



2020-2021
Awards Presentation

Last season threw a curve at athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers.

Training plans were constantly changing, competitions became virtual and athletes had practices on Zoom instead of in the water.

A common theme in the award nominations was how the athletes adapted their minds and bodies to the changes and continued on with determination and a positive mindset.

Duet or Team of the Year

Anna Dolgova and Ainsley Bristol
of the Saskatoon Aqualenes



Nominated by Coach Brittany Leaper

Anna & Ainsley had a rollercoaster of a ride during Covid. With one goal in mind all year - podium at Nationals they had to be focused, driven and positive. They did this even with the obstacles that came with Covid. Their training schedule changed monthly if not weekly and due to Covid restriction they had a whacky training schedule. Their dedication showed when they swam 7 hours on Saturdays to fit in all of their routines. Including Junior Duet Free & Junior Duet Tech that they performed together. Throughout most of the year we had no confirmation about being able to compete at any competitions even virtually. They rose to the occasion and even with this uncertainty stayed committed to the plan. Lap after lap and run through after run through, we treated it like a regular year and hopes we could compete and in pursuit of the podium.

National Qualifiers put them on the map - although we could not compete for marks we were able to submit their duets for feedback and gain valuable knowledge for Nationals. Between then and nationals they made huge improvements in their execution, synchronization and presence in the water. When we finally got the go ahead to compete at nationals they were ready. While filming for nationals they were dedicated to a personal best swim. We started filming two weeks early so they had as many chances as they needed to reach as close to perfection as possible. With two fabulous swims they received silver in both Junior Duet Free (score of 75.8333) and Junior Duet Tech (score of 75.4508) missing the gold medal in duet free by .3. Not only did they improve as a duet but they also improved as individuals.

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Ainsley improved her rocket split from barely getting her suit out to reaching armpits by the end of the year and Anna improved her energy in the water - no amount of whole run throughs could make this athlete tired. With all of this being said, this was the first year Anna & Ainsley were paired up as a duet. Prior they both had different duet partners. It usually takes years to build rapport with a duet partner as you have to be one with each other, to be synchronized it usually takes years of practice. However, these two hit it off instantly. They were the yin to each other's yang. Even through a tough year they were able to support each other when needed and push each other when needed.

While they prepared for their duet, solo and team events they were also named to Canadian Artistic Swimming's (CAS) Talent ID group. This group is watched closely by CAS and national team athletes are selected from this pool. They had to train many land, water and technical skills and send in numerous videos for observation. As Anna & Ainsley's coach, I am so proud of what they accomplished during the swim season. With Covid sometimes it felt like there was never going to be light at the end of the tunnel and there may have been more negatives and positives during the year but that never got this duet down. They persevered and continued to have a winning attitude. Not only did they have a stellar end to the year with their nationals performances but they also helped in continuing to put Saskatchewan on the map as the province to watch.

“Recreation” Athlete of the Year

Eva Hoeft of the Saskatoon Aqualenes



Nominated by Coach Eliot Paul

Eva always came to practice with a positive attitude and pushed herself to be the best swimmer she could be. She improved so much this last season despite the limitations from COVID. Eva helped her team by helping teach the routine, demonstrating positions and bringing a positive mindset to the pool. She has shown a lot of commitment to her team and this sport this year, she always came to practice with a smile on her face and was ready to learn new things.

“Limited Competitive” Athlete of the Year

Kennedy Pastushok from the Saskatoon Aqualenes



Nominated by Coach Cate Janzen

This was Kennedy's first year out of the recreational program but it looks like she's been swimming for years! Kennedy is such a joy to coach and I could not imagine a better swimmer to win the Limited Competitive Athlete of the Year. Kennedy made tough practices lighthearted while somehow still keeping us all on track. She didn't just work at the pool, but made leaps and bounds just by working on her flexibility and strength at home - her coaches didn't even have to remind her! She came to the pool (or to Zoom practices) with a smile on her face and determination to improve. This need to get better paid off when she got third in figures at Provincials this past Spring; well deserved!

Kennedy is the embodiment of team spirit, dedication, tenacity, and of course, love and pride of her sport. Her coaches and club are so proud of her and all that she has accomplished this past season and we're excited to see what's in store for her in all of the seasons to come!

Most Improved “Provincial Pathway” Athlete of the Year

Jaiva Bajema of the Border City Stingrays



Nominated by Coach Janelle Dembicki

The 2021 season was an interesting one, however, Jaiva is always excited to enter all competitions. Jaiva was named to the Junior Summer Team!! Jaiva Placed 1st consistently all season, WITH HER MARKS IMPROVING AT EVERY COMPETITION. Which makes her most improved! Always working for more height and control, Jaiva competed in all online competitions and she had some personal bests. When competing the land testing she received her first 8!! and several 7's. At SKC she placed first in both Provincial junior figures(46.3846), Solo(63.9250) and Land testing(64.2000). And then did the same thing at CPC; Figures(49.0599) Land(64.2000) Her marks increased in both events.

Jaiva is a true pleasure to coach. She is always eager and willing to try anything, which makes her solo so amazing!. She has been known to go practice on her own time to stay at her best. Jaiva also completed her coaching certification during this covid season. Jaiva is a role model to all BCS swimmers and Coaches, and her teammates love her ability to lead them to the top.

“Provincial Pathway” Athlete of the Year

Sasha Mantei of the Estevan Mermaids



Nominated by Coach Shannon Wanner

I have coached Sasha for last 5 years. I watched her grow from an absent minded athlete where she bobbed up and down and drove her coaches crazy to the graceful and hardworking athlete that she is today. She has so much love and determination for the sport. In the past she received some zero on figure marks but that never brought her down very long. If this happened on a Saturday on figure day, the next day she was back ready for team routine cheering on her team by saying "Do your best and forget the rest". I have heard that saying from her many times especially when figures did not go good for her other teammates and she wanted them to focus on team. Her determination would kick in at practice and she would try to get better at those figures and spins that would give her so much trouble.

At practice she is always pushing herself by doing extra laps and working on different figures. Even this year she came to practice every night with a smile on her face and was happy to be in the pool even if things were changing daily. Sasha worked every night like it was normal season. She was sad when we had to cancel her solo for the past season due to Covid-19 but true to her nature she understood and kept working hard in both land and pool stuff. As a reward I asked Sasha if she wanted to do a duet with Ava and she said "YES". She knew they could not compete with it this season but she took on the task and ran with it and they completed in about 4 weeks. Her marks are not the best but I could not think of a better role model for our club than Sasha. She has so much spirit and love for our club.

“National Pathway” Most Improved Athlete

Emerson Hunchak of the Saskatoon Aqualenes



Nominated by Coach Shaelynn Thiessen

Emerson has spent the last 2 years in 13-15 National Stream. However, for the better part of those two years she has had to face the challenges that COVID-19 has brought. Including the lost opportunity to compete in person. Through all that she has still been determined and driven to improve in her figures and solo.

At Qualifiers Emerson was 39th in figures with a 68.44 jumping up to 18th at Nationals with a 71.00. Putting her within the top 20 athletes in the country and a 2.56 score increase. Not only did her figure mark and placing surge, her solo also improved. She went from 22nd at Qualifiers with a score of 65.9 to 16th at Nationals with a score of 67.79.

Emerson is a force to be reckoned with. She puts in the work in and out of the pool and is a huge cheerleader of her fellow teammate's accomplishments. Not only that, but she is a lifesaver when it comes to remembering corrections. Her teammates can always go to her for help. She will continue to improve in leaps and bounds if she keeps going down this path. She hasn't even come close to tapping into her full potential yet.

“National Pathway” Athlete of the Year

Anna Dolgova of the Saskatoon Aqualenes



Nominated by Coach Brittany Leaper

Anna worked tirelessly to improve this year and made sure her solo's were the best they could be. Anna improved many aspects of her swimming this year including her extension, her toe point got substantially better this season. However, her biggest improvement was in her endurance and mental game. Throughout her career Anna had struggled with pushing herself out of her comfort zone, her routines were hard and sometimes it can be scary to push past the lactic acid and numbness in your limbs at the end of a routine. However, this year it clicked. She figured out how to push past her comfort zone and get close to what we call the "red line". Run through after run through she held her energy from start to finish.

With all of this improvement Anna had a great showing at Qualifiers. She placed 7th in Solo Tech with a score of 73.6879 and 8th in Solo Free with a score of 74.1333. Between Qualifiers and Nationals she was determined to make even more improvement spending time working on her technical elements and making her solo free even harder. I would argue her solo free was the hardest routine in the field. With all this improvement she moved up two spots in solo tech at nationals placing 5th with a score of 74.9239. That is an improvement of 1 whole mark in about two months. She also improved her solo free score at nationals to 75.4167 which was an improvement by one point as well.

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Anna's strengths lie in her technical abilities. In our club we even call her vertical the "Anna Vertical" she is so high out of the water in vertical that sometimes she almost has her bum out of the water. While Anna was training for Solo, Duet and team events, she was also named to the Canadian Artistic Swimming (CAS) Talent ID Pool. National team members are selected from this pool and watched closely by CAS. This was the second year in a row Anna was selected into the talent pool and this is only the beginning for her. She is now off to Montreal in pursuit of the Senior National Team. Anna is now on the path to one day swim with Team Canada and she is determined to be named to the Paris 2024 Olympic Team.

We are so proud of Anna's accomplishments this year, it was not easy to stay motivated during Covid but she persevered. She never complained about her irregular training schedule sometimes swimming 7 hours on Saturday to get in all of her routines. She used her time in the pool to get ahead of the competition and that's exactly what she did. We can't wait to see what she does in Montreal next year in her pursuit of the Olympics and we will be cheering her on!

Weiner Sisters “Provincial Pathway” Coach of the Year

Kelsey Van Dyke of Regina Synchro



Nominated by Head Coach Natalie Good

After spending several years in the Yukon, Kelsey returned to Saskatchewan and synchro in the summer of 2017. She began volunteering with Regina Synchro Aboriginal lessons and took her Competitive Development training during the summer. Kelsey is a 2021 Grad completing an after degree in Education.

Kelsey coached the Regina Club's Novice Team in 2020-21. She made the best out of a competitive season that was reduced to land testing and figures. She kept the kids motivated and engaged during the breaks in training. She kept the parents informed of training changes and she pivoted when the plans kept changing. In addition to supporting the club and her team during the season, Kelsey also assisted by offering her technical skills during the Sask Artistic Swimming meets.

Parents on Kelsey's team are excited to have her swimmers return to her team in the 2021-22 season and have the opportunity to show how they have improved under Kelsey's leadership.

Club Volunteer of the Year

Shelley Dammann of Weyburn Artistic Swimming Club



Nominated by the Weyburn Artistic Swimming Club Board

Shelley started with our club over 10 years ago as a parent who was willing to roll up her sleeves to help in any way. She began learning about Artistic Swimming as a recreational coach. Her patience, warmth and humour made her a natural. With her increasing skill and knowledge, she was soon receiving her NCCP Comp Intro certification and Weyburn was blessed with a dedicated 12U and Limited Stream competitive coach.

Shelley's ability to stay so organized and her willingness to help has had her wearing many hats over the years. She has coordinated our club store, ensuring we are always fully stocked with caps, nose clips and bathing suits. She keeps our athletes covered, ordering new suits when material starts to wear thin and makes sure team suits arrive in time to prevent Coach melt downs.

Shelley took over the role of Club Manager from the Head Coach. She has been a fantastic liaison with our pool facility manager, always keeping a positive relationship.

Shelley has that uncanny ability to know everyone, she remembers everyone's name! People are drawn to her because she makes them feel so comfortable and welcome.

That special ability brought our club together in some tough times. Shelley took on the role as Club President in 2019 and rebuilt a strong foundation which has carried forward with a fantastic, fun, and caring Board of Directors.

Even with all the commitment at our local club level, Shelley recognized the importance of being involved at a Provincial level. She assumed the role of Grassroots Chair for one year and was a strong voice representing rural clubs provincially. Always one to help where needed, Shelley has accepted the role of Nominations and Awards Chair Provincially....so not sure how we will keep this a secret!

Now, after many wonderful years, her eldest daughter Megan is graduating and retiring as an athlete, and so too, is Shelley. We will miss your laughter, your leadership, your caring and Tracey will miss your knowing every parent's name!!

Official of the Year

Carol Chernishenko



Nominated by Kirsten Brough

When SAS realized that competitions would be taking on a different format during a global pandemic, Carol did not hesitate to start the organization process. Her dedication helped to ensure that the artistic swimmers in Saskatchewan (and from other provinces too) would have an opportunity for meaningful competition even if our SAS community couldn't gather at a swimming pools to host a regular meets.

Carol worked with the SAS staff, clubs, volunteers, officials and Storm to gather input on how to go about running these virtual competitions. She spent hours preparing detailed documents on how the competitions would proceed. She gathered input from all levels involved and was constantly improving the process as we moved from competition to competition...Marnie Eistetter Training Meet, Sandy Roberts Provincial Competition, Sadie Caulder Knight Provincial Championship and Canadian Prairie Championship.

With her guidance, SAS hosted live Land Skills Competitions. This was something that only bigger provinces were doing and SAS pulled it off with only a few minor "glitches".

Carol took on a huge role in the delivery of SAS Virtual Competitions and for that reason, we believe she is deserving of the SAS Official of the Year Award for the 2020-2021 season.

Here's a bit more about Carol.....She originally became involved in the sport of synchronized swimming because her daughter was a competitor. Like most parents, she started volunteering at the club level. Over time, there was opportunity to volunteer at the provincial level and we are so happy and fortunate that she did! Even though her daughter is no longer swimming, Carol continues to be actively involved. Her dedication to artistic swimming is amazing. She puts 100% effort into everything she does for the sport. She has committed herself to several aspects of artistic swimming, including administration, officiating and scorekeeping. Carol is a very reliable volunteer who never looks for recognition. She is passionate about making the sport more efficient for everyone involved, especially the athletes. When acting as a referee, Carol is always organized. If she is not certain of a procedure she always asks. SAS is lucky to have such a dedicated volunteer!

**Congratulations
to all of the
Awards Recipients!**