

## NCAA VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS AS A DIRECT US NATIONAL TEAM PLAYERS BASE

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### Key words:

- collegiate sport,
- university,
- coach,
- domination.

### Abstract:

As many sports at universities volleyball is popular and attention-drawing. While US Volleyball National Teams are classified on top of world rankings there is no professional senior league in the country. Thus, National Collegiate Athletic Association Championships are the most developed competition form for athletes.

The main aim of the work was to isolate and approximate currently dominating teams in student competition on a base of results from 2003-2013 seasons.

Main research group comprised 14 teams (medalists). Mean number of consecutive champions lost matches was calculated as well as mean won matches percentage and standard deviation, number of graduated players and coaches advanced to US National Team was revealed as well.

NCAA National Champions averagely won more than 80% matches while number of losses did not exceed 5.3 during whole season. Utmost progress in relation to NCAA history was sustained by UC Irvine (+0.17) and BYU (+0.06). Surprisingly, only 5 teams outstripped their overall mean and of all states, California contained more than a half of best teams. US National Team was supported by 24 alumni and 2 academic coaches last years.

Domination in collegiate volleyball competition changes lately but its level is still high. American coaches work with university teams and national selected squads should be given as a model worldwide.

## INTRODUCTION

Volleyball in the United States of America is a sport discipline which is general and popular within academic structure and on international indoor and beach volleyball level. On the other hand, any attempts aiming to create and proceed professional leagues destined for seniors end with failure. The main reason and factor for which competition is being inhibited is enormous fascination with baseball, basketball and hockey, all of which draw spectators' attention and oust other sports successfully.

Despite such significant difficulties, results derived by Americans allow to suppose that professional level of NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) academic competition is sufficient to compensate or even give more profits than leagues dependent on contract-paid players. As a proof, all US National Teams among seniors and juniors are placed on FIVB rankings top 10 [1].

Volleyball students competition in the USA starts with all conferences championships from which top teams advance to further rounds to go into Final Four tournament. In a period

of over 40 years back, involving volleyball championships history few teams established their strong position by frequent Final Four tournament attendance. Starting from 1970 as far as 2005 three universities introduced the most efficient coaching programs what is revealed by the number of final matches: University of California in Los Angeles – UCLA (24), Pepperdine University (10) and University of Southern California – USC (10) [3]. Till now, the most titled head coach on record is Al Scates from UCLA who achieved 19 championships.

### AIM OF THE WORK

The main aim of the work was to isolate and approximate currently dominating teams in NCAA student competition on a base of results from 2003-2013 seasons.

### MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Data were downloaded from official website of NCAA [2]. According to basic criterion, results of 23 teams which attended in all 2003-2013 Division I competitions were analyzed. Additionally, research group was narrowed by extracting those to take at least one medal thus ultimate detailed analysis involved only 14 collegiate teams. Mean number of consecutive champions lost matches was calculated as well as mean won matches percentage and standard deviation, number of players (graduated) and coaching staff members who were US National Team capped.

### RESULTS

In table 1 won to played matches ratio (enunciated as percentage) was contained considering all universities which took part in NCAA men’s volleyball championships between 2003 and 2013 as well as NCAA National Champions.

**Table 1.** Disparities in won/played matches in NCAA National Champions and all participants

| 2003-2013 seasons     | Won %     |    |
|-----------------------|-----------|----|
|                       | $\bar{x}$ | s  |
| Attendants (23 teams) | 57 %      | 14 |
| Champions (14 teams)  | 84 %      | 8  |

Teams which won NCAA National Championship were averagely defeating more than 8 out of 10 consecutive rivals. During the whole season their number of losses was not bigger than 5.3. Extreme case was noticed in 2005/2006 in which UCLA as a champion lost 12 matches over the season. Furthermore, their won to played matches ratio was as low as 0.68. To compare, mean ratio of all participants slightly crossed 50% what is equal with 1 victory of 2 matches.

The review of champion teams’ head coaches demonstrates that one of them is 19-times champion in his career as the rest achieved not more than gold 4 medals (table 2). However, 5 of all became NCAA National Champion during his 5<sup>th</sup> or earlier year of work as head coach with given university team. In addition, team management politics suggests sparse coaching staff changes. As far back as 10 years, 6 teams were coached by the same man, the other 7 dismissed once and only one team recruited staff 4 times (table 3).

**Table 2.** NCAA National Champions over the years 2003-2013 consulting head coach and team statistics

| Season/Champion  | Coach         | Win % | Loss number | Years since Head Coach Nomination | Career Championships |
|------------------|---------------|-------|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 03/04 BYU        | Tom Peterson  | 88%   | 4           | 2                                 | 2                    |
| 04/05 Pepperdine | Marv Dunphy   | 93%   | 2           | 5                                 | 4                    |
| 05/06 UCLA       | Al Scates     | 68%   | 12          | 44                                | 19                   |
| 06/07 UC Irvine* | John Speraw   | 85%   | 5           | 5                                 | 3                    |
| 07/08 Penn       | Mark Pavlik   | 97%   | 1           | 14                                | 1                    |
| 08/09 UC Irvine* | John Speraw   | 84%   | 5           | 7                                 | 3                    |
| 09/10 Stanford   | John Kosty    | 80%   | 6           | 4                                 | 1                    |
| 10/11 Ohio       | Pete Hanson   | 81%   | 6           | 27                                | 1                    |
| 11/12 UC Irvine* | John Speraw   | 84%   | 5           | 10                                | 3                    |
| 12/13 UC Irvine  | David Kniffin | 78%   | 7           | 1                                 | 1                    |

\* - same coach

In analyzed time period the most successful teams were ones from the biggest universities: Penn State University – 1 gold medal, 2 silver medals and 7 bronze medals; UC Irvine (4-0-1) and Ohio State University (1-0-4, table 3). Number of students hovered from 3050 to 37865 in research group while 2 of above 3 were located behind 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile (Q3).

**Table 3.** Achievements comparison of Final Four attendants in 2003-2013 NCAA men’s volleyball championships

| University         | Final Four Attendance | National Championship | National Runner-Up | 3rd Place | Coaches Number | Enrollment |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| Penn State         | 10                    | 1                     | 2                  | 7         | 1              | 36749      |
| UC Irvine          | 5                     | 4                     |                    | 1         | 2              | 21293      |
| Ohio State         | 5                     | 1                     |                    | 4         | 1              | 37865      |
| Pepperdine         | 3                     | 1                     | 1                  | 1         | 1              | 3050       |
| BYU                | 2                     | 1                     | 1                  |           | 4              | 28048      |
| UCLA               | 2                     | 1                     | 1                  |           | 2              | 25634      |
| USC                | 3                     |                       | 2                  | 1         | 2              | 16096      |
| Stanford           | 1                     | 1                     |                    |           | 2              | 6504       |
| IPFW               | 2                     |                       | 1                  | 1         | 1              | 8389       |
| Long Beach State   | 2                     |                       | 1                  | 1         | 2              | 23744      |
| UC Santa Barbara   | 1                     |                       | 1                  |           | 2              | 18318      |
| Lewis              | 2                     |                       |                    | 2         | 2              | 3252       |
| Cal St. Northridge | 1                     |                       |                    | 1         | 1              | 28048      |
| Loyola-Chicago     | 1                     |                       |                    | 1         | 1              | 9348       |

In figure 1 difference between 2003-2013 won/played matches ratio and NCAA all-time history was outlined. Utmost progress was sustained by University of California in Irvine (+0.17) and Brigham Young University (BYU; +0.06). Secondarily, only 5 teams outstripped their overall mean. The most titled team from University of California in Los Angeles reached the most considerable decrease from 0.81 down to 0.64 and it caused averagely 17% less wins than in their all-time book of records.

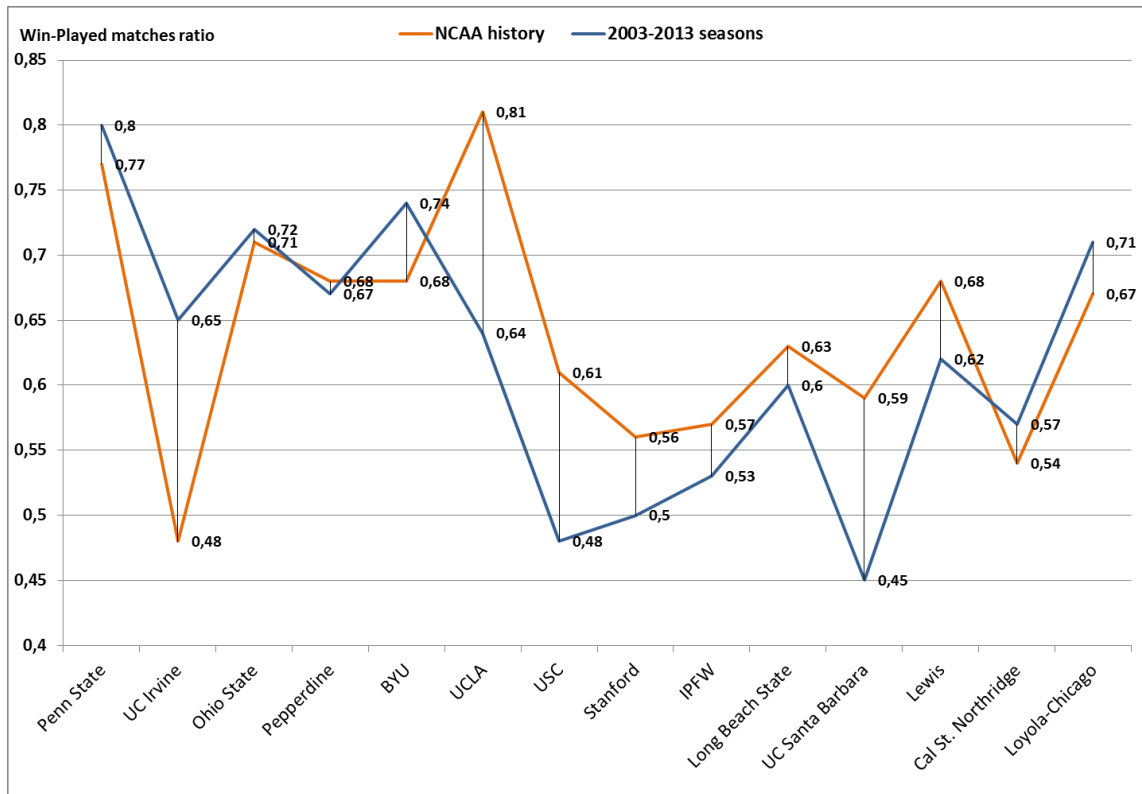


Fig. 1. Teams' 2003-2013 achievements in comparison with their NCAA history

Location of the best teams on the USA map (figure 2) definitely indicates California State domination in recent years as it contains more than a half of reviewed teams (8/14). Further 5 universities (including top-ranked Penn State University) is located in northern east states (Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania) and last one in Utah state.

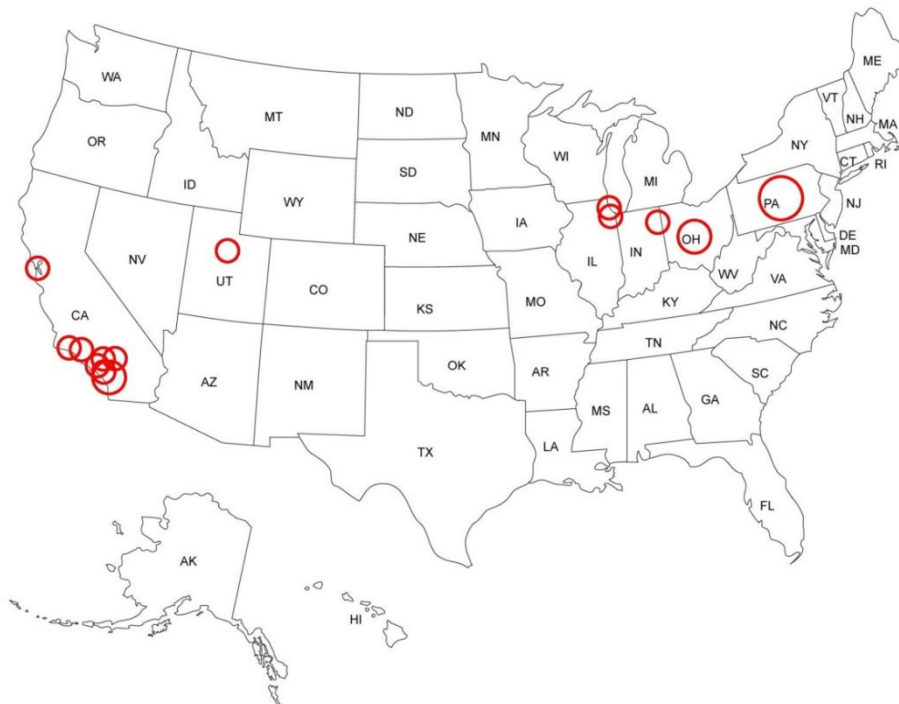
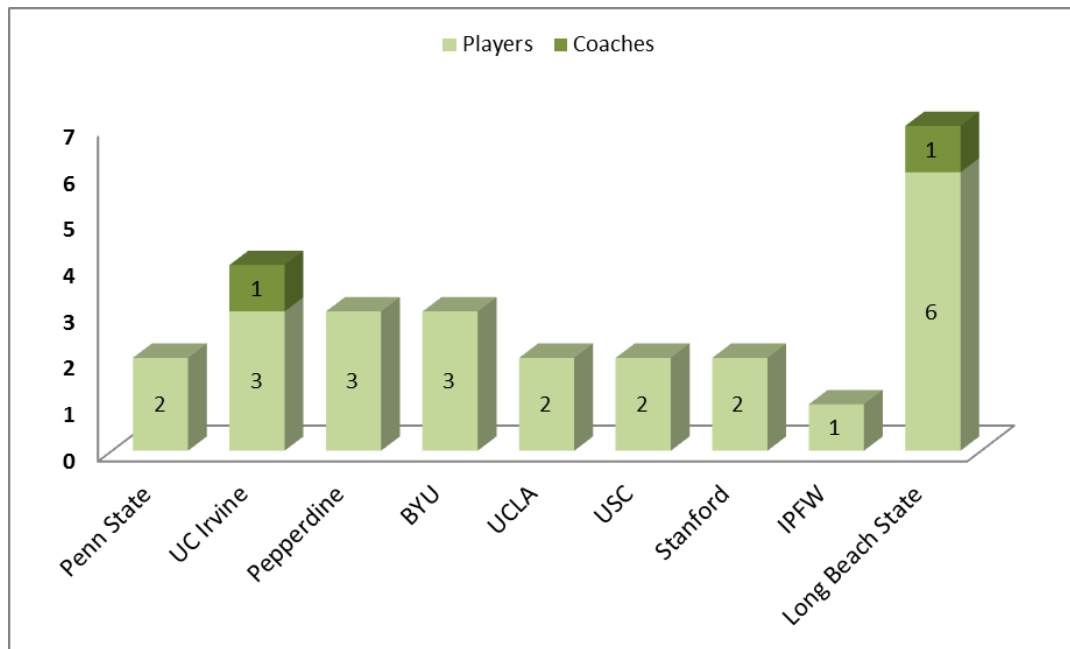


Fig. 2. 2003-2013 NCAA Final Four attendees and their universities location

During subsequent proceeding US National Team squads were analyzed. Research included only those players who played in World Championships (WC) 2006 or 2010 as well as in The Olympic Games (OG) 2004, 2008 or 2012. Thereby, 24 players graduated from 9 universities (Final Four attendants from 2003-2013) were selected to represent the nation. 6 of them were associated in the past with Long Beach State University while UC Irvine, Pepperdine University and BYU had 3 alumni each. Furthermore, UC Irvine and Long Beach State coaches were hired as head coach and coach assistant pending a couple of WC and OG (figure 3).



**Fig. 3.** Number of players (alumni) and coaches in US National Team over the years 2004-2012 who attended World Championships and The Olympic Games

## CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, 5-6 season losses overrun eliminates from NCAA National Championship competition. Besides, it is important to win at least 80% of all matches (up to 30-33) over the season. In recent years one may notice changes in teams domination as the most titled UCLA decreased win/played matches ratio dramatically while UC Irvine follow the opposite direction. The most steady results were achieved by Penn State University as they advanced into Final Four tournament every year of last 10. Undoubtedly, NCAA Division I Championships present high level with prospect players as many of them may be observed in US National Team squads. Moreover, international results of Americans place them on top of world rankings what allows to assess collegiate coaches work highly and recommend their coaching standards and regimes to worldwide volleyball staff.

## REFERENCES

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