

Alberta Volleyball Hall of Fame- Builder Category

Don Saxton (inducted 2010)

Originally a basketball player at the University of Saskatchewan, Don Saxton joined the volleyball team in his third year of University and has been enthralled with the sport ever since.

He has had numerous successes as an athlete including: CIAU Gold in 1979, eight years with Team Canada (with notable results such as a 2nd place finish as FISU Games, 3rd place at Pan Am Games, 4th place at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics), a Professional career in both Sweden (1980) and Spain (1989 -1991), and 4 World titles in the masters and seniors categories.

Despite Don's impressive playing resume, we are not here tonight to recognize his athletic abilities, rather we are here to celebrate his contribution towards the development of our sport- both in the indoor and outdoor games.

Don co-founded the Canuck Stuff Volleyball Club with Marla Watson in 1988. While originally only a program for Adult senior teams, the club branched out to include youth programs in 1997. Initially, Canuck started off by taking all of the athletes who were cut from other clubs, and their teams generally finished last in whatever category they participated in. The Club grew enormously in those first few years and eventually had a total of 26 teams participating. Don and his wife Mylene generally coached 2-3 teams each and mentored anyone else that wanted to coach.

The Canuck Stuff Volleyball Club is now one of the largest and most successful in the country. The club has amassed 16 Canadian Open National Championship Titles, 26 Alberta Provincial Championship Banners, and 1 US Open National title. Hundreds of athletes that have gone through the youth development system at the Volleydome have gone on to play volleyball at the post-secondary level. When reflecting on the success of the club, Don comments "I would say our main and abiding philosophy has always been to run a positive learning program. Right from the start, we have always prided ourselves on teaching the basics well and getting lots of bantam aged kids started on the right foot –a lot of our best coaches have started (at the bantam level) as well." While the Canuck club is now run by a volunteer board of directors- Don is still actively involved in coaching for Canuck.

Don has also been the owner and operator of The Volleydome since 1994. 'The Dome' is a unique air supported structure built specifically for indoor hard court and beach volleyball in Calgary. The Volleydome has evolved over the years, originally containing both indoor beach and hard courts. In it's current state, The Volleydome has five hardwood courts and four outdoor courts. The Volleydome offers programs for players of all ages and abilities; from the Volleyball Academy program for kids ages 8-11, to competitive club teams, to school and club tournaments, to beach programs, to their popular adult co-ed leagues. It is easy to see how almost every volleyball player who has gone through the Alberta club system in the past 20 years would have a fond memory of playing at 'The Dome'.

For more than two decades, Don has dedicated himself to making our sport more accessible and enjoyable for players of all ages. Accordingly, we are extremely proud to induct him into the Alberta Volleyball Hall of Fame in the Builder category.

