

Guide to Club Volleyball in Northern Virginia (2017-2018)

CLUB VOLLEYBALL is an excellent opportunity to take your volleyball playing to the next level. This document serves as a guide to those interested in joining a club volleyball program in Northern Virginia. It is an unbiased opinion of one per person, with input from a few others (thanks!), and reflects my experiences coaching and organizing volleyball programs in the area.

WHAT IS CLUB VOLLEYBALL?

To help place club volleyball in context, here are the categories of volleyball programs available to junior (i.e. grade school) athletes in Northern Virginia:

- **Recreational Volleyball Programs** - Open to everyone regardless of skill level and past experience. Programs are typically run in spring and/or fall, and are divided by age/grade: Elementary School (4th - 6th grades), Middle School (6th - 8th grades) and High School (9th - 12th grades). Teams practice 1 - 2 days per week with 1 match per week. In addition to instructional "House" leagues for beginner and intermediate players, some programs also offer "Select" and/or "Travel" leagues for more advanced players. Visit the [NoVA Volleyball Stuff](#) website for a full list of recreational volleyball programs in Northern Virginia.
- **School Volleyball Programs** – For girls, school-sponsored programs are mainly in High Schools (grades 9th thru 12th). It is a selective program run in the fall with tryouts in early August to fill two or three teams: Varsity, Junior Varsity (JV) and often Freshmen. Immediately after tryouts, teams practice or play 4-6 times a week until school begins and continue after school all the way through playoffs in November. Matches are typically scheduled twice per week against local schools. For boys, volleyball is no longer a varsity sport or school-sponsored club. Instead, it operates through the [Northern Virginia High School Boys Volleyball League](#) (NVHSBVL) during the fall season. Most teams hold tryouts in late summer, practice 2 to 3 times each week after school, and play roughly 2 matches per week against other league teams between mid-September and early November.
- **Club Volleyball Program** - Club volleyball offers the most advanced and competitive youth volleyball in the area. Most girls on high school varsity teams also play club volleyball. Club teams are available for both girls and boys starting with Elementary School (U12) going through Middle School (U13, U14) and High School (U15, U16, U17, U18). In Northern Virginia, most clubs are members of the [Chesapeake Region \(CHRVA\)](#) of the [USA Volleyball \(USAV\)](#) governing organization. Participants must be USAV members and coaches must be certified. Some clubs are also members of the [American Athletics Union \(AAU\)](#) and/or the [Junior Volleyball Association \(JVA\)](#).

The remainder of this document focuses on club volleyball and things to consider in pursuing a spot on a club volleyball team in Northern Virginia.

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WHAT IS THE CLUB VOLLEYBALL COMMITMENT?

Club volleyball is a two-season commitment: winter and spring (6+ months). Girl's tryouts are always in early November and Boy's tryouts are always in October. Teams practice 2 - 3 times per week for about 2 hours in the evenings or on weekends.

The playing season typically runs from December for boys and January for girls through May or June with teams competing in single-day or multi-day tournaments on weekends 1 - 3 times each month. Single-day tournaments are usually local within a 1-hour drive. Some multi-day tournaments are local but many are not and require overnight stays. Tournament days are LONG, running from 7 to 10 hours (no kidding) so this is a commitment for the whole family, not just the player.

Players are expected to attend all practices and tournaments. Playing time is earned during practices and is never divided up evenly. Some teams have "practice players" who do not attend matches in exchange for a reduced fee and a chance to improve skills and experience.

WHICH AGE-GROUP?

Teams within clubs are broken down by age. The table below lists the official CHRVA age divisions and cutover dates for the 2017-2018 season. A few exceptional athletes play up a level, but most stay with their age peers.

| Division | Age Requirement | Target School Grade |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 12 and Under (U12) | Born on or after September 1, 2005 | 6th Grade and under |
| 13 and Under (U13) | Born on or after September 1, 2004 | 7th Grade |
| 14 and Under (U14) | Born on or after September 1, 2003 | 8th Grade |
| 15 and Under (U15) | Born on or after September 1, 2002 | 9th Grade |
| 16 and Under (U16) | Born on or after September 1, 2001 | 10th Grade |
| 17 and Under (U17) | Born on or after September 1, 2000 | 11th Grade |
| 18 and Under (U18) | Born on or after September 1, 1999 | 12th Grade |

WHEN ARE TRYOUTS?

The CHRVA region has defined windows when club teams can hold tryouts. Below are the open tryout periods for the 2017-2018 season:

- For Boys: **October 13 - 24, 2017**
- For Girls U13 and under: **November 3 - 8, 2017**
- For Girls U14 and over: **November 10 - 15, 2017** (after the HS volleyball season)

In addition to club websites, you can learn more about tryout dates and times by linking to CHRVA's official [Club Tryout Dates](#) site or by viewing the aggregated tryout calendars maintained by [NoVA Volleyball Stuff](#). Note that the weekend of the tryout period is packed. Most candidates attend multiple tryouts, so you will need to plan accordingly.

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HOW ARE CLUBS DIFFERENTIATED?

There are over [30 volleyball clubs](#) for girls in Northern Virginia, each with its own selection criteria, coaching philosophy, practice facilities and fees. Some have only one team per age group while others are large enough to support multiple teams per age group.

There are two broad categories of club teams:

- **Regional** - More inclusive teams that primarily compete in CHRVA tournaments across Northern VA, MD, DE and DC. The playing season usually ends in April or May.
- **Travel/National/Open** - More selective teams that play a wider range of tournaments both within the CHRVA region and outside (involving car/bus/plane trips), and compete in Open-level events for a chance to attend the USAV or AAU national tournaments. These teams generally require a higher level of commitment and have higher fees. The playing season usually ends in May or June, but can also stretch into July.

Some clubs have both regional and travel/national/open teams.

The following clubs are planning boys teams: [Arlington Elite](#) (U14, U16), [BRYC](#) (U12 - U18) and, [Western Loudoun County](#) (U14 & U15/U16). Other clubs working on developing boys programs include [NVVA](#) (14U Galaxy League) and [American Volleyball Club](#) (U14 team pending interest).

WHICH ARE THE BEST LOCAL CLUBS?

There are so many factors in determining the right club for an individual including (1) coaches, (2) commitment & competition level, (3) location, (4) cost, (5) culture (fun vs serious), (6) player development & playing time, and (7) recruitment exposure if planning to play in college.

In evaluating clubs, you'll discover quickly that there is a great deal of variety without easy standards to measure and compare them. Some clubs only target the most elite athletes and coaches, while others are more open to a variety of experiences and skills. Some clubs are known to provide a consistent level of services from year-to-year, while others see fluctuation. Without recommendations from insiders or an exhaustive review of information published on websites, it's hard to know where to start.

To help you evaluate clubs in an unbiased manner, the next two pages list club teams in Northern Virginia using the [AES Power Ranking](#) for comparisons. The ranking indicates how well each club team did at competitive tournaments last season. The information can help provide a sense of the caliber of players and coaches that may be attracted to the club during the 2017-2018 season. Clubs with multiple entries in the same age group typically offer separate teams for top talent and emerging talent.

The list also includes the clubs primary practice location. Although specific facilities are identified, there is a general shortage of available volleyball gyms in the area so teams may end up practicing at other facilities during the long season.

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Girls Volleyball Rankings (Regional Comparison)

| Girls AES Power Ranking – Chesapeake Region – 2016-2017 Season | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Club Name and Primary Practice Location | U12 | U13 | U14 | U15 | U16 | U17 | U18 |
| Alexandria Titans @TC Williams HS in Alexandria | 31 of 50 | 20 of 68 43 of 68 | 73 of 107 | 73 of 108 | | | |
| American @a dedicated facility in Manassas | 9 of 50 18 of 50 | 10 of 68 24 of 68 37 of 68 | 7 of 107 23 of 107 | 51 of 108 64 of 108 | 9 of 124 | | 38 of 60 |
| Apple Valley @Body Renew in Winchester | 29 of 50 42 of 50 | 47 of 68 | 47 of 107 | 69 of 108 | 30 of 124 53 of 124 | | 53 of 60 |
| Areyto (AVA) @Potomac Athletic in Ashburn | 40 of 50 48 of 50 | 11 of 68 | 46 of 107 | 56 of 108 | 54 of 124 | 10 of 66 | 33 of 60 |
| Arlington Elite @Kids Choice Sports in Annandale | 26 of 50 | 22 of 68 27 of 68 | 26 of 107 28 of 107 | 15 of 108 23 of 108 47 of 108 | 5 of 124 49 of 124 | 49 of 66 | 25 of 60 |
| BRYC @various gyms in Fairfax/Burke/Springfield area | | 54 of 68 | 35 of 107 87 of 107 | 7 of 108 52 of 108 | 12 of 124 31 of 124 | 18 of 66 47 of 66 | 7 of 60 |
| Chantilly Juniors @The Campus in Sterling | | | | 33 of 108 | <i>Team Planned</i> | | <i>Team Planned</i> |
| Dulles @Cassel's Sports in Herndon | | <i>Team Planned</i> | 56 of 107 | 9 of 108 | 25 of 124 | 33 of 66 | 18 of 60 |
| DSYS @The BeanTree Pavilion at in Ashburn | | 41 of 68 61 of 68 | 25 of 107 33 of 107 | 40 of 108 48 of 108 | <i>Team Planned</i> | | |
| Evolution (EVO) @a dedicated facility in Alexandria off Eisenhower Ave | | 66 of 68 67 of 68 | 20 of 107 105 of 107 | 83 of 108 99 of 108 | 80 of 124 91 of 124 109 of 124 | 12 of 66 60 of 66 | 48 of 60 |
| Go Volleyball @TBD Facilities Sterling/Winchester | | | | | | <i>Team Planned</i> | <i>Team Planned</i> |
| Libero @Libero Sports Center in Sterling | | | | 96 of 108 | 63 of 124 94 of 124 | | |
| Loudoun Elite @The Pavilion in Ashburn | <i>Team Planned</i> | 25 of 68 | 15 of 107 | <i>Team Planned</i> | | | |
| Manassas @a dedicated facility in Manassas | | | 101 of 107 | 102 of 108 | 71 of 124 114 of 124 | 59 of 66 64 of 66 | 50 of 60 |
| MB @The BeanTree Pavilion at in Ashburn | | | 66 of 107 | <i>Team Planned</i> | 64 of 124 | 28 of 66 | 30 of 60 |
| Metro (South) @Holmes MS in Alexandria (<i>Note 1</i>) | | 30 of 68 | 34 of 107 | 75 of 108 | 88 of 124 | | 36 of 60 |
| Mojo Elite @Redeemer Church in McLean | 10 of 50 46 of 50 | 26 of 68 56 of 68 | 42 of 107 | 14 of 108 | 11 of 124 | | 35 of 60 |
| No Panic @Cassel's Sports in Herndon | | 19 of 68 | 19 of 107 39 of 107 | 27 of 108 72 of 108 | 7 of 124 14 of 124 | 14 of 66 | <i>Team Planned</i> |
| Northern Fauquier (NFVBC) @Village Green CC in Warrenton | | | | 42 of 108 | 73 of 124 | | |
| NOVA @Key MS in Springfield and Hoops Plus in Chantilly | | 63 of 68 | 39 of 107 | 102 of 108 | 24 of 124 40 of 124 | 30 of 66 | 16 of 60 |
| NV Premier @Cassel's Sports in Herndon | | | <i>Team Planned</i> | 71 of 108 | 72 of 124 | 48 of 66 | |

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| Girls AES Power Ranking – Chesapeake Region – 2016-2017 Season | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Club Name and Primary Practice Location | U12 | U13 | U14 | U15 | U16 | U17 | U18 |
| NVVA @VA Volleyball Center (VVC) in Sterling | 8 of 50 22 of 50 36 of 50 | 5 of 68 29 of 68 45 of 68 57 of 68 62 of 68 65 of 68 | 6 of 107 27 of 107 49 of 107 57 of 107 80 of 107 83 of 107 93 of 107 100 of 107 | 22 of 108 38 of 108 39 of 108 55 of 108 76 of 108 80 of 108 89 of 108 95 of 108 98 of 108 | 56 of 124 74 of 124 98 of 124 | 4 of 66 | 42 of 60 |
| Paramount @Cassel's Sports in Herndon | | | | 8 of 108 | | 6 of 66 | |
| SYA @various gyms in the Clifton/Centreville area | | | 69 of 107 | 4 of 108 62 of 108 | 18 of 124 | 11 of 66 | 3 of 60 |
| Tier One @Hoops Plus in Sterling | | | | | 28 of 124 33 of 124 | | |
| VA Juniors @Cassel's Sports in Herndon | | 7 of 68 | 4 of 107 | 11 of 108 | 2 of 124 | 8 of 66 | <i>Team Planned</i> |
| Vienna Elite @Flint Hill School in Oakton and The Campus in Sterling | 4 of 50 | 6 of 68 17 of 68 | 9 of 107 <i>+Team Planned</i> | 13 of 108 <i>+Team Planned</i> | 23 of 124 | <i>Team Planned</i> | <i>Team Planned</i> |
| Virginia Elite @The Madeira School in McLean | | 16 of 68 | 12 of 107 | 26 of 108 | 8 of 124 | 2 of 66 | 8 of 60 |
| Virginia Fusion @The Campus in Sterling | | <i>Team Planned</i> | 17 of 107 | 25 of 108 | 26 of 124 | <i>Team Planned</i> | 40 of 60 |
| Virginia Top Team @Cassel's Sports in Herndon | | | | 29 of 108 | 36 of 124 | 45 of 66 | 14 of 60 |
| Western Loudoun @Foxcroft School in Middleburg | | 38 of 68 | 13 of 107 77 of 107 | 46 of 108 | 60 of 124 | | <i>Team Planned</i> |

Notes: (1) Metro operates additional teams across MD and DC

Boys Volleyball Rankings (National Comparison)

| Boys AES Power Ranking – National Ranking – 2016-2017 Season | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Club Name and Primary Practice Location | U12 | U13 | U14 | U15 | U16 | U17 | U18 |
| American @a dedicated facility in Manassas | | | <i>Team Planned</i> | | | | |
| Arlington Elite @Kids Choice Sports in Annandale | | | 215 of 239 | | <i>Team Planned</i> | | |
| BRYC @various gyms in Fairfax/Burke/Springfield area | CHRVA 17 of 44 (vs. girls) | | 41 of 239 198 of 239 | 67 of 151 | 174 of 343 | 51 of 232 | 39 of 404 375 of 404 |
| NVVA @VA Volleyball Center (VVC) in Sterling | | | | 124 of 151 | | | |
| Western Loudoun @Foxcroft School in Middleburg | | | 133 of 239 | | <i>Team Planned</i> | | |

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SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Below are sample schedules for different club teams during the 2017-2018 season. It should provide a sense of the number and scale of events with corresponding time commitments.

| Team | Practices | Tournaments |
|--|---|--|
| NVVA U12 (Regional Team) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesdays @5:00pm-7:00pm (includes 30 min Strength & Coordination) at the VVC in Sterling • Fridays @6:30pm-8:30pm (includes 30 min Strength & Coordination) at the VVC in Sterling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan 13-14 – MLK Tournament at Jessup MD (2 days) • Jan TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • Feb 17-19 – Capitol Hill Classic at the DC Convention Center (3 days) • Feb TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • Mar TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • April TBD – CHRVA Regional Championships at TBD Location |
| Vienna Elite U14 (Open / National Team) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mondays @7pm-9:30pm (includes Strength & Conditioning) at The Campus in Sterling • Wednesdays @7pm-9:30pm (includes Strength & Conditioning) at The Campus in Sterling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan 13-15 – Monument Classic in Richmond VA (3 days) • Jan TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • Feb 17-19 – Capitol Hill Classic at the DC Convention Center (3 days) • Feb 2-3 – Atlantic Power League at Greensboro NC (2 days) • Feb TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • Mar 10-12 – Colorado Crossroads in Denver CO (3 days) • March 17-18 - Atlantic Power League at Roanoke VA (2 days) • Mar TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • April 6-8 – Northeast Qualifier in Philadelphia PA (3 days) • April 28-29 – Mid-Atlantic Power League in York PA (2 days) • April TBD – CHRVA Regional Championships at TBD Location • May 12-13 – Atlantic Power League in TBD VA (2 days) • May 26-28 – East Coast Championship in Pittsburgh PA (3 days) • June TBD – USA Volleyball Nationals in Anaheim CA (must qualify – multiple day tournament) |
| Mojo Elite U16 (Travel Team) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesdays @7:00-9:00pm at Sport & Health in McLean • Wednesdays @6:30-8:30pm at Redeemer Lutheran Church in McLean • Thursdays Strength & Conditioning @8:00-9:00pm at Sport & Health in McLean | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan 13-15 – City of Oaks Challenge in Raleigh NC (3 days) • Jan TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • Feb 17-19 – Capitol Hill Classic at the DC Convention Center (3 days) • Feb TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • Mar 10-11 – Irish Rumble in Lancaster PA (2 days) • Mar TBD – Single Day Regional Tournament • April 6-8 – Northeast Qualifier in Philadelphia PA (3 days) • April TBD – CHRVA Regional Championships at TBD Location • May 12-13 – Beach Fest in Ocean City MD (2 days) • May 26-28 – Happy Volley at Penn State in State College PA (3 days) |

As mentioned earlier, each tournament day can run 7 to 10 hours. Some multi-day events even have morning and afternoon shifts to accommodate all teams. For out-of-town tournaments, teams usually travel the day before and return home on the last day of the event.

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HOW MUCH DOES CLUB COST?

Club fees vary widely from as low as \$1,200 a season to \$7,000+ for the most elite clubs. Here are related guidelines:

- Younger teams and regional teams tend to travel less and are less expensive
- Travel/National/Open teams tend to travel more and are more expensive

A majority of clubs are within a \$2,000 to \$4,000 range (boys are always less). Club fees pay for uniforms, practice equipment, gym space, coaching expenses, tournament fees, and sometimes hotels for overnight stays. In most cases at least one parent will accompany his/her player to out-of-town tournaments and those travel/lodging costs are not covered in the player fees. You can find detailed information (costs and tournament schedules) on club websites.

HOW DO I GET ON A CLUB TEAM?

There are some harsh realities about earning a spot on a club volleyball team:

- Demand is greater than supply. There are generally not enough club teams to accommodate all the girls interested in playing club volleyball.
- At U13 & U14 tryouts, don't be surprised to find 25+ girls competing to fill the 10-12 spots on a team.
- At U15 & U16 tryouts, you'll likely see 35+ girls competing to fill 10-12 spots. The higher numbers are due to so many girls coming out of high school Freshman and JV teams.
- There are really not 10-12 spots open on each team. On average, more than half are already reserved for players returning from the previous season, so the number of openings for those competing at tryouts is actually smaller.
- For U12, it's far less competitive. There are fewer players attending tryouts (maybe 15+) and very few spots on the team are pre-claimed.
- Ideally, it'd be great to earn a spot on a club team close to home. However, you should be prepared to travel to wherever the club practices.

Having said all that, if you're committed, you can optimize your chances of making a team. Here are some strategies to consider:

- Visit the websites of each local club to learn more about its coaches, coaching philosophy, selection criteria, player expectations, practice facilities and club fees. Many of the clubs host a "Meet the Coaches" gathering where you can talk directly with club staff to learn more about the team and its coaches.
- Target 1 or 2 clubs, but attend as many tryouts as possible. Best to have options and choose between multiple offers.
- Of your target clubs, attend as many of the fall clinics and pre-tryout open gyms as you can (START NOW!!). Get to know the coaches and let them get to know you -- many clubs use this as a way to meet and gain a comfort with players before tryouts begin.

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- Attending 3 to 5 tryouts is not uncommon. With the short tryout period, some clubs hold tryouts around the same time, so you may need to prepare a detailed schedule and drive quickly from one tryout to another. Some clubs may offer make-up sessions.
- When putting together your tryout list, consider some of the larger clubs such as NVVA, Evolution and Arlington Elite. With more teams available in each age group, your chances of making one of the teams is greatly increased.
- As the tryouts approach, re-visit club websites to review final details. Most clubs require you to register in advance and pay a tryout fee. There are also forms to fill out and bring to tryouts. Even before making a team, you'll have to officially join CHRVA/USA Volleyball to attend tryouts.
- Don't be intimidated by the number of players at each tryout. Many are "shopping around" and may not accept offers if given. So don't be discouraged if you think you didn't do as well as others during the tryout.
- During actual tryouts be ON. Demonstrating strong skills are important, but don't discount hard work and a positive attitude as influencing factors. Many coaches are looking for potential and "coachability", so always listen and do exactly as instructed.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER TRYOUTS?

Clubs usually communicate with candidates during the tryout, by email, or by posting tryout numbers on their website. Candidates typically fall into three categories: (1) in, (2) out and (3) waitlisted. Because so many players are shopping around clubs, teams usually keep some candidates on a rank-ordered waitlist while they wait to hear back on offers. It can be a challenging time for those on the waitlist hoping for a chance to say yes. The waitlist is released once all open spots are filled.

Finally, if you are fortunate enough to receive an offer, take the time to have a full conversation with the head coach to make sure all expectations are clearly communicated and understood. Also review the [CHRVA recruiting rules](#) and [FAQs](#) on your rights to respond to an offer. It's a big investment of time and money so there's no need to rush in unprepared.

Good luck!!

Regards,

Chuck Pruitt

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Chairperson, Fairfax County Volleyball Council

If you have feedback on this guide, please email me at mcleanvb@gmail.com