



Getting to know GMVAs new preferred supplier and partner in the search for college scholarships, Sandra Brunke from VolleyUSA:

Very cool that you came out to the Beach Volley Victorian Open in February. How did you like the event and Melbourne?

Fun event, especially being in the middle of St Kilda Festival :) It was my first time in Melbourne and I felt immediately connected. I really enjoyed the international atmosphere and the open minded people, the mix of historic buildings, modern architecture, parks and creative spirit. I'm originally from Berlin, Germany and my first thought was "wow, this is like Berlin in nice" :)

You have played college volleyball in Arizona and Hawaii and been through the entire process of receiving a volleyball scholarship in the USA. When did you start supporting young athletes with the recruiting process?

I coincidentally found out about the opportunity of playing college volleyball in the US and had no idea about the league system, never heard about the NCAA and their strict rules and regulations, didn't know how to get in touch with the right coaches, what tests to take and how to prepare for them, how to fill out application paperwork, what visa I needed-the bureaucratic and organizational hurdles where endless.

I was lucky that I had the support of a good friend, but the whole process was time consuming and draining. While I was playing in Hawaii, various players from Germany approached me and showed interest in playing college volleyball in the US. I started helping players for free, but the demand picked up and I felt like there were a lot of players who needed professional support. I decided to write a Business Plan for my Master Thesis and while I was writing it I got excited and thought "I need to do this" :) I played professional volleyball in France afterwards and slowly started building up the recruiting agency "VolleyUSA". That was 8 years ago :)

What are the advantages of playing college volleyball in the USA?

It's a great chance to combine education and volleyball on a high level, experience a new country and get everything financed through the volleyball scholarship. The personal development adjusting to a new culture is absolutely incredible and the international friends and connections you make mostly last through life times. My teammates from Arizona and Hawaii are still like a family to me.

The atmosphere at a college volleyball competition is a unique experience. The sport gyms are usually packed with enthusiastic fellow students and fans. Many teams have their own cheerleaders, a marching band, fan-club, dance group, and much more which creates fantastic vibes. College matches are mostly broadcast via television, radio and the Internet, thus reaching a high number of viewers and citizens.

I remember when I drove my moped in Hawaii after the first week and the guy in the car next to me screamed "Heyyyy..number 8...!" I was almost shocked and thought-how in the world is that possible? :) You truly feel special being a student-athlete :)

What is so special about VolleyUSA?

VolleyUSA exclusively specializes in the recruitment of volleyball players on a very personal basis. Most of you know that I'm constantly on the road to attend youth tournaments in order to personally meet the players/parents/coaches. I'm also spending quite some time in the USA to maintain the direct and long established relationship to the American Coaches. The goal is to find an American institution that perfectly matches the individual qualities of the player and completely meets his/her athletic, academic and personal needs. The most valuable thing for me is to see how a player grows and develops. There are a lot of thankful moments :)





What does a volleyball scholarship cover?

A full scholarship covers all expenses, such as tuition fees, room and board, training equipment as well as travel costs, hotels, and full board at away games. The average value ranges between 20,000 and 65,000 US dollars PER YEAR and will be usually renewed until you obtain your Bachelor's degree. In some cases, the costs for a Master's degree are covered as well. With a partial scholarship you might pay a portion of the costs for room/board and/or books. While female players have a very high chance of being granted a full scholarship, male players should only expect being offered a partial scholarship.

How are chances to receive a Beach volleyball scholarship?

Beach Volleyball is still an emerging sport, but luckily it's developing well. Each year there are more and more schools adding their own Beach volleyball program. For a Beach Volleyball scholarship only Coaches obviously want to see some success from national and preferably international Beach Volley tournaments.

Where can players find more information and what is the first step if somebody is interested in applying for a volleyball scholarship?

More information and experience reports can be found on the Website of VolleyUSA www.volleyusa.com . First step would be to fill out the chance evaluation on the Website of VolleyUSA.

What kind of advice would you give to young athletes in general?

Work hard and don't be afraid to make mistakes or take risks :)

When are you coming back to Australia?

I'm planning on attending the Australian Junior Championships in Canberra at the end of September/beginning of October and will visit GMVA in October or November :)
Good luck at the State Team Trials this weekend!

