

THE 5-MAN MACDONALD GAME

>> BY NEIL MACDONALD

PICS, OR IT DIDN'T HAPPEN. By the time the 5-man Macdonald Game happened (pictured here), we had seen a LOT of lacrosse in my family. Graham was then playing Varsity lacrosse at Carleton University, Joe had played on the inaugural Trent University team, Neil had coached at the 2006 World Championships, Norm had played for team New Zealand at an international tournament (the ASPACs — Asian Pacific Games), and Archie had a collection of 4 provincial Gold medals and a pair of silver medals to go with them as a coach. When I mention this to most people, they find absolutely *none* of that interesting. But they are *fascinated* by the picture.

At FIL games, matches are officiated by a group of five. People familiar with the game of Field Lacrosse in Ontario are quite used to seeing two officials working a game at any given time. Seeing three officials is kind of like a full moon — you see one a month. If three officials is a full moon, a game with a four man crew is Halley's Comet.

This makes a 5-man crew a Loch Ness Monster or unicorn sighting: People have claimed to see it, but most lacrosse people remain imbued with healthy dose of skepticism.

Arch had a reach across the lacrosse community. During the 2014 referee clinics from places in the far west of Zone 7 out to the Durham region, a lot of people know exactly who I am talking about when I mention Arch. People know me, people knew my Dad, but people outside of the referee community often seemed surprised to hear that I am one of Arch's boys.

It could be 40°C with the humidity, and it wouldn't matter. You could count on seeing Arch in his signature look: pressed pants, button down shirt, sport coat, bolo tie, cowboy hat and cowboy boots. There was one other piece to Arch's ensemble that was never far: his referee kit. Whether it was the indoor all blacks or the outdoor stripes, it was a permanent fixture for any lacrosse road trip.

My Dad's lacrosse story began in Guelph. He and his brothers were amped up and ready



Left to right: Norm Macdonald, Archie Macdonald, Joe Macdonald, Neil Macdonald, Graham Macdonald

to play for the local team. This included a trip to Home Hardware to grab a stick (something readers of a certain generation are certainly familiar with). Unfortunately, there weren't enough players for a team that season, so lacrosse dreams were put on hold.

Growing up in Winnipeg, lacrosse was not something I had ever heard of. In fact, the first time I knowingly heard about lacrosse was after moving to Brantford. Archie came into the house and announced to me and my brothers "I signed you up for lacrosse". This was 1989.

Refereeing came a few years later. By 1996, my dad, my older brothers, and myself were the best referees in the world, at least in our own minds and around the dining room table. A couple of years later, we had moved into the game of Field Lacrosse, and my youngest brother had joined the team in stripes. There were many roads, many fields, many cities, many calls, even more missed calls, and even more debates about those calls as we traveled a few thousand miles a season. And then the next year we would do it all again.

Lacrosse was always something we did as a family. Part of our summer ritual was finding tournaments where we could go as a group. This had us meeting some great lacrosse people in Owen Sound, Sarnia, Peterborough, Kitchener, and many more places along the way.

So how did this game happen? It was a pre-season game university game, and the organizers thought that this would be a great chance to get the band back together. Because lacrosse is full of great people, they got together and pulled some strings to have a family lacrosse game. It happened because lacrosse people get *it*.

It happened because my family is insanely competitive and we pushed each other learn more, read more, think more, know more, achieve more in the game. It happened because lacrosse is the best game in the world and we could do it together. It happened because we do things together as a family because we love each other.

I was speaking with Bill Fox a few weeks back, and he said something that stuck with me. He said "you know what you have besides that picture? All the memories, not just from that game, but from all the games and all the times you had together." Before and since that picture, there have been numerous tournament, provincial, and national championships. There have been innumerable games played, championships contested, medals won, and accolades awarded. No matter how many more are played, we'll always have our 5-Man Macdonald game. **OLM**