



Digs – Fall 2016

Beating the Odds

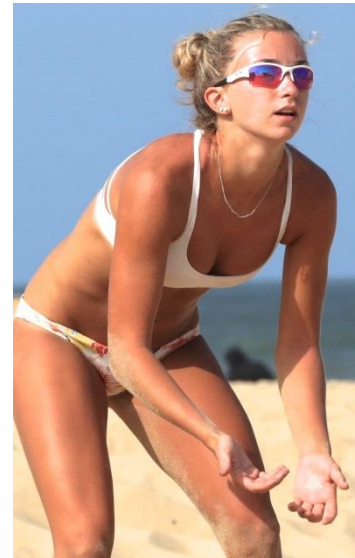
Jordan McKinney, class of 2018, knows about hard work and commitment. As a smaller sand volleyball player from Northern Virginia, she's had to work extra and be very creative in order to compete at the national level.

Jordan played in her first outdoor tournament when she was just 12 years old. She and her partner won that tournament and by the next summer she knew that beach volleyball was her sport and she wanted to play it in college. But things didn't come easy for her. She was an excellent defender but was told she needed an offensive game to really compete. And not just any offensive game; she needed to "be able to hit every shot, develop an aggressive serve, and be able to put the ball away."

Irv Rodrigues with CHRVA told Jordan, "You've got the defense but you need to develop a complete offensive and defensive game if you want to be able to compete nationally. I'll be honest... It's not going to be easy for you. You're going to have to work really hard. You're going to have to play with adults – a lot. You need to play with and against boys. You will need to be creative in your training and think outside the box. You need to jump high and hit harder and run faster than everyone else."

These were not easy things for the 14-year-old girl to hear and certainly not an easy task for someone who was only 5'6". But this didn't stop Jordan. She took that advice and decided to focus on her offensive game, stopped playing indoor volleyball altogether and started running track and field to improve her conditioning and increase her vertical. Not playing indoor volleyball was not an easy decision for a young girl on the east coast. No one else that she knew was doing this. People thought she was crazy. Local indoor coaches thought she was crazy. They told her to play indoor and practice in the sand when she could during the summer. But she said no, this was her dream and she was going to make it.

She started working with a local AVP beach pro, Andrew Dentler, who believed in her and thought she could do it. Andrew worked with Jordan on her offensive game and helped her to be a super aggressive player both mentally and physically. To supplement her skills in the sand, Jordan also started working with a strength and conditioning coach, Bruce Tran. Bruce helped Jordan to get stronger, jump higher and run faster. There were days when she practiced with



Coach Andrew outside in 50 degree raining weather. There were days when she practiced in the early mornings while it was still dark before school, using car headlights to illuminate the courts. There were days when she had high school track practice and then went to train with Coach Bruce at 10:00 p.m. She played with her co-ed partner Christian Phung in as many Adult tournaments as she could. And they won a lot. And when a female partner wasn't available, she played the Men's division and won! Jordan never gave up her dream and she never stopped working.

Flash forward to this past summer. Jordan became a top-5 nationally-ranked player and took the silver medal at the USAV JBT Nationals in Milwaukee. She and her partner beat the number one ranked U18 team in the country. She has placed in the top 10 in all of the national tournaments she has played in so far this year. She's taken gold at two Get Noticed Beach Volleyball Recruiting Showcases this summer. And yes, she is getting noticed. As a rising junior, she already has five D1 college offers that she is currently evaluating.

This story is one of hope and determination. Jordan doesn't come from a family of volleyball players. She's not tall. She's not even that big. But she had a dream and she was determined to work hard to achieve it.

In summary, she did not follow the traditional path most juniors take. She played co-ed, in adult leagues, and used every avenue she could to improve her game – and it paid off! She has her choice of colleges to pick from including top universities in California.