



By Grant Granger
Chair, Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame

Tickets: \$85
tickets09@shaw.ca 604-436-6372

Burnaby's Mawhinney is always at home on the hoop hardwood

Steve Mawhinney has always been at home on the hardwood.

He played hoop, of course, as a tyke but he was still in elementary school in South Burnaby when he first went out on the floor to blow a whistle instead of dribble a basketball.

"I officiated a little bit when I was in Grade 7 at Marlborough, believe it or not. When I was at Royal Oak I did some officiating there," says Mawhinney referring to the junior high which was later merged with Marlborough to form the province's biggest elementary school.

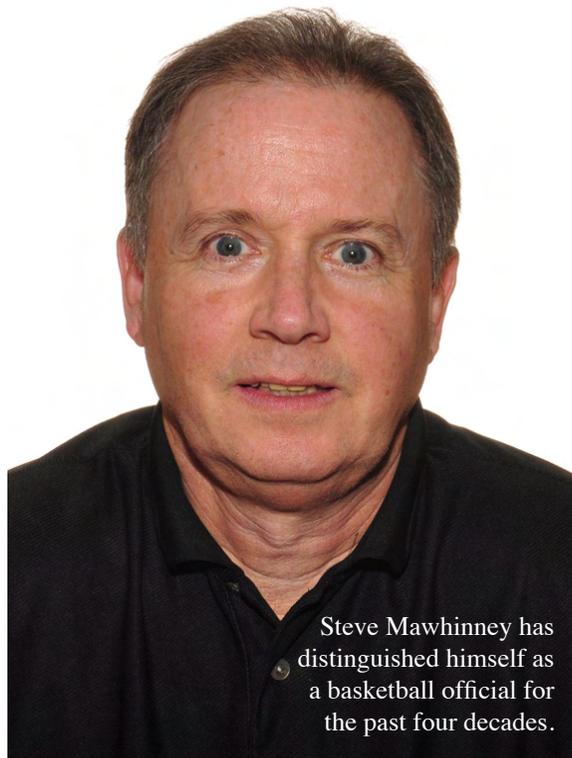
Mawhinney continued to referee when he moved on to Burnaby Central Senior High. That's when a couple of local officials, Terry Garrett and Basketball BC Hall of Famer Harry Cronk, invited him to join the local association, although he's not sure why.

"I don't know. They needed somebody to do it in elementary," recalls Mawhinney.

That was 1977. He made such an impact the Vancouver and District Basketball Officials Association its rookie of the year. More than four decades later the rookie is a veteran who still lopes up and down the hardwood keeping law and order in the hoop world.

"I guess I enjoyed doing it. It's hard to explain. I enjoyed it, so I carried on with it. I liked basketball, and I wasn't going to be a player, that's for sure. So I stayed involved in it. I guess it just becomes what you do. Just like any sporting activity, if you enjoy it you do it," says Mawhinney.

He did his first provincial championship finals just a few years later in 1981 doing both the high school boys A and AA final games. He went onto officiate in two high school girls championship games and four boys championship games including the last high



Steve Mawhinney has distinguished himself as a basketball official for the past four decades.

school game for two-time NBA MVP Steve Nash who led Victoria's St. Michael's University Blue Jags to the 1992 provincial title defeating the Pitt Meadows Marauders.

(Mawhinney says he's been to every BC boys final as an official or spectator since 1970 when he was in Grade 5 and he intends to keep that streak going half a century later.)

Mawhinney has also officiated men's and women's college and university games for 40 years and remains involved in training apprentice officials. He served on the Greater Vancouver Basketball Officials Association's executive for 23 years including 18 years as president. He was been honoured with the provincial Wink Willox

Award in 2006 for his "service, commitment and excellence to basketball officiating" and named winner of the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials' Wink Willox Award in 2012.

"Steve has been a tireless and committed to the betterment of each and every basketball official he's come in touch with," wrote Karn Dhillon, director of administration for the BC Basketball Officials Association in nominating Mawhinney for induction to the Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame. "It's his love of the game, a love of all sports, which makes it easy for him to pass his passion to others so they can carry the torch the same way others helped Steve to get to the highest levels."

Mawhinney, however, is not sure how it is he's lasted so long, especially given the grief most officials receive these days.

"I sort of ask myself a few times, but I can't really explain," says Mawhinney. "Early on you learn when you start if you're motivated to get more challenging games or higher level, if that's your aspiration, you put other things aside. Things like that you try and overcome it. Now at my age, I'm not sure I'd put up with what I did.

"People get excited at the moment."

Although Mawhinney admits officiating is "different" these days, "overall it's not an unpleasant experience" especially given the social aspects that come with it.

"It's like a lot of things, if you get deeply involved with it fellow officials become part of your community," says Mawhinney. "If that wasn't there I'd probably not be involved in it. It's a fraternity of friends that become your support group."

As Mawhinney talks he's getting ready to officiate a game in the evening because, after all, he's always been at home on the hardwood.



Always will be.

