BIKINI BOOST FOR BEACH VOLLEY-BABES

THE fledgling sport of women’s beach volleyball is about to get a big boost. The International Volleyball Federation has just ruled that, from now on, women players must wear bikinis, and they must be teeny. Players will now be required to wear two-piece outfits, and the side of the bikini bottom, where it sits on the hips, can be no more than 2 inches wide.

The sport’s most prominent player, model Gabrielle Reece Hamilton, isn’t thrilled. Reece will be dramatically affected by the changes, since she’s always played in long tights that cover her legs entirely.

“It was explained to me by the head of the federation that promoters in Europe and Japan were complaining that some of the girls were wearing baggy shorts and looking hum-drum,” Reece told PAGE SIX. “They want the sport to represent a fantasy, while forgetting it’s a sport for us. What they’re offering now is this fantasy for people who say, ‘I love the beach, I love the summer, I love sandy people.’ Malibu Barbie stuff, and they’re trying to play off that. The bottom line is, sex sells.”

Though Reece will have to don the skimpy skivvies, she’s not looking forward to it.

“I mean, I’m in good shape, but I don’t necessarily want my butt hanging out there for everyone to see,” she says modestly. “And I don’t want to be playing with my bathing suit, adjusting it and fiddling with it, after every play. I mean, you’re jumping and diving and squeezing your butt together.”

Beyond these practical concerns, one psychologist with the Australian Institute of Sport, where beach volleyball has a strong following, says the sexy new element could hurt the players and the sport itself.

“It could hinder women’s performance and induce eating disorders,” worries AIS psychologist Jeffrey Bond. It’s blatant discrimination. I wouldn’t be surprised if somewhere down the line someone doesn’t challenge this rule in a lawsuit.”

Reece is determined to grin and bare it for now: “At this point, I don’t have the luxury to worry about it because the top concern on every player’s list is to make sure the sport keeps going and that the tour has venues to play on. It doesn’t matter what you’re wearing if you don’t have anywhere to play.”

Men aren’t completely exempt from the new rules: they’ll have to lose the baggy NBA-style shorts that have become popular in favor of tighter, shorter bicycle-shorts.

“If you really think about it, you can get pretty uptight about the whole thing,” Reece says. “It’s ridiculous. Especially since this is a fairly modern arena: women’s sports. We’re supposed to be about liberation and taking charge. But I guess you have to look at the big picture they think this will help move the sport off the ground, and it is still a new sport, so if this will help, we’ll wait and complain once we get big.”
(Brooks) I'm wondering if you could help me out. We had someone give a presentation on the exploitation of women via sports clothing. The gist of the lecture was that the FIVB rules for women's uniforms was sex exploitation.

(Kevin) Indoor or beach?

(Brooks) I teach a module in my sports marketing class that addresses the packaging of scopophilia (it's basically pleasurable looking - in the case of sports it's pleasurable looking at bodies - both men and women) to attract an audience. The volleyball situation is an interesting case study on the dangers of packaging scopophilia if it represents exploitation. I want to learn more about beach volleyball and the controversy.

Ahah, beach (they have changed the indoor uniform rules as well to require uniforms that 'follow the body line'. Those changes were the same for women and men. Many of the women's teams wear lycra bodysuits and similar - in fact, many did before the uniform change. The minimum requirement is just snug fitting clothing. Looks a little silly on the men if you ask me.)

It's an interesting situation. If my memory is correct (and I don't have a lot of exposure to the international scene - at least not yet, bring on September 2000 :-) the rule is that the maximum height of the material on the women's uniform as it rounds the sides of the body is 6cm (2.2 inches). This is at international level. Locally we don't make such a rule. On our National circuit, the rule is that teammates must wear similar uniforms. They're allowed to wear 'bike shorts' or whatever, as long as it's consistent. There was a lot of jumping up and down about this when it changed. Mostly in the media. Most of the players were merely amused.

At the time, I was in Sydney for the Australian Open which was also the training course for the National Technical Officials (lines judges & scorers) for the Olympics and so we had a fairly high calibre field. One of the Australian girls who was making some noise in the paper about how sexist it is actually plays in a skimpier bikini than the one she wears on the beach (she sheds a layer to play). She's also appeared in numerous magazines pushing the sport and using her sexuality to do so. I think they object to being told what to wear.

We had an Hawaiin girl playing during that same tournament and she played in a string bikini that left little to the imagination. On the subject of sexism, I'm torn. By definition, it is sexist since there is no such requirement on the men (although men's and women's tops are provided by the competition organisers at international competition - and national here most of the time). BUT this is a beach sport that is struggling to keep up its
image. We sell the image. Come down the beach on a nice day, enjoy the sun and the
surf, have a hit, see the best playing the game, enjoy the sport. The image is all part of it.

If beach volleyball at the top level was played in tshirts and shorts nobody would watch.
It's horrible to say it but that's how it is. And it's not limited to the women's game. The
guys run around shirtless or sleeveless (and in Australia shirtless equates to skin cancer -
but we have sunscreen sponsorship) so even the guys are playing to the crowd.

I often get annoyed when people mistake 'sexual' for 'sexist'. These days, anything with a
woman in it doing anything non-edwardian and showing any skin is sexist. It's often
'sexual' but sexist means something else. Some of the objections to this style of marketing
comes from that 'misinterpretation'. I'd like to hear your views on this issue of the
uniform rule. I, personally, have no objection (but then I'm a man - that's how it's
supposed to be :-).

I think the FIVB went about it badly. But the FIVB go about a lot of things that way.
They deal in edicts. A bit more consultation might have been good. The players know
exactly what the public perception of their sport is. They work to change it but I think
people understand some of the basic drivers behind the sport. When the FIVB made the
rule, the newspapers didn't treat it well. The radio and TV also had a bit of a go at it.
Their angle was "Women are being told what they can and can't wear". End of story.
Very little balance to it.

The problem Beach VB has is that in order to promote a healthy sporty image, they're
going to have to do this kind of thing. Other sports make similar edicts but when you're
playing on the beach you're in a setting that makes it more difficult. The people making
these rules need to pitch them right if they're going to keep people on side. A few
examples of where these kinds of things have happened voluntarily...

1) The Opals - the Australian Women's Basketball team, started wearing lycra bodysuits
a few years back just as they started doing extremely well internationally. They would
have attracted an audience purely from people switching channels to have a look. I
know I did. And I found a very good sport. I hate men's basketball. It's a boring sport
till the last 3 seconds. The women's game is actually enjoyable.

2) American Female Soccer players tend to shed their shirts on-field when celebrating.

3) Australian Female Soccer players take off ALL their clothes and make calenders
(they've just released it this week and they're getting a pretty good go from the press.
They've handled it very well - because it's the players themselves deciding to do
something and standing behind it). I hope I've provided some insight. It might be a
bit rambly but it's just my thoughts as I've typed.

Please feel free to mail me back if you want some more info.
Regards,
Kevin Lentin
(Australian National Volleyball & Beach Volleyball Referee).
Transcript from Radio National: Australia 12/1/99

Now this week, Victoria University in Melbourne has been running a conference called Gender, Sexualities and Sport. And yesterday I had the pleasure of chairing a session there, where one of the speakers was Dr Margaret Lindley, the woman who put sex into football.

Margaret's a history lecturer at the University of Tasmania, but she's also the person responsible for reviving the annual Ron Barassi Memorial Lecture, that was started up by Ian Turner in the '70s, but which lapsed with his death. The thing about this lecture, as Ian Turner did it, was that it was meant to be funny about the meaning and purpose of Australian football.

Margaret Lindley: I knew I had to be funny. But being funny as a woman, especially on certain subjects like football, is not the same thing as being a bloke and being funny about it. It's very hard to put your finger on it, it's a sense you have. So I had to work out some way of coming at it as a woman. You can't come at something that is as male as Australian Rules Football, as a pretend bloke, it just doesn't work, because everyone looks at you and thinks, 'Not a bloke'. So you in fact have to make something of the fact that you're not a bloke.

Amanda Smith: OK, well when you did give that first lecture in your revival of the series, you caused a bit of a stir by announcing that Australian Rules Football was 'a game played by men at considerable personal hazard, for the sexual pleasure of women.' So what murky territory had you unleashed by suggesting that, Margaret?

Margaret Lindley: Or in my unconscious, as Freud would say! Well I didn't want to do one of those - 'It's not fair, because you blokes get fame and fortune' - I hate that kind of whingey feminism, it really is boring. And I'm not suggesting that women don't have, in sport, as in other things, things to whinge about. But I find it boring. I'm sure lots of people - men especially - find it boring; I wanted to entertain all sorts of people with it. So I thought, well, let's just say: look, we women really rule it. It's really our business; we have ways of manipulating; we have ways of having power. So largely, I think about 90% jokingly, I said, look, we know what the game's really about. I mean you guys get up there, you wear these tiny little shorts - anyone who first sees Australian Rules Football is staggered by the shorts. They look at them: "Oh, my God! Look at those shorts!". They wear tiny, tiny little shorts, very skimpy gear, and they do fantastically dangerous things while we women sit there, in enormous quantities, far bigger than any other footballing code in the world, and cheer and have a damn good time. So I said let's pretend (or I said to myself) let's pretend this is all in fact a devious female plot.

Amanda Smith: Well there's an American writer, Allen Guttman, who's written a book called 'The Erotic in Sports'. And when I interviewed him about this subject last year, he made the point that those who don't like sport criticise it on the grounds that it's a voyeuristic, arousing activity. While those who do like sport, claim that their appreciation
is quite chaste and has nothing to do with any erotic appeal. Would you agree that that division exists?

Margaret Lindley: Oh I think he's absolutely right. I get accused - I just have been accused - of trivialising women's enjoyment of football. I thought, what's trivial about noticing the beautiful body, really, what is wrong with it? But I think he's absolutely right, that you do find people sneering - people who hate sport - saying, 'Oh yes, you just want to look at those bodies'. And you do find the earnest sportspeople trying to suggest to you that this is some desperately moral activity, and that they never notice the bodies. Never. And how you do this, how you actually watch the bodies leaping and running, but you don't actually notice the bodies, or you have no sense that that body is bigger, smaller, or - dare one say it? - more attractive to you personally than another, I don't know.

Amanda Smith: But, Margaret, isn't the idea that women in particular find watching footballers in tight shorts appealing, isn't it the same kind of sexist objectification that women have been accusing men of for years?

Margaret Lindley: Except that a footballer is not a stationary object, and not being stationary is actually very important. I have quite a different view of footballers posed in calendars. I'm not sure what I think of them. I laugh and look at them, but I've never bought one of them. And I go to football matches all the time. A moving object that is powerful, that is surging, and that moreover is moving not for the sake of the observers - none of those players are moving for our sake, for our pleasure, they are doing something for their own, their team's purposes. And to some degree they are completely oblivious of us. They may hear us, but they're not performing for us in some sense. Now if you take the kind of strip show: a woman or a man in a strip show is a posed object, even when they move. Every move is designed not to express themselves, their energy, their goals, their motives, but simply to - 'I think you will be pleased if I move in this way'. Now if I had a bunch of footballers out there on the field doing that, I would regard that as incredibly un-sexy. I think people turning and posing with their hands on their hips is objectifying. You can't objectify a footballer; you can't objectify a swimmer ploughing down a pool. You can watch, you can be privileged to watch their activity, but they're nobody's object.

Amanda Smith: I guess the essence of what you're saying Margaret, is that we should loosen up on this discomfort about linking sensuality and sexiness with sport. But surely part of the awkwardness is that sex, and how you express desire, is such fraught terrain in the last 20th century.

Margaret Lindley: I don't know how we avoid that. I think these are quite moralistic times, in some senses. There is a kind of a desire to turn all bodies into money-making machines. I think that's very, very strong. And I think one of the concerns about people who, frankly, revel in playfulness and pleasure and joys and sexiness of bodies, is that it's not economically rational. It cuts across territories, and we live in a world where people
want the territories, they want to police the territories. We are I think, trying to control this rather frightening sexual world we live in, by putting sex into a whole series of boxes. The thing about sex is it doesn't fit into boxes, it spreads across them. It is in sport, it is in play, it is at work, it's in all sorts of places. And we are trying to confine them at the moment. Some of them have to be confined, but I don't know that sex has to be kept out of sport.
NEW PLAYING UNIFORMS

In cooperation with the official Volleyball uniforms suppliers, FIVB has finalised the new uniform standards. The purpose of the fashion change is to bring a new brand image to Volleyball by creating a modern specific line. Manufacturers will gradually introduce the new uniforms to the public through retail outlets.

The new regulations are:

- Shirts and shorts should not be loose or baggy but should follow the body line.
- Long sleeved shirts are not allowed.
- No numbers on the sleeves, but numbers on the right side leg of the shorts.
- Country flag and name on the front left side of the shirt.
- Family name or nickname on the back of the shirt, above the number.
- Women are allowed to wear one-piece uniforms.

The uniforms of the forthcoming World Championships must conform to these standards.

Première for one-piece suit and Volleyball New Look!

Cuban star player Mireya Luis Hernandez demonstrates that one can be among the best players on earth and in the same time be very attractive.

The Cubans impressed the Japanese audience by wearing a revolutionary one-piece playing outfit designed by Adidas. Although this uniform is not imposed by the FIVB, it is allowed in the new standards for playing uniforms in international competitions. This new look contributes to build up a specific image for volleyball and convey the important values of this sport: Speed and Power.
Excerpt from Miningco Newsletter on this subject:

November 1998 - Week 2

We wear Short-Shorts

The FIVB has changed many of the regulations that govern the sport in an attempt to make
the sport more appealing and exciting to fans. Some of the most noticeable are scoring format
changes, the ball color changing from all white to blue, yellow and white and perhaps the most
controversial, the "encouragement" of women to wear short, one-piece, swimsuit-style, uniforms.

The swimsuit style is "encouraged"; however, uniforms must include shorts that are half as
long as the men players and are expected wear shorts that are "tight in waist and length" and "cut
in an upward angle towards the top of the leg." Of course, Federation of International Volleyball
(FIVB) President Ruben Acosta defends the uniform changes as needed to give the sport more of
an appealing look.

November 1998 - Week 3

Acosta Yells at Players

Last week I told you about the upcoming changes to the 1999 FIVB rules, the most
controversial being the uniform requirements for women. Last Tuesday, November 10th, long-
time President Ruben Acosta criticized players at the 1998 World Championships for showing a
"lack of professionalism" over the aforementioned uniform requirements.

After handing down fines of US$3000.00 to five teams last Friday for wearing baggy styled
shirts, Mr. Acosta, while addressing representatives from the eight teams attending the medal
round, more-than-sarcastically thanked the players for creating extra media interest. He warned
the players that volleyball is in the same boat as tennis and soccer, loosing interest worldwide.

Acosta also insulted basketball players by inferring that the "who cares" attitude that
volleyball players exhibit puts the sport of volleyball in danger of becoming like the National
Basketball Association, with its baggy shorts and trash-talking 1.(1)

Speaking to the players he stated, "You are not basketball players. You are professionals in
national leagues, so you must act responsibly."

"But your (the volleyball players) actions at these championships have let us down. Looking
to Sydney in 2000, either we change our sloppy image or the sport will not survive."

I'm sorry, but what is the average salary of a NBA player? How much are kids paying for
those baggy shorts and jerseys with NBA team logos? GET A GRIP ACOSTA!

Scott Hammon
Volleyball.Guide@MiningCo.com
http://volleyball.miningco.com/

1 (1) "Volleyball chief Acosta slams 'amateurish' players",Kyodo News; 11/10/98
The men's team of the Netherlands has been warned that their uniforms were not according these new rules and they could be given a fine of 5000 $. After this message the Dutch coach responded that the Dutch team would withdraw from competition if they were forced to play in the shorts that some of the teams were using.

**John Kessel**  
**FIVB Technical Commission Secretary**

It has been an interesting day at USA Volleyball. Warner Brothers EXTRA has called, LA Channel 9 has called, Internet broadcasting sites want interviews, KJFK in Austin had me on for a radio broadcast, and we hear that CNN has picked up the story...this all started with yesterday's NY Post article in their famous PAGE SIX.

So to all volleyball leaders, some information that lets you deal with this at your area, should you get asked about this new rule. In short, the FIVB World Beach Council better defined what the sizes of the beach outfits were to be (in Atlanta, the SPONSOR LOGO maximum sizes were defined, but not the uniforms). So the WB Council set these, which result in really no significant changes at all from what you saw the USA players wearing in Atlanta, or at other FIVB USA stops, like the 1997 World Championships at UCLA. The Council did say that one-piece outfits are no longer allowed for FIVB stops. This makes sense to me, as the sponsors at each stop only make a two piece top for their permitted sponsor logoing use, and it looks very unprofessional to have a two piece top over a one piece suit as would happen.

The Women's Sports Foundation took a look at the uniforms for Atlanta, and recognized that these outfits are the best choice for an athlete to wear in the conditions they are playing in. These arenas are enclosed, with little cooling wind; they are played on humid beaches all over the world, in the summers of those areas. Sand court temperature can get well over 110 on the court. The right outfit is one with maximum skin exposure, while being tight to keep the sand out as much as possible. BTW, take time to go take a look at this weekend's Mar de Plata, Argentina Men's Open Stop at www.fivb.ch/beach. Great pecs. Dozens of nations, including 6 USA teams and Nick and Al Hanneman (formerly USA players we released recently at their request) are there. Nick and Al are in the qualifier round now representing American Samoa, as they do their part to grow the game in the South Pacific zone.

But back to the reason for all the press... Gabby is making a serious run at qualifying for Sydney, and the two piece uniforms the players have been wearing all the time, is not what she has been wearing. Gabby is on board, generating publicity for the sport. So...next comes this publicity-generating story that you can also see for yourself at:

http://www.nypost.com/011199/gossip/pagesix.htm

The POST section if you go and look at it, has several inaccuracies:

- 6 cm is more like 2.36 inches;
- the men are not having to wear biker style shorts, just no long board shorts;
- (again, they are wearing the same thing they wore in Atlanta, only the singlet tops are going to be less baggy, keeping with the need to have the sponsor logos for all FIVB stops cleanly seen);
- the women's top is not a bikini in the "teeny" sense (see the Post article regarding that LOL), it is a standard jog bra style.

Note, that there are NO sponsor logos of any size other than brand mark allowed in Sydney (World tour allows 72 cm sq. on the front and 200 cm sq. on the back of player uniform bottoms for both sexes).
Here next is the info from the FIVB's Carlos Sanchez to media questioning this "new" rule, starting with the two sections from the minutes of the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Council meeting last September 25,26 1998:

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Decision:

1. The players uniforms to comply with the following:
   - Men’s shirts to be tight fitting with open arms
   - Inside let of men's shorts no longer than measurement of 2/3 of length from hip to knee
   - Women’s tops to be tight fitting, with open back, open upper chest and open stomach - side width of women’s suit bottoms to be maximum 6 cm.
2. Players to be encouraged to print the name or nickname (corresponding to the team name used in the BVIS) on their shorts/bathing suit bottoms.

Note: (BVIS = Beach Volleyball Information System)

The FIVB then would like to add some comments to complete this information:

The FIVB Beach Volleyball Council includes players’ promoters', FIVB and National Federation representatives.

The new standards for beach volleyball uniforms have been introduced to two main reasons:

**Practical**

The female players like the 2-piece suit, which is more comfortable (freedom of movements). Even when it was not ruled, the quasi-totality of the players, coming from 45 countries, chose the 2-piece option.

At the World Tour events, each promoter provides a top (one by match) to the players. They include the sponsors of the competition. These tops are designed as part of a 2-piece suit element. Moreover, the reason why they have to be tight fitting is to ensure a good exposure to the commercial partners of the events. As this is not valid at the Olympic Games (no sponsors) this rule (bikini) will not apply to Sydney 2000.

**Image**

As the responsible body governing this sport, the FIVB has the mission to develop the sport towards the players, the sponsors and the media. To develop the sport towards the players, the sponsors and the media. To achieve this, one of the elements available is the look of our athletes. It is part of the game.

We want to build a strong and specific image for Beach Volleyball. By definition, this sport is
played on the beach, so it is not so strange that we develop a beachwear-like style.

Furthermore, our supervisors delegated on-site to the events have moreover the flexibility to evaluate each specific demand from a player and eventually accept exceptions if legitimately justified.

Carlos Sanchez FIVB Communications Coordinator

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So there you go...

Tokyo, 6 November 1998
Playing uniforms for volleyball: five teams sanctioned.

Five teams have been fined by US$ 3,000 each for not meeting the requirements of the Official FIVB Uniforms Standards for International Competitions, the Control Committee of the Volleyball Women’s World Championships ’98 announced today in Japan. The fines were imposed on Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy and Russia following an evaluation of the outfits they wore during the preliminary round which finished yesterday. The amount will be deducted from the team’s final prize money.

The Official Communiqué of the Control committee stated that the shirts of the five teams were too loose and baggy. These new standards for playing uniforms have been approved by the FIVB Board of Administration in March 98 and immediately communicated to the teams qualified for the World Championships. This decision have been recently confirmed by the 174 delegates, representing 138 national federations, at the 26th FIVB World Congress held before the Championships in Tokyo.

The FIVB, responsible of the development of the volleyball worldwide is aware of the importance of building a brand image around this sport. To achieve this mission, the FIVB, among other important actions, decided to create new standards for playing uniforms so that volleyball convey a specific and attractive image, emphasizing the main values of Volleyball: "power and speed". The FIVB rejects energetically allegations of being sexist. Two teams playing in the Women World Championship use one-piece or one-piece-like uniforms. They do it freely, as the FIVB’s standards clearly mention that "one-piece" uniforms are "allowed", which does not mean "imposed". Moreover, new standards have also been created for men. These unwarranted attacks against the FIVB are particularly offending for the FIVB which traditionally always defends the interest and the promotion of women’s sport, for instance by giving the same prize money for Individual Players and the same team prize money for men and women. It also insisted toward the IOC (International Olympic committee) to obtain the right to have the same numbers of female teams at the Sydney 2000 Olympics than male teams (12 each).

Rec.Volleyball Discussion

Gerald and Susan Hamilton <gshamilton@ns.sympatico.ca

My high school girls team has recently decided that they will all wear black spandex shorts after wearing lose fitting athletic shorts for years. They feel that they look messy in the old ones and
the spandex shorts will be more comfortable and "____." As well they have developed the opinion that all "good" teams wear spandex after losing to a couple at such attired teams.

I don't understand the need for making a particular style of shorts mandatory as long as team members are dressed in like manner, i.e. same uniform, same shorts, maybe even going as far as the same socks. This is something that develops a strong sense of team sense of course and with uniformity to dress, a more organized look as well.

Putting everyone in one kind of specific shorts is ludicrous though.

Not to be a prude, but I have kids that I work with who will not wear spandex shorts, PERIOD. They consider it immodest. I applaud the Dutch coach! To mandate style is going a bit overboard! Whomever did this sounds a big "dinghy" <pun intended>.

Personally, I think it's much ado about nothing. The only reason it's "ado" for me is that a governing body in volleyball is making sexist rules that seem to have no apparent benefit for the sport other than to satisfy the eyes of male spectators. If there is an advantage to a bodyhugging uniform let the individual team decide if they want to use that advantage. As long as the unis are the same, who is to say that they should all be tight. Just my $.02

As far as the actual rule goes, there is not any difference in the wording for the men compared to the women, it just says that the uniforms should not be loose and baggy. The rule itself is not sexist: it cuts both ways for men and women. The way people INTERPRET it for the different sexes, however...

I think that if you look at the uniforms that the teams are wearing at the world championships (besides Cuba's women), you won't find them to be all that much different from what has been worn in the past. The shirts just fit a little better than some teams have had in the past. Now, I haven't seen the uniforms from the men's teams in Japan yet, but I don't think they've changed much either. The individual teams set the exact style of uniform they wear. The FIVB, if I may presume to speak for them, did not intend for all the women's teams to wear uniforms like the one-piece ones that Cuba wore, but, by the same token, that style is not 'illegal', and I'm sure that they wouldn't have been complaining if all the teams had shown up in that style of uniform.

I think maybe people are getting carried away with the interpretation here, especially now having seen what the Cuban team wore. To me, the rule doesn't mean to be skin-tight, just not over-sized. If you look at the teams that were sanctioned for their uniforms, their shirts were very large and baggy. The teams that had 'legal' uniforms (Cuba excepted), had pretty regular looking shirts that just fit normally and were not baggy. As for shorts, almost all the women's teams wear tight shorts anyway, although they don't have to: again, 'follow the body line' (to me) doesn't necessarily mean skin-tight.

I must agree, however, that the rule really was not necessary and I don't see any good reason for it, especially the part about the one-piece type uniform.

On a slightly unrelated yet related note, after seeing the Cuban women in those uniforms, I never realized those women were so big. Big arms, shoulders, legs and obviously, tall. No wonder they are two time World and Olympic champions.

Glen C
Edmonton, Alberta

Embee98 <embee98@aol.com> wrote:
Indoor volleyball is one of the sports offered at my school and I enjoy it. It's fast-paced and a fun team game. However I resent the rules on clothing that say girls/women have to play in their briefs.

Guys might not think this is a big issue (perhaps they find it sexy?) but personally I feel quite exposed in what is really just my underwear and also to avoid embarrassment you have to depilate "down there" which is painful and a drag.

I have raised this with our head of PE and she says this is the rule for volleyball. She seems to be right - our team plays others from our county and further afield and I haven't seen one team yet where the players enjoy the modesty of shorts.

What is it with volleyball? Is there any way to get this rule changed, or at least made optional?

The rules for FIVB International Volleyball (which certainly don't extend down into local play) are that uniforms must follow the bodyline. That doesn't mean lycra bodysuits as some teams wear stuff that is a little loose than that. It also applies to men, by the way. Many teams play in bike shorts (in fact, here it seems to be preferred by many teams).

I'd try to get it changed via your school. I find it strange that a league would have the power to mandate such strict uniform rules. So either it's a school rule or it's by agreement between the schools, or it's just a tradition that became a rule.

You can tell your Head of PE that this is not a rule of volleyball. It may be a rule of volleyball in Eire or in your county but it's certainly not a hard and fast rule globally. Once you know where the rule has been made, you can address changing it - either at school or county level. It seems ridiculous to me.

I can tell you that in Australia (where we play by FIVB rules) teams at local, state and national league levels all play in shorts, bike shorts or briefs. Their choice. These days, you see very few teams in briefs and bike shorts are becoming far more popular at higher levels. On the other hand, at our National League finals a few months back, one women's team was wearing baggy shorts.

I've replied to Emma, as an International Referee and President of the N.Ireland Association, and suggested she should ask her Head of PE to check out the rule with Susan O'Donnell the President of the Volleyball Association of Ireland.

Personally I would never inflict dress code rules on players in Ireland. We have too few and there are too many alternatives for young women to walk away from this great and enjoyable sport because of a ruling from World HQ. It is my understanding, and how we will play it in N.Ireland, that the Uniform style rule is not a Rule as such, but a regulation (hair splitting difference) applicable ONLY to teams playing in FIVB organized matches i.e. Worlds Olympics and Continental championships.

Finally may I congratulate Emma and others on raising this question in this group. It can help shape the future of volleyball into the New Millennium when young people make their opinions heard. And her use of the term depilate instead of shave shows a great future in use of the English Language - perhaps in translation for FIVB?
I've copied this note to President Susan on sodonnell@artesia.ie and wish Emma and her correspondents Best wishes - and stick with the Volleyball.

Paddy Murphy, in Belfast.

Beach has been given the opportunity, via the Olympics, to become very popular. The uniform rules only help to bring in new fans. Perhaps for questionable reasons. Once there, the fans will always enjoy the game. I think the only reason the uniform issue is causing a stir (in Beach) is that people don't like to be told what to wear. By the way, I haven't heard many complaints except those from Ms. Reece. For the players, I think this is a non-issue. The FIVB is just taking the ball and running with it to give Beach the exposure (no pun intended) it needs to grow even more.

The FIVB seems to think that volleyball is the next big thing on television, but look at all the other "second-tier" sports that also harbor this goal. At the college level (and the pros, to some extent) tennis, lacrosse, field hockey, water polo, soccer, and countless women's sports all would _love_ TV attention. But they're not so neurotic as to _change_ their sport on an annual basis; they're playing their games and enjoying their sport within its own context, and they'll survive whether or not ESPN comes knocking. The difference is that other sports change their rules for the good of the game; the FIVB changes them for the good of television. Why VB seems to think it is privileged in this competition for airtime I have no idea.

Uh, why do the men need shirts at all? There is plenty enough material in their shorts to print the Encyclopedia Britannica volumes A-R! You could make two women's outfits out of one pair of men's shorts! Come on FIVB! You want the men to enjoy the women's competition by them showing more skin. Well, us ladies would like to enjoy the men's competition by seeing more skin!

In 20 years of watching articles come and go from office bulletin boards, I have never seen a volleyball related posted by a coworker . . . until today. An online CNN report on the FIVB women's uniform regulations was tacked to the board with the comment, "Is this what they mean by 'A League of Their Own'?" I actually tried my best to relate the FIVB reasoning to the poster, but she wasn't buying it either.

This is soooo bogus. Both play in the same hot conditions, yet to stay cool, men need only "open arms", while women need "open back, open upper chest and open stomach"? Men can cover 2/3 of their upper legs, while women can cover only 2-3 inches of hip? How does a bikini "keep the sand out as much as possible", compared to a 1-piece suit, or to the men's shorts and shirt? Does the FIVB think they are fooling people with this ridiculous justification? And since when does the WSF go around recognizing what outfits are the best for various conditions and sports? If WSF actually stated that bikinis are the "best choice", I'm disgusted with them, too.

So would some guy in a volleyball shirt opening fire on a Farmer's Market. Are we back on the "any publicity is good publicity" jag?
Why would anyone want to plaster his/her family's good name on his/her ass? In any case, this discriminates against those with long surnames and small rear ends.

Diane Wms <dianewms@aol.com> wrote:
Well, if the FIVB wants to be current, it should direct the men to lose the tank tops completely. There's plenty of room on their shorts for their name, country, number and sponsors galore! I want to see some pecs and abs!

Interestingly enough, I noticed at this month's Australian Open (and the Sydney Championships the week before) that, when given the opportunity (i.e. when no sponsors tops are around), the men will _all_ play bare chested. In two weekends of volleyball, I didn't see a single tank top or T-shirt on a male player other than the Berri tank tops being worn mostly on center court and on some outside courts. The women, on the other hand, chose to keep their tops on when not wearing sponsors' prescribed clothing :-)

They're out there and they're mad as hell. I just listened to a radio interview with Gloria Alred, a prominent feminist attorney, who is filing a lawsuit on their behalf. Normally I think feminism is as big a crock as any other form of bigotry, but I hope she wins this one.

NydiaW <nydiaw@aol.com> wrote:
Men look stupid in similar uniforms so they aren't asked to wear them. I know many men who play volleyball (especially at the national level) whom I would like very much to see in a tight fitting uniform. I also know many women that aren't particularly flattered by tighter clothing. It's an "eye of the beholder" thing.

Yes and the eyes are male, unfortunately. That being said, the FIVB rules don't require uniforms like the Cubans. Some of the uniforms at the World Champs were apparently quite loose fitting but still within the new regs. Many women's teams seem to like the tight fitting stuff. At our club, all our women's teams switched to bike-shorts this year at their request.

I don't contend that it makes sense, nor do I contend that it's right. But I fully understand why it is happening. Which is sad. (Although I'm not going to complain too much about the Cuban uniforms :-)

Oh, who can keep track of FIVB rule changes?????? Rules or not, I've seen topless men in FIVB doubles competitions. They should ban the body tattoos completely and severely limit the size of logos since the players look more like commercials than competitors!

But all of this is irrelevant to the standards selected by the FIVB are unnecessary, stupid, and sexist. If it is "professional" for men to wear shorts, why is "unprofessional" for women to wear shorts????? It's not. Period. The women are being exploited for their sex appeal.