

## **Mix, Beat & Serve**

### **The Fixings of ClubOne 14 Red Diamonds**

All recipes begin with a set of ingredients and then you mix, stir, fold, and modify to create a delectable treat; however, as with any new recipe or experience, you never know what to expect and WOW, did Coach and I have no idea the amazing concoction that we were in store for when tryouts began last October. So, let's begin:

Start with:

9 Parts Talent:

- 3 Setters (Brynn Eckhardt, Rebecca Mikkelson, Taylor Pribble)
- 5 Hitters (Ciera Borho, Sarah Dannettell, Mallory Dill, Patty Esch, Lindsay Miller)
- 1 Libero (Danielle Rodriguez)

A couple of nuts (or Coaches, if you will):

- Head Coach Michelle Chacon
- Asst. Coach Jeff Oldham

Fold in an unlimited supply of supportive family & friends and a dash of knowledge from the Club Director and fellow coaches. Toss in a competitive region, mix well and you end up with a 65-6 season with a second place finish at Colorado Crossroads, a first place at the Northeast Qualifier and finally, one of the best desserts you'll ever have the opportunity to taste, a second place finish in the National Division of the Junior Olympic National Tournament!

After the first practice on December 1, 2008, we knew we had the makings of something wonderful and only hoped that with the right mix, all the ingredients would compliment each other. There were 7 regional tournaments that were utilized in preparation for our first national qualifying tournament, Colorado Crossroads in Denver, CO. The confection seemed to be rising to the occasion, having success the first two days culminating in a tough Gold Bracket crossover match against Front Range Royal with ClubOne Red Diamonds pulling out the win. Day 3 of Crossroads brought more great competition and each girl brought their own special ingredient into the mix. Having successfully navigated three great teams in bracket play, we saw ourselves across the net from Arizona Sky 14-N1. After a well-played match, the Arizona team was the "Selection of the Day" but we had secured an American bid to the Junior Olympic Volleyball Championships (JO's).

The excitement from the second place finish was still cooling (ever so slightly) when we had one regional tournament to prepare us for our second national qualifying tournament, the Northeast Qualifier in Baltimore, MD. Being an east coast event, the unknown factor was even more apparent. Would our confection hold up against the east coast? Turns out, it did. The girls showed up ready to play. Day one and two ended with success but we knew we had our work cut out for us on day three. Yet the ingredients, once again came together, topping off with a trip to the finals against Southwest 14 Asics out of Texas. After a grueling three-game match, we were the "Selection of the Day" on that warm afternoon in April with the result being a National bid to JO's.

After finishing out the Regional season, a much needed brief break was taken and the girls came back better than ever! After 6 months of such a rewarding season, the girls were ready to add a little Miami flavor to the mix. Not only did the girls earn the right to play in JO's but they got to do it in the wonderful destination of Miami, FL. Walking into the Miami Convention Center on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, everyone knew that this was not going to be a piece of cake and each girl would need to play their best game

every time they walked on the court. As expected, each day brought new flavors with great teams competing and the girls had to play tough, earning each point, leading to a Gold Bracket challenge match and this match lived up to its title. Uno Girls 14 Elite brought everything to the table and our girls responded in kind, securing a top 8 finish.

The challenge match prepared the girls for what was to come and they were hungry. As we made that final journey to the convention center on July 5<sup>th</sup>, the girls were their usual selves. Little did the coaches know the treat that these girls had in store for them. The girls were able to take their first two matches of the day achieving the ultimate goal at JO's, the chance to be featured on Court 1! As we warmed up on the featured court, a parent mentioned to us that we needed to “soak it all in” and that we did. A distant dream which first appeared on December 1<sup>st</sup>, had become a reality. Both teams walked in from one corner with music blasting and we lined up on the sideline. Watching as each girls name was announced and seeing them step out and wave to the crowd, at all the family and friends who made this all possible, you realize your witnessing a special moment in time. Seeing Omaha Wave 14 ICE for the second time, after a tough three game loss two days prior, we would love to say that we were crowned the champion but not all recipes turn out exactly as you plan. Yet, the final delectable treat is a composite of all ingredients and the combination of each girl on this team, with all that they individually brought, created ClubOne 14 Red Diamonds recipe for success. On that day in July, a great team won the championship in the National Division but another great team from Northern Colorado provided a dessert just as sweet!