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Large hockey presence among 2023 Ontario Sports Hall Of Fame inductees

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Toronto Maple Leafs president Brendan Shanahan. PHOTO BY BRUCE BENNETT /Getty Images

The contributions to hockey of men and women from this province aren't always recognized.


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But the game was well represented Monday when the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame announced its 2023 inductees.

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Brendan Shanahan, Jayna Hefford, Bryan Lewis and the 1959 world champion Belleville McFarlands were named, while concussion specialist Dr. Charles Tator, broadcaster Joe Bowen and retired NHLer Steve Ludzik received special achievement awards.

Lewis, from Alliston, began his career in the Georgetown Legion Minor Hockey Association, rising to NHL director of officiating.

“I’ve spent 66 years wearing or caring about those wearing a striped shirt,” Lewis gratefully acknowledged of Monday’s announcement. “To the (seven) leagues I have been associated with during my career, I offer a since appreciation for their support and guidance.”

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Lewis also promoted hockey and other amateur sports during a four-term career on the Halton Hills town council and continues to help with amateur and Ontario universities hockey officiating.

Mimico-born Shanahan, well known in minor hockey league circles in the area and with the OHL London Knights, had a Hockey Hall of Fame career, and later joined the NHL as vice-president.

For almost a decade has been president of the Maple Leafs, who went from several years missing the playoffs to the verge of seven straight qualification this spring. Shanahan has overseen many initiatives to spread the team's base to non-traditional fans.

Trenton native Hefford, named to the Hockey Hall in 2018, helped Canada win four straight Olympic gold medals between 2002-14. Starting in ringette, she moved to club hockey in three different leagues, compiling 439 goals in 418 games. She currently assists the women's pro game and the drive for fair pay across the province and the continent as chairperson of the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The McFarlands, elected as a full team, finished the 1959 worlds in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in a tie with Russia with a record of 4-1, but won gold on goal differential.

Tator, presented with the Hall's Bruce Prentice Legacy Award, had his work in concussion study take on greater importance as hockey leagues were compelled to look closer at the causes and effects of head injuries. The University of Toronto-trained Tator is director of the Canadian Concussion Centre and has helped research into injuries in other sports.

Ludzik, born in Etobicoke, was a junior star in Niagara Falls and played 468 NHL games, mostly with Chicago, before he retired to become a broadcast analyst. He fell ill with Parkinson's Disease and a liver disorder that required transplant. But his foundation helped the Parkinson's rehab program at the Hotel Dieu Shave Hospital in St. Catharines and he has been recognized by various organizations for his work to help highlight liver disease. He won the Hall's Sandy Hawley Community Service award.

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Sudbury's Bowen, approaching 40 years as the voice of the Leafs on radio and television, won the Brian Williams media award, also helping for years to promote many amateur hockey and charitable causes.

Also named to the Ontario Sports Hall Of Fame was curler Marilyn Bodogh-Darte of Toronto, a two-time world champion in 1986 and '96, who competed for a rink in St. Catharines.

Paralympian Jeff Adams (Mississauga/Brampton) suffered a spinal injury at age nine, but raced in six Summer Games between 1988-2008, winning three gold, four silver and six bronze medals.

Perdita Felicien (Oshawa/Pickering) was Canadian record holder in the 100-metre hurdles, was 2003 world champion and 2004 world indoor champion. After retiring, she turned to broadcasting and advocating for youth athletics.

Summer McIntosh, youngest member of the 2020 Canadian Olympic team at age 14 and winner of two golds at the 2022 world championships, was named the Syl Apps Ontario Athlete of The Year.

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