



# Covering the Court



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

Fall 2015

## Arizonan's Impacting the Beach: Internationally, Professionally

As the summer winds down, so does the beach season but if you haven't been paying attention, some of Arizona's finest sand players have started to make names for themselves and are representing Arizona and the U.S. on a professional and international scale.

In May, the AVCA hosted the Women's Collegiate Sand Pairs Championships where schools that qualified sent their best teams to compete. The final four saw quite an Arizona feel. Loyola Marymount's Arizona duo of Betsi Metter and Sarah Sponcil upended the Grand Canyon University squad of Shannon Dugan and McKenzie Phelps while the U of A's Madi Kingdon and her partner lost to the USC team that would defeat Metter and Sponcil in the final. All in all, five of the eight athletes in the final four had Arizona ties.

Sponcil, now a sophomore at LMU, admits losing in the final was tough but looks back on the opportunity with fondness. "It sure was one of the greatest seasons I've had playing beach volleyball. I was lucky enough to pair up with Betsi at the beginning of the season and we had done very well considering we were both defensive players. I think we had only lost about 3 matches mostly to USC who was our greatest rival throughout the course of the season."

"I remember right before we headed into our last two weeks we sat down and really talked about how great this opportunity was, we both knew we were physical



enough to get the job done but we both knew we had to be on the same page. I think we were very prepared going into the National Championships because I had Betsi's back and I knew that she had mine. We did so well because of the TRUST that we had built with each other throughout the season. I love talking about it and will never forget this

past season with Betsi, I couldn't have asked for a better partner, and wouldn't have wanted the fight to end alongside anyone else!"

Betsi followed up her triumphant senior sand season at LMU and after gaining a sponsorship, decided to try her hand full time on the AVP beach Volleyball tour. In between, she tried out for the Pan American Games held in Toronto in July. Betsi was selected to play and the player chosen to play with her wound up being her current sand partner, Kelley Larsen from Pepperdine. They won their first three matches against El Salvador, Guatemala and Columbia before losing their only match of the Games to Argentina, the team that would go on to win the gold medal. They followed up with wins against Uruguay and Colombia to take 5th overall, the highest finishing American team in the Pan Am Games.



"They treated it like it was the Olympics, it was really cool. There was an athlete's village and the dining halls and the beach volleyball facilities seated 5000 people and it was sold out almost every match." She says somewhat embarrassed, "Before we were introduced, you would wave to a random person in the crowd and they would freak out. It made you feel like you were really special."

After the Pan Am Games, Betsi and Kelley took a 9th in the Seattle AVP stop, then a 7th in Manhattan Beach and followed that up with a 5th place finish in Chicago. "It's nice to keep getting better." Betsi says smiling. The duo have just a couple more AVP events left in the season and will then take a shot at a NORCECA qualifier that with a good finish, could help them gain important access to more international tournaments going forward.

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# From the Commish... Moving Beyond Managing

As members of USA Volleyball, you are, no doubt, receiving notices regarding news related to the upcoming Olympic volleyball events. The culmination of each quad is an exciting time not only for the Olympic athletes but also for the USA Volleyball Regions and all of the members involved in Region activities. Such is the case with the Arizona Region as well.

At the Annual Retreat, participants were asked to reflect on both the good and not-so-good aspects of last season, to give some thought regarding operational issues, and to consider what the Arizona Region will offer in the future. In addition, each of the participants was asked to present his/her top 3 goals for the upcoming season. It is often difficult to move beyond the point of “managing” a Region and, instead, learn to “lead” the Region into the future. You are encouraged to read the articles written by each of the members of the Board so you can appreciate the leadership in each Division.

Over the course of our brief history, the Arizona Region has consistently experienced an increase in the number of members, teams and clubs. However, with this steady increase, the Region has had to deal with more than a few “good” problems. Obviously, increased numbers have created an even greater demand for coaches and courts. What is not so obvious is the fact that there is also an increased demand for officials and for facilities to host tournaments.

It is exciting to see more and more junior girls and boys participating and those increased numbers means the Region needs more officials to work every tournament. Despite the fact that the Region now has more officials (and more Nationally ranked officials) than any time in our history, it turns out we still need more. Interested parties are always encouraged to consider joining the ranks of Arizona Region Officials.

Likewise, the number of teams in the Region continues to grow and while that is a testimony to the Region’s Mission, it also presents a tremendous challenge to the Region’s Tournament Scheduler. On more than a few tournament days, the Scheduler had the task of locating and assigning as many as 44 courts. But it is more than just finding courts. Other considerations include the fact that multiple divisions might play on the same day, the number of courts available at each site and which teams are playing at each site. The net result is that scheduling is a weekly puzzle that must be solved.

And yet, as intriguing and sometimes frustrating as scheduling can be, that is not the most important topic. More important is the question that was posed at the Retreat that is a regular part of what the Region leadership must contemplate. The group was asked what they expected the Region to look like 5 or 10 years into the future if the growth trend were to continue. The idea presented the participants with many more questions than answers.

If growth figures stay somewhat consistent, the membership will be so large that they will require the leadership to consider how to deal with a number of questions including, but not limited to, the following:

With the limited number of available facilities, should the Region consider playing some events on Sunday in order to get better pricing from facilities by using the same facility for both Saturday and Sunday?

Should the Region consider creating another Division to break up the need for so many facilities and officials on the same day?

What is the best way to provide opportunities for the increasing numbers of sand players in the West Valley as well as the East Valley, Tucson and rural areas?

Should the Region consider hosting Regionals for all Divisions on one or two weekends under the same roof and how much would it cost to do so?

What does the Region need to do to collect the large amounts of unused water and food from tournaments and give it to community organizations?

What can the Region do to mobilize both players and parents for help in creating and supporting volleyball for young men in high schools and community colleges?



What can the Region and clubs do to help junior players transition to playing in the adult division?

What does the Region need to do to connect with people and organizations to sponsor or help sponsor various Region efforts like HP and Sizzle?

What can the Region do to increase its visibility in the community?

Some of the discussions about the future have produced some exciting ideas with a great deal of support while others have made some people uncomfortable. Growth often does that. Nevertheless, that is what the leadership of the Arizona Region must address. Both operational issues and future issues need to be considered for the Region to remain true to its Vision and Mission statements.

As always – those of us in leadership positions are very grateful for the support and participation of our Region members. The Region looks forward to hearing from you with respect to any of the topics mentioned above. Whether you contact us with questions, comments or suggestions, we encourage you to contact one or more of us.

From the court,

*Harold W. Cranswick*

Commissioner, Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

## SafeSport Offering Online Courses and Program Assistance for All

**Beginning with the 2015-16 season, all coaches, officials and Club personnel must be SafeSport certified before they can begin working with athletes and will not be put on a roster until the course is completed.**

Building and implementing a plan to create safe conditions for club can seem like an overwhelming task. To assist you, USA volleyball has compiled practices and direction drawn from sport organizations and leading experts. With so many factors involved in creating an effective plan, these tips provide basic information and guidelines that can save your club time as it formulates a strategy.

Here are the links available to you if you go to the following website:

[www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org) and click HOME > TOOLKIT > FOR CLUBS > GET TIPS

You will see the following helpful articles: Build Your Plan, Communicate Your Plan, Monitor Your Plan, Get Tips, Take the Training.

Speaking of taking the training, there is now some parent education for SafeSport. Coaches and

directors have a 90 minute online course to train them to provide a SafeSport environment. Now parents can tap into a 60 minute online course for their training. Here is the following link:

<https://training.teamusa.org/store/bag?orderId=241239>

I hope as the new club year is upon us that you feel that you have adequate information to get starting building a safe environment for you athletes, parents and coaches.

*Cindy Kirk*



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# AZ Region Championships Overview 2014-15

## 14's Championship Division—AZ EVJ 14N1

The AZ East Valley Juniors 14N1's won the 14's Championship division, topping AZ Storm 14s and coach Danielle Davis saw this team grow all season. "The team is made up of 10 girls that truly love each other," Davis says of her girls. "Their relationships are more than volleyball. This is also a team where every player contributes and plays a vital role in our success."

She notes that the team developed an incredible work ethic throughout the season. "They come to practice focused and ready to give 100%. Their dedication paid off in Colorado, where they got 2nd in the USA division and earned a bid to Nationals. They also battled weekend after weekend in regional tournaments."

"This team had been a little slow to get going in some of our matches." Davis says smiling, "however, once we found our rhythm we were hard to beat. We definitely struggled mentally against our rivals throughout the season, which cost us a few matches."

But with the biggest match of the season, the team did what it had to do. "These girls are incredible athletes and have become students of the game. They proved to themselves in Regionals that they are not only physically tough but mentally tough as well. When they work together, and take care of their role on the court they compete at the highest level."

## 12's Division - AZ Sky 12 Gold Synergy

A fifth place finish at GJNC in New Orleans was the icing on the cake for coach Darci Tilghman and her AZ Sky 12 Gold Synergy team. They won the Holiday Classic, Cactus Classic, Festival Fiesta and SoCal American tournament and capped the regular season by a golden finish in the AZ Region's 12's Championship.

"We had an amazing season. We went 53-4." Tilghman says proudly. "The only struggle we had was at the AZ Qualifier. We played for a guaranteed bid and lost in the 3rd set by 2 points. It was devastating to the girls. They had never lost to that team before and it meant so much to them. We had another opportunity for the 3rd bid available later that day but we had a tough start in the 3rd set that we just were not able to battle back from and we ended up placing 4th at the AZ Qualifier. It was devastating to us not earning a bid in AZ but we went to SoCal determined to win there."

"There are many things special about this team." Coach Tilghman lauds. "We are not the biggest 12's team in the region and not the most athletic but we are very mentally strong and we fight for every point." She adds, "The girls never give up. In SoCal we came back from being behind 8-13 in the 3rd set to win the match 15-13 to put us into the gold bracket on the final day." She adds, and not randomly, "We also have a great group of parents."

## 14 Club Division- AZ Sky 13 Gold VB Rage

Long time Region coach Ed Martell saw this team start from scratch. "This team is special because they were not recruited or 'put together' by parents. These girls were developed at practice and they improved as the season went on."

"We started the season not knowing what to expect from our players and how to match them up correctly on the court." Martell explains. "The focus of this season was to transition this group- from the slower game of 12s to the faster pace of 14 and older. From the beginning of the season to the end, my girls were tested on different positions until we were able to recognize their best skills and by the end, we were able to outlast all others and came out on top."

The season wasn't without its struggles though. Martell says, "The Arizona NQ was difficult for our team and helped me recognize additional areas in need of improvement. We beat a very fast, aggressive and good team and lost to a really weak and slow one. Emotions and friends with the opponents were a big part of it. We played hard when they didn't know the other girls and played soft when friends or ex-teammates were on the other side of the net." Martell explains, "The results of that tournament didn't reflect our true game. However, later that month we competed at the Reno NQ and beat the #2, #7 & #11<sup>th</sup> overall 13s teams of California."

"With all the lessons learned this season, we hope to compete well in Nationals." Martell summed up before his team's finish in New Orleans. "We'll use every practice and tournament as experiences for on these young ladies lives and volleyball careers."

## 16 Championship Division- EVJ 15N2

Coach Jeff Bader described his team like this:

“They all like each other and they put team in front of self. They had the ability to move onto the next point no matter what the circumstances” He cites, “For example in the finals they were down 4-16 and won 25-23.”

“In the second seeding tournament we lost all three matches and did not play well. But it was a spring board to our team coming together.” After their win at Regionals, the team headed to New Orleans and to Nationals. But Bader was gracious with his girls. “I love this team. They are great kids with supportive parents and no drama.”

### 16 Open Division - Aspire 16 Rox

This is coach Sharon Vanis’ third year with the Aspire 16 Rox team and she says, “Each year they get a little better and each year I find them more amazing. This year they started off with a first place finish at Colorado Crossroads, went 7-1 in Indy and won the So-Cal qualifier. We had a bad weekend in regional play before we went to So-Cal so to see them bounce back and win that qualifier was amazing, but expected from this group.”

An injury right before Indianapolis set the team back a bit. “Several players stepped up to fill the gap. As I mentioned before we had a rough weekend in region play but I think it might have been the wake-up call we needed.” Vanis remembers.

“I always hope this team will stay together.” She says admiringly. “Our goal is a national championship in the open division. We fell one place short last year but I know kids have different goals for themselves and their reasons for playing club so some may part ways. This is by far one of the best teams I have had the great opportunity to coach. Several of these girls will play at the Division I level; what more could I ask for?”

### 17 Open Division- AZ Storm 17 Thunder

“This group of girls have played together for a long time so we are all very close,” says coach Terri Spann

about her defending two time GJNC Open Gold Medalists. The

team finished second at Nationals this season but it barely put a damper on the success this team has had the last few years in the Region and beyond.

“We started our first regional tournament a little rough but pulled it together after that. We placed second in Las Vegas, first in 17 Open at the Colorado Crossroads, first in the SoCal Qualifier and first in the Triple Crown tournament.”

“Along the way, we lost to the team we beat in 2014 Nationals in Las Vegas.” Spann recalls. “That was a very hard pill to swallow but that also motivated us from that point on.”

With two golds and a silver medal at Jr Nationals, only one year awaits. And Spann sees the team not letting down. “We have tons of goals and look forward to meeting them.”

### Arizona Region Jr. Beach

The Arizona Region’s 13th season of Junior Beach held at Victory Lanes saw an expansion to three nights to handle the over 500 participants this season.

The Division winners by points are as follows:

- Emma Harmeyer and Alexia Scott won the girl’s 12’s division.
- Shauna Rath won the girl’s 14’s division
- Brooke Nuneviller captured both the girl’s 16’s AND girl’s 18s division point titles.
- Logan Miller won the boy’s 16’s points crown.
- Jakob Chavez won the boy’s 18’s championship.
- Steve Solis won the men’s open points title.
- Kat Schultz won the women’s open points crown.

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# Arizona High Performance Represented Indoor and on Beach

2015 proved to be an outstanding year for the AZHP. The juniors were a force at the High Performance Championship in Des Moines, Iowa and Hermosa Beach, California. Our athletes showed that they could compete not only against other regions, but with the USA teams as well. Arizona volleyball players are earning respect through the country.

## AZHP Indoor Final Results

- The Boys International Youth team finish 1<sup>st</sup> in the Silver Division and Fifth overall
- The Girls Youth International finished 10<sup>th</sup> overall
- Girls Regional Select finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall.

## AZHP Beach Final Results

- Girls U15 Nelson / Spellman - Tied for 5th Silver Division
- Boys U17 Davis / James - 1st in 4th Division (Gold Medal)
- Girls U17 Agnew / McDonald - Tied for 5th in 4th Division; Rockas / Gordon - Tied for 9th in 4th Division; Draper / Benson - Tied for 9th in 4th Division
- Boys U19 Marsh / Varney - 3rd in 4th division (Bronze Medal)
- Girls U19 Martin / Scheel - Tied for 7th in Silver Division; Braun / Woodard - 4th in Bronze; Lacour / Murphy - Tied for 7th in 6th Division

The feedback we got was very positive.;

“My experience with the AZHP program was fantastic. The competition was great and I got the opportunity to learn so many new skills in volleyball. Both my mindset and my skills have improved in just two weeks of training. I can't wait to see what the future hold for the AZHP program. Thank you so much for a wonderful experience!” — Tiana Weeks

“My team was my family away from home and I have great memories that will be with me for a lifetime. My best memory will be of the game that we had to beat an undefeated team in 3 sets to advance to a crossover for

the chance to be in the Gold division. We just lost a tough 5 set match to a USA team the night before and had to play in the morning against a team that beat the USA team in 4 sets. Our team played together and swept the Badger team 25-15, 25-15, 25-20. We had a short break and had to beat another undefeated team. We played aggressive with the help of our Coaches and won a hard fought 5 sets. I enjoyed my experiences and want to thank my Coaches, teammates, Chaperones, Parents, Ron and the Arizona Region for their support. It was awesome!” —Kamaile Hiapo

“My experience with the AZ High Performance family was very exciting and one I won't forget. With the short time we had together, we really focused and trained hard. I made some really cool friends and had a great time playing against some of the best players in the USA and even some from other countries. I loved representing the Arizona Region!” —Sierra Dominquez

“This was my favorite moment of the whole tournament yet most difficult. As a mom, It was so hard to watch my child struggle on the court knowing how bad she wanted to win this game. I cannot

thank Megan (Taylor) enough for taking the time during the game to sit and talk to her. I am thankful for Megan yelling at her, complimenting her, believing in her, and pushing her to be a better player. I appreciate the balance, knowledge, discipline and leadership Megan brought to the team. She learned so much the past two weeks from all the coaches and I am forever grateful.” —Jennifer Chavez

I would like to thank the coaches, athletes, parents, chaperones and the Arizona Region for your support and hard work.

*Ron Pelham*

Director of High Performance



**USA Volleyball**  
Junior High Performance

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

Our Officials' Division has been extremely busy this summer and we appreciate your hard work and dedication. Because of your efforts, our Region's reputation continues to grow throughout the country. The Officials' Division Action Committee (ODAC) has been equally busy in forming policies that will greatly benefit our officials. Thanks to everyone for your valuable contribution. Here's the latest:



## **Advancements**

Congratulations to Gary Gray and Jet Villavicencio for achieving their Junior National rating certifications. We are equally proud of Ryan Feickert, Alyssa Tate and Jet Villavicencio in becoming our newest National Scorers!

## **Special Olympics World Games**

Congratulations to our four AZ Region officials that were selected to officiate the 2015 Special Olympics World Games, which were held in Los Angeles, July 26th-August 2nd. Our heartfelt thanks Alyssa Tate, Gigi Brenay, Milka Steiner and Deanna Mankins for representing our Region at this international event.

## **There's Been A Marriage!**

We are so happy to announce the official union of Webpoint and USAV Academy. This was formally announced at the a National Officials Commission back in May in Detroit,, but it is now a reality. You will now be able to have a one-click transition from Webpoint to USAVA and complete your CourseMill online training curriculum and test. They even created four (4) USAVA access links in Webpoint to help make it easier.

## **Expanded Advancement Policy and Flowchart**

In an effort to streamline and clarify our advancement policy, our ODAC has made some minor changes to the process. These changes can be found in our newly revised Officials' Division Handbook, available September 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Non-Compliant Uniforms at AZ Region Tournaments**

For years, we as officials have wrestled with uniform issues at AZ Region scheduled tournaments. These issues have often caused disruption of play and conflict at many sites. Lead Officials are often left to make these difficult decisions. Starting with 2015-16 season, a new non-compliant uniform policy will be implemented - #1) This variance authorization applies exclusively to NON-TRAVELING teams, playing in AZ Region Schedule tournaments only, #2) All Open or traveling teams are NOT eligible for this variance, #3) This applies only to solid-colored jerseys only, #4) Variances will not be given for uniforms or numbers that are NOT CONTRASTING in color. More info will be forthcoming on this.

## **Junior Training Clinician Compensation Policy**

We have a new compensation policy for officials who teach at Junior Training Clinics. The rate of pay for Head Clinicians and regular clinicians can be found in our Handbook after September 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **AZ Region Championship Incentive Bonus**

In past years, we have experienced a shortage of officials during the three weeks of the Girls' Region Championships. To prevent this from happening in the 2015-16 season, we have an incentive bonus for officials who make themselves available for assignment during these critical weekends. If you work the first 2 Championships (both waves), \$50 will be awarded and if an official works all three Championships, the bonus will be \$100 (non-accumulative). Only officials who work the first 2 Regionals are eligible for the \$100 bonus, once they work the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional. The early 18's Regionals does not apply.

## **Active Coaches Who Are Certified Officials Get Match Pay**

Many 14U coaches who are certified officials are often called upon to ref matches during their tournament day. Since these coaches are required to complete stringent live, online and practical training (including online testing), a new policy regarding match pay for their officiating has been approved. So, when a 14U coach/official gets assigned to call a match, he gets match pay like a regular official.

*J. R. Salima*

Officials Division Coordinator

# 'Hi-Liter's' Motor City Rear View by Chris Lishko

Adult Nationals (USAVs) is an opportunity for many volleyball players to get together for 4-5 days and experience the sport they love. It is an opportunity to make new friends, and to see old friends alike from past playing days in college and beyond. USAVs provides the ability for parents, coaches, professionals, refs, fans of the game, etc. to re-live old glory days, experience what their sons and daughters get to do at their own tournaments, and most importantly, have fun with others wanting to be exposed to the same things.

Hi-Liter won the Arizona Region this year in the Men's AA division. The team itself was able to overcome ups and downs throughout the season and come out on top at the Regional tournament. That team had members playing for the Arizona Sizzle PVL team and others who were not able to travel to Detroit to play at USAVs. As a result, a team with the same name (with no original players on the roster) was assembled with guys from AZ Region teams 'Merica and Island Time, as well as two players who flew in from California. We expected to compete well in the Men's A Division, and it provided us an opportunity to utilize the least amount of vacation days from our respective jobs.

We competed well the first day, going 2-1, and losing a close match by 2 in a game 3 that went well beyond 15 points. The second day we began at 8 am and finished pool play at 4-1, including being down 8-14 in a game 3 and managed to come back and win 17-15, never giving up even when it seemed all hope was lost. We then had 2 gold challenge matches we needed to win in order

to make it to gold the last day. Our last two matches were challenging, but we were able to win both and finish up by 10 pm, which made for a very long day. At this point we had only played 2 games once and the rest of the matches had all gone 3.

Day 3 began at 8 am with us losing in 3 for our first match, and dropping down to the loser's side of the bracket. We were then able to win 4 straight matches, all going 3, except 1, to make it back to the gold final. At this point we had played 5 matches and were beat. It's not easy only playing a few tournaments a season and then be able to play more than 30-35 games in 3 days, but we were able to push ourselves. Ultimately we lost in 2 in the finals in front of a good size crowd that was cheering on the east coast team. We had 3 guys receive all-tournament team, when in reality it should have been a few more. We were very proud of how far we got with only 8 guys, and it just shows how successful a group of volleyball players or team can be when everyone pushes themselves and their teammates hard. The sky is the limit and everyone is looking forward to Orlando next summer.

## AZ Region Continues Offering Coaching, Parent Education, Blogs

The Arizona Region continues to offer coaching and parent education and specific blogs for both.

The coaching blog, Arizona Sidelines has recently featured the story of a popular Arizona coach who is rebuilding a college program in the wake of a town rebuilding.

The parent blog, titled Court of Parent Opinion, talks about issues that face volleyball parents and recently included submissions on a special Mom who passed away but left a lasting legacy in both her children and our game.

In addition, the Region also offers exclusive audio seminars with subjects such as concussions, recruiting and interviews with Karch Kiraly and Marv Dunphy. You can find them under the Multimedia link on the Region website.

We welcome your questions and ideas going forward. Please send them and any feedback you have to [outreach@azregionvolleyball.org](mailto:outreach@azregionvolleyball.org).



# 'Get Some' Enjoys Detroit, Adult Nationals By Darlene Danehy

For the 2015 edition of the USAV Open National Championships, Get Some! and hundreds of other teams traveled to Detroit, Michigan. It was the first visit to Detroit for all of us, and we found that there was a lot to dis-



cover! On our first night, we attended the USA Men's volleyball game versus Mexico, and also cheered on the US the next night against Cuba. It was great to have the opportunity to watch some world-class volleyball and cheer on our national team with hundreds of other volleyball players, coaches, and fans from around the country. Some members of our team also took in a Detroit Tigers game, getting the chance to see and experience the beautiful Comerica Park. Our team also enjoyed the river walk (with a great view of Canada), traveled on the people mover around downtown, and spent some time in Mexicantown, Greektown, and taking in the downtown Detroit scene.

On day one of our tournament, our games were live streamed from Court 1, so we had many fans watching back home in addition to those who were in Detroit. Unfortunately, we got off to a bit of a rocky start, losing both matches that day. We regrouped on day two, just missing out on a chance to challenge for the gold bracket. We won two matches late at night to secure our place in the bronze bracket, and carried that momentum into the final day of the tournament. We won three straight matches on Sunday afternoon, including a convincing 25-20, 25-15 win over Thunder Chickens (New England region) in the championship match. So although we weren't able to challenge for the overall championship as we had hoped, we finished strong, won the bronze bracket, and came home with some more hardware to add to our collection.

While traveling to nationals and competing against teams from around the county is always fun, it's also nice

to be able to cheer on our fellow Arizona Region teams, and to have their support as well. We'd like to thank Danger Zone, Ball Support, and #superawesome for their support, and give special thanks to Cody Montagno (of Danger Zone) for taking tons of action shots of us and all of the Arizona teams who competed during the first session. We really enjoyed the 2015 tournament in Detroit, and are looking forward to representing Arizona in Orlando next year!

## Kessel to Lead AZ Region's Education Weekend December 12-13

The Arizona Region will host its biennial Education weekend December 12-13 at a site in the metro Phoenix area.

USA Volleyball Director of Sport Development John Kessel will lead the program for CAP I, CAP II and for the first time in Arizona, Beach CAP (BCAP).

Joining Kessel will be collegiate men's and women's coach and published author Sue Gozansky.

The BCAP program will feature AVP pro player Tyra Turner. This is a great opportunity for High School beach coaches, new Beach Club directors and collegiate sand coaches to get specific information on the emerging sport of beach volleyball.

The Arizona Region is offering a \$50 discount to any and all Arizona coaches from all level teams. This discount is applied directly to your registration.

To register, go to the Region website and click on the link on the front page on Education Weekend.



# Sizzle Dazzles, Earns First Program Medal in Motor City

The Arizona Region's Professional Sizzle program showed it has come a long way in just 3 short years as it was the only region to finish top four in both the men and women division of the PVL and also earning it's first medal.

The Premier Volleyball League Championships was held at The Open Nationals in Detroit in late May. The Arizona Sizzle women brought home the bronze and the first medal in the Sizzle's history with a five set win against Florida while the men finished just outside the medal stand at 4th. Both were competing in the gold bracket. Madi Kingdon was named to the All-Tournament team.

The Sizzle will look to field a team and compete in Orlando in 2016. For more information, contact Ron Pelham at pelham2@yahoo.com.



## Arizona Sizzle Women

Ashley Andrade, Chanel Brown, Jasmine Conner, Kalynn Egea, Amy Grabiak, Ashley Kastl, Madison Kingdon, Chelsea McShane, Kathleen Messing, Katharine Morrell, Samantha Morse, Erica Wilson, Shannon Wingate. Head Coach Molly Stark, Assistant Coach Amanda Omar.

## Arizona Sizzle Men

Joe Bortak, Trent Bruns, Conner Dougherty, Ben Hunt, Marin Jerolimov, Paul Kuhn, Bryan Lewis, Garrett Lough, Jared Morrison, Keith Smith, Matt Werle, Vince Zanzucchi, Head Coach Fred Mann, Assistant Coach Aaron Payne



# Arizonan's Impacting the Beach: Internationally, Professionally

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Meanwhile, Sarah was making waves of her own. She partnered up with Abril Bustamante at the last minute for the USA High Performance Beach Championships U21/23 division despite being just 19. "I really didn't know what to expect going into the tournament," Sarah says. "It was nice to be able to play the older girls, but Abril and I really just stuck to each match and taking one point at a time. We were down in our quarter final match by eight points, and the thing that was great is that our energy stayed the same, we were focused on getting not eight points in a row but just one at a time and we ended up coming back and winning the second and third game!" "It was a great feeling winning the U23/U21 HP Championships. We played in an AVPnext tournament the week after and took second but I was more pleased about how we handled the tough situations we were put in during the HP tournament!"

Betsi will be the volunteer assistant coach at the LMU Beach program going into the spring with current AVP Men's top 10 player John Mayer who has two titles to his resume'. But Betsi doesn't want to think about next summer, at least not just yet.

"I haven't even thought about next summer because I don't know how the AVP schedule will go with the Olympics." she ponders. "I thought this year was a really good opportunity to do well in the AVP because a lot of people are travelling for FIVB tournaments so it was good for us to get our points and establish ourselves. Next year, I don't know. I'm excited and I want to play in all the AVP's again. I like to travel and explore and try new things so it's really fun to travel to these new places."

Sarah stays focused as she balances her blossoming indoor career at Loyola Marymount and her beach career but has a grand plan to work toward. "In the years to come I hope to stay on the path I'm on working with USA," she says. "I think I really want to start entering into the AVP tournaments because I know I'll be able to learn so much more doing that than competing in the same open tournaments around California. But, depending on indoor and how it is looking, I really would like to get back to try-

ing out for USA indoor team. I know they have tryouts sometime in the spring and I would really like to go and tryout and see what happens. I have such a big passion for indoor volleyball and I would like to see if it could take me to some places that beach has been able to take me."

Another Arizona product, Kevin Villela who recently graduated from IPFW, has also started making traction on the beach taking a 25th at the Manhattan Beach Open and a 29th in Chicago on the AVP tour and recently took a 9th place on the NVL professional beach tour.

These players and hopefully many more will carry their love of the beach game from the Region's Jr. Beach program onto the professional and international sand courts across the globe. Sarah remembers as a youngster watching Betsi play in those summer tournaments.

"For years I would look up to and watch Betsi whether it was on Tuesday and Thursday nights when we were playing in those Jr. Beach tournaments over the summer or even when she was still playing club. But to be able to look up to someone for so long and then be given an opportunity to play with her for her final fifth season and do as well as we did; it doesn't get much better than that. Another way to say it, there couldn't have been a better ending. We had such a great time in Alabama and I really do believe that all the hard work we put into the season especially those last two weeks really allowed us to TRUST in each other and have each other's backs every step we took throughout the tournament. And I will greatly miss her next season."



# Kraeer, USA Men's Sitting Team Makes Cut for Rio 2016

Quinton Kraeer left his coaching job and club in Phoenix a year and a half ago to accomplish one goal: get the USA Men's Paralympic volleyball team into the 2016 Paralympics in Brazil.

Mission accomplished!

After more than 10 years out of the Paralympics, Kraeer's Men's team topped Canada to earn the spot in Rio in 2016.

Going into 2014, Kraeer had a vision of what needed to be done. "I thought the biggest thing that needed to change was to add a little more aggression back into our style of play. The team had become so wrapped up in safe controlled plays that they were almost waiting on the other team to make a mistake instead of going out and trying to earn points."

"I think the biggest difference is the Culture, Personnel has not changed that much in that past couple of years." Kraeer says. "Our A2 team is starting to take hold though and there are some athletes coming up that could be very impactful players in years to come. One change that made a big difference in the tournament was our newcomer John Kremer. He stepped in as a libero and

greatly increased our passing percentage which added more versatility to our offense on every play."

Now that they are in, the work only gets harder on both the coaches and the team. "The staff will have to start demanding more of the players both individually and as a team. There are some gelling issues that they are constantly working on and if they are able to fix that then they will be able to play at a much higher level and I believe they can medal."

Kraeer says the team has the talent to do well in Rio but much like what Karch Kiraly has been working with the Women's National team on, handling adversity is a key. "The team has to learn how to deal with the pressure. Some of that is coming from not being able to play in enough international matches, the other is the staff just needs to raise the level of pressure that they have to start dealing with so that they start pulling together as a team instead of pulling away from each other. Adversity is a something that the team is slowly starting to deal with better and better, the fear and the pressure to perform are something that all athletes are constantly trying to better themselves at."



## Madi Kingdon Enjoys Magical Season— Inside and Out

Arizona couldn't be prouder of one of our own, Madi Kingdon who put together one of the most honored seasons in our state's history.

In her final year as an outside hitter for the University of Arizona, she led the Wildcats to the NCAA tournament for the 3rd time in her four years dropping her final college match to BYU, the National Championship runner up.

Along the way, Kingdon led the U of A program in matches and sets played over her career, was second in career kills and second in kills per game, had 111 matches of 10 or more kills, tops in the program and had more attempts in her career than any other Wildcat. For her efforts, she was named an AVCA All-American in addition to several other conference awards.

She transitioned to sand and posted a 24-3 record earning her a spot in the AVCA Collegiate Pairs Sand Championships in Gulf Shores, Alabama in April where her and her partner earned a final four finish. She was named an AVCA All-American in Sand Volleyball as well, being the ONLY player in the country to earn those honors in both indoor and sand.

Kingdon was also named to the PVL Championships All-Tournament team at Adult Nationals in May. "All of those accolades are such an honor." she says. "The sand and PVL All-Americans were really just icing on the cake. One of my goals going into college was to be an All American for indoor so for me that carried a little more weight. That was the one I had been chasing for four years so fulfilling that goal meant a lot to me."

Kingdon is scheduled to take her talents professionally to Azerbaijan in the coming weeks. "I chose Azerbaijan because of the competitive nature of the league. A lot of really good players have gone through there and continued on to play for other great teams in following seasons. I feel like this is a good career move for me and an opportunity for me to see a part of the world I would probably never see otherwise."

Congratulations to Madi Kingdon and what she has brought to Arizona volleyball these past 8 years.



## Lora Webster Honored as All-Time Great Women's Sitting Volleyball Player

USA Volleyball recognized Arizona's Lora Webster as it's All-Time Great Women's Sitting Volleyball Player at the 70th annual Boyce Banquet held in Detroit in May.

Webster couldn't attend the banquet and accept the honor in person as she was in the final months of her pregnancy but as her name was announced, John Kessel phoned her while up on stage accepting the award for her.

She was notified at the end of 2014 in a phone call that she had been chosen to receive this prestigious award, the first of it's kind ever awarded in USA Volleyball and one of a dozen that were awarded to the All-Time Greats of our sport. Karch Kiraly, Tara Cross-Battle and Kathy Gregory were just a few of the other honorees.

"After everything I've been through with this team; how far we've come and how tough it was to imagine having three medals from where we started in 2003, its amazing." Lora says about the award. "To see the people I was honored with makes it even more incredible because these are the legends of our game and to be even mentioned on the same stage as them, it was amazing, I mean, that just doesn't happen."

Lora was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in her left leg at the age of 11. She had a procedure called a ro-tatinplast to remove the cancerous bone which included the knee. Her lower leg was then rotated 180 degrees and connected to her femur to give her full range of movement and a chance to play sports, mainly volleyball, going forward.

She was an outside hitter for the Cactus Shadows High School State Champion volleyball team in 2004, eighteen months after taking part in the inaugural USA sitting camp in February of 2003.

Lora went to the 2004 Paralympics and won a



bronze medal and followed that up with silver medals the last two Paralympics, in Beijing and London.

"I feel like all the hard work in the last twelve years, I've been really doing something productive and I've had a small part in where our program is right now. Just to be along for the ride has been a huge honor. No award was necessary but it feels really good."

Lora isn't done. She is shooting for her fourth Paralympics in Rio in 2016. She would be the first and only 4-time volleyball Paralympian.

"We are going to Slovenia this month and I am going to be in the best shape I have ever been in. Going into Rio, there is a good chance this is my last Games and there is no way we are not winning. Losing the gold medal three times in a row; that's not an option in my mind and I don't think it's an option for my teammates either."

She feels the vibe with the team going into Rio is more focused and together. "This one, it feels like everybody is on the right track. Everybody is on the same page and we feel a lot closer because four years ago we almost had it. It's scary too: the idea of not winning the gold is just sickening but I really think we can win it as long as everybody keeps their head about them. Rio is my focus, definitely."

The Arizona Region  
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## 2015 Arizona Region Girl's Champions

**Club One 18 Platinum- 18 Open**  
**AZ Storm 17 Thunder- 17 Open**  
**Aspire 16 Rox- 16 Open**  
**Yavapai Jrs. 18N- 18 Championship**  
**Aspire 17 Silver- 17 Championship**  
**EVJ 15N2- 16- Championship**  
**EVJ 14N1- 14 Championship**  
**Gila Valley 16 Shelley- 16 Club**  
**Az Sky 14 Gold VB Rage - 14 Club**  
**Az Sky 12 Gold- 12's Division**