

# What to Expect From 'Worth It'

by - David Cordes

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A few years ago, in an e-mail from a friend, this comment jumped out at me:

*"Last year 'my daughter' was on the "C" team. They put her on "B" this year. Hopefully, this means that the club league and the volleyball camps were worth it."*

While composing a response I got to thinking - What does he mean by 'worth it'? After all, I'm a volleyball coach, and a club director, and a parent, with two girls playing club volleyball - one in my club, and one for another club. Is there a point where the time and money commitment needed to play club volleyball outweighs the advantages of playing club volleyball? As a parent, what does 'worth it' mean to me?

Does my daughter have to become a starter on varsity, or on the 'A' team or the best volleyball player in town for club volleyball to be 'worth it'? In a word - No! Would I like my daughter to grow up to be a state champion or a super athlete who has college recruiters beating down our door? Of course I would. What parent wouldn't want that for their young volleyball player? But those things will depend on my daughter, and are not why I signed her up to play club volleyball.

My daughter loves to play volleyball. I am paying for her to play club volleyball because I love - that she loves to play volleyball. But I also love that she is fit, she is healthy, and she is spending her free time doing something she loves. She is hanging around with and forming friendships with like-minded peers who also value hard work, dedication, and commitment. And best of all, she is busy. Between school, homework and volleyball she is so busy that she isn't bored - and therefore isn't getting into trouble trying to alleviate her boredom. As a parent - that is what makes the time and money I commit to club volleyball 'worth it'.

As a volleyball coach and a club director, what should I tell parents to expect from their daughter's club volleyball experience that will make it 'worth it' to them.

I always tell the club parents and players - if you are here thinking that playing club ball will get you a spot on the high school team, or eventually onto a college team - then you are here for the wrong reasons. If you are playing club volleyball while only thinking about and planning on the 'next' team that you hope to play for - you will be short-changing both your club team and yourself. Focus on this team, this season; you can worry about your 'next' team - next season.

Additionally, any club coach or director who tells you that they can get you onto that 'next' team, be it high school or college or that they can get you a scholarship is lying to you. Unless that coach or director is the head coach or AD of the program they are promising you can play for. No one else can honestly promise those things and expect to deliver. There are too many factors involved in who makes what team, who gets scholarships, and who is successful and who is not, that are completely out of any club coach's or director's control.

So what do I tell a young player and her parents to expect from playing club volleyball?

You should expect to: Work hard, play hard, sweat, hurt, ache, laugh, cry, be happy, be sad, and hopefully to have a lot of fun throughout the process. You should expect to have days when you hate to go to practice and you should expect to have days when you can't wait to get there. You should expect to win some volleyball games and you need to be ready to lose some.

You should expect to learn new things. You should expect to have to teach things to others (including your coach). You should be open to new ideas and to adopting new things and making them comfortable old habits.

You should embrace making mistakes. Mistakes in practice are how you will learn what works and what doesn't. Mistakes are how you will measure your growth and development. You need to learn that in our gym - mistakes are mandatory!

You should expect to jump, hop, leap, dive, roll, slide, skid, run, skip, shuffle, sprint, crouch, spike, slam, tip, dink, pass, set, serve, shank, miss, hit, block, bump, crash, lift, shove, push, pull, weave, wobble, topple, stagger, swagger, accept, reject, laugh, cry, boast, brag, apologize, agonize, celebrate, commiserate, rejoice, revel, rebel, talk, hug, glare, grin, smile, sneer, talk, shout, yell, groan, grimace, and sometimes collapse in a heap with your teammates - laughing so hard that it hurts.

If you do all those things, you will learn how to be a better volleyball player. You will learn how to be a better teammate. You will learn how to win and how to lose. You will learn how to fail and how to succeed at a lot more in life than just volleyball.

You will make new friends. You will make new enemies. You will learn how to deal with both. And if you are lucky, and you are paying attention, you might just get to know yourself a little bit better.

And after all that, you might, get a chance to play volleyball in high school and/or college or beyond. But club volleyball can't promise you that. It can only promise you the opportunity to play. Where that opportunity takes you and what you get out of it - is up to you.