

A PARENTS GUIDE TO CHOSING 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. Most college coaches search for prospective players at larger scale elite events. Events such as National Qualifiers, Bid Events, AAU Junior Nationals, and the USAV Girls and Boys Junior National Championships (JNC) attract the most college coaches.

Club volleyball is a **BIG** commitment! Typically for HS Boys, the season runs from October to the end of February – but may pick up again in June to early July if they attend the Boys JNC. For Grade and Middle School Boys, tryouts occur in late September, but the playing season doesn't begin in earnest until early January, and generally concludes around early April – unless they attend the Boys JNC in Early July. For Girls, the season usually runs from November to as long as July for teams who attend the Girls JNC. The cost can run as low as \$350 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 you 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?
- Do you pay your coaches beyond reimbursement for room and board when travelling?
- 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 BUDGET

- Uniforms: Cost may vary depending on quality; two shirts and a pair of shorts can cost \$100 - \$150.
- USAV Registration: \$50 per player. Local one Gateway Tournaments can run from \$125 with teams ref themselves or \$200 if up ref provide. Larger tournaments such as Qualifiers can run \$800 per team and Nationals up to \$1000.
- 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!**

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!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS CHOOSING CLUB VOLLEYBALL

How many contacts can a coach make in the preseason?

Coaches should be making a limited number of contacts in the preseason with parents or players (example: a mailer, 1 or 2 phone calls or personal contact)

Can a coach guarantee a player a position on their team prior to tryouts?

Coaches may not guarantee a position on a team prior to tryouts. Be wary of “shady” or “muddy” language when speaking with and listening to a coach. Un-clear language may lead to mis-interpretation, which may lead to a “he said – she said” situation after the fact.

How can I find out more information about a particular club or coach?

Read the club profiles of individual clubs (www.gatewayvb.org-- club profiles) and the Parent Guide to Choosing a Club Team. This way parents and players can learn more about the various clubs, teams, and coaches.

My child wants to attend a tryout to get warmed up. Is this okay?

NO! Players should not be attending a tryout for the sake of a warm up. If they are not interested in that club they are taking an opportunity away from someone else.

How many offers can my child receive the weekend of tryouts?

It is recommended that a player can only have two open offers at any given time over the tryout weekend. This means that if you attend more than two tryouts and you receive a third offer you should immediately call the coach of the team you are not interested in and let them know. This will allow for them to offer it to the next person on their list. A player can have an unlimited number of alternate positions.

I do not want to play on a team with 12 players. Is it o.k. to ask a coach how many players they will be carrying on their team?

Parents should ask a coach how many players they will be carrying on their roster.

This may make a difference in their decision-making.

What information should I ask about practices?

How often, where, how long will practices be, and is there an attendance policy?

How often will this team travel and what extra expenses will be involved?

What are the club fees?

Does this include uniforms, gym rental fees, coaches' travel expenses, tournament entry fees, etc.

What are the club/coaches expectations for this season?

Is this a wavered or non-wavered team? If you do not know the difference then ask the coach.

A coach has guaranteed my child a certain position and amount of playing time. Are coaches allowed to make this kind of guarantee?

Coaches may say this, however injury, attendance, commitment, player's failure to advance and discipline may all be reasons for this to change. Coaches will play your child where they will best benefit the team, which may be a different position from prior seasons. Playing time is at the discretion of the coach.

I have heard the coach/team can get a college scholarship for my child if they play for that team?

Parents need to consider how valid that offer is considering the range of possibilities throughout the year/years

If a club has two teams of the same age group, how do I know which team my child is trying out for?

As a parent you need to ask individual clubs what is their policy on this and they should be able to tell you.

Do players float from team to team throughout the season?

This is information that each club should be able to provide you at tryouts.

Do the coaches have to have any screenings or background checks before they can coach in the gateway region?

All coaches, team representatives and chaperones must have a criminal background

check and SafeSport Certification prior to being able to coach within the region or appear on a roster. At least one coach on the roster must be at the minimum IMPACT certified.

Do I need to be present the weekend of tryouts or can I drop my child off?

Parents do not have to stay for the duration of the tryout, but a parent's signature is required on the release form at each individual under the age of 18.

Lastly, do not ever hesitate to ask questions. The Region office personnel can be reached at 314-849-1221.