

THE WADE HAMER CHALLENGE CUP

The Wade Hamer Challenge Cup began in 1985 as the Colonel's Challenge Cup. It earned its name because the game was sponsored by the Jason family, which owned the local Kentucky Fried Chicken. The game was meant to be (and has continued to be) a friendly hockey game between St. Pat's and Sir John. One of the driving forces behind this game was a young St. Pat's student named Wade Hamer. Wade had a vision of setting up a game between the two schools after one extremely rough game in the Rec League where a few choice words were exchanged between the players. Wade entered his team's dressing room and gave them a "dressing down". He then walked into the other team's dressing room (this team was made up of mostly teachers) and ripped into them about their unsportsmanlike behavior. He was embarrassed and wanted to find a way for the students and teachers to play without the unsportsmanlike conduct.

He envisioned a friendly match between a team of students and teachers from St. Pat's against a students/teacher team from Sir John. He worked hard to find a sponsor and scrambled to field a team. He talked to the student council president at Sir John and asked him to issue a challenge to St. Pat's student council. Wade happened to be the sports rep on St. Pat's student council, and he accepted the challenge on behalf of the student body.

The first Colonel's Cup was born! Wade then went on to attend College and heard that the game was in jeopardy of not happening in what would be its 2nd year. He made several phone calls and managed to get a game put together.

Over the years, the game has seen many changes. One of the key changes has been its format. For the first 11 games of the Challenge Cup, male students, female students and school staff all played in the same game - sometimes on alternating lines, alternating periods or all mixed together. In 1996, the game was split up into three sections: one period for the teachers, one period for female students, and two

periods for the male students. Shortly after the turn of the millennium, the teacher's game was abandoned to allow for the female game to have a second period as well. This is the format that has continued on to this day.

The game has also had several traditions that have stood out over the years. In the first days of the Gerry Murphy, fans of each school would sit on the opposite side of the ice. At some point in the game, and there didn't seem to be any rhyme or reason as to when, the fans of both schools would get up and walk past each other to switch sides of the rink. As the students and staff walked past each other, many playful barbs were bounced back and forth.

In the early 2000s, the game moved from the night-time to the daytime to allow all students to attend regardless of other extra-curricular commitments. Students now venture over to the game in lieu of afternoon classes (something we're sure the founders would have supported!).

Currently, students deck themselves out in green or blue (or, for the more brave at heart, paint themselves green or blue) and take pride in screaming the loudest as their school battles it out for high school hockey supremacy. While the hockey action is contained to the ice surface, the cheering battles in the stands are almost as competitive!

Throughout the years, this game has persevered and actually has grown into one of the largest one-day sporting events in the Northwest Territories. In doing so, it has not forgotten its humble roots and it continues to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two schools while showcasing their great hockey talent.

In 1987, when Wade was 18 years old, he was killed in an industrial accident. The annual hockey game between the two rival high schools, formerly known as The Colonel's Cup, became known as The Wade Hamer Challenge Cup.

-NWT School Sports archives

