



Covering the Court



The Official Volleyball Newsletter of the Arizona Region of U.S.A. Volleyball

Fall 2014

A Golden Summer for Arizona Open Teams at JNC's



Boy's 18 Open Gold Champions

Spiral 18 UA

L to R, Front to Back: Carson Flood, Ryne Benson, Saige Gonsalves, Jesus Izaguirre, John Hatch, Dillon Stanley: Assistant Coach Justin Hobson, Andi Li, Brian Campbell, Mark Olsen, William Andrew Jr., Jack Lawless, Zachary Melcher, Coach Brian Hosfeld.

Girl's 16 Open Gold Champions

AZ Storm 16

Thunder

L to R, Front to Back: Alyssa Chisholm, Justine Spann, Sterling Williamson, Kameryn Hill, Katherine Oleksak, Olivia Hallaran, Samantha Boever: Coach Terri Spann, Khalia Lannier, Hannah Combs, Lauren Stivrins, Willow Johnson, Team Rep Penina Snuka



AZR Embracing SafeSport – Coming to Clubs in 2015

If you have not heard the term SafeSport from the USOC, USAV or the Arizona Region you will soon.

SafeSport is a new program instituted by the United States Olympic Committee and passed on to all the National Governing Bodies of which USA Volleyball is one. This program is being designed to help eliminate abuse and misconduct from all sport. It should be safe and fun to participate in sport.

The SafeSport program in Arizona will start with leadership training. All those in leadership positions are encouraged to take the SafeSport Training on the USOC or USAV website. The training is 90 minutes in length and covers the six SafeSport topics of Bullying, Hazing, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Emotional Misconduct. All coaches will be required to take the training as part of their coaching education.

All clubs are required to identify a SafeSport contact within the club. This person will be the liaison between the Arizona Region SafeSport contact and the club players, coaches and volunteers. Travel policies and Elec-

tronic Communication/Social Media policies are to be developed and adhered to in club operations.

Parents and players will be asked to read over the Arizona Region SafeSport document and discuss the six topics of SafeSport. A Participant form is now required for the 2015 season to be signed and turned into the Region with the Concussion form as part of the membership process.

Parents are encouraged to take the training and get educated on SafeSport. If your club does not tell you about SafeSport, ASK them about their SafeSport policies.

Let's all Make The Commitment to Stop Abuse in Sport.



Region Champ Aspire ‘Opens’ Door to Better Competition

With the success that Sharon Vanis has had the past couple of years with her Aspire team, it was a natural progression that they would step up into tougher competition.

“The girls always tease me because when I first started coaching them this season I was hesitant about them being an ‘open’ team.” She says smiling. “I was new to them they were new to me and you just never know.” But a third place finish at Crossroads in the Open division and an undefeated Gold medal finish in the Open division at the Southern California Qualifier gave them some Open confidence.

“We win the region and finish the season with a 56-2 record; you cannot get much more special than that.” she says. “Of course they have asked me several times since if I think we are an ‘open’ team. Now of course, I would have to say YES. It’s a quality group of kids who work hard, do not question and the parent support has been tremendous. As a club coach, that reassures that what you are doing is a benefit to the young ladies.” Vanis says.

Of Aspire 14’s two losses, one was to the EVJ 14’s, the team they would play in the finals in the 14 Championship Regionals. “We were excited about the region tournament.” Vanis recalls. “Every time we played them it was a great battle so we were looking forward to it once again and once again it was a great match. Hats off to those girls, they are a quality group of kids.”

The success of Vanis’ teams can put the team going forward in jeopardy, something she knows and understands. “It would be awesome for this group of kids to stay together for a couple of year but all of us know that doesn’t always happen. We hope to keep them together but we respect the decision of parents to make different choices. As a former college coach and a current high school coach I am just happy to see kids playing. It’s amazing the number of teams the region puts together and even more amazing how well the teams do at a national level. If you love the sport you have to love what is happening.”

And Vanis does. With Open arms.

Competing VB Clubs – Stay Focused on the Positive

Temperatures are still in the 100+ category and the leaves aren't changing but, with schools starting again, all signs point toward the beginning of another volleyball season. The high school and collegiate indoor volleyball seasons have started and will soon give way to club volleyball season. And on the way to one of the many matches we will all attend, we will be subjected to the proliferation of political campaign signs – another clear indication fall is in the air. Is there a connection between those political signs and the upcoming club season? You bet – in both cases, players and parents will be asked to vote. A stretch? Hardly. Whether you are choosing a political candidate or a volleyball club, you are voting.

Curious? Consider how you feel when you are watching television and a political ad comes on. What is the ad telling you? Is it emphasizing the positive qualities of the candidate? Or is it one of those ads that is considered negative campaigning? You know the kind – filled with statements that may or may not be true and designed to ultimately make you question why you would consider the candidate. We see it all the time and most people are offended and/or disgusted. Most people would rather hear the qualifications of a candidate, what his/her vision is, and how the candidate proposes to fulfill the promises and expectations that have been advertised. Most of us would rather read and listen to campaigns that accentuate the positive and then let us make up our own mind.

Sound familiar? Isn't that what we should expect from volleyball clubs too? Did you know that every Club Director in the Arizona Region signs an agreement that clearly states they will not engage in negative campaigning? Our Region wants clubs to compete for players but we have all agreed that everyone associated with clubs must do that based on the merits of each club. We need to let each club share their vision, their qualifications and their plans to deliver their promises with potential players and parents and then let those players and parents decide what is best for each player.

If you happen to encounter a club director, a parent, or anyone who is saying things to plant the seed of doubt in your mind about a competing club, please help the Region stop that behavior. You can document the situation and report it to the Region Office or you can immediately walk away. It is important that all players and parents realize that such behavior is in direct violation of our Region policies.

The Arizona Region has many clubs with a variety of philosophies and a wide array of coaching styles. Players and parents have many opportunities to research clubs so they can ultimately sign on with the club that best suits their needs, budget and location. The important point is this – if a club representative has to talk behind the back of another club and say things that are designed to make you question some aspect of the competing club, do you really want to deal with a club with scruples like that? If representatives of a club will talk like that about other clubs, you have to wonder what they will say about players and parents behind their backs.

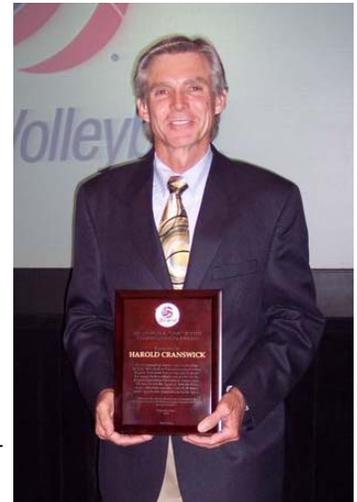
So, whether you are viewing those political ads or gathering data about a future volleyball club, just remember to emphasize the positive. It is the expressed purpose of the Arizona Region to provide a variety of positive opportunities in volleyball. It is the sincere hope that everyone involved – players, parents, coaches, club directors, officials and spectators – will hold each other to the highest standards and maintain the integrity of all aspects of the sport. If we allow negative campaigning to enter into the club volleyball season, everyone loses.

There is no place for negative campaigning in club volleyball in the Arizona Region. Please – focus on the positive and let each club's record speak for itself.

From the court,

Harold W. Cranswick

Commissioner, Arizona Region of USA Volleyball



Spiral 17 UA Golden at Regionals by Pat Mooney

Coach Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) from the movie *Hoosier's* said it best: *"Five players on the floor functioning as one single unit: team, team, team - no one more important than the other."*

In my 23 wonderful years of coaching I have tried to instill this concept in every TEAM I have had the opportunity to teach. I do not believe in MVP's & truly feel that volleyball is the ultimate TEAM sport.

You may have a great outside hitter who scores points at will but without a setter who can get her the ball in the right place at the right time, she's half as effective, and so on and so forth with each position.

As well as in my 23 years of coaching, this Spiral 17's group has embodied the TEAM concept better than most any TEAM I've ever had. Throughout the year, not one person has asked for more playing time, wondered why they haven't been set, or had the "pouty party" on the sideline. That's the reason for our success this year and that was the most incredible aspect of this TEAM; they played together, worked together, had fun together as a TEAM!!!

Some lowlights for us this year included finishing in the bottom half of the Vegas Tourney by way of a loss in the last match of the first pool in which if we win, we're first, if we lose we're fourth. Rebounding nicely and finishing undefeated the next 2 days was a positive point and gained us some momentum as we headed to Crossroads.....or so we thought. Again, a tough pool including Vision who finished 2nd, relegated us to the bottom half where we had some respectable wins, but still, we don't

like the bottom half!

The turning point in our season was the Spokane Qualifier. Having never been there before we had no idea what to expect, but we quickly realized we were legit after a first day 2nd place finish, and a top 6 overall place. More so than the 6th place finish, the 6 matches played versus 3 teams (played each twice) that respectively finished 2nd, 4th, & 5th were the matches against some of the toughest teams in the nation in which your abilities are truly tested. We even took a game from Synergy Force & had them at 10-10 before they decided to play the way they could, which was big, fast, & powerful!

Regionals day is always interesting. It's the only AZ region tourney all year where in the Open division you can have the 3rd seed playing against the 28th seed. Look out 3rd seed when you underestimate the lower ones! As the 5th overall seed, we started pool play with an always tough Shonto Starlings TEAM, seeded 17th to start, and had one of our toughest matches of the season. It was a back and forth match with us hitting our best and them digging like it was nothing. Finally in the 3rd game we started to find holes & squeaked out a very close win! My hat's off to them as they finished 1st in Silver and 7th overall.

As the day went on, matches were no less challenging as we played Aspire, Dinamo, & Revolution; 3 teams who any other days are the best in our region except for that day! We pulled together, played the best 2 matches of the year against Dinamo in the semi's & then Revolution in the finals. What a great day!

Junior Beach Sees Record Numbers on Summer Sand

The Arizona Region Junior Beach Program saw it's biggest year in history with 483 signed up members participating in the 23 tournaments this year.

Junior Beach Tournament Director Micah Briscoe and Assistant Director Logan Rae both appreciated not only the participation but the behavior of both athletes and parents throughout the summer.

"We had some nights with more than 70 teams and for the most part, Parents and athletes were very patient and appreciated that they had this avenue to play." Briscoe said.

On the players front, the 12's division saw Shauna Rath and Jaelyn Elgert took two firsts and two seconds to earn the points title for the 12's division. Payton Harmann won the 14's division points crown in a very crowded division all season.

Brooke Nuneviller finished an amazing season by winning the points totals in both the 16's AND the 18's divisions. Joining her on the boy's side was Matthew Liberator who won the 16's division with partner Brendon James and also won the 18's division with partner Jacob Vasecky.

Brianna Keller-Galley and partner Mia Rivera's two firsts were enough to win the Women's Open division while on the men's side, Micah Briscoe won the points crown.

Club Nights Offer Glimpse into Future Season and Beyond

The Arizona Region will once again this season offer our “Club Nights” for perspective athletes and parents to shop for a club that best fits their needs.

The first of the two Club Nights in the Valley will be held October 17th at Wells Fargo Arena, before the start of the ASU v. Washington match at 6:00 p.m. From 5:00 on, fifty clubs will be on hand to answer questions about time and financial commitments, club philosophies and chances to meet both coaches and Club directors and personnel. Most club will provide brochures to take with you to help make your decisions.

The other Club Night will be held on November 3rd at Grand Canyon University before their match

against Weber State University which begins at 6:00 p.m. Again, doors will open at 5:00 for this match as well.

Some of the questions to ask perspective Clubs and coaches might be:



Costs: not only start up fees and what is included in those, but monthly dues and if there is travel involved, what exactly your dues are paying for. Some clubs include their travel in their dues, some require the athlete and their family to provide the transportation to out of State tournaments.

Club Philosophy: Is this club just about winning? Are they a developmental club? What is their mission statement? What is their philosophy on playing time?

Team sizes: some clubs will only take 8-10 on a team which has some advantages but risks as well. Will the team be 12 girls, which if that is the case, will your daughter get a chance to play?

Level of Commitment: Can your daughter or son play other sports? What about other school clubs and time commitments they may have? Will those affect playing time at tournaments?

Practices: Where and when? Is conditioning involved or is that separate or even necessary?

Coaches: What is the level of the coaches that might coach your daughter or son? What are their qualifications and their philosophy?

You can't ask enough questions on these nights as these are your first chances to get the answers you need to make the best decision for you, your athlete and your family.

New Study Points to Added Benefits of Athletes in Workplace

A new study by Cornell University has cited the added benefits of former high school athletes in the workplace.

The obvious benefits of better physical conditioning and depending upon the sport, greater discipline for both team and solo sports have always been seen as a benefit to hiring ex high school and college athletes.

Kevin Kniffin and his associates have reported in their paper entitled, “Sports at Work: Anticipated and Persistent Correlates of Participation in High School Athletics” that people expect former student-athletes to display significantly more leadership, self-confidence, and self-respect than those who were active outside of sports, such as being in the band or on the yearbook staff.

In addition, the study used biodata to discover

that men who participated in varsity-level high school sports an average of 60 years earlier appeared to demonstrate higher levels of leadership and enjoyed higher-status careers. Surprisingly, these ex-athletes also exhibited more prosocial behavior than non-athletes and they more frequently volunteered time and donated to charity.

This coincides with a 2002 Oppenheimer Funds study found that 82% of women business executives played organized sports after elementary school, 20% more than the general population.



Ball Support Enjoys Backyard Nationals Feel by Shannon Bullock

USA Adult Open Nationals is an experience that all teams need to have at least once in their life.

This year was extra special for us because it was in our own backyard, Phoenix, AZ. Ball Support stayed downtown to take in the full experience. We were able to immerse ourselves into the environment as those do that are traveling from around the nation. We played hard, participated in the organized nightlife events sponsored by the PVL and created new memories and friendships that will last a life time.

For most teams it's the practice that gets you through those tough tournaments but for us since we don't have that opportunity or time, it's the team camaraderie, the shared love of the game intertwined with 8

women who look forward to hanging out together maybe one or two days a month to share a passion for a game we all grew up loving.

Although it wasn't our best showing and we faced loss and injury we still learned and came together stronger as a team in the end. We are looking forward to next season. See you soon Detroit!



Club One Enjoys Nationals Experience By Ryan Wrublik

Club One finished 1st at Arizona's Adult Regional Championships (Men's BB Division) in May and earned free entry into USA's Volleyball Open Nationals held in Phoenix Arizona this year. Club One's team was formed by 4 Club One coaches: Joaquin Santa Cruz (L), David Girts (MB), Ryan Wrublik (OH), and Kristoffer Maglunog (S). They picked up 4 other players to complete their team: Sam Cornell (RS), Mike Hawkins (MB), Casey Cutter (OH), and Jaron Jones (S/RS).

Day 1 was a social packed day as Club One reunited with old friends from across the country that they knew from their home towns or college ball. David Girts for instance had 3 of his buddies from college, who were in town for nationals, stay at his house for the weekend. Day 1 was also Memorial Day so most of Club One was fortunate enough to have their families and friends come watch them play for a change! Maybe it was just all the excitement and support

of fans but Club One came out ready to play! Led by an outstanding performance by Joaquin Santa Cruz, Club One finished 3-0 on the day! Day 2 was a marathon day for Club One, consisting of 4 matches against tough teams. Club One had several tough 3 set matches and finished 1-3 on the day. Despite the losses, everyone seemed to keep it together and still have a blast. Club One's 4-3 pool play finish put them in the Copper division. On the final day Club One was dragging a bit, exhausted from their 4 tough matches the previous day. However, they still managed to finish 2-1 on the day and take 2nd in the Copper Division.

All in all it was great experience for Club One consisting of a lot of good volleyball and socializing with both old and new friends between matches. Club One was very happy about its decision to play Nationals and satisfied with their performance. Club One is planning on attending Nationals again next year and can't wait for another great experience!



Official's Obsessions...by J.R. Salima

As the 2013-2014 season closes out, it proved to be one of achievement and accomplishment. Because of the hard work and dedication of our Division members, our Region continues to enjoy a respectful reputation throughout the volleyball community. For this, we express our deepest and heartfelt gratitude to all of our adult and junior referees. Everyone's willingness to provide the best officiating for our Region members testifies as to the high caliber of individuals we have in our ranks.



We now have the highest number of internationally and nationally ranked referees ever in our Division. This includes International Beach and Sitting referees, and 25 National and Junior National referees. Our total Division roster, as well as Regional rating advancements, are also on the rise. Our training and testing continues to rank among the best.

With the new season around the corner, we urge everyone to register early, and take the necessary steps to prepare, as there are a number of new changes in our leadership, policies and procedures. These changes will be presented at our Officials' Breakout during the General Assembly on September 21st. We wish you all the best this coming season and don't forget to have fun out there!!!

J. R. Salima

Officials Division Coordinator

A "Bad Ace" Experience by Jessica Elley

Nationals began for us after a wild Regionals season with Bad Aces. We had one ACL tear, and many weekends with an incomplete line ups due to busy coaching schedules. We became very used to our libero playing in the front row as we often only had 6 players. In the end we pulled out the victory and won Regionals.

Nationals this year was hosted in the Phoenix Convention center. For us, Nationals was much like our regional experience, a mess, but very fun! Each of the women on our team had played volleyball from a young club age through college, and it is our love of volleyball and the tough competition that keeps motivating us to play at nationals.

We started our first day of Nationals competition slow, but quickly fell into a rhythm and won our first match. Next, we played the #1 seed and eventual tournament champions in our second match. It was a close match, but they beat us in two sets. We lost a second match in three sets. It was a fun, close, rivalry game against another team with many Arizona players on it.

After these loses we were in the silver bracket, out of medal contention.

We won some games, lost some close games, but in the end had an amazing time competing at a high level again.

Nationals is like a big volleyball reunion. Players from our team played at different schools from all over the country. Many of us had friends and teammates come to AZ for nationals. We played against our former teammates, and former adversaries.

The players parties are one of the bonuses of nationals. Every night there was a different event, many put on by the PVL teams like Sizzle from the Arizona Region. So many different fun places to go all within walking distance from the different hotels to catch up with old friends and make new ones. The parties started early and ended late. This often made our morning games quite rough, but that is what made our Nationals experience great!

Playing at a high level, seeing old friends and making memories makes it all worth it!

Secretary's Report– Fee Increase and Other Changes

The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball is a 501c3 Non Profit with the IRS. The Board of Directors understands the cost to play club volleyball is high. Whenever new programming is produced, the cost to participate is always a big part of the discussion. Over the past 6 years while the Arizona economy was falling, our cost to do business was increasing. Fees we paid to USA Volleyball increased for increasing insurance premiums. Our rent and other costs to do business increased. With the economy down we used reserve funds to cover those increases so that we did not have to raise membership or tournament contract prices to participate. We can no longer afford to do that.

On September 1 registration for the 2015 season will begin. With the start of the new season, the Board of Directors has enacted a \$5 per membership fee increase for all membership types. A full membership will now be \$55, a chaperone membership will now be \$30, a one day membership will now be \$20 for an adult. The only memberships remaining the same are the Collegiate membership (this is for a player on an adult team that is in college. This membership type is not for coaches even if they are in college) and the Full Outdoor membership (this membership type is for outdoor play only – someone with an Outdoor membership can't be put on a roster and is not insured for indoor play). These membership fees are set by USA Volleyball and the Region cannot alter them.

One other change that affects the Junior Girls membership – the entire fee will now be paid online when the membership is created or renewed. We used to collect \$25 (half the fee) online and the remaining \$25 was collected from the club when a junior girl joined a club. This year the entire \$55 membership fee will be collected when the member joins the Region. This will give us the funds to pay the membership fees to USAV and allow us to pay our rent and expenses as we incur them.

Club Commitment Changes

Every year in the fall the recruitment and tryout processes begin for club volleyball. It can be a stressful time as the players figure out where they will play club for the season. The Arizona Region and USA Volleyball consider commitment to a club for the entire season. In this day and age, club contracts are a part of the process. This year some changes have been put in place to make sure that players find the club that is right for them AND for the clubs to be ensured players who committed to their teams will remain on their teams when the process is complete.

Open House Period: The 10 days prior to the tryout dates for the specific age groups is called the Open House Period. Parents and players are encouraged to visit different clubs and talk to the coaches and club directors. The clubs are allowed to host a maximum of 3 two hour sessions of Open House for each age group. This is so one club can't force a player to attend only their Open House sessions thereby limiting the players' ability to talk to other clubs. The players are allowed to attend as many club's Open House sessions as they wish to find the right club for them. From the Open House sessions a player and their parent would then decide which club they want to tryout and compete with for the season.

When the tryout session has taken place a club may then offer a player a place on their one of their teams. A club may not ask or allow a player to commit to their club before the tryout process – this is a recruiting violation. The club may not accept any money or signed documents holding a place for a player on their teams – this is a recruiting violation. If a parent of a player signs a club contract or pays any commitment fees to the club following a tryout session they are considered committed to the club for the season. A parent/player may not sign a contract with more than one club in the same season without first being released from the first club and meeting all the requirements for a release from the club. A second club is not allowed to even talk to a player that has signed a contract or paid commitment fees to another club unless the parent/player has a signed release from the club FIRST. A release from a club is not guaranteed. Do your homework PRIOR TO committing to the club.

New for this season is a consequence to the player/parent or the club if a parent of a player signs a contract with more than one club without first being released.

1. If a parent/player signs with two different clubs then both clubs will be investigated by the Ethics and Compliance Officer/Committee. If the parent/player is found to be culpable then the parent of the player will be required to pay the Arizona Region a fine equal to the non-committed club's release fees and the player will have to sit out the next tournament of the Arizona Region Sanctioned Tournament schedule in their division.

2. If the club is found culpable of coercing the parent/player to sign after knowing they were already committed to another club then the club will pay the Arizona Region a \$2000 fine.

3. If this is a repeat offense by either the club or the parent/player, the membership of the violator will be suspended for one season.

Club One Proves Golden at 14 Club Regionals

Club One's 14 Gold squad earned their team name with a simple recipe according to Coach Jim Can Wicklin:

"Our team was filled with talented girls who constantly wanted to get better." Van Wicklin says proudly. "They were never late to practice; they gave 100% always, and thrived off constructive criticism."

The second ingredient according to Coach Van Wicklin?

"The support from the team and parents was unbelievable. We are a family. The girls were always together. They cared about each and every member of the team and supported them throughout the entire year. The parents were the same way. They cheered on everyone's kids and fully supported the coaches and our decisions, which may have meant their girl sat out." And finally, "A balanced coaching staff with full support of our Club Directors."

This simple but often times elusive chemistry set helped the Club One 14 Gold to a gold medal in the 14 Club division at Regionals in May but it didn't come easy.

"From day one, I told the girls the most important thing I wanted to see was growth." Van Wicklin said. "The start of the season was tough. Our first tournament we went 1-2 and lost our opportunity to be in the Championship division. The girls were so disappointed. I looked at them and said, let's make improving all of our stats our goal. Let's focus on increasing these stats in each tournament moving forward and I promise winning will happen." That focus on improvement instead of winning helped the girls reach their golden goal.

"Showing the girls and the parents these stats was the highlight of the season for me. Winning was great, don't

get me wrong, but seeing this kind of improvement in such a short amount of time is what matter most.' He says.

Van Wicklin saw Regionals as a dramatic novel. "Our first match was amazing. Everyone played and we won. Then our fist challenging match came. In the first set, our big outside hitter hurt her ankle and was out. We immediately put ice on her and the girls began to panic. I immediately reminded them of how great they all are, and our DS rotated into the front row and immediately made a block. The team's excitement level increased and we went on to win in 2 sets. Then, in our 3rd match, our other outside hitter hurts her hand, and we have to make additional adjustments. Thankfully, these girls spend time in just about every position and when I changed the rotation and put people in new positions, it was nothing for them and we win match 3 in 2 sets also."

Van Wicklin's dramatic novel continued, "After a long break, plus a nice bye, everyone came back strong and ready to play, and boy did they. After two more tough matches, I witnessed one of my favorite experiences as a coach so far -- 12 girls jumping, screaming, hugging each other, crying, and parents going insane! I'll never forget one of the girls crying and saying, 'This is the first medal I have every gotten in volleyball.'"

Van Wicklin's future for the girls may be ambitious but goes to his faith in his team and his approach. "Their future? To the Olympics, maybe! These girls proved they have the ability to be on a top level team. I strongly believe they will be winning gold at many tournaments in the future."

AZ Region Continues Offering Coach, Parent Blogs

The Arizona Region continues to offer a coaching and a parent blog for our membership.

The coaching blog, "Arizona Sidelines" has recently featured exclusive interviews with U.S. Men's National Team Assistant Coach Andrea Becker and her views on the psychology side of sport and coaching.

The parent blog, titled "Court of Parent Opinion", talks about issues that face volleyball parents and recently included submissions on a series of what there is to do after your athlete is done with their playing days.

These blogs have replaced the Region's newsletters from years past.

We welcome your questions and ideas for the blogs. Please send them and any feedback you have to outreach@azregionvolleyball.org.



Yavapai Junior's Championship Journey— Mile by Mile

The Yavapai 15 National squad knew they would be on the road this season...a lot. A WHOLE lot!

Coach Shawna Ruiz said from the beginning these travelers were a special group. "They have an incredible passion for this game and each other and an amazing friendship off the court that translates to the connection they have built on the court. Their willingness to learn shines everyday whether it is in our gym training or traveling through state lines."

Based out of Prescott, the team had to travel every tournament including two hours down to every Region tournament as well. "This season we traveled to four National Qualifiers and had three top ten finishes which is great for our club." Ruiz says proudly. "On day three in Denver I remember the devastating loss we had in the first round. The team was stunned at the pressure we faced but motivated to be better the next time we were in that situation." Ruiz is sure this was the turning point in the season. "They came into practice more focused and driven to improve. As we continued to move up in the Region we started to face many great teams but they refused to take no for an answer. Continuing to impress me with their amount of energy and execution we managed to move up each tournament except one. We put ourselves in a great seed going into Regionals."



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"Regionals was a great morning, beautiful weather and energy all day." Ruiz recalls. "We began to relax a little after our first two matches and made our cross pool match a little tougher than it should have been." The team then travelled...to the adjoining court. "As the girls watched the first round of games my assistant Taylor (Stipe) and I found out that we would be playing White Tanks."

Earlier in the season, the Yavapai girls had played them but without success. "I knew they would be a tough team. They understood the importance of serve and serve receive going into the day and this next team was no exception. After dropping the first set by 11 the girl's spirits were mixed: some upset and some energized. After winning in the third set they had a different look in their eye. Very focused and driven."

The next round of Regionals saw the Yavapai Jrs. taking on the team that dropped them at last year's Regionals, Verrado. "They were also a tough opponent but we continued to stay focused on what our goal was for the day. Moving on to the championship was a great feeling. They were very excited, some remembering this moment from last year and some soaking it in for the first time." Ruiz says documenting the day.

After a long season on the road, a long season of play, a long day at Regionals, the coaches needed to keep the team motivated. "Taylor was great at motivating and inspiring the team all day but we both were wanting something fresh." Ruiz decided. "I wanted to channel the best of the best and where else would I go but the Olympics. The Olympic motto, Citius, Altius, Fortius, connected with them and carried us through that game." She says proudly.

"Whether we were ahead or behind, as an athlete your mental focus is essential. Faster, higher, stronger are all they were thinking about. Although they might have been fatigued or mentally drained they were only thinking of those three words. In each timeout I would remind them of these words and channel that into their playing. After the last point fell, it was so great to see their faces and reactions. It was the ultimate end to our season, and I feel very lucky to have these players on my roster."

Az. Storm 16 Thunder: A Golden Repeat

The Arizona Storm 16 Thunder came into the season as the defending USAV 15 Open National Champions but started the season with only one goal in mind; defend their title!

To their credit, they didn't rest on their lofty laurels. They won the Fiesta Festival again and the Disney Showcase going a perfect 9-0 and the Az. Region's 16 Open division at Regionals.

That done, they knew they had a huge target on their back. Head Coach Terri Spann said, "We knew more sweat and tears had to come out in order to have a chance at repeating as back to back Open National Champions."

Day one saw a bit of a scare as they lost the first set to Skyline RSB from North Texas, 20-25 but grinding out a 26-24, 15-12 win to advance to day two which turned out to be a mirror of day one. They won the first two but dropped the first set to a frisky K.C. Power team from Hawaii only to come back and prevail in three.

The final day saw them bounce the rest of the field, only losing one set the entire day and topping TAV for their second Open Gold Medal in two years.

Spann couldn't be prouder of her team and their efforts. "We were led by all 11 girls who were huge contributors to making this team successful!" Spann says. "Consistent play came from All-American outside hitters Khalia Lanier and Justine Spann who both dominated on the left during the whole season but also during Nationals week. Huge walls were put up in the middle by both Lauren Stivirins and Hannah Combs. Our new addition on the right side came from phenomenal lefty hitter Willow Johnson. Libero Kameryn Hill was very consistent with passing and defense and setter Katie Oleksak earned the title as Nationals 16 Open MVP."

The 2014 Az. Storm 16 Thunder is the first Arizona team to win a USAV Open Gold Championship let alone the first to repeat.

Congratulations to Coach Spann, her Assistant Jami Rolfes and the rest of the Storm 16 Thunder on a historic season!

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Notable Finishes for Arizona Teams at Nationals

Other notable finishes by Arizona girl's teams at Nationals included the EVJ 14 Mizuno who won 14 National division, silver medals for the EVJ 13 Mizuno (13 National) and Aspire 15 Rox (15 Open) teams.

Bronze medals went to Revolution 15 Premier in the 15 USA division and to the EVJ 15 Mizuno in the 15 National division.

The AZ Fear 18 White team won a bronze medal in the Boy's 18 Club division in Houston.

Congratulations to all those Arizona teams who participated in Nationals.

Parents: What Real Friends Need You to Hear

"A friend won't tell you what you want to hear but a real friend will tell you what you need to know."

Some months back, the Arizona Region sent out an informal survey to over 150 volleyball coaches, club directors, national team and beach players and USAV staff asking them the following question: "If you could educate parents on one thing to better our game going forward, what would it be?"

Amazingly, four answers came up continually. Some were lumped in with other answers but these four were the prominent answers in what came back. While this article will just gloss over some main points, please know the Az. Region is a resource for more information on all of these subjects.

Recruiting

The surveyed were adamant that Parents understand not only the process but the long odds of getting that elusive full ride D1 scholarship. So here are the facts:

There are 327 NCAA Division I women's volleyball programs. Up to 12 full ride scholarships are available per team. Division I women's volleyball is considered a "head count" sport, meaning that the scholarships must be awarded in full to one athlete or not at all.

There are 271 NCAA Division II volleyball programs. Up to 8 full ride scholarships are available per team. Division II women's volleyball is considered an "equivalency sport", meaning the scholarships can be broken down and distributed among the team per the coach's discretion.

There are 414 NCAA Division III programs. There are no athletic scholarships awarded at the Division III level. However, athletes can receive academic or need based scholarships.

There are 243 NAIA schools sponsoring women's volleyball. Up to 8 full ride scholarships are available per team. There are no division separations between NAIA schools. The NJCAA Junior College programs are broken down into Division's I, II and III. There are 97 Division I programs offering up to 14 full ride scholarships per team. Scholarships at the NJCAA Division I level can cover everything including tuition, fees, room, board and books.

There are 124 Division II programs. Like NJCAA Division I, up to 14 scholarships are available per team. Unlike NJCAA



Division I, scholarships at the NJCAA Division II level can cover only tuition, fees and books. Room and board are not covered under the scholarship.

At the Division III level there are 84 schools sponsoring women's volleyball. There are no athletic scholarships awarded at the NJCAA Division III level. However, athletes can receive academic or need based scholarships.

All of these programs offer scholarships but now the reality sets in. In most cases, schools aren't offering all 12 scholarships in one season unless they are a brand new program or for whatever reason, "cleaning house." On average, schools will look to give out 3 scholarships per season to keep continuity in the program and ensure they aren't loaded with just one class of athletes, for example graduating 11 seniors and having to bring in 11 freshmen the next season.

That said, the National Federation of State High Schools reported that volleyball is now the second most popular sport in girl's high school participation after basketball with nearly 430,000 participants. Assuming that a quarter of these are seniors, over 100,000 are in the scholarship pool. Now mix in grades, test scores, geography, level of play and when it's all said and done, the chance of a girl getting a D1 scholarship

hovers around 1% and any type of scholarship around 3%. Putting this into a little more perspective, your odds of winning a hand at blackjack in a Vegas casino are around 40-45%, winning in roulette is 35-40% and winning at craps around 40%.

Sadly, boys have an even harder time earning a scholarship. There are a total of 25 Division I programs, 10 Division II and 46 Division III programs that can offer just 4.5 scholarships total per season.

The idea that your son or daughter will get her college paid for by playing volleyball are remote indeed and so it's important for Parents to understand that high school and club volleyball are not just about the scholarship.

Central Florida University coach Todd Dagenais says so eloquently, "Your child's involvement in sports should be about determining what they love, what they're good at, what they can learn and how they can apply these lessons to real life. An athletic scholarship shouldn't be the goal; the goal should be all of the wonderful life lessons like achievement, defeat and teamwork that sports can teach us."

Overtraining and Specialization

More than 3,400 young athletes visit emergency rooms around the country....EVERY DAY! That staggering number led our surveyed members of the volleyball community to call Parent's attention to overtraining and specialization as another point of education.

Again, here are the facts. According to Dr. Neeru Jayanthi of Loyola University and a preeminent voice in the study of youth sports, he says emphatically, "Young athletes who were injured tended to have more intense specialized training in one sport. We should be cautious about intense specialization in one sport before and during adolescence. Parents should consider enrolling their children in multiple sports." In his study, Dr. Jayanthi presented that athletes in his study who specialized in one sport were 70%-93% more likely to be injured than children who played multiple sports.

Dr. John DiFiori, the president of the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine presented findings last year prefaced by this statement: "Ever-increasing requirements for success in competitive sports have created added pressure for young athletes to train with greater intensity at earlier ages. The goal to become the next Olympian or more commonly, to obtain a college scholarship, motivates many parents to encourage their children to specialize in one sport at a young age. This has resulted in an increased demand for year-round sport training programs, facilities and products. But is this approach really an effective way to generate long-term success in competitive athletics?"

Dr. DiFiori points out that a survey of 296 NCAA Division I male and female athletes with average age of 19 found that 88% of them had played an average of 2-3 sports as children and 70% of those did not specialize in one sport until after the age of 12.

DiFiori also warns external pressure on a child to train and compete in one sport at an early age may cause more harm than good. Social isolation, lack of independence, preferential treatment, abusive relationships, burnout and injury are some of the potential negative effects.

Another study by Ohio State University found that children who specialize early in a single sport led to higher rates of adult physical inactivity. Those who commit to one sport at an early age are often the first to quit and suffer a lifetime of consequences.

Specialization is defined by Dr. Jayanthi as an athlete that trains more than 75 percent of the time in one sport, trains to improve skill or misses time with friends, has quit



other sports to focus on one sport, considers one sport more important than other sports, regularly travels out of state and trains more than eight months a year, or competes more than six months.

Dr. Jayanthi asks parents to step back and ask themselves if their athlete is at risk of specialization and overtraining. He offers these guidelines:

- Do not spend more hours per week than your age playing sports, and do not spend more than twice as much time playing organized sports as you spend in gym and unorganized play.
- Do not specialize in one sport before late adolescence.
- Do not play sports competitively year round. Take a break from competition for one to three months each year (not necessarily consecutively). Take at least one day off per week from training in sports.

While Dr. DiFiori and Dr. Jayanthi are leaders in this field, they are hardly alone in the study of specialization and overtraining. For additional articles and research please contact Arizona Region Outreach.

Process over Outcome

The surveyed volleyball population in the Region's informal survey put this second in the most important point of education for parents. Translated, it's not about the winning but about the journey.

"The main reason kids fall away from youth sports is that the sport isn't fun to the child says Michael Bergeron, Executive Director of the National Youth Sports Health and Safety Institute. "We have to be aware of single sport specialization, overuse, overworking kids searching for the elite athletes; all of these things are causing kids to leave youth sport and not return."

Fun. It's why kids try and stay with a sport. You hear the phrase "free play" thrown around a lot by sports psychologists. What is "free play?" Take your toddler to a playground and sit back and watch them create games and challenges with the other kids on the playground. Put out a Monopoly board in front of a few young kids who have no idea how to play and soon they are engaged in some game that has nothing to do with Monopoly. That is "free play." No coaches, no structure, just fun.

A Boston College study from 2009 stated, "A new theory about early human adaptation suggests that use of 'free' self-organized play for children, teens and even among adults is a key element in the development of cooperative social skills.

Continued on page 14

Psychologists suggest that self-centered actions may, in part, be symptoms of a society that has replaced what used to be known as 'play' with more competitive activities that require a drive to win."

The author of the study, Psychologist Peter Gray adds, "Even when children are playing nominally competitive games, such as pickup baseball or card games, there is usually relatively little concern for winning," said Gray. "Striving to do well, as individuals or teams, and helping others do well, is all part of the fun. It is the presence of adult supervisors and observers that pushes play in a competitive direction--and if it gets pushed too far in that direction it is no longer truly play."

The will to win is palpable all through youth sports in America. Violence involving coaches, parents, officials and even the youth athlete's themselves litter the landscape of local and national news outlets every day. People have even been killed because of it. Officials are increasingly put at risk by out of control spectators that will berate them and at times, even go above and beyond rational behavior.

Type in youth sports cheating and google will come back in .37 seconds with 1,140,000 results, some so heinous it makes one wonder how far off the edge of reason we as a society have gone.

Again, some facts. First, in true athletic endeavors, there is almost always just one winner which means that there are many more losers. The nature of sports is to crown a champion but is there any less reason to be satisfied with doing the best, playing the best that an athlete can? When did this not become good enough for our society?

Another fact is sometimes athletes are bigger and stronger. Athletes develop at different rates and speeds. Some have certain areas where they excel and some where they struggle but nearly all have the capacity to improve those skills.

John Wooden is the most successful basketball coach in college history and some call him the greatest coach of all time. His players will tell you, he never talked about winning. This was a coach who won 7 national championships in a row. He didn't lie to recruits and told players up front what was expected of them. He was honest and sincere and his thought was the process would take care of everything. Bill Walton, after Coach Wooden had passed, said this about his college coach and mentor. "Coach Wooden



never talked about winning and losing, but rather about the effort to win. He rarely talked about basketball, but generally about life. He never talked about strategy, statistics or plays, but rather about people and character. Coach Wooden never tired of telling us that once you become a good person, then you have a chance of becoming a good basketball player."

Another fact of life is that sometimes, oftentimes, it just isn't fair. Some people cheat, officials make bad calls or miss calls, players make mistakes and there is randomness to every sporting event. In almost every instance, a David can beat a Goliath and it's why we are so transfixed with sports; underdogs and over achievers.

Letting Kid's Fail

The top answer from the population surveyed was surprising to say the least but nearly all put it at or near the top of the list.

AVP Pro and Olympic Gold Medalist Todd Rogers was adamant about what he sees now in the youth sports fabric. "Seems like most parents will find an excuse for their kid or make sure they never are put in a situation where they can fail. Sports are the perfect example." he says. "A good college outside hitter hits at a 250% ratio with a kill ratio of probably around 400-500%. That means they fail to kill the ball over 50% of the time. At the pro level in baseball most hitters fail over 70% of the time. Sports can teach this in a setting that doesn't actually hurt anyone. Not to mention people learn a lot more from when they lose than when they win or successful."

One of the mantras of the ASU volleyball program is "Struggle is good." Countless business leaders, coaches and generally those that we would consider "successful" can allude to the fact that at one time or another; they struggled- made mistakes and learned from them. However many psychologists point out that this generation has a parental safety net always there to run interference. In a 2012 study done by Queensland University in Australia, the study reports, "These parents are highly responsive to the perceived needs and issues of their children, and don't give their children the chance to solve their own problems. These parents 'rush to school at the whim of a phone call from their child to deliver items such as forgotten lunches, forgotten assignments, forgotten uniforms' and 'demand better grades on the final semester reports or threaten withdrawal from school.'"

Remember how you learned not to touch the orange part of the stove? Yea, it burns! Why isn't this generation allowed the same learning opportunities?



What We Offer Our Membership:

- ◆ Junior Olympic Girl's Volleyball
- ◆ Junior Olympic Boy's Volleyball
- ◆ Men's Adult Volleyball
- ◆ Women's Adult Volleyball
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"Obviously, you step in when there's a safety threat," says retired teacher Barbara Bushey, a 37-year classroom veteran-turned parenting coach based in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. "But when faced with a possible failure in a school or extracurricular setting, ask yourself: "Is this going to result in their learning resilience? Learning how to stand up for themselves or problem-solve? Then yes, that's a good time to stand back and let them fail," says Bushey. "Or not fail. Let them find out if they can do something by themselves."

Have you ever talked to a coach or club director about your son or daughter's playing time, role on the team or future with the club? If you have you are certainly not alone. Most coaches would argue that letting your own kids speak up for themselves is not only a better way to handle situations listed above but can also be a look into the crystal ball of how those kids will be if they do warrant a scholarship opportunity. One Valley coach will watch a recruit at a tournament and if Mom or Dad

brings down a water bottle to that recruit who could have easily gotten it him or herself, he scratches them off their list.

Volleyball coaches: high school, club and college, look for athletes that are competitive, hardworking, of high character, are able to overcome adversity, learn from their mistakes and are

resilient. If Mom and Dad are always stepping in to put a mattress under every potential fall, how are athletes expected to learn how to overcome mistakes and adversity, to be resilient?

There is much information on all of these subjects and we hope you take this information in the spirit in which it was intended. We are not advocating how to parent your athletes but rather what our volleyball community saw as point of education for Parents to further grow our game. For more information on any of these subjects, please contact outreach@azregionvolleyball.org

It's O.K. to Make a Mistake



**The Arizona Region
of USA Volleyball**

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**Arizona Region
Mission Statement**

“The mission of the Region (formerly known as Cactus Region which originated in 1989) is to promote, govern, oversee, plan and coordinate amateur indoor and outdoor volleyball in the Arizona Region, in order to provide a variety of opportunities for all interested parties to participate in a safe, positive and appropriately competitive environment.”

