

Review of Literature

Mike Rodden

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Mike Rodden was one of those men that were very well known in the early twentieth century. He not only had supreme athletic capabilities in numerous sports but was also well recognized as a coach who could lead his team to victory and a referee that players wanted refereeing their game because his callings were fair. The world of sport was his entire life and he made a deep impression in it during his time.

Mike Rodden was born on April 24th 1891 in Mattawa Ontario; he was the second of four children born to an Irish Catholic family (Mackey). He stayed in Mattawa until the age of fifteen when he left to attend Ottawa University. While he was there he won the Junior boxing title and when he graduated he still had not lost his title (Legends of Hockey). All that scrappiness he possessed was clear at an early age when he was getting into fights on the playground of St Anne's School (Mackey). In 1906 he enrolled at Queens University; during the next four years he excelled in athletics. During his four years he earned 15 letters in both football and hockey; a record no one has been able to break to this day. Every year the football team would assemble an All-star team to compete and Mike Rodden was on that team four times and each time playing a different position (Legends of Hockey). Not only was Rodden a terrific athlete but he was versatile and not destined to play one position he was gifted and able to excel where ever he was needed.

Mike Rodden had an extremely respectable coaching career; he coached 42 teams into 27 different titles (cfhof.ca). In 1916 he was the head coach for Queen's University,

1920 and 1926 he gave his time to the Toronto Argonauts, Toronto Parkdale in 1921-22 and Toronto Balmy Beach in 1924. But the team that has got him the most recognition is the Hamilton Tiger Cats. He was the coach of the Hamilton team from 1927-1930 and picked up one year in 1937. He also brought his team to Grey cup victory in back-to-back seasons in 1928 and 1929 (cfhof.ca). He was liked by his players and respected by other coaches for his knowledge, training, attitude and overall success. "Mike Rodden of Toronto who has licked the 1927 edition of Tigers into their pendant winning shape has brought harmony into the organization which was in turmoil when he took hold. He has the absolute confidence in his players and the squad is particularly strong in team play" (Hewitt, 11). He built a strong reputation for this team, as a team that is strong and should not be second guessed, he is proud of his men and wants them to reach their full potential. "Mike Rodden and the jungleers have worked strenuously to maintain the all-round power that swept them forward for the dominion title last year. Smooth plays and heavy line work, have been a feature of their curriculum and if they perform against M.A.A.A as efficiently as they have in practices they will be hard to stop" (Hewitt, 10).

He also coached at the University of Toronto for 17 years. "UTS coached by Mike Rodden are reported as being much stronger this season and many are of the opinion that they will take Father Sheehan's lads into camp" (1932, 16). Seems that wherever he went we were able to produce winners and turn young boys into men. Mike Rodden loved so many sports, his one passion was for the game of football where he was able

to make a name for himself but his second love is hockey a sport that has recognized him equally.

Mike Rodden was an extremely respected referee in the NHL and had the honour of refereeing 1187 games in a 13 year period and claims that he had part in discovering 32 players in league (Legends of Hockey). One of those players was his brother Eddie Rodden who played on teams such as the Chicago Black Hawks, Toronto Maple Leafs, Boston Bruins and the New York Rangers (Hewitt, 10). He was the type of guy who would never sacrifice his integrity as a ref so that a certain team would win or because he feared the taunting crowd. When the Toronto Maple Leafs was in the Stanley Cup finals he would not let his teams errors slide (Marsh, 8). "Mike Rodden has a pet peeve. At a recent Oakville-Toronto senior OHA game some irate fan threw two "gawjus" femmes in scanties at him on picture postcards. Mike figures if he doesn't rate a petulant pop bottle or scrap iron after all these years of love and service that the customers are softening up to an alarming degree" (Stop! Look! Listen!). Mike Rodden was also a man that was perfectly content sending players to the penalty box if they disgrace the rules of the game he loves so much; "Referee Mike Rodden started thumbing boys towards the penalty bench and on one occasion no less than five players were in Bill Long's pew at the same time- three Royals and two Oilers (Lytle, 14). Rodden was also given the nickname of the Bill Klem of hockey for being the league's most nonchalant official (Lytle, 14).

Mike Rodden also had a knack for writing and entered journalism in 1918 where he wrote for the Toronto Globe for a decade but left the position to become a sports editor at Kingston Whig-standard where he stayed until 1944 writing weekly columns (Legends of Hockey). Rodden was the first man to be inducted into two halls of fame; hockey in 1962 and football in 1964. He was the first and still one of the select few.

When Mike Rodden retired he wrote a large book on his remarkable career which highlights his many accomplishments as an athlete, coach, referee and sports writer (Mackey). The book shows the readers that had a strong writing ability, was very confident and even in his old age he still had a lot of energy (Mackey). In his book he writes that not only did he play hockey and football but was also an outstanding boxer, canoeist and ten pin bowler (Mackey).

Today in Mattawa there is an arena that was built in his honour called the Mike Rodden Arena and Community Centre Ice Rink. It is an indoor facility which is open seasonally from October to March. They offer public skating, figure skating lessons, ice hockey, pick-up ice hockey and birthday parties (rinktime.com).

Mike Rodden died on January 11th 1978. He lived his life to the fullest and never did anything half-way. He loved his wife Millie (Mackey) with all his heart, coached and

refereeing with all the knowledge he had and played the sports he loved with every fibre of his being.

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