

Ready, Set Grow



Following explosion of interest, Scorpions look to refocus

By Bill Doucet

Paul Langan recalls a parent of an opposing team once saying, "Who's the Hespeler Scorpions? Who's Paul Langan?"

Well, the Hespeler Scorpions, now Scorpions Volleyball Club, is one of the biggest organizations in Ontario, and Langan is the man at the helm trying to harness one of the fastest growing clubs around.

Started in 2010 to give his daughter Katie, a skilled high school player, a local, travel club team to play for with her friends, Langan has seen the Scorpions expand from one under-15 team to something beyond his wildest dreams.

"The group photo was pretty easy," Langan joked about the club's meager beginnings.

Even in their second year, Langan had three travel teams and 10 house league teams and said, "As long as we don't go fast, I think we can control it."

With 18 competitive teams for the upcoming indoor season - 13 girls teams and five boys teams - and registrants that should meet or exceed the 441 that signed up for developmental and house programs in the fall and winter of 2015, Langan feels he's now in position to halt the expansion of his club and start having players filter through the system.

"The house league is still why I started the club and that sometimes gets lost in the message," Langan said, noting he's bowed to people in the past demanding more travel teams, but now wants to get back to the original grassroots aim of the program.

That about-face happened in beach volleyball this summer,

where the club stopped offering an elite program. Players looking to play "hardcore", according to Langan, would have to hire a private coach.

"We're going to do more changes like that in both indoor and beach, just saying what the club is and what the club isn't. You can't be everything for everybody. That's just a cause of growth.

"Our whole thing is how do we control and manage the growth."

Part of doing that is fortifying the house league programs so those players can move onto competitive teams if they are skilled enough, and also finding a way to bridge the gap between house league and travel. He's done that by adding some select teams, which will give the house league players and coaches experience, without having to find a coach and players from the outside to field a travel squad.

Slowing the growth of the club, for now, has given Langan a chance to work on some other things for the Scorpions.

He said he is in the works of trying to get beach volleyball courts built at Shade's Mills Conservation Area next year, which will act as a legacy item and could be used long after he's gone. He also wants to talk to the city about not building the proposed third gym in the planned recreation multiplex, but instead take one of the decommissioned arenas and make it into volleyball courts.

He said it should cost about \$300,000, with the Scorpions willing to kick in a third of that price, and would be much like what RIM Park does with their rinks for the provincial championships.

Then and Now

At left is the entire competitive team from 2010. At right and below are the competitive Scorpions from 2015.



All this may sound far fetched, but remember Langan was the man who went from one competitive team to 18 in six years. And saw one of them finish second at the national championships in the spring.

"That's unbelievable," he said.
"The first year we were all happy to have uniforms that fit."
Now, his aspirations are higher.