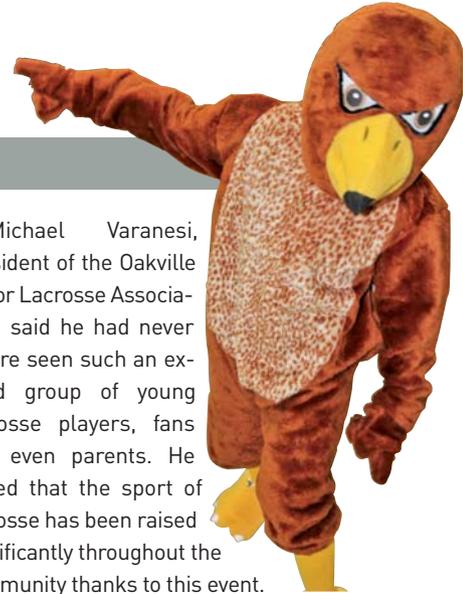


# FLASH MOB CRASHES BANTAM OAKVILLE HAWKS' HOME OPENER

// By Lucas Casaletto (reprinted with permission of the Oakville Beaver)



**T**he Oakville bantam 1 Hawks got a big surprise from their fans for their home opener. More than 300 fans showed up to surprise the players with a flash mob in the stands.

For young lacrosse players, most games are filled with excitement, teamwork and passion. For the Oakville bantam 1 Hawks, their home opener was one game they will cherish for the rest of their lives.



Photos: James Hoggett

Coaches and volunteers arranged a wonderfully put-together surprise for the Hawks last Thursday as Glen Abbey Recreation Centre filled up with more than 300 roaring fans and parents. They were quietly ushered into the arena, while the Hawks had no idea what was awaiting them. Banners were dropped; fans were painted in the team's traditional blue, white and gold; and even a mascot cheered and danced around tossing T-shirts into the crowd.

Mark Follows, the Hawks' head coach and also the main organizer of the event, said the inspiration was brought upon by a Super Bowl commercial filmed in Mississauga, which had the same effect on a local men's hockey team.

"We thought about it a few years ago, and then we saw the Budweiser commercial which gave us the push to do something like this," Follows said.

"I think it was really the impression we wanted to leave with the kids, which was that

the game is all about teamwork and bringing the kids together."

After the excitement and thrill had set in for the young Hawks, they prepared to face off against a very tough Orangeville team who had success against them in years past. The Hawks won the game 7-2 in front of the large and boisterous crowd. Follows said that the end result could not have been better.

"The parents and volunteers showed them



what teamwork could accomplish. The effect on the boys was that they played as a team and beat an Orangeville squad that is traditionally very difficult," he said.

Follows said that after claiming the victory and playing to their full potential, the boys were overwhelmed with happiness. They felt like pro athletes even before the game had even begun.

"The pre-game pep talk really stuck with them. Running through the tunnel and hearing the noise of the crowd, you couldn't wipe the smile off their face, they were so excited," he said.

Michael Varanesi, president of the Oakville Minor Lacrosse Association, said he had never before seen such an excited group of young lacrosse players, fans and even parents. He added that the sport of lacrosse has been raised significantly throughout the community thanks to this event.

"Lacrosse is not only a game or sport, it is a philosophy with a deep spirituality handed down by the ancestors of our first nations to all of us that participate in the sport today," Varanesi said.

"This event demonstrates the bringing together of many people doing a lot of things, volunteering time and effort, that resulted in this terrific celebration. It was more than a regular-season game, it was an experience, a life-long memory for all that were present."

With the Hawks winning their league opener against a tough opponent and also showing well in two preseason games, Varanesi believes the squad could have a terrific season ahead of them.

"This particular group of players has been together for the past several years. They have had mixed success in the past and on several occasions have endured quite difficult competitive challenges," he said.

"It is a credit to the perseverance of the players and their coaches as well as the faith and support of the parents in the program that the bantam 1 Hawks are enjoying unprecedented success thus far this season."

The Hawks carry with them a form of motivation they hope guides them to success this season. They now know not only do they have their parents and coaches behind them, but a community of fans and volunteers alike. ♦

**Video on the story at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVhQ87facal&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVhQ87facal&feature=youtu.be)**