

Dave Vollant: a dedicated coach who leads his team to the top!

Dave Vollant, a badminton coach for Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, can be very pleased with his experience at the North American Indigenous Games that were held last July: his protégés returned from Regina with nine medals, including six silver and two bronze medals, after participating in four quarter-finals.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Mr. Vollant is the coach for the second best Peewee level badminton team in Quebec. This marks the first time that the North Shore ranks in the top three in Quebec.

A lot of effort, motivation and training sessions were required from Mr. Vollant and his team in order to achieve this level of excellence. Four or five years ago, Mr. Vollant was an assistant coach at a public school in the Quebec network who wanted to offer some of his time to his community of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam. Since he loved to participate in badminton tournaments when he was in high school, this was like a calling for him.

The club got off to a rough start. There was not enough funding in the beginning to participate in all tournaments, the gym schedule made practicing difficult and Mr. Vollant was on his own to organise everything on a volunteer basis. Nevertheless, the youth persevered which encouraged him to do the same. Today, he enjoys the help of an assistant and the practices are held in the Johnny-Pilot school gymnasium, which serves as the headquarters for the Nomades Team of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam.

Each year, Dave Vollant and his youth participate in three or four provincial high calibre tournaments and six regional tournaments. To excel, thorough preparation is essential: four two-hour training sessions are held each week during which both cardiovascular ca-



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pabilities and badminton techniques are tested. A nutritionist provides them with advice and recommendations to ensure that they eat properly during training sessions and tournaments. Finally, the youth receive the help they need to ensure that they are as mentally prepared as they are physically prepared.

ENGAGING YOUTH ATHLETES TO ALLOW THEM TO SHINE

Between 70 and 90 youth ages 7 to 19 years train both at the club and the extracurricular program that are conducted by Dave Vollant, the majority of which are girls (60%). In order to recruit as of grades 2 and 3 at the elementary school level, he brings out the fun side of sport during the practice sessions: "Getting them to participate in games that make them laugh and work together

allows a sense of family in an individual sport to set in."

The dynamic coach also believes in the importance of empowering youth and teaching discipline. For example, members of the club pay an annual amount for their membership in addition to paying their registration for each tournament. But the goal always remains positive: "They are here to have fun, be active and get motivated for school!"

The club has received a prestigious invitation to participate in a Canadian Aboriginal tournament that will be taking place next July in Saskatoon: yet another perfect opportunity for Dave Vollant's team to shine!

