



Photos: Buffalo Bandits

# LIVING LEGEND

## ONTARIO LACROSSE TALKS TO JOHN TAVARES, THE ALL-TIME NLL SCORING LEADER, ABOUT THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE SPORT HE TRULY LOVES

### EARLY DAYS OF LACROSSE

I started playing lacrosse when I was about four years old. I grew up playing in downtown Toronto. My older brother Danny used to play for a team called St. Christopher House. I would always take his stick and go to the outdoor box. I never wanted to put the stick down and have been playing ever since.

### GROWTH OF THE GAME

I have played lacrosse long enough to experience a roller coaster in terms of attendance and participation. Once the Toronto Rock came into the NLL and Sportsnet picked up its games, there was a huge increase in participation. I think a lot of people started to put their kids into field lacrosse, with the understanding there was a lot of opportunities for field lacrosse scholarships in the U.S.

### BIGGEST TEAM ACCOMPLISHMENT

Definitely the four championships with the Bandits have been the highlight, with the first one, in 1992, when we won in sudden-death overtime in Philadelphia, and the last one (2008) standing out more than the others.

### BIGGEST INDIVIDUAL MOMENT

The 1992 goal I scored in overtime against Philadelphia to win the championship. It was most memorable because we won and because of the goalie I scored on, Dwight Medkey. I have a huge amount of respect for Dwight, so I was a little intimidated shooting against him. I felt that he knew exactly where I was going to put the ball. In the championship game, I took a backhand and I had no idea where the ball was going and lo and behold it went down, and in between his legs. And of course all of the people I have

met throughout the years. All the great fans, all the great players.

### VIEWS ON MANN CUP

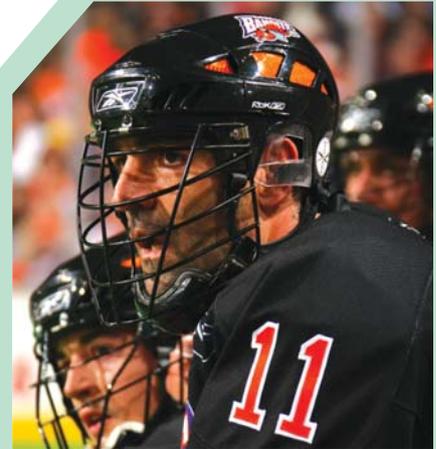
I think summer lacrosse is a bit more challenging to win, and more gratifying than the NLL championship. We don't have the same crowds, but when you win the Mann Cup, you have to go through several playoff rounds that are best of seven. In the NLL, it is a one game playoff and you can't have any aspect of the game go wrong for your team. Anything can happen in one night. In the Mann Cup, there is no luck involved, you have to bring it. The last Mann Cup I won was when I played with the Victoria Shamrocks.

### ADVICE FOR KIDS PLAYING LACROSSE

I definitely would say to continue working on your stick skills. You don't want to have a huge deep pocket in your stick where you are unable to pass the ball. Practice a lot and use your stick so you can pass and shoot with a lot of accuracy. Try to make your teammates better, as opposed to just yourself.

### IMPACT OF NLL ON GRASSROOTS LACROSSE

I think it is going to make the players better as the years pass. They watch the pros now and they can learn; they can take those skills and make the game better. From the time I started playing in Buffalo to now, the skill of the game and the athleticism of the players has improved — everything has intensified. If the league continues to grow, a lot of kids are going to play lacrosse and take it a lot more seriously. The result is they will bring a better product to the floor. ♦



**NAME:** John Tavares

**AGE:** 40

**HEIGHT/WEIGHT:** 5'11" / 185 lbs

**POSITION:** Forward

**SHOOTS:** Left

**CAREER (OUTSIDE OF LACROSSE):**  
High school math teacher

**TEAM:** Buffalo Bandits, National Lacrosse League (NLL) & St. Regis Indians, Major Series Lacrosse (OLA)

**NLL SEASONS:** 17

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** Four NLL championships; all-time NLL leader in goals (620), assists (706) and points (1,326); seven-time NLL all-star; most assists and points in Mann Cup history

**DID YOU KNOW:** John has led the Bandits in scoring 10 straight seasons, including 2008 where he tallied 87 points

