

Choosing a Volleyball Club

This document is 10 pages in length. For your benefit please print and read it in its entirety prior to attending any tryouts.

Each season many of the same questions arise concerning club volleyball. Most are from parents experiencing the club scene for the first time, but many are returning families still without a clear understanding of how it all works. For that reason this information page was created. When reading through it please understand that it is only a guide to club volleyball.

Just as players are not the same, clubs and their policies, practices, and philosophies differ. The information on this page is not intended to promote any club, including our own, or to turn you away from any club. The information here is for your use to have a better understanding of the way the club system works so you can make the best choice for both you and your child. We are able to pass this information along because we have no financial intent. Our club collects no coaching fees. We coach year around for the passion of the game and the exhilaration of watching young athletes succeed.

We hope this information helps your family have the best experience and enjoy the sport of volleyball.

Where to begin? Start with Research.

Researching for a club is paramount to your child's success and his/her continued growth in volleyball. The primary tool for the research is the NTR (North Texas Region Volleyball) website at www.NTRvolleyball.org.

NTR is just one of many regions across the country falling under the USAV Junior Olympic Volleyball organization where teams from each region can compete against teams from within their own region or from all over the nation culminating in National Championships for those teams fortunate enough to earn National Bids.

From the NTR home page click on "Juniors" and then on "Region Clubs". The Region clubs page titled "**Junior Clubs**" is where most of your research will take place. The link is: http://ntrvolleyball.org/?page_id=62

Most, but not all clubs will have their own websites and will supply links to NTR to have them published on this page. You can search for clubs in a couple of different ways. The first is to click on the left side link titled "**Club Lists Alphabetically**". Under this link ALL clubs will be listed. If that club has submitted a link to NTR their website will open up for you to begin your research. The North Texas Region is a big one so many of these clubs may not be easily accessible to where you live. If

you want to reduce your search to clubs near you simply find your area under “Clubs Listed by Practice Area”. More on what to look for in these sites shortly.

Also on the “Junior Clubs” page are several very helpful links. This is what to look for:

[2010-2011 NTR Club Information & Directory](#)

http://svjgroup.com/ntregistration/Internet/Club_PublicContacts.asp

The year on these links will update to reflect the upcoming season. This link lists all clubs in the NTR and provides links to their website and the Club Director if you have specific questions about their club. Primary practice locations will be listed here but you will want to ask where your specific age group will practice. Club dues shown here should only be used as a preliminary comparison. More on this later. Age groups for which the club will offer tryouts are checked here as well as the number of players per team. The number of practices per week as well as the required commitment expected of the player speaks of the level the club intends for teams to aspire.

[2010-2011 Tryout Information \(submitted by clubs\).](#)

http://svjgroup.com/ntregistration/Internet/Club_TryoutList.asp

This link will give you the dates, times, and locations of tryouts for each club’s age group.

[2010-2011 Information Meetings.](#)

http://svjgroup.com/ntregistration/Internet/Club_InfoMtgList.asp

This link will give you the dates, times, and locations of Parent Information Meetings where you can meet the Director, coaches, and other individuals associated with the club hosting the meeting. This is a very important meeting if you are interested in trying out for a particular club. At this meeting you can get detailed information on practices, skills, club history and success, costs, travel, etc. You will also get to meet the individuals that your child will be in the care of for the next 7 months. For your own peace of mind plan to attend this meeting.

USA VOLLEYBALL - JUNIOR OLYMPIC AGE DEFINITION For use during the 2009-2010 Season

To determine the correct age division, please find the Month of Birth in the left column and then the year of birth in the same row. The heading of the column matching the Year of Birth is the correct age bracket.

	18 & Under ¹	16 & Under	17 & Under	16 & Under	15 & Under ²	14 & Under	13 & Under	12 & Under	11 & Under	10 & Under
Sept	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Oct	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Nov	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Dec	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Jan	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Feb	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Mar	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Apr	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
May	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
June	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
July	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Aug	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000

¹ Player who was born on or after September 1, 1990 and is a high school student during some part of the current academic year

² Male Only - Player who was born on or after September 1, 1994 (15 years or younger) who shall neither have completed nor are in a grade higher than the eighth grade (8th) grade during the current academic year are eligible to play in the 14 & Under division.

2010-2011 Age Definitions.

Use the above chart to determine which age group your child should be trying out for. You will need a copy of your child's birth certificate at tryouts. While you are at it make enough copies for the number of tryouts you plan to attend.

Tryouts Page.

http://ntrvolleyball.org/?page_id=80#dates

This page will give you the range of the Region's legal tryout dates. This is the date range in which clubs can legally begin conducting tryouts and the final date for which clubs are required to honor offers to players. Tryout start and end dates are set by age groups. Check the specific dates, times, and locations on the club's website or contact the director. More on legal tryout dates later.

Tryout Offer and Acceptance Form.

http://ntrvolleyball.org/?page_id=95 From this page you can pull up the official "Offer and Acceptance" contract between the club and the player. You will not have to supply a copy of this form. The club Director will have one for each player for which an offer is made. Once signed by the Player, Parent, and Director, and a payment in the form of "Dues" has been passed to the club you will be a part of that club for the duration of the season. Like choosing a temporary residence for your family, ask the question....Is this where we want to be for the next 7 months? Decide before you sign.

Consider Also these Pages with your Research

North Texas Region Ranking (Juniors).

http://gompn.com/ntregistration/Internet/Rankings/View_Rankings.asp?Region_ID=NT

From the NTR home page click on "Tournaments", "Rankings", "Database Ranking". This database is updated every couple of months during the season. When the season concludes this will represent a somewhat overall picture of the strength of the teams by age group in the North Texas Region. Keep in mind that entire teams seldom return intact for the next season. Also, many clubs will keep their coaches in one age group. They may not move up with the team from the previous season. To gauge the strength of the team you are considering look through the lower age group from the season just concluded. This group will be moving into your age bracket for the new season.

North Texas Region Team Results Database.

http://svjgroup.com/ntregistration/Internet/Rankings/View_Results.asp?Region_ID=NT

This is an extremely helpful link. From here you can see where a team competed and how well they did out of the total of teams entered. You can get an idea of

where they traveled and when. This will give you insight on whether or not you can make a commitment to a National team. There are two sections to the database. The first is "Tournament". This section is populated from the Regional database. The second section is "Head to Head". This section has results populated by the club director. Not all directors are diligent about keeping this section up to date. Here you can find whom a team defeated or lost to but there may be a lot of missing data that can be misleading. When searching this database look in the age group that you will be going into.

What to expect playing at the club level

First and foremost you should understand what to expect for the time and expense you will endure for a full season. Club volleyball, as with any other select or club sports is about the development of the individual player's skills but showcased collectively as a team.

In one form or another you will see the statement below on many clubs websites and / or broadcast by the director at the club's preseason Parent meetings. Please read it carefully and understand it's meaning and your experience with the club you choose will be a better one. Be skeptical of any club that promises to guarantee playing time.

"The dues or coaching fees you are paying for in club volleyball are for practice and skills. Playing time in tournaments is optional and is not guaranteed."

Volleyball is a team sport. It is about the success of the team, not about the success of the player. You are not the only one investing time and several thousands of dollars to participate on a team. Most everyone associated with the team (Players, Parents, Coaches, etc) will expect team results in the form of tournament victories. It is the coach's responsibility to the team as a whole to utilize players effectively in a tournament. When possible the coach is going to play everyone but Never Expect It.

After reading the statement above be very honest with your child's experience level when selecting a club to try out for. Hoping that your child will make the National team with limited experience will lead to disappointment. Even if your child makes the team, playing time may be very limited and lead to conflicts with the other teammates and coaches.

The commitment level listed in the link: "2010-2011 NTR Club Information and Directory" is very important when choosing a club. Full Commitment means that volleyball comes before everything else. If you are a multi-sport athlete and you are

in search of a National team in volleyball you will need to make adjustments in your other sports. You will likely be expected to be at all practices and tournaments. Remember that 9 other families have a lot of time and financial commitment in the performance of the team.

The Cost of it All

Club Volleyball is no different than any other sport played at the highest level. The higher you go the more it's going to cost...typically. A typical Club Volleyball Season will range in cost between \$2,000 and \$6,000.

When selecting a club know for sure what is included in your club dues. Season Dues will typically include the following:

- **8 – 10 Tournaments including a National Qualifier**
- **Uniform package with (2) Jerseys, (2) Spandex, (1) Full Warm-up (1) practice t-shirt, and a carry bag (backpack or duffle)**
- **Practice Court fees**
- **Coaching Fees**

What is not included unless stated otherwise:

- **Travel, Yours and the Coaches**
- **Private lessons**
- **Post Season tournaments**

Should I pick a travel team?

Do I need a Mercedes or will that VW get me where I need to go? If your child is division 1 college capable or you just happen to be one of the fortunate few with a fantastic yearly bonus then pack your bags. Travel is the unknown cost in club sports and can easily push the season total into the many thousands of dollars. Lucky for you if you don't have twins playing on different teams.

National teams will often have at least one out-of-town, out-of-state tournament. Because running a volleyball club is a business and is financially driven it is in the best interest of the club to earn a right to participate in National Championships. The more a club is recognized for sending teams to the Nationals the more participants they will have show up for tryouts the next season for all of their teams. To get to the National Championship you must qualify your team. It is an odds beater to enter as many National Qualifiers as possible. This could be as many as half the season schedule on the road. The Lone Star National Qualifier held in Dallas for a couple of the age groups and Houston for the remaining age groups offers teams a chance to qualify for the National Championships without a tremendous amount of travel. But the Lone Star is the largest of all volleyball

tournaments and can have double or triple the amount of teams entered when compared to other qualifiers. Traveling out-of-state to far reaches of the country to compete in small National Qualifiers betters the odds of earning a National bid. The cost of earning bids can often be high for many families. And for all that effort bids may not ever be earned. There is no guaranteed outcome. When totaling the cost, factor in that most parents want to be there to watch their child play. So you must consider the cost of 3 round trip tickets with baggage fees, hotels, rental cars, meals, etc. And oh yes, don't forget to add in the cost of the coach's travel.

Many will justify traveling as a way to get better competition. Club volleyball is club volleyball everywhere. If you are not in the top 5 to 10 teams in your region you are going to have plenty of competition right at home. When entering a tournament out of state, or within your own region for that matter, you will have no idea who will also be competing in that tournament, let alone knowing if the competition will be strong. Decide for yourself if it is for the betterment of the team or for the club.

The bottom line is when you are considering a traveling team you should know what your costs are going to be and when and how many times you will be traveling. And when trying out for a club avoid trying out simply because it is a marquee club unless you can be one of those top 10 players in your age group. More often than not only the top team in an age group within a club is going to make it to the Nationals.

How do I make sure I get a good coach within a club?

Make the top team. Literally. If not you are likely going to fall into a tier. Top team, top coach. Second team, second best coach, etc. The National team, not the local team, is paying for the National coach.

Some clubs will have floating coaches that move around to help out with all the teams and many clubs will have skills coaches to work on the different individual positions.

The assigned coach for your team will depend on what team your child makes. If the club you are trying out for has multiple teams you will likely not know which team you will be placed on until after tryouts. On the player contract (Offer and Acceptance) there is a line for the director to write in the name of the team. If you were outstanding at tryouts and the director is offering you the top team he / she will put the name of the team such as "13's Red National" on this line. You are now guaranteed an offer and position on the top team. If you accept the offer and sign the contract you are set. You will know who your coach is going to be. If that team line is not filled in with the offer you will be grouped with everyone that has been offered and accepted. Once the club knows which players they have to work with they will divide them into teams. It won't be until this process is complete that you will know who your coach will be.

Coaches bios. Coaches Bios are just a starting point in choosing a Coach. Many Coaches will long Bios may have been great players during their playing days but may not know how to relate their knowledge to the athletes they are training. On the other hand many Coaches have very little background as a player but have the ability to teach far and above their ability to play. When it comes right down to it, it is unimportant what the coach has accomplished as a player. They are not playing on your team. They are coaching it. Mike Tyson was a great World Heavyweight Champion but even with a long list of personal accomplishments would he be your choice to coach your child in that sport? When you look at team results and rankings from season to season you will find many of the same teams in the same ranking position whether it is on top, bottom, or somewhere in between. The lengths of coaching credits don't influence these results much at all. The only credit that is important is the one that shows a steady history of coaching successfully.

On the flip side to many pages of coaching credits, many of the best coaches in any sport have never competed in the sport they are coaching. Understanding and innovating new techniques in sports requires an understanding of body mechanics and mental preparation, not execution by the coach. Many athletes, including Olympic athletes are being coached not by expensive, highly touted coaches but by the least expected coaching source, their own parents. Sebastian Coe of Great Britain won two Olympic Gold medals in the 1,500 meters during the 1980 and 1984 Olympics. His father was his only coach. His father had no experience in track and field. He was an engineer at a cutlery company but his coaching techniques revolutionized middle distance running. The top pitcher in MLB today is 24-year-old, 179 lb Giants pitcher Tim Lincecum. At 5'10" he is 7" shorter and 50 lbs lighter than typical ML pitchers but throws 98 mph. His father has been his only coach. Lincecum's contract is very specific, even the best pitching coaches in baseball are not allowed to alter his techniques. Lincecum's father does not play baseball. He is a parts inventory employee for Boeing but has revolutionized throwing techniques for generations to come. And don't forget the greatest coach of all with no major accomplishment in the sport he was coaching. Earl Woods was 42 when he took up golf. A year later Tiger was born.

Consider this when making your decision. Coaches that are former players largely rely on what they have learned from *their* coach. The techniques they learned, as a player will likely be passed on to those they coach, good or bad. Innovators start with a fresh mind.

While you are searching, avoid letting the success of the club alone dictate a choice of club and coach. Remember that the marquee teams are drawing the best athletes at tryouts for the top teams from a large number of players looking to make that club. Even the bottom tier coach with little experience within these clubs can easily lead the athletes on the top team to victory. These teams are the benchmark. They will always be in the top 10. If your child is not going to make a top team on a

marquee club you will do yourself and your child a huge favor by also looking at the smaller clubs that are consistently in the top 30. Small clubs typically get players at their tryouts who didn't get offers, or offers less than they were hoping for from the marquee clubs. When you find a coach that can take average players and make them great players, competing head to head with the top teams and consistently placing high in tournaments your search is over. Many of the smaller clubs have fewer teams, better assuring that you won't be disappointed with a lower than expected placement when the teams are selected. Imagine what *these* coaches could accomplish with a team of top athletes!

Forget the bios. Meet the coaches and observe them with the athletes, even at tryouts. Are they excited about being around the players or do they look like they want to hurry it along so they can leave. Are they devoting attention to just a few athletes, or equally to everyone. Remember, this is a choice you will live with for seven months or more.

And last, your school coach cannot be your club coach. This is a UIL violation. For more on UIL rules click on the UIL Rules link on our home page.

What to expect at Tryouts

Now that you have completed all of your research and have narrowed your decision to a few clubs it is time to plan on tryouts.

NTR posts legal tryout dates on their website. From the home page click on "Juniors", then "Tryouts" and you will find the span of dates for your specific age group.

Understanding the legal tryout dates. Clubs are not allowed to make any offers prior to Noon on the first Saturday per age group. Once tryouts have begun a club can make an offer to a player. To be binding this needs to be a written offer, not verbal, using the USAV Offer and Acceptance form. At the time the offer is made the club is bound to honor that offer until noon on the following Wednesday, the end of the legal tryout period for that age group. The player has the option to accept this offer any time during the legal window and if not executed by the end of the window it will be terminated. If signed by the player, parent, and club director, and payment in the form of up front dues is exchanged it becomes a binding contract. If you choose not to sign the offer when initially made you are still guaranteed a spot somewhere on that club. The club must honor that offer until the end of the legal period. Therefore, you can continue trying out for other clubs before the end of the legal period and if offered by another club you will have the opportunity to make a decision which club will be better for you. Once you do sign the Offer and Acceptance for a club you cannot continue trying out for other clubs.

There is a line on the Offer and Acceptance form for "Team Name". This line is very important. If not filled in at the time of the offer you will be placed on teams

based on the strength of all players who have been offered and accepted. If the club you have tried out for has 10 teams in an age group you will not know what team you will play for until after the legal tryout period and the coaches have assembled their teams.

The legal tryout dates are for the clubs to adhere to. You only need to be concerned with the individual club's tryout schedule and the legal signing date/time. This is important to you because you must make a decision before the end of the legal tryout date/time or the offer made to you is no longer valid. The club/s that you are trying out for will post on their website the Date, Time, and Location of tryouts for each age group. They will also post whatever information they require for you to bring, along with the tryout fee. Be sure to keep checking back to their website periodically to be assured that you do not miss any posted changes to the schedule.

Remember that each club will post their tryout dates/times on their website. Some clubs will host their tryouts on the same date/time as their competitors. This will create a situation where you will have to make a decision of which club is your primary choice. On top of that most will host their tryouts on multiple dates, some requiring that you attend all tryout dates, further limiting you from trying out for another club. It is highly recommended that you find a schedule that suits you and offers you a chance to try out for more than one club. In the event that you would not make the club of your choice, or was offered a lower team than you were expecting, you will want to have an alternate home in mind.

Many of the marquee clubs will host their tryouts the first and second day to secure contracts (Offer and Acceptance) for the top teams. Remember that the legal tryout window is four days long. If you did not get an acceptable offer from one of those clubs there will still likely be other clubs hosting their tryouts toward the end of the legal window.

It can't be stressed enough to honestly assess your ability before planning your tryout schedule. You won't want to waste your time trying out for teams that will be out of your reach. Many clubs will have returning players, some returning with intact teams. They may be hosting tryouts just to see if they can better one position on the team and may have 100 athletes trying out. During that same time you may have the opportunity to try out for a club that will be a better fit.

Finally, consider your financial obligations when accepting an offer. If you choose to sign for a National team and the cost per season with all the travel is \$10,000 make sure you can meet those financial obligations. The team is expecting you to be there.

Even if you are a very talented volleyball player there is a possibility you do not find a team during the legal tryout window. You may have been expecting a position on the National team and held off signing with another team while trying to get there. There will still be an opportunity to join a club. Because of the way the Offer and

Acceptance process works there will be teams that made offers to players, possibly for the top teams, that were declined. If a club makes 10 offers for the top team and only 8 eventually sign they may want to try to fill those 2 positions. Without doing so the club will have to raise the dues for the 8 players or absorb the loss of dues. Clubs also do not want to over-offer. They must honor each offer given until the end of the legal tryout period. If they make 12 offers for a given team and everyone accepts the offer then they have overbooked the team. Playing time has been compromised and there are going to be some disgruntled parents. So don't look for more than 10 or 11 offers. If the club wants to find additional players they will make that announcement on the NTR website. To find those clubs looking for additional players go to "Juniors, Region Clubs, NTR clubs needing players". http://ntrvolleyball.org/?page_id=154

To sum it all up, go into tryouts and club selection with a realistic approach and an understanding that this is a business. Clubs need the lower teams financial support for the top teams to succeed. The club needs the top teams to succeed in order to entice you to join their club. A club can't remain in business with just their top teams. They go hand in hand. If your child is not going to be a member of that top team you will have many choices. Choose a club that is going to treat your child with respect, encourage them, and give them the skills they need to grow in this sport.

Good luck to everyone at tryouts, regardless of the club you are trying out for, and remember to register early. If you have any additional questions not answered here please feel free to email us or contact our director by phone.

Best of Luck to everyone from all of us at:
Black Hawks Volleyball Club