

# US Opens and JOVC

## RMR Commissioner goes to Beijing

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"Nin hao" (nee how) was the greeting I had the opportunity to use for three weeks in August. In Chinese this means "hello". Last season the supervisor of officials for FIVB Beach volleyball asked about availability for the coming year and the Olympics. Immediately the response was "whatever you need". The response started a journey which started as soon Jazzy and Nikky graduated and we went on the annual family vacation (this time NOT a volleyball destination for the first time sine they were 11 years old).

The summer FIVB beach season started out with an event in Paris with matches being played in the shadow of the Eiffel tower. Next, it was off to Stavanger Norway with matches being played at 10:00pm and the sky being as bright as if it was noon in Colorado. Then off to Moscow with trips to the Kremlin and Red Square. Back for four days and then off to picturesque Marseille France. From there to Gstaad Switzerland. This would have been a perfect summer just with these events and places but from Switzerland, home for a few days and then the loong plane flight to Beijing.

All that can be said is a once in a life time experience. The people in China pulled out all the stops for this event. Three months before the event, in order to help the air quality, drivers alternated days of driving according to odd and even li-cense plates. One month before the Olympics all manufacturing and production stopped for 100 miles all around Beijing. Everything was beautiful! It was a country wide effort probably unsurpassed in Olympic history. Many of you saw the Opening Ceremony. I was six rows from the floor and able to see all of the staging for each part of the show, that in of itself was amazing!

Then to witness how well USA Volleyball did was amazing. Watching the USA women over achieve and winning the silver medal, the then the USA men winning the gold. Then of course there was the Beach event I was working. Witnessing Phil & Todd come in second in pool and then fighting

through the bracket to win the gold. Kerry & Misty repeating as Olympic Gold medalists was an amazing way for them to round out the past eight years of their efforts and sacrifices. Every match worked was on television someplace in the world and every match had the energy and feel of a "finals" match.

The Stadium was always rocking with 12-13 thousand people and when China played WOW! You could not hear a thing on the sand it was sooo loud. A very touching moment when the women's team from Russia and Georgia embraced and held each others arms up in triumph at the event was an Olympic moment to behold.

Fortunately, due to country conflicts, I was able to watch every time the USA played. All of the teams from the USA did great!

In retrospect, it is still breath taking and a once in a life time experience. The Chinese people were so kind and generous, the matches were all great (both teams in the finals came in second in their respective pools) with many upsets and absolutely great and entertaining matches.

Now back home to Colorado and the RMR for the start of our 2008/2009 season. Best of luck to every one and hope your season will be fun and fulfilling.



Glenn Sapp  
RMR Commissioner & Olympic Beach Volleyball Referee

## Stellar National 13's

The Stellar National 13's had a wonderful run at Nationals this year! After an amazing win in three close games at the Regional Qualifier against Club One, they took their momentum to Dallasto compete in the Nationals Division against the top 13's team in the country.. In their first match they came up against a tough opponent in Arizona Sky and suffered a frustrating only to rebound and win the next two matches that day. That afternoon the team took a break from playing and headed to the Sixth Floor Museum and the Grassy Knoll. Everyone thought it was really interesting. They also experienced riding the DART, or rail train. The next day they went on to win their first match in the early morning. Next up was the #1 seed in the tournament,

Wave from CA. Although they played tough and competed they were unable to stop the power hitters of Wave and ended up finishing third in their pool which placed them in the upper division of the bracket. Sunday morning, Monique Domme, RMR all-star, became very ill. Despite this, the team pulled together and fought hard against the eventual champion of the 13's division, St. Louis CYC. They even took them to 22-22 in the second game. That evening, with everyone back on track, the ladies came back to win their challenge match over Asics Mavs and enter the Bronze division. Monday morning, they fell to Champions from FL in a heart-breaking third game, finishing the tourna-

ment 19th (best finish ever at nationals). Captain Grace Neal said, "I really felt that our team did well at Nationals, We had fun, played as a team and made great friendships. That is what volleyball is all about! I hope we make it back next year!" Captain Mackenzie Swan said, "Going to nationals for the 3rd year in a row was awesome. It was fun playing against some of the best players and teams in the country" Stellar National 13's had a great tournament and the parents, families and coaching staff are very proud of all of these young ladies and what they accomplished this year.

## Stellar 18 National

The Club Stellar 18's team came to Dallas full of excitement and high expectations. Eighty percent of the team had never competed at Nationals before, so there were a lot of questions leading up to the tournament. Stellar qualified in Reno by beating some very good California teams in the playoffs. The girls were playing really well and working great together. They gained a huge amount of confidence in Reno and it carried into Nationals.

The team had a great start, winning all 3 of their matches the first day. Nerves were apparent as they struggled to minimize errors, but the girls were determined to win that day. After a hard fought match on day 2, Stellar finished 2nd in their pool. Day 3 was intense! Stellar was seeded 3rd in their pool of three. The other two teams ended up playing each other in the national championship. They knew if we could beat one of them, they would get to the medal rounds. The team fought hard and showed incredible determination but eventually lost to both teams.

After a disappointing night, the Stellar players decided to end their season on a great note, winning all 3 matches the final day to win Flight 1. They competed at Nationals with pride and grace. This Stellar team was often recognized for their hard work, positive attitudes and great teamwork. In between their matches, the Stellar players went and watched the younger Stellar teams compete. They cheered and mentored, reinforcing the fact that they were great role-models. They were proud to represent Colorado, the RMR, and Club Stellar at Nationals and worked hard to make a positive impression on all teams, officials, and fans.

## Nationals 2008 by Jenni Cook (Stellar 17 National)

Reflecting on my first experience of Nationals this past summer certain memories come to mind. I played on Stellar 15's, and then on 17's this last year, and this was the first time my team reached our ultimate goal of playing at the Junior Olympics. All the teams we encountered from across the country like Jammers VBC from Honolulu, Heat from San Antonio, and North Florida Volleyball Academy from Tallahassee, had visions of winning and continuing into the gold bracket. In reality most teams would leave Nationals with four, five, and six wins under their belt but it was only the few that had the great honor of getting to playoffs. Although Stellar 17's wasn't ranked with the top teams, we had the mentality of championship winners. We traveled from Colorado Springs, Colorado to Dallas, Texas to prove to the Nation that we in fact were a top team that wanted to show what we had and play some good volleyball.

Traveling back and forth from the convention center to your hotel before and after a tedious day is some what of a hassle. This year our coach, Kyle Robinson, let us haul around our Razor Scooters so we could "glide" to and from the DART (Dallas Area Rapid Transit), our hotel, and the convention center. We have all made bets on the number of teams that will continue this new tradition in the upcoming Junior Olympic Championships. It is our hope and dream that this next club season we will again qualify for Nationals and be able to make more memories that will last a lifetime.

## Stellar 14 National

Nationals is definitely a pressure cooker. Because this team did so well last year at Nationals, coming in 3rd in the American division, the returning girls (most of the starters) felt a tremendous pressure to do well. It showed in our first match where we looked nervous and played not-to-lose volleyball instead of playing-to-win volleyball and subsequently lost in 2 to the High Flyers who were much better than their 45th seed. We never got started that first day and went 0-3. The next day after a good talk, they came out and played much better, winning both matches in two games. The third day was tough, winning the first match handily but losing the second to a very good Austin Juniors team. We then lost the challenge match in a very close 3 set match where every game was won or lost by 2 points. We then lost in our first round of the last

day to a team we'd beaten before at Crossroads, Southwind Attack. We just never found the consistency of play that marked our entire season.

On a positive note, there were some breakthrough performances by individual players. In her first year of club volleyball, Alex Winkler made tremendous improvement and earned a starting Middle Hitter position by Nationals. She really played well at Nationals, putting up tremendous blocks and connecting solidly on quicks. It has really been a pleasure to watch her skills and her aggressiveness on court develop. Alex Poli also made significant improvement over the season, not just in her skills but also in her self-confidence and teamwork and was able to step in and help out with serve receive and defense as libero during Nationals. McKenzie Kessel has been the most overall consistent server, passer and defensive

player all season, and she came through again at Nationals, not letting her nerves affect her playing and providing solid base for her teammates.

Making Nationals is always a positive for the team and the girls. The extra 2 months of practice really makes a difference in longer term development. You can definitely see that in the girls who've been to Nationals 2-3 years in a row. Everyone on the team got significant playing time, especially for Nationals. Even losing was a learning experience, something this team needed in some ways. How the girls deal with losing is important and helps define them as players and highlights how important the mental aspect of the game is. As tough as it was for the girls, the experience was worth it.

## ClubOne at Nationals

What a terrific ending to a good season for ClubOne's 13 and 14 gold teams! The 13's competed in the American Division while our 14's competed in the National Division.

The 13 gold team had a good experience at Nationals. We ended with an 8-3 record and won the Silver Division bracket. We found out how important it was to play defense as we were out sized by almost every team we competed against. Our biggest competition came from Epic 13-1 from the Southern California Region and the St. Louis Cyclones 13 Blue (undefeated) from the Gateway Region. These 2 teams competed against each other for the Gold Bracket Championship with St. Louis winning. We went on to beat SF Tremors 13-1 Jaguar (Northern California Region) in the Silver Division Championship. This was a very fun competitive match as this was the only team that we matched up with size wise. It proved to be a defensive battle with great plays from both teams!

This year was a good year for ClubOne 14 gold in that we experienced a level of play that one usually only talks about. This team won 2 National qualifiers, earning a bid in the National Division to the Junior Olympics. In Dallas we went 7 and 3, finishing in a tie for third. Competition was at a very high level which made for great matches. We are a small team, but we work as one and our defense helped. It was a good experience for us and we played some tough teams, Maunalani from the Aloha Region, and TVC out of the Ohio Valley region. This was a great finish to a great year for all involved with this team. We want to thank everyone who pushed us to become better.

## Colorado Juniors in the Big “D”

Seventy-three athletes from Colorado Juniors made the trip to **HOT** Dallas for the USA Junior Nationals – a record six teams qualified this year – the most for this 9 year old club.

Our two 18's teams made the trip – only 8 clubs nationwide qualified two 18's teams! For 18Peer – it was our 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive 18 Open trip. Always tough – their highlight was clearly the 5 game win over eventual 5<sup>th</sup> place finisher Texas Advantage.

18Jason struggled to get wins early, but finished strong with 4 straight wins. They finished by taking 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Flight 5 championship match. Good

luck to our 16 seniors going off to college!

17John fell victim to the tie-break system, but finished strong winning Flight 4.

16Sherri went undefeated through two pools and had great challenge match – winning in three 22-20 – a thriller! They lost in the gold and finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place for 2008 – a nice finish earning two members a place on the All-Tournament team – Morgan Broekhuis and Megan Tapia.

15Peer enjoyed their first national appearance, including a tough three game loss to

the defending champs and finished 18<sup>th</sup> in 15 National.

14Rey was playing better and better – winning a tough 2<sup>nd</sup> pool and challenge match heading into the gold. A heartbreaking 3 game loss to eventual runner-up left them in 5<sup>th</sup> place and anxiously looking for a quick return for some unfinished business.

A very successful year at Colorado Juniors – thanks to all the players, parents and coaches who made it possible.

## NORCO 18-Black

Well another JO Journey has come to an end. Except this tournament marked the end of a group that has enjoyed an incredible ride at NORCO throughout their careers. Our group of 14 athletes was a special group. The beginning for a number of these athletes came with Glenn Sapp and Tsunami and ended with many of the athletes qualifying each year from 12's all the way through this final season. They will be missed.

Dallas treated us very well. It was awesome to see the RMR represented so well, both by number of teams and the successes that were occurring. We stayed at the Magnolia Hotel on Commerce Street. Very nice hotel. After we figured out how to inflate the air mattress, we were off and running. Except our assistant coach, whose bed looked more like a canoe because the mattress part was missing. Probably the best part of the hotel was the milk and cookie bar each evening. Not exactly the training table diet but good nonetheless. I'll bet even Logan Tom had a cookie now and then, right?

The people of Texas were very hospitable. Even the lady who was head first into the trash can was very friendly. When they say that everything in Texas is big they must have been referring to the Convention Center in Dallas as that place went on forever. The other thing that was really big was the price for a bowl of fruit, \$6.25.

I hope everyone's travel was safe and that every club gained as much from the experience as we did. Our team made the journey special as they have for many years. Till next year, enjoy the camp and clinic season.

## NORCO 16-Black Play's in Dallas, TX

NORCO 16-Black competed in the 16 American Division in Dallas, Texas, July 1<sup>st</sup> thru July 4<sup>th</sup>. We started out the tournament seeded 41<sup>st</sup>. We played Arizona Jr's 16-1 and beat them in 3 games. We then lost to Iowa Elite 16-1. The following day we beat Absolute 16-1, The Edge 16 Black, and OJVA 16 Gold. We beat all three of the teams in 2 games. That put us in a three way tie for first with Arizona and Iowa. We ended up finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in pool with a lower percentage. July 3<sup>rd</sup> we played Texas Assault 16 Kaepa and Mavericks 16 Kyle. We won that pool beating both teams in 3 games each. We then moved on to our challenge match against IPVA 16's. We lost a hard fought match in the third. So we were knocked out of the Gold bracket. The girls were disappointed but they knew they had to continue on, July 4<sup>th</sup> we played TCA-CA 16 Third Degree and beat them to move on to the semi's in the silver bracket. We then had to play Iowa Elite 16-1 again and this time we

took them to three games but couldn't quite close it in the 3<sup>rd</sup> game. So we finished tied for 11<sup>th</sup> in the 16 American Division. The girls played so well together and I couldn't be more proud of them.

Because of the way the girls played the coaching staff had many compliments about the girls and their play. Many from the proud parents. We also had compliments from the referee's saying what a good team we had and how it was a pleasure to ref them. Several collegiate coaches approached us wanting to know about the players. Oregon St, East Carolina, and Miami just to name a few. Many other scouts watched intently game after game and followed us from court to court.

Alex Morford ran the offense beautifully for the four day tournament. Spreading the offense and finding the hot hitters. Michie Johnson stepped up and played in the opposite position as well as passing in 5 rotations for us. Kylee Hoagland

also had a great tournament terminating balls at critical times for the team. All of the girls played well together, they showed a lot of heart and determination.

The teams physical preparation paid off 100%. During their down time in the mornings they got the rest they needed and then they worked out/stretched together. They also went shopping together and found a new favorite sandwich shop called "Which Which". Many of their parents contacted the action photo desk and had several action photo's taken.

The parents that went were a great support for the team. They cheered them on winning and continued their support when they weren't. It was great to have the parents there.

After qualifying in May to go to Nationals the girls came together and worked extremely hard preparing to go. Practices were intense. They set their goals as a team and focused on them in and out of practice. These girls are great athletes and they came together at the right time.

## Denver Parks & Rec make it to the big show

Four years of "almosts" and being inches away... and our little team from the hood finds it's way to the Junior Olympics. A dream realized...

After heartbreak at Crossroads we set our sights on Spokane's Pacific Northwest Qualifier. Our girls were physically and mentally ready to play and they came out ahead. We thought continually while we were there; there was only one bid available. So we had to aim for number one. After winning in the semi's we were told that we had just won a bid to go to JO's and we all celebrated like we'd won the lotto. Taking the National bid was even sweeter.

We came home to put some icing on our little cup cake and won the last power tournament beating the formidable Colorado Juniors team. We were ready to train for the Junior Olympics.

Frank put forth the plan and we worked and scrimmaged and prayed some money would fall from the sky.

Getting ready for JO's meant less summer fun and passing balls till your forearms felt numb.

DPR 16's headed toward Dallas with their hearts in their hands. Our parents all managed to make the trip and we even had some extended family show some support. The surprise was that it looked like all the other tournaments we'd been to...Same sport courts, nets and referees. We'd seen these girls before. We were among some of the best. We were also among giants. The girls were star struck. Silent...Scared.

We had suddenly put ourselves in a category of "I'm not sure we're supposed to be here." For the first time this season they were afraid. I was afraid that our girls would lose their edge.

I don't know how we could have prepared our girls better physically. It was our first time at the show so I think we should have put less emphasis on the fact that it was Nationals and said it's just another tournament.

After our long season injuries began to flare. Our girls were tired and hurt and their confidence waning. We faced a team of tigers... Cincy Classic. They were tough but DPR handed them their first and only loss till finals. It's what we came away with. They took the silver and Frank had the girls sit and watch them receive their medals. It was a memory he wanted them to feel.

After we walked back to our hotel ice packed and taped our girls realized what we did and how we let it slip away. It's a good lesson. They slept till dinner and we sat and talked till fireworks and made a few wishes for next year.

Watching our girls drive away one by one I couldn't help but feel sad and lonely. I sat on porch and surveyed my yard and wondered why the grass was dead. I walked into the house and tried to remember the last meal I had cooked. I wondered where the floor in the laundry room was....I now remembered what life was before JO's. It was time to move on.

We will forever keep Dallas in our memory banks and hopefully those lessons learned can be shared with the rest of our club and those teams looking toward that dream.

What a gift. What a year.

## Colorado Performance 2008 Junior Olympic Recap

Colorado Performance Volleyball sent 5 teams to the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual USA Volleyball Junior Olympic Championships in 2008; three girls' teams to Dallas, TX and two boys' teams to Sandy, Utah.

The event kicked off for Performance on the first day with RMR JNQ winner Performance 181UA. Competing in the National Club division, the 18's, led by the sensational Setter duo of Lauren VanOrden (San Diego State) and Darcy Schwartzman (Metro State), cruised through pool play on the first two days with a 4-1 record behind the sharp play of Libero Kelsey Pobar (UCCS) and MB Abby Monson (WVU). Tessa Trimble and Bri Morley (Metro State) controlled the left-side antenna and Kendra McFadden (Colo. School of Mines) added sharp, offensive serving from the DS position.

Day three found the girls in a familiar position with their backs against the wall in a difficult three-team pool in which only the top-two finishers had a shot at the Gold Medal. Performance battled hard but could not sustain any offensive pressure and succumbed to Triangle 18 Black in a deciding match. The aggressive play of Ashley Benjamin (Rockhurst), Alyssa Bonelli (DU), Kristina Rogers and Devon Abbott wasn't quite enough to get through to the Gold Bracket, but added greatly to the growing legacy of the Colorado Performance program thanks to multiple top-10 finishes in both Open and Club qualifiers.

Performance 181UA was led by Head Coach John Chasey, Assistant Coach Shane Frakes and chaperone extraordinaire Peggy Pobar.

As the 18's were putting to bed a successful season, the awakening giant that is Performance 12UA was embroiled in a most difficult situation that must have seemed oddly familiar.

Led by the scrappy and upbeat play of Nikelle Bronson and Gabby Gomez in the back row and Sarah Hellman and Gabby Miranda in the front row, the youngest of Performance teams had worked their way into a Gold Bracket scenario and a very realistic shot at a medal considering their two top-8 Qualifier finishes during the season.

The high hopes of Rebecca Page, Audrey Penland and Katie Powell were going to be tested on Day 3 by the skill and determination of a MAV's 121 team that hadn't lost a match all year in the age-group. Dropping both matches to MAVS and a resilient Champions squad out of Florida eliminated Performance from medal contention.

Undaunted and playing with a little bounce, Julia and Laura Cole, Merry Hammack and Katie Bradbury spurred a charge through the Bronze Division with victories over Asics Metro, Victory and Amarillo Elite.

Kylie Cople and Amanda Waterman closed out a very rewarding season with an 8-3 record, a Bronze Division Championship and a 17<sup>th</sup> place finish.

Performance 121UA was coached by the dynamic duo of Vicki and Randy Thompson with fantastic chaperone assistance from Cheryl Waterman

Finishing up the event on the girls side was Michelle Buckner's 171UA squad; winners of the Far Western Junior National Qualifier in Reno earlier in April.

Seeded 3<sup>rd</sup> going into the competition, expectations ran high through the team, especially those players new to Performance, Setters Devon Rice and Gracie Howe, Middle Blocker Kelly Miller, DS Allyson Porter and Outside Hitters Bethany Shepard and Logan Boyer-Hayse.

But as it often will, adversity was about to put a chokehold on the Performance dream in the menacing form of not a superior opponent, but a season-altering injury.

Senior Setter and UCCS-bound Alex Nuttall, attempting to handle a tight pass at the net, instead took an overpass kill off the hand and in a split second, a break and a tear put an end to the 6-2 offense that had served the team so well for the season.

Only Nuttall and Assistant Coach Rob Reynard fathomed a guess at the severity of the injury, and Nuttall led on to no one the pain she was in as she finished out the SWIL match. A 6-hour visit to Dallas' finest emergency room resulted in nothing, literally, and X-Rays proved something was wrong but what exactly remained a mystery. Out of the tournament for now...

The team rolled on behind the blocking of Andi Weber and Lauren Bloch and increased ball-control mastery by Cally Fensten. Offensive leader Sam Peters and stellar reserve Emily Mills kept the mood positive and goal-oriented; the team's eyes remaining fixed on a top-3 finish.

In an epic 3-game match with TAV 17Molten which saw an improbable Game 2, 13-point serving run by Devon Rice, the 17's medal hopes ended 12-15 in Game 3. Eliminated from the top-16, Performance settled for a 21<sup>st</sup> place finish with their heads held up as high as their hopes for each other.

Michelle Buckner is the Head Coach for Performance 171UA and was assisted throughout the season by Rob Reynard. Marsha Nuttall chaperoned, finally, her final event for the team with great love and care!

### By Marla Oldfield

The Colorado Performance Boys 14UA qualified and traveled to the USAV Boys Junior Olympics Volleyball Championships, held July 2-9 in Salt Lake City. The 14UA Boys team finished the tournament with an impressive 8-7 match record and winners of the Flight 2, single-elimination, final round.

Head Coach John Archer commented on the most beneficial part of attending the JO tournament, "the boys were able to see that they belonged playing against some of the best boys teams in the country." In Colorado, this team is the only boy's U14 club team, so it is difficult for the boys to judge how they will match up against other teams in its age-group. Their "season" consists of five, single-day tournaments where the team is permitted to compete against girl's U16 club teams in the Rocky Mountain Region.

### Team Background

The Performance Boys 14UA team had a variety of ages and ability-levels represented when the season first began in January.

Only three of the players were returning from the previous season of club volleyball. The remainder of the 2007 CP Boys 14UA team had to move up in age-division to the CP Boys 15UA team. In order to qualify for the 14's age-group, the boys must be born on or after September 1, 1993. Typically boys playing in this age-group would be in the 8th grade (2012 planned graduation date). The CP Boys 14UA team only had four boys who were actually in the 8th grade. The remainder of the boys were younger, some much younger. Three of the boys were 7th-graders last year, three were in the 6th grade, and one was only in the 4th grade. Assistant Coach, Bruce Decker summarized the Junior Olympics tournament experience:

"As a new program, we had not played in the national championships before. The boys entered the competition not knowing how their skill-level would match up against the other teams from across the country. But after competing well on the first two days, winning against some of the top teams, our boys realized that they had what it took to place well. They gained a new appreciation for the value of training and focus and how they can improve to do even better next year. That is something that is hard for a coach to simply talk about and have the boys understand. Now that they have experienced the national championships, they will go into the gym next season with a new perspective and I think all of them are ready to reach for the next level."

### Opening Day

The opening day of the tournament, July 5th, the Colorado 14UA Boys played strong and managed to record a pair of wins, both in 2-sets. The first victory came against Long Beach VBC 13's (26-24, 25-23) in the very first match of the day, and the other against MVP 14-1's out of Maryland (25-14, 25-12) in the last match, wrapping up around 10pm. Sandwiched between those two victories, the Performance Boys took the Ultimate VC Gold team, from Illinois, to three games, with two of the games ending in only a 2-point differential (26-28, 26-24, 15-6). The CO boys also had a good showing against Bay to Bay Nike team scoring 15 and 21 points respectively in the two set loss. These 2 teams both ended up in the top 10 for the tournament with Bay to Bay taking 3rd place.

### Day 2 Challenge

Finishing in 3rd place from day one presents a good news/bad news scenario. The good news is that you still have a shot to stay seeded in the top-half of the tournament. The bad news is that you play an extra 3-team challenge round pool, prior to being seeded into the third-round, 4-team pool, with both pools being played on the same day.

The Performance Boys came out strong to win both matches in a hard-fought challenge round 2. The three-team pool had every match go 3 sets. After defeating the Riptides OC 14 Orange team (25-12, 23-25, 15-12), the boys continued on their roll and defeated Rolling Hills VBC in 3 tight games (24-26, 25-22, 15-12). The pool finished over an hour over the scheduled time, leaving the boys only an hour to regroup and refuel before taking on the Round 3, 4-team pool.

In Round 3, the Boys faced tough competition from all 3 teams. The Beachbones 14s maintained control throughout the match, handing the Performance Boys a 2-set loss (25-19, 25-19). But the Performance Boys bounced right back and fought their way to a match victory of the Pali 14 Kaepa team in 3 sets (21-15, 25-23, 16-14). This match showed the boys composure and their scrappy, strong-will, competitive attitude. The late-night ended with a final loss to the talented and obviously-experienced, Orange County (OCVC) 14-2s (25-22, 25-20). Coach Archer commented, "The 2nd day of competition the boys played as well and as hard as they could. They weren't thinking, just reacting. At the end of our 5 matches they were exhausted. It showed us a lot about the boys and their competitive nature."

### Day 3 High Hopes

Being seeded first in the group-2, pool #4, offered the boys a shot at getting into the Bronze-level final-round of the tournament and competing for 9th – 11th place overall. Unfortunately instead, day three demonstrated the physical and emotional toil of the grueling, 9-match schedules from the two previous days. This is a typical lesson-to-be-learned for a team's first experience in a 4-day tournament. With only one match victory in the day-3 round 4, the boys had to settle for placement in Flight 2 for the win-or-walk final-round.

### Final "Single Elimination" Round – Strong Finish

Having earned a bye in flight 2, the 14UA Boys started their final day with an 11:00 am match against SMBC 14 Silver. The Performance Boys pulled together as a team and pulled-off an impressive victory in two sets (25-20, 25-16). They then also rallied to clinch the Flight 2 bracket with a too-close-for-comfort win against the WVC 14's team from Las Vegas, NV (25-12, 26-24).

Coach Archer was pleased with the overall experience of the tournament. He stated, "Every boy made important contributions. The older boys showed great leadership, and the younger boys provide great promise for the future. Each player improved dramatically over the course of the season." Assistant Coach Rolando Buted added, "Overall, the boys did play well. There were times where they did not play their best, but that was understandable given it was a new experience and also a long tournament."

On assessing the competition, Assistant Coach Bruce Decker summarized, "Many of the 14's teams, from areas like California, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, have boys that may be competing in their third or fourth national championships. They also bring teams that are all 14-year-olds whereas our team had many younger players. Certainly, our opponents had many talented players but overall, I thought that as a team, our boys played right to their level. I'm really excited about next year as our younger players return bigger and stronger and as we add some new gifted athletes to our roster."

The Boy's 15's enjoyed great success at their first National Championships. Led by Head Coach Mark Rich, the squad finished a solid 18<sup>th</sup> place finish. The team was composed of the following players:

Adam Archuletta, Cameron Aris, Alex Arriaga, Eric Arriaga, Michael Ganny, Ryan Lownsberry, Chris Monark,  
Jordan Rich, Damon Sichler and Brandon Ward.

The 15's squad looks to build upon its impressive performance in 2009, spurred on by its success against teams from outside Colorado. Head Coach Mark Rich summed it up well!

"We didn't know what would happen. We can't act like we've been here before, because we never have. The boys were great. Nerves and all, they settled in right from the start and played at the highest level they had all season."

"They're dangerous now," Rick laughed, "They got a little taste of success at that level of competition...makes you hungry!"

## FRVBC 17 Granite

Boys' volleyball may not be the biggest sport in Colorado. In fact, the Colorado High School Activities Association does not offer it as a varsity sport and most schools don't even have club teams.

Yet there is a small group of Colorado boys made up of players from Chatfield, Niwot, Parker and Monument that has been proving to the rest of the country that everyone, even boys from Colorado, can play volleyball.

Somewhat reminiscent of the true-to-life movie "Hoosiers" where an underdog team from Indiana goes on to win the state high school basketball championship, the Front Range Granite 17 & Under volleyball boys team found themselves in Virginia this June at the East Coast Championships with just six players, which in the world of volleyball means nobody on the bench but the coaches.

Every other team there featured a full bench with typically enough guys that they could simulate full games in practice and even sub in during practice games. Yet the boys from Front Range were not about to let it phase them. With the core group of guys on their roster having played together for going on five years, they went up against teams that were deeper, stronger, more experienced and played together in tournaments year round against similar competition.

"In Colorado there really isn't anybody else to schedule or to compete against. So we just pretty much busted our knuckles in the gym and just kept doing repetitions and training and it all paid off," said head coach Brett Ammerman. "We only had three practices before the East Coast Championships out in Virginia."

With only three practices, zero bench and a 5-foot 8-inch middle (the average middle is typically around 6 foot, 5 inch), from Monument who plays his high school club volleyball at Rampart because Lewis-Palmer doesn't have a team, the Front Range Granite team found themselves playing in the championship game against Puerto Rico. Despite falling in the title tilt, the second-place finish earned the group of six boys a trip to Utah to compete in the open division, the highest division in volleyball, of the 2008 Junior Olympics.

It is only the second time ever a team from Colorado has competed in the open division at Junior Olympics. The first? The 2007 Front Range 16 Under team, which had a bench.

With six weeks between the East Coast Championships and the Junior Olympics the Front Range Granite team picked up a couple more players so that they would be able to sub in during the national tournament. Tragedy also struck close to home.

One of the players who had been on the team at the time of the East Coast Championships but was unable to make the trip to Virginia lost his life two days before the team was set to depart for Salt Lake City, Utah. In tribute, the team wrote his number on their jerseys and placed his jersey on the bench before every game.

"It was sad," said Monument player Aaron Belzer. "It brought the team together more though, I think. We had practice Tuesday night and then found out Wednesday he was no longer with us. We left two days later for Junior Olympics."

Playing for their fallen friend, the Front Range Granite entered the national tournament seeded 23rd out of 36 teams and third in their pool. They rolled through the first day of competition going 3-0, winning their pool and defeating the No. 5 overall seed in the process.

Following a strong start, the boys were matched against fresher competition in the second day of the tournament and finished with a 15th-place finish when the 4 tournament was complete.

"We used some bailing wire and chewing gum and put this team together and made it work," Ammerman said. "The kids worked hard. They deserve all the credit. ... They are a good group of guys and I hope to see them all back next year."



In back row from left, are Collin Hartman, Luke Ammerman, Travis Gann, Dalton Ammerman and coach Brett Ammerman. In the front row from the left, are assistant coach Roxanne Sullivan, Aaron Belzer, Josh Sullivan and Kay Rogness.

## Atlanta-The Second Time Around



The 2004 and the 2008 Atlanta USA Open Volleyball tournaments had one thing in common—The Long Walk.

This year only the route of that walk had changed. But the 2008 tournament will be remembered for the obvious effects of the devastating tornado which weeks earlier had hit the downtown area. Workmen were everywhere, busy with their repairs. Cracked windows were taped and awaiting new glass. The complete entrance to the CNN building was closed because of extensive

damage not yet repaired. We learn again that change is inevitable.

The tournament again reminds us of why we come to play—the greeting of old friends and the making of new; watching the many different levels of play; and, of course, the fun of our own competition. We come to play and hope to receive a reward for our efforts. As you know, four teams do not qualify as a tournament and therefore are not eligible for awards. Previously this rule has been followed. Again this year, with much difficulty, the Women's 70+ was able to form only four teams. However, due to circumstances unknown to us, we were recognized with an announcement and receiving of medals. Needless to say,

we felt very good about this decision. As we age, there are more and more reasons that make it difficult to travel to tournaments. Health, family problems, and fixed incomes are only a few. So, thank you USA Volleyball for being so understanding.

We hope that this article helps you younger players realize that volleyball is a lifetime sport. As your life changes throughout the years, you may even give up playing for awhile as other things become a priority. But you can always come back, hone your skills, and play at a level which gives you enjoyment, competition, and many good friends. Those of us who are 70+, or even 75+, still know the thrill of playing to the best of our ability. We hope that you will know it also.

## USA Volleyball Open Championships

We had played in Atlanta in 2004 so we knew the territory. Georgia World Congress Center is a fabulous former Summer Olympic site consisting of three huge connected buildings, probably the largest convention center in the U.S. The onsite CNN Food Center is great for eating because once you leave your hotel, you don't go back until you're finished playing for the day. The hotels are not close by, but the distance from one end of the GWCC to the other is a long walk. There are no shuttles from the hotels and having a car does not help much because it is still a long walk from the GWCC parking lot. Everything else about the site is beautiful, and massive repairs after the March 15th tornado were completed on schedule for our event.

Many of our players enjoyed the new Georgia Aquarium, and tours through Inside CNN Atlanta and the World of Coca-Cola.

In the first session, there were five teams in Women's 65. The final results were: Friends 1st, California Golden Girls 2nd, Shinkara Signals 3rd, Texas Stars 4th, and Ancient Digs 5th.

In the second session, there were four teams in Women's 70. The final results were:

Shinkara Signals 1st, Texas Kickers 2nd, Geri-Actives 3rd, and Colorado Columbinas 4th. Rocky Mountain Region had three teams in this division. Fran put together the fourth Colorado Columbine team so that the division could be held. Having never played together, Columbinas were competitive in every

match. Let's hope we have more women's 70 teams next year in Minneapolis.

George Egan and the Championship Division did a remarkable job of keeping the matches on schedule despite having the computers crash for over a day when everyone worked constantly to get them up and running again. We all enjoyed another wonderful USAV Championship!

SHINKARA SIGNALS  
WOMEN'S 65 – BRONZE  
MEDAL

SHINKARA SIGNALS  
WOMEN'S 70 – GOLD MEDAL

COLORADO COLUMBINAS  
WOMEN'S 70 – 4TH  
PLACE

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YJOVC Finishes were unavailable at this time.

## Denver Masters

The Denver Masters 60s men's team took four or five rookies to Nationals and got the opportunity to play a number of tough matches. Unfortunately, a loss here and a loss there made the road to a higher finish difficult. We won 2 matches in our pool and had the opportunity to win a couple of others, but could not get over the hump. In the playoff rounds, we still didn't

play up to our potential and went out. We never really got the team familiarity to work in our favor. When we played together, we had flashes of playing at a better level, but then would try too hard and make errors. The effort was tremendous, but the result did not always match the effort. Maybe next year.



## US Open Finishes

- Shinkara Purple tied for 5th in Women's Open
- Shinkara Doom tied for 9th in Men's A
- Shinkara Gold 20th in Men's A
- Shinkara White tied for 27th in Men's A
- Shinkara White tied for 5th in Women's A
- Shinkara Hot tied for 19th in Women's A
- Shinkara Blue tied for 11th in Men's B
- Shinkara Sapiens tied for 53rd in Men's BB
- Shinkara Blue 4th in Women's BB
- Bad Betties tied for 20th in Women's BB
- Shinkara red tied for 28th in Women's BB
- Colorado Masters 10th in Men's 55
- wwConnect 4th in Women's 55
- Shinkara Krush 55+ tied for 5th in Women's 55
- Denver Masters tied for 18th in Men's 60
- Shinkara Floor Play 60 2nd in Women's 60
- Shinkara Signals 3rd in Women's 65
- Shinkara Signals 1st in Women's 70
- Geri-Actives 3rd in Women's 70
- Colorado Columbine 4th in Women's 70
- Cool 2nd in Men's 75