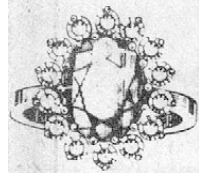


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Sports life pays off

Stan Obodiac recalls events which put him into hall of fame

Note: Approximately one month ago, the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame announced that Stan Obodiac, a former Yorkton resident and now publicity director of the Toronto Maple Leafs of the National Hockey League, was inducted into the honorary hall.

Yorkton This Week contacted Obodiac in Toronto and asked if he would recall some of his golden memories about his sporting days in Yorkton. The following are some of the incidents which took place while Obodiac was a household name in sporting circles in the city, as he recalled them:

"My mother always thought that sports were nonsense because it wasn't a job which provided money for the table and home, even though later she bought me my first pair of skates. She also came to games and watched me play hockey and baseball.

Some of my first skating at Yorkton was at Hopkin's Lake, usually in November when the ice froze over and was strong enough to keep us up. It was a most unusual sight, not known in the modern game, to see a

player and puck disappear under the ice in three feet of water.

My hockey playing then moved to rinks which I built myself in backyard gardens and I invited neighbors over to play.

In grade 7, Burke School teacher Lorne Patrick — now Colonel — told me after one game at school, "You were the best man on the ice," after our team won 1-0 and I scored the lone goal.

It was a real experience. It was the first time I was praised in my life for hockey. The grade 4 teacher, Miss Kushnaryk, said I was an excellent football player. To hear praise for the first time, you remember it all your life.

This early sport life at Burke School was encouraged by Lorne Patrick and C.J. Drake, and I became proficient in all sports from track to hockey. Once I disgraced myself at Burke when I didn't show up for a track meet and old C.J. grounded me from football for an entire month.

Another time, I missed a football game because I had to talk at St. Gerard's. A Catholic priest thought I had the "stuff" to make a good

priest.

Then the championships began to come. At Burke, we won all kinds of titles. In 1936-37 our Yorkton midget team won the first provincial title ever won by the city. We defeated Humboldt in the final. As I recall, it was quite an achievement because previous to that no one could beat the bigger cities like Regina, Moose Jaw and Saskatoon. In those days, you didn't have teams categorized by the size of the cities either.

The team who led us to that first Yorkton victory were guys like George Jamieson, Bill March and Ted Kozachenko. When we came back from Humboldt on the train, we had no money, except for 85 cents, the total of all the players.

The train stopped in some small town and the 85 cents was spent on peanuts to feed us. When we arrived on the train at the Yorkton depot, though, there was a band and cars to take us to the Toy Ying Cafe for a victory feed.

The team stayed together and in 1937-38, we won the first juvenile provincial hockey title for Yorkton when we beat Prince Albert.

Johnny Bower, former superstar netminder for Toronto Maple Leafs, played goal for Prince Albert and I scored a couple of goals on him.

C.J. Drake always used to be interested in softball for men and women. In 1940, he organized a team which won the Saskatchewan senior men's softball title, the first time a Yorkton team did that. We did not lose a single game in our march to the title.

In the final against North Battleford, C.J. always used to tell the story how I hit a grand slam to win the game. He said I hit it so hard that it went into the Saskatchewan River. I didn't hit it that far — the river was 1,000 feet away from the ball park — but with a strong wind and the ball never being found, it was a story which C.J. made people believe.

At the beginning of the war, we drove by places which were turning sod for the air bases for the Commonwealth Air Training Scheme. I didn't realize I would become a RCAF pilot and that my sports career would be halted for four years.

During a summer fling in

1940, I had been selected to attend the New York Americans pro training camp at Port Arthur, which was one of the firsts for Yorkton. To qualify for this, I had to put in some time at Dundurn so I could cross the border into the United States, which was not yet at war.

...When I completed my army life at Dundurn, I went to Port Arthur where the New York Americans were training. It was tough to imagine that I played with guys like Charlie Conacher and Busher Jackson, who were almost Gods to me in my younger Yorkton days.

During the war I came back to Yorkton as an officer and it gave me a great deal of pleasure to present hockey awards to three young players. Metro Prystai, Vic Kreklewetz and Lawrence Popein were recognized for sporting excellence. After the war I was associated with them in various sporting events.

When I returned to Yorkton after the war, I began to play hockey again for the Yorkton senior Legionnaires and Terriers, softball and baseball, and I took up golf.

In two years' time, I won my first North Eastern

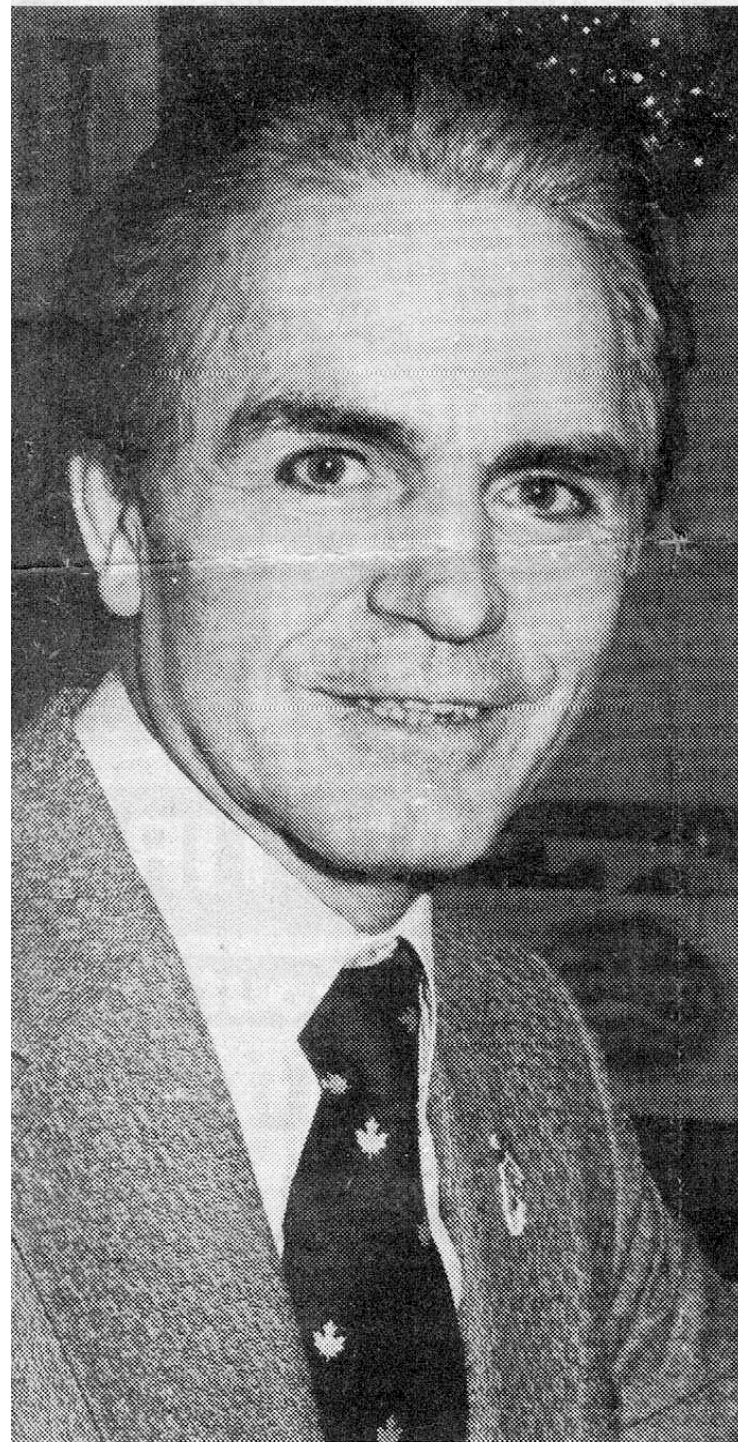
Saskatchewan Open and also won several championships from nearby cities. I also won the first of two Saskatchewan sand green golf titles. They were the first for Yorkton.

...In the late 40s, Bill Miller opened a bowling alley and I took up the sport in my spare time. With a group of fine bowlers, we won the Yorkton Bowling Championship.

While playing with the Legionnaires and Terriers I was able to win several scoring titles and other awards. One year after playing in Melville and Yorkton, I was selected as the Saskatchewan representative of Canada's hockey team which won the world title in 1951. This was a great honor for Yorkton as it was the first and only time a Yorkton person had been on a world championship team.

In Paris I played well in the tourney, as I scored 12 goals and had 12 assists. This is supposed to be a modern day record."

Obodiac is now in the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, British Ice Hockey Hall of Fame, and is being considered for the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame.



PUT INTO HALL: Stan Obodiac, now publicity director for the Toronto Maple Leafs of the National Hockey League, was a household name in local

sporting circles before and after the war. Recently, Obodiac was inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame for his success in sports.