

WHY I PLAYED CLUB VOLLEYBALL



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by Katie Roy, AVCA Intern

It's easy for players to get caught up in the glamour and sparkle of watching their friends commit to playing volleyball in college. They see the grins on friends' faces as they flaunt their new college gear, emblazoned with the school logo, and sign their letter of intent. Their hard work, long hours and far-reaching travel transitioned from a constant grind to a fruitful collegiate scholarship.

But then there's a whole lot of players, standing off to the side cheering on their committed teammates, but never intending to follow in their footsteps.

Many of my peers and I chose not to pursue a collegiate career playing volleyball yet continued to pour my heart and soul into six-month seasons of high-level club volleyball.

So why did I commit to the time, travel and finances of travel volleyball if I didn't play in college? There were a few reasons.

Club provided an outlet to fine tune my overall athleticism year round. Two-day club tournaments taught me endurance, and conditioning during practice helped me grow stronger and faster.

Additionally, I learned the lifelong skill of working out as coaches taught me how to structure an effective workout that strengthened my mind and body. The consistent practice and travel schedule of club provided me with a strict structure, forcing me to prioritize school work with other commitments.

Club's very nature of bringing together top athletes in a specific region promotes a unique sense of community. Athletes spread their network outside of their direct teammates and coaches by training in the gym with other teams, and build relationships with people of all different backgrounds and ages.

Players build allegiances to their clubs as it becomes the undeviating meeting point between their teammates turned friends, and teaches them how to cooperate with individuals outside of their hometown bubble.

Club was a novel talking point in my hometown since so few of my peers ventured beyond city limits. My school friends were jealous when I headed across town to hang out with my club friends that attended a different high school and introduced me to a new group of friends.

The girls I played club with helped me develop a more well-rounded perception of the world because of their diverse backgrounds and experiences. My teammates were my friends and teachers as they told me about a conversation they had with an immigrant classmate, or explained that questionable fashion trends in my school hadn't necessarily spread to theirs.

One benefit to club volleyball is, of course, the tournament snacks! Those homemade peanut butter protein bars, trail mix, post-game cookies and the likes hold a special place in my heart and were more of an influencing factor in keeping me playing club than I'd like to admit.

Not every club player will continue their volleyball career into college, but they will often come out of it a mature, driven and focused young athlete. The skills amplified by playing club transcend the athletic arena, providing resume boosting skills like time management, interpersonal development and perseverance.

I may no longer be on the court with my former teammates that now play Division I volleyball, but I'm certainly still cheering them on like the day they signed with their team.