

The tradition of volleyball in Hawaii is well known, as that state turns out more National team and top level talent per capita than any other state in the US. One of the reasons is the family tradition of playing together at gatherings. The other can be seen at the Outrigger Canoe Club, where right next to the two adult courts, on the incredibly valuable beach frontage of Honolulu, they have a 6 meter by 12 meter court for kids, with a lower net, permanently set up. There, the kids learn shots, cooperation, and hustle from the adults playing games next to them.

There are dozens of parents who have put up courts, smaller than regulation size, in their backyards that allows their kids the chance to learn the most valuable skill of playing over the net. Others have set them up in a fast putup/takedown way, in the driveway, on concrete or asphalt, so kids can play even one on one, acquiring the most valuable reading, anticipation and creative skills that comes from over the net learning. If you go to Puerto Rico, you will see those talented kids learning in the streets, with the curbs being the sidelines, for a net strung across a little used thoroughfare. When I played in Italy, there were not many flat areas other than the holy soccer fields that no other ball could be seen upon. So they closed the street and held kids triples tournaments.

Play Coed

Coed picnics, adults and kids mixed together, have always been one of the most fun ways kids learn to play volleyball. The surface does not matter. One of the most fun times I have had playing with my son and daughter was in Alaska, on a wood chip court. Alaskan rules included you can hit it off the black spruce trees and back into the court, one time per match your side gets four hits if you call it, first serve of the summer mulligans, and more. It was a blast under the endless summer night. If you get good enough, shoot for taking a team, with your son, to the USA Coed Volleyball Nationals. There, skill level competition exists at the most serious, yet fun level.

Create a Team

The lower levels of Men's volleyball – "B", "C" or "Novice" are skill based, and a new team of boys can play in such USA Volleyball tournaments, against the adults. Likewise, USAV Regions understand the problems of boys' volleyball development, and will let 13 & under boys play against 14 & under girls, and 16 & under boys play 18 & under girls. Most commonly the boys play in the pool play, getting in three matches or so, but are not allowed into the playoffs. Make sure to inform parents in advance of this non-contact sport option. They should know that many of the best female players in the US got there by playing coed or with their brothers, gaining that valuable game experience with a ball that went faster, such that playing boys will help advance the girls talents of those lucky enough to play against them. From a coaching point of view, an adult needs to be in the mix, but get the Jr. Olympic Girls to coach 12,13 and 14 & under, coed or boys only. The myth of adult wisdom that only adult kids can teach – if coached well, any JOV player can learn more while giving back to the sport by coaching little kids.



Create a League

Get the YMCA, PAL, Boys & Girls Clubs, Church Recreation, and of course the Parks & Recreation to create a quality youth program for kids of any age and both genders. You do not need to take over the gym. Great kids programs can be run in racquetball courts, using the Wallyball net set ups. You can also share the gym, taking only HALF the gym, and putting up Kidz Courts on one half, while you need not do this from scratch. Contact the United States Youth Volleyball League, www.usyvl.com and they can assist you.

For more information on starting a boys high school or middle school program, contact Jeff Mosher, Coordinator of Boys' & Men's Program Development at USAV.

A complimentary USAV Boys Programs CD is available upon request and may be duplicated as needed.



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Starting a Boys Volleyball Program

By Rob Crawford – Eagle/Vail Volleyball & John Kessel – USA Volleyball

Volleyball too often is seen as a girls only sport. How could the best lifetime sport around be seen that way, after so many USA Men's Team Olympic Medals? It is a challenge we need your help to overcome. Title IX has given the women/girls millions more chances to play, and the sport might well be gone had it not been for Title IX. Title IX also restricts schools from adding a men's sport if a sport such as football with huge roster size is nested there. Football is a great sport, which keeps kids that would otherwise be playing sports with their fingers (video games), playing sport. The impact of Title IX is a different article. At any rate, the boy's game needs to be grown, and you can be the one to help. Part of this is premised with the fact that a successful boy's program in Eagle, Colorado, which is two hours into the mountains west of Denver. It wasn't easy, but if it were, anyone could do it.

Just think about it, ten boys playing on a team. One team, one unit, all together, sweating, working hard, learning discipline, staying off the streets, on the court, not in court, building muscles, the beginning of a passion. Sounds great! Sign me up. If you live in a warm place on the west coast, it may be just that easy. If you live elsewhere, you need to have a powerful passion for the start of boy's volleyball.

Let's start with the basics of what you as a person, might need to start a boys program.

- A job situation that allows you time to make this great program happen
- A trust fund would be nice. (even without volleyball)
- A significant other and family that is equally passionate about the rise of the sport.
- No significant other.
- A good relationship with the Athletic Directors, or Principals at local schools.
- Coaching experience, or good relationships with qualified coaches.
- Connections with wealthy people or companies that might like to see boy's volleyball go.
- The ability to stand up after being repeatedly unsuccessful (tenacity, or foolhardiness).
- Patience
- No, really you need a ton of patience

Education

Your local boys need to be educated about the fact that volleyball is indeed a boys sport. Not only is it a boy's sport, but it is a man's and a lifetime sport. Boys need to know that you can get hurt playing volleyball. Again, unless you live in a warm climate on the west coast, most boys in this country don't know that this is an option.

The best way to show boys that the court could be a scary place to be is to bring in some big guns. National team members are great, but a little hard to come by. Your local region has some great men's players that would love nothing more than to have someone ooh, and aah at them. Contact the USAV RVA and ask for a list of the AA and A men's team programs, their captain or director, and reach out to these men.

In the first exhibition we did in Colorado, we brought up National team member, Scott Bunker in his uniform (as the Olympic Training Center is only three hours away), some great players from the Denver area, and a 5'6" stud that could jump out of the gym and crush the ball. Air time gets oohs and aahs. Towards the end of the exhibition, we got the boys out on the court, for a little bit of serving competition. The stud players would lie down on the court with a gift (supplied in this case by our national team but candy bars and pizza boxes are also powerfully desired), on top of



them. The boys hit a player, and thus won the prize. These skilled players drove hours to further their sport, and this is definitely on the **DO** list.

If you put this exhibition on after a local rival high school girls match, you will already have an audience. Put out some flyers. Get it announced on the radio, at the schools, in the newspaper, on television if you can. It's important that the parents of the boys see that this is a cool sport. If you don't have the support of the parents, you don't have boys. At the exhibition, after the kids are pumped up on the sport, have them sign a "Interested in Boys Volleyball" sheet that gives them a place to put their name, phone number, address, and email address. Just about every boy in the gym will sign the sheet. The boys will remember how cool that exhibition was for as long as they stay awake. The next day it will just be a memory like going to the circus. Many, if not most boys will not call you to ask you when they can practice. They have forgotten about the whole thing, but they now know that this could happen.

Send out Flyers Regarding the Start of Practice.

The entry of a school is littered with flyers, from ballet lessons, to break dancing lessons. Did you ever look at a flyer in the entry of your school? If you are a parent, you know what the glance to trash speed is like when deciphering good versus waste in your child's bring home pile. **Don't** kill the tree yet.

Put on Clinics at the Elementary Level

Good P.E. Teachers are always looking for new ideas for their classes. Ask the elementary P.E. Teacher if you can put on a volleyball clinic at his/her school. If you have the time, you can put on 4-5 clinics in one day at a school. You are reaching a ton of kids, and letting them know in your short talk session that boys volleyball is coming,, and girls volleyball rules. When you get into the gym with these kids, have a good simple lesson plan ready for 25-30 kids. Lesson priorities:



1. Hitting
2. Hitting things
3. Serving, especially jump serves
4. Serving at people on the ground
5. Hitting

You get the idea. We aren't trying to train kids. We are simply asking them to "give us a chance to be their sport" to quote USAV's Becky Howard. If you can bring a stud with you, that really helps your campaign. This needs to be very high energy. A word of warning: Give yourself time to recover from this. Put this on your definitely **Do** list.

Visit the Middle Schools

You are going to call the Principle of the local Middle School (who is your buddy, remember?) and ask him/her if you can have a small table somewhere near or in the lunch room and a VCR. The Principal always say "yes" because he/or she is your buddy. When you arrive there, you will have to carry in some stuff:

1. A promotional video tape of great men playing the sport with pump up music and the whole shebang. Check with your USA Volleyball Regional Volleyball Association for more.
2. Flyers with information, regarding what is definitely going to happen with boy's volleyball in the next two weeks. Costs, practice schedule, uniforms, etc.
3. A new pair of board shorts (long with Hawaiian print). Many boys picture boys playing volleyball in spandex. Not the picture that we want. If you can get a uniform/T-shirt made up with a cool logo and graphics, this helps a lot. This one item has inspired many boys to come out and play our game.
4. A sign up sheet so that you can get the phone numbers, and email addresses.

You will have some kids mock you, be ready for that and know what you will do before you get in there. You don't have to stand up in front of everyone and say a thing. Have a sign up above your table that says "Boys Volleyball". Play the video tape so that everyone can see it, and just wait a minute. Boys will come and talk to you, sometimes before the tape starts. See if you can make a connection with these boys, so that they remember you. Worst-case scenario; you get the word out that boys volleyball is coming, and you slowly build awareness. This only takes one to two hours, and is a good investment. **Do** it.

Find Money

Gym time, uniforms, balls, tournament costs add up quickly. Would you pay \$300-\$400 to play a sport that you have never played? How about your kids? The first year of volleyball for boys has to be...Free. Sorry, but you are going to have to beg, borrow, and...beg some more. Actually when you start telling people the truth about boys volleyball which is; that it gets boys out from behind their televisions and gets them active, and we all know what that means: On the court, not in the court, you will have an easy go at getting money. If we had to ask for a dime from our boys this year, we wouldn't need a dime...ie. Without boys, the program doesn't have expenses. **Do** get money.



Make it FUN

Once you have some kids at your practices, your first few need to be more fun than anything. **Don't** start thinking about disciplined athletes until the boys are hooked. You will have more kids coming up and asking if it is too late to join if you make it fun. This is all word of mouth by the kids. Kids that are having fun, talk about volleyball at lunch, and kids overhear them. Now we have the word spreading. Now we have a boys program, and now we are having fun!

Start a High School Program

We're talking about rural America here. Football, Basketball, Baseball, and for the open-minded, track. Boys in rural America are all the way locked into their sport by high school. Building a high school program could be accomplished, but you have to get at least three other schools in your area with someone as passionate as you there. This goes to the **Maybe** list. For those reading this in larger metro areas, it is much more do-able. A starting point for ALL areas can be helping make sure the intramural volleyball games played at school are run well and fun.

The highest level is to create a statewide varsity program. Twenty of the states have boys varsity programming already. Take a look at www.nfhs.org for more on volleyball at the high school level. Recently Maine (1997) and Florida (2001) began varsity programming for boys, and Colorado has been working on a solid program to do the same. If you are from a state without boy's varsity volleyball, take a look at what Paul Hastings and the progress and planning at www.chsbva.org

Play On Adult Teams

The great thing about our sport is that it can be played coed, and mixed ages. It is a non-contact sport, where skill is most important. Think of the way top tennis playing young players take on adults all the time; Martina Hingis was 15 when she won her first Open event. When kids play against an opponent who is more experienced than they are, no matter what age or gender, they get better faster. Here are more ideas on giving boys the chance to make volleyball their lifetime sport.

Junior Olympic Volleyball is a great program, but it has only been around about 20 years. Before such age group competition was created, boys played on men's teams. The best example of this is Rod Wilde. He would play back row for his dad's Ft. Dodge Cornshucker team (not the real name, but close enough for farm work) at the Men's AA level. This is a great option still, for the faster speed of the adult ball for the younger players gives them a great advantage when they play against kids their age. Rod went on to become one of the best floor defenders ever in the USA National team, in part due to his training with adults early on. They can play in recreational leagues, with permission, in most programs.

Play Doubles with a Parent

Doubles or triples is a fantastic way to get lots of gamelike ball contacts in by playing doubles on any surface, not just sand. Karch Kiraly started this way at about 8, playing with his father against adults. You might even create a Father/Son tournament (along with a Mother/Daughter division), to get everyone out training and playing for fun in the warm weather time of your state.

Create a Kidz Court

