



## Downstate Juniors VBC Newsletter

Volume 3 | Issue 1 |

Thanks for taking a read through our first issue of this year's newsletter. We are excited for the start of our 2024 club season and for what this year has in store for us. Here are just a few things we wanted to share with you all as we gear up for our first tournaments of the 2024 season!

### *Inside This Issue*

#### **PG. 2: This Edition of Dig This**

Transitioning from Rec League to Competitive Downstate Teams & The Difference between 6-2 and 5-1 Offensive System.

#### **PG. 6 Fall Season Accomplishments**

# Downstate's Got New Locations!

Downstate will be hosting teams from new locations. We are now offering Aspire and Regional programs at the following locations.

## SOMERS HIGH SCHOOL

120 Primrose Street  
Lincolndale, NY 10540

At this location, only Aspire programs are available for 9th & 10th graders.

## KINGSTON YMCA

507 Broadway  
Kingston, NY 12401

Downstate Juniors has expanded to the YMCA in Kingston, NY.

At this location, only Aspire programs are available.

## CARMEL SPORTS CLUB

111 Old Rte. 6  
Carmel Hamlet, NY 10512

Here we're running the following teams: 8 Aspire and 3 Regional teams.

# Dig This!

Each edition of our newsletter, we offer a little insight into different topics which will vary from Downstate information to tournament details to volleyball rules. Our hope is to share knowledge with you all to help you better understand the game and why we at Downstate do what we do each year.

## Transitioning From Youth Non-Competitive Teams To A Downstate Club Team

Competitive sports are great extracurricular activity for our youth! We all have to start somewhere, and a lot of our athletes begin at a recreational level. Within the past few years, Downstate Youth Rec leagues have fielded multiple teams in the Westchester and Dutchess counties thus exposing younger athletes to volleyball earlier than in years past. After growing to love the game, athletes are deciding younger they want more structure in their Downstate experience.



When an athlete decides they want to take it to the next level, Downstate offers many options for competitive teams. However, our organized teams are a different program than that of our Rec League teams. Their structure requires a time and effort commitment quite different than school or rec programs. So how do you adjust? First, gauge your child's true interest: do they really want to take it next level? Maybe their friends are playing and that's the reason for their interest. Downstate's competitive programs are more costly than Rec League and your athlete will be making a commitment to a team which requires them to attend regular practices and tournaments. Make sure it's a decision they're prepared to stick with before making the leap. Second, choose the right program for your child. We offer three programs of competitive teams: Aspire (our least restrictive requiring the least amount of time commitment as the season is shorter and practices less times per week.) These teams are comprised of athletes looking to stay in shape for themselves or their school teams, with an unlikely desire to play past high school. Regional teams are comprised of athletes who want slightly more competitiveness but still need/want the slightly flexible schedule. Finally, our National program is our elite and top teams filled with athletes (and parents) committed to three practices per week and multiple travel tournaments all over the country to face the top competition. It's the most rigorous schedule and commitment and our top coaches are leading these teams. We love seeing our kids transition to our competitive programs; however, it can be an adjustment. The structure is for the better: it leads to measurable difference in your pre-teens/teens' skills both on and off the court. Being aware of the difference and embracing the change going in will better prepare both your child and your family. Check out our website and contact us for more program information.

*“We love seeing  
our kids  
transition to our  
competitive  
programs;  
however, it can be  
an adjustment.”*

#### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A 5-1 AND 6-2 OFFENSE?

---

You may have heard your coach or your child talking about them “running a...” 5-1 or 6-2, but what does it mean? In short, this means your team is working with one setter (5-1) or two (6-2). A 5-1 refers to the offensive system in which the setter plays all the way around, both back and front rows, leaving five remaining players on the court to defend and attack. A 6-2 offensive system usually involves setters playing out of the back row for three rotations. The front row players all become attackers. There are many reasons why one is used over the other, with neither being absolute. Sometimes, this can have to do with the height of the setter and their ability to provide a strong block; coaches may opt to run a 6-2 to ensure the net is protected with strong blocking.

# Getting Ready for the Season

While our 2024 season officially kicked off in January with competition, our teams began practicing in November. Early in the season, our athletes hold bonding get togethers, understanding how important team chemistry is in this sport. Here are our athletes spending time off the court.

Downstate teams give back by collecting Toys for Tots. 16 Black collected over 70 toys for donation!



Our 16 Pythons got in the Halloween spirit by getting together for a SCARY team bonding at Kevin McCurdy's Haunted Mansion!



Every year, Downstate coaches travel to the American Volleyball Coaches Association conference which takes place, just prior to the NCAA finals. This year, a few Downstate athletes came along and traveled down to Tampa, Florida to watch Nebraska and Texas battle out for the National Championship.



And the coaches have some fun, too.





# 2024 Season Overnight Tournament Schedule

This season, our teams will once again be attending multiple local tournaments as well as traveling all over the country for some of the best competition.

Our National and Regional teams kicked off the season by attending the New England Winterfest in Hartford, CT.



Many of our teams will be competing again this year, at Volleyfest Festivals in Providence, RI and Springfield, MA.

As we approach mid-season, our girls' and boys' teams will be traveling to Boston, MA for the Boston Volleyball Festival tournament. This is a great tournament for our Regional teams to get looks by local college coaches. Additionally, many of our teams will embark on some amazing sightseeing and team activities in the wonderful city of Boston. As parents and family of our athletes, we encourage you to get out and go enjoy the great food this historic city has to offer! We are very excited to showcase our talent in the New England area.

Some of our top National teams will be headed to the Mizuno's Big South Qualifier in Atlanta, GA in March 2023. The competition at this tournament is sure to push our athletes. We believe exposure to this level of play gives our athletes insight into what they can aspire to achieve. Downstate strives to push our teams every chance we get and attending this qualifier is another opportunity to do that.

Downstate has been attending Northeast Qualifiers (NEQ) and East Coast Championships, in Pittsburgh, PA, for years; this year is no different. These tournaments are part of our annual schedule for all of our National and Regional teams, but they are competitive, nonetheless. NEQ brings college coaches from all over the country and divisions gives our athletes another opportunity to earn a bid to Nationals. East Coast Championships finishes up the season for most of our teams on the three day Memorial Day weekend.

	Boston Volleyball Festival
	February – March 2024 Play Dates
<hr/>	
	Volleyfest Providence * Springfield
	February 2024 Play Dates
<hr/>	
	Northeast Qualifier
	March and April 2024 Play Dates
<hr/>	
	East Coast Championships
	Memorial Day Weekend

# Fall Season Acknowledgments and Awards

We are so proud of ALL our Downstate players and coaches on a great finish to their fall high school and college seasons which wrapped in November 2023. Many of our Downstate athletes were recognized in various ways in their respective sections. Some athletes received awards; others hit unbelievable career milestones. We wanted to close out this first edition by showcasing some of their great achievements. While this is not an exhaustive list of every award and accomplishment earned by our members, we hope you'll join us in

congratulating these Downstate athletes for the following achievements from this past fall school season.

## *18 Black*

Our own Olivia “Liv” King of Ardsley High School was named All League. Liv was named Captain this season as a senior and enjoyed her final matches wearing her lucky #7 jersey. Liv played alongside two other Downstate players on our 16 Black team, Masha Stern and Bella Lanza. Ardsley won the Yorktown tournament and advanced to post pool play in both the Ossining and Pelham tournaments. **Additionally, on January 2, 2024, Liv committed to SUNY Delhi. Congratulations Liv!**



Millbrook’s senior and two-time Journal All -Star, setter **Marisa Markou** dominated as a facilitator and proved to be an offensive threat, helping Millbrook reach the state final. *(Pictured on right)*

**Zakara Masibo** of Cornwall Central High School earned 1st team All-State and All Section. **Additional congrats goes to Zakara for committing to Stevenson University. Congratulations Zakara!**

**Lucy Rosengarden**, Pleasantville High School was named as a Section 1 - All Section Player.



Millbrook’s **Gianna Dipilato** earned Player of the Year by the Poughkeepsie Journal. Gianna hit .470 during her team's run to the state final.

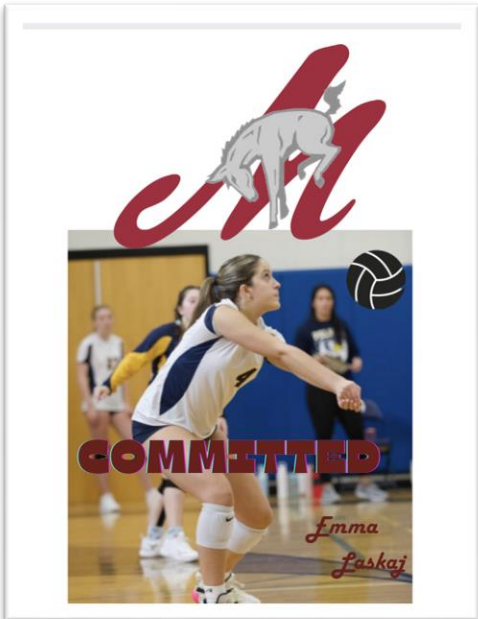


Described by coach Shawn Stoliker as "a bulldog with super athletic abilities," DiPilato excelled while leading the Blazers on a brilliant run to the Class C state final, racking up 338 kills, 110 aces and 212 digs. Gianna was voted MVP of Section 9, Class C and All State.

**Emma Laskaj** of Pelham Memorial High School was named All League & All Section Player. She also took MVP at the Pelham Dig Pink Tournament helping to lead her team to win the tournament! **Emma also recently committed to play next year at Muhlenberg College. Great job Emma! (Pictured on right.)**



**Congratulations to Emilia Cascapera as she committed to Adelphi University for Fall 2024!**



We continue to be impressed with the growth of our boys' volleyball program. As this program, led by Directors Dan Altro and Joe Felipe, is still in its early stage, we are so excited to see the success of the athletes and the teams in which they're apart.



## *18 Black – Boys*



Clarkstown North Rams' **Jacob Svava** (#12 pictured above who plays on 18 Black team) helped lead his high school team to an undefeated season.

## *17 Black*

**Maddie Thompson** of James I Oniell High School had an outstanding season earning the honor of being added to the 100 Kills Club with 132 kills for the season; additionally, her team advanced to the 2nd round of Section IX Sectionals, finishing the season 18-2. An improvement from last season's 4-14!

**Vange Forte** of Sacred Heart Greenwich High School earned the Most Valuable Player Award for the season. Vange was also named to Fairfield Athletic Association (FAA) All League - Second Team.

## *18 Cobras – Boys*

Arlington High School's **Ethan Frank** of 18 Cobras (B) earned All-League and All Section while **Damian Portero** earned All-League and the Sportsmanship Award.

**Ryan Campbell** of Wappingers High School earned All-League. Ryan is playing on our Boys' Aspire team out of Downstate North!

## *17 Red*

**Andriana DiVincenzo** of Mahopac High School was named All Conference 1 League A.

**Claire Fallon** of Horace Greeley High School earned All-Section and All League for Section 1.

## *17 Blue*

**Aanya Shetty** of Briarcliff Manor High School earned All-League.

## *17 White*

Somers High School's **Maren Kellock** earned All-League and All Section.

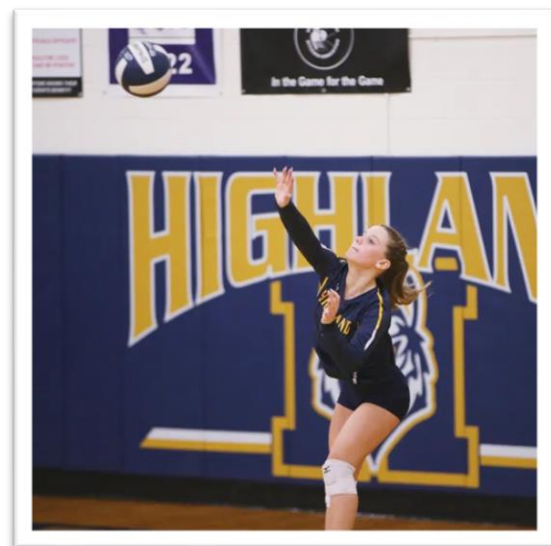


## 17 Cobras

**Ashley Webber** of Carmel High School was named All Conference 1, League A.

Our own **Priscilla McReynolds** of Speckenkill High School earned All-State honors while racking up 165 kills, 83 aces and 18 blocks as she led her team to the Section 9, Class B semifinals.

Congrats also goes to **Priscilla** for committing to Oswego College for next fall as a 2024 College Freshman.



**Cadence Meltz** of Highland High School, a first-team all-Section 9 pick, was also named to the Poughkeepsie's All Stars Team for 2023. Cadence helped lead her team to the Section 9 Champions.

---

## 16 Black

Lakeland High School's **Kelly Mallon** was named captain as a freshman! Kelly earned All-League, All Conference, and All Section at the Section One end of season dinner. Kelly was selected for GEVA's High Performance team. Additionally, she was named captain of that team which went on to win the Bronze at USAV National Championship in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.



**Peyton Kellam** of John Jay East Fishkill was named All Section, League A.

Ardsley High School's **Masha Stern** earned All-League & All Conference awards.

Horace Greeley's **Jaida Cekic** won All-Section and All-League. Jaida also served as her high school's team captain.

Putnam Valley High School's **Izzy Picard** earned All Section and All League. She was named Conference 3 Player of the Year and made 3<sup>rd</sup> Team All State!

Here's a pic of all our exceptional athletes who will play together this season under Director and Coach Matthew Cochenour. *(From left to right: Kelly Mallon, Masha Stern, Antonella Lanza, Izzy Picard, Jaida Cekic, Julia Nelson, Olivia Tran)*



## 16 Vipers

**Sophia Haskins** of RC Ketchum High School earned the accolade of Outstanding Scorer. Sophia said this about what made this season special: *"Bonding with the girls on my JV and varsity team."*

---

## The 2023 AVCA Phenom Watch List

The following Downstate Players were also named to the 2023 AVCA Phenom Watch List. In order to be featured on the list the student-athlete must have a 2025, 2026, or 2027 graduation year and have been recognized in some form for their outstanding volleyball abilities. *(Pictured right are some of Downstate Phenom athletes at the NCAA Finals Match in Tampa, FL.)*

## 16 Pythons

16 Pythons player  
Jillian Cerulo poses  
with her sister,  
Riley (Downstate  
12 Vipers) at the  
Section IX  
Championship



## 15 Black

**Taylor Denike** from Dobbs Ferry High School was named All Conference and All League!

Congratulations to all players in their 2023 fall high school seasons!



Congratulations members of our Downstate 16 and 17 Black Athletes who were recognized.

- Vange Forte – 17 Black
- Brenna Delaney – 17 Black
- Samantha Kranzler – 17 Black
- Jaida Cekic – 16 Black
- Kelly Mallon – 16 Black
- Izzy Picard – 16 Black
- Chloe Snyder – 17 Black

## Team Accomplishments

The following schools have Downstate members on them and experienced success in the fall 2023 season:

**Arlington High School**, coach **Lauren Moran** who also coaches our **Downstate Boys Team** was named **League Coach of the Year**. Arlington High School was 2023 League Champions.

**Horace Greeley** was this year's Section 1 Finals Champions. The first sectional title since 1982!

**Sacred Heart Greenwich** went undefeated in the regular season FAA Division. The team also made it to the Championship Game in the NEPSAC playoffs- Class A Division.

**Somers Modified 8th Grade Red Team** went undefeated on the season, capped with an exciting 2-1 win over Lagrange in their final game. Several members of the team will play on various Downstate teams this coming club season, including **Julia Greco** and **Zara Salazar** from **14 Black** under Director Joel Stanford. We love to see our younger athletes working hard and reaping the benefits.

## Downstate Athlete Spotlight!



## ALUMNI ALERT

**Vanessa Seymour**, Hartwick College, a Downstate Cobras Alumni, was named to the **Empire 8 All-Conference 2nd Team** as a freshman setter.





Ashley Pavarini of Suny Maritime, was named **Rookie of the Week** as the team's setter in October 2023.

Kayla Jennings of Manhattanville College was named **Rookie of the Week** as Libero in September 2023.



Both Kayla and Ashley played on Downstate teams out of the DAC dating back to our youth age groups!



Western Connecticut State University freshman outside hitter **Julia Stoliker** was named the **2023 LEC Rookie of the Year** and **First Team All-Conference**, making her the sixth player in program history to receive the honor. She led the LEC with 312 kills and 3.28 kill per set, ranked second in the LEC in points (360.5 total, 3.79 per set) and was third in hitting percentage (.284) in her first collegiate season.



# Athlete Spotlight

## Jordan Ader

Jordan Ader is a busy and determined Sophomore here at Iona, with a passion for hard work and commitment. As a psychology major also taking prerequisites for nursing school, Jordan also juggles being a part of the Honors Program and a student athlete on the Women's Volleyball Team.

### What is your favorite thing about being an athlete at Iona?

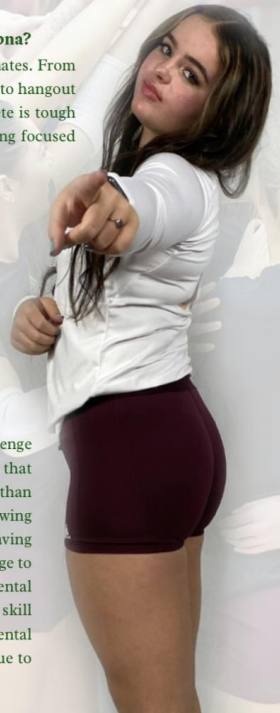
My favorite thing about being an athlete at Iona is my teammates. From the day I got to Iona, I had an automatic big group of friends to hangout and make memories with. The rigorous schedule of an athlete is tough but having each other to lean on is such a huge part of staying focused and connected.

### What are some of your goals this year, both academic and athletic?

Some of my academic goals for this year are to finish each semester with at least a 3.7 GPA and to manage taking sixteen credits in the spring while also completing my athletic season strong. As for athletic goals, myself as well as my team are working hard every day in practice to earn and achieve winning a MAAC title at the end of the season.

### How do you balance honors and being an athlete?

Balancing being an honors student and an athlete is a challenge but is certainly manageable. I prioritize the important things that I need to do and work hard to turn my assignments in earlier than they are due to stay ahead, rather than on track. Allowing yourself a break from studying and school and having interactions with friends and roommates is also a key in college to keep not only your social life, but to maintain positive mental health, as well. Having a healthy mind is an important life skill but is also an extremely helpful skill as an athlete. Athletic mental health is something I am super passionate about and continue to work on for myself and my teammates every day.



Iona College sophomore and Downstate Alumni, Jordan Ader was featured in Iona's Pinnacle Fall Newsletter Edition, in the Athlete Spotlight Section.

In the article, Jordan attributes her success with balancing the rigorous schedule of a college athlete and an honors student, to her teammates and focus on mental health.

*“Having a healthy mind is an important life skill but is also an extremely helpful skill as an athlete. Athletic mental health is something I am super passionate about and continue to work on for myself and my teammates every day.”*

Please join us in congratulating the athletes and coaches recognized this past fall season of volleyball. It is hard work and dedication that yields these types of results and the work ethic that comes along with them, is what we strive for at Downstate. We hope for many more awards as our athletes gain experience through our club season and bring that to their high school and college teams next year!

Thanks for reading this edition of Downstate's Newsletter.

Here's to a great 2024 club season!

Go Downstate!!!

