

2007 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Female Athlete of the Year

Dione Lang

Killam Spartans

Dione has been a member of the Killam Spartans Volleyball Club for the past four years. During this time she has finely tuned and developed her athletic skills and work ethic, despite being a year younger and competing against older athletes in almost each age class she has participated in.

Dione has accomplished a lot in her young volleyball career. She participated on the Zone 4 volleyball team at the 2006 Alberta Summer Games, and has been a starter on three provincial championship teams 13U, 15U, & 16U. In addition to winning the 2007 Provincial Championship, she was also selected to the All-Star team. Her latest accomplishment was being named to the 2007 16U Provincial Team.

Dione has had to learn to be very organized in her academic and sporting activities. For the past three years she has had to juggle playing three different sports at once. She excelled in junior high basketball, midget hockey, and club volleyball at the same time. She has also found time to be involved in public speaking competitions as well as the local 4H club.

She's an athlete with an easy-going attitude that makes her a joy to be around for her coaches and teammates. Dione has been a role model for athletes, peers and elementary students at Killam Public School. She is well respected by teachers for the leadership roles she has taken around the school. Dione is a well rounded individual with tremendous qualities that will take her a long way in reaching any goals she wishes to accomplish. We look forward to watching her excel at the next level.

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16U Male Athlete of the Year

Jarron Mueller

Canuck Clutch

Jarron Mueller has played an integral role in the success of the 16U Canuck Clutch volleyball team this year. He helped lead them to a 22 wins and 2 loss record, as well as two AVA Premier Tournament championship titles this season.

As a setter, Jarron has taken a leadership role on his team, which he expresses through both actions and words. He has developed wisdom for volleyball that few players his age possess and continues to broaden his understanding of the game. Jarron is constantly the hardest worker at practice, which provides inspiration for his teammates and which ultimately takes them to higher levels of play.

Throughout this season, Jarron has shown great improvement. He has pushed himself to develop his skills and is now one of the strongest setters in the province. Tactically he is very strong and knows how to utilize his teammates in each situation. Jarron also possesses a great amount of potential in our sport and combined with his work ethic will lead him to great success in the future.

Jarron has earned this award by portraying a huge passion for the game, maintaining a positive and uplifting character, and displaying a consistently high level of play. His willingness to learn, improve and do whatever it takes to excel will make this young athlete successful both on and off the court in the future.

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18U Female Athlete of the Year

Jaimie Thibeault

Queens Extreme

Jaimie has shown exceptional talent and ability throughout her career and has been recognized as one of the top Alberta athletes in her age class in both basketball and volleyball. She's been named to multiple Provincial Teams and was part of the silver medal winning Team Alberta at the National Team Challenge Cup.

Jaimie played for Lindsay Thurber this past High School season and led her team to the 4A Alberta Schools Athletic Association Provincial Championship, and was named team MVP. She continued her on court success with the Queens Extreme club team and led them to the finals of the 2007 18U Provincial Championship. The Queens continued their success at the National Championships in Abbotsford, where they knocked off the Dinos 18 team (AVA Provincial Champions) in the quarter-finals and made it all the way to the gold medal match. The final was a hard fought battle with the Queens eventually losing the match by a score of 29-27 in the last set to bring home a silver medal. As a result of her tremendous performance at the Championship, Jaimie was named to the tournament All-Star team.

She led her team to a top 4 placing at every single AVA Premier Tournament this year, and has been recruited by several universities and colleges in Canada and the United States. She was named a Tournament All-Star at the Provincial Championships and statistically she led her team in blocks and was second in kills and service aces. What has set Jaimie apart from the rest of the field is her consistency and ability to make critical and timely plays, which has been a key ingredient to the Queen's success.

Jaimie carries herself extremely well; she is highly respected by her coaches, teammates and peers that she has come in contact with in her volleyball career. Jaimie has a great attitude and continually encourages her teammates to strive for success. She has an innate volleyball ability that you don't see very often, and is savvy beyond her years. She is a very mature player that is able to respond to the highs and lows of the game, which will help her prepare for her post-secondary career at the University of Montana.

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18U Male Athlete of the Year

Ciaran McGovern

Cal-Air 18U

Over the past few years, Ciaran has become one of the most prominent young setters in Alberta. Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of a vast array of coaches, Ciaran developed good habits and fundamental skills at an early age. These skills, along with his athletic ability have helped develop him into the elite athlete he has become today.

Starting his volleyball career in Grande Prairie, Ciaran was soon identified as a promising young player within the province. In 2004, his high school team, Grande Prairie Composite High School, won the 4A Provincial Championships. In the summer of 2005 he moved up to the next level by playing on Team Alberta.

Ciaran took another big step forward in his career in 2006. He helped lead his club team to both Provincial and National Championship titles, while being recognized for his accomplishments by being named MVP at Nationals. His talent and athletic ability led him to play on the Alberta Provincial Team as well as the Youth National Team, where he was the starting setter and captain. The following school year, Ciaran has continued to excel by winning 4A provincials for a second time with a new school - Calgary Christian High School in Calgary.

Ciaran is a very talented athlete and he continues to be successful through other means beyond awards and MVP's. He is known as a player who continues to be modest, supportive and puts the team first. He embodies the qualities of sportsmanship and fair play and yet he's still a fierce competitor. His drive and desire to win contributes a great deal to his team's success.

Ciaran has committed to play for the University of Calgary Dinos in the fall. His dedication, drive, and competitive spirit will make him a player to watch at the CIS level. With his past experiences to draw from, and a bright future ahead, we look forward to seeing what else Ciaran is capable of achieving in the years to come.

2007 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Male Team Coach of the Year

Howard Gelderman

Pembina Volleyball Club

Howard Gelderman is no stranger to the sport of volleyball. He has coached a wide range of ages and skill, ranging from junior high boys to ACAC women, over the span of the past 15 years.

His junior high teams have always been successful and have consistently been at the top of divisional and zone play. Howard coached a high school men's team, which won a zone title and earned a lot of respect at the provincial championships. This may not seem like a huge accomplishment until you check the roster. The team was comprised entirely of grade 9 and 10 students.

Howard was instrumental in developing the Pembina Volleyball Club four years ago. The club began with a 15u men's team and has now blossomed into 4 teams, 3 men's teams and a 17U women's squad. He has coached at the 15, 16, 17 and 18U age classes. Howard's teams have always been competitive at the club level as well, having always finished in the top 6. This year, his 16u men capped off a very successful season with a bronze medal at the provincial championships.

Howard's success is not only measured in wins. He has always strived to make every athlete feel valued and has consistently provided each player opportunity to contribute on the court even in must win situations. He has earned the admiration and respect of players, parents and other coaches. His players know they will always be in an environment where they will hear a lot of encouragement, and where sportsmanship and fair play are given priority. Howard sets a great example for all of us to follow and is a very worthy recipient of this award.

2007 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Female Team Coach of the Year

Pat Pyne

WHAM!

Pat's coaching career started in 1982 at St. Mary's High School in Taber where he teaches. Amazingly, he has not missed a single season of coaching volleyball in the past 25 years! Among the many sports he has coached, including basketball, golf and badminton, volleyball has been his number one choice for many years.

He achieved his level II coaching certification in 1992. His passion soon turned to obsession and in 2000 Pat put together his first club volleyball team. Originally named the Storm (after his St. Mary's junior high team), the club grew to a point where it was necessary to change the name so that it was not affiliated with his school. After much deliberation, the WHAM! Volleyball Club began. The new look WHAM! attracted many athletes from surrounding communities and grew rapidly. From its humble beginnings of two 14U girl's teams Wham! has grown and now has six girls' teams and can also boast that for the first time the club has fielded a boy's team.

Pat's passion for coaching volleyball is apparent the moment you step on the court with him. His ability to break a skill into detailed movements is humbling to any coach. He has an innate ability to boost the confidence of players who need it the most. Pat's goal has always been to make his team and each individual athlete the best they can be. Many athletes who trained under Pat have gone on to successful University or College careers; the likes of which include Lauren Perry and Randi-Jo Tajcna.

He is, and will continue to be, a mentor for many volleyball coaches in southern Alberta. He has a streak of 4 consecutive junior high girl's south zone championships and with Pat's passion and dedication for his teams we know he'll have many more banners to hang in the gym in the future.

2007 Tachikara Achievement Awards

18U Female Team Coach of the Year

Gisele Kreuger

Dinos Volleyball Club

Gisele has coached with the Dinos Women's Volleyball Club for three years. During this time Gisele has demonstrated professional coaching skills and dedication to the game of volleyball. She goes out of her way to understand and connect with each and every girl on the team, to ensure a quality experience for the athletes.

She coordinates four practices a week, several tournaments, team socials, goal setting sessions, and individual meetings to ensure the team is ready to pursue their goals. Their hard work paid off with a silver medal and three gold medals in the AVA Premier Series. The Dinos continued their winning ways and finished out the season in spectacular form, with a Provincial Championship banner and a top eight finish at Nationals. What Gisele can be most proud of is the overall development of her athletes, with every age eligible girl on her team set to play volleyball at the college or university of their choice next year.

A great deal of Gisele's volleyball knowledge can be accredited to her extensive playing experience. Gisele holds an impressive playing record with the University of Saskatchewan and Junior National team. She has won numerous awards in her career which have included: two CIAU National Championships, CIAU Tournament MVP, four CIAU All-Star selections, University of Saskatchewan Wall of Fame Inductee, and Saskatchewan Hall of Fame Inductee.

Gisele has passed on her wisdom through well organized and meaningful training sessions. She has instilled the importance of physical fitness, nutrition, mental readiness, and sportsmanship. Gisele has taught her athletes how to handle triumphs and defeats with grace and maturity. She emphasizes the team first, with no one player taking blame for errors, or glory for wins. The success and team camaraderie the 18U Dinos women's team experienced this season is the direct result of Gisele's exceptional leadership and superb coaching ability. Thanks again for all you have done for volleyball in Alberta, and congratulations on this outstanding acknowledgement of your coaching success.

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18U Male Team Coach

Ian Bennett

LVC Pound

This year was Ian Bennett's fourth year of coaching with the Lethbridge Volleyball Club 18U men's team. Ian's dedication and professionalism has helped him build highly competitive and respected teams throughout his coaching career.

He successfully coached men's teams in Calgary at William Aberhart High School and the Canada West Volleyball Club. In 2002, his 16U men's team from Canada West won a silver medal at the AVA Provincial Championships. The following year he moved on to Lethbridge and coached the Lethbridge College Institute Junior Men's team to a South Zone Championship Banner. This would also mark the beginning of his involvement with the Lethbridge Volleyball Club.

Ian has also been an assistant coach with the 16U Provincial Team Program for the past three years. During this time his teams have experienced significant success, winning bronze in 2004 and gold in 2006 at the 16U Western Elite Championships. He instills high fitness standards with his athletes, which has helped them achieve their goals of excellence in volleyball. Ian will take over as the head coach for one of the 16U Provincial teams this summer.

This season Ian's LVC Pound team showed tremendous grit and heart with results ranging from 6th to 13th place over the course of the AVA Premier Series. What Ian can be most proud of, is the way his team performed at the Provincial Championships. The team peaked at the right time and found chemistry and consistency to help them with big wins over Alberta's top teams. Beating Cal-Air in their semi-final match with strong defense and a solid game plan set them up to play NAVC in the gold medal match. LVC's determination and steady ball control led them to victory and a Provincial Championship.

Ian's desire to learn and improve as a coach coupled with his ability to teach and lead young athletes are attributes that have contributed to his success as a coach in Alberta. He also ensures his athletes understand the importance of good sportsmanship and fair play. The future looks bright for the Lethbridge Volleyball Club and at the same time we'll keep our eye on this rising star in the coaching ranks.

2007 Tachikara Achievement Awards

Volunteer of the Year

Don Hutton

Central Alberta Kings Volleyball Club

Don has been a major contributor to the sport of volleyball in Red Deer and surrounding area. He took on the role of President for the Central Alberta Kings Volleyball Club and maintained that position for three years. During this time he undertook a complete restructuring of the Kings Club. In doing so he increased the community's interest in volleyball, the number of participating teams, and instituted a coaches screening process, to ensure a quality learning environment for the athletes.

Don is also no stranger in contributing to the success of volleyball outside of his club. He would volunteer his time to referee at tournaments where officials were short, attended provincial meetings for club teams, and promoted post secondary volleyball to players around Alberta by arranging tryouts for athletes with numerous schools in Canada and the United States.

Apart from his club service, Mr. Hutton has volunteered hundreds of hours coordinating Alberta Volleyball's 18U Tournament in Red Deer for three years, including the 2006 Provincial Championship. For the Provincial tournament Don went to great lengths to ensure that the venue was appropriate for the number of people attending, along with creating an environment similar to that of a national tournament. Don coordinated fundraising efforts, facility set-up, recruitment & training of volunteers, equipment bookings, and liaising with event & facility staff. In order to commit to this huge undertaking Don unselfishly took a week off work to ensure the event ran smoothly.

In 2006, Don also volunteered to organize the Alberta Summer Games beach volleyball tournament. He was instrumental in having Red Deer acquire new beach courts where the tournament could be held, and was heavily involved in facilitating the event.

Apart from his involvement within the community, Don's efforts to develop volleyball are very evident within his own family. He has supported his three children in volleyball for the past eight years. During the 2005-2006 club season he drove from Red Deer to Calgary 3-4 times a week so his youngest daughter could play on a team in Calgary. For the past three years Don also has attended every home game of the University of Calgary Dinos to watch his eldest daughter play.

Don's efforts have created many opportunities for athletes in his community and in Alberta. The volleyball community is extremely fortunate to have contributors like Don who tirelessly promote and volunteer so much for the benefit of the athletes and for our sport.

2007 Tachikara Achievement Awards

Official of the Year

Neal Konowalyk

Neal Konowalyk is a referee who is well known to many in the volleyball community, not only for his performance during matches but also for his endeavours off the court. Neal's involvement in volleyball is extensive; he has donned knee pads as a player, carried a clip board as a coach, blown a whistle as an official and worn a walkie-talkie as a referee supervisor. He has seen the game from all aspects and is well respected for his contributions.

Neal has been a referee for 17 years. In that time he has progressed from a green Local to a respected National official with Volleyball Canada. He has been assigned to the highest levels of volleyball in the country and responded with excellent matches. Neal has worked as a major official at both men's and women's CIS National Championships and men's CCAA finals. This past March Neal was assigned as the second official for the Men's Gold Medal match at Malaspina University College in Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Off the court, Neal has contributed immensely to the development of volleyball officials in Alberta. Having served as the Alberta Volleyball Officials Association president for five years Neal helped organize and shape programs across the province. He has been the Level 3 Regional upgrade chair for five years and regularly assists in Level 1 & 2 clinics throughout the season. Nationally, Neal represents Alberta Volleyball as a Referee Supervisor bringing his experience and guidance to officials from across Canada.

His passion and professionalism has garnered the respect of his fellow officials, players and coaches throughout the volleyball ranks. He interacts extremely well with all participants and is always willing to help educate with the rules and protocols of our sport. Neal spends extra time with young officials, assisting them with details of the game, and instilling a higher level of confidence. Neal Konowalyk is continuing to shape, improve and develop volleyball officials in Alberta and beyond.