

## Chapter 10

### An Interview with Bob Hanna

Larry: *I'm in the bowels of the Whitby Iroquois Pak arena. Today is Thursday June 22, 2005. I'm with Bob Hanna the coach, general manager, and player. Bob, where were you born, what was your height and weight, and which way did you shoot when you played?*

Bob: *I was born in Fergus. I'm about 6'3" and played around 220-225 pounds. I shoot left.*

Larry: *Where and when did you play your first lacrosse?*

Bob: *I played my first lacrosse in Fergus. I think I was eleven or twelve when I first started playing organized lacrosse. Fergus was a real hotbed of lacrosse. I also played at school.*

Larry: *Looking back at your career stats, I see you played three games for Mimico Mountaineers in 1953 as a 19-year-old. What you can remember about those games and the players you played with at the Senior A level?*

Bob: *The first game I played with Mimico, five of us went from the Green Gaels to play against Peterborough. We played at the old Miller Bowl. Peterborough had won the Mann Cup the year before, and the Miller Bowl was sold out; 3 000 people, maybe 3 500. Peterborough had players like Lou Nickle, Curly Mason, Harry Wipper, and Moon Wootton playing goal. They beat us something like 31-3.*

Larry: *Do you remember the other four guys on the Green Gaels who went with you?*

Bob: *Dennis McIntosh, Billy Davenport, maybe Charlie Ludlow, Gene Petroff, and myself.*

Larry: *The Green Gaels entered Junior A in 1953 in Oakville. Who were your teammates? Any junior stories or other memories from that first year in Oakville?*

Bob: *Our original team in Oakville had Dennis McIntosh, Bernie Abrams, Charlie Ludlow, Billy Davenport, Hughie Devine, Billy Castator, Ralph McCormick, Jack Madgett, Gary Etough, the Pulford brothers, Tommy Greene in goal, Jack McGee, Gene Petroff, Donnie Bruce, and Louie Riel. Those are most of the guys I can remember. We played out of the old Oakville Arena and held our practices at the old Sunnyside Bowl. Jim Bishop was our coach. We didn't have any assistant coaches. We had a manager, but I can't remember his name. That's about it. We travelled by car. The league consisted of St. Catherines, Long Branch, Mimico, Brampton, Dundas, and ourselves. I think that was about it.*

Larry: *Didn't you finish first that year?*

Bob: *We probably did. We always practiced Sunday morning. After that, we ran to the Humber River and back.*

Larry: *How far would that be?*

Bob: *It was about a mile and a half. It was a lot of fun. Jim would put us through every practice.*

Larry: *The Green Gaels moved to Newmarket for 1954-1955. What was the reason for the move? Tell me something about your teammates and any Jim Bishop recollections.*

Bob: *We moved there for one year and part of the next because we weren't drawing anyone in Oakville. I talked to Jim and he was ready to move, so the team moved to Newmarket. We basically had the same team except a guy from St. Catherines, Donnie Baker. It was a good move to Newmarket. We did pretty well, actually. Bishop stories? He was very dedicated, very demanding and hard to get along with. He pushed you in practice, and he had a bit of philosophy in those days. He felt the little guys had more stamina than big guys, so the little guys got a little more floor time. The big guys never got much floor time. That's where Jim and I sort of disagreed, or agreed to disagree.*

Larry: *Yeah, you were a big guy back then.*

Bob: *I was. The second year, I was probably in the best shape of my life. I was down to about 185 lb. I could run for a long time. I was not speedy, but I could get there. Jim thought the little guys were faster, had more stamina, and they were.*

Larry: *What year did Dennis McIntosh come along?*

Bob: *In 1953, Dennis McIntosh, Billy Davenport, and myself were all playing for Oakville in Junior A (the first year of Junior A for the Gaels). Dennis was team captain that year. He was an outstanding player. Some of us had been called up to play intermediate with the Scarborough Maitlands to play against the Brooklin Merchants on a Friday night. Billy Davenport and Dennis McIntosh decided not to play with us and went on a holiday and drove down to the states, which was a bad thing because they were both bad drivers. Unfortunately, one of them fell asleep. I'm not sure which one it was and in the ensuing accident, Dennis McIntosh was killed. We lost a good friend, teammate, and outstanding lacrosse player. The most valuable player trophy in the O.L.A. Junior A series is named after him. It's called the Green Gael Trophy in memory of Dennis McIntosh, first captain. The original trophy was lost and about eight or nine years ago, Bishop and I decided to find another trophy.*

*Dave General who is a Native artist from Six Nations designed the trophy. The Green Gael alumni were asked to donate, and the guys did. Jim also put up about \$5 000 himself. So the M.V.P. trophy is in honour of Dennis McIntosh, the first captain of the Green Gaels.*

Larry: *You played on some pretty powerful clubs. In 1956, the Green Gaels moved to Mimico. Where were you at that time?*

Bob: *In '56, I was with the Scarborough Maitlands, and we were Intermediate A. The Gaels were back in Mimico.*

Larry: *Next summer is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mr. Bishop forming the club. Do any Bishop stories come to mind? I'd love to hear some stories about his coaching, his personality.*

Bob: *Jim was always intense. He put that into his coaching. He didn't tolerate anyone not working hard, either at practice or in a game. He demanded perfection. He wanted perfection. He wouldn't accept anything else. He was a little bit hard to get along with in that way. He pushed you all the time, all the time, all the time. There is nothing wrong with that, but you don't think the same way when you're 21. As you get older and look back, you realize that should have made you a better player. I don't have many stories about him. We go back together in or around 1968 when the pro league was starting. He called me and said that the pro league was coming and there was going to be a draft. He wanted to draft me, but wasn't sure if we were going to be able to get along. I told him we could get along. So he drafted me and later called me to say he had. Then he said, "I don't think you will make the team." So I said to my wife, "I'm gonna make that team if it bloody-well kills me." And it nearly did. We had our training camp out in Oakville. We practiced two-hour practices all week, and we ran, ran, ran all the time. Then on Saturday morning, we had a two-hour practice, a lunch break, a two-hour practice in the afternoon, and then about an hour with Lloyd Percival.*

*He would tell us about how to get into condition and to evaluate ourselves. Then we played that night, and when we played, I was so sore that I could hardly walk. I was 34 years old then.*

Larry: *Were you sort of the assistant coach that year, too?*

Bob: *I first started out as a player. But I realized that I was too old for this. I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't move. I was so sore. I really wanted to leave, but Bishop said he would get me in shape, add 10 years to my life, and all this kind of stuff. At one of the practices at the Oshawa Civic, Glenn Lotton who was the assistant coach at the time was running the practice. Bishop saw me, came up, shook my hand and welcomed me back. I told him I wasn't back. He said "you're back and we practice tomorrow night", and the next night I was there. He signed me a couple of days before the season opener. We had talked about bonuses and then he told me that he wanted me to be the captain. I told him I didn't want to be captain, mainly because I thought Powless would be captain. He really wanted me to be captain. He says, "I'm not asking you to do it for free. I'll pay you." He told me how much and I said, "You've got a captain." But he always reminded me that I would be on the heat for the whole team, but he thought that I could handle that. Well, I did, and it was tough.*

Larry: *That was 1968. That had to be the first pro league since 1932.*

Bob: *Yes it was. There was an interlocking schedule. Every team in the east would go out west. There were four teams out there and they all came and played us here. Out west, there was New West, Vancouver, Portland, and Victoria. When we played teams like Victoria, we had to fly over to the island. They had to hold the game up for a half-hour because it was a total sell out. In the Vancouver paper on game day, there were head and shoulder shots of about ten of us and the headline read, "The Green Bay Packers of Lacrosse Have Arrived." Jim would meet us at the airport and we would go right to the arena to practice.*

*When we were in the arena getting changed, Jim once came in and said, "There's a lot of reporters and press here. When you get to the floor, I want you to hit the floor running and I don't want you to stop running through the whole practice." And we didn't. We ran for two hours solid and people couldn't believe how hard we practiced or how stupid we were, but we did. We drew great crowds out there. We played at the Coliseum against Vancouver and about 8,000 people showed up. In Coquitlam it was packed, New Westminster it was packed. Portland wasn't long before they were getting 3 000 fans. Bionda was playing for Portland at that time.*

Larry: *You had a pretty good team. Gaylord Powless was on it.*

Bob: *We had Gaylord Powless, Grant Heffernan, Glen Lotton. Both George Stevens and Merv Marshall played goal. Elmer Tran was on the team. Tommy Conlin, Johnny Bergsma, Bobby Haw, Brucey Wanless. We also had four or five Green Gaels in the lineup. Ross Jones played a lot of games with us. Merv Marshall, Charlie Marlowe, Chuck Li. All those guys played a few games with us. I liked to see Charlie Marlowe there. Charlie played on the number one powerplay and I was number two and I didn't like playing on that power play very much. On the power play that year we played a 2-1-2, and when Marlowe wasn't there, I was the one in the center. You had to leave your back to the two guys on the crease watching the corners. When you got the ball you knew someone was going to come out and get you, so you took a lot of hits in there. So every time Charlie showed up I said, "Good to see you Charlie." We drew relatively well in Detroit. The Tigers won the pennant that year. The town was baseball crazy. We drew around 3 500 or so most of the times. Sometimes we drew a bit more than that. It wasn't bad. Bishop sent five or six of us down to the Chamber of Commerce dinner and I was sitting at the table with these businessmen from Detroit. This one guy says to me "Where do you play again." "We play at the Olympic." I said. "Oh," he says "That's a bad part of town." "Yeah" I said, "we understand that." He says, "Do you carry a pistol with you when you go to the games?" "No", I answered. He says "I always carry my .45 in my glove compartment when I go there."*

Larry: *Didn't you go into the playoffs against New West that year?*

Bob: *Yes, we did. We won the east and then played New West in the final. I tore up my knee that year. Grant Heffernan tore up his knee and neither one of us was able to play, so we didn't go. It was the second or third week in September and Heff was a teacher and I was a teacher and seeing as we couldn't play, we didn't get to go. We lost in six games to New West out there.*

Larry: *You had just started your teaching career around that time?*

Bob: *No, I started teaching in '56.*

Larry: *What kind of money were you getting in Detroit?*

Bob: *It was at par. The cheques were written on the Norris Steamship Lines, so you knew that they were good. They were a pretty big outfit. Everyone pretty well got that \$50 per game. I don't know what it would be worth now; more than \$50 that's for sure. We played about a forty-some game schedule, and we flew down to Detroit every Sunday. We played home on Sunday. Both teams flew on the same plane, down and back. Most of our players were from around the Toronto area, except Tommy Conlin, and a couple of guys from Huntsville.*

Larry: *So you have some pretty good memories of the pro league back then?*

Bob: *Yeah. When I look back at it now, it was fun. We worked hard. We practiced every night. We always practiced around eight, eight-thirty. The Gaels practiced at six. We practiced all over the place. We practiced in Streetsville quite a bit. When we were local, Jim would bring in five Green Gaels to practice with us. So they would have put in a two-hour practice, and then two hours with us, for four hours of practice. Those young guys would really get on your tail.*

Larry: *Let's backtrack a bit. You played on some pretty good Brooklin Redmen teams from 1963 to '67. You didn't win the Mann Cup, but you came awfully close. Give me a rundown on those four years?*

Bob: *They were a great four years. Probably the best four years I ever had as far as playing on good teams, having a lot of fun and winning. I had played with Port Credit, but not in '60 when they won the Mann Cup. I was supposed to play that year with Port Credit. They had asked me to sign. I was going to sign, but Donny Bruce, Bernie Abrams, Gene Petroff, and some of the Green Gaels decided we should have a Senior B/Intermediate team and play in Newmarket. They got my Dad on the team and my Dad said, "You're playing here." So I went to Newmarket and played there. At the first practice, I was voted the coach, so I was a playing coach in Newmarket. We didn't do too badly in the three years I played there. One night, the team was at a local drinking establishment. Elmer Lee, who was the coach, says that some of the older players won't be back; guys like Crawford and Hanna. So I looked at Red and said, "Were you planning on retiring?" He said, "No." He asked me and I said, "No." But I guess we were. That was in '63; I was 29. So anyhow, I guess it was around February and I was teaching school on Danforth Road. Crawford came in and said "We're going to Brooklin." I said "You might be. I'm not." He said "No, no. We're both going out for Brooklin." He said "I'm going to be player/coach." I said "We're both going out for Brooklin." We had four great years. In '64, and '65, we made it to the Mann Cup. '66 for whatever reason, we never had a very good team. '67 we bounced back and we were in the Mann Cup again.*

Larry: *Was '67 the year you won the Merv McKenzie Award for the best defenseman in the League?*

Bob: *Yes, it was. We could beat Brampton in '67, but we couldn't beat Peterborough. I think we played Peterborough four times and they won all four games by pretty handy scores. That year, we played Toronto and put Toronto out. Brampton played Peterborough and put them out.*



*We then beat Brampton in seven and went for the Mann Cup. We picked up Johnny Davis and Brucey Wanless to take them to the Mann Cup with us. McCready was playing goal for us and we had a pretty good team but Vancouver had a powerful team. They beat us pretty handily in the first game so we put in a zone defense for the second game and they didn't know what to do. They got ahead of us and just passed the ball around the outside and nothing happened. The ball just went around the outside. Periodically, we would try and get the ball. We would just stand there. The C.L.A. said we were making a travesty of the game and we couldn't play zone. We said "Show us in the rule book that we can't play a zone." They couldn't, so we continued to play zone.*

Larry: *In '67, the C.L.A. came out with the 30 second clock because of the way teams were ragging the ball.*

Bob: *Part of that was because of the Mann Cup and part of it was because you could rag the ball for as long as you wanted to. In game seven when Brampton beat Peterborough, Brampton was up by one goal and Bill Castator and Mike Finegan hung onto the ball for the 10 minutes.*

Larry: *In 1968 you showed up, of all places, in Detroit playing under Bishop in the N.L.A. We already talked about that. In 1969, you played three games for Bishop in Kitchener in the Eastern Lacrosse Association. Can you comment on how that came to be?*

Bob: *In Kitchener I was supposed to be the playing coach. That year we had Kitchener, Toronto, St. Catharines, and Peterborough in that league. After I tore up my knee the year before in Detroit, I had to have it operated on. When I went to training camp, it didn't work out, and my knee wouldn't stand up. I only played three games and they were later on in the year because Kitchener was losing players. They ran into money problems. They supposed to have sponsors and stuff, and money was a problem. When the sponsor finally backed out entirely, there wasn't any money.*

*We tried to get the players to play for free and most of them did, but three or four of them left. That is why I suited up for a game here and there, when they were really short of guys.*

Larry: *Wasn't that when they televised your games on TV from Hamilton?*

Bob: *I do remember they showed some of those games from the Lakeshore Arena. Morley Kells was calling them.*

Larry: *That's right. I used to watch them myself. Think back to 1971 when you were coaching and managing. Could you ever have imagined that you would be doing the same thing 34 years later?*

Bob: *Not really, but I do plan to retire in another year. I'm still enjoying it; having fun with the kids. We always have a pretty good team here in Whitby? We won in '99.*

Larry: *Another Minto Cup would be nice, wouldn't it?*

Bob: *Another Minto would be nice before I leave, but it remains to be seen. I just play it year by year, see how I feel, and think about what I want to do. This year we'll see what happens.*

Larry: *How many Minto Cups do you have under your belt?*

Bob: *Just one, in 1999. I waited all those years for the Minto Cup. During the years I coached the Green Gaels, we had some really good teams. In '79 against Peterborough, we were up three games to one and we lost game seven in the final at Iroquois Park. We had guys like Jayde Gibbs, Kelly Mitchell, Derek Keenan, Guy Morey, and Mike McKee. Two of those years, Mike McKee scored 106 goals one year and 115 the next. All those five guys were over 100 points each year. In 1979, we scored 500 or 600 goals.*

Larry: *That must have been fun to watch in those years?*

Bob: *I remember beating Windsor one night 40-10. Those five guys were excellent players and we had a good defense, but we didn't have the depth. We ended first because we could score at free will. When it came down to the playoffs when playing Peterborough, they knew us pretty well and they could shut down some of the guys, and we didn't have other guys to put the ball in the net. We were pretty good, but when they shut down our big guys, that shut down our team.*

Larry: *What can you tell me about your coaching days in Junior B?*

Bob: *One of the best teams that I ever coached was the '85 Scarborough Saints Junior B team. We could have played Junior A and done well. I wouldn't say we would have won a Minto Cup. We did however win the Founder's Cup. We had Paul St. John, Scott McMichael, Mike O'Toole, Adam Kluwak, Mike Harding, and Rob Hanna. We had five guys score over 50 goals. We were 37-0-1 that year.*

Larry: *You mentioned your son Rob played. I never heard anything about your Dad before. He was involved with lacrosse?*

Bob: *He never played, but because we lived in Fergus, he knew the game. We went to all the Senior Thistles games. That's one thing about a small town; you knew all the senior players. On a Sunday afternoon, you could go to the park and play lacrosse and all the senior guys would be there and you'd want to be on their team. Two or three of them would be on each team. After we moved to Bradford, we started a Bush League. There was Camp Borden, Beaton, Brandford, and Bolton. I was only 16, playing in a league with men. After one or two years of that league, I went into the O.L.A. and played intermediate. There were a lot of teams in those days. There were probably 20 or 30 intermediate teams of three divisions around the province. I was 17 or so, playing in that league.*

*I played there for a couple of years and then I saw an ad in the Toronto Star saying a new Toronto Junior A team was looking for players and that's where I met Mr. Bishop. Donnie Bruce was the same. That's where Donnie met Jim. We ended up being the two imports on the original Green Gael team.*

Larry: What can you tell me about the 1999 team that won the Minto Cup?

Bob: *One of the greatest Junior A teams ever, was the 1999 team in Whitby. When we had that '99 team, Gavin had 100 points. The year before that, he and Sallie had over 100 points. You only get one or two guys now that get 100 points in a season. We had Gee Nash in goal and he was outstanding. He could throw the ball, plus he got 88 points on the season. We also had Voituk, Maynard, Marty O'Brien, Brad Reed, Ryan Harris, who's coaching with us now, Zac Aitken, Evan Cardwell, Joe Teatro, Tyler Francey, who we got in a trade from Brampton that year, and the Suddons boys. There were no weaknesses on that team. We were a powerhouse. We were expected to win every night out and we basically did. We only lost three games all year; one to Six Nations in the regular season, one to Six Nations in the playoffs, and one to Burnaby in the Minto. We scored an average of 16.9 goals per game. There wasn't any doubt in my mind we weren't going to win the Minto Cup. We just had a solid, solid team. Jonesy helped us defensively. He didn't play in the regular season but came out in the playoffs and played solid defense for us. It was a great, great junior team. I waited 45 years to win a Minto Cup and this was going to be our year.*

Larry: *One more question. What would be your highlights as a player, as a coach and any other comment before we close off?*

Bob: *The highlight as a player obviously would be being in three Mann Cups in four years with Brooklin. I also scored five goals in one night for Brooklin. They had me setting the power play; for what reason I don't know. People think of me more as a defensive player but if you look at my stats, I scored 20 goals most seasons. Coaching the Green Gaels in 1970 was a highlight.*

*We only had two guys left from the Minto Cup teams and we ended up third. Coaching at Scarborough was a highlight. Coaching my son was a highlight. He played well for me. We didn't always see eye to eye but I treated him like any other player. He was a good player. Towards the end, as I starting thinking about leaving the O.L.A., it was my intention not to come back to lacrosse. Sometime during the summer of that year, I said to Bishop that I was leaving the O.L.A., probably in December. During the first week of December, he phoned and asked if I was still leaving. When I told him I was, he said to wait because it would be nice to win a Minto Cup together in Whitby. He would be the coach and I would be the general manager. After talking it over with my wife, she said "Do whatever you want." I thought that it would be kind of fun to be back with Jim and maybe win a Minto Cup. So, I became G.M. and in '98 we got knocked off by St. Catharines in the semi-finals. So, no Minto Cup that year. Later on, the next thing I know, Jim is killed in a car accident. We were supposed to be here two years together and win two Minto Cups. We didn't make it the first year, and although he was here in memory the second year and not actually here in body, we did win the Minto Cup together. Eight years later, I'm still here Larry. It's kind of strange how things work out. Yeah, I don't know how much longer I'm going to be here. I'm not getting any younger. I'll be here as long as I'm still enjoying it.*

Larry: *I am going to get this put on The Bible as soon as I can so the whole world can listen to you. Your involvement in lacrosse has included being a player, a coach and a member of the Canadian Hall of Fame as a Builder. Is there anything else I can report?*

Bob: *I am in the Ontario Hall of Fame as a player. Other than that, I had a long association with Jim Bishop. We go all the way back to '68. By the time he died in 1990, we were very close. We saw each other a fair bit and talked a lot. I had great admiration for him. You know, as a young player you listen to your coach, at least I think you do, but sometimes you don't pay that close attention. But in '68, I learned probably more about coaching than I ever had because it was the end of my career.*

*I was 34 years old, so I paid a lot closer attention about what Bishop was doing. What we were doing in practice and drills. That's when I helped out as an assistant coach. In '74, I coached with Bishop with the Tomahawks and I listened and learned from Jim. So, I have admiration for a lot of people in lacrosse, but obviously Jim Bishop had the biggest influence on me overall.*

Larry: *Okay, thanks a lot Bob. Hopefully I can interview you in another 10 years.*