



CELent NEWS

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**Xceleration
Volleyball Club**

John B. David, Editor

The Sweet Sound of... WHISTLES?!



Xceleration launches 2018 season at California Kickoff

At precisely 8 o'clock each morning and then again at 3 o'clock in the afternoon during the MLK Weekend, streams of volleyball fans across the Bay Area welcomed the sweet sound of whistles, which officially signaled the start of the 2018 competitive season for Xceleration and hundreds of other clubs at the NCVA California Kickoff.

To some, the Cal Kickoff and these small mouth-operated instruments serve as symbols of rebirth. Others may feel that the occasion represents newness or a chance to forget last season. Everyone starts out with a clean slate at 0-0. Everyone has a chance to show how each athlete, individually or as a team, has improved since the first day of practice in a tournament setting. And for some, to capture the eyes of college coaches who were on hand to evaluate potential new recruits.

"Hearing whistles for nearly 12 hours each day during the tournament was music to my ears," said **Jim Ross**. "It means that the games have begun, our teams are competing in the tournament, and they are also getting themselves ready for the all-important Qualifiers that are coming up. We couldn't be more pleased to finally see the girls on the competitive courts after months of preparation."

The club overall sported a 41-31 record



during the tournament and that's not a bad place to be at this juncture of the season. Four teams in particular also finished in the Top 10 of their respective divisions, with a fifth coming in at 11th Place. In addition, eight of 12 Xceleration teams ended their Cal Kickoff with a .500 record or better.

Final standings notwithstanding, it was a satisfying and successful showing by all Xceleration teams during the weekend. Some may have expected more and others exceeded expectations, but it allowed the coaches to further assess their players. The teams tinkered with different lineups, identified their strengths and shortcomings, and noted the gaps that need to be narrowed in the short time before one of the biggest events of the year – Power and Premier League Qualifiers (PLQs)! Are you ready for the next level? For Xceleration, that answer is a confident "YES!"



J-Ross Speaks

XCELLent NEWS will include messages on behalf of the ownership group in this regular feature of **J-Ross Speaks!**

Dear Xceleration Families,

I was able to catch 10 of our 12 teams in action over the Cal Kickoff weekend and I was very impressed with what I saw. A lot of great effort by players that was equaled in enthusiasm by their coaches. I know that players and coaches have been working hard to get ready for the upcoming season and it was nice to be able to hit the courts against some live competition. It serves to give us a barometer of where we are at this early point in the season.

And that is one point that I really wanted to make. At this point in the season it is best not to overblow any wins... and equally as important is not to overblow any losses. We talk to all our coaches prior to Kickoff about what we want them to gain from the tournament. Cal Kickoff is a time to see what your potential lineups might be like. Who works best with certain players? What might happen if the unexpected arose and you had to shuffle line ups? What have you been working on in practice that the team is struggling with? What have you been working with that they are getting and doing well? Answers to these questions and more are what are most important to come away from Cal Kickoff with. While we are happy when any of our teams win and disappointed with a loss, let's keep it all in perspective. What we saw was what we wanted to know and, as coaches and administrators, we were overall very happy with the weekend.

Your league qualifiers are coming up soon. These are very important tournaments for teams as it sets them up for the rest of the league season. Players need to focus hard on the upcoming practices and be ready to play at their best for this tournament. This is a tournament that you need to be peaking for.

Saturday lessons have been well attended and the reviews from players and parents have been excellent. These fill up fast so book early with Leslie to take advantage of this great opportunity to get some individual work in.



Photo Galleries

You can find more photos in the [Galleries](#) page of our website. If you would like to share your pictures during the season, please post them on our Facebook group page, and they may work their way into future issues XCELLent News.

Instagram

Xceleration has an Instagram presence where you can view our posts throughout the season:

XCELERATIONVBC



Instagram

Facebook Group Page

Xceleration has a group page! Join our [Facebook](#) fan page and participate in the discussion forum where you'll hear about our athletes and various ongoing events. Search for "Xceleration Volleyball Club" and ask to join. Or scan the QR code with your mobile device.



J-Ross Speaks

As you can probably tell from the stream of e-mails recently, we are in a very busy time for the club. Many thanks to club travel coordinator **Normie Pineda** for the work she has been doing to finalize our upcoming trips to Salt Lake City, Denver, Reno and Long Beach.

Please continue to work with her as this is deadline time for many of the contracts that we have had in place for months. Also, thanks to all of you for staying on top of your January, February and March installments of the club dues. Getting these on time is very important for the club and we appreciate your help in making that happen.

If you have not had a chance to check out **Tomas Pineda's** pictures on the club Facebook page and SmugMug, you are missing something fantastic! Tomas puts many, many hours into the tournaments to get as many of our players' smiling faces in front of his lens and then spends countless more hours making sure the pictures are up for all of us to see. Kudos on another great job!

I also hope you enjoyed XCELLent News #1 that came out earlier this season. A 50+ page bonanza and a great read. Stay in tune with **John David's** publications. They are fun to read and you garner a lot of useful information out of them. Thanks John!

A special shout out to Club Director **Leslie Ray** who has been putting in countless hours behind the scenes. She is as hard a worker as I have ever been around and she does it with a huge smile on her face. This club is in great hands with Leslie running the show. Give her a quick "thanks" next time you see her.

On a final note, if you watch or read the news lately you know that we are in a tough flu season. Please make every effort as an athlete to stay healthy and as a parent to keep your athletes healthy. Plenty of rest, eating healthy, drinking fluids and getting your exercise are all helpful. In volleyball we are all in close contact and sharing volleyballs so it is very important to keep your hands away from your face and to wash your hands regularly! The first thing you need to do after a practice or tournament match is to wash up well. Also, if you are ill, please do not try and be a hero and attend a practice. We will understand. We would rather have you take a practice off to get well, as opposed to bringing your illness to others.

Thanks for all the support.
See you on the courts.

GO XCEL!!

Jim



Xceleration wishes all of you a very Happy Birthday! May life lead you to great happiness, success, and hope that all your wishes come true!

JANUARY CELEBRANTS

Ellie Armato
Nicole Chamorro
Kylie Greenberg
Kendal Henry
Bianca Malaluan
Lauren Miller
Rochelle Mosley
Grayson Muraoka
Gracie Penman
Maddie Risch
Erin Thomas
Mafa Tuinauvai
Isabel Walsh
Danielle Whisnant
Dana Wong



12Blue: Getting Their Feet Wet

The youngest members of the club, comprised of 3rd through 6th graders and with many getting their first taste of competitive volleyball, did not back down against any of the more-seasoned opponents they faced at the Cal Kickoff. While the win was elusive during the weekend, the team got better and better as they got more touches, even taking a team to three sets.

“We played with a lot of energy and the girls had tons of fun,” Coach **Jeremy Swann** said. “Xceleration just has to catch up with other clubs that have had many of these young athletes in their programs for a while. I’m excited to see the girls get better with more reps in competition.”



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)



13Blue Moves Up 21 Places, Finishes in Top 5

Although the team was short-handed due to illness, the 13Blue was able to overcome this little road bump with an unbeaten record after Day 1 that included two wins in extra frames. The team went on to another victory on the second day of competition to complete a very successful 4-1 weekend and a 5th Place finish at the Cal Kickoff.

I am **EXTREMELY** proud of my girls this weekend! They showed determination, perseverance, and most importantly heart! Being able to go undefeated on Day 1 and finish Top 5 when we came in ranked 26th is a huge accomplishment! And I hope it shows just how hard they have been working in practice. Other teams across the Bay Area better look out because 13Blue is ready to take on all of the competition!

Coach Jade



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda and Anna-Lisa Muraoka.
[Click here to see more.](#)



13White Bounces Back with Two Three-Setters

Day 1 started slowly for the 13White but then followed it up with two satisfying three-set wins to finish the day in good shape for the second day. However, the Extreme and Whiplash knocked the 13White out of competition to finish at 2-3 and a 17th Place finish at the Cal Kickoff.

Coach **Lauren Jones** said, “We learned a lot of good things today and from each of our athletes on the squad. We’ll surely work on the things that we recognized during the weekend that will help the girls going forward.”



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda and Ashley Worsham.

[Click here to see more.](#)



14Blue Starts Slowly, Finishes Strong

From the get-go, the 14Blue faced one of the toughest clubs in the region, matching up against Vision to open their Cal Kickoff. Undeterred, the team continued to plug away during the MLK weekend to finally notch two straight victories and finish the competition in strong fashion.

Kayla and I are proud of how well you worked together to finish our first tournament with 2 hard-fought wins. We have already improved so much in practice, and are excited to see that show in competition. Now, it's time to continue to work towards accomplishing the goals we've set together for our season in the next couple of weeks leading up to Power League Qualifiers! Go Xcell!

Best,
Coach Mariah

The 14Blue recorded their first win of the season in a nail-biter against another perennial contender in Five Starz before closing the Cal Kickoff in a thrilling 15-13 third-set victory against Raven. These bounce backs should bode well for the team as they head into PLQs.



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

Moving Day for 14White

The 14White moved up 49 rungs up the ladder on the first day of competition to the 28th spot after winning 2 of 3 games that included a three-setter. The squad could have easily advanced to the Top 15 as they narrowly fell to Endline.

On Day 2, the team was derailed slightly in their effort to keep moving up after a heart-breaker against Whiplash who handed the team a close 28-30 setback. The 14White finished at 3-3.

Couldn't be prouder of 14W! We battled hard all weekend and advanced 32 spots, from 73 to 41. This team has so much heart and promise and I anticipate great things this season! Continue to work hard girls and you'll continue to see great success!

Coach Natasha



FROM NOTIFICATIONS



Natasha Gayle

3 mins



14W moves up from 77 to 28. Way to go ladies!

You and 1 other



Like



Comment



Share



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)



Great Potential for Amazing 15Blue Athletes

Barely scratching the surface, the 15Blue's potential to do great things will be something to behold as the season progresses. The squad maintained a Top 10 ranking throughout the weekend and finished in 5th Place with a gaudy 5-1 record at the Cal Kickoff.

Aside from its lone loss on the last day of competition, the 15Blue held its opponents to under 20 points in all but two of 11 sets over the weekend in Open competition – one to Absolute and one to Encore.

The 15Blue will now prepare for PLQs, which will present be a stiffer test and set the table for league competition.



Cal Kickoff was a great learning weekend for 15B. All 12 players contributed to a 5-1 record and a nice 5th place finish in Open only losing to the eventual 2nd place team. We knew our team was physically strong, but the intangibles that we uncovered were a welcome discovery. We were losing in our last set of the tourney down 3-12 and then woke up and put together a 10-1 run to tie it at 13. The potential of this team is so great and I can't wait to see what this season holds for these amazing athletes!

Coach Lucas



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

Dominant! 15White Shows How It's Done

The 15White was efficient to say the least. Out of the 17 sets the team played at Cal Kickoff, only three of those sets from three foes went beyond the 20-point mark. The team rattled off six consecutive victories that included two wins in three-setters.

The team's last match was again a three-setter in a battle of two unbeaten teams, which ended with the 15White on the short end of a 14-16 thriller! Nonetheless, the team is off to a great start with a 6-1 record coming into PLQs and will build on this wonderful Kickoff experience.

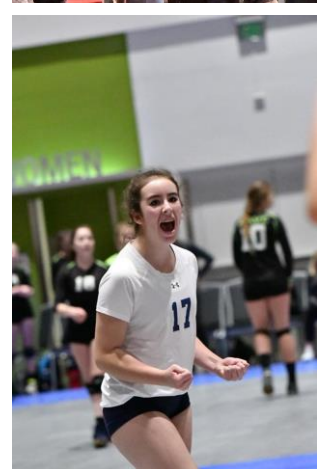


Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

All Eyes on 16Blue

Recently named on Prepvolleyball's top club teams in the nation, the 16Blue did not disappoint and looked to be in mid-shape form at the early part of the season. The squad posted a 4-1 record and notched a 9th Place finish at the Kickoff.

"Eyes will continue to be on this team," said Co-College Development Director **Paul Harrison**. "The girls got a lot of interest from college coaches this weekend after a successful campaign, including Junior Nationals, last year."



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

16White Goes the Distance

The first half of the Cal Kickoff was mixed for the 16White after going 2-2. But then the team got its mojo going with four straight victories in five games and did so in convincing fashion. With a 6-3 record to finish the Kickoff, the team is proud to claim that two of the three losses ended in three sets and were

extremely close in having it go the other way.

“This team will be ready for Qualifiers,” said Coach **Stephany Van Horn**. “We learned from this experience and will work hard to close out the matches, especially after splitting the first two sets.

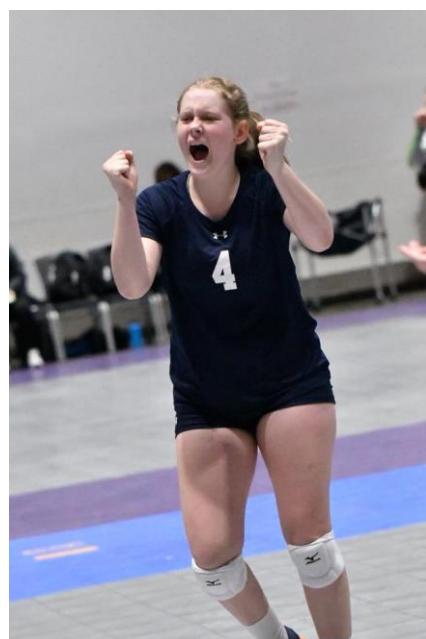


Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)



17Blue Gets an Early Test

After a 3-3 record and an 11th Place finish at the Cal Kickoff, the 17Blue will look to PLQs to do better in closing games. Two of its losses came in three-setters, which will require the team to learn how to buckle down and intensify its focus in the deciding sets.

“Learning from this weekend is a great team motivator. It’s good to get in those tough situations and it will help us in the long run,” Coach **Leslie Ray** said. “We’ll be better prepared for the competition in the weeks to come. Otherwise, the girls were absolutely exciting to watch.”



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

18Blue Knows What it Needs to Do

The 18Blue's 4-2 record at the Cal Kickoff was surely less than satisfying for a team that has set a high bar for the season. The team played to its potential by the closing the competition with three straight victories and is confident of carrying this momentum into the PLQs that will set the stage for league competition.

Coach **Andy Schroeder** said, "We'll be fine and the girls know what they need to do to get where they want to be. The season is early and this is a game of adjustments."



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

18White Faces Stiff Open Competition

The first day of Open competition was a bit of a challenge for the 18White as it faced the top teams in the region. The team played hard against Vision, City Beach and Rage that serves as an early-season test for the team.

The 18White was able to get back on track with a 2-1 record to end the

Kickoff on a high note before preparing for PLQs.

“Getting the draw that we got was something that we welcomed,” said Coach **Ramond Carreon**. “It’s how we improve exponentially.”

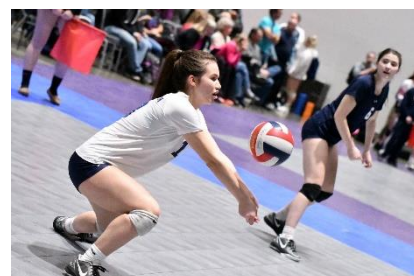


Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)



team bonding



16White



16Blue



Together
Everyone
Achieves
More

15White



Photo credits:
Lucas Abbott
Patrick Artiaga
Kristie Chamorro
Pia Mitchell
Dee Ortega
Leslie Ray
Frances Vaught



15Blue



18White



Xcel 17-1 Blue





ELLIE, GRACIE & KYLIE: ONE HOUSEHOLD, MANY INTERESTS

To learn something more about our Xceleration athletes, in this and in future editions of XCELLent News we feature our players with a common bond, those you would call “different flowers from the same garden.” They are someone who is more than just family, they are forever friends – they are SISTERS! Here we meet 12Blue’s Ellie and Grace Armato and 17Blue’s Kylie Brandt.

Xceleration is pleased to welcome and introduce three sisters who have joined the club this season – **Ellie and Gracie Armato** and **Kylie Brandt**. All are no strangers to volleyball. The girls primarily got their start at an early age from their mom Nicole, who coached volleyball at Kenilworth junior high, Casa Grande high school, and Absolute VBC before recently moving to the delta community of Brentwood from Petaluma.



*Top photos: **Kylie Brandt** slams a kill for the 17Blue at the California Kickoff!*

Left: Gracie, Kylie and Ellie had an early start in their volleyball training from Mom.

ELLIE, GRACIE & KYLIE: ONE HOUSEHOLD, MANY INTERESTS

The volleyball gene is a common thread that binds Ellie, Gracie and Kylie together, but each one has different goals and expectations with Xceleration, different paths in their volleyball journeys, or with life in general. For example, Ellie enjoys passing, Gracie relishes the teamwork, and Kylie loves meeting new people and always learning new things. And several years down the road, their crystal balls are saying that Ellie is still playing with Gracie (Dad Kevin has been doing some “encouraging” to get the girls to go to his old school Cal Poly SLO!!), Gracie will definitely still be playing volleyball and starting the college recruiting process for a D1 school (she has Harvard or Stanford on her radar!), and Kylie is playing in college, though the actual location is still foggy at this time.

In the near-term however, as the season begins with Xceleration, they are looking forward to playing in tournaments where we’ll see the



younger ones in their signature bows – Ellie in the backrow and Gracie getting better all year long – and Kylie bonding with her 17Blue teammates.

Having sisters on the same club is always a treat for the girls, but even better for Mom and Dad who will be aligning their busy schedules to get them to practices and tournaments. What also attracted them to play for Xceleration are the “great coaches” and the “amazing coaching staff” according to Gracie and Kylie, respectively.

With 12Blue coaches **Gayle and Jeremy Swann** this year, Ellie expects to work hard to improve her setting and playing the libero position, while Gracie will work on



*Top photo: **Kylie**, 16, is a junior at Heritage High School in Brentwood, where she earned All-League honors from the Bay Valley Athletic League.*

*Left: **Gracie**, **Kylie**, **Chase** (with his gentlemanly bow tie, of course), and **Ellie** take a few family pictures near Old Borges Ranch at the foot of Mt. Diablo.*





SUMMON YOUR INNER FIERCE.

And say goodbye to your inner fears.

ELLIE, GRACIE & KYLIE: ONE HOUSEHOLD, MANY INTERESTS

like to accomplish some amazing plays at outside! Naturally, Kylie has the most experience of the trio and has the following words of advice for her younger sisters as they learn the game, "Experience every moment and don't rush it – time flies by too fast!" Kylie imparted. She describes Ellie as hilarious and Gracie as sentimental and said, "Both are amazing little ballers! I would also like for them to get a taste of what has been my most memorable volleyball experience so far – that is, getting an open bid to Nationals (and it was in an exciting win over Vision!)."

The girls also have varying interests outside of volleyball. If they're not on the courts, you might see Ellie playing basketball or touch football, while Gracie is playing with friends or flying drones. Kylie said simply, "I'm sleeping."

Ellie excels in Math and Gracie in History. Ellie is good at building Legos and Gracie at telling jokes. Ellie's favorite book is *Stickdog*, enjoys listening to Demi Lovato, and devours pesto pizza! Gracie, on the other hand, enjoyed reading *Who Was Ronald Reagan*, listens attentively to Kelsey Ballerini, and could not live without hamburgers!

Lastly, Xceleration asked each one this question: if a genie will grant you one wish, what would it be? Ellie is attracted to beagles and labs, so she'd like to get a puppy someday. Of course, the sentimental Gracie gave us an "aww" response, "To see my Papa again." And for Kylie, a 4-foot vert!

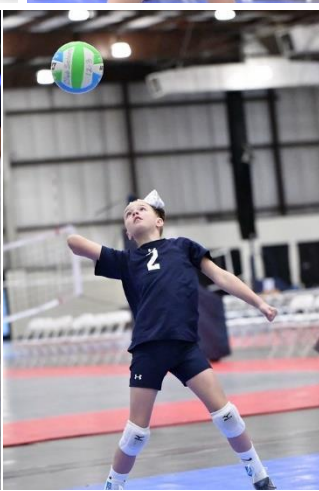
Their parents Nicole and Kevin are definitely running a busy household with their daughters' multiple interests. Luckily for Xceleration, volleyball is the common glue and we're happy to have them join us this year and in years to come.



Top photos: Ellie, 8, is 3rd grader and Gracie, 10, is a 5th grader at Krey Elementary School in Brentwood.

Photo courtesy of Nicole Armato and Tomas Pineda.

Sisters



XCELERATION

*Sisters
are different*
FLOWERS
from the same
Garden





Queens of the Court All-League / All-Area Selections

TOP BAY AREA TALENTS WITH XCELERATION

Xceleration is proud to congratulate all of its current players who have completed their high school seasons. These athletes were particularly honored by their respective leagues for standout performances during their season, resulting in All-League selections. This marks the fifth consecutive season (since we've tracked all-league selections) that at least 25 players on the club are all-league honorees.

Player/League/Class	Team	High School
<u>Bay Counties-East League</u>		
Asha Johnson (Jr) *	17Blue	Head Royce
<u>Bay Valley Athletic League</u>		
Kylie Brandt (Jr)	17Blue	Heritage
Kendal Henry (Jr)	17Blue	Heritage
Cierra Pope (Sr)	18Blue	Heritage
<u>Diablo Athletic League - Foothill</u>		
Kinsey Anderson (Jr)	17Blue	Northgate
Cameron Blakely (Sr)	18Blue	Campolindo
Chiara Gatto (Sr)	18Blue	Northgate
Meaghan Hohman (Jr)	17Blue	Miramonte
Tatiana Luevano (Sr)	18Blue	Miramonte
Grace Paulson (So)	16Blue	Las Lomas
Madison Risch (So)	16Blue	Acalanes
<u>Diablo Athletic League - Valley</u>		
Rebecca Jones (Sr)	18White	Berean Christian
Alaysia Mitchell (Jr)	17Blue	Clayton Valley Charter
<u>East Bay Athletic League</u>		
Sofia Aguilera (So)	16Blue	California
Breyan Ashley (Sr)	18Blue	Dublin
Brya Ashley (Fr)	15Blue	Dublin
Jenna Hahn (Sr)	18Blue	California
Catherine Helgeson (Jr)	17Blue	Carondelet
Shruti Mangipudi (Sr)	18Blue	Dougherty Valley
<u>Mission Valley Athletic League</u>		
Ruby Santos (So)	16Blue	James Logan
Tuamafa Tuinauvai (Jr)	18Blue	James Logan
<u>Monticello Empire League</u>		
Lindsey Reyes (Jr)	17Blue	Armijo
<u>Solano County Conference</u>		
Emily Maher (Sr)	18Blue	Benicia
Miranda Marshall (Sr) *	18Blue	Vanden
<u>Tri-Counties-Rock League</u>		
Claire Conners (So)	16Blue	Albany
Gretta Kirkby (Jr) *	18Blue	Albany
Bianca Malaluan (So)	16White	St. Mary's
Dayna Riggio-Kerley (So)	16White	Albany
<u>West Alameda County 12 League - Foothill</u>		
Nadia Pace (Jr)	17Blue	Bishop O'Dowd

*League MVP/Player of the Year.



EAST BAY TIMES

As announced by the East Bay Times Newspaper Group in January, it placed 8 Xceleration athletes on its "All-Bay Area News Group team!"

16Blue

- Sofia Aguilera, California

17Blue

- Claire Conners, Albany

18Blue

- Breyan Ashley, Dublin
- Cameron Blakely, Campolindo
- Chiara Gatto, Northgate
- Gretta Kirkby, Albany
- Cierra Pope, Heritage
- Mafa Tuinauvai, James Logan

Players eligible for the all-Bay Area News Group team come from leagues based predominantly in Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

Honorees included on these lists were obtained from publicly available information at press time. Please keep us updated if additional names should also be included on the all-league list. Congratulations to all on a job well done during the prep season!



Common Myths in the Volleyball Recruiting Process

Patty Costlow, Recruiting Coordinator, Munciana VBC

Let's examine three myths that aim to detour the athletes from achieving maximum success in the recruiting process. The goal here is to uncover a few 'facts' that spur on not only athletes but also Club Directors and Recruiting Coordinators to heed the 'call to action'. Action that leads to results.

I. CONTACTING COLLEGE COACHES

Myth: "I don't have to reach out to coaches; they will get in touch with me if they are interested."

FACT: Committed players contact an average of 15 schools.

OUR TAKE: Recruiting is an outbound process; not an inbound one! Outside of a very select group of players, the only way to ensure success in the recruiting process is to let coaches know you are interested. By reaching out to a broad range of schools, you are setting yourself up for success.

ACTION: Uncommitted athletes need to reach out to college coaches on a consistent basis, targeting schools that meet their academic goals as well as the right volleyball program for their level of skill. Club Directors need to provide a vehicle to enable their athletes to communicate with ease and target schools that meet their criteria. Recruiting Coordinators, come along side your athletes and teach them how to write an introductory letter in their own



words, encourage them through the process of sharing who they are with college coaches, and advise them on the level of schools to target.

II. VIDEO

MYTH: "I don't need to worry about video, the coach will come see me play in person."

FACT: Coaches are 11X more likely to send messages to players who make their video available.

OUR TAKE: While coaches will ultimately want to see you play in person, it's getting them to see you that is the challenge often forgotten. Video acts as the vehicle to get a coach interested in coming to see you play live. Just because a coach may be at an event you are attending doesn't mean they will see you. The best way to ensure they do is bringing your game to them before the event. Video is the key that can unlock the process and get your communication with a school started.

(Continued on the next page)



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)



Common Myths in the Volleyball Recruiting Process (continued)

ACTION: If you are serious about playing at the next level a current video showcasing your skills is a must! With all of the video capabilities that are available through a multitude of social media applications, this can easily be achieved. Club Directors, this is an opportunity to offer your athletes a value added service. Partner with a video service that can offer athletes options from filming practices to match highlights.

III. TARGET LIST OF SCHOOLS

MYTH: “If I can’t play ‘big-time’ Division I volleyball, I can’t play anywhere.”

FACT: Committed players add an average of 28 schools to their target list.

OUR TAKE: It can be easy to get tunnel vision in the recruiting process; to think there are only a few options at the next level. This could not be more incorrect! Being proactive by contacting a broad range of college coaches not only increases your chances of being recruited, but it broadens your horizons to schools that you may not have been aware of.



ACTION: Athletes, cast your nets far. There are approximately 1,780 schools from DI through NAIA that offer collegiate volleyball. Don’t focus on the division of the school – focus on the opportunity. To all of the Club Directors out there – research recruiting platforms that supply your athletes with tools that enable them to search out these opportunities. The potential for success is in your hands and your athletes are counting on you to lead the way. It is an investment that reaps great rewards!

In closing, I would like to thank VolleyballRecruits for their statistics that are based on proprietary data compiled from thousands of VolleyballRecruits members and for their assistance in providing content for this article.

To athletes & their families, Club Directors, and Recruiting Coordinators - **it is in taking action that success is realized.**

About the Author

Patty Costlow is the Recruiting Coordinator for Munciana Volleyball Club in Yorktown, Indiana. Munciana is a member club of the JVA.



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)



Coaches are **11x more likely** to send messages to players who make their video available

volleyballrecruits



Ways to Reach Out to College Coaches

Reprinted from USAVolleyball.com

The Crazy Season begins for college coaches and roster openings are abound. Follow these tips in your outreach.

For college coaches, the regular season has ended and the crazy season has started. Crazy season? This is the time of year when college coaches conduct end of the season player meetings and the Athletic Directors conduct end of the season coaches meetings.

Both of these meetings will result in roster openings; some spots will become available immediately, while other spots won't open up until after the New Year.

In both cases, players must reach out, and continue to reach out, to volleyball programs because college coaches recruit in the moment.

To this end, be sure to follow these 4 tips in your outreach:



1) Reach out first by email, not by a telephone call. College coaches don't like 'cold calls from recruits. Only call a volleyball program if the coach has requested that you give them a call.

2) Always include current video (either your NCSA recruiting profile or hosted by YouTube/Vimeo. By current, I mean within the last 30 days; either cut up your last couple of high school matches into a high light tape or film an early club practice or two.

3) Contact programs which are realistic to play at - If you don't have the physical talent to play in the Big 10 or Pac 12 conference, then you should not email those schools. Accept feedback from your club coaches, review what level programs have responded to you earlier as to determine what level of college volleyball is best suited for your abilities.

4) Expand your horizons. A great thing about collegiate volleyball is there are all types of programs, all across the USA. The further you are willing to travel from home to attend college, the better your opportunity to secure that roster spot (and scholarship).

As you employ these suggestions in your outreach to volleyball programs, remember that college coaches recruit Talent - If you have the ability to make their team better, then they will recruit you!



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
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Recruiting Tips From Volleyball Coaches

Reprinted from USAVolleyball.com

Hear directly from coaches that are continuously recruiting players for their women's volleyball programs.

1. Cary Wendell Wallin Former NCAA Player of the Year (Stanford), Director of Player Development at 949 Athletics in Orange County, CA

Don't just cut and paste a mass email when reaching out to schools. Communicate something personal or relate a connection to the school. Coaches like to see that you have done your homework about their program and their school.

Doing research about the school can be helpful. Make a chart listing things that are important to you as a player and student. Include things like location of the school, academic programs you like, the coach, possible playing time at your position, teammates, competition in your spot. Once you fill in the chart, your decision may become obvious.

2. Joe Sagula Head women's coach at University of North Carolina

"Call the coach yourself rather than having one of your parents do it. We want to speak to the players. Often, there's a nervousness for a kid who's doing it for the first time, but almost every coach knows that and will help you through it. Prepare for the call by writing down some questions. This way you won't run out of things to say. Some good questions include, "Are you recruiting my position?" and "Tell me a little bit about your school."

It's a good idea to take notes when you're talking to coaches so you'll remember what you discussed next time you call them. If you call and get the coach's answering machine, leave a message, but be positive and professional. Tell them who you are and say something like: "Sorry I didn't catch you. I'll try calling again tomorrow." Or: "Please let my coach know when would be a good time to call you." Be sure to speak slowly when leaving a voicemail. Young players are often nervous and when they rush through a message, it's hard for the coach to get all the information."

3. Rob Browning Head women's coach at St. Mary's College

"Include in your email to coaches a link to video of you playing. This is your chance to let a coach see you at your best, so choose a 5 to 10-minute segment (few coaches will watch more than a few minutes) of a match where you have a lot of great contacts. You might also include a short highlight video.

There is no need for fancy graphics, a personal introduction or even music (most of us mute the sound). A simple title with your name, graduation year and position will suffice – maybe GPA and height, too. Make it very easy to identify you on the court. A halo around you or an arrow pointing at you at the beginning of each play is very helpful!"



Coaches like to see that you have done your homework about their program and their school.

– Carrie Wendell Wallin



It's a good idea to take notes when you're talking to coaches so you'll remember what you discussed next time you call them.

– Joe Sagula

5 Recruiting Tips (continued)

4. Mick Haley

Head women's coach at University of Southern California

"Parents often get really upset by things they believe will negatively impact their kid's chances of getting a scholarship. Two in particular: The player's team isn't doing well, or the college coach only watched their team play for five minutes, then moved to another court.

I can tell you that neither of those things is worth getting worked up about. In the first place, coaches tend to know exactly what they're looking for – Is the player athletic? Can she move? Do her skills match what they need? – so it doesn't matter if the player's team isn't dominant or if the coach hasn't watched the player for an entire set.

What does matter? One big thing that the student/athlete finds a club that has a track record of placing players on college teams. When evaluating that, ask questions. Does the club have a recruiting coordinator? How many kids do they place each year off their 18s team, and where have they gone? Which college coaches call the club to ask about players? Does the club place players into scholarship opportunities, or does it place them at a school of their choice and then let them work out the financial arrangements?

If you're serious about playing in college, it's important to find a club that's experienced at networking so you open doors that will lead to your best options academically and athletically."

5. Daniel Fisher

Head women's coach at University of Pittsburgh

"It's OK to put some pressure on your top schools. If you really want something in life, go for it!

As recruiting progresses, ask where you stand on their list and what their timeline is. All too often, it's the college coaches that are pushing the timetable, so go ahead and turn it around on them – especially if you are considering spending money on an unofficial visit.

Warning: You might not get the answer you want, but it's better to know where things stand!"



It's OK to put some pressure on your top schools. If you really want something in life, go for it!

– Daniel Fisher



Include in your email to coaches a link to video of you playing. This is your chance to let a coach see you at your best, so choose a 5 to 10-minute segment of a match where you have a lot of great contacts.

– Rob Browning



If you're serious about playing in college, it's important to find a club that's experienced at networking so you open doors that will lead to your best options academically and athletically.

– Mick Haley

8

Ways to Gear Up for the Recruiting Process

Reprinted from USAVolleyball.com

As the college season enters the final month, the collegiate recruiting season is getting ready to start.

College volleyball programs will have immediate rosters spots and scholarship positions to fill. From NCAA Division I to Junior Colleges, injuries, academics, job changes, etc., all create opportunities which may not have been available one month ago!

Here are 8 ways to make sure that you are ready to be recruited, especially as a Junior and Senior:

Be registered with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](http://NCAAEligibilityCenter.com) and have your NCAA ID number listed on all your recruiting literature.

If you are Junior or Senior, have a current copy of your high school transcript and ACT/SAT test score ready to send to colleges.

Use the small window of time between the end of high school volleyball and the start of club volleyball to address any injuries or physical issues. Rest does not fix problems, it only masks them.

As a Senior, you need to be at the top of your game early in the club season. College coaches are looking to make immediate recruiting decisions on Seniors, so you don't have time to play your way into shape.

Use practice to improve your weaknesses, but always play to your strengths in early tournaments.

Re-examine your list of outreach schools. If you have been contacting a certain level of program and no school is getting back to you, then it

is time to adjust. Responses or lack of responses from a grouping of schools, provides valuable feedback.

Create a 5 minute highlight or skills video, of your most recent court time to have available for collegiate coaches. Don't show clips/repetitions from September of your high school season, as this is too old. Film the last matches of high school, or better yet, film the first few club volleyball practices or scrimmages.

Stay active in your outreach to colleges and communication. Roster openings will be occurring all through the Holidays.

There is still time on the recruiting clock for Seniors (and definitely Juniors), but no more time to slip by. Use these next couple of weeks to gear up for the opening of the college recruiting season!



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

Making the Transition from High School to Club Volleyball

By James Gilligan, SportsEngine

There are nearly 900 Junior Volleyball Association (JVA) clubs across the country working each year to help players achieve their goals – whether that is to improve their skill level, make a high school varsity team or get recruited by a college program.

With club volleyball continuing to grow as a popular complement to the high school sport, players and their families often have questions about the differences between the two and what are the benefits of playing both.

The short answer is plenty, but it's not as overwhelming as it may seem.

A key difference is the cost, as travel and training at the club level tend to be more expensive. According to the JVA online blog, players on a Regional Team playing eight tournaments a season could pay approximately \$2,600.

Maybe the most noticeable distinction is the time commitment.

Although it differs from program to program, girls club volleyball usually straddles the high school season, which typically runs from August to November. The club season picks up afterward and can carry a player into June.

The thought of a lengthy commitment to one team shouldn't scare off prospective players or their families as there are multiple teams within each club that require varying levels of participation, said Briana Schunzel, the director of marketing for the JVA.

[While other clubs offer multiple options with multiple teams that are each tailored to fit an athlete's skill level and available time, at Xceleration, we require it to be a full-time commitment.]

At others like Magnum Volleyball, based in Columbia, South Carolina: "Some of our teams, we require a high level of commitment," said club director Eric Shick. "On our other teams, you can play other sports [during the club season] and not get penalized [for missing practices or matches]."

"We tell people to seriously consider both money and commitment levels [when choosing a club team]," he added.

Those players at Magnum Volleyball who want to be college athletes consider the club season as an opportunity to improve their skills because they are facing the highest level of competition, Shick added.

Even the most driven club players, however, are encouraged to avoid overdoing their training.

At Texas Advantage Volleyball, located 20 miles northwest of Dallas in the city of Carrollton, the coaches make sure players balance competitions and practices with free time.

"It's all about development here," club director Joe Jablonski said. "We play a lot of matches, but you're also talking about a lot of time off."



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

Making the Transition from High School to Club Volleyball (continued)

While club teams play nearly the same amount of matches as prep programs, which can near 80 per year when factoring in the offseason training, the risk for overuse injuries is lower thanks to a club season that is nearly twice as long and a coaching directive that stresses injury prevention.

It's a philosophy Texas Advantage has taken to heart. Jablonski said his coaches limit the number of jumps in practice, going so far as track how many players make in a given time to ensure they're not overusing their bodies.

Coaching also separates the two levels with club participants often receiving instruction from more experienced coaches who have played and instructed at high levels for years.

That is the case in Texas, where the state's best coaches are working with club teams, said Jablonski, who boasts more than 15 years of coaching experience.

Another significant difference is the setting in which matches are played and who attends them.

Club teams play in local, regional or national tournaments – depending on the team's skill level – in the winter and spring months. This allows college coaches to easily see a number of players in one weekend instead of visiting multiple high schools only during the fall prep season – when they are also coaching their own teams.

"It's hard for college coaches to go to high school practices and matches," Jablonski said. "They can go to a convention center and there could be 100 courts, so the exposure is a lot higher [at the club level]."

Participating in club volleyball, however, doesn't automatically lead to college scholarships. Just as high school athletes must earn playing time, they must also prove they deserve the opportunity to compete at the next level.

Schunzel said club players are surrounded by others who have similar skill levels, making it harder to stand out.

"On club teams, you may find yourself having to work more for a starting position," she said.

Even so, club volleyball remains a positive experience for many participants, and communication between players and parents is critical when discussing joining a club. It's important for both to talk about what each wants out of playing volleyball, especially since year-round volleyball can sometimes feel like a full-time job.

"For a lot of families, it's understanding the cost of club volleyball, and the ability of their child," Schunzel said. "It's important that parents understand what their kids' priorities are."



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Warm Up and Maturity are Keys for Evaluating a Player's Potential

By Jenny Krueger, Austin Performance

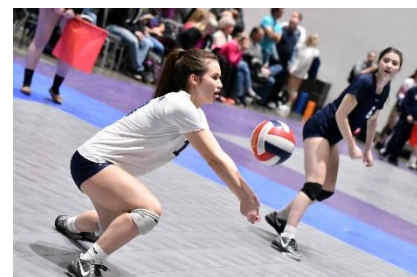
This article by Jenny Krueger on evaluating a player's potential is a perennial favorite of XCELent News. It appears annually in our newsletter, as Jenny's main points serve as important reminders especially for our older players participating in various showcases.

A coach can tell a lot about a player just in the five-minute warm up at a tournament. What coaches are looking for is the player who prepares mentally and physically to win the set. Oftentimes the team does a few common things to warm up. They start with passing and progress into setting and eventually a full pepper with some type of variation or progression. After a couple of minutes, team captains are asked by the referee to join them in preparation for the match. During this time college coaches will stand courtside or one court over to see what a player is doing in the warm up. Is she casually warming up or taking the warm up seriously to prepare to compete? What coaches need on every team is the player that competes to win and uses every opportunity to prepare for a win.

I'll give you a true example. Nine months ago a player came to me about the recruiting process. After evaluating her, I immediately called a long-time friend and NCAA Division I coach that I knew was in need of a middle blocker for the 2010 season. Over the phone we discussed the player and the coach made arrangements to fly to Texas to watch this senior play in a home game during the high school season.

Within 5-6 minutes of warm up the coach leaned to me and said this trip was worth it, and we are going to make an offer. The coach had not even seen the middle play and only had time to watch the player warm up and go through six or seven swings at the net. She could see the work ethic and potential in the warm up and that scholarship offer was accepted after an official visit was made by the player.

Coaches are looking for the players who communicate and drive to make those around her better. We all know the importance of leadership and the ability to communicate on the court in relationship to winning. Communication is key even in warm up. Coaches are also looking for ball control, mechanics, and movement. When it comes to ball control, are they passing with intention or going through the motions? Is the player balanced when they set and are they quick to move to the ball? Do they hustle after the ball that is sent five feet further, or do they just let it drop and pick back up again? In hitting lines, is the player quick to swing and taking the ball at a high point and hitting angles? Is the setter quick to think about the next play and having a consistent location on the ball? Is the libero hustling after the ball with intention to play the ball? Work ethic and potential can all be seen in a warm up. There are several times that college coaches might be going to a specific court to watch a player but see something that really catches their eye in a warm up and they will literally stop and see what a player



*Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
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Warm Up and Maturity are Keys for Evaluating a Player's Potential (continued)

has to offer. Coaches are always on the lookout for that player that is the difference maker, leader, and one who desires to win.

Usually after a warm up, a team gathers on its side to listen to the lineup and what the coaches have to offer in terms of strategy. This is the time college coaches are looking to see if a player is engaged with the team and looking in the eyes of the coach while he or she is communicating. Being engaged is extremely important for the success of the team, and it also shows the maturity level of a player who has intent of winning. During a set, there are oftentimes a player who is in the recruiting process will have to sit out for several points or even an entire set. This doesn't mean that the college coach is no longer going to be recruiting that player. Parents oftentimes panic if things aren't perfect or playing time is altered in some form or fashion. This is a natural reaction for most players and parents. The absolute worst thing a parent or player can do is start worrying during a set about the recruiting side of the game. All things turn out usually for the best in most cases and just because a player sits out doesn't mean they lost their chance or a coach won't evaluate the player. The coaches will also see how a player reacts to situations, such as sitting the bench or a change in pattern. Is the player on the sideline talking and engaged with the team or arms folded and not vocal? Does the player hustle in at a timeout and engage with the coach or does he/she

walk slowly to the huddle to hear what the coach says. Is the player engaging with team members and telling them what shots are open, or has the change in play time gotten the player down? This is a crucial side to teamwork that often fails when players think their value to the team no longer exist. It really is never the case until a player allows the playtime to become personal and negative. As a coach, I have never looked down the bench of players and put someone back in the game who is not engaged for the success of the team. If I have a player that I pull for some reason and they are at the bench with their hands on their knees encouraging the team and communicating during and between plays, then my confidence in that player stays extremely high and the chance of the player returning to the game stays high. If the player becomes selfish and takes it personal and is quiet, there is absolutely zero chance he/she will see the floor the rest of the day.

Coaches can see so much in a player during warm up and intense play situations. They want the player who drives to compete, prepares mentally and physically with one thing in mind, and that is to win. Anyone can pass a ball, set a ball, or attack the ball. Coaches are looking for the maturity level and the drive to win on every touch of the ball. It can all be seen in the small things, so warm up with intention and always take the high road when faced with a challenge. It can make a difference in the recruiting process.



*Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
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3

Reasons Why Volleyball Players Need Strength & Conditioning

By Bridge Athletic, JVA Online

A volleyball-specific strength and conditioning program can optimize a player's performance on the court. Whether athletes are still developing or competing at the highest level, spending time in the weight room building a strength foundation can be the difference between winning and losing a game. Here are three key reasons why volleyball coaches should incorporate strength training in their program.

#1 Strength and Power

Volleyball is a sport dominated by strength and power. Players need power in their legs to get high in the air and strength in their upper body to spike, block, and dig balls. Lifting weights stimulates muscle fibers to grow, which allows athletes to produce more force at faster rates. Thus, as players get stronger their explosive power also heightens on the

court. Strengthening volleyball-specific muscles ensures that athletes are able to reach their maximum performance potential.

For example, core strength is vital for a player's stability and allows hitters to transition power more efficiently from their lower body to their upper body and arm swing. Muscle fibers grow when directly stimulated by the stress of strength training, which makes lifting an athlete's best tool for developing the power to jump higher and serve more forcefully.

#2 Jumping and Agility

Volleyball requires explosive jumps and rapid changes in direction. The ability to jump high is treasured amongst volleyball players because of the importance for spiking the ball as well as defending spikes from opponents. Vertical jumping is all about ground force production, core





Reasons Why Volleyball Players Need Strength & Conditioning (continued)

stability, and quick hips. In order for players to improve vertical jumps, they must spend time in the weight room doing deadlifts, squats, and other exercises that strengthen leg and hip muscles.

Additionally, being able to track and quickly change directions to keep the ball in play is key to winning points. An effective strength and conditioning program incorporates agility drills and lateral movements to improve foot speed. Putting in the extra effort in the weight room will make players more dominant on the court.

#3 Injury Prevention and Flexibility

Not only do volleyball players need to be skilled, strong, and powerful, they also need to be healthy. Volleyball is a high-impact sport and with all the jumping, landing, cutting, and planting, an athlete's body can take a beating. The muscles, tendons, and ligaments surrounding joints help

protect from injury, but strenuous volleyball movements can cause these joints to temporarily weaken.

Without sufficient recovery time or muscle strength, players will experience injuries over time. Overuse injuries include patellofemoral syndrome, shoulder impingements, shin splints, and back pain. Undoubtedly, increasing strength levels will lower the risk of injury and muscle vulnerability. Stronger muscles are better able to absorb the shock from landings and quick change of directions.

Additionally, developing a foundation of balanced strength and flexibility allows muscles to work together to minimize stress on the joints and ligaments. Flexibility increases range of motion, improves technique, and enables more force to be exerted. Therefore, implementing a volleyball-specific strength and conditioning program significantly helps prevent injuries.



Recap

A volleyball-specific strength and conditioning program optimizes athletic performance and takes players to the next level. Working hard in the weight room, translates to wins on the court.



5

Essential Nutrition Tips for Volleyball Players

By Don Patterson, reprinted from StudentSports.com

A big part of getting players to perform their best is making sure they're eating the right things at the right time. Experts will tell you that eating and drinking is as much a part of playing good volleyball as fitness training and practicing skills. Not surprisingly, Penn State, which has won several NCAA volleyball championships, pays close attention to nutrition.

We thought it would be a good idea to pass along some information on how players can improve their play by improving their diet. So we went right to the top and got five tips from Dr. Kristine Clark, who is Penn State's director of sports nutrition.

1. Eat throughout the day.

Athletes need fuel all day. Clark says it's a good idea for players to eat every two to three hours. "Every time we eat, we're bringing nutrients and energy into the bloodstream," she says. "That influences our ability to think because our brain uses glucose, and it's also the primary fuel for any muscle group." A common problem for student/athletes is going too long between meals or snacks, Clark says. By eating more frequently, you give your body the sustenance it needs to perform well.

2. Eat immediately after waking up in the morning.

Each day, you are creating a foundation for building your energy stores back up to where they were the day before, Clark says. So don't skip breakfast. A lot of teenagers and college students do, but it's a bad habit, especially for athletes. "Skipping breakfast puts you in a serious deficit and you can't catch up," Clark says. "If athletes go to practice at 3 o'clock – even though they've had lunch – they are falsely operating on the idea that their energy levels are high. (If they skip breakfast), their energy levels are actually very low."

3. Timing is everything.

Clark says that athletes need to pay close attention to how their day is going to unfold. "You've got to look at your day as if it matters that calories are available to you," she says. "You have to eat before a workout. You *have* to. (When you eat before a workout), you'll get more out of the workout because you'll have available energy. We want there to be energy in the bloodstream. If you're working out, you don't want to go into your bank account and dredge out the energy. You want to have high energy in the first part of your workout, and that means having good sugar or carbohydrates in your blood."

Clark recommends eating one hour before a workout, and she says that what you eat should be heavy on carbohydrates. Some options: fruit and half of a bagel, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, yogurt and fruit, dry cereal or trail mix.

Keep in mind, the first half of a student/athlete's day is usually filled with classes, so eating an hour before practice or a workout means planning ahead. "You need to know where you're going to be, and you need to carry the snack with you," Clark says.



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
[Click here to see more.](#)

5 Essential Nutrition Tips for Volleyball Players (continued)

4. Drink BEFORE you're thirsty.

"This is something I've had to implore my athletes at Penn State to be mindful of," Clark says. "They know they should drink more, but it's not on their minds because they're not stimulated to drink if they're not thirsty."

Clark recommends drinking 32 ounces of water before noon every day and 32 ounces of water before practice. Penn State athletes carry a 32-ounce water bottle with them to class so they're never without access to water.

5. Eat a balance of carbs and proteins after your workout.

Muscle-cell repair occurs at the fastest rate within the first two hours after a workout,

Clark says. She advises her athletes to eat as soon after exercise as possible to facilitate maximum muscle-cell repair.

"We want players to be eating a meal within an hour after exercise," Clark says. "If that can't happen, then a snack is appropriate until they can eat a meal. And the snack needs protein.

This is where protein is most important for athletes. Fifty percent of what they

eat should be protein, and 50 percent of what they eat should be carbohydrate.

At Penn State, we give the players protein-carb shakes. But (the snack) could be anything from nuts to trail mix, a sandwich, a protein bar. It could be a glass of chocolate milk – things that are easy to prepare in advance and don't require refrigeration."

Clark says that it's best if players start the recovery process while they're still in uniform. Ideally, they will be eating just a few minutes after they walk off the court.

"So many athletes don't understand that their muscle cells have undergone some microscopic damage during an intense practice," Clark says. "There are hormones, one of which is cortisol, that are elevated with intense exercise. The minute you bring protein into the diet, it suppresses that cortisol production, so it really helps prevent soreness and muscle-cell damage. That's part of the recovery process."



Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
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9

Best Foods for Athletes

By Amanda MacMillan,
reprinted from Outside Online

Sure, carbo-loading's important—but for top-notch performance, it's just part of the story. Supplement your training with these healthy eats that will help you build strength, sustain energy, and recover faster. Eating for athletic performance shouldn't just take place after the gym or right before a big event. It's something you should be conscious of at every meal and every snack, say sports nutritionists Barbara Lewin and Jill Pluhar, and your strategy should involve more whole foods and natural nutrition than the factory-manufactured kind. Here are 9 of their favorite eats for athletes and tips on how to make the most of their nutritional benefits.

QUINOA – Considered a “super” whole grain, having twice as much protein as other grains, and it's one of the only foods to contain all nine essential amino acids our bodies need to build lean muscle and recover from tough workouts.

BERRIES – Helps protect against oxidative stress and free radicals that form in the body during strenuous physical activity.

SALMON – Good source of lean protein and omega-3 fatty acids, which help reduce inflammation that can hamper athletic performance and contribute to chronic conditions like heart disease.

BEANS AND LEGUMES – For vegetarian athletes (or those who just want to go meatless once and a while), plant-based sources of protein are a must. Unlike animal protein, beans have no saturated fat and are also a good source of fiber, which can help keep you feeling fuller for longer.

PASTA – Carbohydrates are still the single most important component of an athlete's diet. Whole-grain varieties are best. They have more fiber and, usually, less added sugar than their refined white counterparts. The night before a big competition, though, switch to the simple stuff—plain pasta with red sauce, for example.

BANANAS – Great source of easy-to-digest sugar and natural electrolytes. A favorite post-event recovery food, containing potassium to regulate fluids and prevent muscle cramps and spasms. You sweat out potassium during physical activity, so it's important to replenish as soon as possible afterward.

CRUCIFEROUS VEGGIES – Dark, leafy greens and members of the cruciferous family (like broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts and kale) have higher concentrations of antioxidants, fiber, and other important nutrients.

NUTS AND NUT BUTTER – A natural combination of protein and healthy fats, nuts (and nut products) are a staple in many athletes' diets. Easy to digest and can help balance your blood sugar when paired with carbs.

CHOCOLATE MILK – Simple carbs with a little bit of protein for recovery could be found in some store-bought drinks like low-fat chocolate milk. Plus, the caffeine in chocolate dilates and relaxes blood vessels, helping oxygen-rich blood reach your muscles more quickly and easily. Another favorite recovery drink is tart cherry juice to help prevent inflammation and reduce muscle soreness.



9

Foods to Avoid

By Tiffany Gagnon,
reprinted from Men's Fitness

Top performing athletes know that nutrition is king when it comes to gaining an edge over their competitors. However, no matter what your goal is, the gateway to success lies on your plate. An athlete's diet is more than just calories in and calories out—it's fuel. The right foods increase your energy, promote muscle growth, and aid in muscle repair. The wrong ones set you back. When it comes to chowing down, there are certain eats a serious athlete just won't touch. Top athletes wouldn't dare devour these diet disasters—and neither should you.

DIET SODA—Increases your risk for health problems and weight gain; they trick the body into thinking it's consuming real food, and because they're over a hundred times sweeter than the real thing, your body starts producing insulin (the fat storage hormone).

CANNED SOUP—It's more convenient, but their long shelf life should tip you off. Some soups are so processed and high in sodium that it trumps over the health benefits.

RICE CAKES—This staple diet snack is practically empty—nutritionally speaking. They do boast a low calorie count, but athletes need calories to keep their energy levels up. Not to mention these crunchy little snacks will send your blood sugar soaring.

SUGARY CEREAL—Artificial sugar is a definite no, but eating too much of the real thing is just as bad. Too much sugar also causes a spike in insulin, priming your body to store more fat.

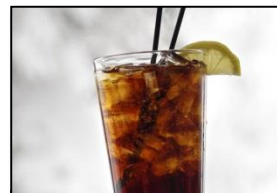
WHITE BREAD—White pastas, rice, and breads are OK, (but not ideal) because they are stripped of their nutrients and fiber, what is left is a highly processed food product, and when consumed, raises insulin levels and contributes to dips in energy and weight gain. Stick to whole-grain products.

MICROWAVE POPCORN—Saturated with unhealthy fats, unearthly levels of sodium, and in some cases, laced with chemicals, popcorn does not fuel an athlete's body for a strenuous training session, nor does it encourage recovery after a long workout. There is a flip side, however. If you air pop the corn or pop it on the stove with a small amount of coconut oil, it turns into somewhat of a superfood, boasting high levels of antioxidants and a hearty dose of satiating fiber.

GRANOLA—Might seem healthy, with fibrous oats as the base, but it's not exactly all it's cracked up to be. Most versions of the cereal come stacked with high amounts of sugar, unnecessary fat, and an excess amount of calories.

ALCOHOL—Slows muscle recovery, impairs motor skills, and decreases strength and sprint performance. Duh!

A MEAL WITHOUT PROTEIN—Protein is important for repairing and strengthening muscle tissue and maintains adequacy, balance, and variety, while also helping lower blood sugar levels.



Limit the Stress of Travel for Youth Volleyball Teams

By Emily Winters, reprinted from JVA Online

Missing a flight on the way to a volleyball tournament can become a nightmare for coaches, players and parents. With all the hours spent on preparing for the trip, losing the chance to compete can kill a team's morale.

It's a scenario Sports Performance Volleyball Director Cheryl Butler and several of her athletes found themselves in two years ago. Unable to get on a flight, the team arrived at the tournament 24 hours later and missed the first day of play.

Since then, Butler, who is also the youth academy director at the Aurora, Illinois-based club, decided to alter all of her teams' travel schedules to include extra time for dealing with delays. Now when booking flights to tournaments, she makes sure everyone is set to arrive in the host city two days before the event. She also has her athletes bring carry-ons filled with everything they need to

play in a tournament to avoid dealing with the potential of lost luggage.

While planning ahead won't eliminate all travel headaches, being well-prepared to handle potential issues could minimize the impact of those hassles. It's one key strategy Butler and several other coaches and directors of clubs in the Junior Volleyball Association recommend for traveling successfully with young athletes.

Butler also recommends laying out a clear set of expectations for players, parents and coaches and having good communication between all parties to help limit the stress associated with the challenges of travel.

She starts her preparations for traveling to tournaments months before the club season starts. Each fall Butler meets with a travel agent to help with logistics such as booking buses, hotels and plane tickets. Weeks before the first trip, she sends a



Top: 18Blue's Brey Ashley (#1) and Jenna Hahn (#15) show a little bit of emotion in a thrilling match at the Cal Kickoff.

Left: Former Xcel college development director and Core's Jack Cowden (center) helps out during warm-ups.

Photo courtesy of Tomas Pineda.
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Limit the Stress of Travel for Youth Volleyball Teams (continued)

spreadsheet with the information to parents so they know what to expect.

Butler also holds a meeting with the traveling teams' first-time participants to provide a clear understanding of what's involved in the process. To ensure everyone is on the same page, Butler sends all parents a follow-up letter that includes a checklist of items players must pack for tournaments.

Sports Performance teams always travel together because it provides athletes a chance to bond and it allows parents to save money on travel, Butler said.

Traveling as a large group, however, requires everyone to work together to stay on track, and to accomplish that, Butler makes sure everyone understands their roles and the rules for traveling.

Parents, athletes and coaches stay at the same hotel, but the coaches are responsible for making sure the players are in bed and wake up on time so the team can arrive at the site with plenty of time to spare before practices or games. While this puts more responsibility on the coaches, it also allows them to get to know the athletes better, Butler said.

While on the road, Sport Performance relies on the help of "house moms" to collect money for food, plan team meals and assist coaches as needed. It's all integral to pulling off a successful tournament experience, she added.

"The championships can come and go, and the MVPs and all that stuff, but the traveling is a special bond," Butler said.

High Performance STL, in St. Louis, Missouri, starts scheduling its travel plans during the fall registration period to better coordinate the process with parents, coaches and athletes, said executive director Scott Mebruer. The club also enlists the help of a travel agent to arrange schedules for approximately 500 athletes each year.

"Just having someone in charge of the travel coordination is the biggest thing that we've done to make the process much more manageable," Mebruer said.

High Performance STL also requires parents play a larger role in travel plans, and club officials make sure those expectations are outlined at the start of the season.

Parents are responsible for making sure athletes bring the necessary uniforms and equipment on the trip, and High Performance STL has its athletes not only travel to the host city with their families but also stay with them -- instead of with teammates -- at the hotel. Parents are expected to make sure their children are going to bed and getting ready for the tournament on time, as well as eating properly. This allows downtime for coaches during what can be a stressful tournament.

"We try to make sure that our parents are part of the solution and helping us," Mebruer said.

Preparation, communication and organization are key for clubs to successfully travel with athletes. Providing players and parents with checklists, holding meetings to discuss concerns, and anticipating problems that may arise will help everyone enjoy the time traveling together and allow the athletes to be at their best on the court.



TRIPLE CROWN - SALT LAKE CITY
15B/16B/17B/18B: February 17-19
[Salt Palace Convention Center](#)
 100 SW Temple, Salt Lake City, UT
 84101 [More information](#)

DELTA AIRLINES
Feb 16 DL 738
OAK 11:43 AM
SLC 2:24 PM

Feb 19 DL 1132
SLC 10:00 PM
OAK 11:00 PM

Doubletree Suites by Hilton Salt Lake City Downtown
110 West 600 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
 Check-in: Friday, Feb 16 for 3 nights

COLORADO CROSSROADS
WEEK 1: 14s-15s: March 10-12
WEEK 2: 16s-18s: March 16-18
[Colorado Convention Center](#), 700
 14th St., Denver, CO

WEEK 1: SOUTHWEST AIRLINES
Mar 9 WN 1952
OAK 8:15 AM
DEN 1:05 PM

Mar 12 WN 1592
DEN 8:55 PM
OAK 10:30 PM

WEEK 2: SOUTHWEST AIRLINES
Mar 15 WN 1952
OAK 8:15 AM
DEN 1:05 PM

Mar 18 WN 4815
DEN 7:25 PM DEN
OAK 9:00 PM OAK

Hyatt Regency Denver at CO CC
650 15th Street
Denver, CO 80202
 Week 1 Check-in: Friday, Mar 9 for 3 nights.
 Week 2 Check-in: Thursday, Mar 15 for 3 nights.