Black Nova Scotians’ Contribution to Sport

Celebrating Black History Month at the Hall of Fame: Black Boxers’ Fight for Recognition

The Hall of Fame honours a diverse group of inductees, including many members of Nova Scotia’s Black community. All inductees are recognized on the basis of merit, regardless of race, gender and ability. However, February is an excellent time to also recognize the struggles that many of these inductees faced due to social barriers, discrimination, lack of recognition, limited resources and other forms of racial prejudice.

Hall of Famer George Dixon (pictured left) experienced these struggles and used his success to act as an advocate for the Black community. Born in Africville, Halifax in 1870, Dixon began his 20-year 800-bout career at a time when bare-fisted fighting was transitioning to gloved boxing. The five-foot-three-and-a-half-inch featherweight was always interested in improving technique and is credited by many with popularizing shadow boxing and inventing the heavy bag. In 1888, Dixon took the world title, becoming the first-ever Black world boxing champion and the first Black person to hold a championship title in any American sport. Dixon fought at a time when lynching was still prominent and being a Black boxer who regularly beat up white fighters was a dangerous occupation. However, when New Orleans organizers asked Dixon to fight champion Jack Skelly in 1892, Dixon would only agree to the match if 700 seats were reserved for Black community members. His request was granted, and he defied many spectators’ expectations by beating Skelly by knockout. Dixon has remained an inspiration to the generations of Black boxers from North End Halifax who have followed in his footsteps, including two-time Canadian Welterweight champion Ricky Anderson (pictured top centre).

The next Nova Scotian to become an international boxing phenomenon was Sam Langford (pictured right) of Weymouth Falls. Born in 1886, Langford fought between 500 and 600 bouts from 1902 to 1923, including 252 professional fights in which he had 99 knockout wins and only 19 losses. Langford moved
Boxing Council later presented him with an honourary gold medal. Was denied the chance to receive due to discrimination, the World
front of 5,000 fans. Because of the many championship belts that Daye
national title, which he did in 1964 when he defeated Jackie Carter in
also had to fight opponents who were well above his weight class, often
excluded from the modern Halifax gyms and forced to train in a one-room shack on Creighton Street. Daye
the Maritime Featherweight champion during his first time in the ring. He and his fellow Black boxers were
in 86 professional bouts. Born in New Glasgow, Daye started his fighting career in Halifax after he defeated
Earle (pictured below). One more Black boxing inductee with a notable story is Delmore William “Buddy”
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Frontline: Nova Scotian Women in the Olympic Games:
Atlas: The story of Aileen Meagher
Aileen Meagher
was the first Nova Scotian woman to
compete in the Olympics. After
participating in the 1932 Los
Angeles Games, the track star
qualified for the 1936 Games in
Berlin, where she won bronze.

Debbie Miller (Brown) was the
first Black woman born in Nova
Scotia to become an Olympian.
She competed in Mexico City
in 1968. She also matched and
broke Aileen Meagher’s 100-yard
dash record of 11.2 seconds.

Marjorie Turner-Bailey also
matched Aileen Meagher’s 100-
yard dash record. She competed
in the 1976 Montreal Olympics,
established four Canadian
records and won a silver medal at
the 1978 Commonwealth Games.

The number of times that
Stan “Chook” Maxwell led the
international league in scoring
when he played with the Toledo
Blades.

Volleyball official Howard
Jackson was one of only
12 Canadians to
hold international
certification in the
early 1980s.

Julie Barton’s age
when she became the
youngest player ever
to make the Canadian
national table tennis
team. She was also the
first Nova Scotian to
make the team.

Will Njoku was the second all
time leading scorer for the
Saint Mary’s University men’s basketball team. He was
honoured with the Mike Mosher Award and a member of
the national team for six years. Will holds the CIAU record
for most rebounds in a single CIAU Final 8 game with 21.

Art Dorrington of
Truro was the first
Black hockey player
to sign with an
NHL team, signing
with a New York
Rangers farm team
in 1950. However,
he chose to play with
the Atlantic
City Sea Gulls
instead.

Wayne Smith
never played high
school or college
football. Bob Hayes
recommended the
Halifax Buccaneers
player to CFL
scouts, and Smith
signed with the
Ottawa Rough
Riders, winning the
1973 Grey Cup.

Bill Riley, who
played in the
NHL with the
Washington
Capitals and the
Winnipeg Jets,
organized and
built the Moncton
Wildcats QMJHL
franchise, serving
as their coach and
GM until 1998.

Tyrone Williams
was the first
Canadian university
football player
invited to play in
the Senior Bowl, a
closest game for
US college
seniors. He scored
the 1992 game’s
only offensive
touchdown.

John Paris Jr. of
Windsor was the first
Black hockey
teacher to coach
professional hockey. He was hired by
the Atlanta Knights of the IHL in 1993
and led them to
win the Turner Cup
Championship in
1994.
Another Memorable Induction Night

On Saturday, November 14, close to 700 people welcomed seven new inductees to the Hall of Fame: Raymond Downey (pictured, right, with Hall of Famer Hubert Earle, top right), Chris Flynn, Andrew Haley, David Kikuchi (bottom left as he receives his award from Olympic gymnast Ellie Black and father & fellow inductee Tak Kikuchi), Jim Bottomley, Lowell Cormier (bottom right with host Bruce Rainnie), and the 1995 Dalhousie Men’s Soccer Team. Many Hall of Famers attended the induction ceremony, including local hockey and baseball legend Bill Hannon, who celebrated his 97th birthday in 2015.

Education Program Update

Since the start of the school year in September, the Hall of Fame has presented to over 5,000 students from 24 schools across the province. New guest speaker Hannah Vaughan has joined the Future Hall of Famers education program to share her story and motivational messaging with Nova Scotian youth. Hannah is a Pan-American Games gold medalist and multi-time Canadian champion. As an RBC Olympian, she aims to represent her community and inspire people through engagement with local organizations. Hannah is pictured below with Grade 4 and 5 students at Kingswood Elementary School in Hammonds Plains.

Facility & Exhibit Upgrades Scheduled for 2016

- Starting in February, the Hall of Fame will feature a Black History Month exhibit outside its entrance in the Mezzanine level, visible to all attendees of Scotiabank Centre events
- Six new displays will be completed, creating content for six mobile cases that will be positioned both in the Hall of Fame’s main gallery space and in the Mezzanine area of the Scotiabank Centre
- The Hall of Fame will be creating new digital content for display on screens throughout the museum
- If you haven’t yet seen the 2015 inductees exhibit, visit our theatre area to see memorabilia from our newest Hall of Famers
- Visit often to see new artifacts and graphics on rotation

For questions or comments regarding the newsletter, please contact Katie Wooler at 902-404-3343 / katie@nsshf.com.

Some of the information in the Black Boxers article was sourced from Graeme MacDougall’s short documentary “Nova Scotia’s Corner: A History of Bluenose Boxing.”

Blaise Landry Named Volunteer of the Year

Blaise Landry has been a volunteer on the Hall of Fame’s Board of Directors since 1989. He is a Director-at-Large and sits on a museum committee for acquisitions. In 2015, Blaise was a valuable member of the organizing committee for the Canadian Association for Sport Heritage conference that was hosted by the Hall of Fame. He has made a significant impact in the community in his three decades as a Sport Consultant for the Department of Health and Wellness, and as a professor at Dalhousie. Blaise (centre) received his award from Chronicle Herald Promotions Manager Kevin Sanford (left) and Hall of Fame CEO Bill Robinson.

Hall Sponsors

Ellie Black on her Road to Rio

The Hall of Fame will continue to sponsor education ambassador Ellie Black in 2016 on her road to Rio. Ellie made headlines this summer when she won three gold medals, one silver and one bronze at the Pan Am Games. Ellie’s public promotion of the education program has greatly enhanced it, and her sincere interest in working with the Hall to help young Nova Scotians is a great contribution to the program.
Hockey was an important part of the social fabric of small towns in the Maritimes,” says Ted Cumming, a Hall of Fame and one of the four founding members of the Maritime Hockey School—a summer hockey camp that is known as Canada’s first hockey school and, some argue, the first school of its kind in the world. In 1956 Cumming took up a position coaching the Kentville hockey team and joined the Kentville Hockey Association executive, which also included Abbie Warden as president, Harmon Illsley as vice-president, and Art Lightfoot as treasurer. Kentville had the unique fortune of an artificial ice rink built on a layer of permafrost that extended hockey season for the town by many months. The rink was managed by George Warden, who, along with his brother Abbie, Cumming and Lightfoot (all three pictured below at left), wanted to improve Kentville’s playing style and attract players from nearby towns like Middleton and Berwick. The four men, now all inductees in the Hall of Fame, decided to offer a summer hockey school to bring attention to Maritime players who were often overlooked by scouts who focused on Central Canadian prospects. Hall of Fame sports media legend Ace Foley ran an ad in his column that was picked up by a Saint John paper, and, by the school’s inaugural summer in 1957, the founders had received calls from a multitude of hopeful participants. Around 50 high-school-aged kids attended the first one-week school, which was staffed by volunteer coaches who were paid only with free boarding. Since the NHL’s ban on “scouting out of season” prevented Cumming from inviting players he knew in the league to coach, he invited Greg Currie—coach of the 1954 Canadian men’s national team and part of the first team to play against Russia—who brought retired NHL pros like Harry Watson with him. The summer hockey schools continued until 1965 and were widely supported by the community and key individuals, such as Hall of Famer and Kings County Academy principal Wally Barteaux.

The Maritime Hockey School turned out many successful graduates. In the photo above at right, Cumming (centre) stands with Omaha Knights players and hockey school alumni Trevor Fahey (left) and Paul “Jigger” Andrea. Andrea, a Hall of Famer, played in the NHL with the Rangers, Penguins and Sabres.
**Noteworthy Visitors at the Hall**

On November 12, Jim Treliving of Dragon’s Den (left) visited the Hall of Fame for a Hockey Canada media conference and took the opportunity to have his picture taken with his friend and Hall of Famer Dave Andrews’ banner. Andrews was also present for the conference. On January 21, Skate Canada held a media conference at the Hall during the National Figure Skating Championships, and World Champion skater and Olympic medalist Elvis Stojko (right) visited the Rob McCall exhibit.

**From the Collection: Phil Scott’s Shoes**

These shoes belonged to Phil Scott, a native of Barrington, who captured the world log rolling championship nine times. In log rolling, two opponents run in place at opposite ends of the same log. The victor is the competitor who does not fall into the water. In 1968 Phil became the first man to ever win the world championship in his first attempt, when he hitchhiked to Wisconsin to compete in the world’s largest lumberjack festival. Phil had impressive stamina, rolling for hours at a time on multiple occasions, and practicing with roller skates for an added challenge. For a few years he held the Canadian, North American, and world championship titles, and he also won the Japanese championship in 1976.

**2016 Event Schedule**

- April 14: The Hall of Fame presents at the 2016 Canadian Museum Association Conference in Halifax
- June (Date TBA): 2016 Inductees Media Conference, announcing this year’s inductees
- June 14: Annual General Meeting
- June 29: Hall of Fame 21st Anniversary Golf Tournament, New Ashburn Golf Club
- September 15-16: Sixth Annual Fox Harb’r Invitational Golf Tournament, Fox Harb’r Golf Resort & Spa
- November 12: 2016 Induction Awards Night