

## BRIEFS

### Hannegan's golf

The 29th annual C.B. Hannegan's Golf Tournament will be played on Oct. 5 at La Rinconada Country Club. The tax deductible entry fee of \$200 per person includes green fees, a golf cart, gifts and prizes and an all day barbecue lunch served on the course, followed by a steak dinner at C.B. Hannegan's.

Proceeds will benefit the daughter and grandsons of Chris Benson, co-owner of C.B. Hannegan's. His daughter, Samantha, is deaf and recent widowed, and is the mother of two young boys, one 6 and the other just 11 months.

E-mail Benson at catering@cbhannegans.com or call 408.395.1233.

### Rowing club

The Los Gatos Rowing Club is looking for boys and girls in the eighth through 12th grades interested in joining its novice program that begins Sept. 10 at Lexington Reservoir. No rowing experience is necessary to join the nationally-recognized competitive team. For more information, visit [www.lgrc.org](http://www.lgrc.org) or e-mail novice@lgrc.org.

### Wildcat Invitational

The 20th annual Wildcat Invitational golf tournament will be held on Sept. 21 at La Rinconada Country Club with a 1 p.m. shotgun start following 11:15 a.m. registration. The tourney is hosted by the Los Gatos Athletic Association and net proceeds benefit Los Gatos High School.

The format of the tournament is a four-person scramble and the \$190 per player cost includes green fees, golf cart, tee prizes, lunch and dinner (\$35 for dinner only).

The LGAA is also looking for tee sponsors (\$250 per tee, \$125 for a shared tee).

Call Bill Frey or Joe Zanardi at 408.395.2002 or Bob Allen at 408.209.1470.

# SPORTS



COMPLETE SPORTS COVERAGE OF AREA SCHOOLS, RECREATION LEAGUES

## Ripp's 'Vision' leads to volleyball success

### Vision Volleyball Club among nation's best

By MARISSA LYMAN

From August to October, you can find them in their high school gyms as far away as San Francisco and as nearby as Los Gatos. The lucky ones play into November, competing for championships after their regular season comes to a close.

But after the final statistics have been placed in the record books, the hours of practice and training are not over for the region's most talented volleyball girls. In fact, at the Los Gatos-based Vision Volleyball club, the hard work is just beginning.

"They all start out just because they love the sport," Joe Ripp, the club's founder and one of its many coaches, said of the Vision girls.

Ripp, along with a few of the friends he had made through coaching, started Vision with the idea to set out on his own and see what he could build. Twelve years later, the club has grown into a commanding regional and national force.

This year alone, Vision made history by sweeping every age division in the Northern California Volleyball Association and then sending a remarkable 12 teams to the Junior Olympics in Florida. And as if that weren't enough, four of those teams went on to medal: three bronze and one gold.

"It's probably one of the most amazing years for a club," said Ryan Cooling, assistant coach of the bronze-medaling 18 Gold team. "It's a testament to what Joe's built and the coaches that he's hired."

Indeed, Vision's staff is comprised of prominent coaches from both high schools and universities around the area.

Cooling, for instance, is the head coach and athletic director at Presentation High School. As some-



Photograph by Chi Kwong Chow  
Vision Volleyball Club coach and founder Joe Ripp (pointing in photo above) leads a group of campers through warm-ups. Vision ranks as one of the top girls volleyball clubs in the region and the nation. Above, Vision camper Megan McConnell serves the ball during a summer camp session.

one who left for a time to work at a rival club, Cooling sees the camaraderie among the coaches at Vision as something that sets it apart.

"The coaches really support each other's teams," Cooling said.

This camaraderie and support translate into a visible commitment that has helped the club grow and improve over the years. For the players and coaches, it has truly

made Vision into a source of pride.

"When you're proud of something, you constantly want to invest in it," said Will Yuen, head coach of the bronze-medaling 17 Gold Team and an assistant coach at Santa Clara University. "We consistently work hard and train hard and compete, and that's why we have that success."

Yuen feels that a degree of healthy competition within the

club has allowed for Vision to develop the best teams. He also cites making it to the Junior Olympics as a major motivator.

"Do I want my team to be the team that doesn't make JOs?" Yuen said he asked himself during the season. "You never really lose sight of how hard it is to get there."

This is an attitude shared by the players as well.

Erin Longinotti, who graduated this year from Notre Dame Belmont, went to the Junior Olympics as an outside hitter on Vision's 18 Blue team. Though the team did not medal, Longinotti describes

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Photograph by Chi Kwong Chow

**Vision Volleyball Club camper Erica Cross participates in a drill during a summer camp session.**

## Vision

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earning the spot at the Junior Olympics as “the best feeling.”

“This was the first time that any club has sent two teams in the 18 division in open division,” Longinotti said. Open division is comprised of the top 28 teams in the nation.

Even with the same goal in mind, the club’s teams have no shared regimen that ensures their success. If anything, many of members of Vision’s staff are grateful that Ripp gives them the freedom to coach as they see fit.

“A lot of the successful clubs across the country ... have a cookie cutter mold of what they want their club to be like at a certain time,” said Jason Mansfield, head coach of the 18 Gold team and an

assistant coach at Stanford University. “[Joe] trusts us to coach them in the way we know.”

This approach is also beneficial to the players as they have the opportunity to learn from different coaches and different styles.

“The best athletes through this process learn what works best for them,” said Yuen, adding that it also helps the coaches to evaluate each girl according to how she plays best.

In that vein, it is readily apparent that Vision’s coaches and staff have really gotten to know their players. Not only are they familiar with their strengths and weaknesses, but also who they are as people. This bond is felt by the players as well.

“Joe Ripp ... really puts all his time and effort into the club to make it the best thing for all the players,” said Lauryn Dowd, a Leigh

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Photograph by Chi Kwong Chow

**Camper Christina York listens along with the other campers as coach Joe Ripp talks about volleyball tactics.**



## SPORTS

### Local girls, boys volleyball club

**Vision Volleyball Club** is one of the many organizations in the area for girls. For information on the club, contact Joe Ripp at 408.356.9181 or visit [www.visionvolleyball.com](http://www.visionvolleyball.com).

Another longstanding volleyball club for girls is the **Jump-start Sports Club**. For information, contact Ed Mattson at 408.378.8590 or visit [jump-startvolleyball.com](http://jump-startvolleyball.com).

Other area girls teams include **Eclipse Volleyball**, contact Daniel Zhang 408.437.8866 or visit [www.geocities.com/eclipsevolleyball](http://www.geocities.com/eclipsevolleyball); and **Club Yahoo!**, contact Gary Mano at

[ghmano@yahoo.com](mailto:ghmano@yahoo.com).

A new organization for boys starting up this fall is the **Point Break Volleyball Club**. Tryouts will be held on Sept. 5-6, 5:30-8 p.m., at Santa Clara High School, for boys 18, 16 and 14 age division teams. Registration is \$25. For more information, visit [www.pointbreakvbc.com](http://www.pointbreakvbc.com) or contact club director Peter Kim at [revmoon@comcast.net](mailto:revmoon@comcast.net).

Another area boys team is the **Apex Boys Volleyball Club**, call 408.362.9005 or visit [www.apexboysvolleyball.com](http://www.apexboysvolleyball.com).

## Vision

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High School graduate who is currently an outside hitter at Santa Clara University. "He inspired me and created more of a passion for volleyball within me." Dowd, from San Jose, feels that this passion is what helped lead her and her team to a silver medal at Junior Olympics during her second year with the club.

These strong relationships prove essential when colleges look to Vision to supplement their future teams.

Dan Kaplan, the club's administrative assistant, has been with Ripp and Vision from the beginning. Through years of experience with the college recruitment process, Kaplan knows the types of schools certain players are drawn to and what schools like the Ivy's and Pac-10 universities are looking for.

"It's a really stressful process," Longinotti said of collegiate recruitment. "When you have people who are constantly backing you up and wanting to help you, it really eases the stress."

Longinotti can now breathe a sigh of relief as she joins Columbia University's women's volleyball team this fall.

"Not everybody gets a scholarship, [but] we happen to get a lot of kids that do," Kaplan said. "It's not like we're alone in that department, but our total number that is going on to play is pretty impressive at this point."

Vision's entire 18 Gold team, for example, have already committed to specific universities. Los Gatos's Rachel Williams, one of the team's

outside hitters, will be joining the Stanford women's volleyball squad once she graduates from Archbishop Mitty High School next spring. Though excited to take the next step, Williams feels lucky to have one more year with a group of people she has been working with since she was 10 years old.

"The coaches, the type of girls that play there—there's a kind of pride," Williams said. "All of the girls are driven and focused and here for the same reason."

Likewise, Longinotti has played with Vision since she was 14. She feels that she will not only be leaving behind the club experience, but also long-lasting friendships.

"When we ended this year at JOs it was really bittersweet," Longinotti said. "I'm leaving behind a great group of people that I've been with for six years."

Even though Dowd has already moved on to the collegiate level, she still keeps in close contact with her former teammates. In fact, her tie to Vision was so strong that she came back to coach for two years.

"[To] give back to a program that gave me so much and getting a chance to teach younger kids what it's like to be a college athlete ... was probably one of the coolest things I'd ever done," Dowd said. "I took a year off, but I'm definitely going back, just because it's such a great program and all the girls are super committed."

With this kind of commitment, the coaches and players alike see Vision and its teams continuing to strengthen and succeed.

"I think Vision is really continuing to head in the right direction," Mansfield said. "As long as we continue to have good coaches and the good kids [that] have always been in this area ... that won't change."