



Michael Tanner

June 13, 1948 - March 18, 2026

Michael (“Mike/Coach”) Tanner was born in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, and spent his early years in Blue Rocks, a place that remained dear to him throughout his life, before moving to Halifax with his family. He was the son of the late Gerald Frederick Tanner of Blue Rocks and Barbara Osborne King of Lunenburg. He was also the grandson of Captain Guy Tanner of the Frances Geraldine and Flora Alberta, who served as a crew member aboard the original Bluenose during its heyday. Mike is survived by his son, William Tanner (Alyssa Pike), his daughter, Jaclyn Tanner (Angus Rhuland), and his beloved granddaughter, Ellen Tanner, who were the centre of his world. He is also survived by his former wife and mother to his children, Sue Creaser, with whom he shared many years and his siblings: Bryan Tanner (Doreen), Alan Tanner (Lilla), Bonnie McCormick (Myles), and Kim Tanner. He will be fondly remembered by his many nieces and nephews—Mark, Lisa, Leanne, Kyle, Sara, Joseph—and their families, all of whom he loved dearly. Mike’s life was defined by his passion for education, sport, and mentorship. He began playing football at Queen Elizabeth High School in 1964, where his lifelong connection to the game took root. He went on to play university football at Mount Allison University, where he was named to the Quarter Century All-Star Team, and later at Dalhousie University, where he earned his Bachelor of Physical Education in 1972 and went on to complete a Master’s degree. That same year, he was drafted by the Montreal Alouettes, but chose instead to pursue a career in teaching and coaching—a decision that would shape generations to

come. In 1973, Mike joined the coaching staff at Queen Elizabeth High School as an assistant under Bob Douglas, who became both a mentor and a close friend. By 1978, he stepped into the role of head coach—a position he held with unwavering dedication until the school's closure in 2007. He then continued his coaching career at Citadel High School, serving as head coach through 2025. Over his career, Mike led the QEH Lions and Citadel Phoenix to 40 provincial high school championship appearances, winning 30. In addition to football, Mike coached both boys' and girls' basketball, as well as provincial and junior varsity teams, leaving an indelible mark on thousands of students and athletes over decades of teaching and coaching. His influence extended far beyond the field—he was a mentor to players, coaches, and colleagues alike, leading with integrity, humility, and a deep commitment to helping others grow. He also played a significant role in developing coaches across the country through the National Coaching Certification Program. In recognition of his contributions, Mike was the inaugural recipient of the NFL/CFL Award of Excellence for high school coaching in 1999 and was inducted into the Nova Scotia Football Hall of Fame that same year—an honour he accepted with characteristic humility. Beyond his professional accomplishments, Mike was known for his warmth, generosity, and the traditions he cherished with family and lifelong friends. His annual Super Bowl parties and monthly poker games became beloved traditions, bringing together family and friends for laughter, food, and connection. He was also famously known for wearing shorts year-round—something that became part of his signature style and a source of amusement for those who knew him best. At his core, Mike was a devoted family man. He treasured time with his children and especially his granddaughter, who brought him endless joy. He also deeply valued simple traditions, including Saturday morning breakfasts with Jaclyn and Will at their favourite diner. Even in the face of illness this past year, Mike remained remarkably positive and selfless. He rarely spoke of his own struggles, instead focusing on others with the same care and concern that defined his life. He maintained lifelong friendships that meant the world to him, and whose

support—especially over the past year—was deeply appreciated. Mike will be remembered as an exceptional father, grandfather, brother, uncle, coach, teacher, and friend. His legacy of leadership, kindness, and dedication will continue to live on in the countless lives he touched. He was an important person to many, a large presence with a kind soul and somewhere he and his best friend George the bernedoodle are walking in the park talking to anyone they pass. We will be celebrating Mike's life and achievements at Citadel High School on May 16th, 2026 from 11:00am - 1:30pm (1855 Trollope Street). All are welcome. For those who wish to support the family, contributions will go toward Mike's Celebration of Life. Please follow the link here: <https://gofund.me/7431f4326>>

Tribute Wall

RJ

“ I had the privilege to be coached by Mike during the 1975 season of QEH football, with friendships made on that iconic team I've been fortunate to carry over a lifetime. Though I never 'started', Coach Tanner made a short kid of dubious weight class feel that his contribution on the practice field was integral to every game's success. I practiced hard...and still do. Only instead of hitting and tackling on the Wanderer's Ground, these past 40 years I've 'hit' the stand-up stage and 'tackled' audiences with the same zeal Coach Tanner inspired in me...and legions of others over the yers, whose potential he nurtured, praised and supported in a life he fully actualized. RIP Coach Tanner. You were a man of inestimable integrity and fortitude who made a difference in this world.

Ron James - May 16 at 11:44 AM

HP

“ April 23, 2026 *My Early Friendship with Mike Hugh Parker* In the early 60's, Mike lived on North Bland Street and I lived around the corner on Inglis Street. During our junior high days Mike and I often played together. We were the same age but Mike was overall bigger and a couple of inches taller. Mike and I went to cubs/scouts at Fort Massey United Church. What I remember vividly was not the badges I earned at scouts but the foot race Mike and I had each evening after scouts. We would line up in front of Fort Massey Church on Queen Street and race all the way down Queen to Victoria Road. Running flat out down a steep paved hill is not fun. I was determined to beat him but never could. At times I was very close but always the “bride's maid”. To the best of my memory of Mike spanning very close to 70 years, Mike and I had a lot of fun in the early years. Mike's father was a captain of an offshore scallop boat which fished scallops in water greater than 50 miles off the Atlantic coast along the Scotian Shelf. One day Mike said to me that his father would be home on Saturday and that he would get me a bag of scallops. Even in those early days, scallops were a high cost item. I knew a bag of fresh scallops was expensive. Did Mike really discuss this with his father? On Saturday, I went over to Mike's place to pick up my scallops. Mike answered the door. “Mike, I've come for my scallops!” Mike looked at me and said, “I can't give you the scallops, Brian peed on them. Brian was Mike's younger brother who I played football with under Coach Bobby Douglas at QEH. I slowly departed Mike's place empty handed. As I walked away, it dawned on me that Brian was only a few years younger than Mike, a bit too old to be peeing on a bag of scallops. Oh well, I appreciated Mike's effort. My sincere condolences to the Tanner Family.

Hugh Parker - May 12 at 03:01 PM

MA

“ I knew Mr. Tanner before I even attended QEH - his reputation preceded him. He coached football and girls basketball at the time (including my older sister). He was my PE teacher in Grade 10, and i learned more than I ever have before about physical education. He was always no nonsense and funny. Mainly he was a down-to-earth teacher who I talked to about different things.

Coincidentally, we became colleagues together at Citadel High for a couple years, before he retired. Whenever I saw him, he always looked the same and acted the same as when I first met him in 1987. he never seemed to change. There are very few icons in school, and he was one of them.

He is sadly missed, but what a life of meaning,

Malik Adams

Malik Adams - April 22 at 12:49 PM

MR

“ Mike and I were classmates through our high school years at QEHS in Halifax. He was a great classmate and a joy to have around! I know he will be missed by many. So saddened to hear of his passing.

Marion Ross - April 21 at 05:46 AM

SC

“ Coach Tanner will always hold a special place in my heart and in my memories.

I will never forget getting out of my mother’s car as an incoming 10th grader, walking over to introduce myself while he was running an early summer practice with the veterans. I was nervous beyond words—this was Coach Tanner, the legend. From that very first moment, he set the standard.

As a former player who was fortunate to play a key role on his teams and help him win a championship, I can say without hesitation that every success we shared was rooted in his leadership. Coach Tanner demanded excellence, accountability, and toughness, not just on the field but in who we were becoming as young men.

He taught me lessons that extended far beyond football. He was tough, fair, and deeply caring an excellent teacher and a winner in every sense of the word. I still smile thinking about being sent to pick up his lunch from McDonald’s in his old Mazda van, or the day he called me a “prima donna” and sent me off to figure out what that meant. I was upset at the time, but in hindsight, it was exactly the lesson I needed and one that helped shape me.

Coach Tanner pushed us because he believed in us. He held us to a championship standard because he knew what we were capable of achieving together. The impact he made on my life, and on so many others, will stay with me forever.

Rest well, Coach Tanner. Thank you for the lessons, the memories, and the championship. You will never be forgotten.

Scott Culley - April 20 at 04:01 PM

WS

“ Dear Mike, We have fond memories (the basement crew) of teachers at Fairview Junior High in the 70s. Somehow we always seemed to be in trouble with the principal ! HaHa! You moved to Q.E.H. to share your love of teaching, football and coaching and boy did you ever! Amazing what you accomplished !
It was our honour and privilege to know and work with you!
Always remembered and admired !.
Deepest condolences to your family!
Grant , Wayne and Nancy (passed)

Wayne Schimp - April 19 at 01:33 PM

TK

“ The impact Coach Tanner had in the community was incredible - you helped boys become men... thanks for all that you did Coach Tanner - you were so unselfish - giving thousands and thousands of hours to help coach, mentor, teach but most importantly lead young men and women thru sport, school etc... you believed in me when I didn't myself. Thanks for everything Coach Tanner - it was an honour to play for your Citadel Phoenix Football teams. To the entire Tanner family - my condolences. My best, Teddy Kinley

Teddy Kinley - April 17 at 04:48 PM

JH

Mike has left his footprint in so many ways. Not to many people can do that but he did. I knew Mike through football and my brothers also knew Mike well. From Frank George and my self our deepest condolences to all the Family and friends of a great Coach and a true grit guy.

Jim Hoskins - April 18 at 07:28 AM

TL

“ Ah my, Mike was a lovely fellow ... a gentleman, a decent man, a fine person. May I extend my deepest condolences to the entire family. May God rest him and keep him safe.

Tom Lathigee - April 17 at 03:18 PM

JD

“ Coach Mike Tanner’s impact will never be forgotten. I first knew Mike as a competitor—Saint Patrick’s vs. Queen Elizabeth—a football rivalry built on respect and intensity. Years later, I had the privilege of standing beside him on the sidelines at Citadel High as a coach, winning three consecutive Nova Scotia provincial championships.

Mike was more than a coach. He was a mentor, a leader, and a steady presence who believed deeply in his athletes—not just for what they could accomplish on the field, but for who they could become in life. He led with integrity, passion, and a genuine care for every student and person he encountered.

I admired, respected, and remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn from and work alongside him. His legacy lives on through the countless lives he shaped, the teams he built, and the community he strengthened.

To Will, and the entire Tanner family my deepest condolences.

Your dad was a true legend— who will never be forgotten.

My best,

Jerome Downey

Jerome Downey - April 17 at 11:56 AM



“ Mike was such a nice guy, honest, caring and dedicated. I was fortunate to get to know him. Sending prayers and condolences to the whole family. Lynn Nickerson

Lynn Nickerson - April 17 at 11:36 AM



“ 18 files added to the album Mike Tanner



Alyssa Pike - April 17 at 11:17 AM



“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Will Tanner - April 16 at 03:34 PM



“ 9 files added to the tribute wall



Will Tanner - April 16 at 03:25 PM