



Gold Series // Championships in Chicago Storylines & Highlights August 30 -- September 1

Table of Contents:

- *Overall Chicago Information - page 1*
- *Midwest Stars - page 2*
- *Top Athletes - page 2*
- *Olympians Going for More in Tokyo 2020 - page 3*
- *AVP's Next Generation "Rising Stars" - page 4*
- *AVP Brand Information - page 5*
- *New for 2019 - page 5*
- *Back for 2019 - page 6*

OVERALL CHICAGO INFORMATION

- The seventh stop of the 2019 AVP Pro Tour goes to Oak Street Beach, Chicago.
- Pro Beach volleyball athletes compete for the special Gold Series Champion title and a piece of the increased \$300,000 in prize money.
- **Previous Gold Series // Championships in Chicago 2018 Champions:** Jake Gibb/Taylor Crabb (Mens); April Ross/Alix Klineman (Womens)
- **Field of 24 teams per gender in the Main Draw** - The Manhattan Beach Open features a field of 24 teams per gender to reflect the demand in the sport of beach volleyball including 14 auto entries, two wild cards and eight teams from the Qualification Round.
- **TV & Streaming:**
 - Live Friday-Sunday with one TBD final on Amazon Prime Video at primevideo.com/avp
 - One TBD final on NBCSN on Sunday, September 1 at 11:30 a.m. PT / 2:30 p.m. ET
- **History / Significance of location:** No city outside the state of California has hosted more pro beach tournaments than Chicago, and this year, the Windy City will add one more to its tally as the AVP Gold Series Championships return to Oak Street Beach.
- **Gold Series** - The Championships in Chicago marks the final stop of the three stop AVP Gold Series where athletes have the chance to win even bigger prize money. A \$300,000 prize purse, up \$50,000 from 2018, is up for the taking (\$150,000 for the men and \$150,000 for the women.) This is the last stop of the California tournaments for the 2019 AVP Season. The third Gold Series stop will be the AVP Chicago Championships Aug. 30-Sept. 1.

Midwest Stars

- **Stafford Slick (Andover, Minn.)** - Born in Andover, Minn., the 2017 Seattle Open Champion's first ever AVP main draw came in Hermosa Beach in 2010 when teaming with Olympic Gold Medalist Dain Blanton. He returned to the Pro Tour in 2017 with former partner Billy Allen after taking a year to compete with Olympian Casey Patterson. #FeartheGoggles is a common hashtag on signs at AVP tournaments. Slick once had to have emergency retinal surgery at UCLA after an accident on the court during semi-finals in New Orleans. He drove cross-country to UCLA after being instructed to not board his flight due to the pressure in his eye. He now plays with goggles as a safety precaution and is an advocate for eye protection on the court.
- **Tim Bomgren (Woodbury, Minn.)** - Half of the popular team "Team TNT" with partner **Troy Field** and consistently ranked in the men's top five for 2019, Tim stands 6' 4" tall and played volleyball at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. He was president of the men's indoor volleyball team and was a three-time 1st Team All American (NIRSA and NCVF Indoor Nationals). He slowly transitioned to beach volleyball, playing local competitive tournaments with his older brother, Brian and joined AVP in 2013.
- **Sheila Shaw (Muskego, Wisc.)** - A 2007 graduate of Wisconsin with a bachelor's degree in social welfare, Sheila was a two-time Academic All-Big Ten selection. She was a member of the U.S. National Training Team in 2007 before traveling to Europe to compete. She served as the team captain of Stade Francais in Paris (2007-08) and was a member of the German Rote Raben Vilsbiburg professional club (2009-10), aiding her team to the league title and was named a German All-Star. In 2011, she became a member of the USA Beach Development Program. Shaw has been a staple on the AVP Pro Tour since and has placed in the top 10 of more than 25 professional beach tournaments. Shaw recently placed in her first women's semifinal ever at the 2019 Hermosa Beach Open.
- **Ryan Doherty (Notre Dame, Ind. / Toms River, N.J.)** - At 7'0, Ryan is the tallest player on the AVP tour and nicknamed "Avatar" for his astounding height. In 2002, Doherty was an All-American baseball player for Notre Dame in Indiana before being signed by the Arizona Diamondbacks as a relief pitcher for three seasons in the minor leagues. Following his baseball career, Doherty became hooked on beach volleyball while living in South Carolina and moved to Huntington Beach, Calif. The pros found a use for him in blocking drills and eventually Casey Patterson contacted Doherty to form a partnership in 2012, where the duo dominated and finished amongst the top in the Jose Cuervo Pro Beach Volleyball Series. As one of the top athletes on the tour, Doherty has partnered with the likes of Olympic Gold Medalist Todd Rogers, John Mayer, and Billy Allen, and is currently partnered with **Miles Evans**.

Top Athletes

- **Alix Klineman (Manhattan Beach, Calif.) + April Ross (Costa Mesa, Calif.)** - Last year's 2018 Gold Series // Championships in Chicago women's champions are collectively known as "The A-Team." In recent FIVB standings, they are currently ranked as the No. 1 women's team

worldwide. April Ross is an AVP Champion with 35 titles to her name. She is a two-time Olympian, earning a silver medal from the 2012 Olympic Games and a bronze medal from the 2016 Olympic games. At 6' 5", Alix was a four-time All American at Stanford University, recognized as Player of the Year by both Volleyball Magazine and the Pac-10 Conference, and a Pan American Games gold medalist. Klineman later played indoor internationally in Italy and Brazil at an extremely high level. In 2018, Klineman and Ross teamed up to become four-time AVP Champions on the Pro Tour. Together they won the 2018 Women's Team of the Year award and Klineman won the 2018 AVP Best Blocker and AVP Most Improved Player.

- **Emily Day (Torrance, Calif.)** - At 6' 1" and 31 years old, Day has eight AVP Championships under her belt including the recent 2019 Hermosa Beach Open. Day is partnering with **Betsi Flint** and won two AVP tournaments in 2018 and three in 2017 with former partner Brittany Hochevar. Day was an outside hitter at Loyola Marymount University where she amassed more than 1,500 kills and 1,000 digs (which has only been done twice in the history of LMU.) Outside of volleyball, Day works as a math tutor - middle school and high school.
- **Phil Dalhausser (Orlando, Fla.) + Nick Lucena (Tallahassee, Fla.)** - Phil and his longtime partner Nick Lucena are still the dominant men's force on the AVP Tour and the previous 2018 Gold Series // Manhattan Beach Open champions . At 6' 9" tall and age 39, Dalhausser has 56 AVP Championships under his belt and Lucena has 13 AVP Championships. Dalhausser won an Olympic gold medal in 2008, finished ninth in the 2012 Olympics and then finished fifth in the 2016 Olympics with Lucena.
- **Casey Patterson (Thousand Oaks, Calif.) + Chase Budinger (Hermosa Beach, Calif.)** - This dynamic duo recently won the 2019 Hermosa Beach Open, their first tournament win as a team. Patterson is 6' 6", 39 years old, a father of four and has 15 AVP Championships. Patterson previously partnered with Jake Gibb at the 2016 Olympic Games and was diagnosed with Hashimoto's Thyroiditis two months before the Olympic Games. He has adjusted his diet to combat this condition, while still competing at an elite level. Casey is partnering with former NBA pro Chase Budinger. Budinger played in the NBA from 2009 - 2017 as a small forward for the Houston Rockets, Minnesota Timberwolves, Indiana Pacers and Phoenix Suns. In 2017, Budinger retired from basketball to focus on playing professional beach volleyball and made his debut on the AVP tour with Sean Rosenthal in 2018.

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.

AVP's Next Generation "Rising Stars"

- **Sara Hughes (Costa Mesa, 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 former partner Summer Ross became the top ranked AVP women's team to beat as the youngest duo on the tour, adding two more wins to Hughes' resume with a total of three AVP championships. 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.

AVP Brand Information

- The Association of Volleyball Professionals is the United States' premier beach volleyball tour, headquartered in Newport Beach, Calif. under CEO and 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.
- **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.
- **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, 272 teams, representing 35 states and four countries, including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and Puerto Rico, competed for the title. All nine AVPFirst gold medal matches are played on Stadium Court over the AVP Pro weekend.

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.

- o The remaining spots will go to Gold Series winners based on ranking and those who make it through Qualifiers at the Hawai'i Open.
- o 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**
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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**
 - o 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.
 - o 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.

###