

Top Caliber is gearing up for the 2025 season! We know North Carolina clubs are starting to put their tryout dates out, so we want to get our tryout information out to everyone so that they can make the best decision for their families. This year, our club will be doing things a little differently. This includes a summer evaluation/commitment process. Youth tryouts will still be held in the fall this year, with tryouts running as our traditional tryouts usually run. **There will be more information on 12-14U tryouts later this summer.** Older athletes ages 15-18 will have an evaluation in August, in which we will evaluate all athletes that come to tryouts August 4th-6th, and offer our COMMITMENT to place them on one of our teams in our program, at the skill/age level that we think it is a good fit. We will then bring them back in for further placement in November. **What this means is that the athlete will commit to play for our club, but will not know immediately what level of team they will be on, until they come in for final placements in November.**

The reason we have decided to go with this way of tryouts is simply because it has more pros for us than cons. It provides parents an extended amount of time to make payments. Athletes can get their gear in an orderly fashion. We can schedule our teams for tournaments that reflect appropriate teams in the correct divisions, with time to make changes as needed. Travel logistics can be taken care of way earlier, more access to hotels, better stay and play hotel options, better rates, which will save parents time and money. It allows athletes an extended period to be evaluated instead of just one day. And the main reason is so athletes can focus on their school seasons.

This is the second year in a row that we have held early tryouts. The difference this year is we are doing it with the High School season in mind. As a High School coach myself, this has been on my mind a lot the last year. We have always felt like we wanted to respect the High School season and allow athletes to compete without feeling anxious or burnt out about club season. The seasons run together so much now, that a lot of time kids don't get a chance to be an athlete for their school without it overlapping so much with club season. We also want to trust that the high school season can better the athletes. We see this every year. **Athletes get better by the time club season starts, and yet the team they were selected for sometimes doesn't reflect what really is the best fit for them.** When you are touching a volleyball from June-October every day, athletes are going to get better. When you finish club in June and tryout 3 weeks later, skill change is going to be minimal and the true evaluation process can become flawed.

So what we are offering in August is a Commitment Day/Period. With what we know so far about how many teams we are projecting to have, we will evaluate all of the athletes, and offer a commitment to those who we absolutely know will be a good fit for our club, and that we will

absolutely have a position for come November. Athletes and families are committing to play for Top Caliber and saying that they want to be a part of our club, and trust us to make the best decision and placement for your athlete and for the club. Does this mean that every single athlete will receive a commitment offer in August? We would like to say yes, but we want to be transparent and say no. If we feel at the time that we are unsure if we will have the team numbers to offer a commitment to athletes, we will offer them the ability to come back in November to try out again when we open tryouts again in November if they choose to do so. The actual evaluation period will occur later after the high school season is over, throughout the month of November.

So what happens on the Initial August Evaluation Day/Commitment?

- We will run through drills and game play to see the initial skills that the athlete brings to the table.
- Athletes will try on jerseys for sizing.
- We will assess verticals, block touch, approaches, etc.
- Athletes and parents will meet the coaches in our club. There will be time for Q&A to see if we are a good fit for your family and vice versa prior to evaluations.

Coaches will meet and we will discuss our initial tryout after the final tryout day. We will then reach out to every athlete's parent by email to offer either a commitment to be placed in our program or defer to be reevaluated in November if so chosen to do so. You will confirm your commitment initially via email response and deposit info will be sent. We will then meet the following weekend on August 11th to sign a Top Caliber Contract and Code of Honor. We will then give you info on spirit wear and uniform ordering, make sure you are signed up on Oasys Sports on the website, etc.

September 8th everyone will come back to meet again to get registered for USAV, AAU, and JVA, sign up for HUDL, and University Athlete.

So what are the pros to Commitment Day?

- We aren't stepping on high school season toes. We know that it is a symbiotic relationship where high school needs club and club needs high school to grow our athletes. Our area is full of great high school programs and it allows athletes time to improve during the high school season instead of improving in the 3-4 weeks between the end of the last club season and August.

What happens next?

- Committed athletes will come on November 3rd, 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, 17th, and 19th to train in our facilities with our coaching staff. We will watch the athletes compete in a controlled environment, a real practice environment where we can see the athletes actually compete and give the athletes an even better look than what can be given in one day of evaluations. On November 25th we will announce the teams via the website. First parent meeting/team meeting will be November 27th, time TBA.

We know there are negatives. One being you don't immediately know what team you are on. However whatever team you are placed on will allow for growth to occur no matter what. Being a part of our club, insists on a relationship of trust between families and the club. This trust is that we will place the athlete on the appropriate team level that is best fit for their growth and their skill level. It will allow the athletes time to focus on the right now which is school ball. We know that athletes will attend other tryouts, and we are not holding anyone back from that. This is just the plan of action for our club and what we feel is in the best interest of club growth and the direction in which we would like to head. Being as transparent as possible, clubs cannot make you sign anything until September 1st as far as USAV, AAU, JVA. Once you sign those commitment documents, you are locked into that club for the season. Once you have committed to us in August, we do require a deposit to be made and there will be no refunds of deposits or any other payments if athletes decide at any time not to stay with our club. *You will continue making payments during September, October, and November.

So what about the athletes who do not receive an immediate commitment for us in August?

- They will have the opportunity to come back for 2 more evaluations in November: on November 3rd, and November 5th. We cannot guarantee then that we will have additional teams, or that there are positions, but it is very much possible due to new athletes trying out. Athletes who missed tryouts in August can also attend these tryouts as well. This will give the club time to still put them in the evaluation process for the other 5 dates if necessary.

We are choosing a quality over quantity approach. It also allows us to commit to our athletes and for athletes to be committed to us. It allows us to provide adequate coaching and fulfill our part as well.

How will payments work?

- NEW this year, families will pay a set tuition amount from the time of the initial deposit until November, and then after November it branches off depending on what team you

are on for continued payments. This includes all club fees. The only additional required fees for participation will be AAU/JVA and/or USAV membership fees and uniforms. Please see the chart below to see how that will work. (Will attach at a later date) You can see what is included here. Payments this year are automatic drafts from the website, no exceptions to this, with a small discount if paid all together (the remaining part in November).

When will coaching slates be released?

- Our final coaching slates will be released at the beginning of November for 15-18s teams. Early fall for middle school teams. We know that athletes and families have specific coaches in mind for their athletes. Again, we are doing what is best for the club and placing coaches where we see is the best fit.

What type of teams will be offered this season?

- REN- The REN Teams are for the highest level player. The name comes from our uniform supplier. Tryouts are required and only the best players at each age group will be selected. Most tournaments will require travel outside of the state, with a couple being held in Raleigh. There is only one REN team per age group. If we feel that we do not have the quality to offer a REN team in a specific age group, we may choose not to at our discretion. The season will start in December, and end in April/May. with the possibility of nationals in June.
- National-The National Teams are for the very high level player. Tryouts are required and only the best players at each age group will be selected. Most tournaments will require travel outside of the state, with a few still being held in NC. There is one National team per age group per location. If we feel that we do not have the quality to offer a National team in a specific age group, we may choose not to at our discretion. The season will start in December, and end in March/April.
- State- The State Teams are for the competitive level player. Tryouts are required and the best players at each age group will be selected. Most tournaments will require travel within two-three hours of Greenville. There will be one State team per age group, with the possibility of two, depending on athletes and coaching availability. The season will start in December, and end in March/April.

Will there be an REN/National/State team for every age division?

- Not every age division will have every level. It will depend on different factors including athlete talent, coaches (quality and quantity).

What tournaments will each team attend?

- Tournament slates will be released at the Parent Info Session on July 28th.
- State teams attend between 6-7 within North Carolina.
- National Teams attend between 8-9, including 1 Qualifier.
- REN teams will attend between 8-9, including 3 Qualifiers.

What is the cost per team?

- We are still finalizing the budget, and projected cost will be released on July 28th

When will uniforms be ordered?

- Uniforms will be ordered as soon as tryouts are over. Again, athletes will be sized during tryouts. If two athletes have overlapping numbers from the same age group we will find a common ground to make this work. Athletes within an age group will all have different numbers in case you have to fill in for a team within the season or play in AAU at the end of the year.

What are we looking for?

- Buy in. Commitment. We are looking for athletes and families to buy into our program and commit to our club structure. We are looking for athletes who fit our club culture. We are looking for families who fit our club culture. We are a tight knit club who do multiple tournaments together. We spend a lot of time together. We will spend our period of August to November seeing athletes play in their schools and interact with them and their parents. We do not want cancers in our club. We want transparency. We will be transparent with you, and expect the same back. We want all of our athletes to feel supported at all times from within our club in all aspects.

Why are we holding tryouts again in November?

- To allow the athletes who maybe didn't hear about tryouts time to come in and try out. Usually this doesn't affect our elite and national travel because kids of that caliber already know when club tryouts are.

We encourage athletes and parents that tryout to know the process that we are using this year and decide if this is the right fit for your family. We know we are not one size fits all, but have evolving expectations within our club to improve our culture.

*****Please note that all 18s Travel will end March 28th weekend at Big South. This allows them time to go to prom and finish out their senior year commitments.

Additional Q and A:

How many teams will there be this season?

- We are predicting 11ish. This number could change but as of now this is our magic number. Again, more info will be given in July as we see our tryout numbers.

What facilities will we use?

- We have partnered with the Premier Sports Academy in Winterville to add to our list of facilities. We will still use OC and Grifton Middle, and teams that practice on Sundays will use AGHS. We are going toward a more traditional practice schedule that is set with the same days and times/locations each week. High School REN teams will now have a trainer that will work with them once a week. National teams have an option to add this on as well.

Will players who played at a national level automatically make the higher level again?

- No. This is the reason for the extended evaluation period. **No one** will be offered a specific team until November 25th. This gives everyone a fair opportunity to try out and encourages athletes who want to play for our club to put in the work to get better in the “off season.”

What about club loyalty?

- We understand that many of our athletes have been a part of our club for a couple of years, some since the beginning. We want to be transparent again, in the fact that our club is open for anyone who wants to try out, and find a new home. What this means is that although we have athletes who have been here since the beginning, that does not equate to automatic placement onto one of our teams, or the same level from year to year. We love all of our athletes, but have to provide integrity in the tryout process and place athletes where they belong.

What factors will go into play on placement?

- We will offer positions based on team needs first. Ex: We will not offer 3 liberos this year to the highest level team just because. We will look at all things including past commitment levels, parent dynamics, athlete and team mixtures the past couple of

seasons (if applicable). We know some will be disappointed in their team placements. We need parents and athletes to understand that once you have committed to our club, we will not offer a refund on money paid, and once you have signed in September, the club will not release athletes to play for another club. Please keep this in mind when committing to us.

If you offer us a commitment does that mean we are FOR SURE going to be offered a position?

- Yes. If we offer a commitment for you to play with us in August, we will have a position in our club for you that we feel is the best fit.

What about if my athlete would be 14U but wants to try out for 15U?

- They would need to attend evals in August. Coaches will then let parents know if they also need to attend the middle school tryouts in September or if there will be a placement on a 15U team.

Can athletes attend more than one tryout day?

- Yes, but will need to register online for each additional day.

Will there be scholarships offered?

- We have a scholarship fund for athletes who want to play for us, but need a little help. This year there will be requirements that go into place to be eligible for scholarships. More info will be available at our Info Meeting on July 28th.

What are the next steps?

- Register for tryouts online at topcalibervolleyball.com. Early bird registration will open on June 1st and will run until July 21st.
- Attend Open Gyms on July 21st and July 28th. Must register online for these and fill out a waiver.
- Attend Parent Info Session on July 28th. Time is TBA.
- Attend Evaluations August 4th-6th. Can do one day or all 3, but must register for the additional days.

For more questions, please email us at topcalibervolleyball@gmail.com

Coach Waters