



## News in Brief

### Fall Election

The new election of MGVCA officers will take place by mail prior to this year's November meeting.

Any coaches interested in a leadership role in this organization should submit their names to our office by October 15, 2003 via mail or e-mail.

Nominees names may also be submitted by other member coaches. Officers currently serve a two year term.

Ballots will be sent out to paid MGVCA members during the last week of October.

Current officers should submit their intentions in writing if they wish to seek their existing position or another office within the organization.

All ballots will be forwarded to a Notary Public and announced at the year-end meeting.

### Victory Club

The MGVCA is in the process of establishing a Victory Club to acknowledge high school volleyball coaching milestones in our state.

Coaches will be recognized for reaching levels of 100 victories and in 100 win increments beyond that level (200, 300, etc.).

Coaches are asked to submit the form enclosed so that we can begin this process. Be sure to follow the specific guidelines when submitting your information.

# Legends in coaching address national clinic

Veteran high school coaches in Massachusetts will fondly remember the USA (Gold Medal) Coaches Clinics which go back well over 20 years. Recently, however, these nationwide clinics for all sports have been reduced to a single national event, held annually in Las Vegas, the world's convention mecca.

Although this year's edition attracted over 800 football coaches, there were nearly 250 college, high school and club volleyball coaches in attendance. For the fifth consecutive year Bally's served as the host. The event is held on the same weekend as the Las Vegas Invitational (a national 17-18- and-under tournament) which serves as a key collegiate recruiting opportunity.

The opening speaker on Thursday, February 13 was the venerable John Wooden, UCLA's legendary basketball coach. Wooden's talk centered around his "Pyramid of Success," a model of team-building which he developed between 1934-1948. And despite Coach's many self-deprecating remarks that he is a dinosaur in the modern world of "fast talkers and bench technology," his mild-mannered, honest remarks rang true with the standing room only audience.

The volleyball specific seminars began with Tennessee's Rob Patrick. The SEC coach spoke about simplifying offensive systems. His own Volunteers use a total of six plays. "We'd rather do a few things well than a number of things half-baked." He noted how much practice time, even at the Division I level, is spent on fundamental skill development.

Illinois coach Don Hardin followed with an informative method of explaining the various transition aspects of the game. He walks through the various steps (from serve-serve to covering) with his players early in the season and advises that all high school and club coaches do the same.

"Kids can learn all the necessary positions (in all six rotations) in one practice. It helps if they verbalize exactly what position they're going to as they move there." Hardin's innovative concept called "staging" is pivotal. These are rehearsed transitional elements in which there is constant movement and communication among all six players.

Notre Dame's Debbie Brown opened the Friday sessions with a cataloguing of the top two things she has learned in each of her twenty years as a head coach at the Division I college level. In her second session, she detailed the drills which her players have found most useful over the past two decades.

Seminars largely focusing on drills, in fact, were prevalent as coaches Anne Kordes (assistant-Illinois) and USA National legend Terry Liskivitch followed with sessions on wash drills and defensive drills respectively.

Brian Gimmillaro and Debbie Green, his Long Beach State assistant for the past 17 years, rounded out the sessions discussing the technical aspects of attacking, individual defense and setting. Much of Gimmillaro's session, in fact, was a rehashing of the ideas which he developed at North Quincy last June.

Green's presentation on setting was perhaps the most well-received of the entire convention. Although her methodology for developing a skilled setter is a bit unorthodox, it is efficient and easy to master. Her video tape (which will be part of our lending library) is a must see for coaches at any level.

The closing keynote address was given by Vince Lombardi, Jr., the legendary coach's son. He has been a motivational speaker for 18 years, and his focus at the clinic was "Characteristics of Peak Performers." Quoting sources from Shakespeare to John Kennedy, Lombardi narrowed his discussion to one theme: commitment. Often invoking his father's legacy, Lombardi's 75-minute talk often touched upon aspects of life beyond the parameters of coaching.

# Liz Smith lifts Somerset to championship status

## Coach's Corner

Interviews with MGVCAs members  
conducted by Leo Fahey

### Let's hear Coach Smith's thoughts on pizza, Eminem and maybe even some volleyball.

In 1995 I was appointed girls freshman basketball coach at Somerset High. The JV volleyball position came open and the AD asked if I was interested. I hadn't played volleyball since high school (1974) and I told him that I wasn't really familiar with the game. "Don't worry, you will learn" was the response. I said yes.

Sheila Fitzgerald, my high school coach, inspired me to get involved in coaching. A lot of my coaching methods and attitudes come from my experience as an athlete and how she coached her teams. I do not have a favorite coach. I do enjoy coaching clinics and opportunities to work with other coaches. You learn new ideas, approaches and styles. It keeps things interesting.

I expect my players to give 100% in practice and to push themselves to reach their full potential. I stress proper nutrition and good sleep. A prepared athlete will be confident.

Everything has to fall into place to win a state title. A combination of talent and maturity kept our team solid. Throughout the season we worked on various line-ups, which gave us the ability to change game plans without losing momentum. The low point of the season was losing our setter (Becca Smith—yes, a daughter) during the first game of the season to a bad sprain. Little did I know that this injury would make us a stronger team because the girls rose to the challenge.

Liz Smith  
Mother of 5  
Entrepreneur

Varsity coach since 2000

Career record of 60-12 (.833)

2002 Division II Championship Coach



Rachel's (yes, another daughter and Becca's twin) unorthodox approach? Rachel has been playing club volleyball since 8th grade. She is very athletic and her progression in this sport has truly been a mix of all the things she does. She has had many coaches and most of them are amazed with her ability to kill the ball with this unorthodox approach.

In 2002 our goal was to go all the way to the State Finals.

The key ingredients to a successful year are talent, mental and physical preparedness and good team chemistry.

I remind my kids that they must come to pre-season physically prepared so we can concentrate on fundamentals and the basics of the game. I recommend a combination of weight training and running program.

I always have a practice plan for each day that touches on the different things that need to be worked on. We always begin with a warm-up and stretch that also includes talking about issues and concerns anyone might have. I take them through basic drills working on fundamentals and stressing proper techniques. The drills are fast paced with everyone involved. We focus on game situations.

Passing is key in this game.

For coaches with daughters, getting involved in a local club program is a good way to experience the sport with various coaches. Club volleyball in general is a great teaching tool and a wonderful experience.

The Volleyball Coaches Survival Guide by Sue Gozansky has been useful and informative.

It was nice to see the change to rally scoring. It definitely improves the flow of the game. I also love the "net" rule because it allows the players to be really aggressive on their serves.

The three attributes I want to see in my players are good sportsmanship, respect and dedication to the team and program.

I think volleyball in Massachusetts is increasing in popularity.

I especially love to work out lifting weights. I think it sets a good example for my athletes and helps them to set personal goals for themselves.

On the way to the State Tournament game "Loose Yourself" by Eminem came on and the whole bus, fans included, sang it together—it gave me goose bumps—"you only have one chance, so don't blow it"...

I have five children and I do a lot of cooking. One of my specialties (and their favorite) is pizza.

# What's New

## Gold Medal Squared

The nationally renowned Gold Medal Squared Volleyball Clinic is coming to the Boston area in August 2003.

Carl McGown, Doug Beal and Marv Dunphy, three of the greatest volleyball minds in the United States, will bring their three-day presentation to Westborough High School from August 14-16.

This "hands-on" clinic is structured in such a way that coaches spend most of their time playing volleyball in order to master the key skills.

The cost of the clinic is hefty at \$325, but it carries a "money back guarantee" to be the best you've ever attended.

More pertinent information, including a registration packet and schedule, is available on line at [www.goldmedalsquared.com](http://www.goldmedalsquared.com).

## PrepVolleyball.com

One of the hottest new volleyball sites on the web is [www.PreVolleyball.com](http://www.PreVolleyball.com). Founded in January 2003 by John Tawa and Kevin Laseau, formerly of Student Sports and vball.com respectively, this "pay-to-join" site presents a great deal of info about this sport at the club and high school levels.

For \$20 per year, the site offers a wide range of features that are unique. It is, of course, particularly helpful to club and college coaches who have a vested interest in the nation's top players.

Highly visible at the Las Vegas Invitational in which over 300 of the nation's top 18's and 17's were participating, Tawa and Laseau were right at home among the numerous college coaches who came to this annual three-day rite of winter.

The site itself offers complete coverage of the national club scene, including national rankings. Similar rankings are also included for high school volleyball. It's easy to see why almost every college coach in the country is a subscriber to this service.

There are also interesting stories of teams and players competing at both the club and high school level. Tips from college coaches, from recruiting to playing better floor defense, are also available.

Bulletin boards, one for players, another for coaches, provide for some informational (and often humorous) "stuff" associated with our sport.

If interested, you can visit the site at [www.PreVolleyball.com](http://www.PreVolleyball.com) and decide if its worth the \$20 annual investment.

# Out-of-season rules: a question of fairness

MIAA Executive Director Dick Neal is nothing if not consistent. His seasonal newsletters for high school coaches (available for download at the MIAA web site: [www.miaa.net](http://www.miaa.net)) serve as constant reminders to coaches of the rules which are most often "loosely" interpreted in all 34 Massachusetts interscholastic sports.

"Integrity, honor, and ethics should be pre-eminent values for those responsible for the education and growth of young people," notes Neal in his "MIAA News for High School Coaches" (Winter, 2001). "Coaches and student athletes must commit to respect the 'spirit' as well as the 'letter' of standards and rules."

The issue of "spirit vs. letter" in regard to rules often creates a grey area in which coaches and athletes interpret rules to fit their own particular situations. As Neal points out, however, the standards are established "to ensure fairness" for all coaches and student athletes. And with nearly 190,000 student athletes in our state, the burden of policing comes back to the coaches themselves.

"It is unfair to student athletes in competing schools to have the opposition player prepare, outside of the rules, prior to the start of the defined high school season." (Winter, 2001)

And these standards are carefully spelled out under Rule 40 ("Out-of-season Coach-Athlete Contact Limitations") of the MIAA Blue Book (also available on-line). Rule 40.1, for example, is quite clear in this regard. "Unless otherwise permitted in this rule, between seasons a coach may conduct a meeting(s) with team candidates only to elect captains, collect equipment, issue equipment, to provide for physical examinations, to conduct legitimate fund-raising events, or to offer wellness workshops or activities."

Rule 40.3, regarding off-season conditioning, is also instructive in defining certain parameters. "Voluntary conditioning sessions open equally to all students in a school and which are entirely devoid of sport-specific activity may be conducted between seasons provided no candidate is either required to participate or penalized for not doing so."

Similarly, Rule 40.4, sometimes referred to as the "50% Rule," establishes the guidelines for "out-of-season" coaching. "A high school coach may be employed by a park or recreation department or other organization or may volunteer for such a group to teach his/her sport out-of-season provided the following conditions exist:

40.4.1 No candidate may either be required to attend or be penalized for not attending.

40.4.2 School funds are not used.

40.4.3 At no time may the coach supervise any group or subgroup which includes 50% or more students who are among his/her candidates."

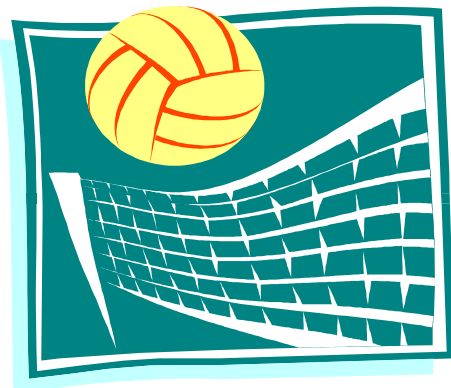
The penalty for violation of these rules is also articulated in the Blue Book. "Because these standards are designed to protect young people from unfair and unequitable scenarios, any coach who violates, or does not prevent violations of these standards will be rendered ineligible to participate to be present at any MIAA approved or sponsored interscholastic competition in that sport for one year from the date of determination of a rule violation..."

# Between the Lines

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## Wellesley's Dorothy Webb conducts annual clinic

One of the nation's top college coaches at the Division III level, Wellesley College's Dorothy Webb, greeted eighty coaches on March 29 as the MGVCA held its annual clinic for area high school volleyball coaches. Assisted by Tom Wilson and a handful of her Wellesley players, Webb presented her ideas on "Conducting Effective Practice."

Coaches were forced to weave their way through a massive construction project on the Wellesley campus to arrive by the 9 AM start. MGVCA President Rob Slavin introduced Coach Webb with an e-mail from her former Pacific coach John Dunning. Webb was part of two NCAA Division I Championships in the late 1980's at that northern California school.

In the first session the duo of Webb and Wilson broke down some of the common misconceptions about teaching our sport. From run-throughs to footwork, they emphasized efficiency and proper technique in skill development.

Session two focused on defense - in Coach Webb's words "the most critical skill in volleyball." Using her Wellesley players to demonstrate various progressions and drills, Webb highlighted the importance of footwork and discipline in developing an effective defensive philosophy. A cardio workout provided food for thought as her players modeled numerous plyometric, stretching and movement drills in a very compact time frame.

After lunch the focus stayed with defense, but more specifically on "blocking." As in the previous session, a series of logical progressions were demonstrated to show the overall impact of blocking in team defense. Concluding her presentation, Webb walked us through both perimeter and rotational defensive systems.

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***Membership in the MGVCA entitles coaches to numerous benefits throughout the year. In addition, only paid member coaches may participate in the selection of the annual All State Teams and be considered candidates for induction into the coaches association Hall of Fame.***

## MGVCA membership drive reaches a new plateau

Over the past three years the membership of the MGVCA has risen steadily. With a recent spike in membership, however, the organization is proud to announce that it has reached a record number of 204 coaches (and growing) for 2003. That marks a 65% increase from 2000.

Our current membership includes over 120 schools from across the state. The most notable increases over the past three years are in three primary areas: (1) Western Mass schools, (2) greater Boston area schools, and (3) private schools.

Junior varsity, freshman and assistant coaches account for almost one-third of the entire membership. Fifty-two percent of the members are women, a dramatic increase in three years.

All coaches are reminded to send in their annual dues by the end of April 2003. The organization can continue to maintain its current services only through the dues of the coaches. League representatives are encouraged to promote our organization at their pre- and postseason meetings.