

HOMETOWN HEROES

IN FRONT OF THEIR DEVOTED FANS, THE PETERBOROUGH LAKERS WON THE 2010 MANN CUP IN A HARD-FOUGHT BATTLE AGAINST THE NEW WESTMINSTER SALMONBELLIES

// By Mike Davies | Photos: Tim Prothero - www.vintagelax.com

The 2010 Mann Cup will live on in the memory of lacrosse fans, particularly those in Peterborough, for several special reasons.

After a two-year absence, the Peterborough Lakers reclaimed the Mann Cup, their 13th, with a hard-fought six-game victory over the only team in Canada with more championships the New Westminster Salmonbellies (24).

On the floor, the Lakers assaulted the record books with Shawn Evans following up his Ontario Lacrosse Association Major Series Lacrosse (MSL) scoring title with a tournament for the ages. Evans recorded 37 points in six games, tying the Mann Cup record for most points in a series set in 2002 in seven games by Brampton Excelsiors' star Josh Sanderson. Evans also smashed Sanderson's assist record for a series of 26, also set in 2002, with 32.



"Words can't express how I feel," Evans said, following the victory. "To come in here and celebrate with my teammates after a big war on the floor is a great accomplishment. To get another ring with these guys is awesome."

Not to be outdone by his little brother, Scott Evans returned from a three-game suspension to earn most valuable player of the game honours in both Games 5 and 6. In fact, he had six goals and two assists in the deciding game. He now sits ninth on the Mann Cup scoring list with 103 points in 27 games, one ahead of Colin Doyle and Paul Gait.

Also setting records was John Tavares who earned his seventh Mann Cup ring and appeared in his ninth senior 'A' national championship. He entered the series as the all-time points leader in Mann Cup history. In addition to furthering that mark to 191 points, he set the record for most goals (90) and assists (101). John Grant Jr. continued to rocket



backstopped the Lakers to three Mann Cup titles and four OLA championships between 2004 and 2007.

Still, it took the Lakers to the last minute to defeat their arch-rival Brampton in seven games in the OLA final to earn the right to hoist the Mann Cup. Shawn Evans broke a 7-7 tie with 64 seconds left in Game 7 and Toll added an empty-net marker to finish off the Excelsiors.

The Lakers' Mann Cup win was special for another reason.

In June, the team's assistant general manager and video coach Barry Larock lost a lengthy battle with cancer. A long-time volunteer in minor lacrosse, a manager of Ontario minor lacrosse teams and a valued member of the Lakers' staff, Larock's loss galvanized the team.

The Lakers dedicated their season to Larock and wore commemorative stickers on their helmets bearing his initials. They also sold T-shirts, with funds going to cancer

up the all-time scoring ranks with a 32-point effort, which moved him past Sanderson, Bill Wilson and Gary Gait into third all-time with 145 points in 29 games. His five points-per-game average is a Mann Cup record.

The Salmonbellies, losers to Brampton in the 2008 and 2009 Mann Cup, were a formidable opponent who deadlocked the Lakers 2-2 after four games. The hometown team, spurred on by sell-out crowds just shy of 4,000 fans at the 55-year-old Memorial Centre, found another gear for the decisive games finishing off the Western Lacrosse Association champions with 14-9 and 15-9 victories.

"You couldn't ask for a better crowd," Shawn Evans said. "It was the best feeling ever to walk out onto that floor to see that crowd. It was awesome."



The energy and support of the crowd led Jim Brady, MSL commissioner, to call the 2010 Mann Cup the "best run and most successful Mann Cup event in my years as commissioner."

The Lakers served notice prior to the season they were serious about getting back to the Mann Cup. They made a series of deals in the dispersal draft for the disbanded St. Regis Indians picking up marquee offensive players Tavares, Mark Steenhuis and transition stand-out Steve Toll. They also acquired the rights to goalie Mike Thompson who stepped in to replace departed fan favourite Pat O'Toole who

research, which read "This One's For Barry."

Lakers' coach/GM Jamie Batley adorned one of the shirts on the bench as the final seconds of the decisive game ticked away.

"What a great ending to something we started after Barry's passing," Batley said. "Barry was our best friend and always will be. The coaching staff loved him dearly. He was so much a big part of this coaching staff." ♦

Mike Davies covered the 2010 Mann Cup for the Peterborough Examiner where he has written about lacrosse for 16 years.