

STARTING A NEW STARLINGS CLUB

As a potential Starlings club director, the following issues need to be considered before initiating a club:

- **Advisory Board** – the assembling of a small but active board should be undertaken immediately. A USAVB regional person, a fundraiser type, a club of interested parents are good places to begin.
- **Age** – it is recommended that a new club begin with a team(s) of younger girls, such as 12s-and-under or 14s-and-under. Commitment seems to be stronger at younger ages for a new sport and the serious girls can continue to play in following years.
- **Recruitment** – schools are probably the best place to seek participants. A captive group of girls is usually a safer way to begin (as an existing team). Coaches and P.E. teachers are excellent sources but should be contacted personally, and visited with printed material. It is critical to talk to recruits face-to-face.
- **Gyms** – usually school gyms are best. However, given basketball interest, most gyms don't free up until late February or March. Prior to that time, weekends are a possibility. Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and church gyms are potential sites. The key is finding someone at the facility (coach or teacher) who is excited about the program for the girls in their community.
- **Tryouts** – if open tryouts are required, it is important that the invited girls have had the program presented to them in person prior to tryouts. Often tryout flyers are sent to schools, coaches etc. with the result that they never get in the hands of the girls.
- **Registration/Insurance** – in most cases, all girls and coaches need to be registered with their regional USAVB office. Some regions have agreed to waive or reduce registration fees (which includes insurance) for Starlings teams since we are a USAVB Member Organization.
- **Coaches** – one of the biggest challenges. If possible, paid coaches are preferable. Commitment and caring are senior to coaching knowledge which is a skill that can be learned. If there is a college team in the area, female college players are an excellent source of coaches as well as role models.
- **Player Dues** – it is recommended that each participant pay some monthly dues depending on the ability of the girl's family (if a girl cannot pay anything, then she should be given some duties to earn her dues). A free program has too often been met with less commitment by girls. Dues should be paid on a timely basis with the first payment made at the first practice (after tryouts). A responsible parent can be put in charge of collecting dues.
- **Team Budget** – a team budget should be determined on the basis of the economic status of the girls in combination with the season's requirements (a sample budget is included).
- **Fundraising** – girls are required to raise part of their team's budget. Usually, much more fundraising is necessary to attend the national tournament; however, it can be done!

- **Email/Webpage** – each director must have an email address that is frequently checked. A club webpage is recommended but must be maintained by the club. The national office can assist clubs in getting a webpage established.
- **Competition** – the season’s dates and playing schedule are to be determined by the director and advisory board. It is hoped that a team will play on average twice a month in local tournaments (that can include scrimmages with other teams) and attend the national tournament.
- **Literary/Art Contest** – all participants should be encouraged to enter the annual Literary/Art contest. A theme will be given by the national office and entries must be sent by mail before June 1. Winners will be announced and awarded cash prizes at the national tournament.
- **National Tournament** – the finale of the season is a wonderful event and should be presented as a great motivator for a team. To attend, it will require serious fundraising efforts which must begin early in the season.