

# Health & Fitness Journal of Canada

---

Copyright © 2020 The Authors. Journal Compilation Copyright © 2020 Health & Fitness Society of BC

---

Volume 13

September 30, 2020

Number 3

---

## COMMENTARY

**Dr. Jack Taunton: Our Miracle Worker**

**Marina Van Der Merwe<sup>1,\*</sup>, Kathy Broderick<sup>1</sup>**

**1 School of Kinesiology and Health Science, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada, M3J1P3**

**\*Corresponding Author: [vdmerwe@yorku.ca](mailto:vdmerwe@yorku.ca)**

---

### Abstract

Jack Taunton's skills in Sports Medicine and his enthusiastic psychological support for the Canadian Women's Field Hockey Team over a period of 17 years were an integral part of bringing the team from 23rd to 2nd place in the world rankings and carrying them to three Olympic Games, from 1984 through 1992. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(3):23-24.**

<https://doi.org/10.14288/hfjc.v13i3.325>

Keywords: Sports Medicine, Olympic Qualification, Health

---

### Introduction

For the Canadian Women's National Field Hockey Team, the "short stories" re: Jack and the Taunton Family stretch over seventeen magnificent years. Our journey started in 1979 at the World Cup held in Vancouver when Jack served as our on-site physician. During that time, we had to decide whether we could "play with the Big Girls" if we put our minds and bodies to the task in our sport. During our seventeen-year liaison Jack and Cheryl had two little girls that needed their love and care and they were not overwhelmed at having to inherit twenty "big" girls plus two Coaches into the family. We watched the Taunton girls grow up from afar while Cheryl kept the home fires burning as Jack travelled with the Team around the world trying to prepare for international play.

Qualifying for the Olympics was deemed a "pie in the sky" objective but with perseverance the goal to develop the fittest team on the international circuit led the

team to three Olympics, six World Cups, and three Pan American Games with Jack Taunton spinning his magic to keep the team healthy and fit.

During the 1983 World Cup in Malaysia Jack was taxed beyond the boundaries of "normal". Temperatures in the forties would test our naive objective of "fit to make the Olympics." During one game at the half time break when Jack desperately called for ice he received a large block of ice and a hammer – Jack knew what to do.

Dr. Taunton was more than a Sport Physician – diagnostically he is superb while also psychologically he instilled powerful energy which stimulated only the best performances – he was our miracle worker – a Coach's delight.

Jack made an indelible impact on the International scene – the health of the athlete came first. He helped teams who did not have the luxury of an on-site doctor. His enthusiasm for the game made him "easy to talk with" and his medical expertise

## Our Miracle Worker

---

coupled with his sociable demeanor gave Canada a voice during important decision-making meetings.

During game play Jack was a stalwart Cheerleader. The “never say die” became the watchword of the team.

In retrospect the success of the Women’s Field Hockey Team can be attributed to many cogs in the wheel but standing out is the medical care and psychological boost provided by Dr. Jack Taunton and indirectly the support and strength of Cheryl.

Jack was often picked up at various airports to join the team. We remember so clearly our Manager quietly interrupting a practice with the words: “Jack’s here!” What a relief – all’s well in the land.

### **Authors’ Qualifications**

The authors’ qualifications are as follows: Marina Van Der Merwe BSc, MA, PhD, Associate Professor Emerita, School of Kinesiology and Health Science, York University; Kathy Broderick BPE, MA, Lecturer, School of Kinesiology and Health Science, York University.