



Asics Midwest Power League Preview

The [Midwest Power League at Premier Volleyball Academy](#) in Maumee, OH has several strong clubs participating in the 18s Division, Premier, Fort Wayne, Elite Volleyball Training Center and Legacy. Elite VTC 17 National, Fort Wayne 18 Force and Premier 18 Onitsuka are three of the top teams in this year's power league.

Fort Wayne 18 Force is coming off of a strong finish to last year's season where they finished in the top-half in the 18 Open Gold Division at AAU Nationals in Orlando. Five key players are returning from that team including future Fighting Illini Maddie Mayers and Ave Stout, who will be attending Western Michigan, while future Louisville Cardinal Allie Miller is digging up the back court. Two strong setters/right side attackers in Abby Saalfrank and Jenna Spadfora round up the five key returning players. 16s Head Coach Steve Florio said, "this is the best team in the club by far and one of the best teams to ever come out of Fort Wayne VBC."

Elite Volleyball Training Center, based out of Columbus, OH is looking to start off strong this season. Currently in their 5th year the club has had very talented players come through its pipeline and is looking to be a strong contender not just in the Columbus area but in the state of Ohio, the Midwest Region and the nation. Last year they just missed qualifying for USAV Nationals and they are on a mission this season. Elite is led by outside hitters Kelly Hutchinson (committed to Kent State University) and Olivia Cobb, setter Karely Kusan and libero Megan Hendershot. Club Director and 17 National Coach Randy Cline said, "This team is strong all the way around, and we don't see many boulders on our path just ripples in the water to smooth out".

The MWPL host Premier 18 Onitsuka is looking to pick up where they left off and is gunning for more, finishing as runner-up at AAU Nationals in the 17s Division. With nine returning players from the 2nd place team last year, improvement is all this team can think about. Being paced by Michigan State bound senior Maggie Halloran at opposite and Dayton Flyer- to-be senior middle blocker/outside hitter Alaina Turner and Ohio University junior Katie Horton on the outside, this team has the focus to take home the top prize. Halloran and Turner were All-American selections at the AAU National Championships along with fellow outside hitter Kelsey Lahey, who is going to be a Marist College Lady Red Fox.

In the 17s Division there are just about the same usual suspects, Premier, Fort Wayne, Elite VTC, Legacy and Predators out of Canada. The top teams look to be Premier 17 Kayano, Fort

Wayne 16 Florio and Elite VTC 17 National Black. The Predators are coming down for the first year to the Power League and the MWPL is excited to have them. The power league participants have seen the Predators in tournaments throughout the Midwest but have never hosted them in the power league and they are very glad this club has joined the mix this year. The 17s Predators have height as an advantage with four players at or over 6 feet tall, two of which are 6'3. Sidney Greulich and Hannah Poole are both middle/outside hitters looking to terminate on a regular basis, while Melissa Dobson will be a strong force in the middle.

Fort Wayne Volleyball Club seems to always have tough teams, and this year is no exception. You know this is going to be a strong team when Coach Florio comes down from 18s to take them under his tutelage. The 16s are playing up this year in the 17s due to their size and athletic ability according to Coach Florio. "We are young, several of our kids are 15 but they will help lead this team to success. It will be a slight learning curve due to being young and playing up but in the end it will pay dividends." Their size comes from 6'3 sophomore middle Gabby Hazen, 6' freshmen outside hitter Tionna Williams, and setter/right side Jordan Lentz. All three players are being recruited by top 25 programs.

With Elite VTC 17 National playing up in the 18s division, that opens up the opportunity for the 17 National Black team to earn a berth in the Power League Championships in June. Coached by former OSU player Kelli Barhorst, this team is looking to play at a high level all season long. Led by powerful middles Aaliyah Slappy and Maddie McCarty this team is an underdog to watch out for.

Yet again, host team Premier 17 Kayano is looking to use home court advantage to propel to the top. With several new players to the team this year team chemistry would be questionable but hasn't been a problem when it comes to practice. This team will be led by a core group from last year's team that missed going to Gold in Orlando after losing a cross-over match. Junior setter/right side Lindsay Smith and Outside Sarah Sikula look to bring stability to the team, while fellow outside hitter Nicole Oestrike and middle Megan Frame try to learn leadership on the court.

The first week of the 17/18 Division Power Leagues are January 21st and 22nd, the next weekends of play are February 11th and 12th and concluding on March 10th and 11th with bracket play being the ultimate determinate of who gets the all exclusive bid to the JVA Power League Championship June 15th-16th.