What is There to Do in Volleyball After High School?

By John Kessel, USA Volleyball Director of Education, Disabled, Grassroots and Beach Volleyball

A very sad factoid crossed my desk recently from Athletic Business magazine. They cited a study stating that only five percent of high school varsity players still participate in their sport when they are 30 or more years old. It might make sense with football, but not for the lifetime sport of volleyball. We have Masters National Championships for the age groups that start at 30 and over, and in five year increments, go all the way up to 75 & over Nationals. Many younger players might not know of the myriad of ways to get even better at volleyball, while also helping grow the game. Here are highlights of those ways to keep playing this sport made in America.

Play USA Volleyball

Many players are aware of what USA Volleyball does at the Junior Olympic Volleyball level, as one in six high school players are found playing JOV ball in their off season. The thing is, for almost 80 years, kids had to play with adults, as there was no junior volleyball programming until the late seventies. So even when in high school, and certainly after, you can get on teams at the USAV skill levels of Open, AA, A, BB, and B, and work towards competing in the US Open National Championships. This same event even has the Masters age groups, but skill level nationals have no age definition, only talented competitors of many ages.

Play Varsity on an Athletic Grant in Aid

Volleyball is one of the top three scholarship sports for women. This is the gold ring many riding on the training carousel of junior volleyball are seeking. While there are significantly fewer for men, there are scholarships and varsity opportunities as well.

Play Varsity Without a Scholarship

Volleyball is a varsity program at 90 percent of the Division III NCAA schools, 318 of the 352 in 2001, however no volleyball athletic grants in aid are allowed for any sport at the Division III level. At the Division I and II levels, not all schools have a full complement of scholarships, so varsity team slots exist for players getting only partial scholarships, and even no scholarships.

Walk on at NCAA Division I, II & III, NAIA, and NJCAA

At all levels, even if you are not recruited, most programs encourage you to “walk on” or tryout and train with the team. While the traveling roster is 12, injuries and in the spring, graduation of seniors, means programs seek more than just the scholarshiped/recruited team members.

Play Collegiate Club

NIRSA, the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association, (www.nirsa.org) has a wonderful National Championship for collegiate club teams, now in its second decade. Nearly 200 men’s and women’s teams compete in this event held each spring. The club teams have tryouts, and generally train two or three times a week, competing regionally against other club teams prior to ending the season at Nationals. If you do not have a club, start one, and contact USA Volleyball for a special NIRSA club program CD that will help you get started.

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Play Collegiate Intramurals

Volleyball is the most popular fall intramural sport on every college campus. Both coed and single gender competition at various levels exist. It is a great way to start a new school year, representing your dorm, making new friends, and improving your skills. Winter and Spring leagues also exist, and in some warmer climes, beach or grass competition is programmed during the warmer months.

Play Park & Recreation

Whether you are in school or out working, every town with a park and recreation program offers volleyball, both coed and single gender competitions. Form a company team, or a school team, and find the right level and make new friends. Many Park & Rec centers also have Open Gym on the weekends (also a good way to hook up with teams, and social opportunities as well). There also are classes offered, where you can keep improving your skills through such education.

Play With Other Organizations

Through religious organizations, many churches organize leagues. USAV member organization Jewish Community Centers have some fairly competitive Leagues in many areas. The YMCA that gave birth to the sport, and YWCAs, offer great places for both classes and competition in well run leagues. You can also often get a racquetball court there and play some fun Wallyball games and even leagues. Sport and Social Clubs feature volleyball in the larger cities that are also great chances to play, while dedicated volleyball facilities for both beach and indoor exist in hundreds of cities.

Play Beach or Grass

Ask for a portable outdoor court for Christmas, and you can play anywhere! Set it up in a park or on the beach and you will have new friends in a short while. Good outdoor courts can be found in even the smallest towns, and most places have a grass park that volleyball enthusiasts congregate in, just ask around. Get involved in your USAV Regional outdoor play, as well as that of AVPNext. Go www.avpnext.com and check out the opportunities to play and get involved in great beach and grass events that even lead to AVP Main draw qualification.

Coach and/or Officiate

Finally, there are countless opportunities to coach or officiate at the Middle, Junior and High School level, as well as at the Jr. Olympic and recreational level. You will be a better player if you take the time to coach. Simple and powerfully true. Volunteer to coach or teach, as everybody is looking for help. This can also be fun income if you officiate, or coach/teach in some programs. Form a club or a club team, Junior Olympic programs for both boys and girls can be set up for 18.17.16.15.14.13.12.10 & unders.

Help youth at the YMCA/YWCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, Girls Scouts USA, United States Youth Volleyball League (www.usyvl.org), and other programs. There also are opportunities to develop or coach Disabled athletes, all the way up to the Paralympic level. Help create programming for sitting volleyball for males or females, standing teams for men, or Special Olympics programming –where volleyball is a hugely popular sport in the fall.

In many leagues, the coaches do the officiating, where a clinic is required but no test. Better is to take the test and become a USA Volleyball rated official, you can even make better money in many programs.

So, keeping playing and being involved in this great lifetime sport. Programs need your talent and expertise! For more ideas and information, check out the USA Volleyball web pages at www.usavolleyball.org. and sign up for Rotations, the twice a month newsletter.

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