

SACRIFICE & SUCCESS

AVP veterans vying for a spot to represent USA at the Summer Olympics 2008.

By Chad Convis • Photo by JasonEllisPhotography.com

Professional beach volleyball players are living the life, so it would seem anyway to casual onlookers witnessing these tanned hard bodies playing in the sand. If you have ever wondered what it takes to become a pro on the Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) Tour, here is a glimpse at the regimens two of the best players go through to stay on top; see if you think you'd be up for it. You just might prefer to merely soak up rays and take in a good book at the beach rather than lead this lifestyle where leisurely and casual are only in the attire.

Behind the sunglasses of Sean Scott and Rachel Wacholder of the AVP are laser-focused eyes determined to represent the USA in 2008. Scott finished third in Olympic qualifying rankings for 2004 with his then partner, Todd Rogers. After just missing the two-team country quota by a few points, he is on a mission to represent in Beijing.

In striving for the biggest stage in sports, Scott and Wacholder, who are dating by the way, have sought out the best training and diet programs available. The warrior-athlete couple shares an innate deep-rooted competitive spirit, which has fueled a combined 20-year career on the AVP Tour. Scott is so competitive that he doesn't even enjoy playing recreational games if he doesn't dominate them, so don't challenge him in ping-pong – seriously!

Winning on the AVP is extremely tough these days. Each tournament is loaded with quality players and even qualifier teams are capable of beating top seeds on any given weekend. On Aug. 28, 2005 in Boulder, Colo. Scott and Wacholder each dominated their fields (including Wacholder's defeat of top seeds and 2004 Gold Medalists Kerri Walsh and



Misty May-Treanor) and won the event. Moments like this are rare and sweet, and come to those with a level of dedication that is not only impressive, it's inspiring.

Scott is a 6-foot-5-inch powerhouse of an athlete. In order to play his physical game throughout an entire tournament, oftentimes in three-digit sand temperatures, he puts his body in the hands of experts to build lean, functional and healthy muscle while preventing injuries at the same time. Wacholder is an unassuming 5-foot-8-inch marvel whose game is all about quickness, ball control and smart play...and did I say quick? Her fast and efficient movements on defense keep balls in play and set her up for transition kills to win points. She too utilizes a bevy of top-notch professionals to keep herself fine-tuned.

Both competitors get specialty soft-tissue massage at A.I.M. Treatment Center in Manhattan Beach, Calif. Problem areas for beach volleyball players are the hips, back and shoulders so a lot of attention goes to these spots. This state-of-the-art facility is also where they build functional lean muscle mass, address weaknesses and improve overall health and wellness – just with different trainers. Scott works with Chris Hoffman and Rachel goes to Lisa Michelle for personalized programs that are quite different from one another.

What's in a Diet?

Not many people have their meals actually “calculated” for them, but this is the kind of thing you do when you're vying for a spot on team USA. To maximize all the hard work and sweat put in during the pre-season, Scott and Wacholder called upon former NASA consultant and nutrition guru, Chris Talley to take them to the next level. Talley, owner of Performance Food Works, has devised sophisticated metabolic equations and specially tailors nutrition plans for celebrities and athletes. The program essentially delivers the right amount, type and quantity of nutrients at the right time for optimal utilization, growth, recovery and performance.

Talley's system takes current weight, age, gender and height into the equation among other factors. He even prefers it when blood work is available to be further dialed in to what his clients



Photo courtesy of AVP

Sean Scott's Regimen

Sean Scott begins preparing for the season by strengthening his core and stabilizer muscles, hitting them from varying angles with strict form. Since this is where all athletic movements originate from, physical breakdowns can occur during the season if this supportive musculature isn't solid. One look at the washboard abs and it's obvious he takes this foundation work seriously.

Emphasis then moves to flexibility and balance with dynamic stretching routines. Here Hoffman and Scott pay close attention for any weak points or imbalances that need to be addressed prior to strength training. Hoffman will employ several fitness tools to improve Scott's overall and sport-specific strength, balance and body awareness. From kettle balls to weight vests and the TRX® Suspension Trainer™, a bodyweight-based fitness tool conceived in the Navy SEAL teams, Hoffman utilizes multi-joint movements to work the entire kinetic chain, promote fluid movement and prevent injury.

The last cycle of pre-season training involves performing sport-specific power moves. These help to achieve explosiveness with proper firing sequences for volleyball movements like blocking and jump serving – it's all about training for what you do. Finally, Scott does sprint work and jumping drills in the sand to build endurance and power. As if the deep sand wasn't difficult enough, elastic devices are harnessed to him for additional resistance. After six months of preparation, Scott embarks on the 18-tournament season, not including several international competitions required for the Olympic qualification process.

needs are, right on down to regulating pH balance in the body. Talley uses balanced proteins, high-alkalinity/low glycemic index carbohydrates, and mixed essential fatty acid ingredients to adjust the composition of each meal so ALL of the nutrients ingested are complimentary and complete. This approach lessens the stress on the kidneys (by delivering the right amount of protein but not too much), extends the lactate threshold (the point where accumulation of lactic acid starts to interfere with performance), and frees up essential fatty acids required for hormone production, repairing damaged cells and maintaining lean body mass.

Ginger and turmeric spices are ingredients in many of the meals, as both of these have the ability to reduce inflammation. Common sense supplementation with vitamins, minerals, glucosamine and omega-3's for example is used to fill in any dietary deficiencies. More on these cutting-edge nutrition programs can be found at www.performancefoodworks.com.

**Want to know who's hot
and who's not in the AVP?
Ready to catch all the
action on the sand? Visit
www.avp.com now.**

For Passion Not Money

Investing so much into their training and being at the top of their sport for so long, you'd think Scott and Wacholder might be appearing on MTV Cribs soon. Although they have an enchanting home together in Redondo Beach, their combined earnings are a little shy of the \$1 million mark. Compare this with what the top three sports leagues (NFL, NBA, MLB) minimum salary would have paid over this timeframe (20 years) for one player and you'll see the disparity is well into the millions. Furthermore, AVP contracts have sponsor limitations, no guaranteed income and players incur most if not all expenses for travel, lodging, equipment, insurance, coaching, training and massage. At least these two can save a couple of bucks by rooming together!

Although it would be nice to close the earnings gap with other professional sports as the AVP continues to grow, support from each other and family are enough to keep them going strong. That being said, several sponsors believe in Scott and Wacholder too including Schick and Oakley (Wacholder), Bolle (Scott), Pacific Broadband; Hilton, A.I.M. and Speedo.

After a long and grueling season, Scott and Wacholder like to recharge the batteries in locations like Bali, Tahiti or Scott's native Hawaii. I'm sure Beijing and podiums will be on their minds wherever they go. In the meantime, you can check them out on a beach near you – see www.avp.com for schedule information. **MS&F**

Rachel Wacholder's Regimen

Rachel Wacholder dedicates the same amount of time to fitness as her beau, Sean Scott, but it's allocated entirely different. A.I.M.'s Lisa Michelle created a program that takes Wacholder through functional strength training routines for improving core/stabilizers, overall strength and balance. Michelle stresses proper form and technique for better postural control and flexibility to allow for efficient volleyball movements made with agility, power and control. Try running zigzags in the sand and you'll quickly see why this is an area of emphasis.

Wacholder is into Pilates and goes to a local studio in Manhattan Beach. She performs full-body workouts to improve joint strength, flexibility and range of motion. All of these benefits help keep her body injury-free throughout the season. Preventing injury is critical since income cannot be won if you're not competing. In addition to A.I.M. and Pilates training, Wacholder enjoys acupuncture treatments as well for its healing properties.

Adding to her Rolodex of trainers and therapists, Wacholder employs coaching from former AVP star, Danalee Corso. Coaches like Corso are relatively new to the sport of beach volleyball and serve as a critical third set of eyes to point out vulnerabilities in opponents and offer strategic advice. Having this network of support provides Wacholder with an arsenal of expert knowledge in her corner. At the ages of 31 and 33 respectively, this will be her and Scott's last effort towards competing in the Olympic Games, so all the effort is well worth it.

