

MEDIA RELEASE

Saskatchewan's Top Athletes, Volunteers, and Coaches Honoured at Sask Sport Awards

The recipients of the Sask Sport Inc. 2008 Athlete of the Year Awards, Volunteer Recognition Awards, and new Coaching Awards, were announced tonight at the Saskatchewan Sports Awards in Saskatoon.

A total of 33 nominations were received for the Athlete of the Year Awards. The list was narrowed to three finalists in each of the six categories. The award recipients in each category were chosen in a vote by the Presidents of Provincial Sport Governing Bodies and Saskatchewan's sports media. The results were compiled and audited by the accounting and auditing firm of The Virtus Group. The award recipients are:

Master Athlete of the Year: Ralph Ibanez, Saskatoon, Judo Saskatchewan

Youth Male Athlete of the Year: Michael Qing, Regina, Swim Saskatchewan Inc./Special Olympics Saskatchewan

Youth Female Athlete of the Year: Kendra Chernoff, Saskatoon, Swim Saskatchewan Inc.

Male Athlete of the Year: Reuben Ross, Pilot Butte, Sask Diving Inc.

Female Athlete of the Year: Ilana Duff, Bradwell, Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association

Team of the Year: Eugene Hritzuk Senior Men's Curling Team, Saskatoon, Humboldt, Wadena, Saskatchewan Curling Association

New to the Sport Awards this year are three Coaching Awards. The recipient of the inaugural **Coach of the Year Award** is:

Rick Reelie, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association

The recipient of the **Coach Dedication Award – Male** is:

Lyle Sanderson, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Athletics

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The recipient of the **Coach Dedication Award – Female** is:

Betty Blue, Nipawin, Special Olympics Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Sport Awards also featured the **Volunteer Recognition Awards**, which were presented to:

Toni Beerling, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Athletics

Bruce McLeod, Regina, Canoe Kayak Saskatchewan

Graham Tuer, Regina, Saskatchewan Hockey Association

Biographies of all the recipients, finalists and nominees can found at www.sasksport.sk.ca.

“Our province has many outstanding athletes, coaches, and volunteers, and we are pleased to celebrate their achievements and dedication each year at the Saskatchewan Sport Awards,” said Ian Cook, President of Sask Sport Inc. “Sask Sport is proud of all the award finalists, recipients, and nominees. They are incredible ambassadors for our province, not only in their athletic accomplishments, but also through their leadership, dedication, and hard work.”

The evening’s guest speaker was Joan McCusker. An accomplished curler, McCusker won Canada’s first gold medal in curling at the 1998 Nagano Olympics. She has also won three Canadian and World Women’s Curling Championships as a second on the Sandra Schmirler team, as well as numerous other provincial and national events. In 2000, she was inducted into the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame. McCusker is currently a commentator with the CBC, a high performance consultant, and a motivational speaker.

The Saskatchewan Sports Awards are sponsored by Global TV, McMaster Photographers, Coaches Association of Saskatchewan, and the Canadian Sport Centre Saskatchewan.

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