

SASK VOLLEYBALL HALL OF FAME



Inducted 2015 – BUILDER

JOHN NEILSON

John moved to Regina in 1979 to be Sask Volleyball's second technical director. He came from Winnipeg where he played, coached and refereed for many years. He played with the grand beach goats, Vancouver volleyball club, University of Manitoba Bisons and the Prairie Roadrunners in 8 national championship finals. John would not have moved to Saskatchewan had it not been for Leroy Starkes, Mark Tennant, Wayne Hellquist, and Marlene Hoffman's enthusiasm and commitment to the sport. He was also impressed with the tournaments he attended as a player and coach in Regina and Saskatoon. He was the technical director for 12 years and was the Canada Games men's coach for the final 2 years.

John did whatever he could travelling throughout the province in a 1969 VW Westfalia, a 1976 VW rabbit and a 1970 Mercedes. May they rest in pieces. Fortunately, Wayne Hellquist had a VW mechanic in Moose Jaw who was usually able to keep them running well enough to get John home most of the time. During the 1980s SK was always at or near the top in Canada for registered teams. There was great interest in the rural areas and almost every small town had a team. John enjoyed meeting the coaches and players and supporting their efforts to develop their teams and the sport. Every request for help was accommodated. That would not have been possible without admin support from Wayne and Marlene as there was no Executive Director and John hated that part of the job. Wayne was recognized as the unpaid executive director in those days. He particularly enjoyed working with players and coaches in the north and became involved as a member of Sask Sports First Nations Advisory Committee.

John was heavily involved with coaching development and hundreds of coaches received NCCP certification. Sask Volleyball led the country in the number of newly certified coaches throughout most of the 1980s. John travelled to Ottawa each year as Sask Volleyball's coaching rep, and was chair of Canada's coaching committee for 4 years. The NCCP manuals were revised and one of John's articles is still being used today. John also conducted many player clinics which always involved some coaching education.

John was instrumental in having the National team move to Regina in the 80's, starting a 12U program in the province, developing affordable summer camps, hosting National competitions as well as the Norceca championships, assisting with referee development, and promoting coaching development throughout the province.

John was inducted as a Sask Volleyball Lifetime Member in 2003.

