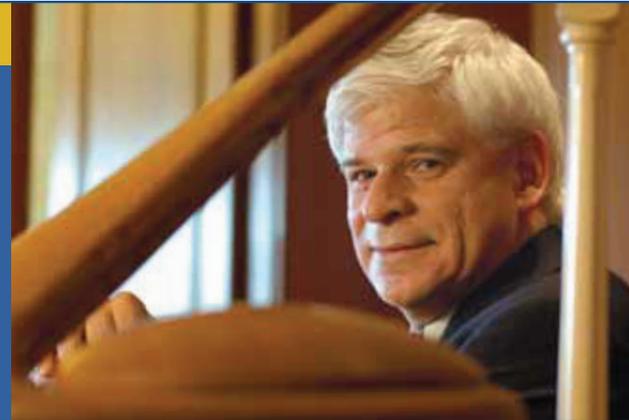


Olympic competitor, captain, field hockey, 1979 Summer Olympic Games, Montréal, Canada



Alan Hobkirk (far right)

## Home Turf

His father was a member of Dean Curtis's second graduating class in 1949. He attended University Hill School and played field hockey where Gage Towers now sit, urged into the sport at age six by Dr. Harry Warren, an Olympic sprinter, Rhodes Scholar geology professor and friend of George Curtis. Two of Curtis's boys were teammates. A Rhodes Scholar himself; UBC Law alum and former adjunct professor; Olympian field hockey player; UBC Sports Hall of Fame inductee; and Partner with Miller Thomson LLP, Alan Hobkirk can trace the beginnings of most of the major facets of his life back to those early days at UBC.

During his first year with the UBC team, Hobkirk recalls, "Peter Burns (who had just come to UBC from New Zealand) was the coach of the field hockey team. Years later, I ended up in law school in his first-year torts class!" He remembers George Curtis's guest lectures in constitutional law: "He talked about the waving fields of wheat in Saskatchewan and it was all tied into constitutional law issues, so he very much brought it to life for me."

Hobkirk easily brings to life one of his own favourite memories of the 1976 Olympic Games. "We'd been waiting out in an open field for several hours, being drilled by a retired sergeant major in how to march," he recounts. "We were all getting very anxious and overheated waiting to go in. And then we walked down the tunnel into the stadium and this roar started, became cumulatively louder as we entered the stadium and it was absolutely deafening. It was a wonderful high to start the Olympic Games on. I'll never forget that."

The 1976 Olympics saw the first major international hockey tournament held on artificial turf, a technological innovation pioneered by Canadians in response to Montréal's sudden summer storms and resultant flash floods. Hobkirk played full

back (or sweeper back). "Our archrival [had] always been Argentina," Hobkirk explains. "We played them in our second game in Montréal and we played an absolute blinder of a game and beat them 3-1, which was a huge upset. We garnered a lot of publicity nationally and were on all the sportscasts. Unfortunately, one of our best players was seriously injured—he had his cheek bone and eye orbit fractured by an Argentinean defender's stick—and he was gone for the tournament. That was the last game we won. It was a great thrill while it lasted."

Hobkirk was named UBC's Outstanding Sportsman for 1979; won the University's Big Block Award five times; and was inducted into UBC's Sports Hall of Fame in 1994. He has worked on sports law issues on a *pro bono* as well as a professional basis, and says, "The advantage of having played at a fairly high level is that one tends to understand that there are often undercurrents present that do not represent the pretty side of sport."

Hobkirk likens the preparation that goes into athletic competition to preparing for trial, and says, "The idea of being physically fit for a trial, particularly a longer trial, holds every bit as true as it does for going into a hockey tournament. The days are long, the opposition is tough, uncertain events occur." He played hockey up until about three years ago, and now works out at a gym close to his office: "Just a little bit a day or every other day makes a big difference."

Hobkirk coached junior boys for many years and was Assistant Manager of the UBC Thunderbirds Field Hockey Team for its Spain Tour in 2006-2007. His oldest son, Michael, was a member of that team and the national squad. Another son, Brian, will be playing at UBC in the fall. Hobkirk is enjoying his time as a spectator, spending lots of time at UBC's new field. "It's a small world," he says of the ties that keep him coming back to his alma mater. "It's been a great relationship."