

Silver Medals for 12U Rival: Working To Be Good

In 12U volleyball, we are learning that “you are not good because you are good; you are good because you work at being good.” It’s even better when you have fun working hard like our team does.

Back in October, at our first tournament ever, we didn’t win a single game, but we did lose some close ones. We went back to practice and worked on our weaknesses. At our November tournament, we won a couple of close matches and lost a couple of close ones. Our work was paying off. In our December tournament, we actually beat some strong opponents, like the Hamilton Smash, a team that defeated us earlier on, and the Mississauga Pakmen.

Over the holidays, most of us worked out and stayed in shape. That was a good move. Before the tournament, the coaches talked about what athletes should eat and not eat. We all bought into it. (That meant no cookies, cupcakes, candy and jello until the day was over.)

So in our January tournament, which was our first official tournament that counted, we actually won a silver medal. But it wasn’t easy. Even though we went into the 10-team tournament ranked 7th, we knocked off the 1st, 6th, 5th and 4th ranked teams to win the medal. This time, we were successful in all our close matches: in fact, we had three 3-game sets and managed to win them all ... just. By the end of the day, we even finished ahead of bigger clubs such as Phoenix, Defensa and Leaside.

What a thrill! Right after we got the kill for the final point, when we won the match so at least the silver medal was ours, we were all going nuts, jumping up and down with joy and screaming

our heads off. Then, when we looked over at our parents on the sidelines, they were doing the same thing. (Sometimes, parents are just as happy and excited as their kids.)

We did a lot of things well that day like control the first touch, keep the ball from dropping, peel off the net far enough, and communicate. However, our MOTF (Most Impressive Team Feature) on Saturday was our spiking. Most of the other teams didn't seem to spike as much as we were hitting. We got a lot of spikes-- from the front row, from the back row. It was great! That made it really tough on our opponents and real interesting to watch.

Our MVP (Most Valuable Player) was actually someone who struggled at our December tournament. She knew it wasn't her best, but she just worked hard over the holidays and in practice. Girl, it paid off. Great control, fantastic setting, moving and anticipating, all over the floor, hit with lots of spin, served nearly 100%, played with a lot of focus, very coachable, super-positive person. Way to go Kiara Van Steekenlenburg!

We know we still have a lot to work on as a team. But from here, we plan to continue working hard and smart because like Coach says, "You are only as good as your work habits." We are enjoying what we are learning and all the hard work that goes with improving.