



# 2022 AVP PRO BEACH VOLLEYBALL TOUR

## Season Event #7 • Tour Series Event #4

### Atlantic City, New Jersey • July 22 – 24, 2022

**ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT** – The AVP Tour is embarking on a three-week East Coast swing, with all three stops being different levels. Up first is the Atlantic City Open, the fourth Tour Series event of the season. That will be followed by a Pro Series event in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and then the first Gold Series event of 2022 in Atlanta, Ga. This weekend's Atlantic City tournament is the seventh event on the 16-tournament schedule that the AVP Tour has this year. The top four teams are guaranteed a spot in the Atlanta event. Total prize money for this tournament will be \$50,000, with equal payouts for men and women, and the season payout totals \$1,975,000 for the AVP, which is in its 39th season.

- The main draw will be a 24-team, double elimination format. The top 14 men's teams were granted entry directly into the main draw from having sufficient points (from the best four domestic or international results in a window defined by the six most recent consecutive Pro Series and Gold Series events offered). There were two wildcards given, to Alex Diaz / TJ Jurko and to Shane Donohue / Chris Vaughan. For the women, 15 teams earned main draw berths based on points, with a wildcard given to Ashleigh Adams / Sarah Wood. Wood became the youngest AVP player in history, men or women, to advance from a qualifier to an AVP main draw in Muskegon as she is just 14 years old. The remaining eight teams in each gender can earn a spot via the qualifier tournament, a single elimination event on Friday, July 22. A total of 34 men's teams and 28 women's teams will be in the qualifier. The men will have 26 qualifier matches while the women will have 20, and both genders will have 45 main draw matches. The main draw begins on Saturday, July 23 and concludes on Sunday, July 24, and will be played on eight courts at 3798 Boardwalk Avenue in Atlantic City. General admission is free throughout the tournament. The championship matches will be around 3:30 pm (women) and 4:30 pm (men) ET. • Live streaming of courts one and two takes place Saturday and Sunday on the AVP's YouTube channel (@avpbeach). David Shaw will handle the announcing duties.

**ATLANTIC CITY'S ACES** – Dave Palm and Roberto Rodriguez, winners of two of the three Tour Series events so far, occupy the top seed in Atlantic City. Palm had begun the season with the intention of playing with Mark Burik, but a last minute injury to Burik before the season opener in Austin Palm replacing him with Rodriguez. The duo again qualified for the next event in New Orleans and then won in Muskegon. Even when Burik was able to return to play, Palm and Rodriguez stayed together, and after placing fifth in Denver they won again in Wuapaca. The duo has a 13-2 match record on the Tour Series this season. These two players are the only ones here who have previously won an AVP title.

- Just like the men, the top seeded women's team has also won twice this year. Larissa and Lili Maestrini have a 10-1 match record on the Tour Series, and in their career as partners, they are 24-1 when winning the first set. They are competing together for the ninth time, all of those have been on the AVP Tour. The duo placed seventh in the first two events of 2022 but then won consecutive events in Muskegon and Denver. The players, who are married to each other, have quickly ascended in the rankings, as they were seeded 10th in the qualifier in their AVP debut last August in Atlanta, and now occupy the top spot for the third time in their last four outings.

#### **HOMETOWN HEROES** –

- There are 14 men's players who list New Jersey as their current residence:

Gary Aramini (Wall), Jason Campbell (Haddon Township), Sean Casiao (Little Egg Harbor Township), Ryan Charterina (Belmar), Shane Donohue (Wall Township), Jameel Epps (Absecon), Nick Fusilli (Asbury Park), Kevion Luo (Egg Harbor Township), Joshua Milke (Mt. Holly), Owen O'Connell (Cherry Hill), Rafael Ortiz (Pleasantville), Brett Scarmazzo (Garfield), Matt Shassol (Hoboken), Oren Zyndorf (Fair Lawn)

- There are two men's players who currently live in a different state but lists their hometowns in New Jersey:

Kristopher Fraser (Lakewood), Christopher Vaughan (Medford)

- Of the colleges known, there are seven men's player who attended a college in New Jersey:

Shane Donohue (Ramapo College), Kristopher Fraser (Ramapo College), Tomas Goldsmith (Rutgers), Brett Greiner (Ramapo College), TJ Jurko (New Jersey Institute of Technology), Kevion Luo (Rutgers-New Brunswick), Christopher Vaughan (Stevens Institute of Technology)

- There are eight women's player who lists New Jersey as their current residence:

Victoria Corcoran (Closter), Rachel Johnston (Point Pleasant), Abbey Roam (Hoboken), Lina Russo (Cherry Hill), Sofia Russo (Cherry Hill), Nikki Senopoulos (Plainsboro), Siobahn Suppa (Williamstown), Lauren Wilcock (Mendham)

- There are two women's players who currently live in a different state but lists their hometowns in New Jersey:

Veronica Chau (Galloway), Ashley McGinn (Sewell)

- Of the colleges known, there are four women's player who attended a college in New Jersey:

Verocina Chau (Rutgers), Rachel Johnston (Richard Stockton College) Agnieszka Pregowska (New Jersey Institute of Technology), Lina Russo (Rowan College, Rowan University)

**SCHEDULE SNAPSHOT** – The 2022 AVP schedule looks vastly different than years past in several regards. This season's slate has 16 tour stops, the most the AVP has had since 2009 (also 16 that year), and more than the past 3 years combined. While there have been several years with more men's events, the 16 women's tournaments has been surpassed just twice (18 in both 2007 and 2008). The 12 different states that the Tour is visiting is the most since the 2008 season (also 12 different states). Two tournaments will be held in November, which marks a first for the AVP Tour, as previously October was the latest that an event has ever been held up to this point. Three locations are slated to have night sessions (New Orleans, Atlanta, and Phoenix). The combined total of \$1,975,000 in prize money also features the most the Tour has distributed since 2009. This season the AVP has stopped using freeze scoring on match points.

• The Tour is divided into four different classifications. One level is the Tour Series, which comprises seven different events in seven different states from June to November. These events will all have on-site qualifiers the day before the main draw begins. The Pro Series has five events from May through September, including the Tour's first two tournament of the year. Unlike in years past, these tournaments will not have an on-site qualifier. Instead, the first two events will use AVPNext tournaments to round out the field, while the last three will rely on specific Tour Series tournaments to determine the final teams. Once again the Gold Series, with three events, will be held towards the end of the season, as the three this year will be in August and September. Each of the three will have a different manner of qualifying. Atlanta will use a Tour Series event, Manhattan Beach will have an on-site qualifier the day before, and Chicago will use an AVPNext tournament. The last type of event is the AVP championships, which will be held in Phoenix in September. Entry for the six-team draws will be based on the best two out of the three results in Gold Series events.

### 2022 AVP Pro Beach Volleyball Tour Schedule

| Event Dates         | Location                            | Tournament Format          | Prize \$ - TV  |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| <b>May 6 - 8</b>    | <b>Austin, Texas</b>                | 16-team double elimination | \$125,000 – FS1 and Bally's RSN<br><i>Andy Benesh gets first career win (with Phil Dalhausser); Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss collect 2nd career win</i>            |
| <b>May 27 - 29</b>  | <b>New Orleans, Louisiana</b>       | 16-team double elimination | \$125,000 – FS1 and Bally's RSN<br><i>Phil Dalhausser / Casey Patterson win in their first event together; Kelly Cheng / Betsi Flint win in hostile territory</i>  |
| <b>June 10 - 12</b> | <b>Muskegon, Michigan</b>           | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>Dave Palm / Roberto Rodriguez win; Larissa Maestrini (with Lili Maestrini) gets first AVP win since 2009</i>  |
| <b>July 1 - 3</b>   | <b>Denver, Colorado</b>             | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>Andy Benesh wins again (with Miles Evans) while Larissa and Lili Maestrini get second consecutive title</i>   |
| <b>July 7 - 9</b>   | <b>Oshkosh, Wisconsin</b>           | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>Dave Palm / Roberto Rodriguez duplicate their feat in Muskegon; Carly Kan / Kaitlyn Leary both first time winners</i>                               |
| <b>July 8 - 10</b>  | <b>Hermosa Beach, California</b>    | 16-team double elimination | \$125,000 – FS1 and Bally's RSN<br><i>Theo Brunner / Chaim Schalk win long 3-set title match; Terese Cannon / Sarah Sponcil both first time winners</i>            |
| <b>July 22 - 24</b> | <b>Atlantic City, New Jersey</b>    | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>AVP last played in Atlantic City in 2014; New Jersey is fifth in terms of total AVP tournaments hosted</i>  |
| <b>July 29 - 31</b> | <b>Ft. Lauderdale, Florida</b>      | 16-team double elimination | \$125,000 – FS1 and Bally's RSN<br><i>Three of the first six AVP tournaments ever were held in the state of Florida</i>  |
| <b>Aug 5 - 7</b>    | <b>Atlanta, Georgia</b>             | 16-team double elimination | \$300,000 – FS1 and Bally's RSN<br><i>First Gold Series event of 2022; one of three 2022 locations to have night sessions</i>                                      |
| <b>Aug 18 - 21</b>  | <b>Manhattan Beach, California</b>  | 32-team double elimination | \$300,000–FS1, Bally's, Tennis Ch.<br><i>Biggest event on the schedule in terms of both main draw and qualifier sizes; Gold Series event #2</i>                    |
| <b>Aug 26 - 28</b>  | <b>Virginia Beach, Virginia</b>     | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>Just the second time since 2002 that the AVP has a tournament in Virginia (along with 2010 in Virginia Beach)</i>                                   |
| <b>Sep 2 - 4</b>    | <b>Chicago, Illinois</b>            | 16-team double elimination | \$300,000–FS1, Bally's, Tennis Ch.<br><i>Chicago trails only Manhattan Beach on list of most frequented stops in AVP history; Gold Series event #3</i>             |
| <b>Sep 16 - 18</b>  | <b>Atlantic City, New Jersey</b>    | 16-team double elimination | \$125,000–FS1, Bally's, Tennis Ch.<br><i>Only city on the 2022 schedule to host two events; first time in AVP history a city outside of California hosts twice</i> |
| <b>Sep 23 - 24</b>  | <b>Phoenix, Arizona</b>             | 6-team double elimination  | \$100,000 – FS1 and Bally's RSN<br><i>Only invitational on schedule; AVP last played in Arizona in 2009; inaugural AVP event in 1984 was in Arizona</i>            |
| <b>Nov 11 - 13</b>  | <b>Huntington Beach, California</b> | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>Huntington Beach is fourth most frequented stop in AVP history; third California stop on 2022 Tour</i>  |
| <b>Nov 18 - 20</b>  | <b>Clearwater, Florida</b>          | 24-team double elimination | \$50,000<br><i>Latest date an AVP tournament has ever been held; Florida held second most AVP events behind California</i>   |

**ATLANTIC CITY HISTORY** – The only two previous times the AVP played in Atlantic City were in 2013 and 2014, both of which were dual gender tournaments. The 2013 event was an eight-team invitational while the 2014 tournament was a 16-team main draw. Atlantic City was also host to a pair of events on the women's tour (WPVA) in 1992 and 1997. However, as a state New Jersey has been a popular site for the AVP over the years. The most frequented states are California, Florida, Illinois, Texas and then New Jersey. Other cities in New Jersey which have hosted AVP tournaments include Wildwood, Belmar and Seaside Heights. This is the 39th year of the AVP hosting competitions, and the 25th which has included a stop in New Jersey. In the second, third and fourth years of the AVP's existence, Wildwood, N.J. was a stop on the tour. Then in 1991 the location changed to Belmar, which hosted 17 men's and eight women's tournaments. Seaside Heights was interspersed in there, with four men's and three women's events.

- Karch Kiraly and Kent Steffes won five times in the state of New Jersey as a team, while the individual leaders are Steffes (six victories), Kiraly (five wins) and Mike Whitmarsh (five wins). Both of the two Atlantic City titles were won by Jake Gibb and Casey Patterson. Entering this weekend there have been 26 men's trophies awarded in New Jersey, and 19 times one of the members of the winning team was a beach Olympian.

- A total of 15 women's AVP events have been held in New Jersey. April Ross has won the last three, including in Atlantic City 2013 with Jennifer Kessy and in Atlantic City 2014 with Kerri Walsh Jennings. All 15 teams included two beach Olympians with the exception of the 1993 Belmar event, which had the only non-Olympian on the winning team, Cammy Ciarelli. Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh won three times in the state, the most of anyone, while individually Walsh Jennings and Holly McPeak each won four times. The two WPVA tournaments held here were both won by Karolyn Kirby and Nancy Reno.

- Here are the results of the AVP tournaments held in Atlantic City:

#### **MEN – AVP events**

| Year | 1st                         | 2nd                              | 3rd                        | 3rd                               |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2013 | Jake Gibb / Casey Patterson | Phil Dalhausser / Sean Rosenthal | Ryan Doherty / Todd Rogers | Theo Brunner / Nick Lucena        |
| 2014 | Jake Gibb / Casey Patterson | Ryan Doherty / Nick Lucena       | Billy Allen / Trevor Crabb | Adrian Carambula / Stafford Slick |

#### **WOMEN – AVP events**

| Year | 1st                               | 2nd                     | 3rd                                     | 3rd                                 |
|------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 2013 | Jennifer Kessy / April Ross       | Emily Day / Summer Ross | Whitney Pavlik / Kerri Walsh Jennings   | Lauren Fendrick / Brittany Hochevar |
| 2014 | April Ross / Kerri Walsh Jennings | Emily Day / Summer Ross | Kathryn Piening / Megan Wallin-Brockway | Lane Carico / Kim DiCello           |

**ATLANTIC CITY SAND BITS** – To make the percentages easy this weekend, there are 100 men's players competing in Atlantic City, with the two youngest being 19-year olds Adam Hartmann and Caleb Kwekel (of the ages known). Four players are at least 40 years old, led by Adam Roberts (46), Jon Mesko (45) and Kristopher Fraser and David Lee (both 40). Of the heights known, Kyle O'Neill is 5'11", while nine others are 6'0". At the other end of the spectrum are three 6'8" players (Michael Groselle, Andrea Lancianese and David Lee). Four players have played in at least 100 events (Adam Roberts, Avery Drost, Jon Mesko and Roberto Rodriguez), while 20 players (20% according to my public school math) are making their pro beach volleyball debuts. There are just two players here who have won an event on the AVP Tour, and those two are partners (Dave Palm and Roberto Rodriguez). Out of 50 partnerships, the three partnerships that have played more than six events previously as partners are Avery Drost / Chase Frishman, Jacob Landel / Lev Priima and Marty Lorenz / Adam Roberts, while 24 are playing together for the first time.

- There are 88 women playing this weekend (please don't ask me to do percentages on them), including three teenagers (teammates 14-year old Sarah Wood and 18-year old Ashleigh Adams, and 19-year old Anna Long). The two oldest players are 43-year old Shannon Boyd and 40-year old Larissa Maestrini. For Boyd to reach the main draw she will have to win two qualifier matches, with the second one possibly coming against Sofia Russo, who was nine months old when Boyd made her pro beach volleyball debut. Katie Lindstrom (5'4") and two 5'5" players (Lisa Reed and Katie Spieler) are the shortest competitors, while at the other end of the spectrum are two 6'4" players, Kathryn Hogan and Jennifer Keddy. There are three women's players have played more than 100 events previously (Larissa Maestrini, Kendra VanZwieten and Lili Maestrini) while 16 players are making their debuts. Larissa Maestrini is the all-time FIVB wins leader (62), and has the most AVP wins of any player here (three). The other women to have won on the AVP Tour include her partner Lili Maestrini (Muskegon and Denver) and Kendra VanZwieten (New Orleans 2016). Of the 44 women's tandems, 23 are playing alongside each other for the first time and just one has played together at least eight times previously (Larissa and Lili Maestrini).

**RELATIVELY SPEAKING** – Larissa and Lili Maestrini, the top seeds on the women's side, are married. Travis and Delaney Mewhirter are a married couple who are both in the main draw in their respective genders. Brett and Dan Gould are twin brothers who are playing on separate teams in the qualifier, and both are making the pro beach volleyball debuts. Abby Van Winkle is in the main draw while her younger sister Tessa Van Winkle is in the qualifier. Sofia Russo and her younger sister Lina Russo are both in the qualifier on separate teams. Mackenzie and Chloe Kleespies are sisters who now live on opposite sides of the country, but are teaming up in the qualifier in what will be the debut event for the younger Chloe.

**THE STATE OF THE STATES** – Of the 100 male players, 26 currently live in California, 14 in New Jersey and 13 in Florida. A total of 23 different states are represented. Of the 50 men's teams, 25 of them live in the same state as their partner. Two of the players are originally from outside of the United States, Scotland and Italy.

• The 88 female players currently live mostly in California (25) and Florida (22), with eight residing in New Jersey. The women currently live in 17 different states, and between the men and women, a total of 29 states are represented here. Twenty of the 44 women's teams are living in the same state as their partners. Five countries other than America were where nine of the women were born or raised, including Canada, Brazil, Paraguay, Poland and Ukraine.

**2022 QUALIFIER LIST** – A good omen for team's seeded first in on-site qualifiers is that for both the men and women, all top-seeded qualifier teams have advanced to the main draw. So far three men's and two women's teams which got into the main draw via a qualifier have been one match win away from reaching the semifinals. Here's a look at the teams who have qualified this season (placing in qualifier or qualification tournament seed) and how they finished in the main draw:

AUSTIN - Men (qualifier in Panama City, Fla.)

Caleb Kwekel / Marty Lorenz (2nd in QT) – 13th

Mark Burik / Dave Palm (3rd in QT) – 13th

Raffe Paulis / Jeff Samuels (5th in QT) – 13th

Lev Priima / Silila Tucker (5th in QT) – 13th

*Burik replaced by Roberto Rodriguez in MD*

NEW ORLEANS - Men (qualifier in San Antonio, Texas)

Noah Dyer / Chase Frishman (2nd in QT) – 7th

Skylar del Sol / Andrew Dentler (3rd in QT) – 5th

Lev Priima / Silila Tucker (3rd in QT) – 13th

Dave Palm / Roberto Rodriguez (5th in QT) – 13th

Cody Caldwell / Adam Roberts (5th in QT) – 13th

*Caldwell / Roberts replaced a MD team*

MUSKEGON - Men (on-site qualifier)

Kyle Friend / Brandon Joyner (#1 QT seed) – 13th

Christian Honer / David Vander Meer (#3) – 17th

TJ Jurko / Dylan Zacca (#4) – 9th

Nolan Albrecht / Tomas Goldsmith (#6) – 17th

Devon Bruki / John Schwengel (#7) – 17th

Bradley Connors / Brett Greiner (#8) – 13th

Mark Bucknam / Jake Fleming (#12) – 17th

Frank Field / Tyler Penberthy (#15) – 17th

*Jurko / Zacca 2 MD losses were to #1, #3 seeds*

DENVER - Men (on-site qualifier)

Travis Mewhirter / John-Michael Plummer (#1 QT seed) – 5th

Caleb Kwekel / Max Martin (#2) – 17th

Brian Miller / Raffe Paulis (#4) – 17th

Angel Dache / Alex Diaz (#5) – 17th

TJ Jurko / Dylan Zacca (#7) – 17th

Gage Basey / Lars Basey (#14) – 17th

Jeffrey Houghton / Trenton Sellers (#22) – 17th

Jordan Hoppe / Diego Perez (#41) – 9th

*2nd time since 2015 a seed 41st or lower*

*advanced*

WUAPACA - Men (on-site qualifier)

Devon Burki / John Schwengel (#1 QT seed) – 17th

Gage Basey / Ryan Smith (#4) – 13th

Nolan Albrecht / Kevin Knight (#5) – 9th

Kevin Coyle / Daniel Leathers (#8) – 13th

Lars Basey / Ian Carlson (#10) – 17th

Zephyr Dew / Kacey Losik (#15) – 9th

Jordan Hoppe / Diego Perez (#19) – 17th

Guille Jimenez / Tyler Penberthy (#27) – 5th

*Basey brothers split but still both qualified*

AUSTIN - Women (qualifier in Panama City, Fla.)

Carly Kan / Kaitlyn Leary (2nd in QT) – 13th

Jessica Gaffney / Molly Turner (3rd in QT) – 9th

Toni Rodriguez / Savvy Simo (3rd in QT) – 7th

Aurora Davis / Teegan Van Gunst (5th in QT) – 9th

Carly Skjodt / Geena Urango (5th in QT) – 9th

*Skjodt / Urango replaced a MD team*

NEW ORLEANS - Women (qualifier in San Antonio)

Jessica Gaffney / Molly Turner (1st in QT) – 9th

Toni Rodriguez / Savvy Simo (3rd in QT) – 5th

Brook Bauer / Katie Horton (3rd in QT) – 9th

Mackenzie Ponnet / Chelsea Rice (5th in QT) – 9th

Macy Jerger / Abby Van Winkle (5th in QT) – 13th

Megan Gebhard / Kahlee York (5th in QT) – 13th

*Last 2 teams replaced MD teams*

MUSKEGON - Women (on-site qualifier)

Ashley McGinn / Sarah Wood (#1 QT seed) – 13th

Makenzie Griffin / Eunyce Vercosa (#2) – 17th

Tambre Nobles / Melissa Powell (#3) – 17th

Jenna Johnson / Raelyn White (#5) – 13th

Kaeli Crews / Lexie Hamilton (#7) – 17th

Denise De Vine / Anna Dunbar (#9) – 17th

Kylie Bryan / Jessica Jendryk (#11) – 17th

Kylie Deberg / Kahlee York (#13) – 17th

*14-year old Wood youngest to ever qualify*

DENVER - Women (on-site qualifier)

Brook Bauer / Katie Horton (#1 QT seed) – 13th

Tiffany Creamer / Megan Gebhard (#2) – 17th

Josephine Kremer / Payton Rund (#5) – 17th

Iya Lindahl / Tessa Van Winkle (#6) – 17th

Olivia Beyer / Maria Kliefoth (#9) – 17th

Kaylie McHugh / Kristi Tekavec (#14) – 17th

Charlie Ekstrom / Amy Ozee (#20) – 17th

Taylor Nutterfield / Avery Poppinga (#23) – 13th

*Two teams seeded 20th or lower advance for*

*the first time since Manhattan Beach 2019*

WUAPACA - Women (on-site qualifier)

Denise De Vine / Angela Rego (#1 QT seed) – 17th

Kelly Bryan / Jessica Jendryk (#2) – 13th

Sarah Senft / Hannah Wentland (#3) – 17th

Kristein Heldt / Jessica Horwath (#4) – 17th

Julia Borges / Ainsley Patrick (#5) – 17th

Amy Ozee / Maria Whalen (#6) – 5th

Kaeli Crews / Abbie Hughes (#7) – 7th

Parker Bracken / Hannah Brister (#9) – 17th

*The top 5 QT seeds did not have to play in QT*

**AUSTIN ANALYSIS** – The first day of the AVP season opener in Austin was a bit of a surprise, as despite the numerous new pairings all 24 matches between the two genders were all won by the teams with the better seedings. There was quite the divergence in the two genders' winning teams though. On the women's side, Taryn Kloth and 5'6" Kristen Nuss won (who last year became the shortest women's player to win an AVP event since 5'6" Barbra Fontana won an AVP event in August 2001 in Manhattan Beach). On the men's side, the first domestic team ever to play in which both players were at least 6'9" tall paired up for the first time and won the title (Andy Benesh and Phil Dalhausser).

- Especially with the start to the tournament which saw no upsets on Friday, and with #1 seeds winning five of the prior six AVP events, it seemed quite likely that top-seeded Melissa Humana-Paredes and Sarah Pavan were on course to winning in Austin. The pair lost just one set in reaching the title match, and would face Kloth and Nuss, who were playing their third match of the day in the Texas heat, which saw the heat index over 100 degrees. The youngsters took an 18-13 lead before the Canadian pair closed the gap to 20-18, but Kloth and Nuss prevailed 21-18. In the second set Kloth and Nuss scored five straight points early and cruised to a 21-13 win for their second career victory.

- The top four men's seeds advanced to the semifinals for the first time since Austin 2017 (since then the AVP had 29 tournaments without that happening). Benesh and Dalhausser lost just two sets en route to winning the title, the first ever for Benesh. Dalhausser won an AVP season opener for the ninth time in his career (most ever by any player) and got his 60th career AVP title. And his success in Texas continued, as he has won seven of the nine times he has played an AVP event in Texas, with a 42-4 match record (winning 38 of the last 39). Chase Budinger and Troy Field, also a team playing together for the first time, had swept all four opponents leading up to the championship match. In the first set of the title match, Budinger and Field held a 19-17 lead, but Benesh had one block and Dalhausser had a pair of blocks in closing out the set on a 4-0 run.

*#6 Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss def. #1 Melissa Humana-Paredes / Sarah Pavan 21-18, 21-13 (:42)*

*#1 Andy Benesh / Phil Dalhausser def. #4 Chase Budinger / Troy Field 21-19, 21-18 (:52)*

**NEW ORLEANS NOTATIONS** – The big storyline about the AVP Tour returning to New Orleans for the first time since 2016 was the connections to the area, especially on the women's side. Four of the 32 women's players had competed in beach volleyball at LSU, including both players on the second-seeded tandem of Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss.

- None of the men's teams competing in New Orleans had ever won an AVP title together, so it came down to individual experience. And the team with the most experience (both in terms of age and AVP titles) was the tandem of Phil Dalhausser and Casey Patterson, who were seeded first and playing together for the first time as well. The duo was the sixth oldest to ever play in an AVP main draw, but they were the strongest on Sunday when it mattered the most. In the semifinals and championship match on Sunday, Dalhausser had 10 blocks and five aces, while Patterson had 55 kills and 26 digs. The duo outlasted third-seeded Taylor Crabb and Taylor Sander in three sets after the Taylors won the first set and led 17-15 in the second set.

- The partisan crowd got what it wanted with former LSU stars Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss advancing to the championship match. However the team across the net, Kelly Cheng and Betsi Flint, was seeded first for a reason. Cheng and Flint played a nearly flawless match, as Cheng hit an outstanding .720 (20 kills in 25 attempts with just 2 hitting errors) and Flint hit .533 with eight digs. Uncharacteristically, Kloth had just one block in the match and Nuss only six digs. Cheng / Flint took a 4-3 lead in the first set and didn't trail in the match after that point.

*#1 Phil Dalhausser / Casey Patterson def. #3 Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander 17-21, 21-19, 15-13 (1:07)*

*#1 Kelly Cheng / Betsi Flint def. #2 Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss 21-15, 21-15 (:37)*

**MUSKEGON'S MEMORIES** – The AVP Tour was making history with its first ever Tour Series Event in Muskegon, Michigan. But on the first day that history was overshadowed by a 14-year old. Sarah Wood, at the age of 14 years, 1 month and 16 days old, became the youngest player (male or female) to advance from the qualifier into an AVP main draw, beating the previous mark by over two years.

- The men's championship match featured two teams that reached the title match undefeated, but not without some serious tests. Second seeded Evan Cory / Billy Kolinske won four matches, three of them in three sets, to reach the finals. Across the net was ninth-seeded Dave Palm / Roberto Rodriguez, who had teamed up this season only due to a late injury to Palm's partner before the season opener. Palm and Rodriguez won a pair of three-set matches, and in the title match were playing their fourth straight match against a team seeded fourth or better. Palm and Rodriguez won the first set handily, 21-14, then held off Cory and Kolinske 26-24 in the second to capture the title. In that second set neither team led by more than two points and there were 16 ties. Palm had seven blocks in the match.

- The women weren't done making history in the qualifier. Larissa and Lili Maestrini, the top seeds in the event, won the title and in doing so make Larissa the first woman at least 40 years old to win a domestic event since 2009. The couple achieved the mark by beating seventh-seeded Julia Scoles and Geena Urango as Lili had four blocks and Larissa added 13 kills and 14 digs. Urango, who had five aces in the semifinal match, was unable to register any in the finals.

*#1 Larissa Maestrini / Lili Maestrini def. #7 Julia Scoles / Geena Urango 21-17, 21-16 (:46)*

*#9 Dave Palm / Roberto Rodriguez def. #2 Evan Cory / Billy Kolinske 21-14, 26-24 (:48)*

**DENVER DOCUMENTED** – The AVP Tour played at altitude for the first time since 2008 with a Tour Series event in Denver. And just like the towering Rocky Mountains in the backdrop, the top teams were able to peak with their performance as the number one seeds won in both genders. That was a bit of a surprise as early on the results indicated something very different. On Saturday, there were 36 main draw matches for each gender. The men had 11 upsets and 19 three-set matches, while the women had 12 upsets and 18 three-set matches. But in the end, the top teams prevailed.

- Andy Benesh was seeded number one and was the tallest (tied) player in the event at 6'9". He was also playing his fourth AVP tournament of the year with a fourth different partner. Joining him on the sand this event was Miles Evans, who had previously advanced to one AVP semifinal in his career (second in Hermosa Beach 2019 with Ryan Doherty). The duo suffered a loss in the first round, then had to win six straight elimination matches to reach the championship match, which they won. In that stretch of must-wins, they beat Phil Dalhausser, won in the rematch against the team which defeated them in the first round, and beat the number three and four seeds in the semis and finals. Across the net in the finals were Evan Cory and Billy Kolinske. Kolinske and Evans had been teammates for 30 international events. Benesh had four blocks and three aces in the title match, while Evans had 23 kills and 15 digs, while Cory had 13 kills and 12 digs and Kolinske had five blocks.

- Larissa and Lili Maestrini, the top seeds in the event, continued to live up to their billing. Although they weren't immune to the upset bug, losing to the 13th-seeded team, they rebounded with consecutive wins over the teams seeded second and third to reach the championship match. The semifinal was a rematch of the Muskegon championship match against Julia Scoles and Geena Urango, and it did not disappoint, with Larissa and Lili winning 18-16 in the third set. In the finals they faced a team playing for just the second time on the AVP Tour, Carly Kan and Kaitlyn Leary. Larissa and Lili trailed just once in the match, at 1-0 in the second set, cruising to a second consecutive title. Larissa had eight digs and two aces while Lili was outstanding all round, hitting .600 (18 kills with just three hitting errors) and adding three blocks and two aces. Kan had 12 kills, six digs and one block while Leary had eight kills.

*#1 Larissa Maestrini / Lili Maestrini def. #7 Carly Kan / Kaitlyn Leary 21-13, 21-13 (:33)*

*#1 Andy Benesh / Miles Evans def. #4 Evan Cory / Billy Kolinske 22-20, 21-17 (:47)*

**WUAPACA'S WONDERMENTS** – For the first time since 1988 the AVP had concurrent events. And for the Tour Series event in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, it was also concurrent with the Wuapaca Boatride Tournament, one of the world's largest outdoor volleyball tournaments, as this one consisted of 348 grass courts for a four-day event. Both the men's and women's winners began the tournament seeded number one and ended up taking home the title.

- Dave Palm and Roberto Rodriguez earned their top seed partly due to winning together in Muskegon. In the Wuapaca Open, the duo lost just one set while advancing to the championship match. On the other side of the net was sixth-seeded Timothy Brewster and Kyle Friend, who were perhaps more impressive in their run to the finals, having swept all four matches and winning each set by an average score of 21-15. Palm / Rodriguez seemed destined to cruise to another title, winning the first set 21-16 behind the strength of Palm's five blocks in the set. The second set was a game of runs, as both teams had early 4-0 runs, then both teams exchanged 5-0 runs. Palm added another six blocks in the set but Brewster / Friend, playing together for just the second tournament, withstood six match point tries to win the set and force a tiebreaker. In the third set the four players combined to have 24 kills and just one hitting error, and Palm / Rodriguez prevailed 15-12, with Palm ending with 12 blocks and Rodriguez with 29 kills and 18 digs. Brewster finished with 25 kills and 17 digs, while Friend had 17 kills and three blocks.

- The best two teams on Friday morning, number one-seeded Carly Kan / Kaitlyn Leary and second seeds Katie Dickens / Jennifer Keddy, found themselves the top two teams on Saturday afternoon when it was time for the title match. Both teams, however, took a difficult route, as an early morning loss for both pairs on Saturday meant they had to play four matches that day including the finals. Dickens / Keddy had two leads in the entire championship match, at 1-0 to start each set. Outside of that, the finals were mostly error-free, with the four athletes combining for 62 kills and just five hitting errors in the match. Kan was a difference-maker, with 19 kills, eight digs and three aces, while Leary had 13 kills. Dickens had 12 kills and eight digs, while Keddy had 18 kills and just one hitting error to go with a service ace.

*#1 Carly Kan / Kaitlyn Leary def. #2 Katie Dickens / Jennifer Keddy, 22-20, 21-16 (:38)*

*#1 Dave Palm / Roberto Rodriguez def. #6 Timothy Brewster / Kyle Friend 21-16, 26-28, 15-12 (1:07)*

**HERMOSA BEACH'S HAPPENINGS** – In Hermosa Beach the men saw players win who hadn't won since 2018 and 2019, while both of the champions on the women's side were first-time AVP winners. The fans in California, seeing their first AVP tournament of the year in the state, were treated to a pair of three-set finals, something that has happened just once prior in the 22 previous tournaments (including Tour Series), as it also happened in Atlanta 2021.

**HERMOSA BEACH'S HAPPENINGS cont'd**

• In the first round of the men's tournament, there was just one upset in the eight matches. But was it ever a big one. The 16th-seeded team, Jake Dietrich / Hagen Smith, who gained entry into the tournament based on CBVA results, knocked off top-seeded Tri Bourne / Trevor Crabb. In the second round Dietrich and Smith upended eighth-seeded Billy Allen / Jeremy Casebeer in a round that saw seeds two, four, six and eight all sent to the contender's bracket. Theo Brunner / Chaim Schalk, the second seeds, were able to rebound from the loss to advance to the title match, meeting up with fifth-seeded Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander, who had lost just one set en route to the finals. This was the 12th time Schalk had ever played against Crabb, with Crabb winning 10 of those meetings. The two Schalk wins, though, have both come in AVP finals after Brunner and Schalk won in three sets for the Hermosa Beach title. Brunner had 20 kills and three blocks while Schalk had 22 kills and 13 digs, with both players hitting at least .500. Crabb had 25 kills, 11 digs and two aces, and Sander had 12 kills and three blocks.

• In 34 women's events leading up to New Orleans earlier this year, just once did the championship match pit the top two seeds. Excluding the Tour Series events, Hermosa Beach marked the second straight time the top two tandems met for the title. Both of the teams in Hermosa Beach were undefeated in matches leading up the finale, but they both required a third set several times in order to stay in the winner's bracket. This match between #1 Terese Cannon / Sarah Sponcil and #2 Kelly Cheng / Betsi Flint came with some emotions, as Cheng and Sponcil had been teammates for 10 AVP events and 25 FIVB tournaments, including placing ninth in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Cannon was playing in her first ever AVP championship match and Flint was looking to defend her Hermosa Beach title, having won in 2019 the last time the AVP played here. Cannon / Sponcil held a slim 7-6 lead in the first set before scoring six straight points to take control. In the second set Cheng and Flint had their only lead of the match at 2-1. In the match Cannon had seven kills, no hitting errors and six blocks, while Sponcil had 17 kills, 15 digs and two aces. Cheng had 12 kills and one block while Flint had seven kills and 14 digs, but the team committed 13 hitting errors compared to just two by their opponents.

*#1 Terese Cannon / Sarah Sponcil def. #2 Kelly Cheng / Betsi Flint 21-12, 21-15 (:36)*

*#2 Theo Brunner / Chaim Schalk def. #5 Taylor Crabb / Taylor Sander 22-20, 24-26, 15-9 (1:14)*

**BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS** – No player here will have a birthday during the three-day event.

**INTERNATIONAL UPDATE** – This weekend Andy Benesh / Miles Evans and Evan Cory / Billy Kolinske are signed up to play in an international event in Marrakesh, Morocco, and are joined by four women's tandems. Victoria Dennis / Savvy Simo, Makenzie Griffin / Jade Race, Megan Kraft / Emily Stockman and Corinne Quiggle / Sarah Schermerhorn are all entered in the Morocco event.

• Here is a look at AVP players / teams which have been in the semifinals of an FIVB event this year:

**MEN**

Andy Benesh / Miles Evans – Silver Medal – Songkhla, Thailand – April 17

Miles Evans / Logan Webber – Silver Medal – Rhodes, Greece – May 22

Theo Brunner / Chaim Schalk – 4th place – Rome, Italy (World Championships) – June 19

**WOMEN**

Kelly Cheng / Betsi Flint – 4th Place – Rosarito, Mexico – March 27

Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss – Gold Medal – Coolangatta, Australia – April 3

Zana Muno / Toni Rodriguez – Bronze Medal – Coolangatta, Australia – April 3

Sara Hughes / Kelley Kolinske – Gold Medal – Itapema, Brazil – April 17

Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss – Gold Medal – Kusadasi, Turkey – May 22

Terese Cannon / Sarah Sponcil – Bronze Medal – Kusadasi, Turkey – May 22

Melissa Humana-Paredes / Sarah Pavan – Gold Medal – Jurmala, Latvia – June 5

Sara Hughes / Kelley Kolinske – 4th Place – Jurmala, Latvia – June 5

Jessica Gafney / Molly Turner – Bronze Medal – Klaipeda, Lithuania – June 5

Sophie Bukovec / Brandie Wilkerson – Silver Medal – Rome, Italy (World Championships) – June 19

Megan Kraft / Savvy Simo – Gold Medal – Balikesir, Turkey – June 19

Brook Bauer / Katie Horton – Silver Medal – Balikesir, Turkey – June 19

Megan Kraft / Emily Stockman – Gold Medal – Bialystok, Poland – June 26

Brook Bauer / Katie Horton – 4th Place – Bialystok, Poland – June 26

Corinne Quiggle / Sarah Schermerhorn – Silver Medal – Espinho, Portugal – July 17

Madelyne Anderson / Molly Turner – Gold Medal – Ciro Marina, Italy – July 17

**NEXT UP** –The AVP Tour continues its East Coast swing with a Pro Series event in Ft. Lauderdale July 29-31, a three-day main draw with 16 teams in each gender. The next Pro Series tournament after the Ft. Lauderdale one will be right here in Atlantic City, on September 16-18.