



Under 18 Grand Prix Pilot

Statement of Need

The Pilot Under 18 Grand Prix series will service the growing requirement for high end competitive opportunities for talented players within a key stage of their pathway.

The Grand Prix will include the best performing clubs within the under 18 championships and qualification will occur seamlessly from the last 8's held in December, offering additional high level competition later on in the season whilst acclimatising athletes to the additional strains of 5 set matches, but in a controlled environment amongst and against their peers.

Pilot Description / Dates

The Under 18 Grand Prix series will require the use of the National Volleyball Centre, Kettering for a number of days of competition. Therefore the proposal is for this to be over two separate days and weekends to alleviate additional strains on clubs finances and workforce resources, this is opposed to the original proposal for four dates over four weekends.

The aim of the Under 18 Grand Prix series is to deliver competition opportunities for players considered to have potential and within the Volleyball England talent system.

The dates proposed for the Grand Prix are:

Saturday 8th February 2014

Sunday 2nd March 2014

Competition Format

The matches will be best of five sets, with a in a similar pool group format to the Last 8s, but run over two days of Competition. Each Team will play in a group of 4, and will play 2 best of five set matches each day of competition (4 best of five set matches in total).

The final of the Grand Prix series for both boys and girls will be played prior to the Super 8's final held at Kettering NVC, which will be held as a double header so both Grand Prix finals will act as a showcase event prior to the Super 8's finals. Exact details to be confirmed.

Competition Seeding

Pool 1	Pool 2
A = Finalist from U18 National Championships	A = Finalist from U18 National Championships
B = 4 th Place in Group from U18 Last 8s	B = 4 th Place in Group from U18 Last 8s
C = Losing Semi Finalist from U18 Last 8s	C = Losing Semi Finalist from U18 Last 8s
D = 3 rd Place in Group from U18 Last 8s	D = 3 rd Place in Group from U18 Last 8s

Teams will be randomly drawn to into the positions above based on their positions from the Last 8s.

Competition Points System

In the U18 Grand Prix three points will be awarded to the team winning a match should the score be 3-0 or 3-1. Two points will be awarded to the winning team and one point to the losing team should the score be 3-2.

Competition Schedule

Schedule – 1st Day of Competition – Saturday 8th February 2014			
Start	Gender	Match	Officiating
10:30	Men / Women	A v B	C
12:30	Men / Women	C v D	A
14:30	Men / Women	A v C	B
16:30	Men / Women	B v D	D
Schedule – 2nd Day of Competition – Sunday 2nd March 2014			
Start	Gender	Match	Officiating
10:30	Men / Women	B v C	D
12:30	Men / Women	A v D	B
14:30	Men / Women	5 th / 6 th Playoff	2 nd Place in Pool
14:30	Men / Women	7 th / 8 th Playoff	2 nd Place in Pool
16:30	Men / Women	Semi Final 1 (Winner Pool A vs 2 nd Place Pool B)*	5 th Place
16:30	Men / Women	Semi Final 2 (Winner Pool B vs 2 nd Place Pool A)*	6 th Place
Schedule – Finals at NVC alongside Super 8s Playoffs			
Girls Final – Saturday 26th April 2014, Boys Final – Sunday 27th April 2014			
Start	Gender	Match	Officials
TBC	Men / Women	Winner Semi Final 1 vs Winner Semi Final 2	Appointed

*Teams who lose the Semi Final will be considered to have finished 3rd equal. No medal will be available for this position.

The benefits to this proposal

Added value to Volleyball England junior competitions – The under 18 Grand Prix will supplement the under 18 championships which will provide an additional competition for those who did not reach the finals as well as preparatory competition for those who did. The weekends proposed will be spread in order to

alleviate excess stress on resources for clubs/colleges as well as Volleyball England and offers a workable timeframe between weekends

Increased competitive opportunities for athletes that are recognised as having high potential - This would allow Volleyball England to offer a more comprehensive competition for talented athletes as the current schedule for Under 18's specific competitions finishes in December. This will offer additional opportunities spread evenly across the indoor season.

Appropriate exposure to 5 set competitions in the right environments – The transition from junior to senior competition is not always easy for talented athletes. The use of 5 set competitions is an opportunity to increase exposure to the rigours of senior volleyball but within their own age group. This added measure from Volleyball England will aid the transition into the senior format of the game in a controlled environment.

To potentially develop a 'top tier' within junior volleyball – with the formation of club England junior satellite academies, there are now 7 further education colleges that provide daily training environments. These 7 colleges also provide some of the talent pool within national programmes at junior level as they are accommodating a number of talented athletes recognised as 'high potential.' It is envisaged that these establishments will help to raise the standard of U18 Volleyball. This higher standard will then need to be serviced correctly by Volleyball England to ensure player development opportunities are offered in line with their potential, in turn providing effective foundations for national standard athletes to be able to then compete successfully against their European counterparts.

Costs and Administration

Teams will be asked to pay an Entry Fee of £40. Entry Forms is included on the email.

This fee has been set in recognition that Teams will have their own costs with being involved in the competition, in particular the costs of travelling to Kettering.

Volleyball England's contribution will include the court time at the NVC, Kettering, the referees / volunteers to service the matches, and staff to administer the event. Volleyball England will also be providing the exposure of the Super 8 Finals set-up as another Showcase final for U18 level competition.

Additional Information / Summary

The long term vision of the Under 18 Grand Prix Series is to increase player development within the national talent pool and raise the level of performance at a junior level which will then lead to a greater number and higher standard of talented senior players. The creation of junior satellite academies has created a network of 7 daily training environments that house athletes during a key phase of their development. It is hoped that the junior satellite academies in combination with the new Under 18 Grand Prix will give rise to additional high level competitive environments delivered by Volleyball England to enhance the players' development.

5 set matches also add greater value to the player experience. As the players involved will be at a key transition stage of the talent pathway, it is vital that Volleyball England offers a controlled and effective environment that can increase their exposure to 5 set matches in preparation for the adult game and/or national representation at European competitions.

Year 2 and beyond

There will be a requirement for regular 'check and challenge' in terms of the Grand Prix format, with the inaugural year being an opportunity to gain valuable feedback in order to add maximum value to clubs and players. Any formation of a 'Super 8's' at junior level will need further consultation and further understanding of the successes and weaknesses of the Grand Prix concept over a number of years.