

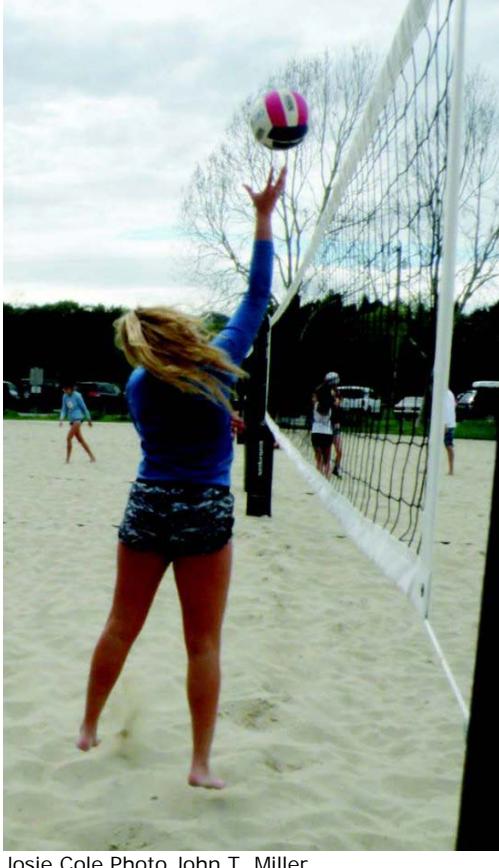


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Published March 22nd, 2017

Brazilian beach volleyball comes to Moraga Commons

By John T. Miller



Josie Cole Photo John T. Miller

A large dose of Rio de Janeiro arrived in the Lamorinda area recently when Fabio Ribeiro moved here to establish a Brazilian beach volleyball club. The club is called Carioca, which literally translates to "born in Rio."

"It's appropriate," he says, "since Rio hosted the first six beach championship main events back in the 80s." Ribeiro was also born in Rio, and grew up playing on the beaches there.

Although volleyball was his first love, the lanky 6-foot, 9-inch three-sport athlete - he also played basketball and swam - took a detour in order to be able to come to the United States.

"There was very little college opportunity for volleyball back then, so I accepted a scholarship to play basketball at the University of Hawaii," said Ribeiro. "I then played 10 years of pro ball in Europe." He was all-Western Athletic Conference first team at UH, and won MVP and all-Conference awards while playing for Italy and Greece.

After Europe, he went back to beach volleyball in Hawaii. His daughter Jacqueyne grew up playing the sport and eventually Ribeiro found himself starting a club in Texas after the family moved there. Eventually he coached the Junior National Boys Under-17 team.

Jacqueline, who won a championship with the Junior National Girls team at the age of 16, has accepted a scholarship to play at UC Berkeley once she graduates from her Austin high school. That was enough pull for Ribeiro to come to the Bay Area last September to establish a club here. He is planning to buy a house in Moraga and move his wife, Sarah, and daughter here.

"The club is growing very fast," said Ribeiro. "I focus on the quality of the training and not a quantity of players."

Ribeiro explained that he takes players almost exclusively on referral and works with small groups of 6-8 players (age 12-18) who want to focus on sand volleyball fulltime or improve their indoor game. Occasionally he may take a player through tryouts, but only if her skills will fit in with the others in the group.

He does caution that it is an expensive sport. "Since there are no tournaments in the Bay Area, players must travel to Southern California, Texas and Florida, among other locales, in addition to either private lessons or joining the club." Ribeiro hopes to begin hosting tournaments in May.

His Moraga Carioca club is loaded with talent. In addition to Ribeiro's daughter, who flies up often from Austin to practice with the club, Caroline Shafer, a senior at Miramonte, junior Grace Andreea from Foothill High in Pleasanton and sophomore Ainsley Radell of Monte Vista in Danville all plan on playing volleyball at UC Berkeley (although Radell's options are still open). Josie Cole, a senior at Campolindo, will attend UC Irvine, and Kate Goto, a senior at Foothill, is considering playing at Loyola Marymount University.

The team practices four times a week at the Moraga Commons sand volleyball courts.



Members of the newly formed beach volleyball team, the Moraga Carioca, include, front row, from left, Charlotte Glass and Nicole Van Stralen; Back row, from left, Coach Fabio Ribeiro, Caroline Schafer, Grace Andreea, Kate Goto, Josie Cole and Ainsley Radell. Not pictured is Jacquelyne Ribeiro. Photo John T. Miller

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