

## 2024 Sask Volleyball Award Winners

### Wayne Hellquist Merit Award

*This award is intended for individuals who have worked in a range of non-competitive capacities to further the development of volleyball for at least five years and in particular during the current year. An individual may be nominated for service within Saskatchewan or at the national or international level, though priority will be given to service to volleyball at the provincial level. Candidates will be evaluated on their commitment to volleyball and on the growth to which they have contributed within the sport.*

#### **Stacey Laing –**

The Saskatchewan Volleyball Wayne Hellquist Merit Award is one that is intended for individuals who have worked in a range of non-competitive capacities to further the development of volleyball. They show exceptional commitment to the sport of volleyball and contribute immensely to growth within the sport. This award was last presented in 2005 and it is not awarded annually. This speaks to both the distinction of the award and the of the person receiving it.

Pertaining to this year's award winner, the key words and phrases that stand out are: "worked in a range of capacities, commitment to volleyball and immense contribution to growth within the sport". No one embodies these qualities more than Stacey Laing.

Stacey wears several hats when it comes to the sport of volleyball. On the surface, she is a program coordinator and coach. Through Regina Youth Volleyball, she runs developmental volleyball programs, camps and recreational leagues that begin with the minis (Grades 1-3), and offers programming all the way up to grade 12. She is passionate about youth staying engaged in sport and sees the space at the Volleybarn, in Regina, as an inviting way to empower youth, keeping them involved and having fun. You'll always see her high fiving kids, learning about them, and encouraging them both on and off the court.

Stacey is also the director of the Summit Volleyball Club and Volleyball Academy in Regina where she coaches, mentors and administrates. It is a program focused on high performance volleyball and incredible culture. On any given day of the week, you can find her at the Volleybarn coaching athletes (ranging from 13u to 18u), coaching coaches, meeting with parents, providing feedback, working in her office and taking care of facilities. Even further, Stacey is passionate about increasing female representation in coaching, allowing for high performance athletes to then develop as coaches.

Stacey is a coordinator and a coach, but more than that she is a mentor, an advocate, a counsellor, and so much more. Her commitment goes beyond the sport- Stacey is passionate about the athlete experience. She creates a safe space where athletes feel they belong, can take risks, and grow as players and young adults. Parents feel comfortable to ask questions and are engaged in their athlete's sport experience. Coaches feel valued and want to invest more in growing their own coaching practice. Her passion and drive inspire everyone around her to strive to be the best they can be. So many have benefitted because of what she has done and continues to do. Thank you, Stacey, for your incredible contribution to volleyball in our province.



### **Marlene Hoffman Volunteer Award**

*Intended for individual (s) who have donated their time and efforts to the promotion and development of volleyball within their local community*

#### **Anthony Kytwayhat – Makwa Volleyball Club**

In the heart of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation, Saskatchewan, known for its serene beauty and tight-knit community, there is an individual by the name of Anthony Kytwayhat who has taken it upon himself to nurture the sport of volleyball. Anthony's passion for the game has helped him commit countless hours to coaching and developing the local volleyball teams.

Anthony believes in the power of sports, not just as a physical activity, but as a tool for personal growth and community building. His coaching style is unique, a blend of technical skill-building, strategic game-play, and character development. He understands that volleyball is not just about spiking the ball or blocking the opponent's attack, it's about teamwork, communication, resilience, and respect. It's about learning to win with grace and lose with dignity.

His commitment to volleyball coaching and development is a testament to his love for the sport and his desire to give back to the community. He is not just a coach, but a mentor, a role model, and a beacon of inspiration for the young athletes he trains. His story is a reminder that with passion, dedication, and a little bit of sweat, we can make a significant impact in the lives of others and our communities.

Congratulations Anthony, on a well-deserved achievement.



**Garth Shoemaker – Wheatland Volleyball Club**

Garth Shoemaker, when I hear that name the first words that come to mind to describe him are passionate, loyal and hard working. Garth's knowledge of the game of volleyball is extraordinary. The time and effort he puts into making himself and his teams better is second to none! Every time he steps into a gym, he makes the young athletes and coaches around him better with his high energy, work ethic and love of the game! The attitude he brings to every single practice is infectious and only helps breed success for his teams! For more than 30 years Garth has coached at all levels, from school volleyball to club as well as being a part of provincial team programs. His success along the way, at every level, speaks volumes to the type of person and coach he is! If there is someone who deserves recognition for the work that he has done and continues to do, it is Garth Shoemaker!



## Dennis Pomeroy Referee of the Year Award

**Jeff Toppings** – Jeff has been very active in all levels of officiating, including post-secondary matches. This May, he was successful in attaining his National referee level. He is a main clinician and mentor in the Saskatoon area. He travels to various events to mentor and develop less experienced referees. He is a member of the Saskatoon Volleyball Officials Organization. While balancing work and life, he makes himself readily available in many capacities for his development of volleyball and other referees in our province.

There would be no hesitation to place him on any high-level match that is available within our province; men or women. Our province will benefit with the advancement of Jeff's promotion and we look forward to seeing where that takes him. Congratulations Jeff on your promotion and this award!



## Coaching Awards

*The recipients of these awards shall be coaches that have made a special contribution as a coach to the development of the sport of volleyball:*

### **Don Laing Male Developmental Coach of the Year – Bryton Such** - Estevan Extreme 15UM

Bryton made his move to Estevan as he accepted a teaching position at Hillcrest School for 2021. He has been involved with the game at many levels. He played school, club, and provincial team in Alberta before playing USports Collegiate volleyball at Brandon University. Bryton loves to be involved in whatever community he is a part of as he has been coaching volleyball in some capacity since he was 15. For Estevan Extreme, Bryton coaches, mentors and provides development opportunities for other coaches. He has grown the game of volleyball in Estevan and also provides the athletes and coaches he works with a deeper understanding of the game. Bryton is a coach who makes an enormous impact on the athletes he is involved with. These athletes range from 8 to 18 years old, whether they are in the school or the club system. Bryton has coached at his elementary school, summer camps, highschool, club system as well as at the provincial level. Bryton has the coaching philosophy that incorporates camaraderie, hard work, dedication, as well as becoming a life long athlete.

Some of the accomplishments that Bryton has added to his coaching resumé in the last 3 years in Estevan include:

- 14U Provincial Champions 2021-22
- 14U Sask Cup 2 Gold 2022-23
- 14U Provincial Champions 2022-23
- Coach at Sask Future Selects 2022-23
- 16U Sask Cup 2 Gold 2023-24
- 15U Provincial Champions 2023-24
- Coach at Sask Future Selects 2023-24

Bryton is always learning new technical aspects and training methods to better develop the athletes. He is always available to help the athletes and coaches and provide them with an opportunity to grow their confidence. Congratulations Bryton!

### **Anne Cote Female Developmental Coach of the Year – Serena Ward - QCVC 15UW**

Serena is a beacon of positivity and enthusiasm, bringing an infectious energy to every practice and game. With a keen focus on the growth and development of each athlete, Serena crafts training plans that not only enhance skills but also build confidence and character. Under Serena’s guidance, the team has consistently clinched provincial championships, a testament to the blend of fun and rigorous training that defines Serena’s coaching style. During the 2024 club volleyball season, she coached the QCVC 15U Elite team to a gold medal at provincials. This is Serena and her team’s 3rd provincial championship in a row capturing the title in 13U and 14U. Serena tirelessly gives back to her community, QCVC and the sport of volleyball by engaging in development camps that span from grassroots initiatives to elite training weekends hosted by Sask Volleyball. As an incredible role model, Serena inspires young athletes to strive for excellence both on and off the court, embodying the values of dedication, sportsmanship, and resilience. Any athlete would be incredibly fortunate to have Serena as their coach, whose unparalleled dedication and inspirational leadership elevates every player’s performance and confidence!



*The recipients of these awards will be club coaches who have achieved notable success as a coach during the current year.*

**Frank Enns Male Performance Coach of the Year – Andrew Nelson – Summit 18UM**

Andrew has been involved at many levels of the game in a short period of time. From an impressive athletic career, coaching club, provincial team, and beach volleyball across the province. He has been instrumental in growing the men's game in Regina, and has given back so much of his time to coaching. Andrew is both a big picture thinker but also has a keen eye for the attention to detail whether thinking about an athlete's long term pathway or seeing a minute correction in an arm action that could make a huge difference, he is someone who is truly a student of the game. His commitment to this continued learning supports his large library of technical knowledge and his eagerness to mentor younger coaches. Andrew has already given so much of his time back to our great sport in Saskatchewan and we are sure there is more to come!

As Head coach of the 18U Men's Summit team, Andrew led the team to a successful season, ending with a win at 18U provincials, the first ever from Regina in that age group, as well as placing silver at all Sask Cups, won bronze at Brandon VC Invitational, and winning 1st place at the following tournaments: Summit VC 18U tournament, Regina Kraken Strikers VC 18U Invitational, and Golden Ticket VC 18U tournament. The 18U Summit volleyball team was ranked 2nd going into provincials, but with Andrew's game knowledge, motivation, and focused attitude, he managed to prepare his players to prep for and overcome any challenges ahead of them, and they were successful in capturing the 2024 Provincial 18U Men's title. Congratulations Andrew on the award.

**Mark Tennant Female Performance Coach of the Year – Shawn Hiebert – Swift Current Jr. Sundogs 17U**

Shawn Hiebert is an outstanding coach that led his team to a near perfect season, finishing with gold at Sask Cup 1, 2, 3, and provincials, and finishing in Tier 3 at nationals, the highest of any Saskatchewan team in the 17U girls age group. Shawn has seen a lot of success in his 20 plus years of coaching volleyball, and that's because his athletes are just as dedicated to playing for him as he is to helping each athlete grow and become the best version of themselves on and off the court. His knowledge of the game and his special talent for developing skills in his athletes takes each team he coaches to the next level.

In addition to the 17U Jr. Sundogs Elite, this year Shawn has also coached high school senior boys who got silver at provincials, beach volleyball and has committed to coaching team Sask. He has given back to the community he grew up in for the last 20 years, and there is no one more deserving of this award.



## Academic and Athletic Excellence

*Presented to the provincial female and male athlete who best exemplifies athletic and academic achievements of excellence.*

### **Darcey Busse Memorial Award – Jon Kozak Summit 18U.**

Jon is an outstanding exemplar of discipline, commitment, and excellence in academics, athletics, and the community. Despite the success he has already earned, Jon is one of the most humble and unassuming young renaissance men you could meet. His quiet confidence and ability to perform under pressure was key to the Summit 18U men's volleyball provincial gold this year.

Outside of volleyball, Jon is also one of the top baseball and badminton players in the province. He will be pursuing post-secondary baseball at the University of Victoria while he completes a Bachelors in Science. He won the badminton singles city finals in grade 10, 11, and 12 and the provincial championship in grade 10 and 11. This year, he made the difficult sacrifice to drop out of the badminton regional championship as it conflicted with club volleyball provincials or he could have had a provincial three-peat as well.

Jon somehow finds the time to excel in the classroom while balancing three or more sports at a time. He has achieved high honours each year in LeBoldus' Bilingual program and earned the top mark in classes such as French and Calculus for his grade. You can also find Jon volunteering in LeBoldus' Best Buddies and Unified Sports programs at lunch and after school. These are excellent initiatives that provide opportunities for students with disabilities to compete and work as a team in various sports and activities.

Congratulations on this well-earned honour Jon. We wish you well in your academic and athletic pursuits in Victoria where you will certainly continue to find success on and off the field.



### **Marilyn Walter Memorial Award — Taylor Bugg - Stealth 18U**

Taylor Bugg embodies the spirit and excellence that this award celebrates. Like many distinguished recipients before her, Taylor possesses an exceptional blend of dedication, leadership, and academic prowess. She has consistently earned honors with distinction since grade 7, demonstrating a remarkable commitment to her education. Taylor is enrolled in all available AP classes at her school, showcasing her academic ambition and ability.

Beyond academics, Taylor is a mentor to younger athletes in Stealth, ensuring everyone feels welcome, cared for, and valued. She has been an invaluable asset to her local volleyball club, volunteering her time to assist coaches with younger age groups over the past four years. Her dedication to the sport extends to providing one-on-one coaching for young volleyball players, helping to foster the next generation of athletes. Taylor is not only a standout student and athlete but also a generous and inspiring leader.

Next season, Taylor will be attending the University of Manitoba and joining one of the top-ranked women's volleyball teams in the CanadaWest conference as a Bison. This achievement is a testament to her exceptional skills and dedication to her academics and the sport.



### **Greg Hatch Spirit of the Game Awards**

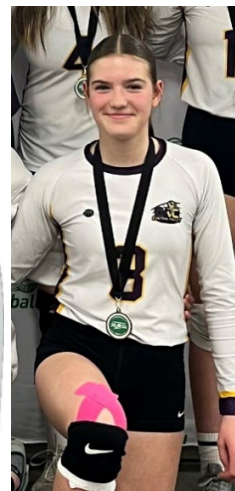
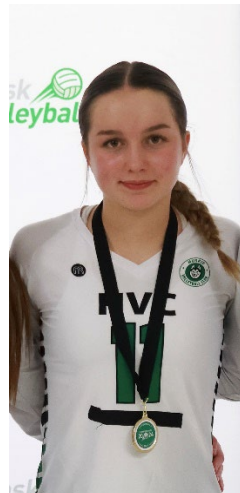
*Presented to the province's male and female volleyball players 13U/14U/15U who best exemplify team work, fair play, hard work and the love of the game.*

**Jayla Bohn** QCVC Royal Purple 13U - Jayla's work ethic, focus and attitude make her a fitting receipt of the Spirit of the Game Award. She can be relied on to fill any team role required of her on and off the court, including those high-pressure moments in matches with her skill and consistency. In her spare time, she works on improving her skills at home, open gym times and occasionally helping at her older brother's practices. If she could, I'm sure she would live in a gym! She began playing club at 10 years old after numerous years of developmental volleyball and has excelled ever since. Looking forward to seeing what her volleyball future holds. Congrats on your achievement!

**Harper Prosofsky** Huskie Premier 13U - Harper showed incredible commitment to practices and games. She was a leader both on and off the court. She showed up to practices ready to work hard and learn. Harper is a great teammate and extremely coachable. She takes feedback and works very hard to apply it to improve her skills. She is a very reliable and versatile player that can be counted on by her teammates and her coaches. The Huskie Program is happy that Harper is a part of it!

**Leo Korchinski** Huskie 14U – Leo Korchinski was a strong quiet leader on the 14UM Premier Huskie team that earned a bronze medal at this year's Nationals in Edmonton. Throughout the year, he continued to evolve as a dominate left side hitter and primary serve receiver. This was due to his unwavering commitment to improve, high standards as an athlete and competitive nature. As such, he was an exemplary example for his team. This is Leo's 2<sup>nd</sup> time receiving this award, which speaks to his nature and demeanor as a player and teammate that everyone wants to play with, coach and be around.

**Bailey Penner** CVVC Force 14U - Bailey consistently demonstrated exceptional team spirit, always encouraging her teammates and celebrating their successes as much as her own. Bailey's eagerness to be the best she could be inspired those around her, as she approached every game and practice with a positive attitude and a relentless drive to improve, embodying the true essence of a team player.



**Bennett Blackwell** 14UW Huskie Premier - Bennett Blackwell has proven herself worthy of the Greg Hatch Spirit of the Game Award with her hard work and leadership skills, not only this past season, but consistently throughout her time as a member of the Huskie Volleyball Club, as Bennett has been with the Huskie Volleyball Club since she first began her volleyball journey as a 12U Player.

As a multi-sport athlete Bennett came to volleyball having experience both as an equestrian and softball player. Both of these sports, along with her parents Georgie and Jared, helped give Bennett a sense of responsibility, work ethic and a realization that success is earned through a dedication to team work. Bennett's leadership has been a major factor for her team's success. Her ability to inspire and lead her teammates is one of the reasons that the team is successful. Bennett has shown maturity beyond her years by training on her own outside of scheduled practices and realizing that coaches are a resource to work with side-by-side coming to the coaches with questions on how to improve her skills.

Bennett has proven herself a valued member of her Team, her Club and the Volleyball Community through her actions on and off the court. Bennett is dedicated to putting her Team's success above her own by being punctual and enthusiastic for practice. The first to enter a drill. The loudest at calling "Mine" The first to offer encouragement and support to teammates. The loudest team cheer. The leader of post game cheers for the other Team. The player that talks to and is welcoming of other teams and their players at competitions. Bennett is always an ambassador for her Team and the sport of volleyball – congratulations Bennett on receiving this award – your whole team is very proud of you!

**Kira Purcell** Wolfpack 15U - Kira joined the newly formed 15U Wolfpack team this past club season. From the beginning Kira showed her passion for learning and love of the game of volleyball. Consistently being at practices and accepting new challenges aided in her development as a force to be reckoned with on the court and at the net. Kira's teammates describe her as being a 'great leader', 'encouraging' and an 'amazing player and person'. With these attributes in mind Kira was nominated as a co-captain by her peers. Kira's leadership skills helped position the team to win a Provincial gold in their division and taking home a gold medal from Nationals. Her tenacity to push boundaries, translated to the rest of the team and they adopted the same mind set and were able to overcome challenges as a unit. Kira was a guiding force supporting her teammates to get stronger and her passion for the game was infectious. Along with her leadership skills Kira has a great volleyball IQ and is receptive to feedback to further her volleyball skills. Kira's dedication and commitment to her teammates and her love for volleyball embodies the Greg Hatch Spirit of the Game Award. It will be exciting to watch Kira's progress over the coming seasons.



**Jayda Evans** QCVC Royal Elite 15U - Jayda Evans has played club volleyball with the Queen City Volleyball Club (QCVC) for the past two years. This year Jayda was selected to be on the top tier team in the 15U category at QCVC, the 15U Elite team. Jayda was very excited to join the team and her enthusiasm and talent for the game were plainly evident. While competing with the team at their first tournament in January 2024 Jayda suffered a heartbreaking injury - badly breaking her leg during a match which required a hospital stay and surgery. Her injury however did not keep her long from returning as an active team member and from being involved throughout the season. She immediately started on the hard work of rehabilitation, defying all odds and being able to walk sooner than anyone thought possible. She continued to participate in practices, being an excellent assistant and supportive teammate. Although she was unable to return to game play before the end of the season she never missed a tournament and was present at all Saskcups and Provincials - fulfilling an important role of being a positive and supportive cheer leader for her teammates. There is no doubt that Jayda will return to playing volleyball - and be stronger and better than ever as her love for the game runs deep and her determination is next to none. Her resiliency, positive attitude and commitment to the sport and to the team make her very worthy of this award.

**Rori Love** Yorkton Blitz Vipers 14U – This young athlete, has excelled and exemplifies the definition of spirit of the game of volleyball. Rori, shows up to every practice and gives it her all in every practice and game. She was a main leader, as the setter. This young athlete ended up being the only setter and played continuous games. She would never complain once, she was excited to do the hard work and try new moves, different techniques, to really push the boundaries of her ability to reach a higher standard for herself. Rori, knows the value of lifting up teammates, and that relationships matter just as much as technique. She understands teamwork means adjusting and collaboration. She is a prime example of what an amazing athlete is, on the inside and out. She is so much more than talent. She is a great young human. Lots of love from your coaches and congratulations!

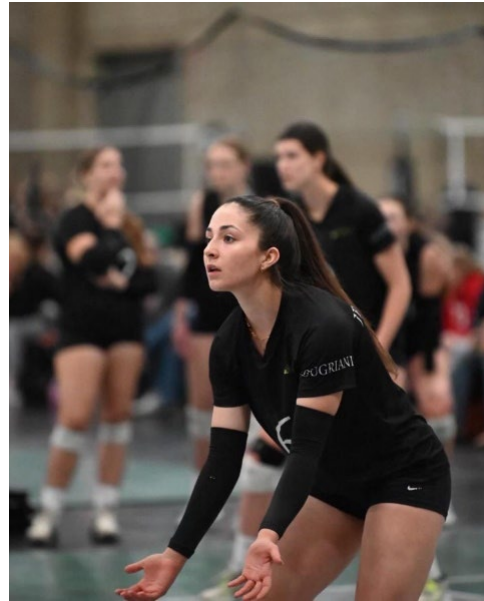


## **Athlete of the Year – Beach**

**Youth Male – Freddie Comfort** – Freddie epitomizes the ideal player every coach desires—a stellar teammate and a dedicated athlete who approaches practice with the same dedication he brings to games. His reliability and ability to excel under pressure make him a crucial asset to his team, while his calm demeanor and effective communication skills elevate those around him. Freddie's relentless pursuit of improvement is evident in his proactive approach to training, where he actively seeks out opportunities to enhance his skills and knowledge of the game. Despite only having a couple of seasons of beach volleyball under his belt, Freddie has already achieved notable success, securing first place at provincials and a top 10 finish at Nationals alongside his partner Taiven in 2023. His proficiency and smooth skillset distinguishes him as a standout performer on the sand. Congratulations, Freddie, on your well-deserved recognition!

**Youth Female – Aleni Tsougrianis** – Aleni is a true leader that leads by example. Her work ethic elevates everyone around her whether it is during training sessions, in practice or during a game. She has an infectious no-quit attitude that inspires anyone she comes in contact with. Aleni is the definition of a coachable athlete. She takes all and any feedback she is given and works to incorporate it into the skills and attitude that are required to make her the elite athlete she has become. If you have been so fortunate as to have Aleni on your team as a fellow athlete or as a coach you can consider yourself blessed. Her successful season is not just the result of luck. The accolades she has achieved whether it is from winning a silver provincial beach medal, a national bronze medal in beach or leading her club indoor team to three Sask Cup wins and a Provincial title are indisputably the result of her extraordinary work ethic, natural athletic ability and mental toughness. She

currently is passing on her knowledge and skills by coaching and mentoring the young up and coming beach players in her home community of Swift Current. While engaging in this new endeavor Aleni continues to dedicate herself to training and preparing herself for the next beach season. Congratulations Aleni on all your achievements and for your receipt of this exciting and well-deserved award.



## Athlete of the Year – Indoor

**16U Female – Dani Babey** – Dani Babey is an exceptional setter for the Stealth Volleyball Club, known for her remarkable talent and dedication. As a leader from day one, Dani has consistently demonstrated a commitment to improving her skills and contributing to the team's success. She played a pivotal role in leading the team to victories at the Sask Cup 1 and 2, earning the title of SaskVolleyball Provincial Champion. Her performance at the Best of the West tournament, where the team secured a 4th place finish and Dani an All-Star selection, highlights her impressive abilities on the court.

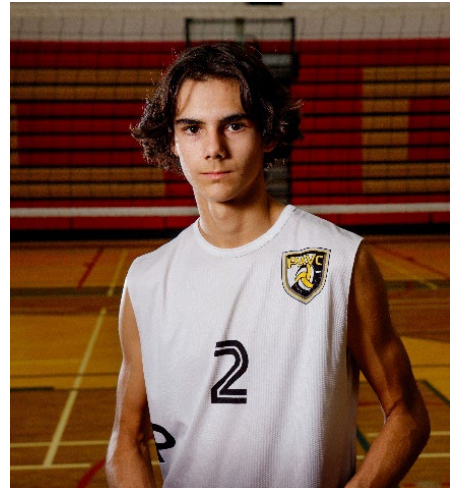
Dani's leadership extends beyond her technical skills; she embodies a team-first mentality, coming to training ready to improve and lead her teammates. Her dedication and desire to excel have made her an instrumental part of the team's achievements. Dani has worked hard to improve her defensive capabilities and decision-making to develop a more well-rounded game. Her dedication to improvement ensures that others around her are also pushed to become the best players they can be.

Congratulations, Dani! We look forward to seeing your further development throughout the SaskVolleyball seasons!

**16U Male – Damien Court** – Damien is a hard working, respectful, and diligent volleyball player. Over the course of the season Damien has put in countless hours of training both on court during practice and off court in the weight room. His commitment to training has allowed him to excel and provided him with the opportunity to represent his province and his country at the U17 Pan Am Cup in Colima Mexico.

Damien has an incredibly bright future in volleyball. His work ethic and overall coachability will allow him to flourish when faced with new opportunities and challenges. I am confident we will see Damien competing at a high level for years to come.

Congratulations to Damien as he is named Sask Volleyball's 16u Male Athlete of the Year. It is well deserved.



**17U Female – Emerson Matthews** – An athlete whose name everyone knows. Emerson is all coach's dream left side, her ability to effortlessly pass, dig and block is outstanding. But what sets her apart from most is her canon of an arm. Emerson has such a unique arm swing that allows her to bury balls straight down in the court. She always knows how to get her team a kill. Emerson's talent turns people's heads no matter where she is playing.

Emerson played club on the Huskie 18u premier team as an underage athlete this past season. Despite her age, Emerson had a huge role on her team and helped them to a provincial gold this season. She was selected in the summer to train and compete with team Canada's youth national team in St. Katherine's. Her team finished first in Canada cup. Emerson was also recently selected to the U19 national team and will compete for the second year in a row at the All-Canadian Game in Toronto. She also has spent 2 summers as a player on team Sask. Emerson has worked so hard and is seeing so many exciting opportunities come out of it, including her recent commitment to play division 1 volleyball at the University of Buffalo.

Despite Emerson's incredible volleyball talent, she is truly a better person - no matter where she is playing, athletes are drawn to her outgoing and funny personality. Her volleyball talent just adds to it. Emerson proved her dedication and love for volleyball over the past years. She is a special player who has already accomplished so much success. There is no one more deserving of this award than Emerson Matthews. Congratulations!

**17U Male – Reuben Veith** – Reuben is a generational volleyball player, his size, athleticism, and Skill set is something that is rarely seen in young players. His dominant and overpowering playstyle made him a threat to any team he played. He made the 16U provincial team last summer, where they had placed 2nd after a strong showing at the Canada Cup. He was a staple for his Carlton Sr. Boys volleyball team, where they had won 2nd in cities, and 4th at provincials. He continued his strong play into the club, and had a fantastic season with the Prince Albert Volleyball Club 18U Men's team. With his capability to read the game, Reuben's serve receive, attacking, and block contributed to his team having strong results at Best of The West and at Provincials. Reuben continues to show tremendous growth as a teammate, a leader, and a player. As a teammate, Reuben challenged his teammates to work hard and improve by competing against them and

providing positive feedback during practices and games. His leadership in turn helped to develop and improve his skills, and when needed, Reuben had the ability to take control of a game. As a result of his skills, he often was the points leader during each match. Because of Reuben's talent, he was selected to the U19 National Team that finished 4<sup>th</sup> in Puerto Rico this May. Reuben, your teammates and coaches are excited for all your accomplishments and congratulate you for a great 2024 season!



**18U Female – Sara Gray** – Sara is in her 8th season of club volleyball, all with the Huskie Volleyball Club. In grade 6, she helped her 13U team to a provincial championship. After covid, she helped her team to a Provincial Championship, a Best of the West Silver, and a Nationals Tier 1 Bronze. She was recognized as Best of the West and Nationals All Stars, and the 16 U Sask Volleyball athlete of the year. Last year, she jumped to U18 and helped her team to a provincial championship and 5th place at Nationals in tier 1. She was recognized as the 17U Sask Volleyball athlete of the year. She attends Holy Cross High School and won back-to-back 5A provincial Championships in grade 9 and 10 before leaving for the National Excellence Program in Richmond, BC. Sara is currently with the Huskies 18U Premier team that had strong showings in Oregon and Washington, DC, a silver medal at the Douglas College tourney in Vancouver, a 5th at Best of the West, and 3 Sask Cups Golds. She also recently earned a gold medal at SK Provincials. Her club team has not dropped a set in Saskatchewan this season.

Sara has also represented our province! Training during the covid summers of 2020 and 2021, she was a member of the 2022 Team Sask that finished 4th at the Canada Summer Games in Niagra. Sara has been a member of Team Sask for the past 4 years. Sara is also a Team Canada athlete, and was a member of the U19 National Team that competed in the FIVB U19 World Championships last summer in Hungary and Croatia. She was selected to NEP last fall where she moved to Vancouver, forgo playing high school, and trained with the top high school athletes in the country. She is one of only 3 athletes that has been asked to return to NEP for the fall of 2024. Sara is a first alternate for U21 Team Canada for the NORCEA games for OH as well as libero in June. The summer of 2022 was her first selection by Volleyball Canada to national team programming, as a member of the Team Canada Youth Red team that finished 7 placed at the 2022 Canada Cup. Sara also was selected to the All Canadian BioSteel All Star Game last June in Toronto. Sara's U17 team won the Championship! A fierce competitor on the court, kind and humble off the court, Sara is a 5'10" outside hitter that touches over 10', has a strong arm, and elite backcourt skills. She has committed to study at University of North Dakota, and is excited to play NCAA Div 1 volleyball in the Summit League.

**18U Male – Daniel Hermanson** – Daniel has an elite shoulder, vertical jump, and shot selection that makes him one of the most impressive attackers in the last decade to come from Saskatchewan. He was on a strong school team with Saskatoon Christian, winning cities and eventually winning 2A provincial gold. He was a part of the HVC 18UM leadership group and served as captain at Nationals where he helped lead his team to a 6-

2 record. Daniel was an integral part of the team winning all 3 Sask Cups with an 18-0 record and also winning a Provincial bronze this season.

As a high school athlete, Daniel has the rare ability to score the ball from the back row as effectively as he does in the front row. He was on the attacking side of some of the hardest hits and biggest bounces of the season in Saskatchewan and at Nationals. He is an athlete you can trust to put the ball away at 24-24 the same way he can at 3-3. Daniel has worked hard all season, we are extremely proud of him, and we wish him the best as he continues in the sport with the University of Saskatchewan Huskies. Congratulations Dan!



**21U Female – Seanna Trumier** – Seanna hails from Prince Albert, and just completed her third year with the Lakeland College Rustlers Women's Volleyball Program. Seanna plans to be an elementary teacher and just got accepted into the collaborative Education program with Lakeland College and the University of Calgary, which will allow her to play all five years of her eligibility with the Rustlers. Due to an injury on the team this past season, Seanna showcased her versatility as she spent the first semester competing as a passing left side and then once her team got healthy for the second semester she moved back into her regular starting spot at the libero position. On the season Seanna averaged 3.51 digs per set and was named to the ACAC North All Conference team. Seanna's consistent service reception and steady stay at home defense helped her team win back-to-back ACAC conference titles and back to back CCAA national championships. It was a year for the record books for the Lakeland College Rustlers women's volleyball program and Seanna's play was one of the major reasons for her team's success!



**21U Male – Skyler Varga** - Skyler Varga has been honored with the prestigious 21U Athlete of the Year award by Sask Volleyball for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, as he received this award in 2022 as well which is a testament to his remarkable skill, dedication, and contribution to the sport. Currently playing as the starting opposite for Long Beach State, Skyler's athletic journey continues to reach new heights, with his team recently finishing second in the NCAA. Skyler's exceptional performance on the court has not only made waves at the collegiate level

but has also earned him a coveted spot on Canada's Next Gen team. This selection highlights his potential and commitment to representing his country at the highest levels of international volleyball.

From his early days in Saskatchewan to his current role at Long Beach State, Skyler has consistently demonstrated his passion for volleyball, coupled with a relentless work ethic. His ability to excel in high-pressure situations, combined with his technical abilities and tactical decision-making, sets him apart as a true leader and an inspiration to young athletes. As Skyler continues to evolve and achieve new milestones in his career, this award recognizes his significant impact on the sport and his promise for the future. The volleyball community eagerly anticipates his continued success and contributions to the game both domestically and internationally.



### **Saskatchewan Players on National Teams**

#### **Women's Sitting Volleyball**

Julie Kozun

#### **2024 Men's NexGen Team**

Skyler Varga

#### **2024 U19 Men's Team**

Reuben Veith (team captain)

#### **2024 U17 Men's Team**

Damien Court

#### **2023 U21 Men's Team**

Coach Sean McKay

Isaiah Mamer

Lucas Musschoot

#### **2023 U17 Women's Team – NORCECA**

**Nov - Honduras**

Olivia Orosz

#### **2024 U19 Women's NORCECA**

**July - Honduras**

Emerson Matthews

Abby Wasutyk

#### **U19W's NORCECA Team – Puerto Rico**

**May 2023**

Sophia Magus

#### **U19W's FIVB World Championship**

**Aug 2023 - Hungary**

Sophia Magus (team captain)

Sara Gray

#### **2023 Women's Youth Team - July**

Emerson Matthews

Abby Wasutyk

Olivia Orosz

Coach Tania Harrison

#### **2023 NEP Women's Training**

**Sept – Dec - Vancouver**

Sara Gray

Gabi Flaman

#### **2024 U21 Women's NORCECA**

**June - Toronto**

Sophia Magus