

1990 GCI Boys Volleyball

OFSAA Volleyball Champions



The GCI Boys 1990 OFSAA-winning senior boys volleyball team. Back left: Blair Ivanovick, Steve Pratt, Jason Tarrant, Anton Potvin, Jason Mulholland, Cam Winser, Jason Koskela, Mark Walters, Jeff Fallows, assistant coach Seymour Hadwen, head coach Rob Atkinson. Trainers: Andrea McCann, Karen Dugmore, Jennifer Foss. Front left: Bill Scott, Kirk Van Os, Shawn Evans, Edgar Bayayawa, Dwayne Hyde.

The Galt Collegiate boys volleyball team was a special group in the early 1990s. With coaches Rob Atkinson, a former university coach and London product with considerable volleyball acumen, and former all-Canadian basketball player Seymour Hadwen at the helm, the team got expert coaching with a generous dose of self-confidence.

But there was more to the mix than that. Having 6'7" power hitter Jason Mulholland as the linchpin, the Galt Ghosts also had a stellar supporting cast that would have contended even without Mulholland. Players like Anton Potvin, Cam Winser, Mark Walters, Jason Tarrant, and setter Jeff Fallows. But make no mistake about it. Mulholland was the star. Still, with Mulholland and his talented teammates, the team had an almost invincible air. The coaches, the players, Mulholland -- all coalesced for a dream season that saw the Ghosts go 54-0 en route to the all-Ontario OFSAA senior boys championship in 1990. It was the first OFSAA team championship won by any Cambridge high school team. And the Ghosts did it by beating coach Atkinson's old high school alma mater, Saunders Secondary School, from London in the final at St. Joseph's College gymnasium on a fall Saturday night in Brantford.

A year earlier, with many of the same players, the Ghosts were bronze medallists at OFSAA. They had tasted the lustre of victory and, with many returning players, had their sights on the top prize the entire 1990 season.

Seeded first at the 16-team OFSAA tournament, against the best teams from across the province, the Ghosts defeated Governor Simcoe 15-5, 15-3 to open round-robin play. They then went on to beat Toronto's Father John Redmond 15-0, 15-1, and North Bay's Chippewa 15-13, 15-7. They advanced to the quarterfinal and downed Sir Wilfrid Laurier 15-2, 15-7, and then defeated Windsor Assumption 15-9, 15-4 in the semis.

The calibre of volleyball at OFSAA in 1990 was among the highest anywhere in North America. Ranked as the top high school association in Canada, OFSAA was considered to be among the top five high school divisions anywhere on the continent. In 1990, OFSAA comprised 18 regional associations, nearly 800 public, separate and private high schools, and a quarter of a million student athletes. GCI's victory at the Triple A level -- the highest level of play -- meant that the Ghosts did what 14,000 other high school volleyball players couldn't do that year: win a provincial title. The win, along with their fourth league title in a row, was the culmination of GCI's domination of high school supremacy in the region.

Atkinson and Hadwen kept the front-runners focussed as they advanced through the playoffs to the OFSAA finals. They told the team to move the ball around. "We could give the ball to Jason every time and I think we'd lose," said Atkinson. "Saunders would have put up a three-man block and Jason would have gotten tired."

People who saw that match in Brantford will talk of Galt's team with awe and respect for years to come. Their eyes will light up. They will talk of Mulholland, Winser, Fallows, Potvin, Walters, Kirk Van Os, and all the others -- each of them integral members of that championship season. And they will ask one question, destined never to be answered on the court: Could they be beaten by any high school



team?

"To go this far," said Winser, "I never would have imagined it." Said teammate Walters, who Atkinson believed played his best ball of the year: "We finally did it!" And Potvin echoed the sentiment: "It's awesome!"

"This was my goal when I moved to Galt seven years ago," said Atkinson.

The GCI boys volleyball team leader, Jason Mulholland, went on to earn All-American honours at the University of Southern California.

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