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EPIC UNITED  
& THE EPIC FAMILY  
THOUGHTS ON...

# SO WHERE ARE YOU GOING FOR NATIONALS?

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## EPIC'S PHILOSOPHY ON NATIONALS AND OTHER SEASON EXTENSIONS

*The "Thoughts on" series is a series of papers designed to supply Epic family members (and potential Epic family members) with our thoughts on various topics. There are exceptions to many rules, so if Epic is "for" or "against" a topic, that does not mean that it's members cannot or must participate or that there is not an exception for a specific player. These are general guidelines and are a reflection of the opinions of the Epic Administration in most scenarios. Generally speaking Epic United refers to the entire Epic family (Epic, Altitude, and Diamond Elite)*

## I. History of nationals

- a. 15 years ago or so, there was only 1 major national event: USAV nationals. Teams who wanted to attend nationals had to do so 1 of 4 ways: National Qualifier, through your region, trickle down, or at Large. “At Large” and “trickle down” are complicated, but the short version is that you would have to almost qualify through one of the previous two methods. This leaves 2 ways and if you did not qualify through your region, you would have to qualify through one of about 8 or 9 qualifiers held throughout the nation each year. Since 100 teams would enter per division and usually only 1<sup>st</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> earn a bid, clubs who wanted to attend nationals would end up sending teams to 3 or 4 qualifiers every year driving up costs significantly.
- b. Then a large group of clubs got together and formed the JVA. The JVA gave USAV (parent organization) a list of demands and one of the demands was ‘reorganize the qualifying process.’ USAV declined and then there was a JVA split. JVA tapped into AAU nationals as their nationals. AAU has a ‘everyone can play’ philosophy. This meant teams could sign up for AAU nationals without qualifying. Clubs quickly flocked to AAU nationals and that tournament broke the record for highest number of participants in an amateur sporting event 5 years in a row (possibly more). USAV retaliated with ‘Patriot Division’ a level that you do not have to qualify for at USAV
- c. This led to coaches, parents, players asking the question, “So where are you going to nationals?” People on the receiving end felt pressure that they needed an answer and that resulted in transforming nationals from a small group of teams to an experience where 1000s of teams across the nation now attend.

## II. Epic’s Philosophy

- a. Extending their season (more practice, more competition and ending with a great event) is a high priority for Epic and we recommend it to every player on every team. The experience is invaluable. Having said that, the cost and time of nationals can be high and many kids are not ready to be seen by college coaches yet, so we give 5 main options for players
- i. AAU nationals
  - ii. USAV nationals
  - iii. JVA Fusion Fest
  - iv. Asics Nationals at Navy Pier
  - v. No season extending event

III. Info about the different season extensions:

- a. AAU National info – 4 day event In Florida, sign up to play, Grade A for college exposure and competition. Multiple divisions, so there is likely a division appropriate for most travel elite and stronger travel teams in our club. It is a great area, a great experience and allows us the flexibility to change divisions to meet our teams playing level late in the season.
- b. USAV Nationals – 4 day event and location rotates. This is the latest in the year of all events, often ending on or after July 4th. Grade A for college exposure and competition. Parents have been drawn to this one because of the “you have to earn it” concept, but this is a big fallacy. For most teams, we strongly recommend against USAV nationals (even though we are USAV supporters and do send multiple teams every year to USAV nationals). Below are some of the reasons:
- i. Stay to play – to play you must stay in pre-approved USAV housing at their costs, which is a HUGE pain and the increased cost in hotel stay usually overcomes any travel cost savings that you might incur. The team will not be able to stay together and will not be close to the playing arena.

- ii. Locked players – USAV has a ‘locked players’ policy which is complicated, but the short answer is any team that might play in USAV nationals cannot borrow/lend players to any other team that might play in USAV nationals throughout the entire year.
  - iii. Tie-Breaker Procedures – in USAV nationals (unlike qualifiers and every other major tourney), you can lose out on a national championship without a playoff match because of a 3 way tie
  - iv. Cost – USAV nationals is the highest cost event of the year
  - v. Extra Hoops – USAV has lots of extra hoops to jump though. For example, teams need to have a team chaperone (usually a parent who has to spend an extra \$55 for a team membership)
  - vi. Poor scheduling – The tournament schedule for USAV appears to be done by a ‘first timer’ every year. We have had teams meet the same opponents in both the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> round and not make it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> round, which is something all tournament directors know to avoid. We have had multiple teams play at 8AM and then not again until 7 or 8PM
  - vii. Division lock – Once you qualify you are locked in. You cannot change divisions if you are playing really well or are not as strong due to injuries. The penalty for cancelling is loss of money and suspension of all players, the coach, the director, and sometimes the club for all qualifiers and nationals for the duration of 1 year.
- c. JVA Fusion Fest - This is a 3-day event in the Dells, which is not considered a national event, but we treat it as one. Significantly lower cost than other events and is a well-run event. It will not have the competition level, nor college exposure of the national events, but still very good competition.

- d. Asics at Navy Pier – This even used to have “nationals” in the title, but was never really considered a national event by some. It has brought in teams from other states and even Puerto Rico. Probably the least competitive of the four options, but still a very strong event. It has a 2day and a 3day option.

IV. Recommendations

- a. All u15 – u17 travel elite teams as well as Epic 13/14s will have AAU nationals included in their price. We allow them to switch to USAV and many of our teams do, but we do not recommend it.
- b. Travel Elite u11-u14 will have JVA Fusion fest in Wisconsin Dells included as their season extension, which is what we recommend. They can switch to Navy Pier or upgrade (pay more) to USAV or AAU nationals.
- c. All Travel teams will end in May (usually around the week before Memorial Day). We recommend that they extend to the JVA Fusion Fest, but extending to Asics or AAU is an option as well. We highly recommend avoiding USAV nationals for all travel teams.