

2014 Volleyball Alberta Hall of Fame Award

Athlete

John Paulsen

Over the course of his career, John Paulson has furthered the development of Alberta volleyball as a coach, player and coordinator. But on this occasion, he is recognized for his tremendous contribution as an athlete. Born and raised in Manitoba, John moved to in Alberta in 1979, which he has represented on the court for the past 35 years.

As a young athlete, John donned uniforms for multiple sporting pursuits, but thanks to influence of an exceptional high school coach, found his niche in volleyball. From city, to provincial, to national competitions, John helped lead his high school, club, and university teams to numerous championship titles, including three straight CIAU gold medals.

While in university, John made Canada's national volleyball team. He remained with the team for eight consecutive seasons between 1971 and 1978. During this time, he represented Canada in the Olympic Games, world cup, and NORCECA Zone Championships, among other international competitions.

At the end of his last season as a national team player, John influenced a decision to invite Canadian cities to bid on hosting the team. He then evaluated the bid submitted by Calgary and, as a result of his findings, the team voted to make the Alberta boomtown its home base, where it remained from 1979 to 1996. John's influence in moving the team to Alberta bolstered the development of volleyball in this province through the construction of high-quality facilities and advances in athlete development, as many national team players remained in Alberta to coach the next generation of elite volleyball players.

When John retired from the national team as a player, he did not retire from competition. As he moved to Calgary and adopted a new role as national team coordinator, he also joined the Calgary Volleyball Club. During his first year with the club in 1979, John was named MVP in the Canadian Open Championship. From 1982 to 1994, he played with the club's Older but Wiser team, which was inducted into the Alberta Volleyball Hall of Fame in 2004. John has since moved on to represent Canada at various international competitions, including four Huntsman World Senior Games, two Global Cups, and 12 U.S. National Open Championships. In 2010 and 2011, John was named to the All-American First All-Star Team. His contributions as a Canadian volleyball player have been recognized through induction to the Volleyball Canada and Volleyball Manitoba halls of fame. As an Alberta athlete, John continues to compete, recently winning a bronze-medal in the U.S. National Volleyball Championships 55-plus category.

Brian Watson, former interuniversity-rival turned friend and colleague of John's, said consistency in effort and performance characterizes John's athletic career. This year marks his 46th consecutive season as a competitive volleyball player. Not one to coast on the glory of past achievements, John approaches each new season looking for ways to improve his game. A true team player, he is known for what Watson described as an "old-school" sense of loyalty. "He's very down to earth and if you ever need help he'll be there," Watson said. "He's true blue."

