



## Austin Open Storylines / Highlights May 17-19

### Overall Austin Information:

- The second stop of the AVP Pro Tour goes to the second largest state in the U.S., Texas.
- Krieg Fields hosts the four day festival.
- Pro beach volleyball athletes compete for the Champion title and a piece of the \$150,000 in prize money.
- **Field of 16 Main Draw teams per gender** - with 10 auto entries, two wild cards and four qualifier teams
- **TV & Streaming:**
  - Live Friday-Sunday with one TBD final on Amazon Prime Video at [primevideo.com/avp](https://primevideo.com/avp)
  - One TBD final on NBCSN on Sunday, May 19 at 8 p.m. PT / 9 p.m. CT

### Hometown Athletes

#### Austin & Texas Area Athletes

- **Amanda Dowdy (Lexington)** - A four-year starter at Texas Tech. Selected as a 2008 All-Big 12 Freshman of the Year and earned First-Team All-Big 12 honors in both 2010 and 2011. She left as the all-time kill leader for the Red Raiders. Following college she played professionally indoors for the Bundesliga in Germany in 2011-12 and in Puerto Rico in 2013. She began playing beach volleyball in 2012 just to stay in shape for indoors, but in 2013 decided to pursue beach volleyball and joined the AVP Pro Tour.
- **Irene Pollock (Fort Worth)** - Was an All-Conference player at Texas Christian University and led the team in points, kills, and aces. She went on to play indoor professionally in the top league in Switzerland and has made the full transition to the beach.

#### Texas Family Connections

- **Kelly Reeves** - Originally from San Diego, Kelly will have a cheering section made up of her Texas family making their way to Austin from Dallas. She is the daughter of Olympic Indoor Volleyball star Jeanne Reeves who was her coach and a member of the 1984 U.S. Olympic Women's Volleyball Team that won silver. Jeanne was an All-American at UCLA and Kelly followed her mother's footsteps as an outside hitter at UCLA, where she was named First Team All-PAC-12 in 2011 when she led the team to a National Championship. She made her debut at the 2016 AVP Huntington Beach Open, playing in six tournaments and named AVP Newcomer of the Year.

### Olympians Going for More in Tokyo 2020

The AVP Tour is home to numerous Olympians and future hopefuls. With the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games less than 18 months away, several male and female players are battling to secure one of the two

spots allowed maximum per country per gender. This will be the seventh time beach volleyball will be featured in the Olympics since starting in 1996.

- **Phil Dalhuasser** won a gold medal in 2008, finished ninth in the 2012 Olympics and finished fifth in the 2016 Olympics. At 6' 9", age 39 and 56 AVP Championships under his belt, Phil and partner Nick Lucena are still the dominant force on the AVP Tour.
- **April Ross** earned a silver medal from the 2012 Olympic Games and a bronze medal from the 2016 Olympic games. In 2020, she's going for gold. Ross is 6' 1", 36 years old, and has 34 AVP Championships.
- **Jake Gibb** competed at the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games and is aiming for his first Olympic medal in his fourth Olympic attempt. At 6' 7", age 43 and 31 AVP Championships later - he's stronger than ever. Jake is also a two-time cancer survivor (testicular and skin) and is a strong advocate for skin protection from the sun.
- **Nick Lucena** finished fifth in the 2016 Olympic Games with partner, Phil Dalhausser. At 6' 1", 39 years old and 13 AVP Championships, the father of two and Phil are still the team to beat on the AVP Tour.
- **Casey Patterson** partnered with Jake Gibb at the 2016 Olympic Games. He's 6' 6", 39 years old, the father of four and has 14 AVP Championships. Patterson was diagnosed with Hashimoto's Thyroiditis two months before the 2016 Olympic Games and has adjusted his diet to combat this condition, while competing at an elite level This year, Casey is partnering with former NBA veteran Chase Budinger.
- **Sean "Superman" Rosenthal** competed at the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games with Jake Gibb. He's 6' 3", age 38 and has 12 AVP Championships.
- **Other Olympic hopefuls** - (W) Emily Day/Betsi Flint, Sara Hughes/Summer Ross, Kelly Claes/Sarah Sponcil (M) Tri Bourne/Trevor Crabb, Chase Budinger, and Reid Priddy/Theo Brunner.

### **AVP's Next Generation "Rising Stars"**

*\* Check on AVP.com for the most updated entry lists. There are a number of teams competing overseas this weekend. \**

- **Sara Hughes (Costa Mesa, Calif.) and Summer Ross (San Diego, Calif.)** - Hughes left an impressionable mark on the AVP in 2016 while still a student at USC. In 2017, she and then USC and AVP partner Kelly Claes made history as the youngest team to ever win an AVP event at the Championships in Chicago. In 2018, she and current partner Summer Ross became the top ranked team to beat as the youngest duo on the tour, adding two more wins to Hughes' resume with a total of three AVP championships. (Summer has five AVP Championships to her name as well.) Hughes was the recipient of the 2018 AVP Best Defender award.
- **Kelly Claes (Placentia, Calif.)** - Claes at 23 years old, has made a name for herself alongside Sara Hughes, as the most established collegiate pair. In 2015 at the AVP New York Open, Hughes and Claes became the lowest seeded team (No. 16) to ever reach the semifinals in an AVP tournament, finishing in third place. At the AVP San Francisco event, a match against April Ross and Kerri Walsh Jennings changed everything as they solidified their status beyond just the collegiate level. In the third round of the winner's bracket, Hughes and Claes nearly knocked Ross and Walsh Jennings off the podium in a 54-minute match. To that point, the Ross and Walsh Jennings were en route to the Rio Olympics and barely pulled ahead with a 17-15 finish in

the third set. Claes and Sarah Sponcil will be partnering entering the 2019 AVP season.

- **Sarah Sponcil (Phoenix, Ariz.)** - Currently at 22 years old, Sponcil placed second in the 2018 Austin Open and third at the 2018 Chicago Championships with coach and Olympian Lauren Fendrick. At the Chicago Championships, Sponcil and Terese Cannon became the second lowest seeds (No. 18) to ever advance to an AVP women's semifinal. This marked Sponcil's second semi-final in her young career. Sarah is a current UCLA student and will be partnering with Kelly Claes entering the 2019 AVP Season.
- **Troy Field (Laguna Beach / San Clemente, Calif.)** - Troy grew up in San Clemente playing soccer and football, then moved to Lafayette, La. to finish high school at Acadiana High. He returned to California during the 2012 Olympics and that is where Troy found his love for volleyball. He decided to pursue a career in beach volleyball in 2017 and has been a one to watch since. This year, he is partnered with Tim Bomgren who is a Main Draw athlete, making this season the first time that he will be able to skip Qualifiers and automatically gain entry into the Main Draw. Look out for his signature pink visor on the court.
- **Brittany Howard (Hermosa Beach / Los Altos, Calif.)** - Since joining the AVP Pro Tour in 2017, Howard has showed herself as a true competitor and athlete advancing from qualifiers in the 2017 Hermosa Beach Open and winning three elimination matches to finish in seventh. In 2018, Howard finished third at the San Francisco Open and fifth at the Chicago Championships. She is also the recipient of the 2018 AVP Rookie of the Year award for the women.

## **AVP Brand Information**

- The Association of Volleyball Professionals is the United States' premier beach volleyball tour, headquartered in Newport Beach, Calif. under owner Donald Sun.
- AVP has a **36+ year legacy**, and is a household brand famous for their **signature yellow and white Wilson volleyball**. It is responsible for providing a stage and developing the careers for the biggest names in beach volleyball.
- This year marks **AVP's 36th season** with an eight-stop tour kicking off in Huntington Beach, CA. (May 3-5) followed by stops in Austin (May 17-19), New York (June 7-9), Seattle (June 21-23), Hermosa Beach (July 26-28), Manhattan Beach (August 16-18), Chicago (Aug 30-Sept 1), and Honolulu (Sept 20-22). Full tour schedule available at [AVP.com/events](http://AVP.com/events).
- **Expanded AVPFirst Programming** - In addition to the Pro Tour, AVP has several branches including a non-profit, **AVPFirst**, dedicated to giving back to the community and providing scholarships and equal opportunities to underserved communities. It also has programs that are dedicated planting seeds early with the youth to invest in future beach volleyball stars and to increase chances for diversity in the sport. To date more than 7,000 youth, ages eight to 18, have participated in these volleyball programs led by elite coaches and a large volunteer corps of dedicated adults and professional AVP athletes. These programs culminate at the annual AVPFirst National Championships, which take place during the week of the Hermosa Beach Open. Last year, a record 272 teams, representing 35 states and four countries, including

Canada, Mexico, Australia, and Puerto Rico, competed for the title. All nine AVP First gold medal matches are played on Stadium Court over the AVP Pro weekend.

- **AVP played a key role in getting beach volleyball recognized as an [NCAA sanctioned sport](#)** as the organizer and producer of the very first college event in 2006. The Pro Tour has been proud to see the fruit of those planted seeds, evident by the talent of young star teams including Sara Hughes, Kelly Claes, 16-year-old duo Megan Kraft and Delainey Maple, and the 17-year old twins Audrey and Nicole Nourse who excelled at the Huntington Beach Open earlier this May.

## **New to 2019**

- **Increased Prize Money & Travel Stipend**
  - AVP is proud to increase prize money across all tournament stops
  - AVP will provide each Main Draw athlete a stipend for each stop to offset some travel expenses (hotel, flight, and expenses)
- **Road to AVP Hawai'i Open**
  - In 2019, Hawai'i will be designated as an Open (vs. an Invitational as it previously was in 2018)
  - Each winning team per gender of every non-Gold Series AVP Pro Tour stop will earn a spot to Hawai'i. The remaining spots will go to Gold Series winners based on ranking and those who make it through Qualifiers at the Hawai'i Open.
  - The event will feature a 16-draw team with a Qualifier as in the other stops.

## **Back for 2019**

- **Second Year Partnership with Amazon Prime Video and fifth season with long-time partner, NBC**
  - Prime Video will stream the men's and women's finals to viewers outside of the U.S., and one final match per event to Prime members in the U.S. Prime members will also have on-demand access to completed matches, including all finals, highlights and additional content at [primevideo.com/avp](https://primevideo.com/avp).
  - Prime Video will deliver live coverage of Main Draw matches from each tour stop through 2020. NBC will broadcast one of the final competitions on the Sunday of each stop. Check local listings for the most updated information.
  - Prime members in more than 200 countries and territories will be able to watch live and on-demand AVP content across more than 600 devices on the Prime Video app for TVs, mobile devices, online, game consoles, set top boxes, and connected devices, including Amazon Fire TV and Apple TV.
- **Festival Village**
  - Each stop on the 2019 AVP Pro Tour Season will have a family-friendly interactive sponsor village complete with fan activations, giveaways, product sampling, athlete meet 'n greets, top local food and more.
  - First-time national sponsors Corner Bakery and Stella Rosa will join alongside returning national partners Wilson®, Kona Brewing Co., Hydro Flask, KT Tape, and Rox Volleyball,

###