



## **Robert Knudsen**

**Nickname:** Knobby

**Sport:** Administrator/Coach

**Date of Birth** 1930-10-07

# Robert “Knobby” Knudsen Recipient of Sport Fest Windsor’s 2005 “Sportsman of the Year” Award

Knobby was one of two people to receive this unique award presented by Sport Fest Windsor for the first time in 2005 for “Outstanding Community Involvement”. Robert, better known as Knobby, has been one of Windsor’s elite citizens for over 50 years. His untiring, energetic commitment to the youth and charities of our city has been unheralded. His loyalty to his wife, children, relatives and friends has made him one of the best loved people in our city.

His varied involvement with local sports and his passion to assist kids through sport and Community Sports organizations began in the 1950's because it was sports that helped him most in his life.

1952-92 - Coach of Windsor AKO in Mic Mac Jr. Baseball League, and won 9 consecutive titles in 1960's.

1955 - Co-founded Mic Mac Class "0" Baseball League. At that time there was no place for kids over 16 to continue playing after the Mic Mac Jr. League, so "Knobby" approached Fr. Ronald Cullen and they organized a "0" Federation Mic Mac League comprised of Eggleston Customs Brokers (coached by "Knobby"), Assumption and Tecumseh. Exhibition games were arranged with Detroit teams for more competition.

1970's - It was "Knobby" who suggested Windsor establish a Sports Hall of Fame. In the late 1970's he convened a meeting at Roseland Golf Course with Frank Wansbrough, Frank Hodges, Jimmy Hogan and Siro Martinello, bringing forth the idea of a Hall of Fame for teams (not individuals) that had distinguished themselves. The group realized it would be a daunting task, it would cover many sports and individuals, so they did not pursue the idea further.

1979 - Others became aware of this interest, and a Steering Committee was formed consisting of "Knobby", Ken Fathers, Rev. Charles Armstrong, Diantha Dowdell, Frank Hodges, Bill Miles, Dick Moriarty, Bill Rogin, Tony Techko, Sis Thomson, and Chairman Andy Paulick. Two years after that meeting, in 1981 100 supporters cast ballots to choose the first 7 inductees into the Windsor/Essex County Sports Hall Fame.

1987 - "Knobby" founded the Greater Windsor Baseball Council (GWBC). It was formed because teams from AKO, Mic Macs, Riverside, South Windsor, W.A.A., and Essex County Leagues were entering Ontario Playdowns, spending thousands of dollars to attend out-of-town Tournaments, many times against each other. "Knobby" realized it was more economical to form an Association whereby local teams could play off for Ontario Playdowns in Windsor.

Also, players were picking the teams they wanted to play for, depending on what tournaments and exhibitions AKO, Mic Macs, etc. scheduled. As a result some teams had difficulty attracting enough players to field a team.

"Knobby" was the first President of the GWBC, and has continued to serve in that capacity since its inception. The founding members were AKO, Mic Macs, W.A.A., Riverside, South Windsor. Each group contributes several thousand dollars to fund expenses for League, Tournament, Provincial and National competitions. In 2002 expenses approximated \$50,000, for travel, equipment, officials, diamond rentals, lighting, etc.

The GWBC led to the founding of the Windsor Selects organization. Players could tryout for Selects teams to compete for Ontario & National Titles, if not successful, they could then play in local house leagues (Mic Mac, Sun Parlour), and not be deprived of an opportunity to continue to play youth baseball, and thus develop skills enabling them to advance to higher levels as they get older.

1965 - "Knobby" was a Founder and First President of the AKO Minor Football League. He served as President for seven years, and also designed the Rules & Regulations. Other founding members were Ron Barbaro, Mal Hodges, George Wortley, John Forrest.

1966-05 - "Knobby" began his association with Windsor Minor Hockey Association (WMHA) as Treasurer He has also served the WMHA as a League Convenor, Tournament Chairman, Fundraiser, Board of Directors, Tour Director for teams travelling to Czechoslovakia and Russia, and co-ordinator of Coaching Clinics. Has also served as a Vice-President.

As a (WMHA) Fundraiser he initiated car washes, bingos, skate-a-thons, and was instrumental in obtaining Government Wintario Grants. He started the annual Coaches Night Banquet, and the Kids Christmas Party (he plays Santa Claus). This event is so successful it also invites Big Brothers, and other Christmas charities. 700 kids attended in 2001.

1976 - "Knobby" became the AKO representative for the "Goodfellows" organization. He formed groups to sell papers on street corners, contacted business owners for donations. Since 1976, AKO has collected the sum of a quarter-million dollars for the Goodfellows, including \$50,000 in 2004.

1983 - "Knobby" was Co-Founder of the Siro Martinello Bursary Fund which provides annual scholarships for students either entering U. of Windsor or St. Clair College. As of 2005, the Siro Martinello Memorial Golf Tournament has disbursed over \$150,000 to 120 worthy recipients.

1997 - A Founding member of the "Circle of 7" (Ed Agnew, John Ferguson, Keith White, Don Wiley, Tommy Williams, Rob Agnew), these seven men organize and administer events to raise monies for local charities and individuals. They have raised over one-million dollars.

2003 - Founder and President of the "Skate for Kids" program: it raises donations to assist the Lions Club with their project to fund a roof at the Lanspeary Park Outdoor Rink. Donations are also directed to offer kids free one-hour skating every day the Lanspeary rink is open. To date, \$35,000 has been collected.

Over the years "Knobby" has been associated with Windsor Sport Organizations, in many ways, as a member, consultant, fundraiser, original member, etc. In one way or the other, he has been associated with AKO, Mic-Mac, Club 240, Choristers, W.A.A., Windsor Chiefs, South Windsor Baseball.

1971-Knobby was selected as, Windsor Kinsmen Sportsman-of-the- Year;  
1973-President of AKO Fraternity.

1974 - He received the "M. Harrison Memorial Award" for outstanding contributions to sports in Windsor.

1986-Windsor Hockey Referees Association Man-of-the- Year;  
1986-World Jr. Baseball Championships MVP for contributions to Amateur Baseball.

2001-City of Windsor Award (September 20, designated "Knobby Knudsen Day"), for his accomplishments and dedication to Minor Sports and children.

## **Other Athletic History**

- Assumption H. S., basketball, football (off & def end), won back-to-back WSSA/WOSSA football titles.
- 1950 & 51 - Windsor AKO ORFU Jr. football - end, kicker and converts, League Champions, Ontario finals.
- 1952 - Toronto Argonauts offered him contract for \$200 per game if he dressed, \$75 if he didn't dress. He went to a Saskatchewan Rookie Camp in Hamilton, they invited him to their Main Camp in Regina. He refused both offers, as he was making \$300 per week at Kelsey Wheel Auto Parts Plant.
- 1952 & 53 - Sr. ORFU Windsor Rockets (off/def end, kicker, punts, field goals, converts).
- 1950's - Basketball with Lyle's Campus Shop, and a Windsor team in the Great Lakes Naval Training League, with teams from Wayne St., Albion College. He played against Harlem Globetrotters who played Windsor Sr. Teams in 1940's and '50s.
- 1958 - Windsor Sacred Heart, Ontario Church Intermediate Basketball CHAMPIONS.