



## AVP Gold Series // The Championships in Chicago Aug. 30 - Sept. 2, 2018

### Storylines

#### Overall The Championships in Chicago Highlights

- **History / Significance of location:** No city outside of the state of California has hosted more professional beach volleyball tournaments than the city of Chicago. The four-day competition showcases the world's top professional beach volleyball athletes with the iconic Chicago skyline and Lake Michigan setting the scene.
- **Gold Series** - The AVP Gold Series // The Championships in Chicago is the third and final stop of the 2018 AVP signature Gold Series events where in addition to the race for the title, athletes will have the chance to win even bigger prize money and more points. Stakes are raised specifically for this event, as results from this competition will determine the final two teams per gender who will be invited to the new AVP Hawai'i Invitational presented by Hawai'i Tourism Authority from Sept. 14-16, 2018. The \$250,000 prize purse is up for the taking (\$125,000 for the men and \$125,000 for the women) Bigger money, bigger prizes, and a bigger title.
- **Field of 24 teams per gender in the Main Draw** - The Championships features a strong field of 24 teams per gender. Fourteen teams receive automatic entries, two Wild Card teams and eight teams from the Qualification Rounds will have the opportunity to advance to Friday's Main Draw.
- **New Partnership with Amazon Prime Video in 2018 and Live on NBC** - To enhance the AVP Pro Tour viewer experience, AVP has teamed up with Amazon Prime Video to livestream all of the Main Draw matches at each tour stop through the year 2020. Viewers in more than 200 countries and territories will be able to watch live and on-demand AVP content including all of the Main Draw matches from The Championships in Chicago. Fans in the U.S. will be able to watch one final on Sunday, Sept. 2 and then catch the other final on NBCSN Wednesday, Sept. 5 at 5 p.m. CT. Viewers outside the U.S. will be able to watch both men's and women's finals live on Amazon Prime Video.
- **AVPFirst** - In addition to the Pro Tour, **AVPFirst** is the organization's 501(c)3 non-profit organization 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. At The Championships in Chicago, AVPFirst will partner with [Beyond the Ball](#) to host a Community Corner Clinic on Sunday, Sept. 2 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. In Chicago, AVP professional athletes will feature Troy Fields and Katie Spieler, and AVPFirst coaches will help introduce beach volleyball combined with positive messaging, experiences and training.

Throughout the 2018 season, AVPFirst invited youth for free clinics with AVP pros and AVPFirst coaches and host top local teams in an invitational match play style event that concluded with AVPFirst National Championship finals being played on Stadium Court in front of a packed house in Hermosa Beach last month. Up from 210 teams last year, this year boasted the largest number of teams participating with 270 teams across the US and Puerto Rico, and international representation from Canada, Mexico and Australia.

- **Festival Village and Activations** – The Championships Festival Village is free to the public Thursday through

Sunday and is filled with activations, giveaways, experiences, food, a beer & wine garden and more. **The first [Chicago Social AVP Tournament](https://www.chicagosocialavptournament.com/) presented by Chicago Sport & Social Club and AVP** will be held Saturday, Sept. 1 at an amped up North Avenue Beach for amateur coed teams of 4s and 6s. Visit <https://www.chicagosocialavptournament.com/> for more tournament information.

### **Midwest Natives**

- **Ryan Doherty (Toms River, N.J.)** - At seven feet tall, Ryan is the tallest player on the AVP tour. Nicknamed “Avatar” for his astounding height, Doherty was an All-American baseball player for Notre Dame in 2002 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. where he would hang out on the beach taking on anybody he could find. The pros found a use for him in blocking drills and eventually AVP player Casey Patterson contacted Doherty to form a partnership for 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, John Hyden, and currently Billy Allen. In 2015, AVP awarded him with Best Offensive Player.
- **Other Athletes with Chicago connections** - Raffae Paulis (Chicago Native and Northeastern alumni) and crowd favorite Matthew McCarthy (Wheaton, Ill.) with partner Dan Buehring (Naperville, Ill.) See [registration list](#) for full list.
- **Sheila Shaw** (Muskego, Wisc.) - Sheila Shaw stands at six feet one inch and has become a staple on the AVP Tour since joining the tour in 2007. Shaw will be partnering with Lara Dykstra for The Championships in Chicago.

### **Additional Notable Athletes**

- **Tour Stop Winners Face Off in Championships** - The field of athletes is stacked with the best professional beach volleyball players. Top teams have each won at least one tournament on the road to The Championships and these winners will each be competing for The Championships in Chicago title. After six stops, there is a three-way tie for the women with three teams each winning two tournaments. The country is watching to see who offsets the balance and wins their third 2018 title on the 2018 AVP Tour or to see if a different team will takeover. Phil Dalhauser and Nick Lucena have captured three tournaments this AVP season for the men, but with heavy competition in the field and the 2017 Chicago Championship winners coming back, the title is up for the taking.

#### **Men’s First Place Teams on the 2018 AVP Tour**

- Phil Dalhauser and Nick Lucena - AVP Austin Open, AVP New York City Open, and AVP Manhattan Beach Open
- Jake Gibb and Taylor Crabb - AVP Seattle Open
- Ed Ratledge and Rafu Rodriguez - AVP San Francisco Open
- John Hyden and Theo Brunner - AVP Hermosa Beach Open

#### **Women’s First Place Teams on the 2018 AVP Tour**

- April Ross and Alix Klinemen - AVP Austin Open and AVP Manhattan Beach Open
- Sara Hughes and Summer Ross - AVP New York City Open and AVP Hermosa Beach Open
- Emily Day and Betsi Flint - AVP San Francisco Open and AVP Seattle Open

#### **2017 AVP The Championships in Chicago Winners**

- Men’s - John Hyden and Ryan Doherty - (Doherty who attended Notre Dame, will be playing with Billy Allen at the 2018 Championships)
- Women’s - Sara Hughes and Kelly Claes (Claes will be playing with Brittany Hochevar at the 2018 Championships)

- **Sara Hughes (Costa Mesa, Calif.) and Summer Ross (San Diego, Calif.)** - This dynamic duo has set the bar high this tour with a win at the 2018 AVP New York City Open, a win at AVP Hermosa Beach Open, and second place at the AVP Manhattan Beach Open. Hughes busted on the scene just after graduating from Southern Cal playing sand volleyball exclusively in college, winning three AVCA national Championships, and being named an AVCA All-American three times. Hughes is five foot 10 inches and 23 years old and won the 2017 AVP Championships in Chicago with former partner, Kelly Claes. Summer Ross stands at six foot one inch, is 25 years old, and started her indoor career as an outside hitter at the University of Washington and then transferred to Pepperdine, winning the first ever AVCA Collegiate Sand Volleyball Championship with Caitlin Racich in 2012. She has been a strong player on the AVP Tour since 2013. This is the first tour season that Hughes and Ross have played together.
- **April Ross (Costa Mesa, Calif.)** - Ross leads the female pack in titles with 31 AVP titles and will be playing with her recently new partner, Alix Klineman, at The Championships in Chicago. This AVP Tour season, Ross and Klineman won the 2018 AVP Austin Open, the 2018 AVP Manhattan Beach Open, took second at the 2018 AVP Hermosa Beach Open, and third at both the 2018 AVP New York City Open and 2018 AVP San Francisco Open events. As a two-time Olympian, Ross holds an Olympic Bronze medal from the 2016 Olympic Games and a Silver from the 2012 Olympic Games.
- **Phil Dalhausser (Redondo Beach, Calif.)** - Nicknamed “The Thin Beast” and standing tall at six feet nine inches tall, 38-year-old Phil Dalhausser is a 55-time AVP champion, 38-time FIVB champion and three-time Olympian. Born in Switzerland, Dalhausser made his AVP debut in 2003 at Ft. Lauderdale with first and current partner Nick Lucena. Since his debut, he has become one of the most decorated and successful players in beach volleyball history. So far on the 2018 AVP Tour, Phil has won the 2018 AVP Austin Open, the 2018 AVP New York City Open, and the 2018 AVP Manhattan Beach Open with Lucena. On the AVP Tour, Dalhausser has also been awarded the Best Blocker in 2008, 2009, and 2015-2017, Best Offensive Player from 2005-2009, 2016, and 2017, Best Server in 2017, Most Improved Player in 2006, Most Valuable Player from 2007-2009, and 2017, won Team of the Year with Todd Rogers from 2007-2009, and Team of the Year with Nick Lucena in 2017. The University of Central Florida alumni is a father to son Sebastian.
- **Jake Gibb (Bountiful, Utah)** - Jake Gibb established himself as one of the premier beach volleyball players in the world when he and partner Sean Rosenthal took home first place at the 2012 AVP Championships in Santa Barbara, Calif. Gibb was chosen as the AVP’s Most Valuable Player in 2005. Gibb and Taylor Crabb this season have so far come in first at the 2018 AVP Seattle Open, second at both the 2018 AVP New York City Open and the 2018 AVP Manhattan Beach Open events, and placed third at the Hermosa Beach Open. Gibb is one of the few players on the AVP Tour that did not play volleyball in college. Instead, the Bountiful, Utah native played golf and basketball. It was not until he turned 21 that he took up the sport of beach volleyball with his twin brother, Coleman. Gibb is a two-time Olympian and has survived cancer twice. Gibb is the youngest of 11 children (six boys, five girls). He graduated from the University of Utah in 2002 with a degree in business.
- **Alix Klineman (Manhattan Beach, Calif.)** - At six feet five inches tall, Alix is an extremely talented volleyball athlete who quickly became a standout in a highly competitive volleyball environment at Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach. She was a four-time All American at Stanford University, recognized as Player of the Year by Volleyball Magazine and the Pac-10 Conference, a Pan American Games gold medalist. After playing indoor volleyball internationally in Italy and Brazil for many years, Klineman moved back from to the U.S. in April 2017. Klineman finished first at the 2018 AVP Austin Open and the 2018 AVP Manhattan Beach Open events and second at the 2018 AVP Hermosa Beach Open with partner and two-time Olympian, April Ross.

#### **Former NBA Player Turns Volleyball**

- **Chase Budinger (Encinitas, Calif.)** - Former NBA star turned pro beach volleyball player Chase Budinger makes his debut this year on the AVP. The 30-year-old stands at 6' 7" and is partnering with two-time Olympian Sean Rosenthal. While in the NBA for seven seasons, Budinger played for the Rockets, Pacers, Timberwolves and Suns. He played with All-Star Kevin Love in Minnesota, almost won the Slam Dunk contest in 2006 and took a charge from LeBron James that he says felt for the next week. During his basketball career, Budinger loved to play

volleyball during the offseason in Hermosa Beach as a way to work on his lower body strength and improve his athleticism. He often played with the likes of current Los Angeles Lakers head coach Luke Walton and NBA champion Richard Jefferson, both graduates of Budinger's alma mater the University of Arizona. The McKibbin brothers who also play on the AVP posted a [video](#) of them playing together. Budinger and Rosenthal made it to the Finals at the 2018 AVP San Francisco Open and took second.

### **Overall Event Info**

- This year marks **AVP's 35<sup>th</sup> season** with an eight-stop tour that started out in Austin, Texas (May 17-20) followed by stops in New York (June 7-10), Seattle (June 21-24), San Francisco (July 5-8), Hermosa Beach (July 26-29), Manhattan Beach (August 16-19), **Chicago (August 30-Sept. 2)**, and new to 2018, Hawaii (Sept. 14-16.) Full tour schedule [AVP.com/events](http://AVP.com/events).

### **AVP Brand**

- The Association of Volleyball Professionals is the United States' premier beach volleyball tour, headquartered in Newport Beach, Calif. under current Managing Partner, Donald Sun.
- AVP has a 35+ year legacy, and has become 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.
- In addition to the Pro Tour, AVP has several branches including a non-profit called [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. [AVPNext](#) is the official developmental program of the AVP Professional Beach Volleyball Tour and serves as the exclusive qualification circuit for elite amateur athletes to earn AVP points, a national ranking, and entry into the AVP Main Draws. [AVP Academy](#) offers a complete level of support services that compliment the entire athlete. Academy strives to provide athletes with the highest level of development possible.
- 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.

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