

Father David Bauer



It was on an outdoor rink behind his house on the corner of King and Allen streets that a young David William Bauer played hockey as a boy. On this rink and in this home he learned the values that would garner him a gold medal for sportsmanship many years later at the 1964 Olympic Games in Austria.

While Reverend David Bauer (1924-1988) became known across Canada as the force behind the re-emergence of a national hockey team in the 1960s, there is one story that is told and retold because it reveals the character behind the man who once said, “We will play to win, but not at any price.”

Father Bauer was the coach of the national team in 1964 when a Swedish player broke his stick during play and threw it at the Canadian bench. The stick hit Father Bauer in the face and when his angry players strained for vengeance Bauer, whose face was bleeding, held them back with a few words. The Canadian hockey team placed fourth that year but the International Ice Hockey Federation awarded David Bauer a gold medal for sportsmanship.

He went on to manage the national team at the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble, France where the Canadians won a bronze medal. Father Bauer also managed the 1980 Olympic team in Lake Placid, New York.

Father Bauer was a strong advocate for amateur hockey, believing that young hockey players should receive a good education. “We have lost sight of the fact that we must distinguish between the objectives of professional hockey and amateur hockey. . . Anything that is taking our boys away from all the very, very great opportunities we have in education today is detrimental.”

Even at 16-years-old David Bauer lived by these words, turning down an opportunity to play with a farm team for the Boston Bruins, to attend St. Michael’s College in Toronto. He graduated with a B.A. before becoming a Roman Catholic Basilian priest in 1953. As a coach for St. Michael’s he won the Memorial Cup in 1961. He had won it as a left-winger for the Oshawa Generals in 1944.

He was transferred to St. Mark’s College at the University of British Columbia in 1961 where he taught and coached until he became ill in 1988. That same year he passed away in hospital in Goderich, Ontario.

While he spent most of his adult life in Vancouver, his formative years in Waterloo are marked by the naming of a street after him. Father Bauer grew up in a large house filled with his five brothers and five sisters. His father was local industrialist Sir Edgar Bauer and his mother, Bertha Hayes Bauer.

Bauer attended St. Louis separate school in Waterloo and St. Jerome's College in Kitchener. With five brothers, one of whom, Bobby, would go on to play with the Boston Bruins, the busy house on King Street South was fertile ground for the formation of a future hockey legend.

In addition to his achievements at the Olympic Games he was awarded the Order of Canada in 1968 and was appointed to Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 1973. In 1986 an Olympic hockey rink in Calgary was named after him.

What distinguished Father David Bauer from other players, coaches and builders of Canada's favourite game was his devotion to the education and character of the amateur athlete. He once said, "If you improve the boy as a person he will improve as a hockey player."

Photo courtesy of USMC Archives