

# Gays & Lesbians Volley Balls and Barbs In Carmel

by Terry Beswick  
Contributing Writer

**M**oCo queers in the know are spending this summer's Tuesday and Thursday evenings spiking, lobbing and basically volleying balls (and barbs) at each other on the beautiful white sands of Carmel Beach. Many of the 20 - 40 gay men and lesbians who show up regularly do not mess around - they are serious about winning - even if it is just pick-up volleyball.

Others, however, seem inclined to expend most of their energies hurling rather catty remarks ("Don't break a nail,

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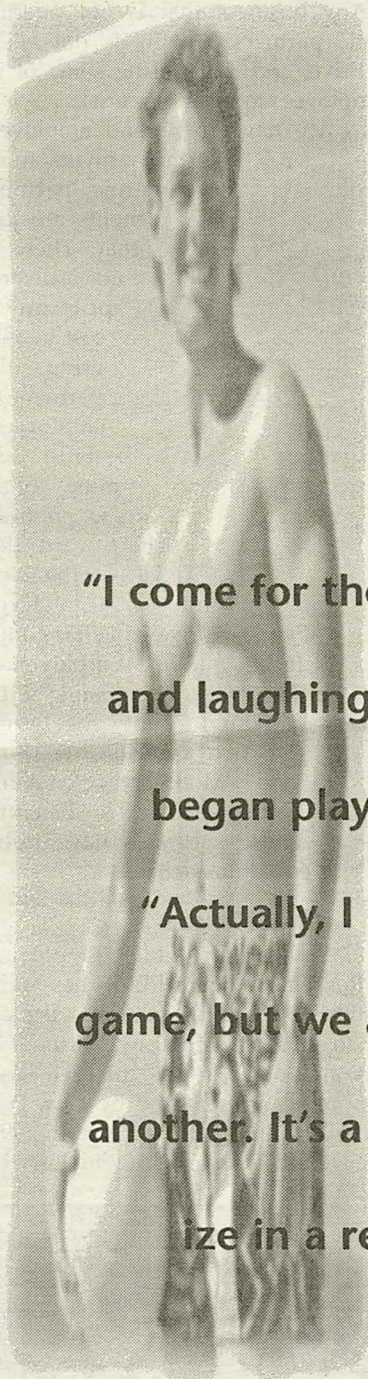
After your soaked to the gills it's time to move over to the River Business Bar for a Beer/Soda bust from 8-11. The Bunk House Cabin in the Woods at Fife's then welcomes all bears from 11 till 2 am. Sunday begins with a Big Bear Brunch at Fife's from 10 till noon. It moves from the dining room to the pool and finally the active Lazy Bear weekend ends with a closing out party at the Rainbow Cattle Company from 8 pm till. . .

Fun in the hot sun all day often leads to sizzling nights along the River. After sunset is when the real animals come out. Their dens include the Rainbow Cattle Company, McT's Bullpen, River Business Bar and Fife's. Mc T's boasts 24 different kinds of draft beer. Domestic pints of beer are only \$1 on Mondays and pool is free all day Tuesdays. Fife's is the only spot along the River with a real wood dance floor.

When you're worn out there are great places to rest your weary head. There's the Triple R with it's rooms, bar and restaurant. Fife's has camping, cabins and dancing. Willows Lodge boasts camping, lodging and an indoor/outdoor kitchen. The Highlands offers camping and cabins. Both the Willows and the Highlands serve continental breakfast.

For more information on the Lazy Bear Weekend or on the Russian River in general call Fife's 707-869-0656 or your local IGLTA travel agent.

Dan Presser operates FourWinds Travel, 408-622-0800 in The Barnyard, Carmel. [fourwinds@redshift.com](mailto:fourwinds@redshift.com)



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girl!," or "Ooo, she almost lost her wig on that one!") over the net. Occasionally, these bouncing, rapid-fire witticisms even manage to rise to the level of high camp.

But only a few hardy souls are really able to both play and cut up well, and at the same time, which seems to be the real challenge of this local sporting event - not getting hit in the head by a ball because you're laughing too hard or trying to think of a good comeback.

And then there are those few who don't even play at all - they like to watch, preferring merely to take in the views of all the handsome, young, scantily-clad men and women, as well as the fabulous sunsets that often signal an end to each evening's

festivities. On one recent Tuesday, four of the 25 attendees sat on the sidelines throughout, simply enjoying the hospitality of a local bartender who was serving complementary "Volleyball Surprise Punch." (Usually, it's just water or BYO).

In any case, the informally-dubbed "Monterey Gay Volleyball League" has become so popular this summer that a second evening - Thursdays - has been added to the weekly line-up (which incidentally barely allows the older participants to recover from their bruises it's time to go back for more!).

And now, for the real gluttons, there's even talk of starting a Sunday tournament,

perhaps with competing teams sponsored by Monterey's After Dark and the Lighthouse Bar and Grill. (Can I design the uniforms??)

Volleyball veteran Benji Dockery says that the gay games have been going on since the late 80's, though most of the current crop are more recent recruits. Dockery says that he is the "longest surviving member" who has played since the early days. "There was a more mature crowd back then," he said. "Now there's a much younger crowd." Just as he spoke, he noticed a young man watching from the fringes of the group, clearly tempted to join in.

"Hey!" he called out to him. "Wanna play?" "Sure!" the kid replied, as he ran over and dropped his pack by the side of the court. His name was Biff, or something like that. From Modesto, he was a surprisingly good player, and appeared to be enjoying himself immensely, but unfortunately had to quit after a couple games when his mother found him...

Players generally range in age from early 20's to late 30's; skill levels vary from beginner to advanced, the latter often assuming the role of team captain, gently coaching new recruits on the finer points of keeping the ball in the air, and hopefully in bounds.

Another newcomer, Pacific Grove resident Joe Aguiar, showed up for his first all-gay volleyball experience recently. "The location was spectacular. They're very gay and friendly. They can be a little catty, but it was all in good spirits," he says. "I'll be back."

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Usually there are at least a few fierce lesbian volleyball warriors in evidence, although these women reportedly tend to stay home in cloudy weather. No explanation has been given for this phenomenon...

Gay volleyball is free, unstructured and open to all gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning persons. Any attire is considered acceptable within legal limits (press-on nails and heels are, however, discouraged). The madness continues Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00 to around 9:00 p.m. until late summer when it gets too dark to play in the evening.

But who knows? Maybe this year practice will continue year-round in preparation for Gay Games V (<http://www.gaygames.nl>), scheduled for August 1- 8, 1998 in Amsterdam, where 300 volleyball teams of six each from around the world are expected to participate at 10 different levels (five for men and five for women).

Unfortunately for gay Monterey volleyball enthusiasts, medal-winning teams will reportedly be judged not on the basis of their acerbic wits, but on their prowess at volleying volleyballs.

*Terry Beswick is a local writer, actor, and small-business owner. He is currently nursing his bruises, physical and emotional, from playing gay volleyball.*