



**By Grant Granger**  
**Chair, Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame**

**Tickets: \$85**  
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# Dan was the man for Cablevision

**J**ack Crosby was a lacrosse legend in Burnaby who sparked a young Dan Mattinson into becoming one too.

Mattinson, who grew up in one of the veterans homes in the Willingdon Heights area, was just out of high school and coaching soccer for Norburn Athletic Club in his spare time in the mid-1960s. Crosby, who Mattinson calls the godfather of Burnaby lacrosse, needed someone to help coach a midget lacrosse team. It wasn't his sport, but he had a first-aid and trainers certificate and he said to himself, what the heck, why not? From the first time he stepped into the Confederation Park lacrosse box he was in love.

"I was single and crazy so I said I would help them over the summer," recalls Mattinson. "I helped out for a couple of years. I really fell in love with the game. I was enamoured with all of the skills you have to have with the game."

An opening to coach a 10-year-old novice team became available and Mattinson took it. His brother was that age and he convinced him to play lacrosse and got several others on his sibling's soccer team to play too. "We learned from the beginning [together]," says Mattinson. "Many of them stayed with me from junior."

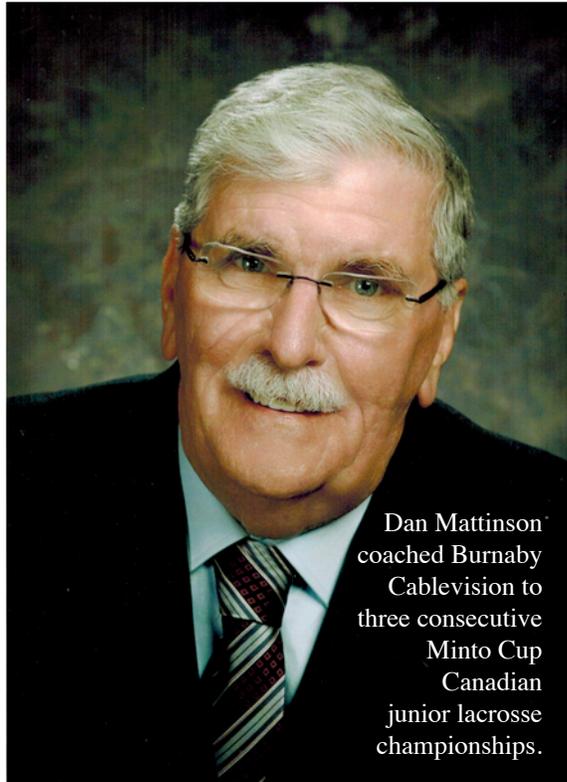
He was coaching at a Junior B level when he cobbled together an amalgamated team to compete in a tournament to represent British Columbia at the 1973 Canada Summer Games held in Burnaby and New Westminster.

"Several of those kids were very skilled for their age," says Mattinson. "We won with a very young team."

**T**he competition was played at Queen's Park Arena in New West with his B.C. team coming third. That's when Crosby came calling again asking Mattinson to be the bench boss for the Burnaby Cablevision Junior A team that was being formed.

"I was pretty hesitant to take that team because I was pretty inexperienced," admits Mattinson.

But the thing was, by then Mattinson was hooked. On lacrosse. And on coaching. He devoured all the knowledge on the sport and coaching that he could find. He even travelled to Ottawa



Dan Mattinson coached Burnaby Cablevision to three consecutive Minto Cup Canadian junior lacrosse championships.

for national coaching courses and took kinesiology courses to expand his knowledge. He'd take note of how senior teams developed skills. He'd go up Burnaby Mountain to watch Jon Kootnekoff masterfully manipulate his powerhouse Simon Fraser University men's basketball teams. He eagerly absorbed the teachings of innovative Canadian sports fitness guru Lloyd Percival and track and field commentator Geoff Gowan.

**I**t paid off. In a big way. Mattinson started with Cablevision in 1974. It wasn't long before he had turned the team into a junior juggernaut. Burnaby won the provincial titles in 1974 and 1975, but lost in the Minto Cup finals to Ontario teams.

"We had our butts kicked badly. We had a skilled team but I learned from those teams what we had to work on. I wanted to change the culture of what we were doing. I still wanted it to be a fun game. We were successful in doing that. We had a group of players that have been together since they were 9 and 10 years old, so that was an advantage there," says Mattinson. "Hack, whack and smack was not my gig. I wanted it fast break-

ing, entertaining with lots of goals.

"We brought some innovation into the game. It changed the game a lot in British Columbia as far as style goes."

In 1976 they were ousted in the league final by the Victoria Shamrocks. That disappointment, however, only helped to fuel a remarkable three-year run with Cablevision being crowned the 1977, 1978 and 1979 Minto Cup champions.

The first was probably the most remarkable. For 53 years, he notes, no western team had won the title in the east. The home team from Whitby won the first two games of the best-of-seven series, but then Burnaby bounced back to win the next four.

**T**hey followed that up by defeating Whitby in the 1978 Minto Cup series played at Queen's Park Arena. The format changed in 1979 to include Alberta with the tournament being played in Calgary. Cablevision defeated Peterborough in the final for its third consecutive Minto Cup crown.

"That no western team has won three consecutive Minto Cups [was an impressive feat]," says Mattinson. "Even with the strong Burnaby (Lakers) team in the 1990s. We did it with two away from home, which is a significant achievement and one I'm not sure will be beat."

The roster included the likes of Dan Wilson — "probably one of the best lacrosse players out of B.C." — Dan Perrault, John Swan (1979 Minto MVP), Lloyd Symons (1978 Minto MVP) and goalie Rod Bannister (1977 Minto MVP), not to mention Burnaby and Canadian lacrosse hall of fame inductees Eric Cowieson and Paul Dal Monte.

"If you talk to those players from that era they will tell you it was the best time of their lives," says Mattinson, who had a terrific time getting together with them all over again two years ago for a 40-year reunion.

"It was as if we'd never left the game," says Mattinson.

There were no down years for his Burnaby boys. In his 12 years (1974 to 1985) coaching Cablevision the team made the B.C. Junior A final ever year and racked up a record of 223 wins, 75 losses and three ties.

Not bad for a kid who never played lacrosse.