



CELlent NEWS

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**Xceleration
Volleyball Club**

John B. David, Editor

...And We All Lived Happily Ever After!

Special Postseason Edition: FAAUntastic Finishes in Orlando, JNs in Minneapolis

(Orlando, FL, June 19-26, 2017) – At the 2017 AAU Girls' Junior National Volleyball Championships in Orlando, FL, where words like magic, dreams, fantasy, wonder, and happily ever after are part of the everyday vernacular, Xceleration's 17Blue and 16Blue competed in the 44th annual installment of the largest volleyball event in the world.

Xceleration's teams or athletes may not have achieved what they had set out to do, such as winning a magical AAU title, committing to the dream school of their choice, or sensing the fantasy and wonder of the theme parks nearby, but the club nonetheless found the event an overwhelming success to officially end the 2016-2017 club season.

Xcel teams played solid volleyball, challenged teams at the highest levels of competition, and got a lot of good looks from many collegiate volleyball programs – big and small – from around the nation. These are all part of the process and journey that will continue to be nurtured in the years ahead. In the meantime, here's how the post-season tournaments unfolded for Xceleration's teams.



A Stacked Deck: 17Blue Gets Noticed, Illini Elite Takes the 17 Open crown

To open their 2017 AAU competition at the Orange County Convention Center, the second largest in the nation with more than 7 million square feet of space, 17Blue faced **Club V Black** from North Salt Lake, UT, followed by **OTVA Rox South Blue** from the Orlando/Tampa area, and then **Club West Nashville** from the Volunteer State on the first day of the event.

With 52 teams entered in this year's field, only the fourth-place finishers in the 13, Day 1 pools were eliminated.

(Continued on page 4)

J-ROSS SPEAKS

Dear Xceleration Families,

In my last words to you for the 2016-2017 season I wanted to give you our thoughts on post-season tournaments, as well as a recap of the season in general.

Post-Season Tournaments

As you know, we had 3 teams qualify for Junior Nationals (JN) this season (18Blue, 17Blue, and 15Blue). Congrats to those three teams for having a season that was good enough to qualify. You should be proud of that! Our 17Blue team, however, declined their American JN bid in order to accept an Open invitation to the AAU Nationals in Orlando. We have been asked about our policy and we are happy to explain it once again. At the 15, 16, 17, and 18 level, qualifying for JNs in any division is an accomplishment in our region. One of the club goals is also to assure that we put our players at those particular age groups into tournaments that maximize their exposure to college coaches, as well as continuing on with our season-long stated objective of placing them into tournaments where we feel they will be challenged on the court.

Therefore, we allow teams at those ages to accept Open Division and National Division JN bids only. Why? Because it is a fact that in most cases (and we do take this case by case), the American Division of JNs is a lower level of competitiveness than we feel our Blue teams are up to. How do we know this to be generally true? For one, we know and have examined for years now, how other regions across the country fill their American JN bid slots. In many regions they have "bid tournaments" where teams from that region who want to play one tournament for a bid are allowed to enter and play. In many cases, this amounts to 5 or 6 teams playing for a bid. As we stated earlier, in our region this is obviously not the case; our region is one of the stronger ones in the country. The smaller "bid tournaments" are prevalent across the nation.

Secondly, we have talked to many, many college coaches on this and it is almost unanimous that they feel our policy is a good one and the right one. The quality as we stated is MUCH better in Open AAU and the colleges are in much greater attendance there as well.

Season Recap – New Tournaments

Staying on that subject of competition but moving on to a season recap, this season we elected to enter our teams into two new tournaments and we were thrilled with both of them. The Triple Crown NIT tournament over the President's Day weekend was VERY competitive, definitely challenged our teams, and was extremely well-run. We are happy to announce that our 15Blue, 16Blue, 17Blue, and 18Blue teams have been invited back for 2018 (this is an invite-only tournament). We are also happy to announce that we have secured hotel accommodations within walking distance of the Convention Center. We are very much looking forward to returning to Salt Lake City.

The other new tournament on our schedule this season was the JVA West Coast Cup in Long Beach over the Memorial Day weekend. As with the NIT, this new tournament was everything we had hoped it would be. Filled with good competition and also very well-run. We have already committed to this tournament as well for next season and hope to send more teams than last year (including our White teams) to Long Beach.

We will once again be on the lookout for new tournaments that fit our club profile. If we find them we will always consider the best options for our players and their families (location, cost, etc.) before committing to them.

(Continued on the next page)



Club Director **Shannon Kussman** and Club Co-Owner **Jim Ross** flank Xceleration Class of 2010 alum **Megan Kehoe** at the AAU National Championships. Megan served as an assistant coach for Washington Volleyball Academy (WVBA) 16 Molten, based in Lynwood, WA. In the 2010 Girls' Junior National Championships held in Reno, NV, Megan was a member of the 18Blue team that finished 5th in the 18s National Division.



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All photos courtesy of Tomas Pineda, unless otherwise noted.

J-ROSS SPEAKS (CONTINUED)

Our Best Season Yet

Overall, we consider the 2016-2017 our best season yet as a club. The level of play on ALL our teams was good and more so, the **effort** demonstrated by all our teams was high level. At season's end, 5 of our teams completed the Power League regular season in the Gold Division of the NCVA in their respective age groups – a new high for Xceleration! Our White teams were competing and playing at a higher level than we have seen in the past and this, in particular, is a great thing for us to witness.

Parent Survey

We want to thank all of you who took the time to submit a Parent Survey form to us. We have read EVERY one of them and appreciate the kind words in many of them and accept the critiques in some of them. While we would love to be everything to all of you each and every season, we surely understand that this is just not possible. We will stumble along the way and when we do we hope that we react quickly to regain our footing, while at the same time learning from and understanding the issues that caused us to trip in the first place. Understand that our goal is to make club volleyball an exciting and rewarding experience for ALL our players. There might be different levels of the experience, but we surely want there to be positives in it for each and every player! We are committed to that and have already begun work on next season's objectives.

2017-2018 Season

Speaking of which, work did indeed begin some time ago on the 2017-2018 season. **With that in mind, we are VERY excited about some new developments for Xceleration that we are in the final stages of completing. Keep an eye on our website and our Facebook page for news on these and other announcements for next season.**

Clinics

Summer clinics/open gyms have started and signup information is on our website. These are great opportunities for players to stay in shape over the summer, meet potential new coaches for next season, and prepare for their high school seasons.

For 8th graders and younger, Fall Ball resumes in mid-August. We will again hold our Pre-Tryout Clinics in October for ages 11-18, and finally for girls under 11, our Winter Workout will get started once again. Details will be posted on our website shortly.

Thank You!

Finally to parents... **THANK YOU!!** So very much of what we can accomplish rests on your shoulders. Getting your girls to practice. Keeping them motivated at home when they are exhausted, disappointed, frustrated and/or angry. Keeping them healthy. Volunteering to chaperone or bring food to tournaments. Rooting the team on. We cannot thank you enough for your efforts and support of Xceleration!!

Onward to 2017-2018. We will see you over the summer and then at our pre-season clinics in October. We cannot wait!!!

Jim



SUMMER CLINICS

Signups are now being taken online. Please visit our website to register

for clinics, beginning **July 9 through August 13.**



FALL BALL

For pre-high school players, our Fall Ball

program will be open to any players outside of the club. Fall Ball for 4th through 8th grades will be held from **mid-August to mid-October.**



PRE-TRYOUT CLINICS

For ages 11-18, Xcel will hold pre-

tryout clinics in four weekends in **October** for an opportunity to meet your potential coaches and teammates, as well as learn more about volleyball and the club in general.



WINTER WORKOUT

For ages 11-and under, athletes in

our Winter Workout program from **January through March** will develop strong foundational and fundamental skills, and build on it through these clinics with scrimmages and games!



SAVE THE DATES! 2017-2018 Tryouts November 4-5, 2017

The Ultimate Fieldhouse
2675 Mitchell Drive
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Online registration and other important information on clinics and tryouts will be posted on our website.

AND WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...

(Continued from the front page)

Teams advancing to Group 1 for Day 2 and Day 3 pools must finish in the top two to keep moving on. The 17Blue met its first-day goal by placing 3rd in the pool to advance, narrowly falling to Club V (in three sets) and to OT Rox South Blue, but gaining the winning edge against Club West Nashville (4-6, 42nd) in an 18-16 three-set thriller for the team's first AAU victory. Off the bat, the 17Blue were tested against hard-core competition, as Club V (8-3, 10th) and OTVA Rox (11-1, 6th) would eventually finish in 17 Open's top 10. Club V kicked off earlier this spring with real dreams of being able to qualify for the JNs but it didn't work out. OTVA didn't try its hand at JN Open this season, but has put up consistent results at the events it did participate in, including winning the USA at the Disney Showcase.

Day 2 of action at Disney, the happiest place on earth, started out in the dark. Within six points, the lights shut off in half the gym at Wide World of Sports Complex. The show must go on, and that it did. Against **Milwaukee Sting 17 Gold** (7-5, 7th), *Prepvolleyball's* predicted 4th-place finisher in this pool, extended 17Blue



to three sets to snag a win away from Xceleration. This team from Menomonee Fall, WI, had upset a nationally recognized KiVA team earlier this year at the JVA World Challenge in Louisville. So, while the Sting might not have consistent results similar to the KiVA victory coming into AAU, it's a group that can pull off an upset at any given time and shouldn't be overlooked by any of the top contenders, according to *Prepvolleyball*.

The next Xceleration foe **Illini Elite** (12-1, 1st), at No. 20 nationally, was definitely not a slouch. It has been a somewhat surprise team in 2017, according to *Prepvolleyball*, "We knew this bunch should be better this spring, but they have exceeded expectations and show up in Orlando as a solid contender." *Prepvolleyball* followed, "A few players can take over matches at times, while others



AAU FUN FACTS

- Largest volleyball event in the world since 2012.
- 35,000+ athletes from across the country.
- 80,000 spectators.
- 9,000 coaches.
- 600 college coaches (a new record).



Top: **Tatiana Luevano**

Left to right: **Terra Murray, Shruti Mangipudi, and Jenna Hahn**

All photos courtesy of Tomas Pineda.

Club information courtesy of Prepvolleyball.com



AND WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER... (CONTINUED)

add versatile and valuable pieces.” The 17Blue was able to take a set from Illini Elite but, in the end, the Elite proved to be more than just a contender. The Bloomington, IL-based team went home as the 17 Open Division tournament champions in Orlando.

The 17Blue needed to salvage the day and the buzz around the gym was the number of rivals playing on just the second day. Teams from the same areas, and those who have faced each other a handful of times already were playing to kick each other out, to expose the weaknesses they’ve found throughout the season. The 17Blue met Redwood City’s **Red Rock** (5-4, 25th), rebuilt after qualifying for 16 Open last year at JNs in Indianapolis. With five players back from that roster, Red Rock overwhelmed the 17Blue, as the two previous three-set matches earlier during the day may have knocked the 17Blue’s sails when it collided with its Bay Area rival. This day’s win-loss record eliminated the 17Blue from advancing to the top echelons of the tournament bracket, but today’s competition tested its mettle against three more tough opponents.

Club Director **Shannon Kussman** said, “We competed and we played hard. Though we didn’t get to 25 or to 15 first in these matches, we are **THIS** close,” as she held her thumb and index finger less than an inch apart.

On Day 3, the 17Blue fell to Louisville, KY’s **Mid-America Volleyball Association (MAVA) Select** (10-2, 21st) and McLean, VA’s **VA Elite** (5-5, 29th) before thumping Sterling, VA’s **NVVA Ice Elite** (1-9, 38th). More times than not, MAVA is going to make teams beat them, not give points away. And that’s exactly what this team did against 17Blue by methodically being efficient in its victory.

On get-away day, the 17Blue tussled with Tampa Elite (4-7, 31st); the Florida team with a few physical hitters. This team tried its hand at qualifying for the Open for Junior Nationals at the Disney Showcase, but didn’t fare too well, according to *Prepvolleyball*, but the Elite played well to eliminate the 17Blue and end their 2017 season.

Overall, the 17Blue met the best of the best and did a fantastic job staying in contention and within striking



AAU FUN FACTS

- 2,400 teams across 33 divisions of competition, including an international division with teams from China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Israel, Germany, Peru, and Slovenia.
- \$52 million in economic impact to Central Florida.
- 172 courts between ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex and Orange County Convention Center (2nd largest convention hall in the country, after Chicago’s McCormick Place).



Bottom: **Chiara Gatto, Gretta Kirkby, and Amaya Wilson**

Right: **Ingrid Lam and Miranda Marshall**



AND WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER... (CONTINUED)

distance in most of their matches. It finished 35th in the 52-team pool and stood toe-to-toe against many tough teams in the field. Four of the teams that the 17Blue faced finished in the top 10 in the 17 Open with a combined record of 38-10, or a .792 clip. They took a set against the eventual champions Illini Elite. Only three of the 10 teams they faced finished below the .500 mark. And these 10 teams collectively posted a 67-43 record, or a .609 winning slate.

Stealth Mode: 16Blue's Depleted Roster Competes, Asics Munciana Ninjas Snatch 16 Open title with a perfect record

In the 16 Open field where 16 of 66 teams are ranked among *Prepvolleyball's* top 60, the 16Blue knew that they needed to be on top of their game from start to finish. The team started the tournament against Central Mississippi's **Infinity** (7-5, 28th), a team that made a name for itself at the Lone Star Classic National Qualifier in Dallas when it placed 15th out of 27 and challenged eventual champion TAV deep into the third set. The match was tight throughout as the 16Blue were on fire with tremendous energy. Neither team was able to extend leads by more than four points, but then the **Infinity** pulled away late in the match. It was much of the same tight game in the second set before the Mississippi team dispatched the 16Blue.

In the 16Blue's second match, a stingy defense, coupled with fine ball control, allowed **Tri-State Elite** (9-2, 22nd) to go fast to the pin. The combination was just too much for the 16Blue to overcome. The squad from Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky came into the tournament with an impressive pedigree – it won the 2017 JVA World Challenge in April, finished 5th in the 15 Open in last year's AAU National Championships, and sported a 38-10 record on the season. It's no wonder that legendary Penn State coach Russ Rose lurched behind the parents in the back corner of the court.

The team closed the first day of competition against Michigan's **Unified VBC** (5-6, 35th). The level of play continued to accelerate and team looked to making a dent in the competition on Day 2.

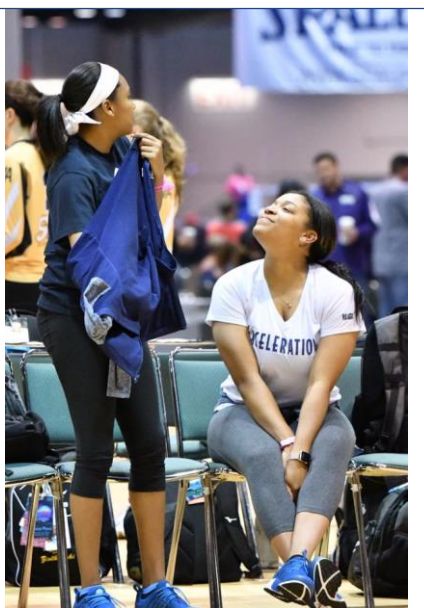


Top: **Katie Gunderman**

Left photos, top to bottom: Coaches **Lindsey Ray**, **Jade Sanford**, and **Leslie Ray**.

All photos courtesy of **Tomas Pineda**.

Club information courtesy of **Prepvolleyball.com**



AND WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER... (CONTINUED)

Day 2 looked promising for the 16Blue as it posted its first victory against an international contingent from Ecuador in **Club JML** (3-7, 64th). It was the team's strongest performance by far, finishing 2nd in the pool. However, the 16Blue quickly ran into **Alamo Premier** (5-5, 56th) to end the momentum. The team struggled back up the hill to stretch the match against Huikahi VC Red (2-9, 62nd) in three sets, which included a 27-25 comeback in the second set. True to its Hawaiian translation "One Team," Huikahi took the third, 15-10.

On Day 3, the gritty 16Blue competed. Against St. Charles, MO's **MOVA** (5-7, 53rd) and **Carolina Rogue** (5-5, 56th) from the Palmetto State, the 16Blue surrendered the first sets in each game but promptly battled back to force the matches to go the distance. McLean's VA Elite (4-6, 56th) closed out the day with a win over the Blue.

The 16Blue redeemed an earlier setback against Alamo Premier with an exciting 17-15 three-set win before MOVA again topped the 16Blue to end the 2017 season in 54th at AAU.



Top: Kelly Jordan and Alaysia Mitchell.

Left, top photos: Asha Johnson and Ainsley Fleming-Wood.

Left photos: Ali Silva, Elizabeth Cannon, and Kinsey Anderson.



AND WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER... (CONTINUED)



On to the Big Stage: 15Blue Slides, Kokoro Wins Title

(Minneapolis, MN, June 26-29) – Soon after the last point closed the 2017 AAU championships in Orlando, the 15Blue tossed its first serve nearly 1,600 miles away at the Minneapolis Convention Center for the 2017 Girls' Junior National Championships. The 15Blue qualified for the 15 National Division, which is considered the next level after Open in the USAV hierarchy. The year's field consisted of 48 teams that earned bids, in some form or another, through their regions. Similar to last year's format, 48 teams started in eight pools of six and play for two days before halving the field. Twenty-four teams remain in contention on Day 3 to play three-team pools to eliminate eight teams.

That night, eight Challenge matches for the top two finishers in each pool determine the eight-team Gold Bracket to be played on Day 4.

Prepvolleyball.com published a pre-tournament preview and picked its Favorites, Contenders, and Other Teams to Watch in the 15 National Division. It also named one Dark Horse... Xceleration 15Blue!

"Xceleration has two terrific tiny setters in **Ruby Santos** and **Chloe Ortega** and two capable, terminating outsiders, 6-1 **Madi Risch** and 5-11 **Caroline Gallagher**. The NorCal team believes a Top 10 finish is possible."

A top 10 is certainly a goal, but getting medals would be even sweeter. The 15Blue, one of the two clubs representing the NCVA (with Vision 15 Gold being the other), took a step toward the goal after the first day of the contest and moved on to remain in contention. The 15Blue played extremely well as it was one of only 12 teams in the National Division that finished the first day with an unblemished 3-0 record, with two of those matches in three sets. The



15Blue outlasted Spokane, WA-based **Performance** (1-8, 43rd), Peoria, AZ's **Arrowhead Rage** (5-5, 30th), and the **OT S. Rox Blue** (8-3, 9th) from the Orlando/Tampa area.

The matches on Day 2 were even tougher as the 15Blue fell to **ECVC Hurricanes** (4-5, 42nd) from Martinez, GA, and **Kokoro Volleyball** (11-0, 1st) from Hudson, WI, which remained perfect through two days of competition at 5-0, and were the eventual champions with an 11-0 record. Dropping just two sets over four days and completing their season with a 64-25 overall record, the championship crown for Kokoro came one week after it placed 13th in 15 Open at AAU Nationals. The 15Blue ended Round 1 pool play in 2nd.

On Day 3, the 15Blue challenged Pompano Beach, FL's, **Tribe 15 Elite Dean** (5-4, 5th), Iowa City's **Iowa Rockets** (7-2, 5th), **Madfrog Blue** (7-3, 17th) from Plano, TX. Two of the three matches went the distance, with 15Blue falling in the third set of both matches, thereby knocking the team out of medal contention and into a five-game skid going into Flight 1 against **The Storm** (3-5, 21st), another team from Plano, TX

The 15Blue could not weather the Storm on the last day of competition and closed out their Junior Nationals in 23rd with a 3-6 record.

Bottom: Two of the 15Blue's matches were live-streamed on video at the 2017 Junior Nationals in Minneapolis. Smile ladies and get ready for the close up!





SHINING STARS

The following is a reprint from PrepVolleyball.com's report on June 19 and June 24 at the 2017 AAU Girls' Junior National Championships.

It's time for the Star Search from Orlando. Here are the players that Prepvolleyball saw courtside who stood out the most. We start with the best of the best called Supernovas and continue with Others Who Shined.

Xceleration's Shining Stars



17Blue Breyan Ashley



16Blue Nadia Pace



Star Search: Day 1 from AAU Nationals, 17 Open

Written by: Sloane Green in Club Features
June 19, 2017 0



Abryanna Cannon led her team from way down in the third to a victory

The 17 Open tourney is underway at AAU Nationals. We searched high and low for these Monday standouts:

Star Search AAUs: Day 1 16 Open and Premier

Written by: John Tawa in Club Features
June 24, 2017 1 Comment



WVA striker Maddie Koch made a big first impression yesterday in 16 Open

After a morning of sleeping in, followed by intense tanning and a getting a start on that summer reading list (yeah right!), the 16s sauntered in to the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando Friday afternoon ready to start to make their mark on AAU Nationals. The field for both 16 Open and Premier robust, we couldn't see close to everyone. Here are those players whose glimmering greatness caught our eye:

Photos courtesy of **Tomas Pineda** and **Prepvolleyball.com**.



The following is a reprint from PrepVolleyball.com's report on June 28 at the 2017 USAV Girls' Junior National Championships.

From Prepvolleyball's Star Search in Minneapolis, Prepvolleyball saw outstanding performances from Xceleration.

Xceleration's Shining Stars



15Blue Madi Risch



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/ Star Search: Junior Nationals Day 3 15 USA and National

Star Search: Junior Nationals Day 3 15 USA and National

Written by: John Tawa
in Club Features, Uncategorized | June 28, 2017
0



Sommer Daniel (4) helped Iowa Rockets get to the Gold Bracket in 15 National

Teams in the 15 USA and National divisions

Photos courtesy of **Tomas Pineda** and **Prepvolleyball.com**.



KUMBAYA IN MINNEAPOLIS!

A setter has to have "good hands," which are among the many characteristics and qualities of being successful in this position. 15Blue's **Ruby Santos** definitely has the fingers to tickle the ivories and consistently deliver a good ball to hit.

Photos courtesy of **Paul Harrison**.



Yes 2018



Xceleration is proud to announce four recent commitments from our athletes (and coach) to play in college. Congratulations!



Breyan Ashley
17Blue

St. Mary's College
Moraga, CA

Dublin High School
Dublin, CA



Ingrid Lam
17Blue

University of Chicago
Chicago, IL

California High School
San Ramon, CA



Miranda Marshall
17Blue

Dixie State University
St. George, UT

Vanden High School
Fairfield, CA

When you're at the sports banquet with your sister and she signs to play with your college team next season... I wouldn't have it any other way you worked for this 🐾... it's official she has signed with CSUEB... 17 Blue assistant Lindsey Alyce Ray!

Leslie Ray



The following is a reprint from the fifth annual Bay Area 75 — SportStars' countdown of the top 75 Bay Area athletes from the 2016-17 school year. The only criteria used in generating the list were that the athletes must be from one of the nine Bay Area counties, and they must have played in a sport which culminated in a sanctioned section title or reached a national-level of success (i.e., won a national championship or been appointed to youth national team).



54. BREYAN ASHLEY

Dublin – Volleyball – Junior
Ashley led Dublin to the forefront of the East Bay as the Gaels more than held their own during their first season in the East Bay Athletic League. Ashley was a lights-out offensive threat, finishing with 523 kills (5.2 per set) and a hitting percentage of 41.3. She added 50 aces, 48 blocks and 120 digs for the 26-6 team.



Photos courtesy of **Tomas Pineda** and **SportStars Magazine**.

SUMMER CLINICS

NOW THROUGH AUGUST 13

Sign up for Xceleration's 2017 Summer Clinics that will be available to all who are interested in continuing to work, improve, or fine-tune their games during the off-season.

Summer Clinics will be held at Xceleration's Concord Facility, located at 3911 Laura Alice Way.

Costs to attend will be \$25 per session. Fees are payable directly to the coach at the start of each session. You will not be billed by the club. Cash is strongly preferred; credit cards not accepted and there will be no online payment options available.

Reservations that are cancelled less than 48 hours prior to the session time and date will incur a \$25 charge.

Preregistration is required, as spots are reserved on a first-come first-serve basis. Sign-ups are now being taken through Xceleration's [2017 Summer Clinics Registration](#) page to indicate the sessions that you would like to attend. If sessions are full, you will be placed on a waitlist.

YOU MUST GO TO YOUR AGE GROUP ONLY (i.e., age division you will be playing in the upcoming 2017/2018 season).

CLINIC SCHEDULE

Age groups and times for sessions beginning **July 9 through August 13** are listed below. Please arrive at least 10 minutes before your designated session.

Tuesdays

- 16s : 6:30 : 8:00 pm
- 18s : 8:00 : 9:30 pm

Thursdays

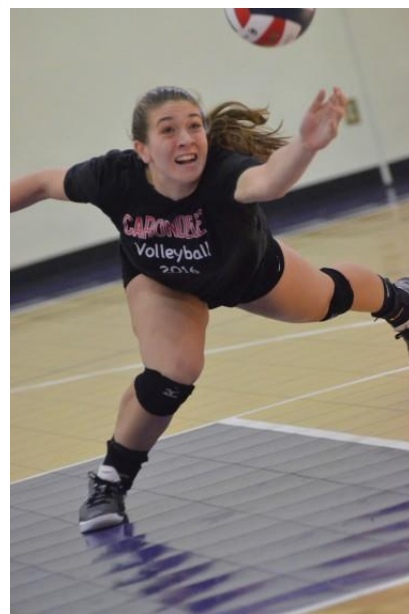
- 17s : 8:00 : 9:30 pm

Wednesdays

- 15s : 8:00 : 9:30 pm

Sundays

- 15s : 11:00 am :12:30 pm
- 16s : 12:30 : 2:00 pm
- 17s : 2:00 : 3:30 pm
- 18s : 3:30 : 5:00 pm



Thank you and much love to the Xceleration coaches and staff for all your dedication to training our girls over the years and supporting their future goals. JVA was a wonderful end to a great run for the 18B family and we look forward to watching future players and Xcel's continued rise. **Win or learn, never lose!**

Delaney's Mom, Suzy McKee

ALUMNINEWS

A Whole New Ballgame, Part 2!

Paul Harrison spent some time with our alumni, discussing how they have made adjustments transitioning to sand. In this second of the two-part series, Class of 2014 teammates Dora Beilin and Hailey Lindberg get their turn to talk about their game. Dora is at Cal Poly SLO and Hailey is playing both beach and indoor at Santa Clara.

How easy or hard was it to transition from indoor to sand?

DORA: The transition was easier because I had great coaches at Xcel who encouraged me along the process.

HAILEY: One of the biggest transition was to adapt to different strategies and learn how to compete for a point.

Is there a skill you need to improve to be successful in sand? What areas of the game did you feel that you needed to strengthen?

DORA: You have to be a well-rounded player including being mentally tough. Focusing on the defensive aspect of the game is a must.

HAILEY: I find that ball control is a major skill that one must possess to be successful. I also need to focus on passing and setting since I don't get much of an opportunity playing indoors.

With only 2 players on sand, conditioning is very important, what did you do to get prepared for sand?

DORA: Physical preparation is very important. We did a lot of plyometrics in the sand, which was a challenge because of the uneven base that sand gives. We also did quite a bit of sprinting in the sand to build our endurance and quickness.

What do you like most about playing sand? What were the factors that made you decide to switch to sand, or play both sand and indoor?

DORA: I love being outdoors. Being able to play in the sand and on the beach is fulfilling to me. I am an advocate for the conservation of our environment and being able to play a sport that is near the beach and outdoors is very satisfying.

HAILEY: Partnership. I love the partnership that is created by playing beach volleyball. It makes me an all-around better player.



Photos courtesy of Paul Harrison.

Top right: Kaitlyn Zdroik (33) with Paul Harrison and Dora Beilin (20).

Sidebar, top to bottom: Dora Beilin vs. Stanford; Hailey Lindberg with Mom Jean, and Paul.



A Whole New Ballgame, Part 2!

Playing volleyball and hitting the books can be a challenge; how do you continue to be successful, especially those who are playing both indoor and sand?

DORA: Being a student athlete forces me to be more accountable with my time. I value my off time more. You have only certain hours and windows of time to get things done.

HAILEY: There is not much downtime. Time management is key. If I even have 20 minutes to spare, I utilize it to maximize my time spent doing something productive.

How are strategies the same or different? Do you prepare the same way as you would in sand vs. indoor? Do the elements factor in game strategy?

DORA: You definitely have many different elements to consider from the type of sand, sunny or shade, the wind, and different temperatures. You always have to make adjustments to these conditions.

HAILEY: I've learned to take deep breaths between every play. That seems to help me relax more.

What words of advice would you give to aspiring sand players wanting to switch from indoor to sand (or would like to play both)? What would they need to do to get themselves ready?

DORA: Work hard. Small steps of progress will work towards success. Adapt to the different.

HAILEY: Fail...fail a thousand times because that is where you will learn. Learn to be outside your comfort zone. Also, you may think you are physically fit when you enter college, but oh my, think again. Train hard!!

What has been the best thing about sand volleyball that you have experienced?

DORA: Playing in some great tournaments and overcoming my fears and challenge myself.

HAILEY: The partnership it creates. I love it !!

Where do you see yourself (or what do you think you will be doing) 5:10 years from now?

DORA: I see myself playing in high level tournaments but not professionally. I want to be able to pursue my career in business or outdoor recreation.

HAILEY: I love marketing and sales and hopefully I'll have a job that will allow me to live in San Francisco. I will still probably play beach volleyball, but I can see myself coaching and doing clinics, too.



Top: **Dora Beilin** (right) digs the ball in the 2017 Big West Conference Beach Volleyball Tournament in Pismo Beach, CA.

Sidebar, top to bottom: Selfie with **Dora** and **Paul**; **Hailey Lindberg**; and **Paul** with the **Lindbergs** and **Beilins**.

Photos courtesy of **Paul Harrison**.