

## FROM THE ARCHIVES BY MARY WATSON

### THE BIRTH OF AN ARENA



*Oakview Outdoor Rink*

Wasaga Beach had no arena in the 1960's. This 1969 picture shows the man-made hockey rink that was located at the Oakview Centre (now RecPlex). The boards were built by the "dads", lighting put up, and a little cabin was moved in for use as a change room and warming up. It's hard to believe that minor hockey in Wasaga was born on an outdoor rink. The dads would arrive first thing in the morning to shovel, clean and flood the rink before the games could start. Everyone was grateful if it didn't snow heavily the night before a game!

In 1968, the Wasaga Beach Minor Hockey Association came up with the idea of building a community-owned arena. When those plans fell apart, a partnership made up of Bob Cameron, Doug Anstey, Jim Arnott, Alf Stone, Archie Gould and Bill Oldfield was formed to fundraise and create a privately-owned arena. It was estimated that the arena would cost a total of \$300,000 to build, which was a huge commitment in the early 1970's for a small village to undertake. But the dream became a reality, and the Wasaga Stars Arena was officially opened on May 12, 1973, with many dignitaries attending including Dr. Gus Mitges, M.P. for Simcoe County, Earl Elliott, Reeve for Flos Township and Wasaga Beach Village Reeve Clair Robertson. The arena was subsequently purchased by the Town in 1977 with the help of grants from the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Wintario and a huge pledge drive hosted by the Wasaga Beach Lions and Kinsmen Clubs.

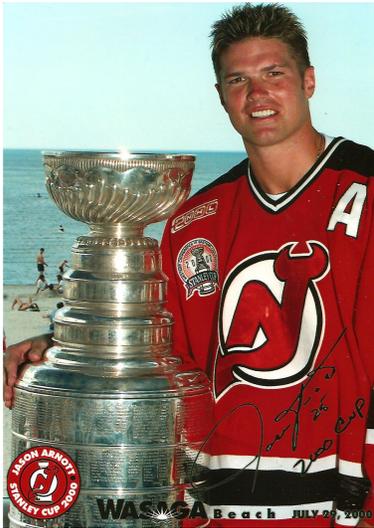


*Official Opening of the Arena*

The arena is located on 22 acres of land at the Hwy 92 entrance to Town. It initially had an ice surface measuring 80' x 125' and could house up to 1,000 spectators. Along with minor hockey, it hosted figure skating, power skating and public skating, as well as hockey tournaments, old timers hockey and much more. The 190-seat upstairs dining hall has a large window overlooking the ice surface and a fully-operational kitchen. The arena originally had six dressing rooms, a canteen, tuck shop and showers.

The Wasaga Stars Hockey School was also initiated at that time, with a total of eight outbuildings being constructed on the property to house the students and staff. The summer hockey school could take 150 boys per season, with professional players from area farm teams participating. In 1973, registrations came from as far away as Fort Worth Texas, however the majority of the players were from Toronto and southern Ontario.

In 1972, Bob Cameron and Dave Chandler were awarded the first Section 4 Division of the Silver Stick for towns with populations of less than 5,000. It is now 36 years later, and Wasaga Beach is still proudly hosting that division of Silver Stick.



*Jason Arnott & the Stanley Cup*

You may recall the New Jersey Devils winning the Stanley Cup in 2000. Jason Arnott, a local boy who went through the minor hockey system in Wasaga Beach, was Assistant Captain at the time and scored the cup-winning goal. He brought the Stanley Cup home in July of 2000 as a thank you to the many residents who supported him throughout his career. The cup was paraded from the Arena to the beachfront with thousands of spectators watching. Jason is continuing a successful hockey career with the Nashville Predators.



*Wasaga Stars Arena Aerial View*

The Wasaga Stars Arena is still a thriving entity today, with a full complement of minor hockey teams, an active figure skating club, and old timers' hockey teams. The facility has been upgraded to include an elevator and accessible doorways to the ice surface. The arena is an extremely busy facility which runs to almost full capacity.

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