

THE DR. TOM PASHBY SPORTS SAFETY FUND MEDIA RELEASE

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The Dr. Tom Pashby Sports Safety Fund is pleased to announce Toronto Star journalist Randy Starkman is the 2008 winner of the Dr. Tom Pashby Sports Safety Award given to a Canadian who has made an outstanding contribution to help in the prevention of catastrophic injuries in sports and recreational activities.

A 'catastrophic injury' by definition leaves a victim with a permanent impairment. It usually affects the eyes, brain or spinal cord.

Mr. Starkman is the fifth person to be so honoured and the first sportswriter to receive this prestigious award which includes a \$10,000 prize.

He is being recognized for his extensive work in educating the public on the existence and problems surrounding catastrophic injuries in sports. The award will be presented at the Hockey Hall of Fame on Friday October 17 at 11:00 A.M.

“Education is the first step in prevention,” is an oft-repeated quote from the late Dr. Pashby who was pioneer in preventing eye injuries in hockey and racquetball sports. He is the reason hockey players wear helmets and facemasks. He was also a force in reducing spinal cord injuries and concussions in hockey.

“Starkman is one of a very few journalists in Canada who consistently brings to the public the causes and the consequences of these serious injuries,” says Al Stewart, a director of the Dr. Tom Pashby Sports Safety Fund and head of the committee that oversees the award. “His concern and his columns have made many more people aware of the vital need for preventive measures.”

Starkman, 48, of Toronto has been covering amateur sport for almost three decades and has been with The Star since 1988. He has written at least 11 features on concussions and helmets alone in the past 15 years. He has had five National Newspaper Award nominations, winning twice, including once (1992) for a revealing series of articles on concussions and unsafe helmets.

Toronto Star sports editor Mike Simpson says “Starkman has a passion for sport that is demonstrated day in and day out. The outstanding concussion feature he wrote last year was a fine example of both his work ethic and his desire to educate the reader. He was illuminating an issue that generally received little attention but clearly affects so many lives.”

Dave Perkins, a Star sports columnist and former sports editor nominated Starkman for this award. “All of Randy’s big projects have been self-initiated,” Perkins says. “The most any sport editor ever did was sign off and give him the space to operate. He does everything himself, from conception through research to writing,” states Perkins.

“These stories are not generally sexy ideas,” adds Perkins. “They’re about difficult issues rather than engaging personalities. The subject matter can become very dry very quickly but ‘Starks’ keeps it easily understandable, often with the use of anecdotes he uncovers from subjects he interviews.

“Most of all he cares if his stories make a difference,” says Perkins. “Often they do. And you can’t ask for much more than that from any journalist.”

Randy’s ‘caring nature’ goes beyond his ability to pen a compelling story. He has volunteered at Bloorview Children’s Hospital, Dovercourt Boys and Girls Club, been a Big Brother and works with The Children’s Breakfast Club. He is married to Mary Hinds and has a teenage daughter Ella.

The four previous Pashby Award winners are: Pat Bishop, professor emeritus in Kinesiology at University of Waterloo; neurosurgeon Dr. Karen Johnston; Dr. Mark Aubry, chief medical officer of the International Ice Hockey Federation and Hockey Canada; and Kevin Stubbington, a grass roots hockey volunteer who developed the STOP sign (Safety Toward Other Players) that is seen on the backs of many hockey jerseys across Canada.