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Camosun coach recaps “Summer of Volleyball”



Chargers Head Coach Chris Dahl

At the end of each academic year, student-athletes disband and are tasked with the challenge of continuing to improve while in the off-season. The same holds true for coaches, and during the Summer of 2012, Camosun College Chargers Women’s Volleyball Head Coach Chris Dahl and Assistant Coach Chris Abra had the opportunity to expand their experience and expertise by working with some of the nation’s best coaches and developing athletes.

While Head Coach Chris Dahl spent most of July and August working with the Junior Women's National Team and the 19U Team BC Women's program, Assistant Coach Chris Abra served as the Head Coach for the Vancouver Island Boys Beach teams.

In July, Dahl assumed the role of Head Coach of the 19U Team BC Women's program and began preparing the team for the National Team Challenge Cup (NTCC) which ran July 18-22 in Winnipeg, MB. The annual competition features provincial team programs from across Canada and outside of the Canada Games and is the pinnacle of regional based high performance programming for the top young volleyball athletes across the nation. Over the past three summers, a significant number of former and current Chargers have been a part of the Team BC NTCC program: Suzanna Campbell, Elizabeth Davis, and Carly Hilliard in 2010; Kelsey Clarke, Erika Morris, Lainey Jantzi and Olivia Redden in 2011; and current first year Chargers Lainey Jantzi and Erika Morris who returned to the program in 2012.

“Clearly, I believe in the Team BC system,” stated Coach Dahl. “Volleyball BC's high performance pathway, in

combination with recent developments and opportunities within the Volleyball Canada Centre of Excellence family are, without any doubt, better preparing our athletes to advance through the sport.”

The Chargers have attracted a significant number of Team BC alumni to Camosun. In addition to the aforementioned athletes, current Camosun student-athletes Angela Richards, Kelsey Johnson, Claire Ash, and Mariah Holmstrom also have Team BC experience on the indoor court or on the beach.

At the completion of the National Team Challenge Cup (NTCC) competition, Coach Dahl began work with the Junior Women's National Team program. Athletes were selected to the Junior program at the conclusion of the NTCC and immediately following, the team traveled to the US High Performance Championships in Des Moines, Iowa. Team Canada had the opportunity to compete against USA Volleyball Regional high performance teams, USA Youth and Junior National teams, the Dominican Republic, and Chile over the course of the week- long event.

"Being an Olympic year and representing Canada while lining up across the net from the USA, Dominican, Chile ... I think there was a heightened sense of patriotism," said Coach Dahl. "We followed Camosun Chargers alumni Martin Reader and his Olympic beach volleyball journey closely. His accomplishments and the stories of others while on the world's greatest sporting stage were not lost on the athletes we worked with this summer. Their dreams and aspirations are one and the same, to be the best at what they do and I can't help but find great inspiration in that."

"Representing your country and having 'Canada' printed across your back and the maple leaf on your chest when entering competition is every young athletes dream," he added. "I had the opportunity to be a part of that with a group of young Canadian athletes this summer and it was something unique to witness."

Following the High Performance Championships, the program returned to Winnipeg to train under the direction of Head Coach Scott Koskie (Team Canada Senior Women's Assistant).

"It was a pleasure coaching alongside Scott, Phil Hudson, Maren Hansen and Team Canada Senior Women's Head Coach Arnd 'Lupo' Ludwig," said Coach Dahl. "These people are good at what they do and work hard at moving Canada towards the podium."

For Chargers Assistant Coach Chris Abra, the summer involved serving as the Head Coach for the Vancouver Island Boys Beach teams at the BC Summer Games in Surrey. In addition to overseeing the operations of the South Island Volleyball Association (SIVA) and its' many grass volleyball leagues and outdoor tournaments over the summer months, Chris worked on the beach courts training the top 17U male beach teams from the Vancouver Island Central Coast region.

"Team Canada, BC Summer Games, Team BC, Indoor, Beach ... we did it all," exclaimed Coach Dahl. "In summary, I would have to say that one of my most significant observations from the summer actually sounds quite obvious. We are all doing the same things. By that I mean to suggest that the game, until you reach the absolute highest levels, functions at a pretty basic level. Our athletes and teams need to be great at the foundation skills of serving, passing, setting and attacking. These skills are being worked on in the local school system all the way up to National team programs. The difference between the levels, the various leagues, and ultimately who wins or loses lies in who can perform these skills better. There is no complex system of play the higher up you go in the sport, it's all still volleyball ... for the most part."

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