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## Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame Inductee

### Ralph Neil

*Builder 2012*



Ralph Neil played a significant role in the history of Mount Pearl Minor Hockey. He was active in starting the Mount Pearl Minor Hockey system and in serving as Vice President on the first executive fundraising team. Ralph later became the second President of Mount Pearl Minor Hockey. In the early 1970's, prior to the town having an arena, Ralph coached Mount Pearl Hockey at the Prince of Wales Arena in St. John's. He was a driving force in building the Smallwood Drive Arena, raising funds through ticket sweeps, selling hot dogs, fries, and drinks at Mount Pearl celebrations and at the Royal St. John's Regatta. Ralph also took charge of securing Federal Government Grants and Provincial funding and support from local service clubs to assist with the cost of erecting the building. Along with these responsibilities, Ralph brought about the accommodations for a new freezer system that the arena would receive from Labatt's Brewery. Labatt Brewery thus became one of the first major sponsors for the arena, ensuring a companionship as a supporter of Mount Pearl hockey.

Over and above these actions Ralph, being a Civil Engineer, also volunteered to supervise the construction of the Smallwood Drive Arena. Ralph played a major role in setting up the bingo fundraising program for minor hockey and had an active voice in building the sky room at the arena, giving minor hockey the much needed space to play bingo. Bingo, as a fundraiser, allowed for

Mount Pearl Minor Hockey to establish itself financially and thus secure the purchasing and maintenance of the equipment needed. Having established an area in which sports could be played within the community of Mount Pearl, and having established a successful fundraising activity to supply players with quality equipment, Ralph also managed to maintain a coaching position. After completing the Canadian Amateur Coaching Certification Program (receiving his Level V certification at a CAHA coaching clinic at York University in Toronto under the watchful eye of NHL Coach Scotty Bowman), Ralph put his skills to work as the coach of the Mount Pearl Blades Midget All-Star team in the NAHA minor hockey system. In 1976, the team won the NAHA Midget B Championship.

At the end of his career, Ralph became President of the Mount Pearl Jr. Blades. Through the use of his own building program, Ralph's coaching led to the winning of the St. John's Black Horse Jr. Hockey League championship by the Blades team, the cherry on top of their undefeated season. The Junior Blades went on to win the NAHA Junior Championship as well. Following this performance, they continued on to win the Don Johnson Trophy as the Atlantic Provinces' Junior B Champions, a memorable win for the team. Moreover, Ralph played a major role in forming the Mount Pearl Senior Blades, a team that played in the NAHA Senior League. The Senior Blades' devoted supporters filled the arena on every game night to watch and cheer on a team that proudly represented Mount Pearl as a hockey town. Unequivocally, Ralph is recognized for his tireless work in building, bolstering and maintaining hockey as a sport in Mount Pearl.

The Mount Pearl Sports Alliance recognizes Ralph Neil's outstanding contributions with his induction to the Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame.

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