

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Female Athlete of the Year

Jordhynn Guy

Dinos 16U

Jordhynn is a multi-sport athlete that dedicates herself fully to whatever activity she is engaged in. She excels at many sports but it is on the volleyball court where we really notice this natural volleyball athlete who makes difficult plays appear quite easy.

As a 16 year old setter Jordhynn possesses the ability to get her teammates into great positions for attacking. Her coaches have said “even though volleyball is the epitome of team sports, Jordhynn is an individual capable of completely taking over a game and controlling its results.” This is a true testament of Jordhynn’s talent as an individual on such an accomplished team.

What may be Jordhynn’s most impressive skill is her unwavering confidence and ability to lead her team to be better every time they step on the court. This was clearly demonstrated in the National Final as she led her team to the first ever Gold medal for an Alberta women’s team at the Canadian Open National Championship in Calgary.

Guiding her team to 2 Alberta Volleyball Premier gold medals, a Provincial Championship Gold medal and finally a National Championship Gold medal speaks volumes about her ability as a leader and player. Jordhynn was individually recognized as a Provincial Championship all-star and to cap off her season she was named as the Canadian Open National Championship MVP.

Congratulations on an outstanding season!

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Male Athlete of the Year

Branden Schmidt

Canuck Nemesis

Branden has been instrumental to the success of Canuck Nemesis this season, not only as a leader on the court but as an inspiration off it. At the start of the season Branden's coach asked his team to accept the responsibility of being accountable for their actions and Branden has embraced that, holding himself and others to a very high standard.

An outstanding athlete, Branden has been the Nemesis' emotional leader who sets the tone for others to follow. His coach states that "Branden is the type of player that is an absolute pleasure to have on a team, because of his drive, intensity, and coachability. This young man's fire, determination and attitude are infectious and he has helped us have a very successful season winning a silver medal at the Provincial Championships and finishing 5th at the National Championships in Calgary".

Branden has also enjoyed a lot of individual recognition this year winning All-Star awards at both the 16U and 18U Provincial Championships. In addition to his role on the Nemesis, Branden played up two levels with the Canuck Aikido 18U team where he made a major contribution towards a solid fourth place finish at the 18U Provincial Championships. A true testament of Branden's talent and maturity is his ability to raise his game to contribute to his team's success and be recognized while competing against older and more experienced players.

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

18U Female Athlete of the Year

Kaylene Ehret

Griffins 18U

Kaylene has a natural leadership ability that has played an integral part of the success of the Griffins 18U women's club program this past season. She not only possesses great athletic prowess, ability and potential but also exemplifies true leadership qualities. She is the type of leader that not only humbly leads by example but is also charismatic; because of this, other athletes follow her naturally.

Kaylene was a significant contributor to the soul of this year's club team; she rose to every occasion and competed with poise and heart even in the most stressful situations. This past year Kaylene led her Griffins team to a gold and 2 silver medal finishes in the 18U Premier series and a 4th place finish at the Provincial Championships. Kaylene's mental and technical game grew over the season and she had her best performances at the National Championships, helping the Griffins capture 5th at the tournament in Ottawa.

Kaylene is every coaches dream athlete. She is dedicated and hard working in practice and competition. She is always willing to accept feedback and is consistently asking questions to better herself. She is an athlete that realizes what excellence means, she is a true leader that has respect for the game and the ability to fully develop into a great player.

Kaylene has received several individual awards based on her outstanding play on the volleyball court. She has been named an Edmonton Journal all-star and while at Bev Facey won the rookie of the year award and was twice named the MVP. A provincial team athlete the past 3 years, she competed for Alberta at last year's Western Canada Summer Games (Bronze medal) and has already been selected to Team Alberta and will compete in the NTCC's in Calgary this summer.

Kaylene is one of the few players who is strategic in her play; she listens, analyzes and reacts to make the correct decision at the right time. She understands what it means and requires to be an elite athlete. She has been recognized as an elite development athlete by Team Canada and will continue her volleyball career at MacEwan College in the fall.

Alberta Volleyball congratulates Kaylene on an outstanding season and wishes her good luck in her future career both in the classroom and on the volleyball court.

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

18U Male Athlete of the Year

Jeremy Potter

NAVC U18

Some of the traits that consistently stand out amongst our Tachikara Award winners are a work ethic and a positive attitude. According to Jeremy's coaches these two traits combined with his leadership skills and athletic ability are what set him apart from all the others in the 18U men's category.

Jeremy is another multi-sport athlete who balances a busy schedule of team handball, basketball, track and field and rugby all while maintaining his honor roll status in school. Outside of sports and the classroom Jeremy is one of only five students at Bev Facey high school on the leadership team who organize all extra-curricular activities and run the intramural program.

On the volleyball court this year Jeremy excelled as an outside hitter helping guide his team to a Provincial Championship gold medal. His current coach describes him as "an athlete with an amazing work ethic who has the rare ability to lead by example or by offering an encouraging word. In short, Jeremy fully embodies the principles of performance, positive attitude and leadership and he makes all those around him better, both on and off the court".

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Female Team Coach of the Year

Tracy Keats

Dinos 16

Tracy has been coaching in the Dinos club program for the past 5 years after a very successful playing career that started in Newfoundland and ended up in Calgary where she helped guide the Dinos to multiple Canada West championships and a CIS silver medal. Tracy also had a stint with Team Canada and played professionally in Germany during her career as an athlete.

As a coach Tracy brings the strengths that she learned as a player to her athletes, fostering a positive team attitude by emphasizing the team over the individual. She runs a high energy program where the girls enjoy practice and learning the game. By teaching these young athletes all aspects of the game including technical and tactical game play, physical training, injury prevention and mental training; Tracy is preparing them to reach the next level of play – post secondary volleyball.

This past club season was a tremendous success as Tracy guided her team to victories in 2 of the 3 Premier events, the JCVC tournament in Saskatoon, the NAVC tournament in Edmonton and gold at the 2008 Alberta Volleyball 16U Provincial Championship. The crowning achievement for Tracy and her team was realized when they won the 2008 Canadian Open National Championships in Calgary – a first ever Canadian Open National Championship win by an Alberta team since it's inception in 1998.

Congratulations on an outstanding year!

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

16U Male Team Coach of the Year

Steve Weinbeer

NAVC 16U Gold

Steve has been a one man show juggling the demands of being a full time student at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Engineering while balancing the life of an elite club team coach who never missed a game or a practice. Steve could often be found between matches on the bus or a quiet corner studying while also focusing on preparing his team to play their best.

Steve's team enjoyed tremendous success this past year with the NAVC 16U boy's team, winning two silvers and a gold in the Premier series. Steve then led his charges to a gold medal finish at the Provincial Championships in Edmonton. The NAVC Bears continued with their stellar play with a fifth place finish at the Canadian Open in Calgary to round out their season.

The NAVC Bears were continually challenged this season by talented opposition and they often had to battle back when trailing in a game. Steve not only remained calm in these anxious moments but was able to instill confidence in his athletes to bounce back in a match. Steve's ability to effectively communicate with the team has had profound results both on and off the court.

Steve has been described as a positive role model for his players, someone who teaches them the skills and tactics while keeping them motivated to play at their highest level. His work ethic, time management skills and determination are second to none and his players will be set for a great deal of success in the future if they follow the example set by their coach.

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

18U Female Team Coach of the Year

Don Saxton

Canuck Pulse

Don Saxton has always been a coach ever since he took up the game after first playing basketball at the University of Saskatchewan. Fortunately Sax quit basketball and joined the volleyball team at the U of S and his natural ability to analyze the game as he played it helped him become one of Canada's most dominant middle blockers of all time.

Don has played and coached at all levels including the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics as a player and as an assistant coach with the men's national team. He began coaching youth teams in 1993 with the development of the Canuck Stuff Volleyball Club and has coached his own kids and hundreds of others over the years covering all of the age categories.

In the 2008 club season Don coached the Canuck Stuff Pulse 18U women's team. Don's teams are always known for their consistency and this team was no different as they finished no worse than sixth in the Premier series of events. Another characteristic of Don's teams are that they continually get stronger as the season progresses and he always prepares them to play their best ball at the Provincial and National Championships.

The Pulse continually improved throughout the 2008 season and finished with a second place at the final Premier and won the silver medal at the Provincial Championships. They saved their best play for the Canadian Open National Championships in Ottawa where they upset higher ranked teams on their way to winning the silver medal and capping off an outstanding season.

Don is best described as a team oriented coach who gives a lot of credit to the players on his team. The positive impact of his coaching is apparent as this year's team was not one that could dominate physically. They always competed against teams that had a height advantage but Don's coaching and preparation gave his players the tools and the motivation they needed to achieve success at both the Provincial and National level.

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

18U Male Team Coach of the Year

Brad Poplawski

NAVC U18 Gold

Brad is a NAVC Golden Bear through and through. He started his playing career in the club as a young developing athlete then moved on to the college ranks playing at both Medicine Hat College and Grant MacEwan College. Brad moved off of the court and to the side line with the Griffins where he spent one year as an assistant coach. Following that season Brad joined the University of Alberta coaching squad and has been with the team for two years now. This 2008 season was Brad's fourth as a coach for NAVC, where he has had tremendous success winning two Provincial gold medals and one silver.

Brad is described by those around him as an unselfish coach who can connect with his players in order to provide them with a quality volleyball experience. Most eighteen year old athletes have their own ideas but Brad was able to get the team to buy into his philosophy. He has taught his athletes to properly follow a game plan but to also handle wins and losses with sportsmanship and grace. Brad has always emphasized the team first, with no one individual taking blame or glory. The Bears benefited greatly from this attitude and it helped lead them to victories at Premier #4 and the 2008 Provincial Championship.

Brad also has the ability to boost the confidence of players who need it the most. He strives to make his team and each individual athlete the best they can be. Brad is a dedicated coach who balances a full time job, assistant coach duties for the University of Alberta and head coaching the 18U NAVC Bears. This demonstrates Brad's generosity, tenacity and commitment to the sport of volleyball. These are attributes his athletes have learned through his leadership, which is just another example of what kind of person and coach Brad is.

2008 Tachikara Achievement Awards

Volunteer of the Year Candice Sylvester Grande Prairie Wolves

Candice has been with the Grande Prairie Wolves Volleyball club for ten years now after signing on to help while her four children went through the ranks from Bantam to Juvenile. She is so dedicated to the Wolves that she will stay on with the club even after her last child has completed their time in club volleyball.

She has been the parent manager of several teams, even doing the task for two teams at once on occasion. She has amazing organizational skills and has a real sense of calm in times of crisis. Candice serves as a mentor to other parent managers; she is their source of information as they face the challenges of a busy and complicated club season.

In addition to her role as a parent manager Candice has served as the accommodation manager for the club for the past couple of years. This is a huge job for such a large club as she looks after not only the teams but also the parents and ensures that all the arrangements are perfect. Never one to say no Candice has also taken on the role of Bus Coordinator another huge and critical job for a club that has to travel the furthest distance to compete in the Alberta Volleyball Premier series.

Candice is the epitome of what volunteer stands for – quietly working behind the scenes, passing on the credit to others while completing all of the work with a smile to ensure the parents and athletes have a fun and stress free club volleyball experience.

2008 Tachikara Achievement Award

Official of the Year

JP Desaulniers

JP is a referee who is recognized by many in the volleyball community. He is known for his abilities on the stand and his involvement off the court. Having donned knee pads, carried a clipboard and blown a whistle, JP has seen the sport grow and develop from every possible angle.

JP first started officiating some 30 years ago while living in Fort McMurray. He quickly developed through the ranks and attained his standing as a regional official. He continues to try and improve his skills and is rewarded with high caliber assignments every year.

From a teaching perspective, JP is very conscientious of the rules and continues to teach and ensure they are being enforced in a fair and respectable manner.

Off the court, JP has been the go-to guy in the Red Deer region. Acting as zone treasurer, he assists the development of the region from an administrative position. He also gives up a lot of time to run clinics and provide mentorship throughout the zone, leading by example. Whenever a surrounding zone is in need of officials, JP is always there to answer the call.

Over the last number of years JP has expanded his involvement in officiating to the beach game as well. His natural ability as a teacher is very evident in his approach. Not only has he excelled and become a very competent referee, but also a leader that helps educate players and colleagues alike. His abilities and passion for the game instill confidence in all those that work with him.

Away from the game, JP is supported by a loving wife who grew up playing varsity volleyball at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. The family involvement in volleyball has also been carried on by JP's daughter, who has spent the last 4 years playing at the University of Winnipeg. JP is also an avid golfer who continues to help shape our youth as a high school teacher.

JP continues to be one of the most involved officials in Alberta and his dedicated work ethic is greatly appreciated by the volleyball community. This is a major reason why JP is being recognized as Official of the Year.