



2024 AVP PRO BEACH VOLLEYBALL TOUR

Season Event #6 • Heritage Event #3

Chicago, Illinois • August 30 – September 1, 2024

ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT – In the 2024 outdoor season finale, the AVP visits Chicago for its traditional Labor Day weekend event. As the final Heritage Event on the schedule, this tournament has even more meaning as spots in the newly created AVP League will also be at stake. Total prize money for this tournament will be \$300,000, with equal payouts for men and women.

- The main draw will be a 16-team, double elimination format over three days on three courts on Oak Street Beach. Twelve teams from each gender are granted entry directly into the main draw from having sufficient points, with four teams coming from the top finishers in the Contenders Series event which was held in Virginia Beach in early August. The main draw begins on Friday, August 30 and concludes on Sunday, September 1. The main draw features 29 matches for both genders. General admission tickets for the stadium cost \$22 per day, while premium seats are available for purchase at avp.com. Admission to the outer courts are free both Friday and Saturday (on Sunday all matches will be held in the stadium). The championship matches will be at 2:00 pm CT for the women and 3:00 pm CT for the men and will be shown on the CW Network.

- Streaming of stadium, court 1 and court 2 takes place on Bally LIVE. Cam Irwin, Kevin Barnett, Rich Lambourne, Mark Schuermann, Victoria Dennis and Rob Espero will handle the announcing duties.

WINDY CITY WIZARDS – For the second consecutive event the top-seeded men's team is Theo Brunner and Trevor Crabb, who are playing in their seventh AVP event together and have reached the semifinals in all six previous outings. The duo did not play in Huntington Beach earlier this year but went 21-4 in matches last year when they first teamed up, then went 6-0 in Manhattan Beach (with consecutive wins over teams seeded second through fourth) in claiming that title. Still, they have plenty of experience together as they competed in 22 international events since March 2023 in their push to qualify for the Olympics. The tandem has three AVP wins, in Hermosa Beach 2023 and in their last two AVP outings (in Chicago 2023 and Manhattan Beach 2024). This weekend's tournament marks the third time they have been seeded first, with the other times in Manhattan Beach 2023 and Manhattan Beach 2024. Brunner won four AVP titles in his first 65 tournaments, and has now won three times in his last five events. Crabb is trying to accomplish something that hasn't been done since 1983-1985 as that was the last time that a male player won three consecutive years in Chicago. Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland won in 1983 on the Parks and Rec Tour, then in 1984 and 1985 on the AVP Tour. Meanwhile Crabb won in 2022 with Tri Bourne and then last season with Brunner.

- Paris Olympians Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss remain as the top-seeded women's team. The duo has won five of their last eight AVP tournaments and is seeded first for the fourth straight AVP tournament (also the top seeds in the 2023 Pro Series finale in Chicago which they won, in Huntington Beach in May where they finished second, and in Manhattan Beach last event which they won). In 16 AVP events as partners, Kloth and Nuss have been in the title match nine times, the semifinals 12 times, and have placed fifth four times. They are trying to win in Chicago for the third straight year, equaling a feat done by Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh (who won four straight times from 2003-2006) and Alix Klineman / April Ross (who won three consecutive events in 2018, 2019 and 2021).

NO YOUTH MOVEMENT – In the first three years that the AVP held an event in Chicago, the six winning men's players were all 25-29 years old. But the game has changed and the older men are having their way in the Windy City. In the last nine tournaments here, just twice has a player in his 20s won (Taylor Crabb when he was 26 and 27) while in that span four times a player in his 40s won. The average age of the winner in those nine events is over 35 years old. In the last 15 Chicago tournaments, the only other player in his 20s to win was 28-year old Phil Dalhausser in 2008, with the average age of the winners being 34 in that span.

NO MORE PAC-12 – Not only has the PAC-12 ended, so has the run of women's players who went to a PAC-12 school (specifically UCLA, Stanford and Southern Cal) winning in Chicago. There have been 21 previous AVP women's events in Chicago, and 18 of the first 19 were won by a team that had at least one player who went to one of those three schools, with the exception being in 2015 when Nicole Branagh / Jenny Kropp won. Then the last two years the Chicago title went to Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss, both of whom played miles away from the PAC-12.

FOUR FOR FOUR? – Top seeds Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss have played in the championship match in each of the last three AVP tournaments (excluding Tour and Contender Series). Should they reach the title match this weekend, they will become the first women's duo to play in four consecutive finals since Alix Klineman / April Ross did so in six straight events from the end of 2019 through the 2020 abbreviated season.

SCHEDULE SNAPSHOT – The 2024 AVP schedule is divided into three groups. In the summer there will be six events comprised of two different types of competition. The Heritage Events are made up of Huntington Beach May 16-19, Manhattan Beach August 15-18 and Chicago August 29-September 1. All of those will be double elimination formats. The Contender Events include Denver July 5-7, Waupaca July 10-12 and Virginia Beach August 2-4, and will have pool play followed by a single elimination bracket. The fall portion will be a new concept; eight consecutive weekends of league play (beginning September 14-15) followed by the league championships on November 9-10. Qualification for the League is determined by gaining a berth automatically by winning one of the three Heritage events, or by having the most points from two of the best three finishes in Heritage events (with possible wildcard spots given as well).

- This marks the third straight year that all six of the summer cities have held an AVP event. The AVP will play in all four time zones during the Heritage and Contender Events schedule. The three Heritage locations represent the first, second and fourth most frequented stops in AVP history.

2024 AVP Pro Beach Volleyball Tour Schedule

| Event Dates | Location | Tournament Format | Prize \$ |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| May 16 - 19 | Huntington Beach, California | 16-team double elimination | \$150,000 |
| <i>Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander and Melissa Humana-Paredes / Brandie Wilkerson win season opener</i> | | | |
| July 5 - 7 | Denver, Colorado | 24-team pool play then single elimination | \$40,000 |
| <i>Evan Cory gets first win with Alison Cerutti; Savvy Simo / Abby Van Winkle are both first time winners</i> | | | |
| July 10 - 12 | Oshkosh, Wisconsin | 24-team pool play then single elimination | \$40,000 |
| <i>Alison Cerutti / Evan Cory win 2nd title in a week while Devanne Sours gets first win alongside Carly Kan</i> | | | |
| August 1 - 4 | Virginia Beach, Virginia | 24-team pool play then single elimination | \$40,000 |
| <i>Ryan Wilcox, in his 5th AVP event, wins with Tri Bourne; Savvy Simo / Abby Van Winkle win for 2nd time this year</i> | | | |
| August 15 - 18 | Manhattan Beach, California | 32-team double elimination | \$300,000 |
| <i>Theo Brunner wins his first MBO while Trevor Crabb collects his 4th; Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss first MBO wins</i> | | | |
| August 30 – Sep 1 | Chicago, Illinois | 16-team double elimination (no onsite qualifier) | \$300,000 |
| <i>Chicago trails only Manhattan Beach on list of most frequented stops in AVP history; no on-site qualifier this year</i> | | | |

HOMETOWN HEROES – Chicago native David Wieczorek, who still lives in Chicago, is the most hometownish of all the players here. His 1,263 career kills at Loyola Academy High School ranked as the sixth most in Illinois state history while his 138 aces were the 15th most. Additionally, his 542 kills as a senior were the 10th most in a single season in state history. Coldy Caldwell is from Newport Beach, Calif. but played at Loyola Chicago. He helped the team to its first ever national championship in 2014, and was named the NCAA Tournament Most Outstanding Player. Then as a senior his team repeated, defeating crosstown rivals Lewis. One woman competing here is from Illinois, as Molly Shaw (formerly Molly Turner) grew up in Naperville. Kylie Deberg played one season indoors (2017) at the University of Illinois.

OLYMPICALITY – This week's AVP event features 16 players who have played in the Olympics (either indoors or on the beach). Players here have competed for three different countries. Eight of the 16 men's teams have at least one Olympian. This is the first tournament for Melissa Humana-Paredes / Brandie Wilkerson since winning the silver medal in Paris on August 9.

- Men with Olympic experience:

Andy Benesh played beach in 2024 (fifth place)

Chase Budinger played beach in 2024 (ninth place)

Tri Bourne played beach in 2020 (9th place)

Alison Cerutti played beach for Brazil in 2012 (won silver medal), 2016 (won gold) and 2020 (fifth place)

Phil Dalhausser played beach in 2008 (won gold), 2012 (ninth place), 2016 (fifth place), and 2020 (ninth place)

Miles Evans played beach in 2024 (ninth place)

Paul Lotman played indoors in 2012 (fifth place) and was an alternate for the 2016 team

Miles Partain played beach in 2024 (fifth place)

Taylor Sander played indoors in 2016 (won bronze) and 2020 (10th place)

Chaim Schalk played beach for Canada in 2016 (9th place)

- Women with Olympic experience:

Kelly Cheng played beach in 2020 (9th place) and 2024 (fifth place)

Sara Hughes played beach in 2024 (fifth place)

Melissa Humana-Paredes played beach for Canada in 2020 (fifth place) and 2024 (won silver medal)

Taryn Kloth played beach in 2024 (ninth place)

Kristen Nuss played beach in 2024 (ninth place)

Brandie Wilkerson played beach for Canada in 2020 (fifth place) and 2024 (won silver medal)

CHICAGO HISTORY – The Windy City has a rich history with the AVP, hosting events every year since the AVP began playing in 1984 through 2009 with the exception of 2001. On top of the 33 AVP men's events here, P&R had tournaments in 1983 and 2012, Wide Open had one in 2011 and there was an FIVB dual gender tournament in 2000. Chicago has held the most domestic tournaments of any location outside of the state of California. In each of the first 25 AVP championship matches, there was at least one individual who has competed in the Olympics in beach volleyball, but that streak ended in 2015. There have been 24 different men's teams which have won titles on the AVP here, including nine different winners in the last 10 tournaments here. In 1999, Kiraly's win gave him 140, overtaking Sinjin Smith for the all-time lead. Todd Rogers won three times in his career here with three different partners. In 2004, the Chicago event was the first domestic tournament following the Athens Olympics, and both winners had just competed in Athens. Ironically though, Dain Blanton and Jeff Nygaard, who were 0-3 in the Olympics, went undefeated in Chicago, while Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh Jennings, who did not lose a single set in their seven Olympic matches, not only lost a match but also two other sets yet still won the title. Amazingly, May-Treanor / Walsh Jennings became the first women's team since the reorganization in 2001 that had won a title with one loss, having lost in the winner's bracket semifinals (all 43 other winners had been undefeated). The 2005 event offered the most prize money ever (at the time) for a dual-gender domestic event (\$375,000). In 2006, after winning for the fourth straight time in Chicago, Walsh Jennings eclipsed the \$1 million mark in career earnings. In 2007, 14th-seeded Jenny Kropp and Jenny Pavley became the lowest seeded team in AVP history to reach the semifinals (since eclipsed). Chicago 2016 was the first AVP event to use match point freeze scoring. The 2017 winners set records on both ends of the spectrum in both genders. John Hyden (along with Theo Brunner) won the men's title at 44 years, 10 months and 27 days old, becoming the oldest player to win an AVP event, surpassing Karch Kiraly's mark. On the women's side, Kelly Cheng and Sara Hughes won, becoming the youngest women's team to win (combined age of 44 years, 6 months, 6 days), bettering the previous mark held by Betsi Flint and Kelley Larsen in Mason in 2015. Cheng and Hughes combined age was less than Hyden's. In 2019 on stadium court, Billy Kolinske proposed to Kelley Larsen (now Kolinske). This season the only men's team competing here that has won here before is the defending champions Theo Brunner / Trevor Crabb. There are two women's tandems competing this weekend that have won here previously, as Kelly Cheng / Sara Hughes won in 2017 and Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss claimed the title in both 2022 and 2023. Here is a look at the tournaments in Chicago:

MEN – AVP events

| Year | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd / 4th |
|-------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1984 | Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | John Hanley / Jon Stevenson | Robert Chavez / Jeff Southcott |
| 1985 | Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland | Mark Eller / Andrew Smith | Ricci Luyties / Steve Obradovich | Andy Fishburn / Jay Hanseth |
| 1986 | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | Scott Ayakatabby / Brent Frohoff | Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland | Leif Hanson / John Hanley |
| 1987 | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | Andrew Smith / Dan Vrebalovich | Scott Ayakatabby / Steve Obradovich | John Hanley / Jon Stevenson |
| 1988 | Pat Powers / Jon Stevenson | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | Brent Frohoff / Andrew Smith | John Hanley / Dan Vrebalovich |
| 1989 | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland | John Hanley / Dan Vrebalovich | Rudy Dvorak / Craig Moothart |
| 1990 | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | Tim Hovland / Kent Steffes | Brent Frohoff / Karch Kiraly | Wally Goodrick / Craig Moothart |
| 1991 | Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes | Brent Frohoff / John Hanley | Eric Boyles / Shawn Davis | Mike Dodd / Ricci Luyties |
| 1992 | Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes | Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland | Adam Johnson / Ricci Luyties | Brent Frohoff / Mike Whitmarsh |
| 1993 | Brian Lewis / Randy Stoklos | Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh | Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes | Scott Ayakatabby / Tim Hovland |
| 1994 | Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes | Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh | Troy Tanner / Wes Welch | Eduardo Bacil / Jose Loiola |
| 1995 | Scott Ayakatabby / Karch Kiraly | Adam Johnson / Jose Loiola | Brent Frohoff / Rob Heidger | Eduardo Bacil / Tim Hovland |
| 1996 | Adam Johnson / Jose Loiola | Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh | Scott Ayakatabby / Brian Lewis | Eduardo Bacil / Randy Stoklos |
| 1997 | Jose Loiola / Kent Steffes | Randy Stoklos / Troy Tanner | Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh | Dain Blanton / Canyon Ceman |
| 1998 | Kent Steffes / Mike Whitmarsh | Dain Blanton / Eric Fonoimoana | Rob Heidger / Troy Tanner | Brian Lewis / David Swatik |
| 1999 | Adam Johnson / Karch Kiraly | Roberto Lopes / Franco Neto | Dain Blanton / Eric Fonoimoana | Dax Holdren / Todd Rogers |
| 2000 | Dax Holdren / Todd Rogers | Jose Loiola / Emanuel Rego | Adam Johnson / Karch Kiraly | Canyon Ceman / Brian Lewis |
| 2002 | Eric Fonoimoana / Dax Holdren | Eduardo Bacil / Fred Souza | Mike Lambert / Lee LeGrande | [3rd] Carl Henkel / Casey Jennings |
| 2003 | Dain Blanton / Jeff Nygaard | Canyon Ceman / Mike Whitmarsh | Brent Doble / Karch Kiraly | [3rd] Scott Ayakatabby/Brian Lewis |
| 2004 | Dain Blanton / Jeff Nygaard | John Hyden / Mike Lambert | Paul Baxter / Scott Wong | [3rd] Jake Gibb / Adam Jewell |
| 2005 | Todd Rogers / Sean Scott | Karch Kiraly / Mike Lambert | Matt Fuerbringer / Casey Jennings | [3rd] Jake Gibb / Stein Metzger |
| 2006 | Mike Lambert / Stein Metzger | Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers | Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal | [3rd] Dax Holdren / Sean Scott |
| 2007 | Mike Lambert / Stein Metzger | John Hyden / Brad Keenan | Nick Lucena / Mark Williams | [3rd] Ty Loomis / Hans Stolfus |
| 2008 | Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers | Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal | John Hyden / Brad Keenan | [3rd] Nick Lucena / Sean Scott |
| 2009 | John Hyden / Sean Scott | Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers | Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal | [3rd] Pedro Brazao / Matt Prosser |
| 2015 | Brad Keenan / Ty Trambie | Ryan Doherty / John Mayer | Casey Jennings / Billy Kolinske | [3rd] Todd Rogers / Stafford Slick |
| 2016 | Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena | Tri Bourne / John Hyden | Taylor Crabb / Trevor Crabb | [3rd] Ryan Doherty / John Mayer |
| 2017 | Ryan Doherty / John Hyden | Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena | Jeremy Casebeer / John Mayer | [3rd] Billy Allen / Stafford Slick |
| 2018 | Taylor Crabb / Jake Gibb | Tim Bomgren / Chaim Schalk | Ed Ratledge / Roberto Rodriguez | [3rd] Jeremy Casebeer/Reid Priddy |
| 2019 | Taylor Crabb / Jake Gibb | Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena | Chase Budinger / Casey Patterson | [3rd] Jeremy Casebeer/Chaim Schalk |
| 2021 | Chase Budinger / Casey Patterson | Tri Bourne / Trevor Crabb | Paul Lotman / Miles Partain | [3rd] Billy Allen / Andy Benesh |
| 2022 | Tri Bourne / Trevor Crabb | Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander | Phil Dalhausser / Casey Patterson | [3rd] Jake Dietrich / Hagen Smith |
| 2023 | Theo Brunner / Trevor Crabb | Andy Benesh / Miles Partain | Chase Budinger / Miles Evans | [3rd] Phil Dalhausser / Avery Drost |

MEN – non-AVP events

| Year | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd / 4th |
|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1983 | Mike Dodd / Tim Hovland | John Hanley / Jon Stevenson | Sinjin Smith / Randy Stoklos | Robert Chavez / Steve Obradovich |
| 1988 | Andy Fishburn / Dane Selznick | Rick Arce / Chris Hannemann | Mike Fitzgerald / Eugene LeDuff | Dave Morehouse / Wes Welch |
| 2011 | John Hyden / Sean Scott | John Mayer / Matt Prosser | Braidy Halverson / Adam Roberts | [3rd] Ty Loomis / Mark Williams |
| 2012 | Ryan Doherty / Casey Patterson | Avery Drost / Ty Trambie | Stein Metzger / Mark Williams | [3rd] Brad Keenan / John Mayer |

WOMEN – AVP events

| | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1984 | Linda Hanley / Dale Keough | Nancy Cothron / Donna Townsend | Kathy Hanley / Beth Rogers | Kathy Kehoe / Patti Walsh |
| 1986 | Linda Hanley / Nina Matthies | Patty Dodd / Janice Harrer | Linda Chisholm / Heather Hafner | Lori Forsythe / Jeanne Goldsmith |
| 1993 | Linda Chisholm / Holly McPeak | Nancy Reno / Angela Rock | Rita Crockett / Linda Hanley | Cammy Ciarelli / Jackie Silva |
| 1994 | Cammy Ciarelli / Holly McPeak | Nancy Reno / Angela Rock | Sandra Pires / Jackie Silva | Linda Chisholm / Linda Hanley |
| 1999 | Liz Masakayan / Elaine Youngs | Annett Davis/Jenny Johnson Jordan | Holly McPeak / Gabrielle Reece | Patty Dodd / Angela Rock |
| 2002 | Annett Davis/Jenny Johnson Jordan | Holly McPeak / Elaine Youngs | Nancy Mason / Rachel Wacholder | [3rd] Carrie Dodd / Leanne McSorley |
| 2003 | Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh | Holly McPeak / Elaine Youngs | Jennifer Meredith/Wendy Stammer | [3rd] Nancy Mason/Dianne DeNecochea |
| 2004 | Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh | Annett Davis/Jenny Johnson Jordan | Carrie Dodd / Nancy Mason | [3rd] Holly McPeak / Elaine Youngs |
| 2005 | Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh | Mimi Amaral / Tatiana Minello | Rachel Wacholder/ Elaine Youngs | [3rd] Jennifer Kessy / Holly McPeak |
| 2006 | Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh | Rachel Wacholder / Elaine Youngs | Dianne DeNecochea/Tammy Leibl | [3rd] Nicole Branagh / Holly McPeak |
| 2007 | Annett Davis/Jenny Johnson Jordan | Angie Akers / Brooke Hanson | Barbra Fontana / Alicia Polzin | [3rd] Jenny Kropp / Jenny Pavley |
| 2008 | Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh | Nicole Branagh / Elaine Youngs | Annett Davis/Jenny Johnson Jordan | [3rd] Jennifer Kessy / April Ross |
| 2009 | Nicole Branagh / Elaine Youngs | Jennifer Kessy / April Ross | Annett Davis/Jenny Johnson Jordan | [3rd] Tatiana Minello / Priscilla Lima |
| 2015 | Nicole Branagh / Jenny Kropp | Kim DiCello / Kendra Van Zwieten | Amanda Dowdy / Heather McGuire | [3rd] Lane Carico / Summer Ross |
| 2016 | Lauren Fendrick / Brooke Sweat | Betsi Flint / Kelley Larsen | Ali McColloch / Geena Urango | [3rd] Lane Carico / Summer Ross |
| 2017 | Kelly Cheng / Sara Hughes | Summer Ross / Brooke Sweat | Lauren Fendrick / April Ross | [3rd] Emily Day / Brittany Hochevar |
| 2018 | Alix Klineman / April Ross | Sara Hughes / Summer Ross | Terese Cannon / Sarah Sponcil | [3rd] Kelly Cheng / Brittany Hochevar |
| 2019 | Alix Klineman / April Ross | Emily Day / Betsi Flint | Sara Hughes / Brandie Wilkerson | [3rd] Kelly Cheng / Sarah Sponcil |
| 2021 | Alix Klineman / April Ross | Larissa Maestrini / Lili Maestrini | Kelley Kolinske / Zana Muno | [3rd] Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss |
| 2022 | Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss | Melissa Humana-Paredes/Brandie Wilkerson | Kelly Cheng / Betsi Flint | [3rd] Terese Cannon / Sarah Sponcil |
| 2023 | Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss | Melissa Humana-Paredes/Brandie Wilkerson | Kelly Cheng / Sara Hughes | [3rd] Betsi Flint / Julia Scoles |

WOMEN – non-AVP events

| Year | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd / 4th |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1985 | Nancy Cothron/Donna Townsend | Anne Crocker / Marcie Rasmussen | Kathy Bay / Fran Knapiewitz | Julie Bowser / Kathy Drumboski |
| 1987 | Linda Chisholm / Jackie Silva | Patty Dodd / Dale Hall | Linda Hanley / Nina Matthies | Lori Forsythe / Jeanne Goldsmith |
| 1996 | Holly McPeak / Nancy Reno | Barbra Fontana / Linda Hanley | Elaine Roque/Dennis Shupryt Knoop | Karolyn Kirby / Angela Rock |
| 1997 | Liz Masakayan / Elaine Youngs | Lisa Arce / Holly McPeak | Krista Blomquist/Christine Podraza | Karrie Poppinga / Angela Rock |
| 2011 | Jenny Kropp / Whitney Pavlik | Jennifer Fopma / Tracy Jones | Emily Day / Heather McGuire | [3rd] Erin Gray / Olaya Pazo |
| 2012 | Jenny Kropp / Whitney Pavlik | Priscilla Lima / Tyra Turner | Kristen Batt-Rohr/Raquel Ferrerira | [3rd] Jennifer Fopma / Brooke Sweat |

REVISITING THE RULES – The Chicago event in 2016 was the AVP season finale and the first domestic event following the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Given that, the AVP instituted a couple of rule changes for the Chicago event which would then be in place for the following season. The let serve rule, in place since 2000, was modified so that if a serves touched the net and stayed inbounds on the opponent's side of the court, no point was awarded and was replayed. However if the replayed serve also touched the net then it was considered a service error and a point was awarded to the receiving team. The second rule change has to do with match point. Once a team reached match point, scoring changed from rally scoring to side-out scoring for the remainder of that set for both teams. A team had to serve in order to score a point, and the two-point margin requirement was still in place. There were no additional time outs allocated, and teams still switched every seven serves (in a second set) or five serves (in a third set).

RELATIVELY SPEAKING – One sets of brothers is competing this weekend but will be competing on different teams, Taylor and Trevor Crabb.

- Speaking of relatives, there are several players with notable volleyball relatives. Hagen Smith is the son of 1996 beach Olympian Sinjin Smith, Jaden Whitmarsh is the daughter of 1996 Olympic silver medalist Mike Whitmarsh. James Shaw is the son of long time Stanford volleyball coach Don Shaw.

MAKING MONEY – The prize money for each gender is \$150,000 this weekend. In AVP history, this marks the 13th time that the prize money has been at that level or higher for a women's event. The first time was in Chicago 2005, and this is the fifth time Chicago has offered that much. Eight of the 13 events have occurred since 2022.

CHICAGO SAND BITS – Of the 32 men's players competing this weekend, there are 11 players in their 20s (the youngest being 22-year old Miles Partain), 19 who are in their 30s, and two in their 40's (44-year old Phil Dalhausser and 42-year old Billy Allen). The average age of the male players is 32 years old. The three shortest are 5'11" Diego Perez and a pair of 6'0" players (Taylor Crabb and Hagen Smith) while at the other end of the spectrum are two 6'9" players (Andy Benesh and Phil Dalhausser). Ryan Wilcox is the least experienced player, competing in his seventh pro beach tournament (and just his fourth main draw), while the player with the most experience is Phil Dalhausser. A total of 25 of the 32 players here have won an event on some tour (including international, NORCECA, and Tour and Contender Series). Out of 16 partnerships, four have competed just three times previously while on the other end the most experienced are Theo Brunner / Trevor Crabb, Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander Chase Budinger / Miles Evans.

• There are also 32 women playing this weekend, and 27 of them are still in their 20s, with the other five in their 30s. The two youngest are Piper Ferch and Megan Kraft (both 21), while Geena Urango (35) and Kimberly Hildreth (33) are the oldest. The average age of the female players is 26 and half years old. The women are equally divided as 16 of them are 5'11" or shorter, with 5'6 Kirsten Nuss the leading the pack, and 16 are at least 6'0" with Kylie Deberg and Taryn Kloth both at 6'4" as the tallest players here. The least experienced player here is Piper Ferch, who is competing in her ninth pro beach event but just second Heritage Series main draw (Manhattan Beach was her first). There are five players (Sara Hughes, Brandie Wilkerson, Melissa Humana-Paredes, Kelly Cheng and Betsi Flint) who have played in over 115 pro beach tournaments previously. Similar to the men, 24 of the 32 players have won a title before on one of the tours. Piper Ferch and Molly Shaw are playing together for just the second time, while the two teams with the most experience together are the 2024 U.S.A. Olympic teams; Kelly Cheng / Sara Hughes and Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss.

300TH FOR DALHAUSSER – Four-time Olympian Phil Dalhausser played his first pro beach volleyball event in a qualifier in Ft. Lauderdale in April 2003, when he was 23 years old. Compare that to Miles Partain, who at 22 years old has been the youngest player to advance from an AVP qualifier, the second youngest to win an AVP tournament, and competed in one Olympics. Partain was just two years old when Dalhausser first played an event. But fast forward to Chicago 2024 and Dalhausser is playing in his 300th beach tournament. Here is a breakdown of the events on the various tours:

AVP – 163rd event, 62 wins

FIVB / World Beach Pro Tour – 132 events, 39 wins

NVL – 3 events, 1 win

Parks and Recreation – 1 event, 0 wins (finished 2nd)

NORCECA – 1 event, 1 win

WIN EARLY, WIN ALWAYS – On the men's side, there have been 16 AVP events held in Chicago since 2001. In those title matches, the team winning the first set has won the match all 16 times. In fact, just three times has the finals even required a third set (in 2004, 2009 and 2022) and all three of those saw the team winning the first set claim the title.

• The women likewise have played 16 times in Chicago in that span and seven of the 16 title matches have gone to a third set. In 13 of the 16 years the team winning the first set won the match, with the exceptions coming in 2002, 2008 and 2016.

THE FINALS COUNTDOWN – If there is anything close to a certainty, it is that the team of Andy Benesh / Miles Partain will play in the finals of an AVP tournament. After all, the partnership which began playing on the AVP Tour in 2023 has reached the championship match in all four of their events together. The duo first took to the sand domestically in the 2023 season opener in Huntington Beach and won that event. Then in Atlanta the pair did not lose a single match in winning the title in their second outing. In the 2023 season finale in Chicago Benesh and Partain won four straight matches to reach the finals but then lost, finishing in second place. Last event in Manhattan Beach they again went undefeated to reach the title match but had to settle for a second-place finish.

Getting to the finals in the first four tournaments as partners is extremely rare on the AVP Tour on the men's side. And if they are able to make it to the championship match in Chicago, they will become just the second team ever to achieve that. Mike Dodd and Karch Kiraly played for the title in each of their first five tournaments together in 1985 (even though they had played with different partners throughout that season). They did not play together in 1986, but then reached the finals twice more in 1987 before finally finishing in fifth place.

The only other men's teams to achieve four straight finals appearances to begin a partnership were John Hanley / Jon Stevenson in 1984, who had three firsts and a second before placing third. That duo had played together domestically prior to that though, competing on the Parks & Recreation Tour together from 1981-1983. Then Tim Hovland / Kent Steffes teamed up in late 1990 and had a win plus three seconds in their first four events before placing fifth.

An interesting note about these accomplishments, besides the fact that it hasn't happened in nearly 35 years, is that some of the greats in the sport have done it; Karch Kiraly, Kent Steffes, Tim Hovland and Mike Dodd, yet none of them did it with their most successful partnerships.

SENSIBLE SEEDINGS – In the last 19 men's AVP events (excluding Tour and Contender Series), the winner has been seeded either first or second 15 times. The four exceptions were in Atlanta 2022 (#6 Paul Lotman / Miles Partain), Hoenix 2022 (#3 Taylor Crabb / Taylor Ssander), Huntington Beach 2023 (#5 Andy Benesh / Miles Partain) and Manhattan Beach 2023 (#4 Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander). Amazingly though, the last time the winning team was seeded first three straight times was back in 2014-15 (four straight events won by the top seed). A win by Theo Brunner / Trevor Crabb would mark the first time since then that the top seeds were victorious in three straight AVP events. In Chicago the top seeds have won just once (by Chase Budinger / Casey Patterson in 2021) in the last nine events here.

- Wins by the top women's seeds are now back in fashion apparently. Excluding Tour and Contender Series, six of the last 9 AVP tournaments have been won the top-seeded team following a stretch of six straight events won by teams with lower seeds. In Chicago there have been 16 AVP tournaments in which seeds were known, and the number one seed has won nine of those, including three of the last four. The only time in those 16 Chicago events in which the top seeds did not make the semifinals was in 2022, when Sara Hughes / Kelley Kolinske finished in fifth place.

ON THIS DATE – None of the 64 players here will be celebrating any birthdays this weekend, but the dates still have some significance. Friday will mark nine years to the day that Kelly Cheng and Sara Hughes first tasted victory as partners, as they won a NORCECA event in Cuba while defeating a Cuban team. Saturday will mark the 16th anniversary of Phil Dalhausser's win (with Todd Rogers) in Cincinnati, which was the 34th win in his career. Sunday is an anniversary for two players' wins. Dalhausser in 2007 (with Todd Rogers) won in Cincinnati for his 21st career victory, and in 2019 Taylor Crabb collected his 10th victory by winning in Chicago with Jake Gibb.

UP NEXT – The AVP's newly formed AVP League will begin after a one week hiatus. Competition runs on nine straight weekends, culminating in the League Championships