



November 1, 2011

Dear Prospective Player and Parents;

I hope you will take a few minutes to read this letter and the attached information about the Virginia Elite 15s Team, so that you can determine if we are a good fit for you. We seek excellent athletes who have the potential, the desire, and the determination to play college volleyball. If you fit that model, we hope you will consider joining the Virginia Elite Volleyball Club. Our mission is to provide the highest quality volleyball experience through a program of individual development that produces players capable of competing successfully at the next level. I want to emphasize that we seek the best athletes. 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.

With that said, VA Elite is not for everyone. Our club is focused on players who seek to play at their highest potential, 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 every 15 year old player to know exactly where they want to go to school or what they want to study, we do 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 the most intense volleyball program at the 15s level in the region, for those players who want more. In order to help you determine if VA Elite is the best club for you, let me provide you with some information to consider:

- o **More Practice:** We will hold practice 4 times per week, all at Madeira School. Three of those will be team practices (Mondays from 8-10 pm, Thursdays from 6-8 pm, and Saturdays 10 am - noon). Additionally, we will practice in a combined skills session with the 16s, 17s, and 18s every Wednesday night from 8-10 pm.
- o **More playing time:** We limit team to 10 players and publish a playing time policy (below) so you know what to expect.
- o **More touches:** Our practices are at least 2 hours. We focus practices on individual and team skill development.
- o **More Tournaments:** We seek to play at the highest level possible, whether it is at a qualifier or many of the Mid-Atlantic Power League events, we are seeking the highest

quality of competition we can find. The 15s team will continue to compete in the CHRVA Regional tournament this year, so we will additionally participate in a number of local tournaments. The following is the schedule for the 2012 season:

Jan- Monument City (Richmond, 1/14-16), Maryland Juniors (Jessup, 1/21)

Feb- MAPL 1 (Hampton Roads, 2/4-2/5), VA Elite 15/16s Invitational (Madeira, 2/12), President's Day Classic (Omaha, 2/18-20)

Mar – MAPL 2 (Raleigh, 3/10-3/11), MVSA Invitational (Montgomery Village, 3/25)

Apr – NEQ (DC, 4/7-9), Regionals (TBD, 4/14)

May – MVSA Capitol Festival (Montgomery Village, 5/5)

June – MAPL 4 (Greensboro, 6/2-3)

June/July – To culminate the season, our team will go to Nationals, if we qualify. If we don't qualify for Nationals, we will attend an end-of-season tournament AAU championships.

Additionally, VA Elite is open to adding additional travel tournaments after the season begins. These would be completely optional on a player-by-player basis, so there would have to be enough interested players (typically 7 or more) willing to make the additional time commitment and pay the extra costs.

- o **More Coaching:** We have 2 coaches (Mark Frymire as head coach and Lexi Patton as assistant) who will be coaching the 15s team, enabling us to provide individualized instruction. Additionally, we will be supported by our Club Skill Development Cadre, coaches who float across age groups. Furthermore, because we are a small club with a strong technical director and an extensive coaching development program (we sponsor a number of coaching certifications for all of our coaches), we offer a progressive program in which each year builds on the previous year's foundation.
- o **Video Analysis:** As you have seen at some of our clinics, we make use of video to diagnose and correct skill errors, and this year at the 15s level, videos of all practices and matches will be made available online (privately), so that players can watch their performances in both settings. We have found that this feedback can help players catch mistakes that they are unable to correct in practice, even in cases for which coaches are providing direct feedback.
- o **More focus on individual skill development:** VA Elite views the 15s level as being a primary transformational year from a technical standpoint. Specifically, our goal is to take players with strong athleticism and core technical training and develop them into a team with the full suite of technical tools and the tactical systems that would be immediately recognizable at the college level. For offensive systems, this includes

training a variety of different types of shots for each hitter, running fast tempo sets for all three front line positions, and incorporating backrow attacks as offensive options rather than outlets. On defense, this involves moving to a flexible system where players are given more freedom to respond to attacks as they recognize them, rather than playing a pre-assigned X on the floor. Lastly, this includes aggressive serving techniques, and an ability to perform advanced, "special situation" skills in all phases of the game.

- o **More Season:** Our season runs from December to July.
- o **More expensive:** Yes, it is an expensive program. The cost for 15s this year will be \$5642. The program cost is driven in large measure by the cost of tournaments. 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 highest level they can achieve. 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 to attain that objective. If that is not your goal, we want you to realize it now, rather than after becoming a VA Elite 15s player. This kind of program requires more 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 attach the following, below:

- Coaching Philosophy
- Coaching Bio
- Playing Time Policy
- Practice Principles

I publish these before you try out so that you will not be surprised by anything after you make the team. **You should ask for these items from any team you are considering.** If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at mark.frymire@vaelite.com or call me at 703-626-8177.

Sincerely,

Mark Frymire
Head Coach, Virginia Elite 15s



Mark Frymire
Virginia Elite 2012 15s Head Coach
Coaching Philosophy

I coach volleyball because I love the sport, I love to compete, and I believe that with the right guidance, the athletes I coach can benefit tremendously from participating in this program. I care about each of my players as individuals, not just as athletes, and very few things make me happier than helping them grow. I believe that having fun and striving to excel and win in sports are mutually consistent, and I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that neither goal is sacrificed for the other. We will always direct our energy toward winning matches and playoff championships, yet I believe that what we learn about ourselves in striving for excellence is much more valuable and permanent than the fleeting rush of victory.

Our long-term success as a team depends on our ability to find a way to improve every single day, regardless of the match-up we face or the training facilities available to us. To do this, we must focus on three key points. First, everyone involved in this program – players, coaches, parents, and administrators – must work to build a positive environment for our teams. Next, we must set challenging, yet realistic goals consistent with our long-term vision of what we want to become. Finally, we must have the commitment to work until we are successful.

For all of its extrinsic benefits, players should participate in this program because they love the experience that comes in learning, improving skills, and very importantly, competing as part of a team. Our practices are structured to maximize our chances of winning volleyball matches, and the right type of players will appreciate their value in gaining rewards that only come through goal-oriented, hard work sustained over time. Though we and our opponents may be burning the same number of calories, we can achieve our potential if we are willing to consistently work outside our comfort zones and together as a team.

Beyond simply executing according to coaches' instructions, players should learn the reasons behind their coaches' view of the game. From this perspective, players are expected to take an active role in establishing, pursuing, and achieving personal goals that are consistent with those of the team.

Roles in this program are guaranteed for no one. Players should expect to be held accountable for their performance, and they must continually prove they deserve any role they have earned to date. While it is my goal to help each player to find a meaningful role on the court, those who give us the best chance to win will play the most. Even so, those who play less have a crucial role in pushing their teammates to improve. And very importantly, players

who are willing to put in the effort may strengthen their roles, if they choose. It is the player's responsibility – not her parents' responsibility, not her coaches' responsibility – to make this decision. I will support these efforts as much as possible, provided I can do so without sacrificing my responsibility to the team as a whole.

My players have the right to expect that I will work as hard as anyone else in this program, and usually harder, although that work may not be in the form of expended calories. I understand that I owe it to my players to continue to improve my coaching knowledge and skill. I am focused on building this program for long-term success, and I expect the same of all coaches and players in the program. My goal is for us to make this experience something we will remember with pride long after our win-loss record is forgotten.

Coaching Bio

Since 1991, Coach Frymire ("Fryguy") has coached over 15 different teams in Michigan, Tennessee, Rhode Island, and Virginia with female and male athletes from 11 to 19 years old. He was part of the original coaching cadre when VA Elite was founded, and returns this year as the head coach of the Virginia Elite 15s team. In VA Elite's inaugural season in 2006, he was head coach of 15 Vortex team, leading them to a #1 CHRVA ranking and CHRVA Regional Title. In 2007, he continued as head coach of the 15s Adrenaline team, at one point achieving a ranking of 25th in the nation by PrepVolleyball.com. In 2009, he participated as a part-time assistant coach with the same team at the 17s level when they finished 16th in the nation.

In 2004 and 2005, Coach Frymire was the head varsity coach at Edison HS in Alexandria, VA. Prior to his arrival for the 2004 season, Edison had only two wins in the previous four years combined. Within just two seasons, he led Edison to a district championship and was named 2005 National District Coach of the Year.

Prior to taking over at Edison, Coach Frymire was the JV head coach for two seasons at James Madison HS in Vienna, VA, and he also coached at the World Scholar-Athlete Games in 1997 and 2001, after attending as a participant in the original event in 1993. He brings over 20 years of experience in the sport, and has completed numerous coaching clinics including ASEP, USAV IMPACT, USAV CAP I, Gold Medal Squared, and Winning Edge Volleyball Workshop.

He named his dog "Sprawl", out his love for backcourt defense.



Playing Time Philosophy Virginia Elite 15s

In the years that I have coached, playing time has always been the biggest issue that causes friction among players, coaches, and parents. Therefore, I have tried to outline my specific thoughts on the topic in writing for you to consider 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 by trying to be as transparent as possible, you will know how seriously I take the issue.

Balanced Approach: I presume that players want to play volleyball. Playing 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 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 through hard work at practice, and I always strive to make sure that every player is treated fairly. That said, being treated fairly does not imply that playing time will be equal for everyone. For instance, 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 on a case-by-case basis.

Performance and Development: I make playing time decisions based on performance, as measured by myself and my assistant coaches. I will often use statistics to make those decisions, but that is one of many factors that will be considered. In particular, since the focus of this season is technical development, I believe that a player who has been willing to change her technique should be recognized for that beyond what her numbers might be on paper in the short term. Therefore, such a player may actually get more playing time than someone who has better statistics, but who has been unwilling to make changes to improve over the long term.

Position Differences: It is inherently more difficult to balance playing time for some positions than for others. For instance, while MHs and pure OPPs typically only play a half rotation, the rules explicitly make it easier to keep liberos in play for nearly an entire set. Because of these differences, direct comparisons across positions are problematic.

Playoffs: If the team advances to the playoffs in a tournament, or we are in a deciding set in any match (even in pool play), 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 playoffs will be on team success.

Recruiting: A key focus at VA Elite is not only to prepare the girls to play on their high school teams, 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 on the court playing against good competition, so I will endeavor to balance playing time such that players are in a position to be challenged and to perform well.

Special cases: For NEQ and the Regional Tournament, I will 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.

Strengthening Team Roles and Handling Concerns: To reiterate a point from my Coaching Philosophy, it is my hope to help every player on the team find a meaningful role on the court in our closest matches. While this ideal is rarely completely attainable, I want to encourage open dialog so that players who wish to strengthen their roles know exactly what is expected of them. With that said, there are a few parameters on which I have to insist in order to fulfill my responsibilities to the team as a whole and to ensure the process is fair for all players.

- Players are expected to find appropriate moments to raise playing time issues with me. During a match is never an appropriate time. Additionally, it is typically better to wait until the day after a round of play to raise these issues, if there is any chance that charged emotions could prevent the conversation from being as productive as possible. While this is a guideline rather than a hard rule, I may require on a case-by-case basis that any given discussion be deferred until the following day.
- I do not play someone because they ask; I know they want to play, since otherwise they would not be on the team. I do not play someone because they cry or whine, because I do not want to reinforce that behavior. I do not play someone because they are nice to me, or because of my interactions/relationships with their parents.
- Playing time conversations should happen between the players and the coaches directly, without the parents present, since this ensures that the players are responsible for their own goals. After all, this is a situation they will need to learn to handle before they begin their college careers. Only in situations where playing time concerns persist over a period of time should parents be brought into the conversation.
 - When playing time conversations do occur between coaches and parents, these must always include the player herself. Because of concerns about parent-coach relationships influencing playing time decisions (or the perception that it is happening), it would be inappropriate for a parent to discuss playing time directly with a coach without the player present, and it will be strictly enforced that these types of discussions do not take place.

- Naturally, if there are other concerns that need to be discussed directly between a parent and coach, those topics can be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- Playing time discussions will center around understanding what are realistic goals for improving the player's role on the court, what the specific plan is for trying to achieve that, how will progress be measured, etc. It would be unproductive and inappropriate for those conversations to involve demanding more playing time based on the perception of the player's current skills relative to other players. Those assessments are made exclusively by the head coach, with inputs from the assistant coach.
- Incidentally, to ensure fair consideration for all players, I never involve parents in taking team stats, and if they do it on their own, I never look at the results.

Bottom Line: I want every player to play, and I believe that each player selected for the team deserves that. In fact, in an effort to track playing time more accurately, this year our coaching staff will be using statistics software that tracks and provides reports on this metric specifically. In the end, though, some differences in playing time are inevitable. I will continually be asking the my assistant coaches for their input, but at the end of the day the decisions will be mine.



Practice Principles 2012 Season

Purpose

Since the goal of the 15s season is to make the transition from basic volleyball skills to the techniques and systems used at the college level, the guiding principle for our practices is to...

Train on your physical and technical edge.

Naturally, players on any sports team should expect to be challenged with intense drills that build overall fitness. One aspect that is sometimes missed, though, and which will not be missed on our team, is that every drill and even every scrimmage is goal-oriented. In particular at the 15s level, these goals will typically be focused on building and refining volleyball skills, although we will also do many drills that are focused on performance goals, as is more common at the 16-18s group. 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 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

- **Keep drills safe:** It is crucial that everyone works to keep balls from rolling under players as they jump, and this responsibility always takes priority over the other goals of the drill. Shaggers are expected to run in order to keep the playing area free of balls, and in cases where a ball is lingering in the middle of the court and no shagger can get to it, players within the drill should quickly move it out of the way themselves. If a ball can't be cleared and a player is in immediate danger of jumping near it, it is everyone's responsibility to warn her not to jump. The cue for this is "Stop! Stop! Stop!" rather than "Ball!", since some coaches unfortunately use the latter cue to start drills.
- **Hustle:** When you step on the court, you need to hustle. This means you don't walk on the volleyball court. You jog or run.
- **If you do not understand something, ask:** There are dumb 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 dumb 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.
- **Individual attention:** Having more than one coach at a practice enables us to work with players individually, and we try to provide this type of attention as much as possible. Additionally, when players have problems in execution, coaches will take them aside for additional instruction, so the drill can continue. This is not a punishment, and in fact, we encourage players to seek out this attention themselves. Individual attention is something we try to provide as much as possible, both as a matter of routine and in cases when we want to correct specific problems.
- **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.

- **Coaches Coach, Players Play:** Players should communicate, but it is not the players’ role to correct teammates on their form. Feel free to encourage, but players don’t criticize their fellow players on or off the court. 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 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.
- **Explore position capabilities:** At this age, players are being picked to play specific positions, but it has been my experience that it is beneficial for the players to experience and have the opportunity to play some other position. This also allows the team to continue to push even if there are injuries or something where someone cannot play. So during the course of the season, I will be looking for opportunities to expose the girls to different opportunities of play.
- **Conditioning matters:** Fitness is an important life attribute and is vital to success on the court. Players will be expected to condition outside of practice and performance will be measured. We will use the court primarily for skills training because net time is precious.