

## Spiking on the Plattsburgh Shore

(DoNorth/Seth Thomas) Worthy of a postcard from paradise, the fine-grained sand of Plattsburgh City Beach comprises one of the largest freshwater beaches in the United States. It has played host to sporting leagues, fitness classes, major cup events and live music festivals. On July 26, 2014, the beach will host its first ever Pro-Am Volleyball tournament — the Extreme Volleyball Professionals (EVP) Tour. Plattsburgh City Beach features over a mile of sandy beach, a swimming area, tables and grills, a concession stand, kayak rentals and a nature trail. The beach itself is smooth, with minimal rocks — perfect for volleyball. “To...

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“To have the Adirondacks host, we’re very excited,” says Ross Balling, EVP Tour commissioner. “As a kid, I heard about the Adirondacks as a destination for summer vacation; we’re a summer beach volleyball tour, so we want to go to a place that attracts people in the summer.”

The EVP Tour has aimed to spread the sport of beach volleyball since 1994 and has held tournaments in Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and even Wisconsin. But the EVP Adirondack Pro-Am Tour will mark the first time the event has ever been held in the Northeast.

“We’ve had a lot of people express their pleasure,” says Steve Peters, the City of Plattsburgh superintendent of recreation. “They had a choice of a few communities, and for them to choose you, it makes (our community) proud, and so am I. It’s a great thing for the region.”

The tournament will feature a junior and amateur division, so local and aspiring beach volleyball athletes can contend on the same stage as the professionals.

“We’ve been doing this for 20 years Pro-Am style,” Balling says. “I think that’s why we’ve had so much participation in the sport; people love to play volleyball.”

Rosi Cummings, a 22-year-old Plattsburgh resident, has been entrenched in the sport since she was in middle school. Cummings played a year at Springfield College and three years at SUNY Plattsburgh. She has played in numerous tournaments and leagues, and she jumped at the opportunity to enter this tournament.

“It’s such a great opportunity to talk to players at a high level,” Cummings says. “I want to be a collegiate coach, and just to have the opportunity to make connections like that is incredible.”

A big factor that helped bring the national tournament to Plattsburgh City Beach was the influence of Canadian Olympians from nearby Quebec who will likely participate in the event.

“I think the one thing is that we have a contingency of athletes from Canada,” Balling says. “Hopefully we can have a Canada versus U.S. type challenge.”

Professional volleyball player Larissa Witherspoon says she loved the idea of attracting Canadian athletes to the tournament. She believes the tour will expand the sport across the border.

“It’s been expanding exponentially as years have gone by,” Witherspoon says. The 28-year old Buffalo native is familiar with Upstate New York. She believes adding a northeast tournament not only benefits EVP tour and its athletes but also spreads beach volleyball throughout the area.

“Anything to grow awareness for this awesome sport, especially in a place where beach volleyball isn’t as relevant,” Witherspoon says. “It brings people to the sport and is great for the community.”

Peters expects at least a few thousand people to attend the July event. He’s honored that Plattsburgh will be the first northeastern city to host the professional tournament — if for no other reason than to share the scenery with people from all over.

“People should see what we see every day,” Peters says. “It’s just a remarkable view.”

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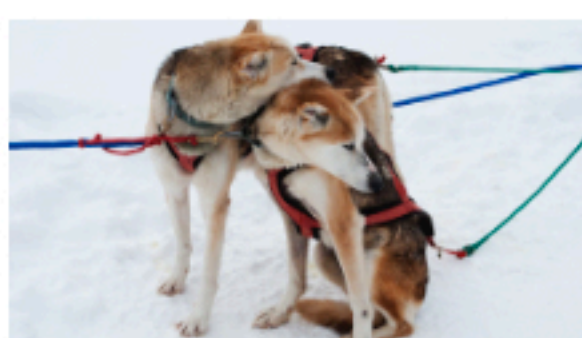
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