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OCAA Honour For Cliff Dunkeld



Cliff Dunkeld, left, with the Seneca Scouts. Mr. Dunkeld is being inducted into the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association's Hall of Fame for his work in developing and coaching women's softball.

By Hannelore Volpe

Cliff Dunkeld will be inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association on April 29. The long-time Stouffville resident is being honoured for successfully developing and coaching women's softball at Seneca College.

This year, the 35 new members in the Hall of Fame will be recognized for their contributions in a variety of sports. Mr. Dunkeld is the only inductee in the field of women's softball.

It all began in 1978 when local resident Linda Stapleton asked him to coach the inaugural ladies fastball team at Seneca College. He and the other coaches, Dave Stapleton and Lee Trempe, took the team to Florida for spring training when Seneca College became part of the National Junior College Athletic Association in men's baseball and women's fastball. In 1981, the OCAA kicked off its inaugural Championship hosted and won by the Seneca College SCOUTS.

"The first year at Seneca, we never lost a game," Mr. Dunkeld recalled. Seneca continued to medal each year of his leadership, earning two silver medals, a bronze and another gold.

"Cliff's name was and remains synonymous with men's and women's fastball, slo-pitch and women's hockey in the Whitchurch-Stouffville area," wrote Ms Stapleton, Director, Sport and Recreation at Seneca College, in her nomination remarks.

"As a dedicated advocate for girls' and women's sports, Cliff began the building of not only a successful program at Seneca, but became a vocal advocate for OCAA for Women's Fastball," she added.

Many of the young women also played in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Softball Association's intermediate league, the Stouffville Stingers.

With a chuckle, Mr. Dunkeld recalls one player who kept asking, "How far do you want me to hit the ball?"

He obviously instilled the love of a game he loved to play: five of his six children played softball.

"That is why I got into coaching and umpiring," Mr. Dunkeld explained.

Cliff was an auditor, a convenor for over 20 years and is now honorary president of the Ontario Amateur Softball Association. He was also an Ontario Women's Softball Association convenor and is a past vice-president.

Never far from sports, he is known for bringing girls' hockey to town, which he did along with another resident, Joanne Steele. The organization has grown into what is now the Stouffville Markham Girls Hockey Association. For years, he was known around town as "Mr. Hockey".

His wife, Glenda, recalls the many winter nights the couple split up the hockey parent duties: he'd be in one arena while she would head to another.

His passion for helping people and bringing out the best in them extended to the wider community: he was Ward 4 councillor for 12 years before retiring in 2006. He is a member of the Stouffville Lions Club and served as president in 2008. In 2006 he was named Stouffville's Citizen of the Year and was chosen as the town's Sports Personality of the Year in 1975.

Cliff's name was and remains synonymous with men's and women's fastball, slo-pitch and women's hockey in the Whitchurch-Stouffville area.



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