



## REMEMBERING KELLY MITCHELL

This past weekend we lost Kelly Mitchell to cancer after a very long and hard-fought battle. Kelly was the poster boy for what a Green Gael is, was and will always be. From his adopted home in Alberta, Kelly kept in constant contact with his friends and teammates. We offer our condolences to Kash (Steve Kashul), Jammer (Derek Keenan) and Freddy (Fred Upshaw) as we know this was a very tough weekend for you. Along with Kelly, these men have been friends for almost 45 years – a bond that began as teammates with the Green Gaels in 1977. Kelly usually made his annual trip to Ontario to see his family and attend the Jim Bishop Memorial Golf tournament to support the Gaels club.

## Kelly Mitchell Career Statistics As A Green Gael

### REGULAR SEASON

	GP	GO	ASS	PTS	PIM
TOTALS	98	300	393	693	282

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### PLAYOFFS

	GP	GO	ASS	PTS	PIM
TOTALS	37	90	144	234	69

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### CAREER TOTALS

	GP	GO	ASS	PTS	PIM
TOTALS	135	390	537	927	351

Over four full seasons playing for the Gaels, Kelly Mitchell averaged **three goals per game** (2.89) along with **4 assists per game** (3.98) for an average of **seven points for every game he played** (6.87). You can also include 2.6 penalty minutes per game. Think about that – 7 points per game in the highest calibre of Junior “A” lacrosse in the country – competing against the very best Junior players in Canada!

\*1977 - 5TH IN SCORING IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A" (125 points)

\*1977 - AWARDED OUTSTANDING ROOKIE IN O.L.A JUNIOR "A"

\*1978 - TOP SCORER IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A" (187 points)

\*1979 - 3RD IN SCORING IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A" (213 points)

\*1980 - TOP SCORER IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A: (164 points)

\*10TH ALL-TIME TOP GOALSCORER IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A" with 300 GOALS

\*6TH ALL-TIME TOP PLAYMAKER IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A" with 393 ASSISTS

\*6TH ALL-TIME TOP POINTGETTER IN O.L.A. JUNIOR "A" with 693 POINTS

## *Teammates Share Their Thoughts On The Passing of Kelly Mitchell*

### **Peter Abramczuk**

(General Manager of the Gaels during the Kelly Mitchell years (1977-1980).

“Kelly was so smooth, so skilled. He had a polish to his game. A genuine sniper who was known for his offensive skills. But, if you check his penalty minutes, he knew how to take care of himself. (Note: Mitchell had a 121 penalty minutes in his final year of Junior “A” lacrosse in 1980). As a person, Kelly Mitchell was somewhat refined and distinguished, he seldom swore. Mitch always had a friendly smile and a gentle calmness about his character. Over four seasons as a Gael, I cannot recall Kelly ever missing a practice or game unless he was injured. His intelligence, his skill, his desire made him an outstanding lacrosse player. We have lost a great one with the passing of Kelly Mitchell.”

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### **Neil Armstrong**

Neil Armstrong was an Assistant Coach to Head Coach Jim Bishop in 1977

“Kelly Mitchell was a very gifted player. He didn’t look like an intimidating lacrosse player, he looked more like a choir boy. But he was incredibly talented. He had great vision – a player who was a great passer and he was a great scorer. Even as a rookie, Kelly played on the power play as he should have. He was that gifted. He thought the game deeply and was able to execute. Some players had trouble adapting to Coach Bishop, but Kelly did not. As in any walk of life, the more intelligent people are going to do well and Kelly Mitchell was that. Kelly was very coachable and a nice kid. Kelly loved the game of lacrosse. Mitch was always a Gael, he maintained contact with Gaels including travelling back to Oshawa from Calgary to play in an alumni game to celebrate the Gaels 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.”

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### **Steve Kashul**

“As a player, in 1977 Coach Jim Bishop had returned to the Gaels and we had training camp early. When we went out to the Lake Vista Bowl, before practice there was a new player face down on the massage table. This guy was having his back worked on...I thought who is this guy? It was Kelly Mitchell. We met for the first time at that practice session and became teammates which led to friendship and a life-long relationship that extended beyond being lacrosse buddies, but life friends. As a lacrosse player, Kelly had a sidearm shot that was amazing. Kelly had a slight body. He was only 5’10” and maybe 150 pounds, but he never backed down. He was our leader, he was our captain and our scoring ace. When you needed him to get the big goal, he usually

delivered. From our era, there wasn't anybody better, he was just so smart. We played an intense system under Coach Bishop. I feel if we had played a bit more relaxed style, Kelly would have excelled even more as he would have been able to use his skills and intelligence that did not need a system to succeed. Scoring is about finishing, and Mitch could finish. We played lacrosse together, we golfed together, we travelled together and partied together. Outside of lacrosse, Kelly was a businessman in Calgary, a very successful stockbroker. He served his community as a member of United Way and gave back to lacrosse as a coach and builder. Kelly came to Toronto for business meetings and he would catch up to us. He was just a really nice man who never said anything bad about anyone. I last saw him in October this year. Kelly knew the end was near. We both acknowledged that. I know I am going to miss him."

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### **Fred Upshaw**

"Mitch was a phenomenal player. He was magical, he could really control the ball. He had skills that most of us didn't have. As a person, he was a fantastic – you knew when he was in the room, because the room was full of joy. People just enjoyed being in his company. Kelly just lit up a room. We used to know if Mitch was present because he was the loudest guy in the room having fun. I think we stay connected for over 40 years, because we just clicked as Gaels in the 1970s. We all challenged each other athletically whether it was on the lacrosse floor or on the golf course. We were all competitive and we loved to have fun. We just fell in love with each other. It is really special to have a tight group of buddies for so much of our lives. We have been blessed to have each other. And although Mitch is not here, he will always be in our memory. My heart is in need of repair right now thinking of Kelly being gone, but he will always be in my memory and that is priceless."

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### **Derek Keenan**

"Honestly, in my lifetime I have seen many great players and played with some great ones, Kelly is the most skilled and talented player I ever played with or saw, without a doubt. Talk about ahead of his time, the things he could do with a wood stick were simply amazing. In regard to life beyond lacrosse, Kelly was one of the smart ones – one who put career ahead of lacrosse. He moved to Calgary in 1982 or 1983 to begin his professional business career. If he had stayed playing lacrosse, Kelly would have been a genuine superstar throughout his career. He did give back to lacrosse in Alberta and even today is highly respected for his contributions as a player, as a coach and a builder. I last saw Kelly in October. He knew the end was near. We talked a lot until the last week of his life when things turned near the end. It's a sad day but at the same time a day to remember everything this wonderful man brought to his family and his many friends. I'm proud to have been his friend for so many great years. I will miss him every day but will smile remembering him. Rest in peace, my friend."

## Footnote

Despite knowing his time on earth was drawing close to the end - in October, Kelly Mitchell drove to Ontario to visit with family and close friends. Among those he spent time with were his band of brothers of Steve, Fred and Derek. And Kelly being Kelly, the fine person he was – Kelly presented each of his friends with a uniquely designed wooden ring. The wood was significant as it represented how these players were the last of the wooden stick lacrosse players, the final generation of lacrosse players who all used wooden sticks as a team.

Engraved on the ring were the words: *“Friend like Family”*

Rest in Peace Kelly – yes, you were an amazing lacrosse player, but of greater significance, you were an amazing person. You will be missed.

