

Alumni Profiles
The Work Behind the Play
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Lana Button

Craig Button (Concordia BA 87) was raised on hockey. Not only did he grow up playing the game, his father was an NHL GM and his mother worked for Toronto Maple Leaf's Punch Imlach. But while at Concordia, Button had no aspirations for a career in sports management. Setting his sights on banking, Button studied economics, and intramural hockey was the extent of his involvement in sports. (Although he will tell you that his 'Ice Sharks' intramural team was legendary.)

But after sending a congratulatory note sent to Jack Ferreira for being named General Manager of the Minnesota North Stars (Ferreira worked with Button's father in the past) Button was offered a part-time scouting job. Within 2 _ months he was a fulltime scout with the North Stars.

Button joined the North Stars in 1988 when they were in the basement of the NHL. He became Director of Scouting and eventually Director of Player Personnel under Bob Gainey, who was at one time both coach and general manager of the team. Gainey allowed Button a hand in managing areas of the organization traditionally under the domain of the GM.

Button said the Star's move from Minnesota to Dallas in 1993 was an exciting opportunity to establish a foothold in a brand new market. And when the Dallas Stars won the Stanley Cup in 1999 Button, who is considered to be one of the key architects of that team said, "The most rewarding aspect was being with a terrific group of people who as a team had seen the organization climb from the bottom, work through a franchise change, and ultimately stand together as champions 11 years later."

In 2000 Button became General Manager of the Calgary Flames. He knew what it would take to build a strong organization. "I had that experience of worst to best, and that was my goal for Calgary. "I knew it beginning middle and end, and I was confident in it," says Button. "I still am." Although ownership did not renew Button's contract after 2003, the following season The Calgary Flames went to game 7 of the Stanley Cup Finals.

After 2005's NHL lockout Button worked as pro scout for the Toronto Maple Leafs where he was happy to contribute to a major hockey market; but having goals in management, felt after two years it was time to move on.

In the meantime, Button is anything but waiting in the wings for something to open up. "Sports have given me opportunities to spread my wings in different areas. I'm doing some consulting work in Calgary and in the media." In fact, Button is seen in more than 8 million homes across Canada and the US sharing his NHL perspective on television's Hockey Network.

And when the time is right, Button has every intention to return to developing and managing an NHL team. "It's not about the setback," says Button, "It's about the comeback."

When Julie Healy (Concordia BSc 83) was growing up in LaSalle there weren't a lot of opportunities for girls to play hockey. "We had a kind of team together; just a bunch that

wanted to play in our neighbourhood.” It wasn’t until she attended John Abbot College that Healy played on an organized team. Today, as Director of Female Hockey for Hockey Canada, Healy sees to it that female hockey thrives in Canada; from small town arenas to the national level. “We create programs and opportunities to grow all aspects of the female game.”

Healy has been overseeing female hockey from development to high performance since 2002. She’s the ‘big picture person’ that lays out the vision, gathers the resources and puts the right coaches and support staff in place to support the National Women’s Team, the National Women’s Under 22 Team, and the National Women’s Under 18 Team. Healy also works to ensure that female hockey programs are supported from a media, marketing and events point of view.

Healy, who played for the Lady Stingers for 5 years while studying exercise science at Concordia joined the Stinger’s coaching department as Assistant to the Women’s Athletic Director in 1985, where she had a broad range of responsibilities that went beyond assistant coaching; from managing equipment and facilities to managing programs and budgets. “Those experiences gave me the administrative skills that allow me to do this job completely,” says Healy.

Healy has enjoyed an impressive coaching career which began with her 14 season stint with Concordia’s women’s team who were CIAU National Champions under Healy and Head Coach Les Lawton in 1998 and 1999.

She started with Hockey Canada as Quebec Provincial Team Coach for the Under 18 Provincial Team in 1992. By 1995 she was head coach for Quebec’s senior team, and in 1998, when Hockey Canada started a National Under 22 Team, Healy became their assistant coach.

Healy, who was on Hockey Canada’s National Coaching Committee for five years, is only one of five Canadian women coaches who have a Hockey Canada Level 4 Coaching Certificate. She’s guided Canada’s National Women’s Teams to a long and prestigious list of gold medals; her most memorable being Olympic gold in 2006.

And with the 2010 Olympics on home turf, Healy says it’s definitely an exciting time for women’s hockey. “We work in four year cycles that end at the Olympics. And we’re expected to win gold, we know that. It’s what we expect as well,” adds Healy, who, like the rest of the country, has become accustomed to seeing her hockey team finish at the top. “We don’t win silver, we lose gold.”

In 1983 Sue Hylland was working towards her Concordia Sports Administration Graduate Diploma when she was handed what she considered to be a golden opportunity; a 7 week internship with the Canadian Olympic Association. “That internship turned into a summer job, which turned into a full time position lasting 17 years.”

Hylland worked with the Canadian Olympic Association in various positions until the end of the Sydney Olympics. After spending a year with CAWS, (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity) Hylland was asked in 2003 by The Canada Games Council to join their organization as President and Chief Executive Officer. She’s been traveling the country organizing Canada Games ever since.

Hylland oversees the organization of each Canada Games, which is a 16 day event held once every two years alternating summer and winter games. The multi-sport event hosts 4000 young athletes (ages 12 to 22) from across the country.

Every province and territory will host a Canada Games. Hylland visits and evaluates each site that bids for the games and finds the community within that province that will provide the best environment, meet the standards and uphold the integrity of the Canada Games. Five years in advance, the Canada Games Council awards a community the honour of hosting a Canada Games.

Once a site is chosen Hylland helps establish that community's host society which will run the games. "We appoint one lead person, and it's amazing to watch that one person grow into a 6000 person society that takes over the organization."

Hylland is currently fully immersed in the supervision of the Summer Canada Games being held in PEI this August (15th to 29th). At the same time she is overseeing the preparation for Halifax's 2011 Winter Games, and preparing to visit sites bidding for the 2013 Summer Games being held somewhere in Quebec.

Hylland's Canada Games Council also creates opportunities for young Canadian athletes to stay active and continue competing year in and year out. Hylland encourages schools and communities to put on their own Canada Games with the use of the council's Canada Games Resource Kit. "This kit simulates a Canada Games. It's an excellent way to keep young athletes active and competitive between games," says Hylland

Hylland is proud of the Canada Games' track record. "It's a springboard for many Canadian Olympians," she says. "In the last Olympics over 50% of the Canadian athletes and over 50% of the Canadian medalists were past Canada Games athletes."

Hylland says the springboard for her career was Concordia's Sports Administration Program. "Certainly, for me the Concordia program internship led to a lifelong career."