



FOR THE PARENTS

OCTOBER 2023

We call it the “Murky Crystal Ball.” In this issue, we unravel the myth of “volleyball whisperers” - club directors and coaches who claim to know talent when they see it. Before tryouts get underway, discover the red flags surrounding “Talent Identification” and the reality of youth athletes making it to the collegiate level, the pros, or even the Olympic stage. We also talk with experienced parents who’ve supported their own children through the club volleyball in the AZ Region. Get their helpful tips and tricks before tryouts!

NEWSLETTER



FINDING A VOLLEYBALL CLUB CAN SEEM OVERWHELMING AT FIRST - EVEN IF YOU’VE ALREADY PLAYED CLUB AND YOU’RE LOOKING FOR A NEW PROGRAM. IN THIS ISSUE OF “COVERING THE COURT”, COMMISSIONER HAROLD CRANSWICK PROVIDES AN EASY-TO-FOLLOW DECISION MAKING GUIDELINE ON CHOOSING THE BEST VOLLEYBALL PROGRAM FOR YOUR FAMILY. BE SURE TO CHECK OUT IMPORTANT ADVICE “BEFORE” YOU SIGN THE CONTRACT.



The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball had a thrilling experience at the USA Volleyball All-Star Championship this summer. Our incredible High Performance program, led by Ron Pelham, earned the “Region Cup!” Be sure to check out this newsletter online to learn more about the program and how your child can tryout next summer!



Volleyball has no age limit! This fall’s newsletter discusses everything *parents* need to know from A to Z for their tweens and teens. But we’ve also got opportunities in our **Adult** and **Officials** programs. You love the game. You know the game. And we’d love to have *you* play a meaningful role in the game with us this season. Please visit our website to find out more!



“Tuesday’s Practice”



What exactly should your child be doing in volleyball practice? Cardio workouts? Plyometrics? Or *learning the game*?

The Arizona Region’s Director of Coaching Education, Eric Hodgson, writes a heart-felt apology to coaches and parents for the cycle of ineffective training.

“We have talked to coaches about the number one factor of a good practice, athlete engagement, which is often crippled with boring rote drills, too much talking, players asked to shag balls while their teammates are in a drill and an overall malaise of a practice without a focus or attention to pushing athletes past their comfort zones.”



The *Science of the Game* is well known. Find out what the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball is doing so your club’s coaches have the tools and resources to provide your child worthwhile training.



READ THIS
NEWSLETTER
ONLINE

WWW.AZREGIONVOLLEYBALL.ORG

Utilized and not used. The Arizona Region is committed to your child’s safety. Our staff define “exploitation” and how to identify it. We also spell out the *standards for protecting minor athletes*. All of these important updates can be found in our online newsletter.

www.azregionvolleyball.org



THE MURKY CRYSTAL BALL

THE TRUTH ABOUT TALENT IDENTIFICATION IN CLUB VOLLEYBALL & WHAT TO WATCH FOR DURING TRYOUTS

A myth of Herculean proportions claims some coaches and programs are able to identify outstanding junior players, children between 8 and 13-years-old, who will go on to earn college scholarships or roster spots on professional or international teams.

This is particularly true in the European Premiere League of soccer.

No matter the training, some coaches put their reputations on this “gift”, while others still just “know it when they see it.”

“ The problem is, like the newest Instagram diet sensation, it is both unproven and highly marketable. ”

Can you guess how much American families spend on youth sports each year?

The Aspen Institute estimates the price tag reaches \$30-40 BILLION **a year** on youth sports programming for their kids. You read that right, \$30-40 BILLION a year!

With this much money in the pot, marketing becomes paramount. You've probably seen pictures of athletes lining the walls of club facilities with their full-ride, scholarshiped school and year under each prized, smiling face.

Coaches and Club Directors talk about their plan for each athlete to get to the college of their choice - or maybe even, *gulp*, a National or Olympic Team!

Parents who enter the conversation can get entranced at the thought of their young child going all the way in their sport - and see the hefty weight of that college cost suddenly lifted from their backs.

CLUB VOLLEYBALL MARKETING 101

Not all clubs have their own facility. But the sentiment remains that some self-proclaimed “volley whisperers” claim to know talent when they see it, and will secure your athlete's spot in their program with the promise of a pot of gold at the end of the youth sports rainbow.

This idea, known as Talent Identification, is a great marketing tool for teams, clubs and coaches. However, don't buy in just yet. Science tells us a completely different story.

Case #1 Younger athletes, referred to here as prepuberty, have little to no projection about what *kind* of athlete they will be until after they go through puberty. The body changes are dramatic; muscle, limbs and weight are all affected, as well as the mental makeup of a teenager. Anyone looking at a prepubescent athlete and claim to know anything about their future is simply not in touch with the science of biology.

Case #2 Training. Sadly, so many of our 17 and 18-year-old athletes get burned out by overreaching, negative, abusive or poorly trained coaches, and would rather walk away from a sport they might have loved 4 or 5 years prior. The amount of pressure put on athletes by coaches, AND/OR parents, can be another reason for burnout. *Working to balance a school life, social life and an athletic career can be overwhelming.*

Case #3 The numbers. A Division I scholarship in the U.S. is a literal moon shot. Consider how many schools offer full or partial athletic scholarships, (1,254). Divide that by the half million boys and girls playing high school and club volleyball, and you can see just from these numbers the odds are long indeed.

TALENT IDENTIFICATION: IS IT PROVABLE?

Talent Identification has been the subject of several recent studies. A paper from August 2023 entitled, “*Quantifying the Extent to Which Junior Performance Predicts Senior Performance in Olympic Sports: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*,” by Barth and Gullick, gathered evidence looking at over 13,000 senior-aged athletes, (older than high school), with 62% male and 38% female over a long list of Olympic sports and concluded, “...**junior performance explained only 2.2% of the reliable variance in senior performance.**”

In the Academy programs of youth soccer in England, 1.5 million youth players go through trainings to get them to the elite level of the Premier League. But again. Only 180 players will be chosen. In fact, the Academy programming for these clubs warrants a **97% failure rate** with only 3% of those athletes moving into professional soccer - which may or may not be the Premiere League but a lesser professional program. Not counted in these numbers is the high level of **depression** that comes from going through the Academies and not being chosen. The **disappointment and dejection** can be crippling for many of these young athletes.

Dr. Craig Harrison, in his article, “Talent Identification: How We Are Failing Our Youth Athletes,” says succinctly, “A major study of over 3,000 elite senior athletes across a variety of sports showed that early specialization was positively related to early success, but negatively with achievement at the elite level. Basically, early success creates an illusion that an athlete will continue on to succeed in adulthood.”

Coaches and parents get fooled by those athletes who have matured faster than their peers and appear to be light years ahead of their teammates of the same age. This is a mirage. As the other athletes mature, this outlier’s performance can come back to the level of the group. Everyone is different, grows differently and matures at different ages. Don’t let this smoke screen fool you.

ROUGHLY 2 OUT OF EVERY 100 JUNIOR ATHLETES WHO WERE TARGETED TO BE SUCCESSFUL SENIOR ATHLETES LIVED UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS. TWO OUT OF ONE HUNDRED.



Continue

Also to be considered is the **Relative Age Effect**, which we discussed in the spring issue of the Region's Newsletter.

One final piece to this misconception is the outlier. Yes, there are coaches who predicted success for athletes. There are some athletes who, with their height and speed, are good bets to have a future in our sport. But as with any outliers, there is an ocean full of those that didn't fulfill the predictions and expectations: **from injury, burnout, choosing another sport, social or emotional issues, relationships**, etc. For every athlete a coach hangs their "I told you so" hat on, there are dozens if not hundreds more that they were wrong about.

"Research suggests that athletic talent is rarely identified with much accuracy, especially early in a child's development. Sadly, talent selection methods are often sporadic, lack criterion, and those selecting are uneducated regarding identification of athletic talent. The average citizen involved in sports can identify a coach who truly believes that he can spot athletic talent simply by watching young players briefly."

This conclusion from Gray and Plucker's paper, "She's a Natural": Identifying and Developing Athletic Talent", portrays not only the failure of the systems, but also the idea that parents are fooled by those who claim to be the "whisperers" of their sport.

"YOU DON'T HAVE A CRYSTAL BALL. YOU CAN'T LOOK AT A KID AND PREDICT HIS FUTURE ANY MORE THAN I CAN."

-BRAD PITT'S CHARACTER BILLY - "MONEYBALL"



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EXPLOITATION. BEING UTILIZED. NOT USED.

Submitted by Cindy Kirk

SafeSport Director | Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

Parents, when you see a red flag, speak with your player and or coach to involve yourself in the process.
-Cindy Kirk

Exploitation of volleyball people in our community needs to be understood as destructive. The very definition of the word "exploitation" is the action of treating someone unfairly to benefit from their work. By this definition, it can happen to anybody in our volleyball community, and it can be done by anybody as well.

When a family decides to have their son or daughter play club volleyball, they enter a world that is new and exciting. The adventures ahead for that family are often great memories for life. That is the hope and the intent of this great community. The downturn is that there are times when coaches may use their position for the wrong reason. A player and their family may be using club for the wrong reason.

That relationship of Coach and player and family can be so rewarding when done well. There are times when coaches become thrilled with how their season is going that they move from developing young players to become all they can be to using them as pawns in a chess match. Maybe as the player sees growth in their game and they begin to see that they can play at the next level they suddenly see their coach as a person to hire instead of trusting their mentorship. When that relationship breaks down you now have people using and exploiting others instead of utilizing this wonderful opportunity.

You have people in the gymnastic community that felt used and said nothing because it might have jeopardized their position on the USA Olympic team. This silence allowed many abuses of power and was quite destructive. Simone Biles has been quoted that she reported what happened and her claims were ignored. The trust and relationships along the way has devolved into a new level of anxiety and mental illness.

People matter and want to be accepted by others. This includes the player and the coach. Having defined boundaries helps to keep those relationships healthy and individuals may feel utilized and not used.

Q. What can we do in the community as parents, players and coaches to maintain that healthy trusting relationship?

A. Speak up and empower your voice to be part of a solution and not a problem. Talk with your coaches and coaches talk with your players to maintain the health of each other. Parents, when you see a red flag, speak with your player and or coach to involve yourself in the process.

As Biles stated, "That has proven to be an exceptionally difficult burden for me to carry, particularly when required to travel to Tokyo without the support of any of my family. I am a strong individual and I will persevere, but I never should have been left alone to suffer the abuse of Larry Nassar. And the only reason I did, was because of the failures that lie at the heart of the abuse that you are now asked to investigate."

We will grow as a community. Let's do it together and not alone. This upcoming year, let's involve ourselves in others' lives not from control, but a desire to grow our athletes on and off the court.

“FROM THE COMMISH”

USA Volleyball has 40 regions. We are the "regional" organization for USA Volleyball in Arizona. In fact, we promote, govern, oversee, plan and coordinate amateur indoor and outdoor volleyball tourneys for youth and adults!

Our mission is to provide a variety of opportunities in safe, positive and appropriately competitive environments. We are a nonprofit organization.



Harold W. Cranswick
Commissioner
Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

NAVIGATING JUNIOR GIRLS TRYOUTS ARIZONA REGION OF USA VOLLEYBALL – THE LEADER IN ARIZONA VOLLEYBALL –

If you are a parent in the Arizona Region, it is highly likely you have heard a similar conversation at some point:

Junior Girl: “Mom and Dad, I want to play club volleyball like my friends.”

Parents: “We’ll need to investigate how to do that because we’ve never done that before.”

Junior Girl: “It’s easy. My friend plays at ‘XYZ’ Club every year. Let’s just go there.”

Parents: “We could, but we hear all the clubs have tryouts. So let’s check out a couple of clubs just in case.”

And so, it begins. There are plenty of people to talk to, as well as places online, to help parents choose a volleyball club. So this article is simply intended to provide a starting point for those parents who are new to the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball, or those who are interested in exploring additional options for their child.



Pictured left in white: AZ Region Commissioner Harold Cranswick started playing as an athlete in the AZ Region in the 1970's.

He joined the Board of Directors in the 1980's.

He has served in the role of Commissioner since 1997

Pictured in middle: Elvin Otley

Pictured right: Eddie Vasquez

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If parents communicate with the the Arizona Region or their friends, they will quickly learn about the opportunity to visit different clubs during the Open House period, and then pick the tryouts at the potential clubs they prefer. As a parent, you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the fact that Club Directors want you to have information about their club. I think it is fair to say that **Club Directors want you and your child to be happy with your choice.** It is good for your child and good for the club's reputation.

But even if parents do their due diligence, there are a lot of factors to consider when choosing a club for your child. Some of the information parents are looking for might be characterized as **"Documented Information"** whereas other unwritten information might be described as **"Undocumented Information."** Both are important to parents, so a brief description of each is presented below. Attached is a QR code directing the reader to a checklist of some of the criteria parents have used to help them choose a volleyball club.

DOCUMENTED INFORMATION

Documented information can convey information to parents about where and when the team plans to practice, what it will cost to play for the club and how many tournaments the team plans to enter this season, as well as a lot more factors listed in the club information and/or Club Handbook. Most of these items, if not all, will probably be part of the contract a parent will be asked to sign.

However, before a parent signs any contract, it is important to remember the contract is a legal document that both parties are expected to honor. If a dispute arises after you have signed the contract, the Arizona Region has no authority to get involved in a legal matter between the parents and the club.

From the Club Director's point of view, the contract is critically important in helping determine the club's budget for the season. Usually, Club Directors are very willing to work with parents to resolve issues, but serious disagreements might involve going to Small Claims Court.

UNDOCUMENTED INFORMATION

So, what else should a parent take into consideration before signing a contract?

Parents should keep in mind that some issues are important to parents and may not show up in the contract. If a parent has been told or promised anything which is important to the player and the player's parents, then it is critically important to get that information included in the contract. Some examples of verbal but undocumented information might be:

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- If you were told that a particular coach would coach your child,
- if you were told that your child would start on a particular team,
- if you were told that your child would get special instruction,
- if you were told that if you volunteered for certain tasks with the club that you would get a discount,
- if you were told that your child would be guaranteed a certain amount of time on the court during tournaments,
- if you were told that your child could speak with the coach and ask what they could do to get greater playing time, or
- if you were told that your child would not be penalized for missing practice for school or family reasons.

As you can see, many additional items might be discussed at tryouts which may or may not be in the written documentation presented to parents. The best advice you can get is, “if something is a potential deal breaker then GET IT IN WRITING.” You are encouraged to discuss it with the Club Director and make sure it is in the contract or added to the contract. **If it is not in the contract, or in writing of some kind of document, then there is no way to enforce it.**

If you are new to the process, you should know the vast majority of Club Directors in the Arizona Region run their clubs with honesty and integrity. Talk to other parents and find out which Club Directors they know and trust and start your search with them. **The tryout period is stressful for everyone, but parents can reduce the stress by learning about the clubs and Club Directors during the Open House period and dealing with those Club Directors that have earned the respect and trust of many former players and parents.**

Of course, like everything, there is no fool-proof guaranteed way of picking a volleyball club for your child. Hopefully, this provides a reasonable starting point.

From the court,
Harold W. Cranswick
 Commissioner
 Arizona Region of USA Volleyball



**DOWNLOAD THE DECISION-MAKING
 GUIDELINE FROM OUR WEBSITE**

WWW.AZREGIONVOLLEYBALL.ORG/NEWS_ARTICLE/SHOW/1287200

Birthday Calculator

Put in your child's birthday and find out which age division your child can tryout for.



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MAAPP

**MINOR ATHLETE ABUSE
PREVENTION POLICIES**

PROTECTING MINOR ATHLETES

Mahalo, AZ Region Members...

I want to thank those of you who utilized the QR code we established last year at tournament sites around the state. We saw a huge uptick in complaints, some of which were investigated and saw meaningful action take place.

Others were less concerning, but still, *every complaint was heard and examined.*

Coming up this season will be additional safeguards implemented by MAAPP. This is the **Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies**.

The Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (MAAPP) limits one-on-one adult/minor interactions, and sets standards for training and sport settings which prevent abuse and misconduct. The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball invests in keeping young athletes free of abuse, and have adopted the MAAPP — now required throughout the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

MAAPP is made up of three components: Education and Training Policy, Required Prevention Policies, and Recommended Prevention Policies.

The most important part of these is the Required Prevention Policies with seven key guidelines limiting one-on-one interactions between certain adults and minor athletes.

We are relying on you for a great season, full of fun and exploration for your athletes. If we can be of help, please reach out.

JR Salima

Ethics Compliance Officer

Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

Mobile: (602) 614-9263



INFORMATION & TRAINING
MAAPP.USCENTERFORSAFESPORT.ORG

AZ Region EARN THE REGION CUP



RON PELHAM | AZ REGION OF USA VOLLEYBALL



AZ GIRLS SELECT | 2ND PLACE



AZ BOYS YOUTH | 2ND PLACE



AZ BOYS NATIONAL | 2ND PLACE



AZ GIRLS FUTURE SELECT | 2ND PLACE

The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball has a highly competitive **High Performance** program led by Ron Pelham. This summer, Arizona Region High Performance participated in the All-Star Championships hosted in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Four junior boys teams and four junior girls teams competed among 90 teams from across the United States.

*We are incredibly grateful to all the parent chaperones and sponsors for their support every year!
Thank you!*

FOLLOW #AZHP IN SOCIAL MEDIA | WWW.AZREGIONVOLLEYBALL.ORG/HIGHPERFORMANCE

ARIZONA REGION HIGH PERFORMANCE 2024 ALL-STAR CHAMPIONSHIP DES MOINES, IOWA

CLINICS AND TRYOUTS TBA IN EARLY 2024

FIND OUT
MORE @
THE AZ
REGION
WEBSITE!



2024 Adult Volleyball

Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE:

- FORMER HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR RECREATIONAL ATHLETES
- RECENT HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATE WHO AREN'T PLAYING

2024 SEASON REGION TOURNAMENTS:

- JAN 21
- MAR 10
- MAR 24
- APR 28
- MAY 5 REGION CHAMPIONSHIPS

IF YOU HAVE INTEREST IN PUTTING A TEAM TOGETHER, PLEASE CONTACT THE REGION OFFICE WITH TEAM NAME AND TEAM REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT INFORMATION.



ADULT OPEN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

May 24-29, 2024 in COLUMBUS, OHIO

WWW.AZREGIONVOLLEYBALL.ORG/ADULTS

ADULT DIVISIONS

LOOKING FOR TEAMS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ADULT LEAGUE STARTING IN JANUARY. THE TEAM FINISHING HIGHEST AND GOING TO OPEN NATIONALS WILL GET SOME REIMBURSEMENT FOR YOUR ENTRY FEES.

CLUB CHALLENGE FOR THE ADULT LEAGUE TO PARTICIPATE:

- 50% OF YOUR TEAM HAS TO BE FROM THE SAME JUNIORS CLUB
- YOU MUST PLAY IN AT LEAST 3 TOURNAMENTS AND THE REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

MORE INFORMATION:

PLEASE VISIT THE USA VOLLEYBALL WEBSITE. HERE YOU CAN FIND INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT, REGISTRATION AND HOUSING OPTIONS, TOURNAMENT RULES, AND MORE.

[HTTPS://USAVOLLEYBALL.ORG/EVENT/2024-OPEN-NATIONAL-CHAMPIONSHIP-OPENS/](https://usavolleyball.org/event/2024-open-national-championship-opens/)

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE TOURNAMENT DATES OR ANYTHING ELSE, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT RON PELHAM.

LOOKING FOR THOUGHTS ON HAVING A GRASS TOURNAMENT!!

CONTACT RON PELHAM

AZHP@AZREGIONVOLLEYBALL.ORG

www.azregionvolleyball.org/adults

Mom, Dad... I owe you an Apology!

Submitted by Eric Hodgson

Contact: erichbke@msn.com

As the Arizona Region Director of Coaching Education for the past 16 years, I need to apologize.

We, as a Region, have spent an inordinate number of hours, money and effort working with clubs, coaches and yes, even parents to make the training of your sons and daughters more efficient and productive.

From the beginning of my tenure and under the initial guidance of USA Volleyball, all NEW coaches are required to take a baseline course called IMPACT. It used to be in person, four hours going over the legal aspects of coaching, the science of motor learning, drill design, practice planning and the resources available to new coaches. USAV only required this course at the start of a coach's career, but as a Region, we required it every three years so our coaches would stay current in the practice of coaching. It was in person with video, lively discussion and taught in the evenings and weekends all over the state.

Then came March of 2020. And the world, and Coaching Education were altered completely.

USA Volleyball jettisoned its entire Coaching Education office. In-person clinics were too toxic for healthy environments, and coaches retreated to YouTube and commercial websites for all their new drills and training ideas.

Today, this four-hour course is online, and is just 2 ½ hours long, mandatory for new coaches to USA Volleyball. It is still full of material new coaches need to know from a legal and coaching perspective, but it has been pared down to the bare bones. This is problematic because it glosses over so many issues coaches will face and this lack of awareness and the acumen to successfully circumvent these waters costs us young promising coaches who are burned out after a season or two, not given all the tools they need to succeed.

I apologize because so often, working with coaches on the science of the game, what we call motor learning, we have so many who choose to ignore the science that was made prevalent in the 70's and repeat the cycle of ineffective training that they learned from their coaches.

We know that one of the hardest human traits is change. **Almost no one likes it and very few embrace it, even though as coaches we preach and demand it from our athletes.** As we have asked coaches to change, our ideas are often validated but putting those changes into practice rarely becomes a reality.

I apologize because as much as we have told coaches that our athletes have a limited memory to recall things, they are inundated with two-hour practices bogged down with 40 minutes of coaches talking and athletes standing and listening.

We have talked to coaches about the number one factor of a good practice, athlete engagement, which is often crippled with boring rote drills, too much talking, players asked to shag balls while their teammates are in a drill and an overall malaise of a practice without a focus or attention to pushing athletes past their comfort zones.



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*If athletes aren't engaged, then a coach isn't teaching.
And if a coach isn't teaching, then they aren't coaching,
and everyone is wasting their time.*



I apologize because I have watched practices where the players won't touch a ball for the first 40 minutes of a 90-minute practice. I have watched in equal horror as the ball will not go over the net for an hour of a 90-minute practice.

This idea, called specificity, is simple. *If the game of volleyball is played over the net, why isn't practice?*

I have observed plyometric and cardio workouts with a little volleyball sprinkled in and called "Tuesday's practice." I have watched players run laps and stretch to start practice, wasting 15 minutes of precious court time to the tune of 14 hours of lost volleyball time in a season.

I apologize that for all the times we have talked to coaches about how fleeting and harmful physical punishments can be for an athlete and team culture, **we still see coaches having their athletes run lines at a timeout in the middle of a match from a misplayed ball; both humiliating and certainly unnecessary.**

How we treat a 12's team as if they are a Division I college program, yelling and punishing them even though, contrary to many coaches and parents' ideas, they are just learning the game. Can you tell me where else in modern American society young people are physically punished for learning? Did your 13-year-old son have to do 25 pushups for missing that algebra problem on his last test?

I apologize because we haven't kept up with training coaches on all the new research that is taking place about the brain; how it actually works, dispelling the myths associated with it and how to understand learning from the more the brain is studied. **If coaches could understand how the brain works, maybe they would understand that those drills with one tosser and one passer doesn't transfer much knowledge to the game of volleyball that your athletes will be playing.**

I apologize that we allow bad coaches to permeate our sport without a way for parents or athletes to evaluate and give constructive feedback to help them improve their craft or remove them if necessary. That egocentric coaches are lionized because of a winning record but the biggest indicator of their success, whether their players want to come back the next year, is often ignored. Coaches that take the credit when teams succeed or throw them unceremoniously under the bus when they fail are the red flags of our profession and need more guidance to become transformational coaches instead of transactional ones.

I apologize that for the last 16 years we have worked toward these goals with coaching clinics, online webinars and speakers, beach and sitting clinics, in person seminars with various entities wishing to join the growing collective that sees the game of volleyball as a vast expanse of potential athletes for future programming and **yet still, we lose 70% of most volleyball athletes by the age of 13.**

THIRTEEN!

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I truly apologize because I haven't done enough with Parents to understand the science and ideology behind productive coaching. **It is your hard-earned money helping these programs thrive, or not, and most parents would struggle to pick out a good practice from a bad one. If parents were better consumers of what they knew what to look for in the training of their young athlete, coaches might be more inclined to embrace change and look for ways to improve.**

I apologize as the Region's Coaching Education Director because I haven't done enough. As a Region we will continue to offer our services to Clubs wanting us to come in and help them with whatever subject they think their coaches need more refinement in. We will continue to offer online subject matter that we hope pushes coaches to dive further into the rabbit holes of the million different subtopics that coaches encounter every season.

All this being said, there are certainly lots and lots of coaches that ARE doing things the right way, using science, building productive and healthy cultures, training their athletes with efficiency and pushing them to become the best version of themselves. For those coaches, the ones we call lifelong learners, you are appreciated more than you know. And you are the role models for the other coaches that might be too young to know what questions to ask, where to turn with problems and how to handle issues on and off the court.

I apologize. ***We as a Region will continue the work needed to ensure your young athlete's experience in our sport is a healthy, life-enhancing and positive journey into self-efficacy and challenging competition.*** For the coaches that represent our Region, we will continue to reach out to you, perhaps using different platforms and ideas going forward, to raise your awareness of the science that scaffolds our sport and the better engagement of our athletes now and in the future. For our parents, you deserve the science and information to make you a better consumer of which coach or club is the best fit for your son or daughter's youth volleyball career.

As the saying goes, a rising tide raises all boats. If I can do better, give more opportunities for coaches to become the best version of themselves and the best coaches for your young athletes, then we hope coaches AND parents AND club directors might take advantage of the opportunities.

After all, our future is on the line...



"As a Region we will continue to offer our services to Clubs wanting us to come in and help them with whatever subject they think their coaches need more refinement in. We will continue to offer online subject matter that we hope pushes coaches to dive further into the rabbit holes of the million different subtopics that coaches encounter every season. "

-Eric Hodgson, Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

**PLEASE VISIT
www.azregionvolleyball.org/coaches
FOR COACHING RESOURCES**



GET OUTTA THE WAY. LET THEM PLAY!

Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation is a simple contrast.

Extrinsic learning is achieved with outside motivators as the goal: trophies, money, ice cream, medals, etc.

Intrinsic learning uses the athlete's sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy as the motivator.

While one is not worse than the other, higher-level athletes use **intrinsic** motivation to reach the pinnacles of their careers.

Younger athletes and students begin understanding the idea of motivation with extrinsic rewards. The small piece of candy when they finish a chore at home, a run to the ice cream store for an A on a spelling test. These are harmless and in the beginning of an athlete's career are used often.

As athletes become older however, the love of the game, the sense of improvement and the joy of competing should start to outweigh any outside motivators. It's hard to imagine an Olympic volleyball player is going to get very excited about the daily practices, weight room sessions, sports psyche time and the sacrifice of their normal lives for a bag of skittles after practice.

The question is how can we transition athletes from an extrinsic to intrinsic motivation?

PLAYERS FROM THE ARIZONA REGION OF USA VOLLEYBALL ON THE WORLD STAGE

In Mid-October, the Mexican town of Tlaxcala will host the best beach volleyball players in the world as they compete in the **2023 FIVB Beach World Championships**.

This special tournament features all the top teams around the globe which have earned a spot in the draw of 48 men's and women's duos.

Two of the teams from the US will prominently feature an Arizonan. **Betsi Flint and Hailey Harward** are both from Ahwatukee, and both played at the same high school. Another successful Arizonan - who won't play this tournament - is 2021 Beach Volleyball Olympian **Sarah Sponcil** who recently decided to go back to professional indoor volleyball.

Last June, two Arizonans were added to the USAV Indoor National Team from their overseas professional teams for the recently completed VNL tournament: **Brooke Nuneviller and Khalia Lanier**.

In the last few years, Arizonans **Madi Kingdon and Amanda Benson** have been in the USA gym and have enjoyed successful pro careers as well.

Almost all these athletes went to different schools, clubs, had different coaches. But one program is a common thread.



The Arizona Region recently completed the 22nd season of its Junior Beach program. Started in 2001, the cost has never risen and the rules remain constant: no parents or coaches are allowed on the sand.

In other words, without worrying about being subbed out, yelled at or chastised for losing, these athletes learned their craft.

Continue ➔

Pictured left in orange: Sarah Sponcill playing AZ Region Beach Volleyball
Pictured next page in green: Betsi Flint playing AZ Region Beach Volleyball

CONTINUED

They enjoyed those summer nights at Victory Lane Sports Park in the west Valley. Most of the athletes mentioned would play with friends, would play up in age groups to challenge themselves, and most of all, paddled through the murky eddies of wins and losses, good nights and bad nights and learned the game on their terms and their timeline.

This isn't a marketing tool for the Arizona Region's Junior Beach Program. Many other athletes have come through the program and enjoyed their time but didn't develop the physical, emotional or psychological skills that these upper echelon athletes exhibit.

The message here is that not everything in an athlete's life has to be scripted. There doesn't have to be full-time coaching, private lessons and constant feedback.

The whistle starts the beach tournaments at 6pm sharp. The players would play the team in front of them and learn and talk and give themselves feedback on what works with who against who.

No coaches gave them instructions. Most parents sat back and enjoyed watching their sons and daughters play. And rarely were there problems with parents or coaches. The athletes learned to love the game on an intrinsic level.

According to the Association for Applied Sports Psychology, "Athletes who are intrinsically motivated participate in sports for internal reasons, such as enjoyment, whereas athletes who are extrinsically motivated participate in sports for external reasons, such as material rewards."

Intrinsic motivation is always a goal in training. Intrinsically motivated athletes enjoy the process of getting better. They usually have growth mindsets. They don't play for the results, they play to continue to improve.

Listen to any USA National Team player and one constant shines through: their LOVE of the game, the competition. Intrinsic motivation keeps athletes engaged and motivated.

The question for coaches and parents is how to guide their athlete(s) to be motivated intrinsically?

As a parent, is your social media plastered with pictures and posts when your athlete wins or does well? If yes, then is it the same when they don't have a good tournament or don't play well? If you are highlighting only the good and not seeing the progress and growth in the not so good, you are tamping down intrinsic motivation.

Parents, are you letting your athlete fail? Are they able to figure out what they need to improve on and act accordingly or are they being told what they have to do with no autonomy? Are they punished for mistakes or are they given a green light to keep trying to be their best self despite the inevitable mistakes that come with learning? Coaches that don't interact with their athletes, don't give them a reason to enjoy the competition and the self-efficacy with boring practice plans, non-game like drills and constant feedback aren't giving their athletes a chance to discover the love of the game and their growth.

Coaches, do you have a culture in your gym that doesn't punish mistakes but embraces them as a learning tool and helps the athlete solve their own problems? Do they feel safe as a learner in your training culture?

As coaches and parents, we control a lot of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ultimately it is the athlete that will thrive intrinsically, but it is not an easy road.

Parents and coaches, buy a beach volleyball, grab a couple of teammates, drive to a sand court and then... get out of the way. Let your athletes explore, make mistakes, learn, compete and enjoy it all while having fun. No coaching, no judgement, just pure learning.

For those that might think this has no merit, think about two categories of athletes: video gamers and skateboarders. They will work on their craft for hours...literally hours at a time, working to get better, loving the competition on their screen or the challenge of the next trick. What, or more specifically WHO is almost never involved in these two learning environments?





PATH TO THE PODIUM



*Here are the 2022-23 Season
Podium Finishers from the*

*Arizona Region in Girls, Boys and Adult Divisions
at USA Volleyball National Championships.*

US Open Championships - Adult Division - Dallas, TX

Women's B - Phx Fire - 2nd Place - Silver trophy

Men's B - Cuervos - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

Boys Junior National Championships - Salt Lake City

18 USA - MVC 18 Black - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

18 Club - Molten 18 BJ - 1st place - Gold trophy

AZ Summit Boys 18 Gold - T3rd place - Bronze trophy

17 Club - Victory 17-1 - 2nd place - Silver trophy

16 American - MVC 16 Black - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

15 Club - Rush 15 Red - 1st place - Gold trophy

14 Club - APV 14 Black - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

Girls Junior National Championships 18s

18 Open - Revolution 18 Premier - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

Girls Junior National Championships 14-17s

17 USA - Revolution 17 Premier - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

AZ Sky 17G - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

17 American - AZ Storm Elite 17 Thunder - 2nd place - Silver trophy

17 Patriot - Club Cactus Jrs 17 Mizuno - 2nd place - Silver trophy

16 Open - AZ Storm Elite 16 Thunder - 1st place - Gold trophy

16 American - Club One AZ 16 Platinum - 2nd place - Silver trophy

AZ Sky 16G - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

16 Freedom - AZ Storm Elite 16 Lightning - 1st Place - Gold trophy

15 Open - AZ Storm Elite 15 Thunder - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

14 Open - AZ Storm Elite 14 Thunder - 2nd place - Silver trophy

14 National - Revolution 14 Premier - 3rd place - Bronze trophy

14 Freedom - Club One AZ 14 Platinum - 1st place - Gold trophy

**2024 JUNIOR DIVISIONS AT
USA VOLLEYBALL
NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

- **Open**
- **National**
- **USA**
- **Liberty**
- **American**
- **Freedom**
- **Patriot**

We did not have any teams in the 11s-13s that medaled.



USA Volleyball NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

APRIL 26-28, 2024	2024 USA Volleyball Girls 18s Junior National Championship Baltimore, Md.
MAY 24-29, 2024	2024 Open National Championship (Opens) Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio
MAY 24-29, 2024	2024 USA Volleyball Open National Championship Columbus, Ohio
JUNE 21-24, 2024	2024 USA Volleyball Girls Junior National Championship 11-13s Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center Dallas, TX

JUNE 26-29, 2024	2024 USA Volleyball Boys Junior National Championship (BJNC) Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas, Texas
JULY 3-11, 2024	2024 USA Volleyball Girls Junior National Championship 14-17s Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev.
APRIL 25-27, 2025	2025 USA Volleyball Girls 18s Junior National Championship Salt Lake City, Utah
JUNE 21-24, 2025	2025 USA Volleyball Girls Junior National Championship 11-13s Kansas City, Mo.

JUNE 25-JULY 3, 2025	2025 USA Volleyball Girls Junior National Championship 14-17s Dallas, Texas
JULY 3-10, 2025	2025 Boys Junior National Championship Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, Minn.

Junior Boys & Girls teams in the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball, and adult teams, can earn Bids to USA Volleyball Junior National Championships.

The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball also provide National Club Qualifiers as an additional opportunity to qualify for national championships.

Best wishes to all teams working toward earning Bids this season!

USAVolleyball.org/events



AZ REGION NATIONAL CLUB QUALIFIERS

AZ Region Boys
American National Qualifier
December 16, 2023

AZ Region Girls 18s Only
National Club Qualifier
March 2-3, 2024

AZ Region Girls 11s-12s, 16s-17s
National Club Qualifier
April 6-7, 2024

AZ Region Girls 13s-15s
National Club Qualifier
April 13-14, 2024

BOOKMARK JUNIOR PAGES

www.azregionvolleyball.org/juniors

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