specialize, the common thread through their experience was the opportunities their community and its people offered them.

"I stood at the bottom of my driveway, stick in hand, and watched two brothers play hockey," said Mike Knoepfli, who went on to captain Cornell University's team before an 11-year pro career in Switzerland. "After a while, and my best puppy dog eyes, they invited me over to play. I think back now to the patience they showed with me, the

willingness to show me some skills. It created this passion for hockey that I have. Those two players were Rod Pasma and his brother Jeff."

Now the executive vice-president of operations for the NHL, Rod Pasma joined Knoepfli in the 2019 class and later joked, "Mike, I apologize. Obviously, I was the one who showed you the little tricks of the trade in the driveway. If it had been my brother, we'd be talking about your 11 years in the NHL."

Pasma said it was impossible to say thank you enough to those who allowed him to pursue his career in hockey and then in the sport's administration.

"A hall of fame induction in any sport at any level is a special honour, especially in your hometown," he said, "and it's likely the result of sacrifices and commitments of family and friends. You're the reason I'm up here today."

There was a time when there would not have been athletic opportunities for Emily Boycott, who has won 16 medals representing Canada at the



Herb Garbutt / Torstar

The Halton Hills Sports Museum inducted its Hall of Fame class for 2019. Honoured were: (back, from left) Joanne Berentson, Emily Boycott, Cristy Nurse (front, from left) Rod Pasma, Mike Knoepfli and Gary Bianchi of Sunny Acre Farms.

Special Olympics World Games.

"When Emily was young, we started looking for a sport for her, just like we had done for her two brothers and two sisters," said her mom Debbie Boycott. "Special Olympics gave Emily that unique opportunity to participate and compete in sports, an avenue to meet friends and give her an opportunity to shine."

Sports and those who take the time to coach teams also gave Joanne Berentson (Bingham) an opportunity. In high school, Berentson was so shy she passed up an opportunity

to attend a junior national volleyball team tryout. But her coach arranged a private tryout and she made the team.

She went on to an all-star collegiate career and represented Canada at the world championships before going on to a 20-year career in policing.

"I'd like to thank all the coaches who take the time to coach young kids so they can find endeavours that make them feel more powerful, more confident," she said.

The hall's selection committee also recognized those who help provide those opportunities when

it inducted Sunny Acre Farms, the sponsor of the Georgetown, and now Halton Hills, midget AA team for more than five decades.

Walter Bianchi started the tradition in the 1960s and after his death in 2001, his son Gary carried on the longtime affiliation. Like the sponsors, the team's players have spanned generations. Last year's midget coach, Blake Seaton, was a former player and his dad also played on and coached the team.

"You don't think the things you do through life, and enjoy doing," said Gary Bianchi, "will result in an honour like this."





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