

Chapter 5

The End of Field Lacrosse: The Beginning of Box Lacrosse

The 1928 season was the second last season of field lacrosse to be played at the Senior A level in Durham Region. The league was set up with six teams: Brampton Excelsiors, Toronto St. Simon, Oshawa General Motors, St. Catharines Athletics, Weston, and the Young Torontos. The young Oshawa team played a 20 game schedule with the third place Oshawa General Motors making the playoffs and playing a sudden-death semi-final playoff series against the Toronto St. Simon team. One game ended in a tie and Oshawa won the other game. The two-game total series ended with seven goals to three. In the final series, the Oshawa and Brampton teams split the two game series one game apiece with the Oshawa team taking the series seven goals to four. The Oshawa team then took the Clare Levack trophy by downing the Buffalo Intermediate team 13-1 with Judy "Punch" Garlow between the pipes for the less experienced and less talented Buffalo team. Because the Ontario Amateur Lacrosse Association (O.A.L.A.) series had taken so long to finish, the Ottawa Emmetts were declared the winners in the East and were the winners for the second last time that teams competed for the Mann Cup as field lacrosse teams. This young Oshawa team was the beginning of a team that would go on to win the Mann Cup in 1929. This would be the only time Oshawa would win the Mann Cup.

One of the players to play on that team was "Toots" White. He had also played a year later for the Mann Cup winning field lacrosse team. Toots was the top scorer on the Oshawa team with 23 goals and four assists in 17 games. Toots also played professional lacrosse in 1931 and 1932 for Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Maroons. In 1931, he scored 34 goals for the Toronto Maple Leafs pro lacrosse franchise. He later played in 1936 for Oshawa's only Senior A box lacrosse team; a team that lost all 28 of their games in their only season.

Chuck Barron also played on this 1928 team scoring 11 goals. He also played in the International Professional Lacrosse League (I.P.L.L.) in 1932 with the Montreal Canadians. In 1936, he scored 49 goals in just 15 games for the 1936 Oshawa Senior A team. He finished fourth in league scoring outscoring Bill Isaacs in total goals 49 to 45, even though Isaacs played 25 games to Chuck Barron's 15 games.

Chuck Barron played on all the Oshawa Senior B box lacrosse teams in 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941, and 1947. He was the top scorer throughout the early history of box lacrosse in Oshawa.

Toots White, Chuck Davidson, Bob Stevenson, Kelly Degray, Ernie Shepley, Pat Shannon, Red Spencer, Pete Walsh, Chuck Barron, Cliff Stokes, and “Smitty” Smithson all played on the 1929 Oshawa Generals Mann Cup field lacrosse championship team. Toots White, Pat Shannon, Red Spencer, Ted Reeves, Chuck Davidson, Bob Stevenson, Kelly Degray, Ernie Shepley and Chuck Barron also played for teams in the I.P.L.L. in 1931 and 1932.

In 1931, International Professional Lacrosse League started with four box teams: the Toronto Maple Leafs, Montreal Canadians, Montreal Maroons, and Cornwall Colts. The O.A.L.A. Senior A teams started in 1931 by playing exhibition games at Sunnyside Park in Toronto. In 1932, box lacrosse seemed to be catching on. The pro series had the Cornwall Colts drop out and they were replaced by the Toronto Tecumsehs. Unfortunately, the 30-game schedule was aborted after 15 games when the two Montreal clubs could not draw enough spectators. With the league now down to the two Toronto clubs, it added the Buffalo Bowmans and the season finished as a three team league.

In 1932, a five team Bush League called the Southern Ontario Box Lacrosse League played for one season. Teams included Harmony, Bowmanville, Port Perry, Stonehaven, and Brooklin. Harmony took the league championship with players including Roy Fleming, Jim Fleming, Fred Fleming, Waddey Oak, Pete Sandford, Mel Moffatt (Goal), Ab Barnes, Bob Normoyle, Jack Gay, Don Hern, Cy Campbell (whose brother Soup Campbell was the sports editor of the Oshawa Times) Stan Cook, Ray Leroy, and Glen Salter. Roy Fleming, Glen Salter, Stan Cook, and Ray Leroy all played on the Oshawa Senior A box lacrosse team in 1936 that lost all 28 games of the schedule. This 1936 Oshawa team was joined by many Peterborough lacrosse players such as Red Creighton, Emmett Creighton, Mick Magee, Ira Dundas, Pete King, as well as Eugene “Shine” Boivin. Boivin played lacrosse for both Peterborough and Oshawa until he was killed in World War II on November 2, 1944.

Brooklin boasted the Vipond twins Lewis and Luther, as well as Sailor Luke, Jim Patterson, Jack Patterson and Jack MacDuff. Port Perry Rovers had Rick Armitage who later played on that 1936 Oshawa Senior A box team, Gord Kidd and Mac Black.

Members of the 1936 Oshawa Senior A club that never won a single game but were the only Oshawa team ever to play Senior A box lacrosse included Chuck Barron, Kelly Degray, Lloyd Daniels, Ray Leroy, Pete King, Rod Clark, Shorty Oke, Joe Cheevers, George Crowley, Eugene "Shine" Boivin, Mick Magee, F. Gibson, Ed Osler, Toots White, Stan Cook, Emmett Creighton, Glen Salter, Ira Dundas, Roy Fleming, E. Clark, Johnny Cardinal, Red Creighton, and Earl Armour.

Oshawa Local 222 played Intermediate in 1937. In 1938, the team moved to Brooklin to form a Senior B team. Some of the team members included Lewis and Luther Vipond, Ken Sanders, Peter Grist (who played professional football with the Montreal Allouettes), Gord Cook, Hugh Ormiston, Bill Vipond, Earl Armour, Eugene "Shine" Boivin, Sailor Luke, Jerry Cooper and Tim Vipond. In 1939, 1940, and 1941 both Oshawa and Brooklin had teams in Senior B.

World War II ended Senior B lacrosse until 1947 when Oshawa formed a Senior B club in a league that was won by Peterborough. Gord Cook, Hugh Ormiston, Bill Vipond, Luther Vipond, Tim Vipond, Ken Sanders, Robbie Robson, Bas Bastien Jack Sutherland, Charlie Barron, Don Mitchell, Bruce Mitchell, Art Bradley, Peter Grist, Obie O'Brien, Cliff Chambers, and Henry Janzen were all members of that 1947 Oshawa Senior B team. The 1948 team also had Gord Cooke on the Oshawa team.

The Brooklin Memorial Arena was opened in Brooklin January 1, 1949. An indoor ice arena was built from lumber from the Ajax Municians plant. Brooklin did not get a box lacrosse team until the summer of 1950 when the Brooklin Bruisers Intermediate box club came to town. Members of that first team to play in the Brooklin Memorial Arena include Hugh Ormiston, Gord Cook, Luther Vipond, Bud Christie, Don Mitchell, George Richardson, Bruce Mitchell, Ross Lowe (who played hockey for the Oshawa Generals and played professional hockey in the Montreal Canadians farm system), Allan Mackey, Bill Lowe, Bill Vipond, Jack Sutherland, Tim Vipond, Art Bradley, and Bob Heron. The 1951 team again played Intermediate with many of the same players from 1950.

In 1952, the Brooklin team changed its name to the Brooklin Dodgers and won the O.L.A. Intermediate C title, becoming the first team in Durham Region to win an All-Ontario title since the Oshawa Generals won the Dominion Championship for hockey (1929) and the Mann Cup championship for field lacrosse (1929). The three top point getters in the playoffs that year were 17-year-old rookie Don Craggs, Gord Cook, and Hugh Ormiston (believed to be the only three surviving members of that championship club). Don Craggs had started playing his lacrosse two years earlier in Oshawa in the Community Recreational Association (C.R.A.), playing for Storie Park in a midget house league. In thirteen playoff games that spring, Craggs scored 24 times, while Gord Cook finished with 23 and Hugh Ormiston with 20 goals to lead all playoff scorers. Hugh Ormiston retired from lacrosse after the 1952 championship season. He is now 89 years old and resides in Brooklin. Gord Cook retired in 1955, also living in Brooklin, and is 90 years of age. Don Craggs played throughout the Senior B and Intermediate days with the Brooklin team. He played on their first Senior A club in Brooklin in 1961 and played Senior A lacrosse until the league changed from Senior A to Major in 1973. Don is currently 78 years old and was inducted into the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame several years ago. He was a playing coach and captain of the Brooklin Redmen Mann Cup champions in 1968 and 1969. Don even took time for a stint of pro lacrosse with Detroit in 1968. Craggs finished his lacrosse career with 285 goals in Senior A and another 228 goals in Senior B and Intermediate lacrosse.

Don Craggs became the vice-president of the Senior B Brooklin Merchants club in 2001 and I was on that same Brooklin Merchants executive as the promotional director. I will never forget the first time I met Mr. Craggs. I have often shared a joke with Mike Gray about how easy it was for Brooklin to win the Mann Cup in 1968 and 1969 (Mike Gray was on those teams) because the league was “watered down”. It was during this time that an attempt to get a pro league off the ground was starting, and all the best players were going pro. During that first encounter with Don, I shared my opinion about the “watered-down” Senior A league and Don, who was then 72, showed that eternal spark of competitiveness. He came close to beating the crap out of me and my badly directed sense of humour. That was the way “number 15” played his lacrosse, with full intensity as captain of the Brooklin Redmen. If the team needed a goal to spark them he would go out and score one. If they

needed some inspiration he would go out and start a fight. Don Craggs was a tough customer and was one of the greatest players the town of Brooklin has ever seen play the game.

Other members of that championship club included Bud Christie, Al Mackay, Robbie Robson, Tod Lidner, George Richardson, Doc Lewis, Doug Jackson, Jim Phillips, Bill Vipond, Bruce Mitchell, Eric Branton, Bruce Mitchell, Art Bradley, Bill Vipond, and Luther Vipond who finished with 104 goals to Luther's credit in Senior B and Intermediate lacrosse during his career.

Several new players were added to the Brooklin Dodgers lineup in the 1953 season. Doug "Tip" Vipond was one of those who joined that Brooklin Dodgers club. In total, six Vipond brothers played lacrosse at one time or another during the history of the Brooklin Senior club. That 1953 Brooklin Dodgers team moved it up a notch winning the Ontario Lacrosse Association (O.L.A.) Intermediate B championship knocking off a talented Bradford team in the playoffs. Another notable player was a young Jerry Ravary who went on to fame as a top lacrosse and hockey referee, refereeing in the O.L.A., as well as the professional National Lacrosse League (N.L.L.). Jerry was inducted into the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame in October 2008. Prior to that, Jerry was voted into the Whitby Sports Hall of Fame and was also the president of the Brooklin Merchants Senior B lacrosse club in 2001. That was the same year that Don Craggs was the vice-president and I was publicity director. Also that year, I had incurred some serious health issues. I was a bit down on my luck and Jerry gave me an old refrigerator that worked perfectly until it needed to be defrosted. I set to work with a hammer and a screw driver and my mechanical skills to defrost it. I soon heard the hissing of freon gas where I had damaged the tube, thus rendering the refrigerator from any further use.

Not much is known about the 1954 Brooklin lacrosse club but 1955 saw a new team, the Whitby Merchants added to the Intermediate League. A strong rivalry existed between Whitby and Brooklin, especially after Whitby retrieved many of the Brooklin players to form their first club. Leading the charge to join the ranks of the Whitby Merchants were Don and Rusty Craggs, Jerry Ravary, Eric Branton, veteran goalie Art Bradley, and the Tran brothers, John, Herb and Paul. Neither Brooklin or Whitby fared very well with the split club as the two teams finished the season in the bottom two positions of an eight team

Intermediate A series. Owen Sound took the league title but was then knocked off by the Tuscarora Indians in the all-Ontario final.

Cy Lemon, Don Campbell, Doug Gillespie and Harry Kazarian played on the Owen Sound club while Tuscarora was led by Roger "Buck" Smith and Ross Powless as many of the province's premier lacrosse players were playing at the Intermediate level.

The 1956 season saw both Whitby and Brooklin compete at the Intermediate A level. Brooklin became the Brooklin Meadowcrests, in honour of Meadowcrest farms, home of the Vipond clan. Other Brooklin teammates included Bruce Mitchell, Keith Sutherland, Robbie Robson, Bruce Mackay, George Richardson and Doug "Tip" Vipond. This was Gord Cook's last kick at lacrosse hanging up the gutted stick at 35 years of age. Don Craggs came through with a 33 goal season for the Whitby Merchants. Other prominent Whitby members included Jerry Ravary, Jerry Burrows, John, Herb and Paul Tran, Bryan Gibson, Ron Elliott, Tru Olmstead, Les Moore, and Gord Platt.

The year 1957 saw both Whitby and Brooklin enter in the seven-team O.L.A. Intermediate series with Whitby Merchants finishing in third position and Brooklin finishing in sixth. It was Don Craggs big year of Intermediate lacrosse as he scored 62 goals and added 15 assists to win the scoring title and the league's most valuable player award. Other members of the Whitby Merchants team included Jim Cherry, Jerry Burrows, Bob Cherry, Jerry Ravary, Ron Elliott, Rusty Craggs, Bryan Gibson, Pete Powell, Larry Hutchison, John, Herb and Paul Tran, Tru Olmstead, Hank Jansen, Gord Platt, Eric Branton, Bruce Jones, Brian McGrath, Mike Cunningham, and Bill Barlowe. Little did the players know that this was the team's swan song and Whitby failed to form a club in 1958. Several of the players ended up suiting up for a few games in 1958 with the last place Senior A Mimico Mountaineers including Bob and Jim Cherry, Don Craggs, and Jerry Ravary. Don "Sully" Vipond even suited up for Mimico for one game as well as hockey's Alan Eagleson. Brooklin did field a team in the nine team Intermediate A series and the lineup included Doug "Tip" Vipond, Don "Sully" Vipond, Jim Cherry, Bob Cherry, Bob Carnegie, Charlie Grandy, Bill Shortt, Irwin Reazin, Les Moore, Elmo Gibson, Ken Ross, a 17-year-old Mike Gray, Bruce Mitchell, Gord "Doc" Holliday, John McKinney, and Tom Davis. Also present were George Richardson and Robbie Robson from the first days of Brooklin lacrosse in the early 1950s.

In 1958 Brooklin Meadowcrests finished 8th in league standings out of 10 team but still managed to win the O.L.A. Intermediate 'B' Championship. Scarborough Maitlands boasted two players Don Craggs (47 goals, 14 assists for 10th place in league scoring) and Ken 'Red' Crawford (55 goals, 25 assists for 4th place in league scoring) who would both have a big affect of the storied Brooklin franchise.

The Brooklin Meadowcrests claimed the O.L.A. Intermediate title in 1959 and 1960 as well as the O.L.A. Senior B title in 1959. In 1959, the Meadowcrests defeated the Brantford Indians 4-3 in the Intermediate championship as Brantford did not appear for the final game. Members of the Brooklin championship team included Bill Vipond (coach), Don Vipond, I. Reazin, R. Barton, W. Robson, Bob Carnegie, Rick Craggs, Charlie Grandy, Ken "Red" Crawford, R. Cherry, J. Mitchell, Jerry Burroughs, Larry Hutchinson, K. Ross, Bill Short, Doug Vipond, G. Rawson, Don Craggs, Matt Campbell, Jim Cherry, Bev Groves, and Alvin Puckrin. The Meadowcrests went on to beat Cornwall in a two game total goals series winning the first game in Brooklin 14-8. They dropped the second game in Cornwall 7-5 but took the series 19-15 in total goals. The Scott Galbraith Trophy was presented to O.L.A. Intermediate A Champions. In 1960, the Meadowcrests again won the O.L.A. Championship. They won the Intermediate Championship by beating the Niagara Falls Scobie Transports taking six games to win the all-Ontario championship in a best-of-seven series.

A big change was made in 1961 when the Brooklin Hillcrests joined the O.L.A. Senior A series allowing them to compete for the heralded Canadian Championship, the Mann Cup. The Peterborough Senior A club had disbanded from the previous season so the Hillcrests built their club around the nucleus of Peterborough players. Notable Peterborough players included Pat Baker (an all-star netminder. Baker played for that initial Senior A club, going on to play for the next four seasons), Terry Davis (who won the scoring crown and later duplicated that effort in the Western Lacrosse Association. He was one of only three players including Bobby Allan and Jim McNulty to pull off this feat), and local Glen Lotton who finished eighth in the top ten scoring. Other prominent ex-Peterborough players included Larry Ferguson, Rock Batley, Cy Coombes and Roy Wood. Even Ken Ruttan and Teddy Higgins suited up for a couple of games. The remaining players of this historic first Senior A club included Don Craggs, Jerry Burrows, Bob Carnegie, Bill Shortt, Charlie

Grandy, Phil Hall, Gord Platt, Bryan Gibson, Elgin Luke, Ken Lotton, Don “Sully” Vipond, Don Bruce, and Don Mitchell.

Wednesday May 22, 1961 was the date of that first Senior A game. Coached by Lewis Vipond, Brooklin won the home opener 6-5 against the Brampton Ramblers. It is only fitting that Don “Sully” Vipond would score the first goal in Senior A company at the 2-minute mark of the first period. It only seems fitting that from the first game of Bush Box lacrosse played in a bowl in Brooklin in 1932, that Lewis and Luther Vipond were involved with that game. The Vipond name continues to be synonymous with success in lacrosse. Decades later, Luther's son Peter (a former Brooklin Redmen coach), is the winningest coach in Senior A Major Lacrosse history.

The Brooklin Hillcrests finished fourth that year in a five-team loop. They lost to the eventual Eastern Champion Brampton Ramblers in a seven game semi-finals.