

Innovation & history

The Chesapeake Region combines a rich history on and around the court to make it one of the most prestigious organizations under the USA Volleyball umbrella.

The Chesapeake Region, incorporated in Virginia, also serves the states of Maryland and Delaware as well as the District of Columbia. The association morphed out of the old Region 3 in 1977 for consolidation purposes.

Even with more than 7,500 active members, the organization does not maintain a specific office or employ a full-time staff member. Much of the work is shouldered on current commissioner Lisa DiGiacinto, who follows direction from an engaged board of directors from her personal residence. In that context, she is following a no-frills budget philosophy that Ron Sommer inherited when he became the commissioner of Region 3 in 1971 with \$157 in a bank account and a bill for \$450 for guides (the bill was later forgiven by USA Volleyball).

"We really don't have an official office address," DiGiacinto said. "Whoever is the commissioner uses their house as the primary office during their tenure. It kind of keeps with our philosophy of relying heavily on volunteers who are so passionate about our sport."

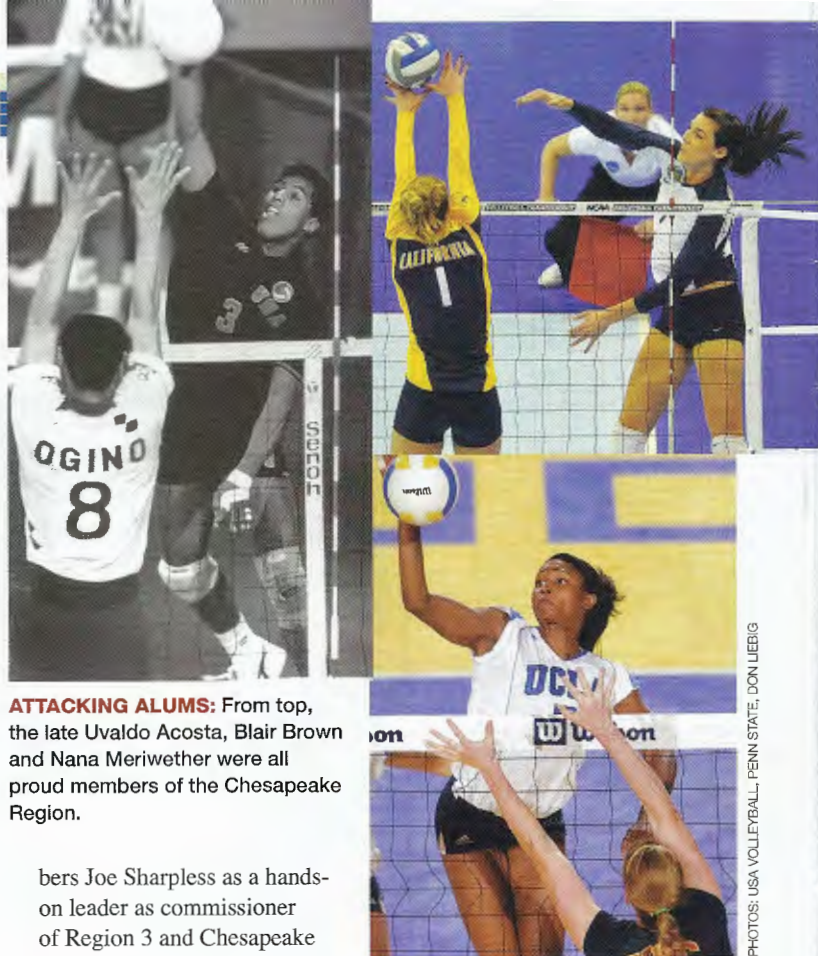
Members of the region are indoctrinated into playing the game correctly at an early age. There is a significant history of the region producing internationally respected officials and scorekeepers, including Nancy Sharpless, who was the head scorekeeper at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Even at tournaments for 12-year-olds, the players get a hands-on approach to serving as chair referees and scorekeepers.

"It's a great way for them to learn the rules as well as appreciate the role a referee plays in a match," DiGiacinto said. "They are more likely to respect what somebody is seeing up in the chair if they have been there themselves."

The Chesapeake Region remains committed to adult level competition, as well as the juniors. "We still field quite a few teams," DiGiacinto said. "People stay with us for a long time. I like to think we make it fun for them."

DiGiacinto is a lot like many of her predecessors. Sommer remem-



ATTACKING ALUMS: From top, the late Uvaldo Acosta, Blair Brown and Nana Meriwether were all proud members of the Chesapeake Region.

bers Joe Sharpless as a hands-on leader as commissioner of Region 3 and Chesapeake (1977-79).

"Joe was the Region president, editor of the DIGS newsletter, treasurer, tournament "boss" and anything else that needed to be done," Sommer said. "He actually attended Middle River's first hosted tournament to make sure that everything ran smoothly for our first attempt."

DiGiacinto makes sure the region does not live in the past. A sophisticated web site earned the region USA Volleyball's Viggo O. Nelson National Communications award, much of the credit going to webmaster Charles Ezigbo.

"We like to think we are evolving and making things better for our members," she said. "That's what motivates the people who makes this region special." 🌀

Chesapeake Region

■ **Year established** — The region originally was part of a larger geographic area on the East Coast, but became the Chesapeake Region in 1977.

■ **Headquarters** — Incorporated in Virginia.

■ **Membership (approximate)** — 7,661 (adult, 2,549; juniors, 5,112)

■ **Key staff** — Lisa DiGiacinto (commissioner); Julie Briggs (president of board of directors); Barbara Cline (registrar); Tia Storey (treasurer); Charles Ezigbo (webmaster)

■ **Famous alumni** — Blair Brown (four-time NCAA Division I Women's Championship team member, Penn State University), Uvaldo Acosta (George Mason University) Ric Lucas (George Mason University), Nana Meriwether (UCLA), Joe Sharpless (former region commissioner), Nancy Sharpless (FIVB scorekeeper), Dick Smith (three different terms as region commissioner), "Pop" Idell (national referee, former USAV Volleyball vice president).

■ **Major events** — Capitol Hill Classic, a three-day junior tour-

namment held over President's weekend run by Metro American VBC; Region is the geographic area for NEQ.

■ **Key venues** — Virginia Volleyball Center, Maryland Juniors Sports Complex, Champions of Tomorrow, Meadowbrook Sports Complex, Columbia Volleyball House.

Unique facts about the Chesapeake Region

- CHRVA High Performance Youth won the National division at HP Championships in 2010.
- Board member Rob Bailey is a top-ranked beach player, winning the prestigious Motherlode Masters title on several occasions.
- The region can claim two Friermood Award winners in Ed Heisler and Joe Sharpless.
- Nancy Sharpless was the first person in the FIVB to be certified as an international scorekeeper and served as the head scorekeeper at the 1984 Olympic Games.
- The Chesapeake Region also has four current International scorekeepers: Dixie Collins, Karen Daukantas-Jones, Debbie Reed, Tom Sullivan.