

Slugfest at the MBO

Written by Dave Howard



Now it's REALLY on.

Is Team Crackpot ready to get their plaque? You bet your ass they are.

We got quite a showdown heading into the Manhattan Beach Open this weekend. Team Crackpot of Jennifer Kessy and April Ross sliced and diced their way through the FIVB in Stavanger, Norway. In Gstaad, Switzerland they got waxed up by the Brazilians. This was a minor setback and they are my choice to take the Wimbledon of Pro-Beach Volleyball.

Let's take a look at the Women's AVP teams.

EY and Nicole Branagh finished below their abilities in both FIVB tournaments but it's that time of year. This is when the schedule starts to grind down the players. While EY and Branagh have started off hot winning the first five AVP events, they have slowed recently.



This is due to two factors, the first is the schedule. This was also very apparent in the 2008 Beijing Olympics where EY/NB were just plain worn out when they got there.

The second is more interesting. For years the women's teams have been focusing on taking out Kerri Walsh and Misty May. They now have a target on the back of their bikinis. Folks have been trying to figure out how to beat them and succeeding.

The Manhattan Beach Open IS BIG this year. Kessy/Ross are rolling despite the last loss. Also as EY/Branagh gnash down Kessey/Ross seem to just be getting revved up. Their game continues to unfurl into something very special. If they stick together, they have the edge going into 2012 Olympics.

Now since the FIVB standings (where Kessy/ Ross are ranked #1) are not factored into the AVP rankings, they appear to be inaccurate and lopsided towards B/Y.

1	Nicole Branagh	Elaine Youngs	5030
2	Dianne DeNecochea	Carrie Dodd	4360
3	Annett Davis	Jenny Johnson Jordan	4140
4	Jennifer Kessy	April Ross	3960
5	Brooke Hanson	Lisa Rutledge	3830

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6	Jennifer Fopma	Brittany Hochevar	2900
7	Katie Lindquist	Tracy Lindquist	2770
8	Angie Akers	Tyra Turner	2640
9	Priscilla Lima	Tatiana Minello	2550
10	Lauren Fendrick	Ashley Ivy	2400



The biggest upset threats are Akers/Turner, both former partners of Wacholder.

For the rest of the field, doing well in MB is important. The highest honor on the beach is at stake. Kerri Walsh has announced her return to the Hermosa Pier with new again partner Rachel Wacholder in tow. This will be a dominate pairing but not a slam dig to any of the top eight seeds. Keep in mind Akers, Youngs and Turner have all played with Wacholder and are very aware of her strengths and weaknesses.

Kerri Walsh will wreck the bracket (also considering she will be ranked extremely low), so the Pro's are gonna do their damndest to get their name on the pier or at least higher in the rankings. This competition is gonna be most razor edged MBO in years. Everyone wants to take this and get a higher ranking to get into Hermosa.

Looking for additional surprises?

The #2 team of DeNecochea/Dodd are WAY overranked, I look for them to fall early in the finals. In addition to Akers/Turner, watch out for Davis/Jordan, Hanson/Rutelege and the "never say die" duo of the Lindquist sisters. The #2 team of DeNecochea/Dodd are WAY overranked, I look for them to fall early in the finals.

You can bet my plaque on it!