



Dear Prospective Player and Parent,

Welcome to VA elite 17's program. I hope you will please take a few minutes to read this letter and attached information about the Virginia Elite 17's team. We seek excellent athletes who have the potential, desire and determination to play college volleyball. If you fit that model, we hope you will consider joining the VA Elite Club. Our mission is to provide the highest quality volleyball experience through a program of individual development and guided discovery that produces players capable of competing successfully at the collegiate level. In order to achieve this goal it is necessary for the players to begin the process of advance techniques and tactics. The players are still developing their skill sets and we will work hard to assist them in determining their strengths. The best athletes may not be the best volleyball players on the court today because they may have started playing only recently. We believe that our program will make great athletes into great volleyball players who can play at the collegiate level.

In order to help you determine if VA Elite is the best club for you, let me provide you with some information 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 do not expect the 17 yr. olds to know exactly where they want to go to school or what they want to study, we do seek players who have a dream to play at the collegiate level and be willing to try and get there.
- We seek to offer the most intense volleyball program at the 17s level in the region for those players that want more:
 - **More Practice Time:** We practice 3 times per week. Currently we are scheduled to practice M&TH @ Madeira from 8:00-10:00 for week 1, T&Th, and W@ Madeira from 8:00-10:00 for week 2, and Wednesdays @ Hoop Magic from 7-10.
 - **More Playing Time:** We limit the team to 10 players and publish a playing time policy so you know what to expect.
 - **More Correct Touches:** Our practices on the court last for 2 hours. We focus our practices on individual and team skill development. We have other opportunities for extra practice time with sister teams.
 - **More Tournaments:** In order to enhance the quality of the play, we seek to play at the highest level possible, whether it is a qualifier or many of the Mid-Atlantic Power League (MAPL) events we are seeking the highest quality of competition we can find.
 - Our schedule this season will consist of:

Jan.10 Host @ Madera	Apr. 2-4 NEQ
Jan. 16-18 Monument Classic	Apr. 17 Regions
Feb. 6-7 MAPL#1 In Raleigh	Apr. 24-25 MAPL#3 in VA-Hoops;
Feb. 13-15 Las Vegas Classic	May 15-16 MAPL#4
Feb. 28 Host @ Madera;	Jun. Practice swap with Triangle Club
Mar. 6-8 Denver Crossroads	July. JO's in Reno or Volleyball Festival in Phoenix
Mar. 13-14 MAPL#2 in PA	

- **More Coaching:** We have 3 coaches who will be working with the 17's enabling us to provide more individualized instructional, as well as additional help from our Club Skill Development Cadre. Due to the practice values we adopt, your daughter may have access to six or more coaches in a session. As you have seen at some of our clinics we make use of video to diagnose and correct skill errors. Because we are a small club with a strong technical director and an extensive coaching development program, we offer a progressive program in which each year builds upon the previous year's foundation. We sponsor the USAV CAP coaching certification program.
- **More Focus on advance skill development:** VA Elite 17s girls will be proficient in performing and understanding advance skill, both technically and tactically. We will focus on developing a solid foundation of individual skill and well-rounded players so that they have options in later years. Our goal is to develop players that are, in a sense, their own coach.
- **More Season:** Our season runs from December to July.
- **More Expensive:** Yes, it is an expensive program. The cost is driven in large measure by the cost of tournaments, hotels and travel. Our program includes the cost of nationals so there are no additional costs to be borne at the end of the season.

Why such an intense program? We want players and parents to determine early in their club careers whether they have the ability and desire to play at the college level. Joining Virginia Elite is a big commitment to being the best volleyball player you can be. We appreciate that and are equally committed to helping our players attain that objective. If that is not your goal, we want you to realize it now than after becoming a VA Elite 17. This kind of program requires a more collaborative effort from players, parents, and coaches, but we think you will find that it is worth all that you put into it. I encourage you to talk to parents and players who have had the experience.

To help you determine if VA Elite is the right club for you, I have attached my:

- Coaching Philosophy
- Playing Time Policy
- Practice Principles

You should ask for these items from any team that you are considering. If you have any questions please feel free to talk to me or email me at michael.burch@vaelite.com

Sincerely,
Michael Burch
Virginia Elite 17s
VA Elite Coaching Advisor



Coaching Philosophy Virginia Elite 17s

At the center of my coaching philosophy is the concept of **"The Choice!"** Over the years the title has changed, but the principle remains the same: *"Daily Decisions Determine Destiny," "Victors vs. Victims,"* and *"Making the Right Choice."* It is my pleasure to tell you a little more on how I will teach each player to make assertive, positive choices. The 17s team will know that it is each member's responsibility to encourage and assist their team members in making proper decisions.

In life, decisions are all around you! Whether you are preparing for the next phase of your volleyball career or just the next day, remember *"Daily Decisions Determine Destiny."* Make every choice a rewarding decision and your outcome will be something worthwhile.

I believe everything in life breaks down into one simple moment - the moment when you have to make a choice. At that moment, the team tries to help and encourage our student-athletes to make the proper choice or decision based on priorities agreed upon by the girls and our staff.

The sport of volleyball is a great metaphor for life. Every choice or action on the court results in an effect on the scoreboard. Every decision has rewards or consequences. The culmination of enough good choices is a form of destiny. In volleyball, if you make a decision to hustle on every play the first day of the season, your destiny may arrive in the form of a championship or other special accolades. If you choose to study for a test an extra five minutes a day, your destiny may arrive in answering that one question and marking a higher grade. We will help the team become autonomous in their ability to make the proper decisions on the court or off.

We aim not only for a solid program, but we also strive to build solid, well-rounded individuals on and off the floor! When talking about success there is one book that has helped many organizations reach their potential: *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. "Our most constant relationships require our most constant deposits. Your accounts with the people you interact with on a regular basis require more constant investment." (*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, pg. 189) We understand that concept could be applied to your volleyball team. Working from the book, I have developed a system of Banks, Withdrawals, and Passes. This is a system to record, tally, and reward positive decisions. Throughout every facet of our program you will see remnants of this system. **Did you make the proper choice?**

A team that is making proper choices will:

- work harder than other teams
- understand tactically how to execute
- focus on technical training
- place the team above the individual

We strive to educate the individual and the team in their ability to make the proper choices technically, tactically, and personally. By making the correct choices, you place yourself and team in a position to learn, to fight, and to ultimately be successful. The VA Elite Volleyball program looks forward to reaching those goals on a regular basis. If you are a player looking for new philosophies, challenging choices, and a promising future then VA Elite may be your next stop!

Playing Time Philosophy Virginia Elite 17s

In the years that I have coached, playing time has always been the biggest issue that causes friction between, players, coaches and parents. So I have tried to outline my specific parameters in writing for you to view before committing to the team. I don't believe that this will alleviate all issues that can arise or that you won't have concerns but I hope that this being as transparent as possible you will know how seriously I take the playing time issue.

Balanced Approach

I presume that players want to play volleyball. Playing is the payoff for hard work at practice and at home. At the same time everyone wants to be on a winning team and I seek to develop girls into winners. Our playing time philosophy attempts to balance these interests.

Every player plays

Every player will play if they have demonstrated that they have a desire to play through hard work at practice. Every player will be treated fairly when it becomes time to play.

If a player is absent from practice for being sick, another sport, a family event, etc...It would not be fair to the other players to have equal playing time, BUT everyone will play. The coaching staff will assess each situation case by case.

Performance Pays: I make playing time decisions based on performance, as outlined above. I do not play someone because they ask, because I know they want to play or they would not be on the team. I do hope to put the girls in challenging positions and opportunities to learn, but will also make use of subs if performance warrants it. If the team is winning, that leads to more opportunities to play at a higher competition level.

I am solely responsible for playing time decisions. I will continually be asking the assistants for their input but at the end of the day the decisions will be mine and any concerns or frustrations should be addressed directly with me.

Recruiting: The emphasis of the 17s is to not only prepare the girls to play in college but also to facilitate playing time opportunities in college, whether on scholarship or not. It is my belief that every girl needs to be seen but also needs to be seen playing good competition, so I will endeavor to balance who is on the court with the teams ability to perform at a high level.

Special cases:

Post-Pool Play/Playoffs: In my experience, when we get to playoffs or into deciding sets of a match (if we are in match play), the players really want to win. If the team advances to the playoffs in a tournament, or we are in a deciding set, I will play the players that have performed the best on the court that day, to give us the best chance to win. I will endeavor to get every player in the match so they can contribute, but the focus in play-offs will be on team success.

NEQ and Regional Tournament: I reserve the right to organize the team and playing time so as to offer us the best chance to win, as these tournaments are qualifiers for Nationals. I will try to ensure that each player will play in every match, but not necessarily a whole game.



Practice Principles 2009/2010 Season

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
- 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.
- Tournaments: Bring all game jerseys as we may change colors during a long tournament.

What to do when you arrive:

- 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, delay ask:** First attempt to constructively think about the goals and the activity. Attempt to figure out the issue yourself first. Then if you still have questions, ask the coach away from the activity. 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 more than one coach 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.
- **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 floor" (immediately sprawl or roll) 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!