

Joe Grdisa, Pakmen coach and a Health and Physical Education teacher shares his love of the game.

I love volleyball. After making the team in middle school, I didn't really enjoy the game. When I played in high school I began to enjoy it more. When I played in university I began to actually enjoy the game. After years of outstanding coaching, athletic and skilled teammates and a successful end in my final year, I loved volleyball.

I continued to play some beach and club ball. I started to coach first with Toronto West. Then as a teacher for 23 years Then with Pakmen. I now play adult rec volleyball.

25 years of volleyball as a player, coach, ref, tournament host. I love all aspects of the game. I thought I had seen it all.

I was fortunate to be asked to be the Supervisor of the Training Facility for Indoor Volleyball at the **TO2015 Pan Am Games**.

This afforded my crew and I the chance to oversee the practices of all the men and women teams. As it was practices, the players came everyday in a relaxed and friendly mood. We worked hard to make each practice an efficient and comfortable experience.

This gave us the chance to get to know the players, the coaches, the trainers and the managers. It didn't matter where they were from or what language they spoke. We joked and laughed. We discussed drills and games and plans for the future.

One Mexican player talked to me about how he wished he didn't have to play middle. But had no choice because there were few tall people in Mexico.

I invited the Canadian Women to join our upcoming Sunday Pakmen Adult Rec League if they were free this fall.

The Argentine assistant coach and I got along so well that he gave me his contact info and asked, "if we could be...how you say? Friends?" I stood court side assisting the legendary Argentine Head Coach, Julio Velsaco, as the team was running a "wash" drill. Being so close and watching a long rally I was so close to such skill and height and power and intensity and knowledge and passion and focus...I actually got emotional...I could have cried at that moment. The common thread to every team was their focus and intensity at every moment

during practice. The sheer desire to refuse to allow a ball touch the floor. The heated moments when a serve hit the line but was called out.

To quote a former NBA great.. we are talking about practice." Yes..practice was a moment to give it your all. To never give up. To compete. To fight. To refuse to lose. To focus and use every moment as a moment to improve."

And why?

Because they all love volleyball too.

Editor's Note: Joe Grdisa is a volleyball legend. He was a leftside player for Orest Stanko's championship team at University of Toronto (that team was recently inducted into the University of Toronto's Sports Hall of Fame) and has been a leader in youth volleyball ever since. Joe is a health and physical education teacher at Thomas Street Middle School, a York University Teacher Education Course Instructor, and a Pakmen coach. He hosts all the Peel District School Board Beach Volleyball tournaments in June, each year. This summer he was the Supervisor of Training Facility - Indoor Volleyball at the Pan American Games and we asked him to share his experience with us. Thank you Joe!

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