

Sports Hall of Fame to host inaugural induction ceremony this month

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Some of Caledon's greatest athletes will be recognized later this month.

On January 31, the Town of Caledon will host its first annual Caledon Sports Hall of Fame (CSHOF) induction ceremony at the Caledon East Community Complex (CECC) banquet hall.

The ceremony will run from 7 to 9 p.m. and tickets for it are \$65 per person. A table of six can be purchased for \$390. Tickets can be purchased on the Town's website.

The CSHOF was established in 2018 as a place to recognize, memorialize and celebrate the achievements of Caledon athletes, builders, and teams who have excelled at their respective crafts. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, plans to annually induct people to the hall were put on hold until this year.

However, the CSHOF does currently have one member: Jerry Callaghan. He was inducted into the hall in its builder category in 2018.

Callaghan, who passed away in 2008, moved to Bolton in 1972 and soon began volunteering and participating in sporting activities in the community. He quickly became a leader and administrator for adult and youth sport organizations in Bolton, volunteering a seemingly endless amount of time to ensure things ran smoothly for participants.

In 1975, Callaghan helped create the Bolton Men's Slow-Pitch league and worked behind the scenes on it for over 30 years. This league is still running today. In 1977, Callaghan became involved with the Bolton Minor Hockey Association, and spent over 20 years in executive positions there.

Callaghan was also involved in junior hockey with the Caledon Canadiens from 1992 to 1998, and helped create the Sunday Night Men's Hockey League. This league began in 1986 and is also still running to this day.

For his organizational and leadership talents, Callaghan was given the nickname 'The Commissioner' by his friends and fellow volunteers.

There are eight new inductees being honoured at the January 2024 CSHOF induction ceremony: four athletes, three builders, and one team. The inductees, alongside Callaghan, will have their information on display in a dedicated space on the second floor of the CECC for visitors to appreciate for years to come.

Caledon Mayor Annette Groves said it's important to honour Caledon's past and having annual CSHOF induction ceremonies is a great way to do that. She said the eight inductees represent a broad cross-section of sport history in Caledon, adding she's excited to celebrate their induction later this month.

The athletes being inducted this year are hockey player Bert McCaffrey, triathlete Bob Knuckey, skier Laurie Graham, and jockey Robin Platts.

McCaffrey was a defenceman from Albion Township and played seven seasons in the NHL for the Toronto St. Pats, Toronto Maple Leafs, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Montreal Canadiens. He won a Stanley Cup in 1930 with the Canadiens, and an Olympic gold with Team Canada in 1924. McCaffrey passed away in 1955.

Knuckey is a 75-year-old triathlete who recently was the only one in his age category to complete the gruelling 2023 Ironman Championships race in Nice, France ? earning a much-deserved win. In his working life, Knuckey was a school teacher in Caledon for 37 years.

Knuckey won the Toronto Marathon in 1976 with a time of two hours, 28 minutes, and this is just one of his many wins over the years. Knuckey has won four Ironman World Championships and is one of two men to ever complete a sub 12-hour race as a master.

Graham was raised in Inglewood and began skiing at the age of five. Graham was a three-time Olympian and was once Canada's premier female downhill skier. She won a bronze medal at the 1982 world championships, won three national titles, and has six world cup victories.

Graham was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1998 and inducted into the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame in 1991. She's also been inducted into the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame and Canada Sports Hall of Fame.

Platts lived in Bolton for over 30 years and raised his family there while competing as a jockey. He's one of three jockeys to ever win the King's Plate four times. In his career, Platts ran in over 20,000 races and secured 3,200 victories in races all over the world.

Platts was Canada's top jockey in 1979 and was inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 1997.

The builders being inducted this year are editor and reporter Bill Whitbread, former Toronto Maple Leafs owner and racehorse breeder Conn Smythe, and much-loved basketball coach Gord Everett.

Whitbread was a long-time editor and reporter with the Caledon Enterprise and was credited as the backbone of the Bolton area when it came to sports. He was known for being at every championship game to take a photo of the winning team and always being at Caledon tournaments to report on the day's events.

Whitbread was also known as a great community advocate who supported athletes in Caledon in taking their careers to the next level. Whitbread, who passed away in 2014, would still show up to championship games even in his later years. Caledon Minor Hockey and Caledon Minor Baseball now hold annual tournaments in Whitbread's honour.

Smythe is best known as principal owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs from 1927 to 1961. In 1951, Smythe bought land for a farm in Caledon which he used to breed horses for racing. Horses from Smythe's stable won the King's Plate twice. In 1963, Smythe hosted the World Plowing Championships at his Caledon farm.

Everett is known for dedicating much of his adult life to positively impacting the lives of young people. His approach to basketball coaching also focused on mental health and academic success, making him a great mentor and friend to many athletes. Everett mentored two athletes from Bolton who made it to the national level of women's basketball. He was the coach of Team Ontario from 2012 to 2019 and was the Ontario Basketball Elite Coach of the Year in 2012.

The team being inducted this year is the 2004 Mayfield Secondary School Girls Nordic Ski Team, consisting of Brittany Webster, Julie Porter, Gillian Montgomery, Brittany Reid, and Robyn Kemp.

Mayfield's girls Nordic ski team won the Ontario high school championships for four consecutive years in the early 2000s. Webster went on to represent Canada at the Olympics in 2010 and 2014. The skiers mentioned above are credited with motivating many others to take up Nordic skiing, leading to Mayfield being the number one Nordic skiing school in Ontario for many years.