

## Sports

## From one great coach...



FILE PHOTO Sun Media

Before becoming a scout for the Edmonton Oilers, Bill Moores was an assistant coach with the team.

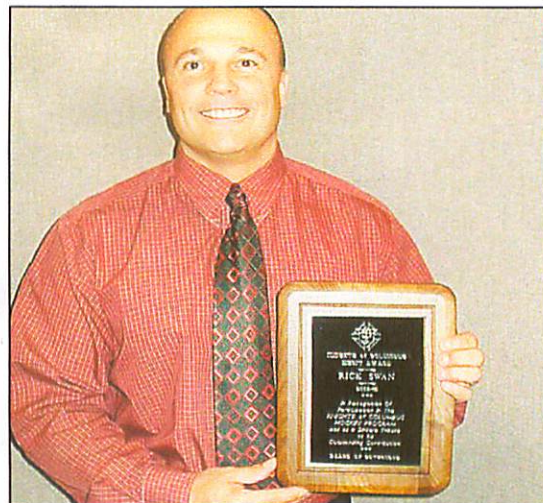


Photo supplied

Midget AAA hockey coach Rick Swan was recently presented with the Knights of Columbus Merit Award.

## ...to another

With mentorship from Bill Moores, Rick Swan is redefining how a coach works in minor hockey

**Brian Swane**  
Examiner Sports

It's quarter past seven in Smitty's on a dark Edmonton winter morning, and Knights of Columbus midget AAA hockey coach Rick Swan, his assistant Larry Draper, and Edmonton Oilers scout Bill Moores are seated at a table.

Around them, the nine-to-five crowd is just starting to amble in, a cup of coffee away from jolting themselves to life, but there's no sleepy heads in this group as Swan picks the veteran coach Moores' brain on running a hockey team. System, structure, personnel – it's "kind of an open forum," says Moores. "Whatever they want to talk about."

Recently honoured with the Knights of Columbus Merit Award for outstanding hockey contribution, Swan is leading a coaching renaissance at all levels of the local minor hockey organization, shifting the focus from wins and losses to the process of developing hockey players.

It's a philosophy that's rooted in

his experiences a generation ago playing for coaches Moores and Clare Drake at the University of Alberta, and continues to be shaped with the counsel of Moores, who served as something of a mentor to Swan this past season.

"I feel privileged that here's a guy involved in the National Hockey League, and (he is) so generous of his own time," says Swan. "It started out just as a breakfast – 'What are you doing, and how can I help?' -- on to being a monthly thing and then it turned out to be a bi-weekly breakfast."

**BACK TOGETHER**

Moores and Swan reunited 25 years after winning a Canada West championship together on the Golden Bears. Moores, who coached several seasons in the Edmonton Minor Hockey Association during the '70s, says Swan is doing a lot more than teaching hockey; he's teaching life skills.

"I think the thing that impresses me is how much he cares about the athletes," says Moores, whose lengthy coaching resume includes

“**He's not just coaching the stars of the team, he's in it for everybody.**

— Bill Moores

18 years on the Bears' staff (as head coach or Drake's right-hand man) and 10 seasons as an NHL assistant (New York Rangers and Oilers).

"He's trying to develop the whole person. Hockey is the vehicle, but he's working on a lot of different things; He tries to inspire them to reach their potential or just find ways to make them be the best they can be."

"It sounds cliché but that's really what it is," Moores continues. "He's trying to find a way that they can, through hockey, develop skills that will help them in their future (outside hockey)."

"He's not just coaching the stars of the team, he's in it for everybody. If he's got 22 players, his role

is to develop 22 players, and to make it a positive experience for every one of those young men..."

After being named 2008-09 Alberta Midget Hockey League coach of the year in his first season with the Pats, Swan was approached by K of C's president of hockey operations, Ken Rylance, about implementing his philosophy organization-wide. Despite his demanding day job as an Edmonton police sergeant, Swan found time to work with numerous K of C coaches from novice to midget. He's greatly enthused with how others in K of C have embraced his ideals, and the direction the organization is headed in.

**TWO YEARS IN**

"We've got two years under our belt and we think that now we're starting to create (a sense) of what it means to be part of the Knights of Columbus organization, and the pride involved in it," says Swan.

"It comes right back down to what coach Moores was teaching me, and my days with coach Drake on the Bears: If this was successful there, why can't we

implement it at the minor hockey league level and give them the same type of passion and love that I had for the game playing for those two gentlemen?"

For Moores' part, as long as Swan and Draper are hungry to learn, he'll be glad to keep meeting them for a little hockey talk over a plate of pancakes.

"I've done a fair amount of (mentoring) over the years with individual coaches so, for me, it's always a good experience, because I know how critically important and what a difference it can make in young people's lives if they've got good coaches that have a philosophy that can support the kids' development," he says.

"The first thing I always talk about is their philosophy of coaching."

"What do they want these kids to learn? How are they going to get across the important things in terms of transferring it through the rest of their lives? And that's what Rick's got in place. He understand that completely, and (so does) Larry."

"They get it."