

Plantation volleyball player wins junior beach championship By EMMETT HALL SUN SENTINEL

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Please keep me updated on any local upcoming or recent events that you would want covered.

Thanks!

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By EMMETT HALL SUN SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT | SEP 08, 2021 AT 1:38 PM

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Eli Mowry, left, and Elijah Lam display their gold medals after winning the USAV Beach National Championship in the boys' 12U division. (SoFlo Volleyball Academy/Courtesy)

For Plantation resident Elijah Lam and his partner Eli Mowry it was a summer to remember as the duo claimed the 12U USA National Beach Tour Junior Championship at Fort Lauderdale Beach. The event featured six days of competitive beach volleyball.

The 12U and 16U boys and girls age groups kicked off the festivities during the first three days of the tournament with 187 teams vying for gold.

The 14U and 18U age groups for boys and girls were center stage for the final three days. In the past, California has hosted the event but the state lockdown provided Fort Lauderdale with the opportunity to be the host venue.

Both Lam and Mowry have good volleyball genes flowing through their system.

Lam is a 12-year-old who has been brought up in the sport by his parents, Audie and Tania, who are the owners of SoFlo Volleyball Academy based out of Plantation and Davie.

Mowry is the son of Association of Volleyball Professionals player Chad Mowry, who is the owner of Gulf Coast Volleyball Club out of Redington Shores in Pinellas County. Both clubs have indoor and beach volleyball programs.



The 12U teams played the first two days competing against 14U clubs in pool play before going into a 12U playoff bracket the third day.

Lam and Mowry went 4-0 during the playoff run to clinch the title. The talented duo had to battle the elements of heat and wind but were able to make the necessary adjustments to take home the gold.

Lam is a multi-faceted athlete who plays soccer, tennis and basketball but lists volleyball as his favorite sport. He has been playing volleyball for five years and can play multiple positions on the court ranging from an outside hitter to a setter.

“I like playing the indoor game and beach volleyball because they are very different and both are fun,” Lam said. “Playing against the 14U teams in pool play was challenging but was really a lot of fun. It prepared us for the single-elimination round on the third day. We played four matches, best of



three, that day and went 4-0. We had a couple of tough matches during the tournament but played really well that last day.”

There was strong chemistry displayed between Lam and Mowry on the courts. Having played together before was a positive factor during the championship run.

“Eli has strong skills and passes very well and we played out in Clearwater and became friends,” Lam said. “This was our second tournament together. We were both very happy to win this event. We are looking forward to playing in future tournaments together. Next for me is the indoor volleyball season. It’s all about volleyball.”

During Day 1 and 2, USA Volleyball hosted the first Adaptive Beach Volleyball Training Camp and Tournament.

Beach ParaVolley athletes were able to put on display their talented skills with the U.S. Sitting National Team Paralympians Nicky Nieves, Maddy Ball and Paralympian Chris Seilkop highlighting the field.

Ball won the Best of Beach women’s division followed by Skye McDermott and Berklee Andrews, while Dave Newkirk, Seilkop and John Kriescher were the top three men’s finishers.



The top finishers in the 2021 USAV Beach National Championships in the boys' 12U division show off medals and goodie bags at Fort Lauderdale Beach. (SoFlo Volleyball Academy/Courtesy)

The event was well attended in spite of concerns with COVID-19. Masks were not required for the players on the court. The wearing of masks was required at the registration, merchandise and officials' tents. All beach volleyballs were sanitized and social distancing was part of the safety protocols.

The Junior Championships hosted by USA Volleyball is the largest beach competition of the season. Over the last five years, beach volleyball has become the fastest growing sport for NCAA Division 1 athletes. Since 2020, there are over 100 colleges that offer beach volleyball and another 100 colleges that are looking to add beach volleyball to their athletic programs in the next four years.

The junior beach volleyball athletes had an opportunity to fine-tune their skills before the start of the tournament.

The USA Volleyball's Beach National Team Development Program offered its first USAVplay Beach camp for boys and girls ages 9 to 15 for three days leading up to the tournament.

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