



How to Start a Junior Olympic Volleyball Program

Starting a Junior Olympic volleyball program can be both a rewarding and a frustrating experience. The sources of the rewards are rather apparent – the opportunity to see those young people grow and develop, the excitement of athletic competition, and the joy of a job well done.

The challenges, on the other hand, can mostly be avoided by careful preseason planning which must then be carried out throughout the entire year. The majority of the frustrations arise not out of the players or the coaches, but the administrative details.

Once you have decided to start a program, you must keep in mind three initial hurdles:

Where Will You Practice?

The number of courts you will need will depend upon the number of teams operating in your program. Most coaches want at least one court per team. In addition, you will have to consider the number of hours you plan to practice. For example, practice times could vary from one evening per week to four times per week during the school year.

Sites for practices are limited only by the gym space available in your community. The site must have a properly sized and lined volleyball court and safe equipment. Places to begin looking include the local YMCA or YWCA, schools, churches and recreational centers.

Who Will Coach?

The selection of the coach(es) is one of the most critical decisions you will make in initiating a Junior Olympic Volleyball program. Coaches form the basis for the entire program. The coach, if possible, should have some experience in either coaching or at least playing volleyball. All coaches should be willing to learn! The coach should also understand the basics of first aid, because injuries do occur.

In searching for coaches, the most obvious place to start is with parents. However, parents frequently do not make the best coaches and conflicts can arise. Other places to look are at local colleges, both in terms of college coaches and players. High school coaches may also be available, although you and they need to be aware of any high school league rules limiting the activities of high school coaches in your state. Adult players from your area may also provide you with a good source of coaches.

Once you have selected the potential coaches, encourage them to improve their coaching skills. The basic coaches' clinic, called an IMPACT clinic, is suggested for all JOV coaches as soon as they are able to attend (preferably during their first year of coaching and required by some regions). Information about clinics sponsored by the region, high school leagues and area colleges may be published in *Region newsletters and the USA Volleyball web site*. Most regions encourage all coaches to attend as many clinics as possible to improve their coaching knowledge and abilities. Coaches participating in the Junior National Championships are required to hold an IMPACT or CAP Certification.

How Much Will it Cost?

One frequently made mistake is that the Junior Olympic Volleyball program is not treated as a business. Whether we like it or not, we are running a small business when we set up a Junior Olympic Volleyball program. Bills must be paid. The players have to either pay fees and/ or participate in fundraising activities. Separate checking accounts and closely detailed accounting should be kept. Programs should be incorporated to avoid possible tax problems.

In terms of the costs of the program, the cost per player can vary greatly from program to program depending upon the length of the season, the locations of competition, the amenities you offer the players and the amount of equipment you have to buy.

Basic Expenses

There are three items that are certain to result in costs to the program:

- Each team must have similar uniforms – both shirts and shorts. When ordering uniforms, be sure to comply with the USAV uniform requirements, including the size and location of numbers on the front and back of jerseys. Numbers on the front of the shirt must be at least four (4) inches high and at least six (6) inches on the back. Numbers must be of contrasting colors to the shirt. Rule Book: Rule # 5.0.
- Your team will have to be registered with the USAV through your region. The cost of this registration is established at the beginning of each year.
- All tournaments have entry fees, which are listed on the tournament schedule (available on many region web sites). The fees vary by region.

Other Possible Expenses

Additional items may add expenses to your program:

- You may choose to pay your coaches and/or cover their travel expenses.
- The practice gym may cost you money. If the facility you are using will charge you, this has to be included in your initial budget.
- You may need to purchase some equipment such as first aid kits, volleyballs and volleyball bags.
- Transportation may begin to cost money, depending on how far and how often you travel.

Parents will usually provide transportation at no charge if they come to watch their children play. However, if you are going long distances, travel costs can add up quickly.

- e. Extra player benefits. These can be fairly expensive but give a separate identity to your program. You may want to include benefits to the players such as warm-ups, volleyball publications, knee pads or shoes.

Fundraising Ideas

As explained above, there are expenses involved with running a junior program. Here are a few fundraising ideas to help you get started. You can be as creative as you want.

- a. Charge regular monthly dues
- b. Have a fund raiser (car wash, pancake breakfast, spaghetti dinner, sell coupon books, candy, etc.)
- c. Find a company to sponsor the team or several smaller merchants to contribute to the program. If you incorporate and apply for a non-profit organization status (these have fees associated with doing them), the donor's contributions may be tax deductible.
- d. If you have access to a nice facility (gym) with a good net system, your region is always looking for good facilities to rent for adult and junior tournaments.
- e. Offer to have concessions at some of the tournaments (soda, sloppy joes, popcorn, candy, etc.).
- f. Ask if your team can be the site directors for a tournament.
- g. Host a tournament. In these last four options, contact your region office for assistance and information.

Selecting the Team

Tryouts

Once you have found your practice site, selected your coaches and established a preliminary budget, you are ready to get started. If your team will be composed of players from your local high school or community, you may not want to have tryouts. However, if you are selecting players from various schools and communities, you may need to have tryouts.

The tryouts should be held on at least one day, and possibly two. Notices can be posted in the area schools and mailed to area coaches and players (labels are available through your region office for a small fee). Local recreational centers and YMCA and youth facilities may also allow you to post notices. The local media may provide some form of free advertisement for your tryouts. Tryout information may also be published in your region newsletter, and posted on your local region web site, or on your own club web pages.

Once you have set the date and location, be prepared. Before you even set foot in the gym, know what evaluation tests you will have the players perform, what equipment you will need, how many helpers you will need, and how many evaluators you will use. You should also have some idea of the type of player you want in your program, because you will probably have more players at tryouts than you can accommodate in your program.

In addition, plan for parents. Many will almost certainly be there. They will have questions about the costs and the commitment their child is making. Be prepared to answer those questions. It is a good idea to have a rough season schedule already prepared to hand out together with a rough preliminary budget. The better organized the tryout; the better your program will look to those who are thinking of getting involved.

Additional Steps

Once you have selected your team, you have at least two more steps:

- a. First, how are you going to get the parents involved? Some junior programs have formal parent organizations or have parents involved in the organization on a Board of Directors basis. Others have very limited direct parent involvement. Some form of parent organization seems to provide a way to avoid the conflicts that will inevitably arise.
- b. Second, once all of this is accomplished, you can begin the registration process by contacting your Regional Volleyball Association.

Choosing Where to Play

Most regions have three basic types of tournaments. Check your local regional web site under the Junior Tournament Schedule for a list of tournament.

- a. Power league and play date formats are generally half-day events with no playoffs.
- b. Regular one-day tournaments generally consist of pool play followed by playoffs.
- c. Multiple-day events generally consist of two to four days of pool play and playoffs.

Remember to read the Coaches' Code of Ethics, and your local region club responsibilities and regional policies, for players, coaches and parents.

By forming a Junior Olympic volleyball program, you have started down a long and rewarding path. Each USAV Region will provide as much support and assistance as you need. Good luck and have fun.

For additional information and assistance with registration or forming your program, please contact your region office and make sure to browse the USA Volleyball website at <http://www.teamusa.org/usa-volleyball>