

NEWS RELEASE



September 09, 2024

The London Sports Hall of Fame is pleased to announce its inductees for 2024. The inductees will officially enter the Hall at the annual Hall of Fame induction event taking place on Thursday, November 7 at the Hellenic Centre.

For ticket information please contact us at director-lsc@westernfairdistrict.com

In the inductee lineup for 2024 are:

- **Rob Atchison** – champion drag racer
- **Bill Boland** – behind-the-scenes figure skating powerhouse
- **Peter Inch** – curling organizer extraordinaire
- **Jim Martin** – organizer of one of the most successful women’s hockey programs in Canada
- **Helen Smith** – Commonwealth and Pan Am Games pistol shooting medal winner
- **Gerald Wilcox** – Canadian Football League All-Star

The Hall of Fame, now in its 23rd year of operation, was the brain child of long-time London Free Press sportswriter/editor the late Bruce Huff whose tireless efforts on behalf of the Hall were recognized with his induction in the Builder/Founder category in 2008.

The inaugural class of inductees included Canada’s Golfer of the Half Century, C. Ross (Sandy) Somerville, Western’s legendary football coach and athletic director John Metras, Pittsburgh Pirates catcher and manager, George (Mooney) Gibson, and the 1948 World Sandlot baseball champs, the London Majors.

Brief bios of the class of 2024 inductees are enclosed. For additional information contact

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Robert (Rob) Atchison - Athlete Modern

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- Born London, Ontario, September 19, 1975
- Attended Prince Charles Elementary School and Clarke Road Secondary School in London
- At age 19 in 1994 he joined family business, Atchison Machine Service Inc, founded by his father Bob in 1964, who was also a competitive drag racer at a high level for over 20 years
- Atchison Machine Shop supplies and builds drag racing components
- Rob began drag racing at age of 19, with the assistance of his father who was his crew chief
- Honed his driving skills at Grand Bend Dragway and other Southern Ontario tracks in the Quick 16 and Pro Comp Eliminator categories
- Over 25 years he became the winningest Canadian driver in International Hot Rod (IHRA) history winning 21 national events across North America and three IHRA Alcohol Funny Car championships
- Competed in the IHRA Alcohol Funny Car class from 1999 to 2008 winning three consecutive IHRA Alcohol Funny Car Championships in the 2003-2005 period
- Was named 2003 IHRA Pro Driver of the Year and 2005 Canadian Drag Racer of the Year
- Was the first IHRA Alcohol Funny Car driver to run a 5.685 second elapsed time at last event of 2005 IHRA season in San Antonio
- Qualified first over 35 times and had 36 final round appearances
- Is second in career victories in IHRA Alcohol Funny Class category
- Following discontinuation of IHRA Alcohol Funny Car category in 2010 Rob moved to the NHRA where he competed in top alcohol category
- In 2011 began competing in IHRA Pro Modified category winning his race in that category in Grand Bend in 2014, the scene of his first Alcohol Funny Car win in 2003.
- Was first Canadian driver to be named a second team all-star by the American Auto Writers and Broadcasters Association (2005)
- Retired in 2023
- Atchison remains active in family business which now occupies 4 buildings in east London where they perform machine work on all types of engines and supply and building drag racing components
- Has raced in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia and more than half the American states
- Rob and his dad became the first father-son duo to be elected to the Canadian Drag Racing Hall of Fame in 2023

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Bill Boland – Builder – Legend (deceased)

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- Born in Toronto June 17 1944 - died in London, August 26, 2020
- Resident of London and prominent figure in the figure skating milieu since 1980
- Support for his nomination to the London Sports Hall of Fame came from a who's who list of prominent members of the figure skating world locally, nationally and abroad
- They include: Marilyn Chidlow – Past President Skate Canada, Anne-Marie DeCicco-Best – former London Mayor, Sharon LaPier – past chair Skate Canada Western Ontario, Steve Scherrer – Skate Canada past Director, and London Free Press articles by Ryan Pyette
- Accomplishments and honours:
 - London Skating Club Volunteer of the Year
 - Manager of Synchronicity (London Skating Club)
 - Team leader for Team Ontario Skating, multiple years
 - Ontario Sports Council Award for lifetime achievement
 - Skate Canada Billie Mitchell Award for outstanding service
 - Planning committee 2007 Synchronized Skating World Championships in London
 - Planning committee Skate Canada Nationals 2005, 2010 in London
 - Chair, World Figure Skating Championships 2013 in London
 - 2013 Governor General's Caring Canadian Citizenship Award
 - 2014 Sports Person of the Year – London's Celebrity Sports Dinner
- Led the move to make sports tourism in London a major initiative
- As a Board Director of Skate Canada - Western Ontario, he led training seminars for volunteers and created and instituted a financial plan which created more help for athletes
- Was instrumental in the formation of Precision Skating teams at the London Skating Club later known as Synchronized Skating
- In 1989, Bill took 30 young women to the very first international Figure Skating competition in Gothenburg, Sweden and Helsinki, Finland. A few years later he brought Team Unique from Helsinki to London and set them up with billet families from the London Skating Club so the European team could learn from the skaters at the London Skating Club who, at the time, were the best in the world.
- The London Club held the Canadian title for many years and the city hosted the World Synchro Championship which he chaired
- Marilyn Chidlow, Skate Canada Past President, stated: "Bill, a person of the greatest character, truly epitomizes volunteerism and love of community to the fullest extent of sport administration and participation for four decades."

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Peter Inch – Builder – Modern

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- Born St. Thomas, Ontario, July 4, 1960 - moved to London in 1999
- Attended elementary and high school in St. Thomas
- Inducted into the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame -2018
- First elected to Curling Canada in 2013
- Chair of Curling Canada's Board of Directors – 2016-17
- Serious knee injury as a teenager prevented Inch from playing the sport
- First got "bug" to get involved in curling from organizational perspective while attending 1981 Silver Broom (world championships) held in London at Western
- Chair of 2002 Canadian Senior Men's and Women's Curling championship held at St. Thomas Curling Club
- In 2003 was vice-chair and marketing director for JVC/TSN Womens' Skins Curling Game also held in St. Thomas
- Was chair of 2006 Scott Tournament of Hearts (women) curling event held in London and 2011 Tim Hortons Brier (men)
- Chair of the organizing committee of the 2018 Continental Cup curling event held at the Western Fair Sports Centre which saw the world's top men's and women's curlers compete in a Ryder Cup format
- Was only second time Continental Cup held been held in Canada
- Event reached out to community with 2 sheets of curling ice set up in Victoria Park
- Was vice-chair of organizing committee of 2020 Continental Cup, also held at Western Fair Sports Centre
- Event was wildly popular with both curlers and fans, with an attendance of over 14,000 for the event. Average attendance was 1,281, with a sell-out being 1,500
- Upon induction into curling hall of fame Inch said: "My goal has always been to make a difference in the curling community"
- Vice chair – 2023 -Tim Hortons Brier to London in 2023
- Chair – 2024 Can-Am Men's Curling Tour to United States

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Jim Martin – Builder – Modern

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- Born in Tobermory, July 11, 1942
- Played hockey in Wiarton, Tobermory and Owen Sound
- Moved to London in 1962, married Charlene Ball 1967 and began family of 3 daughters and one son
- Was no girl's hockey organization in London at the time for their daughters to play in so the Martin's looked to start their own
- Began with a girl's hockey programme with the South London Minor Hockey where they were able to secure limited ice time
- Key to the growth of women's hockey in London was the availability of ice time. Jim worked closely with Bob Graham of London's PUC department to find ice time for girl's hockey
- South London program started with two teams of 20-30 girls 12-18 years of age
- He went to every arena in London speaking to parents with daughters who might be interested in playing girls hockey
- He believed that females deserved their own hockey organization so in 1986 along with the assistance of a number of like-minded individuals he laid the groundwork for the London Devilettes Girl's Hockey Association
- Jim and Charlene wanted a unique look for the group so they adopted the colour scheme of the New Jersey Devils of the NHL – red/green/white and named the organization the Devilettes
- The goal of the organization was to provide girls with the opportunity of playing hockey at all levels of competitiveness from house leagues to travelling teams
- Another goal was to level the playing field, regardless of ability, finances, or access to equipment. If the girls could not skate – they were taught to skate and provided with equipment
- In 1992-93, the 6th year of operation, over 400 girls were registered – from tyke teams through senior. 2 tyke teams and house league teams playing in structured divisions within the city
- 11 select travel teams competing in sanctioned tournaments throughout the province with one team winning silver medal and one a gold medal at the Ontario Provincial Championships.
- On the tenth anniversary in 1995-96 over 560 girls and young women were playing Devilettes hockey – that number grew to 800 for the 2017-18 season
- Was instrumental in the development of women's hockey in Ontario, taking on many roles with the Ontario Women's Hockey Association
- Over 100 former Devilettes have gone on to play university hockey in Canada and United States
- This past March, 6 former Devilettes were on teams who competed for the United States Women's Collegiate hockey title while 2 former Devilettes were on the Toronto Varsity Blues team which played in the U Sports women's final
- Katelyn Gosling and Brittany Howard have played for Team Canada
- Professionally, 3 former Devilettes were selected in the first-ever Professional Women's Hockey League draft in 2023 while Julia Gosling was the 6th overall pick by Toronto in this year's draft
- The first goal in the Professional Women's Hockey League was scored by a former Devilette, Ella Shelton

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Helen Smith – shooting-Legend

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- born in Kirkland Lake April 26, 1950
- resident of London from age 3 to age 58
- attended Northbrae Public School, A.B. Lucas Secondary School, London Teachers' College, Westervelt Business School
- entered world of sport shooting in 1984 after taking fire arms safety course at Fanshawe College
- after passing course instructor, Don Kishibe, a level 3 coach, encouraged her to come to Crumlin Sportsmen's Association the week after she passed the course due to her proficiency
- joined the Canadian National Shooting Team in 1986, which was governed by the Shooting Federation of Canada
- was on the team until 1997 for 10 years (not a member in 1995)
- was a provincial and national champion for 7 out 10 years in either women's sport pistol or women's air pistol
- silver team medal winner at 1991 Havana Pan-Am Games
- gold medal winner, individual, women's air pistol, 1994 Victoria BC Commonwealth Games
- silver medal winner, women's sport pistol, 1994 Victoria BC Commonwealth Games
- participated in World Cup events in California, Mexico City, Munich, Milan, Havana, Fort Benning, George and the 1996 pre- Olympics event held in Atlanta, Georgia
- recognized by the City of London (1988-1993) and the London Sports Celebrity Dinner (1995) for her accomplishments
- finished 2nd in Canadian trials for lone spot in her category for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics
- after retiring from sport, became a national level range officer and ran the events held at the 1998 National Championships held in Kitchener
- also in 1998 started coaching London Pony Club tetrathletes, ages 8 to 21, in shooting as part of their 4 event sport (riding, running, swimming, shooting) which she did for 10 years

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Gerald Wilcox – Athlete – Legend

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- Born in London, England July 8, 1966
- Attended Princess Elizabeth Elementary School and South Secondary School
- Excellent all-round athlete – 10-time London gold medalist in shot put, long jump and triple jump; 10-time WOSSA gold medalist in long jump and triple jump; OFSSA 10-time competitor in long jump and triple jump, 2-time high school hockey scoring champion, London high school football champion
- Outstanding hockey player – drafted by London Knights in 1983 in the 17th round
- Attended Weber State University (Utah) from 1985 to 1989 on football scholarship
- Was a 4-year starter at tight end, earned 3-time All Big Sky Team awards and was a 2-time Honourable Mention All American
- First overall pick in 1989 Canadian Football League draft by Ottawa Rough Riders
- Played for 3 seasons (1989-91) for Rough Riders
- Traded to Winnipeg Blue Bombers in 1992 where he achieved his greatest success, playing primarily the slot back position
- For 3 years was leading receiver for the Blue Bombers
- Known as a “big target with soft hands and good speed”
- Was favorite target of quarterback Matt Dunigan
- Had 79 receptions for 1,340 yards in 10 touchdowns in 1993, 111 receptions for 1,624 yards and 13 touchdowns in 1994 and 69 catches for 1,024 yards and 5 touchdowns in 1995
- 2-time finalist for outstanding Canadian, winning in 1994
- Was a league all-star in 1994 and an East Division All-Star in 1993 and 1994
- Injuries limited him to just 4 games in 1996 and in 1997 was traded to Calgary Stampeders
- After playing 2 games he retired, amassing 356 passes for 5,478 yards and 36 touchdowns during his career
- Was a finalist for 1994 Manitoba Male Athlete of the Year
- Was inducted into the Winnipeg Football Club Hall of Fame in 2001
- During his 5 seasons with Winnipeg, he also practised with the Winnipeg Jets of the National Hockey League