



November 1, 2011

Dear Prospective Player and Parent,

Welcome to VA elite 13 Black program. I hope you will please take a few minutes to read this letter and attached information about the Virginia Elite 13's team, so that you can determine if we are a good fit for you. 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 that produces players capable of competing successfully at the collegiate level. The 13's program assists in helping your daughters find their niche in volleyball. In order to achieve this goal it is necessary for the players to learn multiple positions. The players are still developing their skill sets and we will work hard to assist them in determining their strengths. The knowledge and comfort of playing multiple positions will make them a stronger player and make her more marketable down the road. I again 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 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 13 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 15's level in the region for those players that want more:
 - **More Practice Time:** We practice 2 times per week. Currently we are scheduled to practice M-W @ Madiera from 6:00-8:00,
 - **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, or a Friday or Sat. extra practice.
 - **More Coaching:** We have 3 coaches who will be working with the 13's enabling us to provide more individualized instructional as well as additional help from our Club Skill

Development Cadre. 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 individual skill development:** At 13's the girls will be proficient in 2 positions. We will focus on developing a solid foundation of individual skill and well rounded players so that they have options in later years.
- **More Season:** Our season runs from December to June if we attend Nationals/AAU's
- **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 13. 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 have attached my:

- Coaching Philosophy
- Playing Time policy
- Practice Principles

Thank you for exploring Virginia Elite as your club. If you have any questions please feel free to talk to me or email me at kim.sears@vaelite.com .

Sincerely,
Kim Sears, Virginia Elite 13s



Coaching Philosophy Virginia Elite 13 Black

It is my desire to meet the individual needs of each player as well as the collective needs of the team in order to build a strong foundation in volleyball skills and life principles which can be drawn upon in the future. Players need many various opportunities to improve and enhance their physical, intellectual, emotional, and relationship skills. I believe this is the essential tenet in developing the girls in volleyball and life. Players will be allowed to learn principles of responsibility, commitment, fun, teamwork, sportsmanship with grace when winning or losing, problem solving, communication, a strong work ethic, goal setting, focus, health and fitness, encouragement and passion. I will create a positive and safe environment in which to challenge the girls to be the best each of them can be in volleyball and life. The girls will learn that winning does not make winners. So why compete? It is to prepare the girls to become winners. Life is a competition. Competition teaches us to find ways to get back up when defeated, to improve our skills, and to maintain a positive attitude with success as well as with failure. A winner is someone defined by their work ethic, and the measure of their passion. Becoming a winner is a process. It is a process that is both challenging and rewarding. It is a process that is both painful and fun. Winners give a strong effort day in and day out while having a great attitude. The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender. I want the girls to start thinking like they are a winner as it will translate to their whole being. The girls will begin to carry themselves differently, start to see things differently and ultimately they will be different, transforming from a young girl to a confident young lady. This is the legacy of personal growth in volleyball and life that I desire to create.

The following is a list of those categories;

Passion:

Passion is contagious and starts with the coaching staff. The things that grow out of passion are friendships, lessons, laughter, intensity, strength, spirit, courage, encouragement and determination.

Fun, Fun, Fun:

One of the great mysteries of sport is how you define fun. "Did we win because we had fun, or did we have fun because we won?" Why do we build fun into a program? The simple answer is that the players will perform better when they are relaxed. Humor also helps to develop strong bonds between players. What we do everyday should be fun, but fun does include hard work. We need to enjoy what

we do and do what we enjoy. The players may not remember a particular serve receive option 10 years later, but they will remember all the fun they had and stories to share for a lifetime. They will remember their training because it was fun to develop and remember the relationships they forged during that time. "Anything you love doing is not work, no matter how much you sweat."

Sportsmanship Matters:

In the end, life lesson learned on the team will be more important than technique lessons. We seek to develop player into leaders and good people. We want them to think of the team, not just themselves. Sportsmanship means to be humble in victory, and gracious in defeat. Players demonstrate sportsmanship in how they represent themselves, their family, their club in a positive manner.

Develop Competitors:

Learning to be a winner is not determined by the score at the end of the match. Winners learn how to compete by finding ways to improve. Winners are encouragers, someone who can make good choices, be responsible, and someone who has learned discipline. Winners are givers, while whiners are takers.

Striving for Excellence:

Being the best you can be both on and off the court requires discipline, willingness to learn, taking risks and finally effort. Players will play like they practice. If practices are not challenging, then the players will not be ready to respond to challenging matches. If we train for surprises then they are no longer surprises. The coaching staff will work to ensure players touch the ball a lot because the more correct repetitions a player receives the more likely they are to perfect the skill required. By doing the same activity hundreds of times skills become a learned response eliminating or minimizing emotion, stress and decisions. For example a free ball is expected to be passed perfectly. After hundreds or even thousands of free balls, the pass becomes automatic without much thought as the player's body and mind have been trained on where to go and what to do. In practice we learn to create outcomes, big or small by practicing paying attention to detail. If a player's technique is poor they will not get better by playing more. The player needs to strive to correct poor technique in order to maximize their success. It is okay to make mistakes and learn from them as it enhances skill and decision making. If excellence is our goal, then success will follow.

Encouragement and Motivation:

Learning to encourage one another and develop self motivation through the accomplishment of small goals helps lead to the success of larger goals. The girls will learn to summarize their accomplishments for each day, to look at the positive and learn from their mistakes. The girls will learn to take risks in order to learn their comfort zones with positive support from teammates. Encouragement and compliments go a long way in helping to motivate a player in being confident that they are going to be the best they can be.

Everyone gets an opportunity to play:

We presume that every player wants to play volleyball or they would not be on the team. Every player that demonstrates they want to play will play. The amount of playing time will be based on performance and effort. If a person works hard, then they will perform better and will play more. (See playing time policy attached.)

Players Don't Try to Lose:

We have never seen a player actually try to hit the ball out-of-bounds or serve into the net. We see coaches scream at players to 'hit the ball in 'or 'don't make a service fault.' Players will make errors: that is why we practice. Coaches are there to identify and help correct errors, and to prevent them by demanding rigorous execution of skills. You can expect coaches to correct errors during matches. I tell players what they need to do to succeed so that they focus on how to improve, rather than the error they just made. You will hear coaches use our key terms (e.g., feet to ball, square up to target) to focus on the correction rather than yell, 'hit it in'.

Have a goal:

You must have a goal and a plan to attain your goal. We will set team and individual goals and measure ourselves as we go. My goal for every practice is for players to work hard so they become fit, learn something so they become more skilled, and enjoy the sport so they come back.

Focus on the fundamentals:

The primary focus of player development at this level is to ensure that players have a strong sense of fundamentals especially in the skills of setting, serving, passing, blocking, hitting and digging. I also want the players to understand how to teach themselves and how they can start to refine their already developed games to be even more impressive.

Explore position capabilities:

At this age the 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. I am also a strong believer in flexibility and will spend a good amount of time especially at the end of a practice or match. We will use the court for skills training because net time is precious.



Playing Time Philosophy Virginia Elite 13 Black

Over the years 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 do not believe that this will alleviate all issues that can arise or that you will not have concerns, but I hope that by being as transparent as possible you will know how seriously I take the playing time issues.

Balanced Approach: I presume that players want to play volleyball. Playing is the payoff for hard work at both practice and outside of practice. Parents don't come to tournaments and pay their 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 being a winner and competitor. Our playing time philosophy attempts to balance these interests.

Every Player Plays: Every player will play in every match, not set, if they have demonstrated that they have the desire to play through hard work at practice while trying to learn new techniques. Every player will be treated fairly when it comes time to play. An exception to this would be during special cases. See special cases below.

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.

Striving for Excellence: This is a process that requires a player to give their best effort at every practice and focus on the changes I require. Effort does not necessarily mean performance at the time. Players are at different stages of volleyball development for the different skill sets and require time to learn and change. As the players are learning new techniques and mastering others there will be many mistakes which are allowed when the player is trying to utilize the new techniques. Performance comes with being comfortable to make mistakes and learn from them even as the skill set digresses for a little while. In order to grow and increase our performance the players have to be willing to change and focus on the new. I will not punish a player with court time for making a mistake while trying to do what I ask, especially with learning multiple positions. Striving for excellence will develop performance and success.

Special Cases:

Post-Pool Play/Playoffs: In my experience, when we get to the 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 playoff in a tournament, or we are in a deciding game, I will play the best players at that time, to give us the best chance to win. I will endeavor to get every player into every match so they can contribute, with the focus still being on the team's success.

NEQ/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 national qualifiers. I will try to ensure that every player plays in every match, but not necessarily a whole game.

Bottom Line: I want every player to play and I presume that every player wants to play. So I will do my best to enable players who demonstrate desire, hard work and striving for excellence, to play. Each player selected for the team deserves playing time.