

## **A PARENTS GUIDE TO CHOOSING A VOLLEYBALL CLUB**

Choosing a volleyball club is a difficult decision. It is a serious commitment in both time and money. This guide is intended to help the volleyball family make an educated decision about a rather large investment in time and money.

Aside from the obvious benefits of learning and improving volleyball skills and playing the game; club ball provides a broad educational experience. It enhances athletic, social, and leadership skills. One of the best ancillary benefits of club volleyball is making new friends from new schools and new places. Since players regularly officiate matches when they are not playing, leadership skills and knowledge of the game is also enhanced. Many players from various clubs have gone on to be very successful college players, some are on full scholarships. Some have gone on to coach high school or college or returned to coach club volleyball.

Some teams will play tournaments only in town; other teams will travel to various tournaments throughout the country. While there is no guarantee your son or daughter will be seen by a college coach, there is a much better chance they will be seen if they play club volleyball. Since the high school season generally coincides with the college season, the heavier recruiting time is after the high school season during the club season. A majority of college coaches search for prospective players at Junior Olympic tournaments. Events such as regional tournaments, national qualifiers and the Junior Olympic Volleyball Championships attract the most college coaches.

Club volleyball is a **BIG** commitment! The season usually runs from November to as long as July for those teams that attend the Junior Olympic Volleyball Championships. The cost can run as low as \$250 per season to a high of more than \$5000 depending on the level of competition and the number and locations of the tournaments. Travel expenses are usually in addition to the regular club costs. Costs should be used for comparison between clubs to make sure you know what is and is not covered in their fees.

The most important element is the kind of coaching your child will be getting for your investment. The parent should also consider what the purpose of sending your child to a club: recreation, more experience for high school play or possible a college scholarship. Practices may vary from once a week to several times a week. Tournaments may last one, two or up to four days competition.

As in any sport, coaches at each club have a wide range of coaching experience and abilities, from very successful high school and college level coaches to those with little experience. In some clubs the coaches are paid, some are volunteers and in some cases they are reimbursed for their expenses.

As a parent of a volleyball player you have a shared responsibility with the player. Two big responsibilities lie in providing support financially and assistance with transportation for the under-aged players. You can also help by encouraging good sportsmanship and responsible behavior. Of course, players love the encouragement parents provide. Parents also have the responsibility to conduct themselves in a reasonable, responsible manner.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK AND CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A CLUB**

- How many practices a week will the team have and the duration of each practice?
- Where will the practices be held?
- Do we have to practice during the holidays and on days following tournaments?
- If a team has more than one team in an age group, is the player assigned to the same team all year or can they be moved up or down?
- How many tournaments will we attend, when and where?
- Is the club a non-profit organization?
- Does each team within the club fund itself or are the monies shared between the teams?
- What is the coaching experience of each coach?
- What is the playing level of this team? Developmental? Competitive? Or Elite?

- Do you have a written standard of conduct for players and coaches for trips and practices?
- Are coaches required to travel with the team?
- Are parents required to travel with the team?
- Will tournament information such as when, where and how be given to each player as soon as possible before each tournament? Many times this information is not available until the last minute due to the late arrival of information from the tournament directors.
- Are the requirements of fundraisers clearly spelled out as to participation, distribution and accountability for funds etc.?
- Get a complete itemization in writing of what is being paid by your dues.
- Some clubs charge one fee for the entire season or charge an initial fee with periodic or monthly payments. Some teams use fundraisers to fund their teams and some teams use a combination of the above. Be sure to find out what is done with any remaining funds at the end of the season. Clubs have an obligation to fully disclose their financial policies and if unwilling, you may want to seek another club.

## **THE CLUB'S TYPICAL BUDGET**

- Uniforms: Cost may vary depending on quality; two shirts and a pair of shorts can cost \$70-100.
- USAV Registration - \$35 per player
- Tournament entry fees - \$80 to \$100
- Entry fees for Qualifiers - \$700, entry fees for the National Championships - \$900 (If attending these events)
- Hotel and transportation costs: these are usually the responsibility of each player and/or parent.
- Other costs: Teams will incur other costs such as coaches's salaries and expenses, gym rental, supplies, equipment, balls, printing, postage, etc.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Choosing a club is serious business. It is a commitment in time and money as well as an individual commitment to one club for the

duration of the season. A bad decision can make for a very long season. A little time researching your options and opportunities may save you an unpleasant experience. Be sure to ask a lot of questions. If a club is hesitant to answer those questions, it is probably best to move on. **Remember volleyball is supposed to be FUN!**

A good resource for information on many clubs in the Gateway Region is the Region web site. Look under the Junior Club profiles page.

For further information regarding club volleyball, please do not hesitate to call me, Chris Clauss, at 636/343-4029. All questions are encouraged and welcomed!