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Frequently Asked Questions for Age Class/Club Volleyball (“Club Volleyball”)

Preamble:

- This FAQ document has been prepared to help parents, caregivers, and athletes (particularly those new to Club Volleyball) better understand the Club Volleyball program.
- Club Volleyball is predominantly administered by the individual clubs and coaches, within the guidelines of the *Volleyball Manitoba Age Class Handbook* and the rules of Volleyball Canada. This document is intended simply to provide supplemental information to help parents/athletes make informed decisions. Accordingly, this document is not a rulebook. If specific situation/problem exists, then the rules of Volleyball Canada, Volleyball Manitoba (Age Class Handbook) and specific club documentation should be used to resolve the circumstance.

A. Overview and Club System

What is “Club Volleyball”, and how do I get my son/daughter involved?

Club Volleyball is the term that is used to describe the development of club teams (described below), training, tournaments/competition that most often culminates in participation in the Provincial Championship Tournament and for many a trip to the National Championships.

Girls and boys teams compete separately in Age Classes – determined by their birth year (grade level). Age classes exist for 13U (13 and Under), 14U, 15U, 16U, 17U and 18U.

What constitutes a “Club”?

A Volleyball Club could range from a small club that has only one or two teams of the same gender, to a large Club that has all age classes for one or both genders.

The range of volleyball clubs can span:

- School based Volleyball Clubs administered by coaches/gym teachers, and are comprised predominantly of students from that school or community area.
- Universities or Community Colleges often run clubs, based out of their facilities, drawing athletes and coaches from around the province.
- Other clubs simply rent gym time from public/private schools, inviting coaches/athletes from the same geographic area; or alternatively may attract people from multiple areas or communities.

In addition, some clubs communicate or establish a reputation over time of being more performance/competitive based, while others will focus more on participation and development; or more typically a combination development/competitive.

Restated, there is no typical “Club”, and athletes, parents, coaches need to ask questions, research, and ultimately find a club that aligns with both your needs and what you have to offer.

How do I select a Club to try-out for?

While some clubs have the resources (and volunteers) to create web-sites and posters, the majority of Club Volleyball information is most often shared by word of mouth. Athletes and parents are encouraged to proactively speak with school volleyball coaches, other athletes (and their parents) who have played and/or Club Volleyball, coaches and administrators who can describe Club Volleyball options.

What do I need to ask about a Club?

Common considerations and questions include:

- Friends. Most common determining factor of where to play is simply, where are my friends playing? A club season (as described below) can include 20-50 practices, multiple tournaments, perhaps travel – and therefore athletes (and coaches) typically want to be among friends or those with common goals.
- Finding a competitive fit. At younger years (13U/14U), this is less of an issue as the focus for all teams is developmental. However as players/coaches mature (starting as young as 15U/16U and certainly by 17U/18U), clubs or specific teams will communicate if their focus is to develop teams comprised of the most skilled athletes and play at the highest levels of competition, while others will have a developmental focus. This will determine things like frequency/ length/ intensity of training, type/frequency of competition, playing time decisions, etc.
- Geography. Find out where the team will practice and determine how much you are willing to drive. While this issue can be mitigated with car-pooling, athletes often choose a club that is close to your home/school/community.
- Coaching. The knowledge, approach and demeanor of a coach can have a significant impact on the overall club experience for the athlete. [See coaching section below for issues to consider.]
- Administration/Finances. Assess the resources of the Club. For a single-team school program, administration and finances will be simple, often done exclusively by a coach or parent. On the other hand a large club (perhaps as many as 16 teams), will be managing hundreds of athletes/coaches and large budgets.
- Recruitment. In some circumstances, Club coaches may observe athletes in school competition, camps or other sport situations and invite athletes to consider trying out or playing on their team. Athletes often play where they are invited to try-out.

Where do I sign my child up for Club Volleyball?

Registration for try-outs varies from club to club. Parents/athletes should be aware:

- Try-outs typically occur during the first half of December and try-out dates/times are typically communicated in the preceding October/November.
- Most clubs will communicate their teams being offered (age class and genders) and try-out dates to Volleyball Manitoba. As a service, Volleyball Manitoba will post the dates/time of try-outs, and club contact information, as submitted by clubs. Athletes/parents are encouraged to check site frequently for updates.
- Some clubs will post try-out information on their web-site.
- In some circumstances, smaller and newer clubs may simply communicate by word of mouth, posters and/or direct email to their constituency or previous interaction (ex. school, sports camp, etc).

Who runs Club Volleyball? Who is responsible for what?

There are multiple stakeholders in Club Volleyball. These include:

Stakeholder	Responsibility
Volleyball Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish themselves as a club. ▪ Determine which teams (age class/gender) to operate. ▪ Recruit coaches and arrange gym-time. ▪ Develop club policies/procedures. ▪ Assist coaches in recruiting/run try-outs/select teams. ▪ Manage finances. ▪ Address and resolve the concerns of parents/athletes that cannot be resolved by the team(s) coach.
Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Select club to coach for (or perhaps start own club). ▪ Determine age class and gender to coach. ▪ Recruit, lead try-outs, select team. ▪ Develop season plan, enter tournaments, plan practices. ▪ Manage athletes and address concerns of parents.
Athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine which team(s) to try-out for. ▪ Play, compete, enjoy.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support your children and their team as a whole by transporting athletes to training and competition on time, and providing positive feedback. ▪ Support your club by paying fees on time, help out at tournaments your club hosts (admissions table, canteen). ▪ Support your child's coach with positive feedback, not critiquing your child's coach with your child or other parents, moderate your expectation of the coach/team/child, and communicate appreciation for the volunteer time/ effort being provided by the coaching staff, administrators and volunteers.
Referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many tournaments administered by clubs are officiated by older club, high-school, university or provincial team players. They are paid modestly (to keep tournament fees down) to subsidize their own volleyball training. ▪ Provincial, National and more elaborate local tournaments are officiated by Manitoba Volleyball Officials Association (MVOA) referees. ▪ Regardless of who is officiating, the expectation of athletes, coaches and parents alike is to support and respect the work and decisions of referees, who are in many cases growing their officiating experience . ▪ Club Volleyball and the growth/strength of volleyball in our province requires developing a pool of referees who are growing in their experience and knowledge of the game. Respect and appreciate referees.
Volleyball Manitoba (staff, Board of Directors, and Competitions Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Age Class Handbook (including: recruiting rules, blackout periods, deadlines for roster submission, coaching requirements, club requirements). ▪ Organize dates, facilities and administer Premier Tournaments and Provincial Championships for all age classes (and genders). ▪ Liaise with Volleyball Canada (rule consistency, preparation for National Championships, implement elements of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)).
Volleyball Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and administer National Registration System (VRS). ▪ Organize and host National Championship tournaments.

Is Club Volleyball tied to school or community club system?

No, Club Volleyball is not affiliated with either the school or community club system. The Manitoba High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) is responsible for the high school program and high-school provincials and the respective school divisions are responsible for junior high school volleyball program (normally occurring from September to November). Volleyball Manitoba has run a *Year-End Junior High Championship*, but is not affiliated with Club Volleyball.

Note that the Winnipeg Minor Volleyball Association (WMVA) does operate a community based league (which runs Fall/Winter, giving opportunity for younger and beginner players not playing in the school system). This is an independent operation (ie. not administered by Volleyball Manitoba).

Volleyball Manitoba is motivated to grow the sport of volleyball (both number of participants and the quality of play), and seeks to cooperate with school, community and other programs.

B. The Club Season, Practices & Competition

Is there a Club League?

No, there is no league organized by Volleyball Manitoba. Rather teams practice, and enter a variety of tournaments, which are initiated/organized/run by Volleyball Manitoba, Clubs, schools, universities, colleges or any other organization. Teams can also enter Provincial and National Championship tournaments (see below).

How many practices/games per week will there be for club teams?

Activity per week will range from 2-5 days per week, depending on stage of season, age and coach preferences. Weekly activity can include: regular volleyball practices, physical/strength/mental training, watching video, team-building events/meals, weeknight tournaments or exhibition play, and weekend (Fri/Sat or Sat/Sun) tournaments.

Our coach wants to practice 5 days a week. Is this normal?

In extreme circumstances (where a coach has a team comprised of 15U+ athletes involved in no other activity, and has no tournaments) one may have this occur one or two weeks a season. More often 2-4 practices per week (90-120 minutes each) occur.

When are we allowed to start practicing?

Practices as a team should only occur after school resumes (after Christmas break) in January, until the end of Nationals. The remaining time off allows athletes to rest, play other sports, do other activities and perhaps play provincial team (summer), beach volleyball, and of course school volleyball from September to November.

How many volleyball tournaments will club teams enter?

This varies from team to team. Tournaments start as early as February, but most occur from mid-March until the Provincial Tournament. Coaches will typically enter 3-6 tournaments before provincials.

Describe a typical season.

While there are exceptions, a typical club season follows the timeline presented below:

Timeline	Activity	Detail
Late Summer/Fall	Information Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For younger ages (13U-15U), the school season is a time where clubs may post information on web-sites and at schools, explaining Club Volleyball and promoting their own program. ▪ For older ages, some teams are watching school volleyball (junior and senior high) and inviting/recruiting athletes to consider their club/team. ▪ Note that there are recruiting guidelines detailed in the Age Class Handbook.
October to early-December	Recruiting / Information Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Try-out registration. ▪ More time for question and answer between athletes, parents, coaches and clubs.
Early December	Try-outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To encourage a fair try-out process, Volleyball Manitoba specifies an approximate 2-week long window to conduct try-outs and team selections. ▪ Most clubs allow registrations for walk-on athletes.
Mid-December to resumption of School in January	No try-outs or training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With the intention of ensuring rest and recovery for athletes, there is a formal blackout period between end of try-outs and the start of school in January.
January – May	Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teams will train 2-5 times per week. (see practices question below).
Late February to mid-April	Club Tournaments and Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teams will enter 1-5 tournaments (see tournaments questions below). ▪ Teams may also organize exhibition games amongst other club teams.
Late-April to mid-May	Provincial Tournament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volleyball Manitoba organizes and runs a Provincial Championship Tournament for all age classes (both genders) – typically 2 weekends before the National Championship weekend for the respective age-class.
Mid- to late-May	National Championships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volleyball Canada organizes and runs a National Championship Tournament (see below).

I read the handbook and it talks about “Blackouts”. What are they? And who enforces them?

Amongst its roles/responsibility, Volleyball Manitoba is motivated to protect athletes and foster fair and healthy competition amongst clubs. In this regard, two blackout terms are used within the Age Class Handbook. First, there is “Recruiting Blackout”, restricting coaches from talking to athletes during critical points of their school seasons (ie. playoffs). The second is “Training Blackout” – essentially disallowing formal team training from end of club season (June 1) until start of club team practices in January (ie. after December try-outs and Christmas break).

It is noted and acknowledged Volleyball Manitoba does not have the staff to monitor, investigate and penalize clubs that breach these guidelines. Under the guise of camps, clinics, scrimmages, etc – some clubs are training “informally”, and only blatant rule-breakers are warned and/or sanctioned from time to time. Thankfully the vast majority of clubs and coaches honour the guidelines, making for a competitive and fair environment athletes and clubs alike.

The integrity displayed by coaches, clubs, and athletes during the off-season and recruiting/try-out period are often indicative of behavior during the Club Volleyball season.

C. Tournaments/Provincials/Nationals

Who runs tournaments?

Tournaments in advance of the Provincial and National tournaments are initiated and run by clubs, universities, colleges, schools, and Volleyball Manitoba (ex. Premier Tournaments). Tournaments can be a single weeknight running from 4-10pm, or could operate 1 or 2 days over Fri/Sat/Sun – depending on the number of teams and number of courts available.

Most tournaments are “sanctioned” by Volleyball Manitoba, meaning that they are advertised/posted on the Volleyball Manitoba website, can utilize NRS for registration, are covered by VM insurance, and the results will be used for rankings (see below).

How much do tournaments cost and why is there such disparity?

Tournaments can cost \$100 to \$350 per team and sometimes more. The cost will vary depending on the number of teams, number of matches played, who is officiating (students or MVOA referees), number of gym(s) being used, and awards for winning team (and/or all-star) prizes. Fees, sponsorship, canteen proceeds, and admission (sometimes charged) are used to pay for gym rental/permits/supervision/caretaker, referees, awards, and net proceeds are used by teams to subsidize club fees or travel.

Restated a low entry fee tournament would have a single referee (likely an older player), 8 teams in a gym set up ½ court, run over a single evening, with no awards for winning team(s) or all-stars. Higher fee tournaments would have more guaranteed matches, older/more experienced or certified referees, and prizing.

How are teams ranked for the Provincial Tournament?

Beyond playing experience, the benefits of sanctioned tournaments is that results are used to determine rankings within the age class (and gender). As outlined in the Age Class Handbook, a ranking committee will be struck for each age class, allowing results to update rankings on a weekly basis. The final rankings two weeks before the Provincial Tournament will be used for seeding at the Provincials.

Do teams have to enter the Provincial Championship Tournament (“Provincials”)? Can teams enter provincials and not go to nationals? Can teams only enter nationals?

There is no obligation for teams to enter the Provincials, although for most athletes and teams this is one of the high-points of their season.

Teams that enter Provincials do not have to enter Nationals, however for teams that want to go to the national tournament, they do have to participate in provincials. Results from the provincial tournament are used for rankings at the national tournament.

Where are “Nationals”?

Many Manitoba teams participate in the Western Canadian Open – which include teams from BC to Manitoba (for 13U-14U) and from across Canada (15U-18U). Every 2-3 years now, Volleyball Canada hosts a nation-wide Nationals (Toronto 2012, Calgary 2015, Edmonton 2018).

The locations of national events vary, and can be viewed at Volleyball Canada website. In recent years events have been run in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Abbotsford in the West, and Waterloo, Ottawa and Toronto in the East.

Teams make their own travel (bus or air) and accommodation arrangements.

D. Recruitment / Try-outs

How are teams selected?

In the same way athletes/parents are asking questions about specific clubs and coaches, clubs and coaches are also learning about athletes. This is done a variety of ways:

- For most teams, open try-outs is where a majority of athletes are identified and selected.

- Occurring more often at older ages, some coaches are out watching athletes during school season, at camps/clinics, and other locations inviting those to open try-outs, and in other cases offering a spot directly onto their team (before try-outs).

As coaches consider selections for their team, they may consider athleticism, physical characteristics, playing experience, past performance, and skill of the athlete. At the same time the coach is also considering the composition of a team; typically comprised of 2-3 setters, 3-4 middle players, 4-6 outside attackers, 0-2 liberos (applicable for older age classes), role players and perhaps even practice players. In addition, a host of intangible considerations also exist (team chemistry, personality, past relationships/experiences, school affiliations, geography, etc).

Team selection is the sole discretion of coaches and clubs. Regrettably, not all players will be offered spots on their first choice team, and there will be disappointment and perceived bad/unfair decisions. Volleyball Manitoba works to provide training to coaches, provide guidelines and assist where it can to allow for as many club teams as possible – however is not in a position to involve itself in the selection process.

How many teams can my child try-out for?

Athletes can try-out for as many teams as they choose to. It is noted however that with a limited 2-week try-out window, it is challenging to try-out for more than 2 or 3 teams.

Can players switch teams during the season?

Yes mechanics exist to allow players to switch teams, but practically, players are strongly discouraged, and in some circumstances disallowed, switching teams after committing to a team (with Volleyball Manitoba Registration/Waiver Form), for the following reasons:

- Registration for national championships opens in mid-January. For most age classes, there are more teams wishing to participate than there are spots, so most teams register when registration opens.
- It is unfair to clubs and coaches to switch teams, leaving teams short position players (after majority have already committed to other teams). Moreover it is unfair to other players who may have been released/cut to accommodate the player now wishing to switch.

At the same time, for exceptional circumstances mechanics do exist (per Age Class Handbook) for players to request a “Release” from a club. A club has the authority to issue the release (allowing the athlete to join another team) or deny the release (disallowing the athlete to play elsewhere and requiring athlete to either rejoin his/her team or sitting out the remainder of that club season).

Is there a form that holds us to a certain club? Do players have to sign a "letter of intent" or other documentation prepared by volleyball clubs?

Yes. Volleyball Manitoba and Volleyball Canada have an Individual Registration form which players are required to sign. It is effective the day of signature and expires at the end of that club season.

For administrative/formality reasons, some clubs will prepare Letters of Intent, Offer Letters, Commitment Letters, or some other document -- however it is noted that these documents are **not binding**. Restated other club documentation exists, but it is for club use and does not preclude players, or coaches, from changing their minds (until Individual Registration form is signed, and the two-week try-out period has expired).

It is common for teams to request a signed form as a spot on the team is offered during December try-outs, and in most cases this is a matter of convenience to solidify team/player relationship in December before Club season starts in January.

It is noted however that players are not obligated to sign it at any time. Practically it should be signed by the end of the two week try-out period in December; or before practices begin in January (and National tournament registration date approaches), but players can join/sign with teams until the end of March. The ability to add players this late accommodates unfortunate situations where teams have multiple injuries or players quitting – and not to have athletes delay a team decision past mid-January.

The coach asked my son/daughter to play and gave him/her only a few hours to make a commitment or her spot on the team would be given to another athlete. What should we do?

The response to this situation depends on your circumstance:

- If the coach/team is your preferred choice, accept the offer, and have a great season.
- If your child is trying out for multiple teams, know that they are NOT obligated to accept the spot, and they are entitled to finish all try-outs and then make a decision. Things to consider however, as you ask for more time to consider:
 - Know that you run some risk, and that the coach/club/team may ask others to commit right now (which they may do) – and the spot offered may be rescinded.
 - Realize that coaches are trying to build a team (to be as good as they can) and appreciate that to avoid losing a player to another team and eliminate the stress for both player and coach, spots could be offered in the weeks leading up to try-outs (or at 1st day of try-outs).
 - Trust your instincts and talk to the coach. If you are feeling uncomfortable, pressured, stressed – then honestly communicate your feelings/situation to the coach. Parents can/should include themselves in the live conversation with the coach. Realize that your coach's/club's actions during try-outs are often indicative of their actions during the season. Restated, the feeling of pressure/stress/ discomfort (and perhaps bullying) during try-out process often recur during the season.

A club coach approached my son/daughter after a school volleyball game? Is this normal? What is the protocol?

Specific rules/guidelines regarding recruiting and invitations to athletes are presented in the Age Class Handbook. Generally speaking, the general guidelines for all athletes being recruited include:

- Prospective coaches should speak with the parent and current (school or other team) coach first, asking permission to speak with the athlete.
- Recruiting coaches should wait until the end of the tournament or after a league game, before speaking with the athlete. Recruiting coaches should be respectful to the athlete's current school (or other) team and coach, by not distracting the athlete from their current performance.
- Parents/guardians should be consulted and give consent to recruiting coach before a conversation occurs between athlete and recruiting coach, with parents/guardians being present in those conversations.

Our club coach wants a commitment for next year and it's still summer... is this allowed?

The recruiting club coach can ask, and the athlete can verbally commit, but there is no binding obligation until the athlete signs a registration VC/VM Individual Registration and the December try-out process has concluded.

My son/daughter also plays hockey and basketball (or maybe plays in a band)... will it interfere with Club Volleyball?

That depends. A few considerations:

- Many clubs and coaches accept, and even encourage participation in other sports (and activities). They will work with athletes (and parents) to accommodate other sports practices, tournaments and other conflicting activities.
- Coaches are often more lenient and forgiving in January to mid-March, early in the club season, but more demanding that athletes attend club volleyball practices/competition in mid-March thru to end of season, as the season progresses (and as Provincial/National tournaments approach).
- Recognize that volleyball is both an individual skill-based and team-sport that requires regular attendance at practices (and competition). Those who miss regularly may see slower progress in their improvement and may affect playing time later.
- Athletes/parents should engage in conversation with the coach during the try-out process, honestly communicating the conflicting activities, and determine if an acceptable compromise can be achieved. It is better to understand the extent of the conflict and your respective levels of understanding before committing to a team.

How do I know which club is the most competitive/least competitive?

As noted above, athletes need to learn about clubs and its coaches, and clubs/coaches need to speak with and communicate with athletes. This dialogue will provide an indication of competitiveness for the club/team.

Be aware however that circumstances have occurred where a club/coach communicates one thing during recruitment, and then later see actions/decision that may be or appear to be different. To avoid these circumstances, investigate past performance by looking at past results (at tournaments, provincials, national tournaments), and speak with (past alumni) athletes that have played for that club/coach. Ask the critical question, "Would you play for this coach/club again?" and then ask why or why not.

No one has offered my son/daughter a spot on their team yet... what should I do?

Practically, those athletes who have not been offered a spot at the conclusion of the December/January (or later) try-out phase of the season, can consider the following options:

1. Go to the Volleyball Manitoba website link to learn if there are teams still looking for players.
2. Keep asking around with coaches/friends/athletes to find out if school-based programs (that sometimes start later – often after basketball season in March) will accept your son/daughter.
3. Approach teams, asking if your son/daughter can participate as a practice player.
4. Continue to ask around, and in the unfortunate circumstance where injuries and/or players quitting occur, perhaps team may look for new players.
5. Volleyball Manitoba is also in the planning process of a 'youth development program' that would run concurrent to the club season in the winter / early spring that would involve less commitment and cost. This program is targeted at athletes who are unsuccessful in making a club team, cannot commit the necessary time required of club teams, or cannot afford the cost of playing club volleyball.

Regrettably limited gym time, coaches and club administration often means there are more athletes that want to play, than there are spots on teams. One of our goals as a volleyball community will be to grow the number of coaches, facilities and officiating such that all players who wish to play can. Please do not blame the existing coaches, clubs, or organizers as the shortage of spots is simply not their fault.

E. Costs/Fees

What can I expect to pay for my son/daughter to play Club Volleyball?

The cost to participate in Club Volleyball can vary from club to club. Fees requested, and the corresponding ranges, include the following items:

Item	Description	Cost per team		Cost per player *	
		Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi
Volleyball Manitoba/ Canada fees	Insurance, admin, NRS.	\$ 792	\$ 792	\$ 72	\$ 72
Practice time & equipment	Gym permits and/or rentals, volleyballs, carts, etc	500	4,000	45	364
Tournament entry fees	Ranging from 3-5 tournaments @ an average of \$300/tournament	900	1,500	82	136
Club overhead	Web-site, promotional, admin	-	1,000	-	91
Provincial Championship	Registration only**	495	495	45	45
National Championship	Registration only**	-	1,200	-	109
Uniforms	Ranging from simple t-shirt to elaborate home/away jerseys/shorts	440	2,200	40	200
Other clothing/bags	Bags, sweats, jackets.	-	3,300	-	300
Coaches training, registration fees, honorarium	NCCP training, criminal/child abuse registry checks, honorarium	250	5,000	23	455
				\$ 307	\$ 1,772

* Assuming an 11 person team.

** Does not include out of town accommodation or travel to local, provincial or national tournaments. Additional travel/accommodation expenses could total \$500 plus

As you speak with other teams and compare pricing/fees, be aware of what you are paying for. A school based team, that uses the local school for free, enters local tournaments, skips provincials and nationals, and uses t-shirts for uniforms, can result in around \$300 fees per player, while a team paying for gym time/permits, enters 5 tournaments and a complement of team sweats, uniforms, etc could approach \$2000/athlete (**not including accommodations and travel**).

What if we cannot get a cost breakdown of fees or any kind of financial statement from our club director or coach?

Most clubs provide a breakdown for required fees. If not, it is reasonable to ask club administrators for the breakdown.

F. Coaches

Who are the coaches?

There is no typical coach. Most teams have a head coach and one or more assistant coaches. Many are former players, school coaches, parents and those who generally like the sport of volleyball, working with 13U-17U athletes, and the journey that each season brings.

How are they certified?

All coaches must meet certain requirements with NCCP (National Coaching Certification Program) in order to coach Club Volleyball and at Provincial and/or National Championships. The Age Class Handbook provides the requirements for each age class/gender (older age classes and higher tiers require more certification). Full certification of each level requires completion of a technical workshop (2 days), coaching theory courses, and observation by a trained evaluator.

In addition, coaches are required to submit to Volleyball Manitoba both a Criminal Record Check and Child Abuse Registry form; and complete the Sport Manitoba *Respect in Sport* program.

How can I tell which coach is best for my child and/or who the most qualified?

There are multiple factors that can influence the experience between your child and his/her coach. Some of this is dependent on the coach and some dependent on the athlete. Proactively talk to the coach, speaking to past players on his/her teams, watch him/her in competition or practices, speak with other coaches and perhaps look at their performance – and consider:

- Coach's attributes: How many years and at what level did they play? How many years have they coached? Who coached the coach? Who are the coaches' mentors? Where have they coached? What age classes have they coached? Are they a parent? Is their focus on development or competition? What level of certification do they have? Are they male/female coaching males/females? Who are their assistant coaches? What is their demeanor when you watch/talk to them?
- Athlete's attributes: What motivates your child (affiliation/achievement/sensation)? Is your child receptive to feedback/criticism? Do they respond better to male/female younger/older coach? How old is your child? How much training has your child had? Is your child intense or more relaxed? How does your child respond in structured/unstructured training situations?

In general, moderate your expectations of coaches. All of the club coaches have day-jobs and do this largely on a volunteer basis – sacrificing 100+ hours planning your season, creating practice plans, running practices; and forgoing 4-7 weekends to mentor your children at tournaments. In addition, everyone wants an experienced coach, but the only way they can get the experience is by serving as an assistant or head coach, and making (and learning from their) mistakes.

Do coaches get paid?

Most clubs reimburse coaches for their certifications, criminal/child abuse registry checks, and Volleyball Manitoba/Canada registration fees. In addition, it is common practice for the cost of tournament travel to be borne by the team.

In addition, it is common practice to provide an honorarium to the coach (and assistant coaches). In most cases this is adequate to cover gas and perhaps meal money required for tournaments.

As noted above, a copy of club fees most often communicates the amount of honorarium.

What can we do if our coach raises their voice and yells inappropriate things at the athletes? What if we don't like the way the club is treating our son/daughter and we have a complaint?

By the nature of the sport and location (echoing gyms, often with more than 1 court playing) – emotion and/or effective communication require raised voices. Furthermore, in a position of leadership, coaches are in a position of authority.

Regrettably however, circumstances occur where inappropriate language or messaging occurs, making athletes/coaches/parents uncomfortable (or in more extreme circumstances intimidated or offended). If this occurs, the following steps are suggested:

1. Have the athlete clearly communicate what was stated, when it was said, by whom and gather as much context as possible. Role play the situation with your son/daughter to ensure as good an understanding as you can. Alternatively, objectively recall what you observed (as a parent) first hand.
2. Ask to speak with the coach – but do so after the emotions of the practice or competition are settled. Communicate your observation or understanding of the situation, and the discomfort and/or inappropriateness of the comments and/or tone. Listen to the coaches response to learn of additional context, perhaps an apology, or acknowledgment of poor judgment and/or poor choice of words.
3. If unsatisfied with the response, and concerned for your child, approach the club's administrators and/or mentor coaches. Most clubs have an executive or senior / older /mentor coaches within the club that can meet with you to discuss, or mediate a meeting with the coach.
4. Smaller clubs with only one or two teams may not have mentor coaches or supervision. In these circumstances it is suggested that prior to the season that an experienced parent (one who has played or has had older children play club volleyball previously) serve as a parent liaison to mediate conversation between offended player(s)/parent(s) and the coach.
5. While all situations like this are serious, even more serious circumstances that involve physical abuse, recurring verbal abuse or health/safety of an athlete is in question can be raised with the Competitions Committee of Volleyball Manitoba. These concerns are typically communicated to the office staff, who in turn document them and share them with the committee for review (and action as necessary).

It is important to note that all participants in our sport (athletes, coaches, referees, parents, spectators) are required to follow and abide by the Volleyball Manitoba Code of Conduct.

Please also note that the staff, Board and Competitions Committee of Volleyball Manitoba are not and will not address issues of: team selection, broken promises by coaches/clubs, issues of playing time, team performance, or behavior issues of coaches/athletes not considered abusive. These are to be handled at the coach and club level.

G. General

What are general guiding principles for Volleyball Manitoba as it creates guidelines/rules and administers certain elements of Club Volleyball best?

1. Consider what is best for the athletes;
2. Promote volleyball in our province, having as broad participation as possible, and improving the quality of play of all participants (athletes, coaches, officials, administrators);
3. Cooperate with the school system (junior high school divisions and MHSAA), beach volleyball, and provincial programs;
4. Promoting the principles of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) – see <http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca/learn-about-canadian-sport-life/ltad-stages> and <http://www.vcdm.org/vision/solutions/>
5. Preparing athletes for next levels of competition (incl. provincials, nationals, Provincial Teams, college/university, and eventually National Teams);
6. Seeking the balance between as low a cost as possible, while still providing a positive playing and learning experience for the athletes, coaches, teams and clubs;
7. Promote systems and procedures that foster accountability and transparency.

Does my child have to play club to become an elite player?

No. Not all athletes that play club become elite volleyball players, and not all elite volleyball players (defined loosely as those who participate in play college/university volleyball) started playing club at a young age.

However experience has shown that the majority of the better skilled high school and post-secondary players have played Club Volleyball. Furthermore, the more skilled players in older ages of Club Volleyball most often began playing 13U and 14U.

Club Volleyball is ideally suited for young athletes that have been introduced to the sport at school, by an older sibling or some other means that wants another season, more coaching, competing, spending time with teammates and learning the life-lessons that each season bring.

Is it ever too late to start playing Club Volleyball?

No. Some athletes are late bloomers or only become interested in the sport later in their teen years. Stories exist of athletes joining a club team at 17U and maturing into university and national team players.

It is noted however that while there are normally lots of teams at 14U and 15U, the number of teams decline starting at 16U – making spots available on teams coveted by many high school players.

Have a question that isn't addressed in this FAQ? Looking for more clarification? Please contact the Competition Committee Chair at vm.competition@gmail.com with your questions, comments, ideas and/or concerns with regards to this document.