

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Northwest Juniors! We are one of the many clubs in the New England Region (NERVA) of USA Volleyball. This handbook has been created to help our parents better understand what club volleyball is all about. Club Volleyball is a commitment from all parties. It begins with you as the parent to your child to the coaches and the club director(s). Everyone needs to be involved in order to have a successful club season. Northwest Juniors is program run in collaboration with the Northwestern CT YMCA and Greater Waterbury YMCA.

It is required that ALL PARENTS or GUARDIANS read this publication in its entirety before participating in our program.

## ABOUT US

Northwest Juniors is a volleyball program devoted to the development of volleyball skills in girls and boys through our developmental, Club and Select programs.

## CLUB DIRECTOR CONTACT INFO

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## OUR GOALS

Northwest Juniors prides itself on being recognized as a program that offers a quality volleyball experience for each player. Our goal is to teach our athletes to excel on and off the court by developing skills and promoting team unity.

We do this by and providing:

- Quality training that enhances and develops the skills of our participants.
- Competitive teams that pursue performance, leadership and sportsmanship.
- Developing interest and encourage participation by conducting clinics and playing opportunities for all ages and ability levels.
- Encourage and help our players pursue higher education.
- Provide and train quality coaches to be teachers of the game in a competitive and positive environment.

## SELECTING A CLUB

Deciding which volleyball club is right for you can be difficult. It is our hope that this brief guide provided by USA Volleyball & Northwest Juniors will help your family make an informed decision.

### *What Can My Child Expect from Playing?*

At a minimal level, club volleyball provides the opportunity to learn and improve volleyball skills through hours of additional practice and competition. Club volleyball gives players the opportunity to enhance athletic, social and leadership skills and make new friends from other schools and areas. In addition, since players regularly officiate matches when they are not playing, leadership skills, knowledge and understanding of the game is enhanced. The player also gets to see the game from the official's point of view and gain that respect. Many players have gone on to be successful college players (at all levels); some are on partial to full athletic scholarships. Others have gone on to coach at the high school or college level or returned to coach at the club level, while others have made significant extra income by also being an official for Parks and Rec programs, YMCA leagues and many other organizations.

### ***College Exposure***

Some teams will only travel to tournaments within a 1-2 hour drive, while others will also travel to other parts of the country. While there is no guarantee that you will be seen by a college coach, the chances are better if you play club ball. The high school season coincides with the college season, making it difficult for college coaches to get out to watch players very often. In many cases the high school matches start around five or six making it difficult for a coach to even get to local matches without having to miss their team's practice. The heaviest recruiting time is during the club season. A majority of college coaches search for prospective players at Junior Olympic Volleyball events. Larger tournaments involving teams from several states, national qualifiers and the Junior Olympic Volleyball National Championships attract the most college coaches.

### ***Why Play?***

You should also think about why you want to play club (recreation, more experience for high school play or possible college scholarship). No matter what your objective, you should be playing because you have fun, love the game and want to play. You must be willing to work hard and take the responsibility for your improvement. Your coach is there to help you work toward your goals.

### ***Who are the Coaches?***

The most important factor is the kind of coaching you will receive. Coaches at each club have a wide range of coaching experiences, from very successful high school and college coaches (head and assistant) to those with little experience. Indeed, the relationship your athlete has with the coach is more important than the club itself. Having a chance to interact with the coach of your athlete's age group is important. Go to pre-season skill training sessions, talk to players and parents from that coach's previous season, check out the coach's resume – do at least what you would do to gain background on a new babysitter for a child. In a related way, you need to find out the coach's level of coaching education, as well as what ongoing coaching education the club provides. A club's level of commitment to improving their coaches gives an example of the programs commitment and passion for excellence.

### ***Choose Wisely***

Choosing a volleyball club is serious business. It is a commitment of time and money as well as an individual commitment to a club for the duration of the season. Spending a little time researching your options and opportunities may save you from a frustrating (or worse) season. Be sure to ask lots of questions. If possible, talk with players and parents who have played in the club before. If a club is hesitant to answer those questions, it is probably best to move on. Remember, volleyball is a game, and should be played to have FUN.

### **TIME AND TRAVEL COMMITMENT**

Club Volleyball is a huge time and travel commitment. The season will begin in November and December for the Girls Tryouts & Evaluations and in October for the Boys Tryouts. Tournaments during league play do not necessarily run on back to back weekends. However, if your team decides to play in a Special Tournament, your child could be playing tournaments on multiple weekends during one month. This idea is more centralized around girls because the girls have additional tournaments.

Each club/team varies on how they choose which tournaments they would like to play in. You as a parent can decide what level of commitment you want to give to your daughter and/or son to play club volleyball.

Teams generally practice around two-three hours at a time and practice one to two times per week. Teams will generally play in at least 5 tournaments (some may play as many as 9-11 in a season). Tournaments last from one day up to four days.

## **REGISTRATION**

In order to participate in our Junior Olympic Volleyball Club, all individuals must be registered with NERVA/USA Volleyball. Once you are registered with NERVA, members are covered by USA Volleyball's sport accident policy, which is the best insurance coverage around. Please note, the insurance provided by USA Volleyball will not cover the club and/or its administrators during practice, tournaments, or tryouts unless ALL the players are registered as NERVA members. You delaying your membership will affect the whole club, not just your child! You must have your registration PRIOR to the first try-out or evaluation.

## **TRYOUTS and EVALUATIONS**

The tryouts are used to place players on our Select Teams. Evaluations are used to determine the team a player will participate on. Many factors, such as age, ability, volleyball experience, position, and the number of registered players, go into deciding team placement. If a player is not chosen for the Select program, they will automatically be placed on a Club level team, unless told otherwise by the player. Because we have established limits on the number of players allowed on each team (10-11), it may become necessary to use the tryouts to decide which players will be allowed to participate during the season. Players will only be cut if absolutely necessary. This would only occur if we had more players registered than available roster spots.

If necessary, some players may be asked to move up to an older age division. Players will only be moved up if the coaches and the director feel the player can compete at that level. At the Club Level, players may ask to be grouped with other players from the same school to facilitate carpooling, etc. We will do our best to make it happen, but our main focus when putting teams together is the development of each player and the success of each team.

## **TEAMS**

The primary objective of club volleyball is to give individuals the training and playing experiences necessary to improve their overall volleyball skills.

### ***Select Team***

This program is for the athlete who is able to play at a high level of play, looking to play in college, and willing & dedicated to attending all scheduled practices & tournaments. Select teams are made up of the elite and more experienced players. These teams are required to qualify for play in the Open League and will play against the highest level of competition which may include teams from all over the United States and Canada. Northwest Juniors will attempt to field teams in the 14's, 15, 16's, 17's, and 18's age groups if we feel the teams will be competitive. In addition to the regular tournament schedule, these teams will play additional all-weekend tournaments starting mid-January. Players selected for a Select team will practice every Sunday and 2 designated Weeknights practice. The player in this program should expect to get the most training out of their practice regimen and understand that playing time in tournaments will not always be an equal playing field. Players will play based on the position played, ability of an athlete, level of competition, the needs of the team, and the importance of the tournament. Players will be played at the discretion of each team's coach.

### ***Club Team (15-18's)***

Club teams compete against other New England Juniors clubs and the tournament sites are generally less than a two-hour drive. However, some teams may have to drive to the Cape, CT, RI, NH or even ME. All players are responsible for their own transportation to and from practices and tournaments. Practices are approximately 2 hours, 2 times per week and are held on Sunday & 1 weeknight. The 4-6 tournaments (which begin late January for girls) are generally all day affairs and held on Sundays (girls). The February Tournament for girls MAY be on a Saturday. Teams are formed based on age, number of participants and skill level. USAV Age groups are 12's, 14's,

15's, 16's, 17's, and 18's. Players will roughly play equal playing time at the Club Level, with the understanding that depending on the position played, ability of an athlete, level of competition, the needs of the team, playing time may vary.

### *Club Team (12-14's)*

Similar to the older Club teams, they compete against other New England Juniors clubs and the tournament sites are generally less than a two-hour drive. However, some teams may have to drive to the Cape, CT, RI, NH or even ME. All players are responsible for their own transportation to and from practices and tournaments. All players are responsible for their own transportation to and from practices and tournaments. Practices are approximately 2 hours, 1 time per week and are held on Sunday. They will compete in 4-6 tournaments and are generally all day affairs and held on Sundays. The January Tournament for girls MAY be on a Saturday. Players will roughly play equal playing time at the Club Level, with the understanding that depending on the position played, ability of an athlete, level of competition, the needs of the team, playing time may vary.

### *Developmental Program*

This program is aimed at developing basic skills and competition. There are no tryouts for this program; however, players will be grouped based upon skill and experience. We will run separate In-House programs for boys and girls. Both are 8 week programs. Training will be approximately 2 hours, 1 time per week and will be held either Saturdays or Sundays. Players will be coached by Northwest Juniors Coaches and top-level players in the area.

## **FEE STRUCTURE**

Northwest Juniors is program run in Collaboration with the Northwestern CT YMCA and Greater Waterbury YMCA. A fee is charged for the programs to cover expenses incurred with operating the club.

### *ITEMS INCLUDED IN YOUR FEE*

- Your \$50 Registration fee (non-refundable)
- **Training and competition** weekly from Oct – early March (boys) & mid-November- early May
  - (Girls Select season may run longer)
- **Tournament entry fees:** Each team will be allocated a budget to use for 6 tournament days. Girls' Select level teams have an additional allocation of 3-4 tournaments.
- **Uniform & Practice Shirt** (Select Level Players receive two uniforms and a practice shirt)
- **Practice Facilities and Equipment:** Each player has a built-in allocation for a share of our expenses for renting practice facilities, balls, and other necessary equipment.
- **Coaches:** To insure quality coaching, our coaches are paid. This payment is minimal compared to the time and commitment of our coaches for a six-month season
- **Administration Expenses:** Website, postage, accounting, printing, and other general office expenses.

### *WHAT IS NOT COVERED?*

- **Transportation:** Travel to tournaments is not covered in fees. We encourage ride sharing for tournaments and practices
- **USA Member Registration Fee**-must be registered prior to 1<sup>st</sup> try-out/evaluation.
- **Meals:** There are usually concession stands, and of course, restaurants near-by. You can also pack a cooler with food and drinks for the whole day
- **Rooms:** There will be several multiple-day tournaments for the Open Level teams. Hotel expenses are not covered by your fees

## SPONSORSHIPS/FUNDRAISING

Some parents may be able to help us obtain sponsorships for their athlete's team. Funds can be used to lessen the cost of going to tournaments. If you have a possible sponsor, please contact the Club Director for additional information.

## REFUND POLICY

Refunds (not including the \$150 deposit) less a \$10 processing fee will be granted prior to when teams are formed. Once a program starts (player assigned to a team), payments are non-refundable, and if on draft or payment plan, all fees will still be owed even if player does not complete the season. All deposits are non-refundable. Northwest Juniors is not responsible for any additional fees that be incurred based on travel to tournaments. NW Jrs is not responsible for any fees incurred for tournaments that maybe cancelled or relocated. We recommend making reservations that are able to be cancelled within 24 hrs of reservation.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial Assistance may be provided to those who qualify. The application is processed by the partner YMCA and all assistance is awarded based on an approved sliding fee scale that is approved by the YMCA. Applications must be processed by the end of evaluations, so that it does not affect team numbers.

## WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN EXPECT FROM PLAYING FOR NORTHWEST JUNIORS

Each player has a different experience as a club member. Naturally, some players are more successful than others. Players who put more effort into the program usually get more out of it than those who don't work as hard. Below are the major benefits of our program:

- **Instruction:** Coaches who have previous varsity and/or Junior Olympic experience
- **Extended Training Schedule:** Top collegiate programs work nearly year round because volleyball takes a long time to master. Since high school programs are restricted to a few weeks of practice followed by an intensive match schedule, good technical instruction is hard to obtain during school. Our training allows ample time to work on techniques so players may improve their skill levels
- **New Friendships:** Since our players are committed to becoming the best they can be, many new friendships can be formed from different schools
- **Increased Discipline:** The time commitment required to be in a junior program requires that study habits improve and players budget their time better. It's also vital players have disciplined work habits on the court
- **Exposure to College Recruiters:** We cannot guarantee scholarships for all our players but your odds of being recruited go up exponentially by participating in Junior Olympic Volleyball. Coaches or their representatives regularly attend tournaments looking for up-and-coming talent
- **Fitness & Jump Training:** Conditioning does not play a large part in our plans because it takes vital time away from practices, however, it is necessary for players to be fit in order to succeed. Therefore, Select Level players may be given the opportunity of extra practice time for strength training and specifically plyometrics.
- **Education:** We are trying to create educated players, not just better players. Volleyball is a sport in which new situations happen frequently and outstanding players learn to deal effectively with new situations.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PLAYERS**

Just showing up for practices isn't enough. We need players who are punctual, who are in the proper frame of mind to work hard, and who pay attention to the coaches and cooperate with teammates and coaches.

We recognize that many of our athletes are involved in many school activities and athletic programs while participating in our program. It is not the intent of Northwest Juniors to have girls and/or parents have to choose volleyball over other school activities. We will try and accommodate other school activities. Please inform your coach of conflicts so they can plan their practices and tournaments. If you are going to miss a practice or tournament, please give advanced notice.

Like those other school activities, Northwest Juniors is a commitment and we ask that you try your absolute best to keep that commitment the entire season. To get the most out of our program, it is recommended you make a solid commitment to this program. Attendance will be kept by coaches for record keeping purposes, but please recognize your coaches and teammates will be counting on you to make the best effort to be at each practice. Attendance at practices can be a factor in determining playing time.

**COMMITMENT:** It is vital to be committed to the program. If you really don't want to participate, don't. If you work hard in practices, matches and scrimmages, you are likely to have a successful season. Players who are committed to improving will have little time for you if you simply wish to turn practices into social events.

**REGULAR ATTENDANCE:** We know that not all players can show up to every practice. Exams and other activities sometimes must take priority. It's important you attend every possible practice, though, and notify coaches when you can't attend. Select team attendance is vital to the success of the program. Missing practices may affect playing time at the coach's discretion at the Select level.

**IMAGE PRESENTATION:** Most of the time, players are not aware when college coaches, administrators or other Directors are present. You can make or break your recruiting chances, or even the chance of a teammate, by the way you act as a member of a team. A positive attitude is everything.

**MAINTAINING GOOD GRADES:** Though not all players are trying to earn scholarships, we still consider ourselves a college prep program and you should consider yourselves scholar-athletes and strive for the best possible performance in school.

## **PLAYING TIME & POSITIONS**

The biggest challenge for any coach is assigning playing time and positions to athletes. Northwest Juniors gives discretion to the coaches in regards to playing time. During pool play of each tournament, all girls will be given playing time. Playing time is not always equal for all girls because of positions played and available players. Once a team enters the playoff portion of an event, it will be at the discretion of the coach as to playing time. The coach will evaluate the athletes' attitude, ability, practice attendance, needs of the team, competition of opponent and other individual philosophies when it comes to playing time. It is important that each athlete understand she may not receive all the playing time she believes she deserves.

At the beginning of the season, players will be asked which positions they would like to focus on during the season and teams will be formed based on those answers. There may be times at tournaments where the coach will put an athlete in a position he or she feels best suits the team. It may or may not be the same position the athlete plays on their school team. The athlete is welcomed to train at multiple positions, but this will be at the discretion of the coach. Northwest Juniors coaches may hold team and/or individual meetings to discuss this subject and other philosophies the coach has. It is an expectation the athlete and parents respect the coaches' decisions and give 100% effort towards the success of the team.

## PRACTICE LOCATIONS

Northwest Juniors was created as a YMCA program. This connection allows for us to use the YMCA's that the program is affiliated with at a very low cost for gymnasium space. For the 2014 season, the primary locations for practice and clinics will be the Torrington YMCA, Winsted YMCA, and Greater Waterbury YMCA. We are always open to using additional locations as we continue to grow, providing the program is able to support additional locations.

## PRACTICE GUIDELINES

When the evaluation process is over and players are assigned to teams, we ask that all spectators for practice remain outside of the gymnasium. Space is small our in gyms, and it becomes a liability to our program if spectators get caught up in a drill. We also need this time to have the coaches' work individually with their teams.

## TOURNAMENT EXPECTATIONS:

- Tournament locations for NERVA will be posted roughly a week prior to the tournament date.
- **Enter times** for each tournament is the time designated for participants to **ENTER** the facility. **START TIME** will be the time the first match begins. All players should expect to be at the location by the **ENTER TIME**.
  - If you arrive early, please wait in your car or grab a coffee until the designated enter time. It helps the location get the tournament set up, and not have interruptions during that time.
- Once the tournament starts, all players are expected to stay with their team for the entirety of the tournament.
  - Lunch time and breaks will be spent with the team and/or coach. It is important for the team to be a cohesive unit, and this provides opportunity for the players to interact off the court. Players will not be able to sit with parents during these times.
  - Parents are welcome to leave the facility to get food for players, but no player is allowed to leave the event. Unexpected play-off matches can come up and the team can be penalized if they are not ready to play.
- Always bring court shoes, water bottle, warm-ups, and all issued uniforms.
- Some teams may travel more than others, this is based on available locations and the seeding of your player's team based on the prior tournament results.

## CONFLICTS & COMPLAINTS

Northwest Juniors would like to handle any conflicts and complaints in a professional manner. It is an expectation that all players and parents read the Northwest Juniors Handbook before beginning a complaint process.

Playing time and position conflicts should first be discussed between the coach and player. It is an expectation that both the coach and player conduct any conversations in a civil manner, withholding many emotions that come with this subject. Players and coaches discuss issues first. It is the players who play for the coach, not the parents. Parents will not be allowed to discuss these issues or any conflicts with coaches unless their daughter is present. Discussions with coaches will not be had until **24 hours AFTER** a competition is over. At no time, will a parent and player be able to address the Coach in the middle of an event. If any parent or guardian has a conflict or complaint, we ask that they contact the Club Director. Contact information is available on the website and on the last page of this handbook. Northwest Juniors believes this policy is a great first step to open up communication doors without causing further problems.

## **ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE NOTIFICATION**

Attendance will be taken by the coaches at each practice and tournament for record keeping purposes. It is the sole responsibility of the athlete and/or parent **to notify the coach** regarding an illness, upcoming absence or if the athlete will be late to practice. All coaches can be emailed through the website rosters. As mentioned earlier, what you want to get out of this program may also depend on your attendance. Remember, your absence not only affects you, but also your team and both of your development. Attendance may play a role in the playing time an athlete receives. The attendance policy is as follows:

### ***Practices***

Excused from Practice:

(In-season school sports, family commitment, illness, out of town, etc.) – Notify the coach beforehand

Unexcused from Practice: (Did not notify the coach beforehand)

1st Offense – May not start in the next tournament

2nd Offense – Limited playing time in the next tournament

### ***Late to Practice***

Will be dealt with by team coach on a case-by-case basis

### ***Tournaments***

*Late to Tournament*-Will receive less playing time for first two matches of the tournament.

*Leave Early from a Tournament*-

(does not help officiate, clean up): Will receive less playing time in the first two matches of the next tournament.

*Unexcused Tournament* (did not show up for tournament and did not call coach) –Limited playing time in the next tournament

## **WEATHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

New England is known for its' constantly changing weather. In the event of severe weather, practice will be cancelled. Announcements will be posted on our website, and sometimes through e-mail. You will be asked to provide contact information at the start of the season so you can stay informed of any scheduling changes. **DO NOT TRAVEL IF YOU DO NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE DRIVING TO PRACTICE! JUST NOTIFY YOUR COACH.**

## **COMMUNICATION**

Frequently, pre-tournament information is often delayed and vague. We will release the information as soon as it becomes available. Tournament info will be sent out by email and posted on the Club Website. As a parent/guardian, please familiarize yourself with any information that comes home with your athlete or through email. Please ask your children on a continual basis if they brought any information home with them. As you know, sometimes you may not see it unless you ask.

Please make sure that we have both your child's email and your email so that we can notify you effectively. Please be open to the fact that sometimes last minute changes are made and we will do our best to inform you ASAP. It might also be helpful to establish communications with the parents/guardians of the members in the club on your child's team. Your patience and cooperation is appreciated. If you have any questions, please ask.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS**

Yes, parents, we do expect some things from you. We are a club (and a non-profit organization at that!), and sometimes parents forget that just writing out a dues check does not keep the club operating smoothly. Please remember there are several areas in which you can help us:

- **Pay fees on time.** If fees are not paid on time, coaches, tournament fees, and bills cannot be paid. Remember, players will be withheld from participation in tournaments and practices if fee payments are not made on time.
- **Solicit corporate grants and sponsorships.** Parents have the contacts available to help us gain sponsorships for our team.
- **Please watch your daughter when she competes.** Although she may not let you know, she will appreciate if you are there to cheer her on when you can. Also, remember your daughter has a coach, let the coach do their job while the players are on the court and you as parents are their “positive” cheerleader.
- **As spectators, please be courteous!** Some of the match officials or scorekeepers are going to be young players. You are not going to like all the calls the referees or lines people make but parents need to be role models for the players! Remember, others see you as a representative of our club as well as the players and coaches.

## PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

It is important for Parents and/or Spectators to understand this section. Everyone must remember that you are there to support your child and their team. Parents of a volleyball player have a shared responsibility with the player. A few of the biggest responsibilities are encouraging good sportsmanship and responsible behavior, support and encourage your child win or lose, providing support financially and assist with transportation. Parents also have the responsibility to conduct themselves in a reasonable, responsible manner. Parents must be aware that they have as much, if not more, influence on the chemistry of their team than the coach. How can a player be a good team member when they have to listen to a parents bad mouth their teammates or coach? How can the team have good chemistry when parents sit in the stands and make disparaging comments about players or coaches to other parents?

## NORTHWEST JUNIORS COMMITTEES

The Club Director and Administration may, at its discretion, form and implement committees to further the development of the club and its athletes. These committees may include:

- **Coaches:** Responsible for the search and hiring of coaches for the season. This committee will be the main contact for coaches concerns or questions
- **Tournament:** Responsible for coordinating an annual tournament hosted by the club each year. Works with concessions chair to coordinate food for the event. Works with the board to plan and execute the tournament.
- **Fundraising:** Responsible for coordinating annual sponsorships and coordinating other events to raise funds by the solicitation of gifts and other means.
- **Tournament Concessions:** Responsible for coordinating food and beverages, and workers for NW Juniors Hosted tournaments. This committee will work with the tournament committee chair to coordinate this event.
- **Apparel:** Responsible for coordinating uniforms and special apparel items for club as requested by the Club Director.