



2021 AVP Pro Beach Volleyball Tour

Event #1 – Atlanta Open

Atlanta, Georgia • August 11 - 15, 2021

ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT – For the 38th consecutive year, the AVP Tour is in action on the sands across America. This year the schedule features three events in a span of one month, with all being part of the Gold Series. The Tour kicks off appropriately in Atlanta, as the first domestic event following the Tokyo Olympics is being held in the same city where beach volleyball made its Olympic debut back in 1996. The following weekend the biggest tournament both in terms of number of teams as well as prize money will be held in Manhattan Beach, California. There will be a one-week hiatus before the Tour concludes in Chicago over Labor Day weekend. This is the fourth latest start of the Tour in history, behind 2011 (finals on October 22), 2012 (finals on September 2) and 2013 (finals on August 18).

- The inaugural weekend of the Gold Series is the Atlanta Open. A total of \$200,000 in prize money will be paid out to the two genders. This event has a rare two-day qualifier in order to accommodate all the teams vying for a spot in the main draw, which will be a 16-team, double elimination format on three courts at the Atlantic Station Courts. The main draw will have 29 matches in both genders. The main draw begins on Friday, August 13 and concludes on Sunday, August 15, with night sessions held on both Friday and Saturday nights. The championship matches will be around 2:15 pm ET and 3:15 pm ET. The qualifier tournament is a single elimination event held on Wednesday, August 11 and Thursday, August 12 on 10 courts at Rally Volleyball at LakePoint in Cartersville. The men's qualifier has a total of 61 teams competing for the final four spots in the main draw, joining 12 teams seeded directly into the main draw. The men's qualifier will be divided into two phases, with 37 teams competing on Wednesday, August 11 for the eight remaining spots in the second phase of the qualifier, which will be on Thursday, August 12. Phase two will have the eight teams advancing from phase one joining the top 24-seeded qualifier teams in a single elimination bracket that will determine the final four main draw teams. There will be 29 men's matches in phase one and 28 in phase two. The women's qualifier will be held entirely on Thursday, August 12 with 30 teams vying for the four main draw slots. There will be 26 women's matches in the qualifier.

- This year the main draw matches will be streamed on LIVE SPORTS within Peacock Premium, the streaming arm of NBC. All of the NBCSports replays will be shown on a tape-delayed basis. Kevin Barnett, Dain Blanton, Camryn Irwin, Chris Marlowe and Kevin Wong will combine to handle the announcing duties.

SEASON OPENERS – This is the first time in the history of the AVP that the season opener is taking place in the state of Georgia, which becomes the 13th different state to host a season-opening tournament. Florida leads the pack with 15 of the 38 openers (including this year), followed by California with six, including in both 2019 and 2020. Hawai'i, with three season openers, is the only other state with more than two on that list. The player with the most victories in season debuts is Phil Dalhausser, who has won seven times, including three of the last four years. In addition, Dalhausser was slated to play in the finals of the 2010 opener in Ft. Lauderdale, which was never held due to weather. Karch Kiraly tallied six wins, with Sinjin Smith and Randy Stoklos getting five wins in the first event of a year.

- All of the AVP season-opening events since the start of the 2001 have been dual-gender. Excluding 2011, when there were no seeds for the four-team tournament, either the number one or number two seed has won each of the season debuts. The top-seeded team has won the last six, and 14 overall in that span, while the number two team has won the other five times. Just because the top teams had success doesn't mean it came easy, as 10 of the finals in that span have gone three sets. April Ross has claimed the title seven times, including the last three, all in the span from 2012-2020. That figure ties Kerri Walsh Jennings for the most, just ahead of Misty May-Treanor's six victories on opening day.

A NEW NUMBER ONE – Alix Klineman and April Ross just won the gold medal in the Tokyo Olympics, and had won 10 of the 15 AVP tournaments they had played as partners. But in Atlanta Klineman isn't competing and Ross instead will pair with Kelley Kolinske. For Ross, this will be her ninth consecutive AVP tournament holding the number one seed, while it is Kolinske's third time as a top seed (placed seventh and won in the other two times). Kolinske's first ever AVP tournament came in Salt Lake City in August 2014, and after winning three qualifier matches to get into the main draw, her first match came against Ross and Kerri Walsh Jennings. Kolinske and Ross played each other 12 times across different tours, with Ross holding a 10-2 advantage. Kolinske has played all 31 of her previous AVP tournaments with either Betsi Flint (2014-2017) or Emily Stockman (since the start of the 2018 season). Ross, who has 39 AVP victories to her credit, has won with six different partners on the AVP Tour.

- Phil Dalhausser and Nick Lucena occupy the top spot on the men's side, which is no surprise as the duo has been in the title match in 15 of their last 21 AVP tournaments together. Dalhausser has won AVP championships in 16 different states, and is looking to add Georgia to his resume.

ATLANTA HISTORY – The AVP has held eight men’s tournaments and five women’s competitions in Atlanta prior to the 2021 season. The men played here four times between 1994-1998, then another four times between 2006-2009. All eight winning men’s teams had at least one player who was an Olympian (either beach or indoors). Karch Kiraly won four times with three different partners, while Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal won twice, tying for the most team wins with Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes. John Hyden, who won the last tournament in Atlanta in 2009, joins Jake Gibb as the only two players who have won in Atlanta and are also playing here in 2021. In 1996 beach volleyball made its debut in the Olympics, and it featured an All-American finale with Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes defeating Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh. The eight AVP events and one FIVB event are the only ones ever played in the state of Georgia.

- On the women’s side, the AVP event in 1994 was a dual gender event along with all four from 2006 to 2009. The five previous titles were won by seven different individuals, five of whom were Olympians including three who won medals. No woman playing in 2021 has ever played in the semifinals in Atlanta, with the highest finish by a current player being the fifth-place in 2007 by April Ross.

- Here is a look at the AVP and FIVB tournaments in Atlanta:

MEN – AVP events

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	3rd / 4th
1994	Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes	Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh	Brent Frohoff / Bruk Vandeweghe	Adam Johnson / Randy Stoklos
1995	Scott Ayakatubby / Karch Kiraly	Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh	Eric Fonoimoana / Ricci Luyties	Bill Boullianne / Brian Lewis
1996	Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes	Adam Johnson / Jose Loiola	Eduardo Bacil / Randy Stoklos	Scott Friederichsen / Jim Nichols
1998	Adam Johnson / Karch Kiraly	Brent Frohoff / Rob Heidger	Roberto Lopes / Franco Neto	Aaron Boss / Albert Hannemann
2006	Mike Lambert / Stein Metzger	Dax Holdren / Sean Scott	John Hyden / Jeff Nygaard	[3rd] Matt Fuerbringer / Casey Jennings
2007	Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal	Mike Lambert / Stein Metzger	Karch Kiraly / Kevin Wong	[3rd] Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers
2008	Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal	Anthony Medel / Fred Souza	Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers	[3rd] John Hyden / Brad Keenan
2009	John Hyden / Sean Scott	Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers	Brad Keenan / Nick Lucena	[3rd] Matt Olson / Kevin Wong

MEN – FIVB events (Olympics)

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1996	Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes (USA)	Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh (USA)	John Child / Mark Heese (CAN)	Joao Brenha / Miguel Maia (POR)

WOMEN – AVP events

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	3rd
1994	Nancy Reno / Angela Rock	Linda Chisholm / Linda Hanley	Sandra Pires / Jackie Silva	Cammy Ciarelli / Holly McPeak
2006	Rachel Scott / Elaine Youngs	Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings	Annett Davis / Jenny Johnson Jordan	[3rd] Nicole Branagh / Holly McPeak
2007	Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings	Rachel Scott / Tyra Turner	Annett Davis / Jenny Johnson Jordan	[3rd] Dianne DeNecochea / Barbra Fontana
2008	Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings	Annett Davis / Jenny Johnson Jordan	Angie Akers / Holly McPeak	[3rd] Jenny Kropp / Nancy Reynolds
2009	Nicole Branagh / Elaine Youngs	Dianne DeNecochea / Carrie Dodd	Annett Davis / Jenny Johnson Jordan	[3rd] Lisa Fitzgerald / Brooke Niles

WOMEN – FIVB events (Olympics)

Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1996	Sandra Pires / Jackie Silva (BRA)	Monica Rodrigues / Adriana Samuel (BRA)	Natalie Cook / Kerri Pottharst (AUS)	Barbra Fontana / Linda Hanley (USA)

HOT TEAMS IN HOTLANTA – The teams earning the top seeds are generally the hottest teams on the Tour. In Hotlanta, those teams do especially well. In the last four women’s events here (the seeds were not known in the first AVP tournament here), the number one seed won three times and finished second the other time. The number two seeds have a pair of seconds to go with that victory. The men have not seen quite that success, but of the five tournaments held when seeds were known, one was won by a top-seeded team and three by the number two seeds. In 2008 Jake Gibb and Sean Rosenthal were seeded sixth but managed to come through the contender’s bracket to claim the title.

TOPPING THE CHARTS – The women’s qualifier features one of the top beach volleyball players in the world, Larissa Franca Maestrini, who is playing with her spouse Liliane Maestini. Larissa is a three-time Olympian (won bronze in 2012), a 2011 FIVB World Champion (won five World Championship medals in her career), and the all-time leader in FIVB wins with 62. In addition, she won 84 titles on the Brazilian National Tour, topping that list as well (second place is Shelda Bede with 71). Larissa has played one prior tournament on the AVP Tour, an international event in Glendale, Arizona in 2009, which she won alongside long-time partner Juliana Felisberta. Atlanta will mark her first competition since 2017.

PERFECTION ACHIEVED – Eight of the last nine men’s winning teams on the AVP Tour have come from the winner’s bracket. The one exception in that span was in Chicago 2019, when Taylor Crabb and Jake Gibb had to win one match in the contender’s bracket en route to the title. On the women’s side, 20 of the past 22 AVP champions have been undefeated, including the last 9 straight. The two exceptions during that stretch were in Austin 2019 (Karissa Cook / Jace Pardon) and San Francisco 2018 (Emily Day / Betsi Flint).

WELCOME HOME TOUR – The Atlanta Open will be the first domestic event following the Tokyo Olympics. Of the 13 men's teams from previous Olympics, 10 played in the AVP event following the Olympics, with three of those teams winning the AVP title. For the women, nine teams played in the first domestic event and three of those won the title. One team did not compete domestically after the Olympics that year and three others split before the next domestic event, and one of those players went on to win the first domestic event after the Olympics. Here is a look at how USA players fared in their first domestic event following previous Olympic Games.

- 1996 Karch Kiraly / Kent Steffes (Gold in Atlanta) – placed 3rd in Santa Cruz
- 1996 Mike Dodd / Mike Whitmarsh (Silver in Atlanta) – placed 5th in Santa Cruz
- 1996 Carl Henkel / Sinjin Smith (5th place in Atlanta) – only played FIVB in 1996
- 2000 Dain Blanton / Eric Fonoimoana (Gold in Sydney) – neither played in King of the Beach event
- 2000 Rob Heidger / Kevin Wong (5th place in Sydney) – neither played in King of the Beach event
- 2004 Dax Holdren / Stein Metzger (5th place in Athens) – placed 13th in Chicago
- 2004 Dain Blanton / Jeff Nygaard (19th place in Athens) – won title in Chicago
- 2008 Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers (Gold in Beijing) – won title in Cincinnati
- 2008 Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal (5th place in Beijing) – placed 3rd in Cincinnati
- 2012 Jake Gibb / Sean Rosenthal (5th place in London) – placed 5th in Cincinnati
- 2012 Phil Dalhausser / Todd Rogers (9th place in London) – placed 3rd in Cincinnati
- 2016 Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena (5th place in Rio) – won title in Chicago
- 2016 Jake Gibb / Casey Patterson (19th place in Rio) – placed 5th in Chicago
- 2021 Tri Bourne / Jake Gibb (9th place in Tokyo) – Bourne playing with Trevor Crabb in Atlanta, Gibb playing with Taylor Crabb
- 2021 Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena (9th place in Tokyo) - ???

- 1996 Barbra Fontana / Linda Hanley (4th place in Atlanta) – placed 2nd in New York City (WPVA Tour)
- 1996 Holly McPeak / Nancy Reno (5th place in Atlanta) – McPeak won title (with Lisa Arce) in New York City (WPVA Tour), Reno placed 3rd (with Karolyn Kirby) in New York City (WPVA Tour)
- 1996 Gail Castro Kehl / Deb Richardson (9th place in Atlanta) – placed 7th in New York City (WPVA Tour)
- 2000 Annett Davis / Jenny Johnson Jordan (5th place in Sydney) – did not compete domestically post Olympics
- 2000 Misty May-Treanor / Holly McPeak (5th place in Sydney) – May-Treanor placed 7th and McPeak placed 3rd in the Queen of the Beach event
- 2004 Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings (Gold in Athens) – won title in Chicago
- 2004 Holly McPeak / Elaine Youngs (Bronze in Athens) – placed 3rd in Chicago
- 2008 Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings (Gold in Beijing) – placed 2nd in Cincinnati
- 2008 Nicole Branagh / Elaine Youngs (5th place in Beijing) – won title in Cincinnati
- 2012 Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings (Gold in London) – placed 2nd in Cincinnati
- 2012 Jennifer Kessy / April Ross (9th Silver in London) – placed 3rd in Cincinnati
- 2016 April Ross / Kerri Walsh Jennings (Bronze in Rio) – Ross placed 7th (with Kelly Reeves) in Chicago, Walsh Jennings did not compete domestically post Olympics
- 2016 Lauren Fendrick / Brooke Sweat (19th place in Rio) – won title in Chicago
- 2021 Alix Klineman / April Ross (Gold in Tokyo) – Klineman not competing in Atlanta, Ross is playing with Kelley Kolinske
- 2021 Kelly Claes / Sarah Sponcil (9th place in Tokyo) - ???

ON THIS DAY – The Atlanta Open will conclude on Sunday, August 15, with numerous players hoping to get their first ever title. One player who did get his first tournament win on August 15 was NBC announcer Chris Marlowe, who on August 15, 1976 won in Manhattan Beach alongside Steve Obradovich to claim the first win for both players. Marlowe would go on to win eight tournaments in his career.

TWIN TWINS – There are two sets of twins playing in Atlanta. Making their pro beach volleyball debuts are Angelina and Isabella Ferary, the 19-year olds who both currently play beach volleyball at Georgia State. Annika (Van Gunst) Rowland and Teegan Van Gunst are 26-year old twins who played indoors at Georgia Tech before competing for one season of beach volleyball at Georgia State.

ATLANTA SAND BITS – Of the 144 men's players competing this weekend, there are two teenagers competing (of the ages known), 19-year olds Caleb Kwekel and Miles Partain. Meanwhile 10 players are 40 or older, with the four oldest being Christopher Shipps and John Hyden (48), Chris Luers (47) and Ricardo Santos (46). The two shortest players are David VandeerMeer (5'9") and Francisco Quesada-Paneque (5'10") while at the other end of the spectrum are 7'0" Robbie Page, and three players who stand 6'9" (Andy Benesh, Phil Dalhausser and Kevin Owens). Jake Gibb is playing in his 318th pro beach tournament, followed by Phil Dalhausser (278th), Nick Lucena (275th) and Ricardo Santos (259th), while there are 37 players who are making their pro beach volleyball debuts. There are five players competing in Atlanta who have won at least 10 AVP titles entering this weekend, led by Phil Dalhausser (59), Jake Gibb (34), Nick Lucena (16), Casey Patterson (15) and John Hyden (13). Out of 72 partnerships, 49 are competing together for the very first time. The most prolific partnerships are Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena (106 events before Atlanta), Taylor Crabb / Jake Gibb 54, and Tri Bourne / Trevor Crabb 30). There are four men's teams here which have previously won an AVP event (Phil Dalhausser / Nick Lucena 14, Taylor Crabb / Jake Gibb 8, Tri Bourne / Trevor Crabb 1 and Chase Budinger / Casey Patterson 1).

- There are seven teenagers competing among the 84 women playing this weekend, 18-year old Megan Kraft and 19-year olds Rorianna Chartier, Caitlin Moon, Lina Russo, Raelyn White and twin sisters Angelina and Isabella Ferary. There are two players who are 39 (Larissa Framca Maestrini and April Ross) and one who is 38 (Maria Clara Salgado). Katie Lindstrom and the Ferary twins (Angelina and Isabella) are the shortest at 5'4" while Amber Bennett and Terri Del Conte both measure 5'5". At the other end of the spectrum are four players who stand 6'4" (Falyn Fonoimoana, Kathryn Hogan, Taryn Kloth and Rachel Krabacher). A total of 14 women are making their pro beach volleyball debuts, while the most experienced is April Ross (262 tournaments prior to Atlanta), Maria Clara Salgado (179) and Emily Day (1673). April Ross has tallied 39 AVP victories, far and away the most of any player here, followed by Emily Day (9). The women feature 31 tandems (out of 42 total) playing alongside each other for the first time and five having played together nine or more times before Atlanta (Emily Day / Betsi Flint 32, Kelly Claes / Sarah Sponcil 31, Mackenzie Ponnet / Sheila Shaw 11, twins Annika Rowland / Teegan Van Gunst 9 and Corinne Quiggle / Allie Wheeler 9). There is just one team competing here which has won an AVP title as partners previously, Emily Day / Betsi Flint (2 titles won).