

Clarence Sutton

Inducted into the NLBA Hall of Fame in 2011 as an
“Athlete/Builder”

On the court Clarence was a quiet, competitive, positive leader who liked to win!



His best qualities as a basketball player were on the offensive end of the court. He perfected the fade away jumper and a deadly mid-range shooter, which led him to much success in his playing career. He was a 2 time High School Provincial Champ, a member of NL Canada Games Team and NL Junior National Team. Clarence played for Memorial University of Newfoundland and was inducted into the MUN Athletic Honours Society, a varsity athlete’s highest honour. Sutton was a three-time MVP and six-time all-star in Provincial men’s and St. John’s Senior Men’s league where he won 21 combined titles.

As a coach Clarence has touched the lives of many young athletes in our province. He modelled his coaching style after his hero, John Wooden. His personal philosophy was that a young person needed to know that you cared before they cared what you knew. Many have said Clarence did not just teach the game of basketball, he taught hundreds of young people about life. As some famous person once said: “A good coach changes your game, a great coach changes your life” – Clarence was definitely a great coach. Most of the athletes who had the opportunity to be coached by this quiet, unassuming man have a story about how Clarence taught them a life lesson while at the same time making them feel unique and special. His legacy is not measured simply by his wins and losses but by the countless young people whose lives he touched using the game of basketball as his vehicle.

Clarence has long been recognized as one of the top high school basketball coaches the province has ever seen. Many of his players have gone on to play at the university level and local leagues are full of his former athletes. Clarence began his coaching career in 1990 at Stella-Maris Academy in Trepassey. Trepassey was Clarence’s hometown. Upon returning there to teach at the local school he was driven to bring his hometown basketball program back to its glory days. He did so by managing to coach all 4 school teams, the male and female senior and junior teams. During his 8 years at Stella Maris Academy Clarence often would be the first person in the school each morning and the last to leave each night. It was not unusual for Clarence, with his trusted co-pilot Darlene at his side, to coach 8-10 games in one weekend in 4 different gymnasiums. It was in Trepassey where he won several Provincial Championships at both the 3A and 4A level and developed a basketball program that produced many of the top players in the province. Players such as Memorial University standouts- brother and sister duo John and Jenifer Devereaux, Tami Pennell, Joanne MacNeill, Gillian Halleran, Justin Halleran and Jessica Ryan. Following his time in Trepassey Clarence moved on to St. John Bosco where he brought a passion for the game that helped build the program in area where basketball was not as popular. Clarence’s final coaching experience was at St.

Kevin's in the Gould's where his program continued to excel at the 3A and 4A provincial level. Again he coached both male and female teams to provincials in their respective divisions. His St. Kevin's girls' team once won 125 games in a row, over a two year span, a record that will likely never be touched in high school sports. Players such as Michelle Bartlett, Stephanie Dinn and Sheena Fleming are just three of the many St. Kevin's players who Clarence inspired to play basketball at a higher level.

Clarence also volunteered his coaching prowess to various other teams. He coached provincial teams at the national level for several summers and was a member of the coaching staff for the 1997 Canada Games. Clarence was also remembered for the several years he assisted with Memorial University Men's Program.

Despite his awards and championships as both a player and a coach those who knew Clarence would say that his real accomplishment was in the many lives he touched through his genuine love for the game and concern and dedication to all the many young athletes he worked with in his years of devotion to the sport. Speak to any of his former athletes and most will tell you not about the basketball skills they learned or the games they won with Coach Sutton – instead they will tell you about the very special person who, through basketball, helped bring out the best in all those he touched.