

Exclusive Interview With 2009 EIVA Most Valuable Player Austin Lanteigne June 11, 2009

NA: How does it feel to be done with your volleyball career at Navy? Are you feeling nostalgic at all yet?

AL: I don't think it has hit me that I will no longer be playing college volleyball. I am still living in Annapolis through the end of July and still play as often as I can. I find myself calling up players from the men's and women's team at Navy trying to play as much pick-up as possible and to overcome the feeling of nostalgia that has been developing.

NA: What are your thoughts about your team's performance this year at Nationals?

AL: I was extremely happy with our performance at Nationals this year. My freshman year we made it to the Gold Bracket and finished 9th after a tough loss to Marquette. As a freshman starter I wanted to do everything I could to help the seniors end their career as strong as possible. It meant a lot for me to finally help bring the team back to that level after a rough showing at Nationals the past two years. We set our team goals in the Fall semester. First, to win the National Service Academy Championship and second, to finish the season in the top 16. We were two for two.

NA: Did you ever have any thoughts of playing for a varsity program, rather than a club team?

AL: For the majority of my high school career I had anticipated playing varsity for an NCAA program. A few schools were interested, but I ultimately decided on going to college to satisfy what I wanted to do with my life. Although NCAA volleyball would have been an incredible experience, I knew that I wanted to develop a career that would allow me to serve my country. Volleyball was not my answer to what I wanted to accomplish in my life.

NA: In what ways do you think collegiate club volleyball might be better than varsity?

AL: First of all, club volleyball allows you to do so much more in college than just volleyball. I know plenty of varsity athletes at school that do things only affiliated with their sport. Club athletics in general allows you to participate in a lot of other activities. Second, in terms of men's volleyball, I feel that club allows for more travel and a unique competition. I have friends that play NCAA and never venture out of their conference or general region for competition. Club volleyball allowed me to travel across the country, New York, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, Austin, etc and play teams from nearly every state.

NA: What key factors have led to your successes as an individual athlete, and what do you think it takes to become the EIVA's Most Valuable Player?

AL: Well I have been blessed by God to have an amazing family that supported me and helped me compete in nearly every sport possible growing up. He has also blessed me with unique talents, amazing teammates, and a couple of great coaches that helped me succeed. To become EIVA MVP you just need to have a lot of faith in your teammates and coaches. Volleyball is a great sport, it is not a one man show, you need a supporting cast for every play.

NA: **Is it true you ran a marathon the day before the East Coast Championships?**

AL: Haha, no I did not run a marathon the day before East Coast Championships. I love running and have run in a number of distance races to include a marathon and half-marathons. I actually ran a marathon 5 days before the Service Academy Championships in the Fall and was in the most pain of my life that entire week. I never practiced and for the entire drive up to West Point I kept telling myself there was no way I would be able to play that day. Somehow I managed to play and we actually won the championships which I was excited to be a part of.

NA: **Why aren't the EIVA teams winning national championships in Division I lately? What, if anything, needs to change?**

AL: You know, I remember my freshman year when Maryland made it to the finals against Oshkosh and I was pulling for them as if it was Navy. I think the EIVA teams have the talent, Maryland, JMU, Va Tech, PSU, Buffalo, Navy, we all have some consistent programs. Other conferences benefit from a regular season schedule that allows for more competition. There is a ton of talent out West and in the Midwest that are only a couple of hours from each other. The EIVA Conference is heading in the right direction and I think that the organization is the key to future successes at the national level.

NA: **What is your overall assessment of the conference, based on the changes you've seen throughout your career?**

AL: I didn't know the EIVA Conference existed my first two years at Navy. I know we played in an EIVA Championship every year, but I really didn't understand more than that. The conference has developed into an organized structure rather than the former mysterious entity it was once. The fact that the conference has certain guidelines and set divisions allows for better competition, competitive championships, respect in national rankings, and has overall changed the club volleyball community for the better.

NA: **What do you think will be some of your most memorable moments from playing volleyball in college? Could you describe some of them?**

AL: Playing volleyball in college allowed me to not only form new friendships at school, but at various schools across the country. The mens volleyball community is pretty small, so it's pretty cool to see friends at tournaments all over the place. More specific moments would include any match against Penn State, I feel like we could beat each other on any given day and I have nothing but respect for everyone on that team, everyone is totally a class act. My freshmen

year we beat #2 Maryland and Ohio Northern to win Maryland's Invitational Tournament. Later that year, at nationals in Salt Lake City, we defeated #5 Lakeland to take 1st on our championship pool the second day. This year, we also had the pleasure of playing against the Royal Military College of Canada which was a lot of fun to play against our allies across our very own national border.

NA: Do you plan on playing more volleyball in the future? If so, where and when?

AL: I plan on playing as much volleyball as possible in the future. Being in the Navy will allow me the unique opportunity, if work and deployment schedules work out, to eventually play for the All-Navy and All-Armed Forces teams. Additionally, I have already played in two outdoor tournaments this year, one with Navy teammate and friend Greg Reichel. I am scheduled to play in a couple of beach tournaments in Virginia Beach this summer and hope to continue playing when I move to Pensacola, FL next month to begin Flight School. If all goes as planned, my ultimate goal is to soon be stationed in Hawaii where you can find me playing volleyball on the beaches of Waikiki daily!