

## **Chapter 2**

### **Lacrosse -- Oshawa's Game Since 1872**

**By Geo. N. Campbell**

The City of Oshawa can respectfully boast of its participation in every type of sport familiar to Canadians. It is of special significance that in lacrosse, Canada's National Game, Oshawa has its oldest history of any sports activity.

A review of Oshawa's sports history for the past century reveals that while there were friendly games in lacrosse (as well as baseball and hockey), the very first team to represent the Oshawa community in an organized competition, against other centres, was the Oshawa lacrosse team of 1872. This team competed against similar sized communities, such as Port Hope, Bowmanville, Millbrook, and others. Richard Troy, one of the great goalkeepers of the 18th century, was the Oshawa star, in those years... 95 years ago.

#### REVIVED AT TURN

Following the enthusiasm of the 1870-1885 period, there was a lull, but lacrosse popularity surged again at the turn of the century and a "Town League" was organized, with four teams operating. These included Williams Piano, Ontario Malleable Iron, McLaughlin Carriage, and the "Town" team.

With a small population during those days, every citizen of the town who was eligible to play either played the game, worked with someone who did, or lived next door to one of the players.

The O.M.I team of 1904 recalls the names of Bobby Essery, Bert Large, George Gibson, George Papeman, Bob Knox, "Mickey" McGuire, Billy Hickey, Norman Michael, Eddie Curtin, Ernie Parsons, Charlie Sarrae, "Cham" Cameron, John Griffin, Harry Brown, "Red" Callaghan and Eugene Day.,

The "Oshawa" team was similar to an All-Star team selected from the four teams in the Town League.

Back in 1906, games were played at Prospect Park (now known to Oshawa residents as Parkwood), home of the city's number one sportsman, Col. R. S., McLaughlin. The games included such stars as D.J. "Joe" Swanson, George "Dumpy" Dormer, W.D. Harding, Art Miners, "Red" Miners, Jim Doyle, George McCullough, "Dick" Thomas, and John Staples.

### **"NEWSY" LALONDE HERE**

The Oshawa Shamrocks of 1907, was one of Ontario's greatest junior teams of the era. They eliminated three districts in the playoff competition but were later declared ineligible, because of two over-aged players. One of the great stars of that team was the famous "Newsy" Lalonde, rated by many as Canada's all-time greats in both lacrosse and hockey. He starred in the National Hockey League with the Montreal Canadians during that era and continued on playing lacrosse up until 1932 when the professional box game was introduced.

Others with the Oshawa Shamrocks were Don Hawks, Walter Carter, "Farmer" Kemp, Reg Thomas, Ralph Robinson, Jimmy Roussel, along with Jimmy Guenett McCullough and others.

Other names recalled from lacrosse lineups of those days include "Doc" White, Art Way, Jim Kervin, Bev Glover, Tom Sands, a great Indian star, "Cooney" Shields, "Barney" Quinn, Bob Stewart, Eddie Baker, Donald Hall (father of His Honor, Judge Alex Hall), who later played with Oshawa's great 1930 team.

"Barney" Quinn held the world's record for throwing a ball, while Shields and Hall, along with Sands, Staples and Art Raymen, were all standouts along with Lem Hamlin, Cy Pitcher and Dave Brown, a standout goalie, known in later years as one of the city's choir soloists and a jewelry businessman.

Oshawa's famed 1903 team included Eddie Happy, great Montreal Nationals goalie; Don Cameron, from Cornwall, greatest "point" player of his day; two Ottawa stars, Nelson Kimpton and Ed Blythe and a trio of lacrosse stars, known across the country for their prowess - Hagan, Fagan and Degan.

## WORLD'S CHAMPIONS

In Town League play, such names as Hal and Trevor Burton, Bill Coad, "Yank" Morriss, Theo Fishleigh and Harry Frohme, are still remembered by the city's older residents, along with a couple of "imports" from Port Hope, "Diddie" Rowden and "Jumb" Fryor.

## ANOTHER ERA

Following the era of good and great Intermediate teams, Joe Swanson, Eddie Curtin, and Eddie Donald were three names that revived lacrosse after World War I was over.

A highlight of that era was the Oshawa team that lost in a thrilling final to St. Mary's by two goals in 1921. In those days, championship finals had changed to a home-and-home series, with total goals deciding the issue. In earlier years, the first team to establish a three-goal lead was declared the winner of the game, no matter how quick or how long it took.

The St. Mary's team was coached by George Munroe, who later coached the Oshawa GM team to a Mann Cup championship.

The Oshawa coach was Art Warick and Dr. F. L. Henry was the president with Morley Jacobi the secretary-treasurer. William A. Coad was the OLA representative and the team manager was F. A. Nixon.

Oshawa won Group No.1 of all of Eastern Ontario that year and played off with St. Mary's for the provincial title. Members of the team included W. "Dad" Clapper and son "Dit" (stick boy), Danny McDonald, Art Sarles, Alex Graham, Frank "Buck" Oliver, Orville Gantan, Norm Irwin, Ernie Lovegrove (centre), Joe Jockque (goal) "Beech" Beecham (captain), George McKinnon, Karl Irwin and O.Cook.

## **FIRST SENIOR CHAMPS**

Oshawa had other good Intermediate teams in later years, one of which played off with Buffalo "Kodiaks".

In 1928, lacrosse received a major boost in Oshawa when General Motors took over the club sponsorship. General Motors brought in some outstanding juniors, such as "Chuck" Barron, "Chuck" Davidson, "Tilly" Stokes, "Buster" Whitton, Ernie Shepley, "Smokey" Fox. These players, along with a group of Oshawa boys, formed a great junior team.

In that same season, those mentioned above, along with a host of other imports, won the Ontario Senior Championship in their first try. Among the newcomers to Oshawa were "Big Bob" Stevenson, "Toots" White, Mel Whyte, "Mac" McGrath, Ted Reeve, Kelly DeGray, "Red" Spencer, "Smitty" Smithson, Jack and Pete Walsh and goalie "Patty" Shannon.

Harry Lott coached the juniors and George Munroe coached the seniors. Matt Leydon was team manager and Frank LeRoy was the club president. Bert Constable, Jack Carson, and Jack Rupert were other executives and two of the trainers were "Jock" Anderson and Sammy Johnson.

The Oshawa Intermediate team also went to the finals that season. Some of the juniors played on all three teams. Intermediates included Howard Luke, "Casey" Luke, Bill Luke, Art Black, Steve Stephens, Fred Kunkel, Quirrie, "Danny" Daniels, "China" Cardinal Brown, Pete Garrison, "Red" Cardinal, "Shine" Bovin, Brown, and oh yes - trainer "Butch" Higgins.

## **MANN CUP CHAMPIONS**

The next year, the General Motors moved in with both feet. Only Ted Reeve left the club - to continue his fine column in The Tely and play his lacrosse for Brampton.

Oshawa added top strength at key spots by including Bill Coulter, Walker Wilson, "Doddy" Doddemeade, "Cunnie" Golden and Oshawa's own Nory Hubbell, who quickly developed into a great defenseman, with the guidance of Coulter, Smithson, Spencer, etc.

V. B. McTavish headed the club as president and other executives not mentioned, included Fred Branton, Fred Davis, Art Cooke, H. W. Nicholl, R. P. McKenzie, F. McLaughlin, Oscar Baird and vice-president Fred Hobbs.

The team won the Ontario Senior title again and then marched to their Mann Cup triumph and Dominion championship, beating Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and finally New Westminster (at home) - a feat believed utterly impossible by the avid supports of the world-famous "Salmonbellies." Oshawa General Motors won the final game 9-5 and the second game 2-1.

In June of 1930, Oshawa defeated the United States, at Maple Leaf Stadium in Toronto, to win the International or World's Championship.

The U.S. team was an all-star representation from their very strong College teams and featured no fewer than eight players who were also track stars and could run the 100 yards in 10 seconds - mighty fast, even today.

The United States won the first game 7-5, rallying for three goals in the fourth period, to turn the trick and literally stun a small crowd 2,000 spectators. Their terrible speed was their forte and they had lots of room to use it, on the spacious ball diamond.

That game was played on a Friday and the second game on the Saturday was different. The Oshawa team donned their heavy pads and reverted to their own heavy checking tactics and thwarted the Americans' running game and speed with their own long and accurate passing attack. Not even their sprinters could keep up with the long pass and Oshawa won the game 6-3 and the round 11-10, to bring the World's title back to Canada. Five thousand attended that second game.

### **THAT WAS CLIMAX**

The Oshawa team never again seemed to have quite the zip necessary to match their great rivals from Brampton and in the playoffs the Excelsiors eliminated Oshawa. Both games had ended in a tie, with Brampton winning both in overtime. Here at home, the winning goal was scored after the full-time-whistle, on a free throw that had been awarded a second before the regulation time ended.

The Oshawa team disbanded in 1931, many of them joining a new Toronto team, Native Sons. Others stayed on their jobs at General Motors while Oshawa fielded a team in the senior league. Oshawa did not have a big year.

## **PRO LACROSSE**

Lacrosse became an indoor game at the professional level in 1931 and "box lacrosse" was born. In 1936, Oshawa entered a team in Senior 'A' league and played their home games in the Oshawa Arena.

In 1939, a group of players and other enthusiasts built their own outdoor box, in the Motor City Stadium, using lumber that was obtained when the old curling and skating rink (located on the south side of King Street west, along the west bank of Oshawa Creek), was finally demolished.

Box lacrosse enjoyed good years of fun and competition, but no championships arrived, although Oshawa was in the finals several times. The team moved back inside Hambly's "Hockey Home" in the late 1940s.

Brooklin was one of Oshawa's keen rivals in many of those years, along with Peterborough, Scarborough, Weston, etc. This was Senior 'B' rating.

From 1934 on, Oshawa's teams were comprised mainly of homebrews, chaps who had learned their lacrosse in the "field" game. A juvenile league was formed to develop the General Motors Junior and Senior teams.

Back in 1928, and in later years, such juvenile teams as Tod's "Big Dandy's", Weston Bakery, Shamrocks, Tecumsehs, Burke Street "Bullocks" and other teams, provided the talent that represented Oshawa from 1931 on.

Various minor lacrosse programs were tried at different times but when the Oshawa Arena burned down in 1953, lacrosse ended in Oshawa. Those still playing, played in Brooklin.

Lacrosse was revived in Oshawa when the Oshawa Green Gaels were formed in 1963. Under the leadership of Jim Bishop, the Oshawa Green Gaels won the Minto Cup (representing the Canadian Junior Championship), in their first year of operation. The Oshawa Green Gaels went on to win six more consecutive Minto Cups.

That brings us up to date, in the most successful era that Oshawa has ever enjoyed, in Canada's National game. Oshawa's history in lacrosse is the longest of any sport, and just as it was back in 1872, Oshawa is once again one of Canada's hotbeds of lacrosse. Long may that continue!