

USAV Girls Junior Nationals ~ 15 National Division

Shockwave 15-1

June 24, 2014

We did it again! For the second year in a row, this group of girls representing Shockwave VBC won the Regional bid to Nationals! We were humbled and excited to have earned the privilege of representing the ERVA in the 15National division in Minneapolis, MN. Our age group was scheduled to compete from June 25-28. Last year we flew in a day early, but since this was our second appearance at nationals, we didn't feel that was necessary. We arrived in Minneapolis mid-day on June 24th and went straight to the convention center to get the team checked in. Once we received our credentials we entered the facility to scout things out, find our court, and shop in the tournament store. The set-up in Minneapolis was different than it had been in Dallas. In the main area of the convention center, there were only ½ of the total courts. Splitting the courts into 2 different areas helped make this tournament feel less daunting. We liked the smaller feel! Here is our team just as we entered the convention center in Minneapolis for the first time.



In order for our team to stay together as much as possible, we rented 2 minivans for our use around town. It would have been nicer to have had a 15 passenger van so we all could be together, but they were too pricey. It was much cheaper to rent the 2 minivans, and it worked out well for us. We loaded up into our vans and departed the convention center to check in to our hotel. Our original reservation was at the Marriott Northwest which was about 17 miles north of the convention center. We arrived only to learn that a boiler had gone out the night before and our rooms were not going to be available for a couple of days. Fortunately the hotel took good care of us and had made reservations for our entire team at a nearby hotel. Plus, since they knew this inconvenienced us, they agreed to pay for 2

nights for our entire team! That was a nice little bonus. The temporary hotel was a bit of a dump, so that was difficult, but we kept reminding each other that it was free and we would be back at the Marriott on the 3rd day. Although we didn't like the last minute change, we rolled with the punches and made the best of the situation. We got settled into our new hotel and got busy making our gifts that we would hand out to the teams we would play. This year we chose to do water bottle koozies that were printed with a good luck message from our team. Here is a photo of our team putting them together and a photo of our finished product. We knew the younger teams exchanged gifts at the beginning of each match, but we weren't sure if the U15 age group would still be doing that. We were glad to see that every team we played did participate in the gift exchange.



That evening we had reservations at Pin Stripes for dinner and Bocce Ball. We reserved a private area for our team with 2 bocce courts and had a great time at this fun team bonding event. Good food, good company, and good fun!



June 25th, 2014

Our first day of competition was set to begin at 4pm. We don't particularly love playing in the afternoon wave because of the risk of too much down time during the day, so we decided we would not sit around the pool at the hotel all day! Instead we had planned out an itinerary for each day with some mild team activities to allow us to explore the area and prevent lethargy. No sleeping in on this team! First up was a visit to Minnehaha Falls. We rented 4-seater Surrey Bikes to do a nice leisurely team ride around Minnehaha Park and then view the falls. Well, it didn't quite go as planned. The girls

decided they were going to race! Off went the first bike, with the second one in hot pursuit. Unfortunately, the coaches and parents were a few bikes behind and were left in the dust. The problem was the girls did not pay attention to directions, and the parents weren't given directions. Instead they were just told to follow the lead bikes. What a disaster! The girls missed a very early turn and ended up taking the entire group 10 miles farther than was originally intended. It was exhausting! What was supposed to be an easy 40 minute ride turned into over 2 hours of major exercise! Not exactly the way we intended to begin our first day of competition at the biggest, most important tournament of our season! Here we are smiling and thinking about how fun this ride is going to be...



After a delicious lunch at Cap's Grille, which some say is the best barbecue in Minneapolis, we headed to the convention center to begin play. We started out as the 41st seed overall and knew the day would bring great competition. Although our region is a little weaker than most, we were hopeful



that this year we would be in a better position to compete with these national level teams. If our team had been playing up to par, we certainly would have been competitive.

Unfortunately, we never found our groove and did not perform anywhere near our ability. It was a disappointing first day. We went 0-3 and left the gym feeling deflated and a little embarrassed.

June 26, 2014

Rise and Shine Shockwave! We left the hotel at 8:30am for a team breakfast at Fat Nat's Eggs. Our schedule was a little different today so we didn't have as much downtime. We were scheduled to begin at 1:30pm. So there was no activity today except for team breakfast.



We arrived at the convention center an hour before we were set to play. This year the courts stayed on schedule so things were much nicer. We had 2 matches scheduled to complete Round 1. We fully expected to win both of these matches which would have moved us up in the seeding. Things did not go as planned. We went 1-1 on the day. Our play was better than it had been on the first day, but our team still was not playing our game. At least we left the gym feeling better and secured our first win of the tournament. With

that win, we moved up 1 spot to the 40th overall seed. Our attitude was one step at a time, so we felt encouraged!



June 27, 2014

The third day started out GREAT! We had originally planned on exploring the Chain of Lakes, but the weather had turned bad so we made alternate arrangements for an indoor activity. We found a facility near our hotel that offered a fun team game called Whirly Ball. None of us had ever heard of it, but it sounded like great fun, so we decided to give it a try. It's a cross between basketball, lacrosse, and hockey all while riding bumper cars. Talk about fun! We rented a private court for 1 hour for our team and played 4 rounds. This was an awesome team bonding event with the right mix of activity level and competitiveness. We also played some pool, darts, and had a nice lunch. Then off we headed to the convention center! Here we are at Whirly Ball...



So we started Day 3 of competition hopeful that we would play our game and at least be competitive. We did play better and we found moments where we knew we were playing to our potential, but for whatever reason, we weren't able to sustain. We lost both matches in Round 2 and dropped to 45th. This is when things really fell apart. For all of you coaches, I am certain that you would not make the same mistake that I did, but honestly, I never thought I would do this either, so I

will tell you the story so you can learn from my terrible blunder. My team had just lost the second match with a very disappointing second set score of 5-25. I was unhappy to say the least. It was late afternoon and I believed in my head that we were done for the day and the challenge brackets would begin on the final day before heading to our actual single elimination bracket. Clearly I had looked at the schedule wrong. But instead of stopping by the monitors to check the schedule... which I always do at big tournaments... I walked right by them and herded my team out of there to get back to our hotel. BIG MISTAKE! ALWAYS check the monitors to make sure you are done for the day BEFORE you leave the convention center. If you are tied up coach, have your chaperone do it! Just make sure someone does it! We drove the 17 miles back to our hotel, sent the kids to the shower and started to regroup so we could have a team dinner. Thank goodness I didn't wait any longer to check the schedule. I pulled up AES on my phone and could not believe my eyes. It was 6:38pm and I was seeing that we were scheduled to play our challenge bracket at 7:30pm THAT NIGHT! I was frantic. We grabbed 4 kids out of the shower, threw on our dirty jerseys and rushed back to the convention

center. When I saw what time we were supposed to play, I dropped everything and jumped into action. But there was a piece of me that feared that I had overlooked more, so while we were on the way, I pulled up AES again. Much to my dismay, I saw that we were supposed to be the work team for the 6:30 match. Clearly we had missed our work assignment and I knew we would be assessed a penalty. We arrived at the convention center and



sprinted to our court. Fortunately, the court was running a bit late so we got there right as the first set was wrapping up. We took over as the work team and I explained to the official what had happened. They were very understanding and appreciative that we had rushed back. But, we were late and would be assessed a penalty on our next match. We were officially 25 minutes late according to the

start of the match so we automatically lost 25 points on our next match. That was a terrible blow. I single-handedly cost my team the first set 0-25. Learn from my mistake! Don't leave without checking the monitors! We fought hard to try to take that team 3 sets, but fell short and lost in the second set. That loss kept us 45th and sent us to Flight 7 for the final day.

June 28, 2014

Our final day we were determined to redeem ourselves. We made a commitment that losing was not an option and we would do whatever it took to pull out the bracket win. Fortunately we did just that. We won both of our matches in Flight 7 and won the Flight. Our final finish was 45th. Not at all what we had planned or hoped for, but we were happy to finish the 2014 season with a win. Nationals is tough. Last year this team was out of the league physically. This year, our team didn't show up mentally. It takes both to be competitive on the National level. We know we have work to do, but we also know that we have what it takes to improve. Even with the losses, this tournament is worth it. If your team has the chance to represent the ERVA at Nationals, accept the bid! You won't regret it! Your players will cherish the memories and the opportunity to compete with the best teams in the nation! We had a ball... even in spite of one debacle after another! I am honored and humbled to coach such a great group of girls. To the 10 of you that made this season possible, my hat goes off to you! Way to go Shockwave!

Coach Kim

