

Trying to create a spike in boys volleyball



Andrew Kiser Sep 30, 2018

Digging deep, eighth grader Talmage Barton passes the ball during practice on September 25 at Centennial Middle School.

(Sydney Warner/Montrose Daily Press)

The Centennial Middle School volleyball team looks a tad different than most years. It's because this year's roster includes a couple of boys.

In a Colorado sport that is mostly offered to girls, Talmage Barcon and James Mundell are outliers.

The duo, as well as Centennial coach Jill Pulford, said they hope more males begin to play the sport, with the ambition of one day having a boys' volleyball program at the middle and high school levels.

“We want more boys to know that volleyball is a sport for them as well,” Pulford said. “... We want to get a program started so they can start at a younger age.”

So far this season, Centennial has faced only one opponent that had a boy on its team, Pulford said.

Boys volleyball is gaining interest statewide. CHSAA, the governing body that oversees high school sports in Colorado, approved a pilot season for the sport for boys, as well as girls wrestling and unified bowling earlier this year. Each sport is a step closer to becoming officially sanctioned by CHSAA.

Twenty-three states currently authorize boys volleyball, while another seven, including Colorado, are mulling it over.

Currently, high school volleyball programs are under the umbrella of the Colorado Boys High School Volleyball Association. According to CBHSVA’s Facebook page, the entity provides the sport to 300 high schools in the state.

Additionally, there are no Colorado universities that have an NCAA men’s volleyball program.

Without an outlet, some boys believe they may be missing out on a sport they’re more adept in. That was the case for Barcon, who said he found he had talent in volleyball that might have gone to waste. He added his uncle, who played the sport, realized he had the skills as well.

“I figured I should play volleyball this year,” said Barcon, who also had a second cousin who played college volleyball.

Mundell, who played on the Centennial team last year, said he got into the sport through his mom, who showed him videos of men’s volleyball. Pulford had high praise for Mundell saying his long arms and legs make him an archetypal volleyball player.

Barcon didn’t have an easy decision to make because he had to choose between volleyball or football. Although he was new to the team, Pulford said he didn’t have a problem getting used to the sport.

“With him being an athlete, he was able to learn quickly,” Pulford said.

“I still like football,” he said. “It is a sport I do enjoy but volleyball is a great sport and I like it a lot. With James here, I don’t think it would have nearly been as much fun.”

Barcon added outside of Mundell he has other teammates on the team that have made the transition comfortable.

Mundell agreed, adding the players have a competitive spirit which translates into wanting the boy to also have success.

“It’s pretty competitive,” he said. “They see us playing and they want us to play well, too.”

The additions of Mundell and Barcon have helped elevate the quality of play by the team, Pulford said.

“They definitely add a dynamic,” Pulford said. “I feel like when I put both of them on the court we’re pretty unstoppable.”

She added she wants for the pair to not only play on a boys and girls team but also on one that’s solely for males.

“My wish is — and think their parents feel the same — they had teams to compete against other than just coed,” she said. “It has been great and fun and we’ve so enjoyed their addition to the team.”

The Centennial volleyball season just wrapped up as the team recently participated in a league tournament Saturday.

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