The sound of freshly sharpened blades gliding across the crisp ice. Hockey sticks slapping pucks against the rink’s boards and of course, the blood shedding fights. Wait no more, Johnstown, hockey is back and in a big way! To add to our excitement the one and only, Mario Lemieux will be in town to help us celebrate the welcoming of Johnstown’s new hockey team, The Johnstown Tomahawks!

Lemieux will be dropping the puck at the Johnstown Tomahawks inaugural home opener on Saturday, September 29 at the War Memorial at 7:30 pm. The former professional hockey player and co-owner of the NHL Pittsburgh Penguins and Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins is known to be one of the best hockey players of all time. Needless to say, it is a huge honor to have Mario Lemieux in town for this commemorative event.

Johnstown has had a strong hockey history and background dating back to seven decades. This legacy dates all the way back to Johnstown’s first hockey team established in 1941. That team was named The Johnstown Bluebirds. Unfortunately, they only lasted one season, but hockey in Johnstown was born. Nine years later hockey was back in Johnstown where the team played at the newly built War Memorial, which was opened as tribute to the men and women of Cambria County who served in the military. The Johnstown Jets were the first team to use the rink and played for 26 seasons in the Eastern, International and NA hockey leagues until 1977. The Johnstown Wings represented Flood City in the Eastern Hockey league from 1978 to 1980 but changed their name to the Johnstown Red Wings after their second season. Next, 1987 to 1988, the Johnstown Chiefs were formed. The Chiefs played in the East Coast Hockey League until leaving in 2010. Sadly, once the Chiefs left, Johnstown was with out a team. For the following two years, the Wheeling Nailers used the War Memorial as an alternate home rink. But now, to the joy of all of us, the Tomahawks are here as Johnstown’s first Junior A team. Yes, hockey is back to Flood City, where many passionate hockey fans are anxiously anticipating the return of their beloved, adrenalin pumping sport.

The Johnstown hockey history doesn’t stop there. The classic hockey lover’s film, Slapshot was filmed at the War Memorial in 1977. The film featured Johnstown’s very own hockey team, The Johnstown Jets as the fictional hockey team, the Charlestown Chiefs. Slapshot was written by Nancy Dowd who got her inspiration from her brother, Ned Dowd, who played for the Johnstown Jets. The film was based on the three Hanson brothers who were actual hockey players. Dave Hanson, and Steve and Jeff Carlson portrayed them in the movie. The film also included A-list stars like Paul Newman, Strother Martin, and Michael Ontkean just to name a few.

The hockey history even continues further on into the Tomahawks staff. The Tomahawk’s general manager, Rick Boyd, head coach, Jason Spence and assistance coach, Mike Letizia, all have had hockey in their life in a big way. Boyd is originally from Canada and played for the original Chiefs team in 1988, which lead him to move to Johnstown and played on various Chiefs teams for 3 decades. Spence, also from Canada, was an assistance coach with the Johnstown Chiefs and played in 262 regular season game for over seven seasons. Finally, Letizia played as a junior player with the Plymouth Whalers and then signed his first professional contract with the Rockford Ice Hogs. He has also been an active member in the Johnstown hockey community for several years as a coach for many local teams.

Don’t miss out on this one of a kind celebration, Johnstown hockey fans; this is an opportunity you won’t want to miss!