

# Fair play most important: sports leaders

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
Staff Writer

There is more to sport than who wins, loses or scores the most goals or points.

Of far greater significance is what type of character participants exhibit, nine high-profile York Region athletes told students at Moraine Hills Public School in Richmond Hill Wednesday.

The message was part of an initiative launched by the Character Community Foundation of York Region through its Character in Sport program.

The sports stars included:

- Paul Jones, radio voice of the Toronto Raptors and a former principal at Richmond Hill's Walter Scott and Roselawn public schools;
- Cody Hodgson, a Unionville resident and Brampton Battalion forward expected to be a high selection in June's NHL draft;
- Peter Polansky, a Thornhill resident and member of Canada's Davis Cup tennis team;
- Jacqui Palm, an Aurora resident and supervisor of officials for Hockey Canada and the International Ice Hockey Federation;
- Bill Crothers, a Markham resident and former silver medallist in the 800m at the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo;
- Brenan Rurak, a member of the York University women's basketball team and three-time Ontario University Athletics all-star;
- Shelby Anderson, a Huron Heights Secondary School student and ranked player in the Ontario Tennis Association;
- Adam Smalley, a Newmarket High School student who is a ranked player in the Canadian Junior Golf Association and;
- Maggie Hall, a three-sport athlete from King City Secondary School.

"Character in sport does matter," Mr. Jones said. "I came to the York Region board in 2000 and, at that time, there was a push for character in education, but a lot of it was focused on the curriculum and every day lifestyles.

"I like the fact that it is targeted now to sports.

"There are so many other things that can help teach character lessons through sports. What a better way to learn about the 10 character words that sports teaches in courage, honesty, integrity, fairness, initiative, respect, responsibility, optimism, inclusiveness and perseverance.

"I think it is a great way to teach all of these things."

Hodgson was approached by Paul Titanic, his former minor coach and a Brother Andre Catholic



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Raptor broadcaster and former Roselawn Public School principal Paul Jones (from left) hosted the Character in Sport forum with guest speakers including Bill Crothers, past chair of York Region District School Board; former Olympic silver medallist and 1963 Canadian Athlete of the Year Brenan Rurak; Olympic hockey referee Jacqui Palm; Moraine Hills Public School student Gabi Pavlovic; Canadian tennis star Peter Polansky; OHL Brampton battalion star Cody Hodgson; Moraine Hill Public School student Abhi Matthews, high school golfer Adam Smalley, high school tennis player Shelby Anderson and Maggie Hall, a three-sport athlete at King City Secondary School. The focus of the assembly was to teach children sportsmanship and the value of fair play.

High School teacher, to speak to the packed gym. The night before, his Battalion lost to Barrie in an OHL playoff game.

"This means a lot. It's definitely good for them to have role models. I know when I was young, I had some in guys like Steve Yzerman (former Detroit Red Wings player), Mario Lemieux (former Pittsburgh Penguins great) and Wayne Gretzky. They always gave something back to the community," the 18-year-old Hodgson said. "They were great character people."

Playing in the Challengers Circuit and preparing to represent Canada in the Davis Cup, Polansky, 19, acknowledged there were players, to whom he looked up, too.

"When I was 11 or 12, I looked up to players like Pete Sampras. Now, I look up to a number of players who respect the game.

"Guys like Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

The new program's roots took hold seven to eight years ago when character in education was an initiative of the board, Mr. Crothers, a trustee and former chairperson of the York Region District School Board, said.

But he's excited with the

new concept.

"Anything to deliver the message to young people," he said.

Palm, who was an on-ice official at the 2002 Winter Olympics women's hockey games in Salt Lake City and is the head of physical education at Aurora High School, was excited with the assembly.

"I think it was fantastic," the Newmarket resident said. "Character in sport is what an official is trying to instill ... that fairness, honesty, integrity. It's why I like doing what I do.

"Athletics is what I take a lot of pride in."

Part of the festivities also included cheerleading and sport demonstra-

tions by Moraine Hills Public School students and other area schools.

The program is the first of its kind in Canada, Character in Sport chairperson Darren Greenspoon said, adding the program has been in the planning stages since 2007.

Initially, groups such as York Region Public Health, the York Region Athletic Association, the Markham Sport Council, the York Region public and separate school boards and York Region Media Group were contacted for their input.

The school was approached because it was a tribes school, Denise McLafferty, Moraine Hills Public School principal, said.

A tribes school is one that works toward a caring and supportive culture.

It assures the growth and development of all students regardless of skill, ability, academic achievement, race, religion or culture.

While Moraine Hills had the honour of hosting the first such program in Canada, Mr. Greenspoon hopes it will set the tone for other regions across the country.

"Our plan is to be the leader. You want someone to talk about character in sport and we want to be the leaders, the ones who are the experts in this subject. We want people to say, 'Look at the York Region model,'" he said.

## Students invited to participate in Character in Sport contest

Students in York Region public, separate and private elementary schools are invited to take part in a Character in Sport contest.

Students are being asked to tell their stories about good character in sports.

"It could be about someone looking out for other people and doing their best to make sport a positive part of people's

lives," said John Havercroft, Character Community Foundation of York Region Council chairperson.

"Tell your stories and share your ideas of how character and sports go together. The theme of each entry is character and sport."

Participants can range from kindergarten to Grade 8.

Students can tell their real-life experiences on posters, billboards, videos, T-shirts, collages, pamphlets, scrapbooks, announcements, banners or a comic strip.

A number of prizes will be up for grabs. Deadline for submissions is May 2.

For more contest information, go to [charactercommunity.com](http://charactercommunity.com)



## FIND THE HOTSPOTS >> at [yorkregion.com/business](http://yorkregion.com/business)

Log on to [yorkregion.com/business](http://yorkregion.com/business) for a list of local hotspots in the York Region



Hotspots are the ideal way to stay connected, no matter where your work takes you. With many convenient locations throughout York Region, Wi-Fi Hotspots provide high-speed Internet access so you can check your email or surf the Internet away from the office or home.