



WHAT PUTS THE “POWER” IN POWER LEAGUES?

One of the original goals of the founding groups of JVA was to find ways to reduce the cost of junior club volleyball. Power Leagues are a way to insure quality competition for all levels of teams, while reducing travel and entry fees. Another mandate from the JVA clubs was to be able to have the flexibility to develop systems that work best for their programs, without heavy handed regulations and sanctioning expenses. The leagues that have flourished are the leagues that formed under junior leadership and common objectives between participants.

One of the first power Leagues, the [Mid-Atlantic Power League](#) began 24 years ago as a competitive series with 20-30 teams and then morphed into a league that currently has about 240 teams. As Power Leagues grow, the structure and primary objectives of the leagues allow for their continued success. Due to this success, along with the increasing number of inquiries we have received, we feel it is beneficial to share the structure, organization and benefits of Power Leagues with you so you can be “in the know” on this direction in junior club volleyball.

THE BENEFITS OF POWER LEAGUES

Matched Competition

Successful Power Leagues are structured to maintain a high level of competition throughout the season for all participating teams. Power Pools are organized to effectively allow teams to play to their level and provide the opportunity to move up or down in pool strength depending on performance. With the Power Pool structure, the highest seed doesn't start by playing the lowest seed and the lowest seed has an equal opportunity to play their way into the championship final; every match has meaning. The competition level is always high, respective to each team, which creates a higher quality, more enjoyable event for all participants.

Core Tournament Schedule

A typical Power League will provide the participating teams 8-12 play dates. This offers a solid core of events around which to build a club team's season schedule. Mike Lingenfelter, Director of [Munciana Volleyball](#), says two of the inherent benefits of the Mideast Power League are that “it maximizes competitive playing opportunities per dollar...by virtue of harnessing the region's best teams we can play an ultra-competitive schedule within our geographic confines. And the constant competitive culture creates a tremendous stage for improvement within the league.” The balance of a team's schedule outside of the Power League will generally be filled in by a President's Day Tournament, JVA World Challenge, USAV Qualifiers and end the season with AAU Nationals and/or USAV Nationals (if qualified).



Predictability

In a Power League structure, teams know exactly when they are going to play. Curt Glesmann, Founder of Northern Lights Power League says “parents love this, they can plan their lives.” He feels the structure of two waves (morning and afternoon wave) is an important benefit of Power Leagues. “They (parents) also love the idea that they are in the gym for 6 hours max... most people don’t want to go and spend an entire day in the gym playing a pool of 4 then doing playoffs, which run another 2-4 hours, and often a lot of time is spent sitting around waiting for matches to finish. People want to be in and out in a short period of time” adds Glesmann. In addition, many JVA teams that participate in Power Leagues attend the AAU National Championship that does not require teams to have to “qualify” to attend. This leaves out any unknowns in the schedule because from day one players, coaches and parents know their schedule and can make early travel plans, which saves money.

Knowing the entire season schedule ahead of time definitely has its cost benefits when it comes to hotel and air reservations. When most club dues range between \$2,000 and \$3,500 for elite teams not including travel costs, parents appreciate the dollars they save by being able to make reservations well in advance. Teams that participate in a Power League and the JVA World Challenge save money because entry fees are lower than qualifiers; this trickles down to the parents in the form of lower club dues. Ron Kordes, Club Director of [KIVA](#) in Louisville, says “parents love their club season schedule and the limited hotel nights when traveling to other sites in the Mideast Power League”. In the MEPL, travel time is an important benefit because all four league sites are typically within a 5 hour drive for all participating teams. Tournament play ends by 4pm on Sunday which allows participants to travel home that day and players can avoid missing any school on Monday.

Facility Revenue

Junior clubs that own their own facility rely on events to bring in revenue. Power Leagues insure a set schedule of events with a guaranteed number of teams, plus spectators paying admission fees and spending money at concession stands. Sports Performance is the sole owner of the Great Lakes Power League, which has grown into the largest private volleyball league in the United States with approximately 400 teams playing in five different divisions. It includes teams from Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan and Indiana. Sports Performance will guarantee nearby participating clubs who also own facilities a schedule of dates at the participating clubs’ facilities. By sharing the hosting responsibilities, clubs can put their profit right back into their programs and facility operations. It is a win-win for everyone.



POWER LEAGUE STRUCTURE

One of the most successful models of a Power League is a shared league in which the dates rotate between cities within a 2-6 hour radius and the league utilizes the facilities of all partners. While the 13's and 14's are playing in one location, the 15's and 16's, and 17's and 18's are playing in another location. This is a great model since teams will only travel on the dates that their club is not hosting their age division.

Typically, Power Leagues are comprised of two days of competition during a weekend with two waves per day. There are anywhere from 28-32 teams that play in each wave. The morning wave will run from 8am-2pm and the afternoon wave from 3pm-9pm. Each Power League varies on the number of host sites for competition, so depending on the weekend a Power League with multiple sites could have different age groups competing in different cities. Below are a list of well-known Power Leagues and their competition structure:

[Great Lakes Power League](#)

Host(s): Sports Performance Volleyball Club (Great Lakes Center) in Aurora, Illinois
Divisions: 18/17, 16/15, 14, 13, 12/11, Mini Volley (10 and under)
Format: 8 days of competition for 13s-18s (4 weekend dates), 6 days of competition for 10s-12s (3 weekend dates). Typically a 3 match guarantee per day.

[Mideast Power League](#)

Host(s): Team Indiana in Indianapolis, KIVA in Louisville, Team Z in Cincinnati, and Munciana in Muncie, IN
Divisions: 18/17, 16/15, 14/13 & 12
Format: Each division will play at each location once. All age divisions except 12s will have 8 days of competition (4 weekend dates). 12s will have 6 days of competition (3 weekend dates).

[Midwest Power League](#)

Host(s): Premier Academy, Maumee Sports Center in Maumee, Ohio
Divisions: Ages 12-18
Format: 3-4 matches per day, each team plays in all dates listed in their age division

[Mid-Atlantic Power League](#)

Host(s): Convention Centers with Hosts Lucky Dog in Hampton Rd, VA, Triangle VBC IN Raleigh, NC, and DVA in York, PA
Divisions: BLACK: 16, 17, and 18 & Under, BLUE: 14, 15 and 16 & Under, RED: 13 and 14 & Under
Format: 6 match guarantee, Two waves on Saturday, One wave followed by bracket play on Sunday



[Northern Lights Power League](#)

Host(s): Northern Lights Juniors (Midwest Volleyball Warehouse) in Burnsville, MN

Divisions: 18/17, 16/15, 14/13 & 12/11

Format: 5 League Dates and 2 Optional Seeding Dates consisting of play on a Saturday or Sunday.

[Tour of Texas](#)

Host(s): Austin Juniors in Austin, TX, Texas Advantage Volleyball, Skyline Juniors, and Dallas Summit in Dallas, TX and Houston Juniors in Houston, TX

Divisions: 18s, 17s, 16s, 15s, 14s, 13s, 12s

Format: 2 Tour Qualifiers (Austin and San Antonio), 3 Tour Stops in Houston and Dallas, and teams are tiered in Divisions I-III based on the results. There are 12-16 pre-qualified teams in age groups 14-18 that qualify for the top Division the next season.

Initial Seeding: For the first Power League date, teams are seeded according to their overall power league and regional finishes the year before, and input from the coaches. That first round of play is then used to "confirm" or adjust the seeding for the second play day. If your team is seeded in the bottom half it does not mean that you cannot get into the top half during the season.

Team Movement: Each week, teams will move depending on their finish. Each Power League can vary in terms of how many teams they allow to move up or down each week. Sometimes 2 teams can move and sometimes only 1. Teams will not be moved after their final play date - where they finish in their pool will determine their final finish in the league.

Age Divisions: Some Power Leagues such as the Mideast, the Mid-Atlantic, and the Northern Lights Power Leagues combine age groups (13/14, 15/16, 17/18) in order to guarantee a high level of competition and allow the stronger teams to play up. The Great Lake Power League chooses to keep age divisions separated at the 13s and 14s level since each division consists of enough teams to field a high level of competition, but then it combines the 15s/16s and 17s/18s.

In regards to the Mid-Atlantic Power League schedule, Sherry Fadool, Executive Director of [Triangle Volleyball Club](#) states "The collaboration of club directors from various regions is essential to our success. Despite on court rivalries we have a great working relationship rooted in a shared vision of MAPL- high level interregional competition that is affordable and also results in no missed days of school. Get more with less sacrifice." Club Directors make the schedules so they have the flexibility to accommodate one another and their teams. This builds a positive relationship between club directors because by working together to create the Power League schedule, different clubs host each weekend, rather than one club hosting and reaping the benefits.



Fadool also adds “what is really cool is how clubs collaborate in MAPL. We have socials, lots of fun, staff get-togethers. It is a very positive leadership model.” Tom Lowrey from [Virginia Elite](#) agrees. “It (Mid-Atlantic Power League) has really helped push our relationship to be even greater and more useful... and it is allowing us to develop further relationships with other clubs that have similar missions and visions. Since we don't compete for kids we can compete on the court and really cooperate off the court.”

For many clubs who host a Power League event in the MAPL, the goal is not to generate a profit but to break-even, while also being able to create an event beyond the normal tournament experience. “Last year we had an environmental theme ‘Going Green’. We launched an environmental awareness program on the impact of sports drink bottles on the environment. With that in mind we gave away reusable water bottles to every participant and FREE dry Gatorade (4500 servings!). So it’s no wonder we don’t make money but we truly made a difference. The maintenance staff kept telling me how much cleaner the gym was and how little trash/recycles they took out. It was really great!” says Fadool, Triangle VBC.

Not only are Power Leagues benchmarking the direction of junior club volleyball through high quality events at a lower cost, they are offering an avenue for collaboration: juniors working for juniors. So if you do not have a Power League in your area that works for you, gather your fellow club directors and get it going!

For more information on the JVA and Power Leagues visit www.jvaonline.org.