

# THE GREATEST FRANCHISES IN SENIOR 'A' HISTORY

FOR SOME, PETERBOROUGH IS NUMBER ONE, WHILE FOR OTHERS IT IS BRAMPTON OR MONTREAL. IN THE END THOUGH, A TEAM FROM THE WEST TAKES TOP HONOURS

**I**n the premier issue of *Ontario Lacrosse*, we looked at the top 10 franchises in Junior 'A' history. Now it is time to turn our attention to Senior 'A' lacrosse and the franchises that have helped shaped the sport for more than 120 years.

Similar to the Junior 'A' list, the following is just one fans' opinion of the greatest teams to grace our beloved sport. To clarify, my greatest teams criteria is based on what the franchises have done over the entire history of the game. Essentially, which teams have had the most impact upon the game we all love.

## 10 NEW WESTMINSTER ADANACS

This franchise had nothing to do with the current Adanac (Canada spelled backwards) team from Coquitlam. This was purely a New West club. With the Salmonbellies importing eastern players in the 1930s the locals rebelled and formed the Adanacs. What was amazing was the success this "second team" achieved, including two Mann Cup titles. By the 1950s the Adanac's fortune declined and the club merged with the Salmonbellies.

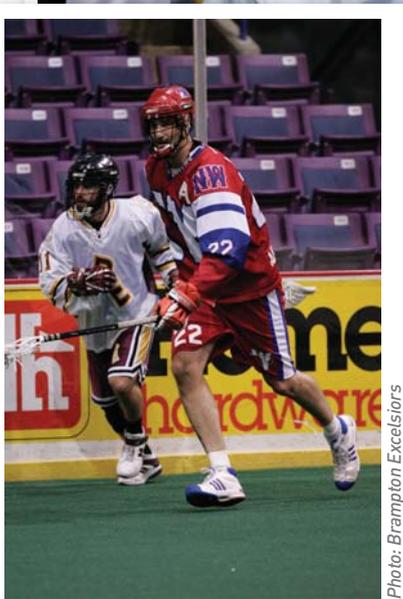


Photo: Brampton Excelsiors

## 9 COQUITLAM ADANACS

The hard-luck kids of senior lacrosse, Coquitlam came along in 1965 and finished in first place the next year, but lost in the league final. They were also finalists four times in the 1970s. Finishing first in 1980 it looked like their year, but unluckily they blew a 3-1 semi-final lead to New Westminster. Eight years later, when they grabbed a 3-1 advantage in the Western Lacrosse Association (WLA) final, history appeared to be repeating itself as the Salmonbellies came back to win games five and six. Yet the Adanacs prevailed in the deciding game to win its first championship. Another 13 years passed before the club finally won the Mann Cup. One Canadian championship might seem to be a bit thin



Josh Sanderson celebrates Brampton's 2008 Mann Cup victory.

Photo: Martin Allinson

to claim a spot on this list, but keep in mind the Adanacs have now competed in the last 44 seasons of senior lacrosse. No Ontario Lacrosse Association (OLA) team can boast such longevity.

## 8 MONTREAL SHAMROCKS

The first centre of the lacrosse universe was Montreal as no community was more instrumental in leading lacrosse to the big time than the Irish. The Shamrocks were the National Lacrosse Union's (NLU) premier team for three decades, in the game's most popular league ever. Their best stretch was five successive titles from 1901 to 1905.

## 7 ST.CATHARINES ATHLETICS

The Athletics last won the OLA title back in 1963. Most of the years since then the A's have not even competed. It is a hard to believe this was once Ontario's greatest lacrosse team. One must go back to 1946 for St.Catharines' last Mann Cup win. That culminated a dominant period from 1938 to 1946, but the A's couldn't hang on to their young players. They won championships for other towns while the Garden City bloom suffered from an early frost.

## 6 BROOKLIN REDMEN

Long time intermediates, the Redmen made the jump to senior lacrosse in 1961. A very nice decade followed with five OLA titles, plus two Mann Cup wins. It wasn't until the mid 1980s that Brooklin hit its stride again with a fantastic 15-year run, which included tying the OLA record with seven consecutive titles (1985-91). Success and popularity soon caused the Redmen to vacate the village and move to the big city of Whitby.

## 5 VANCOUVER BURRARDS

The Burrards have been a force in B.C. lacrosse since the late 1930s. Their glory era was the 1960s when they were the team of the decade. During this time frame, Vancouver won four Mann Cups in seven years. Their most infamous moment was the last game

of the 1967 final when they took ball ragging to such an extreme that the Canadian Lacrosse Association introduced the shot clock the next season. In recent years, the team has moved to Surrey then to Maple Ridge — two locations curiously not on Burrard Inlet.

**4 VICTORIA SHAMROCKS**  
Compared to its Lower Mainland rivals, Victoria was late to the game. The Shamrocks only joined the Inter City Lacrosse League in 1950. Five years later Victoria ended Peterborough's Mann Cup dynasty. However, the 1960s and 1970s were barren decades, although they did win a Mann Cup in 1979. The Shamrocks' greatest success has come recently with nine WLA titles and four Mann Cups between 1996 and 2006.

**3 BRAMPTON EXCELSIORS**  
One of the oldest teams still operating, the Excelsiors date back to 1871. Brampton's first successes came as OLA champs from 1911-1913. After the war, they were one of the OLA's top teams until the end of the field era.

They won the last two field Mann Cups in 1930 and 1931. Interestingly, George Sproule played on all those teams dating back to 1911. The box era was a different story for the club. Excelsior fans had to wait nearly half a century for their next Canadian championship in 1980. Brampton made history then as the only last place team (fourth in a four-team league) to ever win the Mann Cup. Since 1992 the club has been at the top of the standings practically every year, with today's team enjoying its best run yet with most recent championships in 1998, 2002 and 2008.

**2 PETERBOROUGH LAKERS**  
For most of the game's history the town has been an insignificant backwater. That all changed in 1951 when Lloyd Wooton, Curly Mason and Russ Slater all defected to Peterborough from Owen Sound. Four Canadian championships immediately followed, along with seven consecutive OLA titles. It was a grand old time from 1951 to 1984. Then it all changed. By the 1990s the Lakers had hit such hard times they were playing out of the Kinsmen Arena to an indifferent public. Only the

hard work of owner Ted Higgins kept the club going. He was rewarded for his effort as the franchise rebounded in the new century to capture three titles from 2004 to 2007.

**1 NEW WESTMINSTER SALMONBELLIES**  
It didn't take the Salmonbellies long to make their mark. In 1908 they defeated the NLU champion Shamrocks in Montreal to win the Minto Cup, which at the time was awarded to the top Senior 'A' club in Canada. As a senior championship trophy the Minto would never reside east of New Westminster again! In the box era the Salmonbellies became the first club to win a dozen Mann Cups. The club is most famous for its home floor at Queen's Park Arena with the wooden boards. ♦

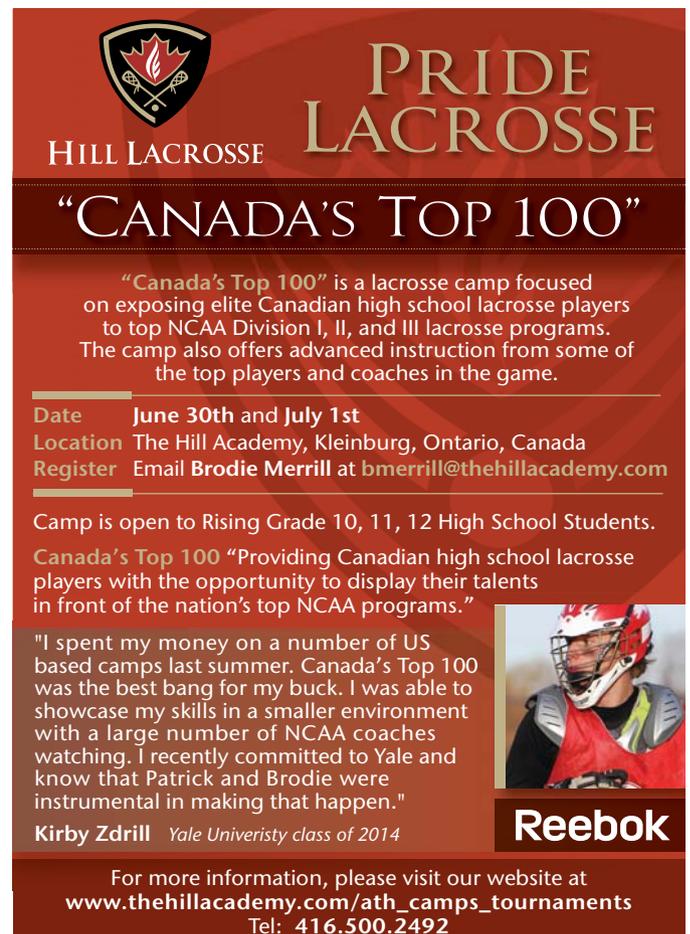
*Paul Whiteside is a lifetime lacrosse fan whom, back in the 1990s, had the honour of conducting lacrosse research, pre-1961. That journey through time took him beyond the box lacrosse era, back to the start of the Ontario Lacrosse Association and the glory days of the National Lacrosse Union.*



**Coach Canada**  
A STAGECOACH GROUP Company

**Welcomes the 2009 Ontario Lacrosse Festival**  
Getting you there on time, and in style! With our diverse fleet, we're sure to meet your budget so you can maximize the fun!

**Call 1-800-461-7661  
for your discounted rates!**  
greener smarter travel



**HILL LACROSSE**

## PRIDE LACROSSE

### "CANADA'S TOP 100"

"Canada's Top 100" is a lacrosse camp focused on exposing elite Canadian high school lacrosse players to top NCAA Division I, II, and III lacrosse programs. The camp also offers advanced instruction from some of the top players and coaches in the game.

**Date** June 30th and July 1st  
**Location** The Hill Academy, Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada  
**Register** Email **Brodie Merrill** at [bmerrill@thehillacademy.com](mailto:bmerrill@thehillacademy.com)

Camp is open to Rising Grade 10, 11, 12 High School Students.

**Canada's Top 100** "Providing Canadian high school lacrosse players with the opportunity to display their talents in front of the nation's top NCAA programs."

"I spent my money on a number of US based camps last summer. Canada's Top 100 was the best bang for my buck. I was able to showcase my skills in a smaller environment with a large number of NCAA coaches watching. I recently committed to Yale and know that Patrick and Brodie were instrumental in making that happen."

**Kirby Zdrill** Yale University class of 2014

**Reebok**

For more information, please visit our website at [www.thehillacademy.com/ath\\_camps\\_tournaments](http://www.thehillacademy.com/ath_camps_tournaments)  
Tel: 416.500.2492