

Welcome to

Boys-town

Volleyball star adds city honor to impressive resume

By Paul Svoboda

The Intelligencer

You might say fate intervened on behalf of the Loyalist Lancers men's volleyball program.

When Todd Boys moved from Markham to Cloyne in his first year of high school, little did the Lancers know they'd soon be the main beneficiaries of this particular relocation.

A few years later, Boys, 22, became the linchpin of a powerhouse Lancer team and the main reason they've won two consecutive Ontario Colleges Athletic Association championships — three in the past four years.

Boys' contribution to Lancer volleyball has been recognized by the college (he's won back-to-back male athlete of the year honors), the OCAA (he's the association's 1996-97 male athlete of the year) and the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association who've named him All-Canadian three times and men's volleyball player of the year at the recent nationals in Alberta where Loyalist finished fourth.

Now, Boys can add a new trophy to his already crowded mantle — the Robinson-Kelleher Memorial Award (Unit 201 ANAF Veterans) as Belleville's athlete of the year for 1997.

Boys was an almost unanimous choice for the award in voting conducted recently by members of the Belleville sports media. In typically modest Boys fashion, the Recreation Leadership student says he wasn't even aware he was in the running.

"I'd heard of it," he says. "But I was pretty surprised to hear I'd won it."

"We're very pleased he's being recognized (by the city)," says Loyalist athletic director Greg Gavin. "He's done a lot for a small college like Loyalist. Without Todd we'd be competitive but we wouldn't have gone to any championships."

"He's certainly one of the premier volleyball players in the country," says Loyalist athletic officer Jim Buck. "We're fortunate to have him here. He's taken good teams and made them great."

"He really elevates his play at the championship level. That's what really separates him from the rest."

When he arrived at Cloyne and North Addington Education Centre, where for several years volleyball has ruled the sports program, Boys was a basketball and soccer player. But, with no options, he switched to volleyball.

"That was the only choice," he says. "But I loved it. And, it's

easy to love something when you're doing well at it."

Boys says the coordination he'd acquired from basketball and soccer helped him excel at volleyball where he quickly evolved into a versatile power hitter.

"I guess my height helped too," he says, referring to his lanky 6-foot-5 frame.

Boys also heaps credit on his former NAEC coach, Ron Pawlik, the coaching staff of the Ganaraska club team, provincial mentor Brenda Willis and, most recently, Loyalist coach Chris Carson, for his rapid development on the court.

By the time he was ready for college, Boys was a hot commodity. At Loyalist, where men's volleyball is the premier varsity sport, the word was out: Get Boys.

"Yes, we chased him," admits Gavin. "He could just as easily have gone to Durham (Oshawa). We've sort of ridden on his coat-tails. There's a lot of talent here but he's gotten us over the

hump."

Actually, Boys and five of his NAEC teammates decided to enrol at Loyalist, providing Gavin and head coach Chris Carson with the core of a championship squad. Boys says cohesion and teamwork are major components in the team's success.

"We'd been together for five years and were successful," he says. "We knew our roles in high school and we continued it here. I look at other teams and they don't get along as well as we do."

"We yell at each other once in a while, in practice, then we're friends again right after."

Boys and his teammates part company this year. What then? According to Gavin, the sky could be the limit.

"Todd has the skills to aspire to the national team," says Gavin. "Or, to even make an interesting living for himself playing pro beach volleyball."

"If he was a junior hockey player, he'd be destined for the pros."