

James Walsh

Inducted into the NLBA Hall of Fame in 2017 as an “Official”



Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to take the next few minutes to introduce one of the finest basketball officials of our time, if not the finest, Mr. Jim Walsh of St. John's. I have had the pleasure of knowing Jim since the early 1970's, and we have been good friends ever since.

There are many adjectives to describe Jim Walsh as a

basketball official – focused, prepared, uncanny, leader on and off the floor and so on. In an era where Officials camps were a pipe dream in Canada, and FIBA Cards for NABO Officials were non-existent, Jim dominated the local and provincial scene as a great floor official.

Jim started officiating in 1973- he was one of several young officials who came through Dr. Bill Redden's recruitment group of young potential officials. Also included in that group was the current NABO President Fred Wakeham and others, who got their start in officiating at MUN Intramurals and Residence Basketball. Being a quick study of the game, Jim went on to work every available city league final over the next several years, including Grammar school, Junior High, High School and eventually all City Finals in Sr. Men's and Women's leagues – those were the days of the Normores, Taylors, Tobin's, Murphy's etc. Very good basketball players who demanded good officiating – and they got it with our honouree, Jim Walsh.

Jim worked his first national championship at the young age of 18, when the NLBA hosted the Premier Men (U21) and Sr. Women's tournament here in St. John's in 1978. He was the youngest official in the tournament – and gave the rest of us young officials a goal to reach for. In total, Jim officiated 11 Canada Basketball/CCAA/AUS and CIS Championships over a 30+ years as an active floor official.

Jim worked the AUS Panel at MUN for many years and has many memories – He was featured in the *Telegram* in 1989 providing his interpretation of a call to Mark Elliott of Memorial, while Captain Bill Murphy tried to intercede. In the end – Jim’s interpretation carried the day – nice pic though! Jim was the most consistent floor official in the MUN University Panel for many years, and he earned the respect of both players and coaches from Memorial and from the visiting teams. On tossing then UNB Women’s coach, Joyce Slipp, on a Sunday morning after she had made an inappropriate remark to Jim, the only comment by Coach Slipp gave after the game was that “I crossed the line” and deserved the meted punishment.

In 2008, Jim retired as being an active floor official at Memorial University and then became one of two assigner-evaluators for the AUS MUN Panel – or as old fellas would call it, “The Pool.” He was assigned by the CABO Executive (which he is a member) to the National Evaluation Panel to assign and evaluate officials at National Championships. Including this past season, Jim has assigned 8 National caliber Championships, including the AUS Men and Women, CCAA Men and Women, and CIS Women’s.

Jim has been an invaluable resource and mentor to young officials in the province aspiring to become elite officials. He leads by example to the officials he evaluates and to those he works with. He has shared his insights with our young officials wishing to move to the next level within the province, and within the country.

Jim has been recognized for his efforts in officiating by both NABO and CABO. In 1998, CABO bestowed the J.A. Wink Willox Award to Jim at its Annual General Meeting in Montreal. In 2007, NABO honoured Jim with the Frank J. King Award of Merit for his service to officiating in Newfoundland.

Jim served on NABO’s executive for many years, and in many capacities – secretary-treasurer, President, Interpreter and for a brief period in 2005, our Provincial Supervisor. Starting in 1988, Jim attended the CABO National Council as Interpreter or Supervisor for NABO. This meeting was hosted in various provinces each year, where Jim advocated for NABO’s positions on matters of interest, but more importantly, for the state of officiating within the country. Prior to his next step on the National Level, then President of CABO Bill Crowley of B.C. sought Jim’s advice and counsel in some serious deliberations with Canada Basketball

under their “BE ONE” program. Jim attended many meetings as an advisor to the Executive of the day on issues that required his expertise and guidance under governance issues with CB.

It was at the Halifax Council meeting in 2005 that Jim took his talent as an administrator to the National Executive, where he successfully ran for Vice-President of CABO. In my capacity as Provincial Interpreter, I helped him work the room prior to the vote. One other member ran against him, and both gentlemen were given a chance to speak. I believe it was the few times since I’ve known Jim that he was shaking while speaking. I asked him why after. He said “In my line of work, I can stand and advocate for others. In a room full of friends, it hard to advocate for yourself.”

Jim went on to serve CABO as its Vice-President for 4 years, and in 2009 at the CABO AGM in St. John’s, he was elected President. It was in his capacity as President did Jim leave his greatest mark on CABO as an organization.

Until his tenure, there had been a lack of dialogue and understanding between Canada Basketball and CABO. Jim set out to change this. In the words of Michele O’Keefe, President and CEO of Canada Basketball:

As President of CABO, Jim was very open-minded in regards to the relationship between CABO and Canada Basketball. He recognized that things needed to change as there was too much distance.

CB approached Jim regarding a “technical summit” to discuss technical points of emphasis. CB technical staff recognized that the Canadian basketball stakeholders needed to work more closely together to bridge to technical gaps – travelling calls, off ball contact and interaction between coaches and officials during the game. A technical summit was held in Montreal in the summer of 2011 in conjunction with a CABO camp. It was an excellent first step.

In May 2011, Canada Basketball hosted a Canadian Basketball Congress in Toronto. Jim was part of a panel speaking on Recruiting – Women and Visible Minorities.

At the May 2011 CB Annual General Meeting, it was approved to change the membership category for CABO to Active – same level as the Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations.

By his forward vision, Jim and the CABO executive made strides with Canada Basketball so now that CABO is a full partner in CB, and has the third largest membership outside of the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia.

Jim currently sits on the CABO executive as Past President.

Ladies and gentlemen – there can be no doubt that Jim Walsh has left his mark as an official in many capacities – as an active floor official, an assigner-evaluator at the provincial, conference and national level, an administrator willing to show empathy and patience, yet willing to deal with the tough issues when need be. This he has done for officials in Newfoundland and at the National Council, first as a member of the council, and then as an executive member. When Jim speaks regarding issues on officiating – members listen. Now it is your turn. It is an honour to introduce to you, the 2017 Hall of Fame recipient in the Officials category, Mr. Jim Walsh