

## 2009 USJO National Championships - Day 3

### Mizuno Northern Lights 16-1, 16-2, 17-1, 17-2, 17-3

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The 16's teams have already been playing for two days before I arrived. Both of the 16's teams had done very well in their first two days. They each won their 6 team pool with perfect records of 5-0. This set them up for their 3rd day of competition in some 3 team pools with challenge matches afterwards.

The 16-1's won both of their matches today in their 3 team pool fairly easily. This put them in a good position for the Challenge match at 8pm. Their match was against Cajunland, and game 1 Northern Lights dominated and quickly won. Game 2 was a different story. NL started out slow and was behind as much as 6 points during the match. It wasn't until about 20 when NL finally evened the score out and started to take more control of the match. Even then, it was a real cliff hanger as the 16-1's went into overtime and eventually won 28-26. This put them into the 16 National Division Gold Championship Bracket. It is an 8 team bracket that starts at 8am on Monday morning. Good luck to the 16-1's as they try to win the 16 National Championship.

The 16-2's went 1-1 in their 3 team pool and placed 2nd. This set them up for a more difficult challenge match. The match was against Santa Barbara. Unfortunately the match did not go well for the 16-2's. They lost the match in 2 games to a good Santa Barbara team. This put them out of the running for the Gold Championship. They will be playing on Monday for the Silver Championship and 9th place in the American Division. Good luck to the 16-2's as they try to end their season by winning the Silver Division.

The 17-1's started their tournament today in the 17 Open Division. They are seeded #1 in the tournament and they are hoping to be able to hold that seed all the way through the Championship match. They are playing best of 5 game matches. They started off their day with a quick win in 3 straight games against Young Guns. They then had a 3 hour break and came back for their second match of the day against Laguna Beach. This was a bit tougher, but they still pulled it out in 3 straight games. They finished off the day by waiting another 3 hours and then officiating a match. They will continue play in their 7 team pool on Monday with 2 more matches.

The 17-2's started their tournament today in the 17 American Division. They didn't play great in their match, but they still won that match in two games. Their second match of the day they played was much better. They pretty easily handled the other

team and won in two quick games. They only had 2 matches today, and will play the remaining 3 matches in their 6 team pool on Monday. After they finished play they headed out for dinner in the South Beach area.

The 17-3's started their tournament today in the 17 National Division. They also are in a pool of 6 teams and only played 2 of the possible 5 matches today. In their match they were their normal high energy team. They easily won the match in 2 games. The second match of the day was against the number 1 seed in the tournament, El Paso, and it did not go as well. They ended up losing the match in 2 games to a team that is very similar to them with good ball control and some slightly bigger hitters and blockers. The 17-3's ended the day 1-1, and are still in contention for the Gold Championship Bracket if they win at least 2 of the 3 matches they have on Monday.

### **2009 USJO National Championships - Day 4**

#### **Mizuno Northern Lights 16-1, 16-2, 17-1, 17-2, 17-3**

All of the pictures taken this year are posted on our new photo website by [CrossCourt Images](#)

#### **Mizuno Northern Lights 16-1's place 3rd in the 16 National Division Championships.**

Today the 16-1's medaled at the USJO National Championships. They started the day off with a 3 game win over Dallas Premier. Game one we easily won, game 2 they easily won, and in game 3 Northern Lights dominated them to advance to the semi finals. The semi final match was against Wave out of Southern California. Game 1 we won 25-20. Game 2 they won with a score of about 25-18. It all came down to game 3. We started out the match slow and within a few minutes we were down 3-8. But we battled back to 13-13. From that point on it was a war with each side siding out. Unfortunately in the end Wave won 18-16 and the 16-1's ended their tournament in 3rd place. This was a very respectable finish, and we are extremely proud of them. At the awards ceremony three Northern Lights players were named to the All Tournament team. [Lisa Atkinson, Katie Habeck, and Ashley Murtha](#). Congratulations to Lisa, Katie, & Ashley and the entire 16-1 team.

The 16-2 team was playing for 9th place in the Silver Division today. Unfortunately they ran up against a very strong Renaissance team and they lost their first match in 2 games. They officially finished 13th in the USJO National Championships American Division. Congratulations to the 16-2 team for another excellent showing.

17-1's had two matches today. Both of them they finished off in 3 fairly quick games. I'm having a hard time getting pictures of them because every time I come over to one of their matches they are either done or only have a few points left! Oh well, I guess that's better than losing. They will finish their 7 team pool play on Tuesday with a match at 8am and 4pm...what a messed up schedule.

17-2's had three matches today. The first match went very quickly in two games. The second match was almost a repeat of their first match today, and they won that one in two games. Unfortunately in both matches they have exceeded Curt's magic point total number that would get them a free fruit dessert crepe. Oh well, maybe next time girls. Their third match was not as good as the first two. They lost that match in 2 games. This gave them a 4-1 record in the pool and they were tied with two other teams with the same record. Based on the tiebreaking procedures of game % & point % they ended up ranked 2nd in the pool. They are still in contention for the Gold Championship and they will play again on Tuesday afternoon and evening.

17-3's have to be one of the most fun teams to photograph. They are so full of energy and have great expressions combined with huge point celebrations. Combine that with their personal cheering section, today they were dressed in beach clothing, and you have the makings of a high energy match. They started off their first match of the day against a team named Titans. This team is a physically bigger team, but in the first game the 17-3's hung right with them until the very end when Titans scored the last 2 points 25-23. In game 2 the 17-3's led most of the way until the very end when Titans caught up at about 22. It was then a sideout match that ended up 27-25 with Titans winning the match. In their 2nd match of the day they easily won it in 2 straight games. This meant everything was riding on winning the third match in order for them to advance out of the pool towards the Gold Championship. Unfortunately they were not able to pull out the third match, even though it went three games, they lost in the 3rd game 16-14. They officially finished 4th in the pool and are out of contention for the Gold Championship. They will play again on Tuesday afternoon and evening.

## **2009 USJO National Championships - Day 5**

### **Mizuno Northern Lights 17-1, 17-2, 17-3, 15-1, 15-2**

All of the pictures taken this year are posted on our new photo website by [CrossCourt Images](#)

Today the tournament started for the 15-1's & 15-2's.

The 15-1's played at 8, 10, & 1. They won their first match in two quick games. The second match was more interesting and intense. It was against MAVA which is a very

good team that should not have been seeded as low as they were. Mava won game 1. Game two was a tight one most of the way. NL finally won it in the end forcing a third game. In game 3 it was all NL. They jumped out to a quick lead, then lost the lead, but came back and took the lead again and never stopped. Their 3rd match was suppose to be at 1pm, but I arrived at the court at 1:05 and two other teams were playing. It appears that the 15-1's started their match early and quickly won, or they played on a different court and the tournament never published the revised court. In any case the 15-1's were 3-0 today and will play the remaining 2 matches in their pool on Wednesday.

The 15-2's had two matches today. They won their first match pretty convincingly. They then had a 2 hour break, then a ref assignment and then played their 2nd match. The 2nd match was against the top team in the pool, Stingrays. Game 1 we were way behind in but came back in the end to tie it up 24-24. Unfortunately we lost the last 2 points and the game 26-24. Game two the 15-2's led most of the way, but at about 20 the Stingrays pulled ahead and finished out the game and the match. So the 15-2's are 1-1 on the day and will play the remaining 3 matches of their pool on Wednesday. Alli, I got lots of action shots for you.

The 17-1's are in their final day of pool play. They played at 8am and easily won their first match in 3 quick games against a team from Virginia. Their second match was at 4pm against the #2 team in the pool Skyline. This was a scary match. Skyline won the first game of the match. Game 2 started off pretty even, but the 17-1's managed to build a few points lead and hold onto it to win the game. Game 3 started off with Skyline taking control and the score was about 5-8, but then the 17-1's got back there and ripped off 5 quick points on dominating net play to take the lead 10-8. They finished out the game by maintaining that lead, so we headed into game 4. The 17-1's really jumped on Skyline in game 4. Within a matter of minutes it was 15-5 with NL leading. Skyline was unable to recover from that and NL quickly closed out the game and the match. So the 17-1's ended up 1st in the pool, they are into the Gold Bracket starting on Wednesday morning at 8am. It was good they won their pool, or else they would have had to come back and play at 8:30pm tonight which would have been very tough. They will be playing Texas Advantage.

The 17-2's were in a 3 team pool today followed by a challenge match late at night. They played exceptionally well in their pool play. They won a close match against Cincy Classic. In the second match they really turned it on and dominated a team they had lost too twice before, Denver Parks and Recs. This left them 2-0 in their pool, with a challenge match to be played at 8pm against OVA...a very good team which lost a match they shouldn't have. The match between OVA 17-1's and NL 17-2's was a great match. Game 1 went to OVA. There were some long rallies, great blocking and good hitting. Both teams were playing very well. Game 2 was neck and neck all the

way up. The 17-2's played an awesome game, probably the best of the year. Unfortunately in the end OVA won 29-27 and this puts the 17-2's out of the Gold and into the Silver. They will be playing for 9th on Wednesday. I was very proud and pleased with the play of the 17-2 team in this match. They left it all on the court....they made no major errors and everyone was playing at the top of their game.

The 17-3's like the 17-2's were in a 3 team pool followed by a challenge match late at night. The 17-3's were back on track today and their usual energetic selves. They easily beat a team named Niagra Frontier, and then had to play M1 17-2's. They once again turned on the heat and defeated them in two games. This set them up for a 10pm Challenge match.....stupid schedule. I left the convention center at 10:40 and they were just warming up for their match. They finished the match around 11:35 and they won it in two games against CT Jrs. They will play their final matches as the 17-3 team on Wednesday starting at 9am.

## **2009 USJO National Championships - Day 6**

### **Mizuno Northern Lights 17-1, 17-2, 17-3, 15-1, 15-2**

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### **Mizuno Northern Lights [17-1's](#) place 2nd in the 17 Open Division Championships.**

The lead story today is the 17-1 team. They started out the day in the quarter finals of the 17 Open Division. There they played Texas Advantage. They won that match in 3 straight games. Their semi final match was against Vision from Northern California. This match was a bit tougher, but the 17-1's pulled it out once again in 3 straight games. This set them up for the 17 Open Finals against Long Beach from southern California. The match started out poorly for the 17-1's with Long Beach taking the first few points. Long Beach clearly had a game plan and they executed it quite well, fairly easily winning game 1. Game 2 started out with NL taking the lead but Long Beach came back and it battled back and forth all the way to the end. The 17-1's had several opportunities to win it but didn't convert and Long Beach won 29-27. Game 3 was pretty much Long Beach's game. They controlled the game most of the time and won that game and the Championship. So Northern Lights 17-1's finished their 2009 Junior Olympic season by placing 2nd in the 17 Open National Championships. [Tori Dixon, Molly Kreklow, and Ashley Wittman](#) were named to the USJO All Tournament Team. Congratulations to the entire team and it's coaching staff for such a great achievement. We are proud of what this team has accomplished this year.

The 17-2's played in the Silver Division today. They started off the day very strong, easily winning their first match of the day. Their second match of the day was against SCVC from southern California. Game 1 was dominated by Northern Lights and we won 25-12. I headed off to watch the 17-3's figuring this one was in the bag....only to find out about 20 minutes later that we had just lost game 2. I arrived back to watch the end of game 3, which unfortunately was being pretty much controlled by SCVC. In the end they won the match and the 17-2's season came to an end. They officially placed 11th in the American Division. This team has had it's ups and downs this season, but I am very proud of how well they recovered in this past week and was able to put together a good performance at this event. Congratulations to the players and the staff for a job well done.

The 17-3's were playing for the top of the bottom half today which was 25th place. They started off the day by beating Jacksonville Jrs in two straight games. The first one was close 26-24, but they completely dominated the 2nd game. In their final match of their season the 17-3's played Bravos Valley. After losing game 1, they came back to win game 2 fairly easily. Game 3 was a tough one with lots of good rallies, but in the end Bravos Valley won it. The 17-3's officially finished 26th in the National Division. Once again I loved watching this team play. Win or lose they always put forth 110% effort, and their energy is high. Everything from Jordan calling every possible hitter, setter, and dump, to Kathryn calmly and cooling running a very well orchestrated offense made this team one of our top teams in the club. Congratulations to the players and the coaches for a wonderful year.

The 15-1's finished their first round pool play today. They won 2 of their 3 matches to make them 5-1 overall in the pool. Because of their lose to Texas Tornados, they ended up ranked 2nd in the pool. This still keeps them in contention for the Gold Championship. They will play in a 3 team pool on Thursday morning which will determine if they go into the final Gold Championship Bracket.

The 15-2's wanted me to report that they played very hard today. They also wanted to say that they loved the one ocean view room they have, but wanted to have 3 of them. I wanted to publish that they were 4th in their pool and are no longer in contention for the Gold Championship, but I was told I could not say that. So they will be playing on Thursday in a three pool that will lead to a championship bracket (not gold) that will be played on Friday. After they finished playing today, they went swimming in the Pool/Ocean, came back and watched the 17-1 finals, and then went out for a good dinner at Carrabas (even though it was a long wait).

## **2009 USJO National Championships - Day 7**

### **Mizuno Northern Lights 15-1, 15-2**

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The 15-1's were in a 3 team pool today with TAV & Puerto Rico. In the match against Puerto Rico they lost the first game, won the second game and were at a critical point in game 3 when the ref made a serious error in a ruling. Chad protested it and would have been right except for the fact that the refs banded together and claimed that the error that was made (had to do with the other team serving) all happened before 8 seconds expired and therefore what the other team did was not wrong because the 8 seconds hadn't expired so it was a replay. This type of thing has been typical of this poorly run event. In the end the 15-1's lost that game and the match. They then had to immediately play TAV who they jumped on and won game 1 fairly easily. But TAV turned around and won games 2 and 3. This put the 15-1's out of contention for the Gold Championship. They will be playing in the silver division for 9th place.

The 15-2's also played in a 3 team pool today. In their first match against Skyline they played a very good and close match. Unfortunately Skyline was just too strong for them and we lost the match in 2 games. Their second match was against a team called CS 15 out of the Eastern part of the US. Once again the 15-2's played hard but came up short in both games. So they placed 3rd in their pool and had a challenge match at 7pm. After their morning pool play they went back to the hotel for a few hours, and ordered Chinese food and worked on some new scents for their beach view room. Their challenge match at 7pm was against VB Pensacola out of Northern Florida. In game 1 they jumped out to a quick lead, then slowed down in the middle, but finished strong winning that game. Let's try a little play by play on game 2.....starting at 14-5 NL.

Wollack serves, returned pass by benson kill by Olivia. 15-5

Wollack serves an ace 16-5

Wollack serves, they hit it out. 17-5 NL. Time out by VB Pensacola. Marlon gives inspirational talk.

Wollack serves, roll shot that we miss. 6-17

They serve, Natalie is stuffed. 7-17

They serve, good rally, great dig by Kari, we double handle ball. 8-17.

They serve, rally a bit then set to Alli who is stuffed. 9-17.

They serve, bad pass by us, they block it down. 10-17.

They serve, we pass and set Olivia who kills it. 18-10.

Olivia serves, they dump it, we miss it. 11-18.

They serve, we set Kari and she kills it. 19-11.

Natalie serves they shank it, 20-11.

Natalie serves, they free ball it over, we bungle it and hit it into the antennae..20-12.

They serve, we pass set and Kari slams it .....into the net..20-13.

They serve, we set Kari again and side out.

Alli serves an ace 22-13.

Alli serves, they hit long 23-13.

Alli serves and Taylor blocks one straight down for point 24.

Alli serves they make a bad pass and the ball drops...we win 25-13.

On a side note, Ellen who was just cleared to play again last week after her ACL surgery/rehab got to play in a few games. She was very happy to be playing again. She even got a few kills in the VB Pensacola match but then hit her knee on the floor so she stopped playing. We had it checked out and she is fine. She'll play again on Friday. The 15-2's will play their final matches on Friday morning.

## **2009 USJO National Championships - Day 8**

### **Mizuno Northern Lights 15-1, 15-2**

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The final day for Northern Lights teams at USJO Nationals in 2009.

The 15-1's had a good day. They started it off by playing against Vision from California. They won that match in 2 straight games. This put them in the finals of the Silver Division against Long Beach who was originally seeded #4 in the tournament but who like us had made a mistake on day 3 and were knocked out of the Gold. The

match went 3 games, and was a good one, and in the end the 15-1's prevailed and won it in game 3. The [15-1's officially finished 9th](#) in the 15 Open Division by winning the silver bracket. After the match we took some pictures and then headed back to the hotel and some beach time. Some of the players went to the beach others went back to watch the 15 Open finals, but we all met up again and went out for a final team dinner at Carabbas Italian Grill. It was a good way to end the season. I'm proud of this team and what they accomplished this year....winning two Qualifiers, NJC's, 3rd at AAU's and 9th at USJO's. Congratulations to each and every player and the staff.

The 15-2's had not so good of a volleyball day. Their first (and last) match was against Central Cal. The match went 3 games but in the end the 15-2's lost in game 3 15-12. This ended their tournament and season. They officially finished 43rd in the 15 National Division. After the match was over they reffed the next match and then came back to the hotel for about an hour in the ocean before they had to leave for their flight home. The water was warm, clear, relaxing and the sun was shining...a great way to finish off their their trip to Miami Beach. I am also very proud of this team, they won the Regional tournament beating the other clubs 1's teams, they finished 3rd at the Show Me Qualifier, they played exceptionally well in the NL Qualifier in the 15 Open division, and the finished 9th in the AAU National Championships. Congratulations to all the players and staff for a great year. PS: Kelly, they gave me 4 more pieces of chocolate after you left!

Overall Northern Lights had 2 of its 7 teams medal at USJO's, and had 6 players named to the All Tournament teams. A very successful year.