



Dear Prospective Player and Parents,

It is with great pleasure that we introduce you to the Virginia Elite's 12s Team. At such a developmental age, we focus on hard work, discipline and passion for excellence. To summarize our Coaching Philosophies, you will notice that we are committed to developing high level volleyball players, but we will dedicate ourselves to uncover each athlete's potential by allowing them to discover themselves and their role on a team of driven individuals.

With our philosophies in mind, we will seek the best athletes to secure spots on our team. The best athletes may not be the best volleyball players on the court today, because they may have started playing volleyball only recently. We believe that our program will make great athletes into great volleyball players who can play at the collegiate level.

As you begin your selection process on finding the best program for your daughter, let us share a few thoughts with you to consider:

- VA Elite is not for everyone. Our club is focused on players who seek to play in college and we specialize in creating opportunities to do so by providing the most intense volleyball program in the region and the best exposure to college recruiters.
- While we don't expect 12 year old players to know exactly what they want to do five years from now, we seek those players who have the dream to play at the collegiate level and are willing to try to get there.
- We seek to offer a first class volleyball program by offering the following:
 - At least 2-3 coaches per team.
 - Practice space at Madeira School & Hoop Magic, Tuesdays (6:30PM-8:30PM) and Wednesdays (7:00PM-9:00PM).
 - Ten tournaments: 5 Local and 5 Multi-Day tournaments include: Monument City (Richmond), Capital Hill Classic (Wash. DC), NE Qualifier (Baltimore), **Quest for Excellence (Greensboro)**, and Nationals (Should the team win the Region, they will be expected to go to Nationals.)
 - Uniforms, team events, conditioning sessions, etc...

In summary, thank you for taking the time to explore Virginia Elite. Attached you will find the 12s Coaching Philosophy, Playing Time Philosophy and Practice Principles. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at john.ginty@vaelite.com.

Sincerely,

John Ginty
Head Coach, Virginia Elite 12s

I coach volleyball because I love the sport. I have the desire to be around volleyball for the rest of my life. I have been involved in volleyball since I was fourteen years old, when I began my playing career. Now, as a coach, I want to pass my knowledge of the game on to young athletes. It is my goal to bring out the best in every athlete I have the opportunity to coach.

On my team all players are treated fairly. Playing time may not be equal, but it will be fair. Playing time is earned through practice attendance, effort, attitude, and skill execution. Players are expected to be at every practice unless specific circumstances prevent otherwise. When at practice, and during matches, players are expected to give 100% effort at all times and do this with a positive attitude. With attendance, effort, and a positive attitude skill execution should improve over time. My biggest pet peeve as a coach is a player who does not try their hardest and give it their all every time they step on the court.

Players should respect each other, their opponents, their coaches, the referees, and the fans. Disrespect towards any of the abovementioned will not be tolerated. All team members should cheer each other on, help each other succeed, and support one another when we are down. We will shake hands with our opponents after each match and congratulate them on a job well done. Players will not argue any calls made by the referee(s). We will show excellent sportsmanship at all times.

I ask that you trust in me and my decisions. If at any time you feel that I am making a decision harmful to any individual or the team please come and speak to me. Please trust me that my drills are done for a reason. I will not ask the team to do a drill that is not beneficial to our learning and skill development. Some drills may be a little less fun than others, but I choose drills based on our needs.

Practices will be performed at a high level of intensity. Practice plans will be determined by the team's strengths and weaknesses. Strengths will be reinforced and weaknesses will be strengthened. There will be many small group activities focusing on skill development and execution, as well as whole-group activities focusing on game-play, strategies, and skill execution. All season long we will focus on improvement. We will strive to be the best volleyball players we can be. Wins and losses do not determine whether we have improved or not. A win-loss record does not speak for how hard we worked, what we have accomplished, or how well we played. Any team can beat any team on any given day. Improvements trump records!

Player roles are never permanent. Players may be asked to play an unusual position in order to help out the team. As a member of the team you are expected to do this without questioning or arguing the decision. The team comes before any individual, including the coach. Our system (5-1, 6-2, etc) will be determined by the strengths of our team. This may change at any time.

Everyone on my team is a captain! Captains are leaders and I expect all of my players to be leaders. Captains are team members with responsibilities and I expect all of my players to be responsible. Captains are vocal and I expect all of my players to be vocal. I ask you all to take on the responsibility of being a team captain throughout the season. Every match we will take turns attending the pre-match captains' meeting.



**Playing Time Parameters
12s, 13s, 14s Teams
2009-2010 Season**

Playing time issues often have a major impact on a player's volleyball experience. Virginia Elite is committed to developing each player to the limits of her desire and potential.

We seek players who want to play. Playing at tournaments is the payoff for hard work at practice and at home. Parents don't come to tournaments and pay club fees to watch their daughter sit on the bench. At the same time everyone wants to be on a winning team and we seek to develop players. In order to balance these interests and to ensure clarity and accountability, the Club has established parameters for playing time at each age level.

The following parameters apply:

1. Coaches will endeavor to provide equitable playing time for every player in every match. All players will play in every tournament if they have demonstrated that they have a desire to play through hard work at practice, and are eligible to play.
2. In order to be eligible to play in a tournament a player must:
 - a. Attend practice regularly. Absences must be excused by parents and should be based on illness or academic considerations.
 - b. Abide by the player Code of Conduct.
 - c. Demonstrates the effort expected of a Virginia Elite player during all practices and competitions.
 - d. Demonstrate respect for coaches, officials, opponents (sportsmanship), and teammates.
 - e. Be current in payment of player fees.
 - f. Be on time to tournament and to matches.
3. A head coach has the discretion to bench a player for the remaining day of any given competition for behavior unbecoming to themselves, their team, or Virginia Elite.
4. All our players require and deserve ample playing time during both practices and tournament competition at their respective position to develop in the sport sufficiently to reach their next level of development and to get the most enjoyment out of their experience with Virginia Elite. However, knowing that the pace of skill development differs from player to player, a player can expect either an increase or reduction in playing time as the season progresses, based on performance.

5. Playing time parameters will evolve over the course of the season based on three phases:
 - a. Phase 1 (December – February): Coach will provide balanced playing time during pool play, i.e., players can expect to play a relatively equal number of sets during pool play over the course of a tournament.
 - b. Phase 2 (March-April): Each player who has demonstrated a desire to play can expect to play an entire set (in front or back row) in each match during pool play. Note that this does not mean that playing time is equal as some players will play more than one set per match.
 - c. Phase 3 (May-June): Each player who has demonstrated a desire to play can expect to play an entire set during pool play (in front or back row) in each match. Note that this does not mean that playing time is equal as some players will play more than one set per match.
6. All players will have the opportunity to play in the back row so that they get match passing experience.
7. Players will be trained in and play at tournaments in at least two positions during the first two phases of the season.
8. **Special cases/Exceptions:** The following exceptions to the above parameters apply:
 - a. **Post-Pool Play/Playoffs:** If the team advances to the playoffs in a tournament, or is playing a deciding set in a match the coach has the discretion latitude to play the players that have performed the best on the court that day, to give the team the best chance to win. Coaches will endeavor to get every player in the play-off matches so they can contribute, but the focus in play-offs will be on team success.
 - b. **NEQ and Regional Tournament, and Nationals:** Coaches have the discretion to organize the team and playing time so as to offer the team the best chance to win, as these tournaments are qualifiers for Nationals. Coaches will endeavor to ensure that each player will play in every match, but not necessarily a whole game.
 - c. **Skill Qualification:** Coaches may make adjustments to playing time based on skill qualification (e.g., serving) as long as the standards are clearly stated and upheld.
9. **Suspensions:** Suspension from play beyond a single day of tournament play requires approval of Virginia Elite Executive Committee. Suspension from play for longer than a single competition may be imposed as outlined in Virginia Elite's issue resolution policy.



PRACTICE PRINCIPLES
VIRGINIA ELITE 12s
2009-2010

Purpose

As much as possible, everything we do at practice should contribute to development of volleyball skills and ability. We seek to maximize the number of correct touches on the ball at each practice. A correct touch improves our game, an incorrect touch sets us back. In order to achieve this goal we will need to make best possible use of the very limited time that we have at practice.

Everything we do at practice has a purpose and is designed to improve players' skills, motivation, and competitiveness. If you as a player or parent do not understand why we are doing something or anything at practice, ASK me about it. Your questions cause me to evaluate what we are doing and if I cannot articulate its purpose, then we should, and will change the activity.

Practice Preparation

An important component of what we do is to teach players personal responsibility. Players are expected to bring the following items to every practice and tournament.

- Kneepads: Players may not scrimmage without kneepads
- Water Bottle w/ water (at least 24 oz)
- Towel
- Notebook and Pen
- Dress in athletic clothing for a hard workout (T-Shirt, spandex, kneepads, socks and court shoes. No running shoes, as they lack lateral stability).
- No jewelry. We practice like we play. Coaches do not hold jewelry for players. If you value it, leave it at home.
- Hair must be pulled back and away from the face at all times. This is not a fashion show.
- Tournaments: Bring all game jerseys as we may change colors during a long tournament.
- Volleyball (having your own ball means that whatever happens, you can get a good workout)
- Jump rope: A very useful warm-up and conditioning tool. (To fit a jump rope, stand on middle of rope with both feet and pull handles to arm pits. Handles should reach your arm pits.)

What to do when you arrive:

- You must be in the building by 15-20 minutes before practice. At that time, your gear needs to be put on so you are starting to warm up your bodies by 10 minutes before practice. Be ready to walk onto the court at 5 minutes before the scheduled start of practice. Practice starts at the scheduled time. We realize that parents have many demands on their time and cannot always make it on time but we want to reinforce player accountability and don't want the player to be the cause of tardiness by making them accountable for being ready to go. Parent

caused lateness is excused, but realize it cuts into your player's ability to practice effectively

- Line bags up against wall out of the way of play. Put warm-ups in bag.
- Put water bottles full of water at the end of court for easy access.
- Be in proper attire, with knee pads on, hair tied back, when practice starts. No jewelry.

Practice Activities

You will play like you practice. If you practice with intensity and focus, and you push yourself at each practice, you will play with intensity and focus, and you will improve more quickly. Practices are designed to push players hard. We seek to stretch players mentally and physically.

- **Hustle:** When you step on the court you need to hustle. This means you don't walk on the volleyball court. You shuffle or run.
- **If you do not understand something, ask:** There are silly questions (like asking what you are supposed to be doing because you were not paying attention to instructions) but it is better to ask even a silly question rather than be unable to perform a drill or benefit from an activity because you do not know what to do or how to do it. When players have problems in execution coaches will take them aside for additional instruction, so the drill can continue. This is not a punishment. It is intended to give additional help where needed. You will all need it at one time or another, and should seek it out. We will also pull players out in rotation for individual instruction. Having three coaches at a practice enable us to give this kind of individual attention.
- **"Corner up":** Team lines up at the corner of the service line and sideline facing in to the court. If told to have a ball, each player will hold a ball in the correct setting position at waist level. Eyes on the coach and mouths closed to hear instruction.
- **Water Breaks:** When water break is called, run immediately to your water and drink. Water breaks are short. At the end of a water break, execute the water break exercise established at the beginning of each practice. Then we will normally "corner up" to start a new drill. If you need water during a drill, go get it and return immediately so as not to disrupt the drill. You don't need to ask permission to run and get some water. We will sweat. You will need to drink water during practice. Drink some before practice but don't fill your stomach with a lot of water just before practice because you will be carrying extra weight and could become ill.
- **Call the Ball:** The volleyball court is a crowded place. Good communication is vital to good teamwork. Whenever you touch the ball on the court yell "mine" as soon as you see that it is coming to you, well before you touch it. All players will call the ball before touching, to include setters.
- **Coaches Coach, Players Play:** Players should communicate, but it is not the players' role to correct teammates on their form, players can correct court positioning if a teammate is out of rotation. Feel free to encourage, but players don't criticize their fellow players on the court (or off it). You can rely on coaches to correct a player's problems.
- **Focus:** When you are on the court your eyes should always be on the ball in play or the ball about to be played. After a point, or contact, keep your eyes and head in the game. When you are told to move off the court you run off the court so you don't clog the drill or the play. We will use focus exercises to re-focus players during practice. We will pick the exercise at the beginning of each

practice. When you get told to “focus,” immediately perform the exercise and get back in play. These exercises are not a punishment; they are reminders to keep your head in game.

- **Drills:** Everyone has a role in a drill, not just the player touching the ball. You are handling the ball, shagging, watching and learning, handing ball to coach, or serving as target. Seek to use every role to get better. When you are target, call the ball and catch the ball with proper passing or setting technique. When you shag, call the ball and seek to use proper technique to catch it. When shagging, run after the ball and bounce pass the ball to the ball cart player or coach. When you are watching, you are trying to learn from others’ successes and mistakes. Therefore you are not discussing school, boys, or your favorite music group.
- **When you call the ball, you take it:** If you call the ball first, you own it, so play the ball. So don’t call balls you can’t play. You will make mistakes by being too aggressive but you will get better faster by pushing yourself. When you call the ball do it loudly so your teammates can hear you. ABOVE ALL, don’t let a ball hit the floor.
- **Nothing hits the floor:** To be successful in volleyball we have to play the ball aggressively. A ball should never touch the floor without someone getting a hand, a foot, or some other body part on the ball. Obviously we seek to play the ball, not just touch it, but that can’t happen if we are not getting to the ball. There may be some times that a ball is “shanked” so badly that no one can get a body part on it but that will be the exception. If a ball hits the floor in a drill all players who had any chance to play the ball will “hit the wall” (immediately runs and touch the back wall) or perform some other remedial exercise, and players not in the drill take their place. Message: Nothing hits the floor!
- **Challenges:** We seek to make each player a strong competitor. If you want to play at the highest level you must learn to compete. At most practices we will conduct challenges (groups competing against each other, e.g., servers vs. receivers. The goal is to promote competition and have some fun. We will determine what the challenge exercise is and the winners will drink water while the losers perform the challenge exercise. Message: It pays to win!