

Pro players get charitable

By John Cudmore
Nov 14, 2011 - 11:45 AM



Play with pros. The RBC Hockey Helps the Homeless charity tournament will take place Nov. 18 at the Magna Centre in Newmarket. Former NHL player Kris King (from left), Canadian Women's Hockey League players Christina Kessler and Amanda Shaw, Hockey Helps the Homeless executive director Gary Scullion and former NHL player Mark Osborne are among the participants in the event. *STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT*

The ladies have got game and in some instances, Olympic gold medals, too. Area hockey fans will be able to get a close-up view at some of Canada's top women's hockey players in action Nov. 18, when the Burlington Barracudas and Brampton Thunder face off in a Canadian Women's Hockey League regular season game to cap a day of hockey during the RBC Hockey Helps The Homeless charity tournament at the Magna Centre in Newmarket.

The CWHL rivals are scheduled for a 7:30 p.m. start time.

"This is professional women's hockey and some of Canada's elite players and Olympic athletes," RBC Hockey Helps The Homeless executive director Gary Scullion said. "I think there's an appetite out there for women's hockey."

The concept is a winner for both the charity event and the six-team CWHL, which is trying to solidify a foothold on the hockey landscape. Founded in 2007, the CWHL also includes franchises in Toronto, Montreal, Alberta and Boston.

"We talked about what we are trying to achieve and they were looking for a venue to promote women's hockey," said Mr. Scullion, who has put together a sold-out recreational tournament running all day and featuring 10 men's and eight women's teams.

Toronto Maple Leafs alumni and current members of the CWHL will be included in lineups for the recreational teams during the course of the day.

Among the Canadian Olympians due to participate are Gillian Apps, Jayna Hefford, Lori Dupuis and Cherie Piper, members of the Brampton squad. The Thunder roster also includes Team Canada members Vicki Bendus and Courtney Birchard.

The Burlington roster includes Team Canada goaltender Christina Kessler.

Proceeds from the day-long event, sponsored in part by The Era-The Banner, will go to RBC Hockey Helps The Homeless and its partner outreach organizations, including Belinda's Place, Pathways, Habitat for Humanity, Light Patrol, Snug as a Bug, Gateway and Inn from the Cold.

The organization has raised more than \$3.5 million and assisted more than 18,000 homeless men, women and youths since its 1996 inception. It supports long-term solutions with homeless agencies, shelters and transition programs across Canada.

Following the recreational tournament, former NHLers, including Kris King, Mark Osborne, Steve Thomas and Rick Vaive, and Canadian Olympians will face off for a 4:30 p.m. contest.

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