

# Penn State Women's Volleyball Booster Club News

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## Greetings from the Incoming Club President

By George Weigand

### Welcome to the 2002 Volleyball Season

On behalf of the Penn State Volleyball Booster Club, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome each of you to a new season. We are looking forward to another exciting year of Penn State Women's Volleyball. Coach is excited about our new recruits, as well as our returning veterans. The Booster Club is planning some additional activities and is looking forward to active participation from all of our members. I am encouraging each of you to recruit a new club member in order to expand our support of the team. If you would like to volunteer to assist with any of our activities, please email me at [gweigand@else.org](mailto:gweigand@else.org) or write to:

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George

## East Coast Tournament: Memorial Day Weekend at Penn State

By Albert Rozo

Once again, the Booster Club will provide a major retail presence at the East Coast Tournament held Memorial Day weekend at Penn State and the surrounding communities. Volunteers are needed to "man" the different sales locations. Along with our usual T-shirts, other merchandise this year includes seat cushions, pins, and more. This is the club's biggest fundraising event of the year, so if you would like to volunteer, please contact Albert or Colette Rozo.

## The Libero

By Mike Schall

The NCAA Women's Volleyball Rules Committee adopted the "Libero" Rule for the 2002 NCAA Women's season at its rules meeting in February. The Libero (pronounced LEE-bah-ro) is a designated back row player, intended to be used as a ball control specialist. The libero is allowed to replace any player in the back row without counting as a substitution.

The libero will wear a contrasting jersey to the rest of the team. So, if Penn State is at home, wearing their white jerseys, the libero will wear blue. The libero will still have a number. The following restrictions apply to the libero position:

- the libero plays only in the back row
- the libero may not serve
- the libero may not block or attempt to block

- the libero may not attack the ball if contact is made while the ball is completely above the height of the net
- the libero may not overhand set a teammate IF the libero set that ball to her from the attack zone (in front of the 10 foot line)

Again, the libero does not count as a substitution and the libero can “replace” more than one player. Coaches will now be allowed twelve total substitutions in addition to the libero “replacements.”

The libero was first introduced internationally by the FIVB (Federation Internationale de Volleyball) in 1998 and was adopted by men’s collegiate volleyball for the 2001 season.

## **Perception and Reality: Kaleena Jean Walters**

By Roger Deitz

What is your image of a Penn State recruit? Do you see Lindsay Anderson or Catie Schumacher or perhaps, Miska Levy? Can we really learn anything looking at the cover of a book? I met this recruit at the Early Bird Tournament in Baltimore this past January before I had seen her play. She is just 5 feet 9 inches tall (she says 5 feet 8 and 3/4 's) in excellent athletic condition. But not the muscular power appearance of many expectations. She was easy to talk with asking questions, responding spontaneously displaying a very attractive personality. She has a calm demeanor suggesting a person of considered opinions and private character. But that is before I saw her play. Then..

It is as if a switch got turned on the minute she crossed the sideline. Suddenly she is all action, moving about the court with purpose, enthusiasm and energy that is unending.

This is not frantic but controlled activity moving to proper positions for digging, covering, hitting and encouraging. She was the first to slap hands with the players, jump up in joy for a point made or a great action by a teammate. She seemed to know where everyone was to be on the court and managed to give directions that were easily accepted by her team. When errors were made she was the first to support the player who erred.

As a primary passer, I am not sure that in the two tournaments that I saw her play she ever missed a serve/receive. When she was playing defense she managed to be up under the hitter waiting for the block and often got balls up that seemed destined to score a point for the other team. As a hitter I observed that she got blocked hard a couple of times and then shifted to a new tactic eliminating the block potential. She is able hit down the line, cross- court capitalizing on the opportunities. As the first server on her team she moves the serve around from side to side, short to long creating confusion on the receivers.

I could go on but you should know this is Kaleena Jean Walters who currently plays for the Adidas Penn Juniors out of Pittsburgh. She played for Mount Lebanon High School varsity for four years. They were second in the states during her freshman and sophomore years and won the championship in her junior year This past year they were 3<sup>rd</sup>. Kaleena began playing volleyball in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade when her mother, Kendra, was coaching a team. Then she joined a club in the fifth grade and has been active in club volleyball since then. Although she played softball, pitching and playing infield, during the early middle school years her first love was volleyball so softball was eliminated after her freshman year. "Too much to do with softball and

volleyball happening during the same season" Wore me out" The result of this concentration and commitment was to be All State 2<sup>nd</sup> team as a freshman and first team All State each of the remaining three years.

When asked why she chose Penn State she responded that after watching the Stanford/Penn State final in 1997 she set a goal to attend either school. During the following years Penn State seemed the better choice for her allowing her parents to watch her play during the college years and being a bit closer to home and it's attendant attractions. "Penn State just left me feeling like easy and comfortable: All Friendly and welcoming. Almost as if we had known each other for a long time". I asked her if she had set many goals and was not surprised to learn that she has. She wants to be an Academic All -American as well as earn a National Championship ring. The confident but not showy determination indicates that she knows what that will take and is willing to do the work. She has an unusual vertical jump developed during her middle school years by doing 50 squat jumps, 100 toe raises and 50 push-ups 5 days a week for a month. Then if she meets that regime her father, Tom, would take her out to an event of her choosing. Then another month and another until it became a routine habit. Her reward was going to see the Steelers or when Miami came to town to play the Pitt Panthers. She admits her enjoyment of Miami University football and her Ohio State jacket are not destined to be seen or heard in State College. Now the training workouts, professionally designed, are much more demanding and the reward is just being ready for the collegiate scene in August.

Public relations and Advertising are her expected majors in college with a lot of English courses in both literature and

writing. The history of the United States is a favorite reading subject especially the last 150 years. Her favorite novel is "To Kill a Mockingbird" dealing as it does with the subject of segregation and the conflict/resolution of individuals. Parts of her attempts at writing revolve around poetry, which she says helps her work out things that are confusing.

Exciting, caring players have spoiled us Penn State women volleyball fans in the past. Kaleena will continue the tradition.

## **Social Events for the Upcoming 2002 Season**

By Judith Stevens, Social Chair

We will begin the 2002 season with the annual picnic on Sunday, August 11, 2002, from noon to 3 p.m. This event will be held at Sunset Park.

The picnic allows the Booster Club members the opportunity of meeting the team, coaches, and staff and we always look forward to visiting with the players' parents.

Chuck and Mary Ann Haas have graciously agreed to be responsible for the four Coach's Luncheons to be held at "The Penn Stater". Times will be announced.

The dates for these events are as follows:

Friday, August  
Friday, September 13  
Friday, October 25  
Friday, November 8

Our post game events will begin on Saturday, August 31st\* with an ice cream social. Five more socials will follow and you may mark them down on your calendars.

Saturday, September 28\*  
Saturday, October 12  
Saturday, October 26  
Saturday November 9\*  
Saturday, November 30

We need volunteers to help with the socials. Please contact me at 861-6294 and let me know if you are available on any of the above dates, especially the ice cream social on August 31<sup>st</sup>\*.

*\* - A reminder - check your calendars for the football weekends before you volunteer.*

Thanks to all who have helped with the planning of the socials. A special thanks to Chuck and Mary Ann Haas and George and Kay Weigand, who have provided me with a "tough act to follow," but I'll do my best with the help of volunteer booster club members.

Judith (Judie) Stevens

## **Northeast Qualifiers: Samantha Ann Tortorello and Kimberly Anne de Lambert Holm**

By Roger Deitz

At an earlier tournament this year I had the good fortune to meet Kaleena Walters and her parents. Kaleena has been invited to play at Penn State I thought it might be useful to interview her before the fall season. We

arranged to talk at the Northeast Qualifier. Good fortune permitted two other short interviews with players who will be coming to Penn State in the fall. But you ask: "What is the Northeast Qualifier?"

Many volleyball fans may not be familiar with the club volleyball scene. It is huge, growing and receives little if any media attention. It is the springboard for most (possibly all) of the collegiate women players that we see and have seen at the University level. Club volleyball for women thrives in nearly every major community in the United States. Here in State College there is a team made up of players from Holidaysburg, Altoona, Huntingdon and town. Over the entire state of Pennsylvania there are nearly 100 clubs and in the Midwest Chicago has nearly 50 clubs within the metropolitan district. California exceeds these numbers significantly.

What is club volleyball? Enthusiasts and business people organize a team or teams in age groups beginning at age 12 moving chronologically up through 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. Teams normally have between 9 and 12 players and several coaches. The player's families pay for their daughters coaching, gym time, uniforms, travel and incidentals including food. Teams practice one or more times per week depending on the availability of gym time. Since some players may have to travel some distance this also influences the number of times practice is held. Ashley Pedersen traveled for 2 hours in one direction to get to her club practices.

Club fees vary from about \$1000 a season to over \$2000 but that does not include travel, hotel and other expenses. Many teams do not travel frequently and participate in a limited number of tournaments. Tournaments are held beginning in January

and continue until July. Teams that do a lot of practicing (Sports Performance, the club of Bonnie Bremner and Robyn Guokas, practice 5 days a week for nearly 5 hours per day) are more expensive. In addition this club may travel internationally as well as across the United States. Many All-Americans started at Sports Performance.

Coaching at the club level has every gradation of ability. Some coaches have modest experience in either volleyball or coaching. Others are eminently qualified to work with the young people. I believe that Mike Schall, Sarah Schall, Shannon Bortner and Josh Steinbach have all had their turns working with club teams. In the Midwest and Far West training young women to play may be a full time occupation with owned facilities and yearlong programs.

In order to create National Club champions each year in the 14 and over age groups 8 qualifying tournaments are held in strategic geographic locations. The Northeast Qualifier is held in Baltimore over the 3 day Easter weekend. Three hundred and 40 teams were on hand with parents, friends, families and fans this past weekend. A cursory count showed 25 states represented with many teams from California, Illinois and Texas although the majority were from the Eastern Seaboard. Additionally more than 160 coaches from colleges were there to evaluate talent including the coaches or their assistants from Ohio State, Wisconsin, Florida and Penn State. Filling the referee stand were 101 rated persons. The event is staged in the Baltimore Convention Center where courts numbering 54 are erected. Play schedules are created for morning play beginning about 8 AM (AM WAVE) and finishing around 3 PM. Then a second group (PM WAVE) plays from 3 PM until finishing after 10 PM. Not infrequently ties

and long games will keep players there until after 11 PM

To my surprise playing in this tournament were 2 other young women who have committed to play at Penn State beginning in September of 2002. So the three players are Kaleena Jean Walters, Samantha Ann Tortorello and Kimberly Anne de Lambert Holm. Kaleena plays for the Penn Juniors located in Pittsburgh while Samantha and Kimberly are members of the Sports Performance 18's team from Chicago.

It is difficult not to wax enthusiastically about these young women. Kim and Sam are 6 feet or over while Kaleena is just 5 feet 9 inches. Sam is a setter who strides and gallops around the court getting to errant passes and sending them appropriately to locations for power hitters to demolish. Kim is a middle who terrorizes opposition while she patrols the net blocking and smashing. Kaleena manages to rise above the net on exceptional elevation to power balls into the opponent's court but excels at passing and denying kills.

My interview with Sam was held in the corridor of the Convention Center as hundreds of people passed by us. She and her three sisters are all setters in volleyball and have worn the same number 5. Sam has been playing since the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and at Sports Performance for 8 years. She committed to Penn State last March when she visited the campus: Claims she liked it in March so she is really going to be happy in the autumn! Enjoys school especially the arts, mathematics and English with a particular appreciation for Shakespeare. Her favorite novel is "To Kill a Mockingbird" which is a novel mentioned by many of the young people of this generation.

Sam moves about the court with the grace of a dancer emphasized by her lean long body. Her hands are quick and fluid soundlessly guiding the ball. Long arching sets are made from all locations on the court and frequently over her head for a backward set that must surprise even the most sophisticated defender. Defensively she is a tiger after anything that may fall regardless of the gymnastics required reaching it. With so many powerful hitters on her team she is not called upon for much offense but she can hit from the back row and has the sneaky ability to use the left-hand surprising defenders.

Kim is a tall blonde haired middle covering the net effectively with athletic precision. As a more muscular player she hits slides with authority and overpasses with finality. Digging her hits is infrequent. The match I watched her play was very one-sided giving me little opportunity to see her perform. Her volleyball career began in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade joining Sports Performance in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Early in the recruiting wars she realized that the Big Ten was the right place for her. This allows her to play close to home and participate in outstanding competition. Penn State was the staff and facilities most attractive. So early in 2001 she committed. Then she and her teammates concentrated on winning the state championships for the first time in the school history.

Kim will be in the school of Liberal Arts when matriculating this fall perhaps concentrating on history and languages. Her reading provoked an interest in writing, which found an outlet in the high school newspaper. Favorite books are the "Cats Cradle " and "Lord of the Flies" Our interview was shortened when the team was called to the court.

A more comprehensive interview with both Kim and Sam will appear later in the year after the summer Volleyball Express Camp. Since I had more time to talk with Kaleena her interview appears separately.

## **She's Back: Robyn Guokas Set to Return**

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By Roger Deitz

It was a real rush that the few fans at the Spring Tourney felt when we saw Robyn Guokas come into the gym ready to play. She had endured a season of disappointment and ill health. Many were concerned that her volleyball days would be cut short. Now we applauded this smiling enthusiastic young woman as she took her place in the starting lineup: A lineup that is so entirely different from the last few years. Gone are the SCHU, "Chicken" Bortner, Nadia Edwards and Amanda Rome reminding us that collegiate athletic careers are short lived. We wish those well who have moved on and eagerly look forward to the new team. Well not entirely new as many faces of last year remain.

LIBERO (pronounced many different ways) is a new position to the ever-changing rules of collegiate women's volleyball. This is a position used by the men the last few years and common in international play. During the Olympics this role was filled by Stacey Sykora who competed at Rec Hall a few years ago with Texas A & M But the person filling that role for Penn State this year is one of our more experienced members (She won't ever be old!).

Miss Hilary ("TWITCH") Sexton was custom designed for this position. Sykora won awards for her play and Hilary is of the same mold: getting to every ball, passing

nearly every serve and running down errant balls, A dynamo of energy that pervades the entire team. And from the fan standpoint she plays more now so we see more of her.

Robyn manhandled the net blocking in tandem with all combinations possible and frequently as a single. Remember that Robyn was a blocking leader in the Big Ten her first year so we can look forward to her helping this team improve dramatically from last year. A new aspect of Robyn's game is her more powerful offensive ability. I do not remember that she hit with authority in the past but during this event she was rising up over the net and spiking with terminal velocity.

A new innovation for a Russ Rose team is jump serving. It has been used sparingly in the past. Erin Iceman has got a very well hit and difficult jump serve. The ball moves around creating confusion and consternation for the receivers. She was so consistent it would be likely that we shall see a lot of her. The left-handed spin adds an element that most receivers are not prepared for. Additionally Erin was playing the opposite enabling her to take advantage of her left-handed swing. She hit with pace and location.

Cara continues to do her thing and do it very well. She manages the "shoot" with precision surprising nearly every opponent not previously victimized. Combining this with the slide or "9" and her very quick "quicks" these execution or finesse plays give dimension to the offensive plan. Ashley maintains her kill abilities with a new angle that seems very potent. This is a shot that finds the hole in the defense close to the net in the opposite front quadrant. Combining with others in the front she managed many blocks during this tourney. Syndie was solid passing from the back row. She was a

primary receiver and played all around contributing many solid attacks with an agility that is surprising for one of her height. She also was an effective blocker. It seems to be contagious with Robyn back.

EM and Tab were used in the back row effectively with Tab receiving serve and EM digging effectively when not galloping after any errant ball. Jessica was smooth and on targets all daylong choosing hitters with attention to opportunities.

So the 2002 season is eagerly awaited. With an appreciation for the skills that the new recruits will bring to the team, Coach faces the enviable position of an excess of riches. The winners are going to be the fans, as we seem how he puts this winning team together.

**Penn State Women's Volleyball Booster Club News**  
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**The Penn State Volleyball Booster Club**

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**LET'S GO LIONS!**

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