

ROB COOKE

Inductee

Belleville Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2022

Athlete/Builder, Football & Rugby

Before Rob “Cookie” Cooke became the backbone of the Belleville Bulldogs Rugby Club, he was an exceptional athlete in his own right. Growing up in Stirling, Rob played every sport in school and in 1966, he was part of his high school’s COSSA championship football squad. Rob went on to a stellar university career, first as offensive lineman with the Guelph Gryphons from 1970-1974, making the University of Guelph 1970s Team of the Decade, and then as defensive lineman with the Queen’s Golden Gaels in 1974-1975. During a 32-year career as educator and coach at Centre Hastings Secondary School, Rob fostered the self-esteem and athletic development of hundreds of students in football, rugby, basketball, track, and curling. In 2005, Rob was honoured with the OFSSA Award as Outstanding Educator to Student Athletes, and in 2007, he received the OFSSA Pete Beach Award for a life dedicated to sport and to helping others achieve their full potential. When Rob and his wife Irene retired from teaching, the athletic field at CHSS was aptly named “Cooke Field” in their honour. Rob also was an assistant coach for rugby at the college level with the Loyalist Lancers from 2006-2013, capturing 3 consecutive provincial titles. Since joining the Bulldogs in 1981, he has been an advocate and promoter of the game at every level, and has held every official position from player, captain, coach and mentor to organizer, fundraiser, regional representative, and long-standing club president. To grow the game, Rob fully backed Pete Hercus’ concept of introducing a non-contact rugby program. Other milestones during Rob’s tenure on the Bulldog’s board were securing Belleville as a host for OFSAA and dual host of the Barbarian Cup Provincial Rugby Championships, drawing hundreds of young players and their families to the area every other year. Naturally, Rob was among the first group of inductees to the Belleville Bulldogs Hall of Fame and was also awarded a lifetime membership. According to Club founder Lew Frape, “without Rob Cooke, the Belleville Bulldogs would not be what it is today.” For more than four decades, Rob Cooke has put his heart and soul into building the sport of rugby in this region and his efforts have landed Belleville squarely on the provincial and national map as a breeding ground for top rated athletes. The Belleville Sports Hall of Fame is proud to induct athlete and builder, Rob Cooke.