

The Baggy Blues

By Holly Santman



In the gym at an Xavier College Prep volleyball match, something is different.

It's subtle. It might take a minute. Suddenly, you realize...

Shorts.

The Xavier girls volleyball team is wearing loose-fitting shorts.

For those who know the game of volleyball, this is odd and potentially off-putting at first. See, most volleyball teams wear skin-tight spandex.

“We always wore shorts, so nothing has changed since 1943,” said Sister Lynn Winsor, vice principal of athletics and activities.

Since then, the “baggy blues,” a name coined for the bagginess of the shorts, have become a tradition and a symbol of the dominance of Xavier athletics. The school boasts some of the winningest teams in Arizona history.

The nickname “baggy blues” came about from a group of players years ago.

“They were chanting something about their baggy blues years and years ago and I said ‘OK, that’s a cute thing,’” Winsor said. “I remember when they were just wearing them and they used to say, ‘We love our baggy blues.’”

Winsor said the uniforms are designed to limit distractions on the court and wants every player to feel comfortable while playing the game.

“It’s a modesty thing. Plus, I don’t want those kids having to be pulling down (on the spandex) all the time,” Winsor said. “We’re just trying to make the kids feel comfortable in what they wear. And to (help them) look nice.”

Kristen Selbach is a representative at BSN Sports who works with Xavier on ordering their uniforms. She said in a phone interview that companies like Under Armour are starting to make uniforms with better fits for women’s bodies.

Senior middle blocker Isabella Sinacori recognized this trend as well. She said lots of players are switching to leggings for personal reasons and tied this back to the baggy blues.

“Honestly, during club I like wearing spandex, but during school season I’m so excited to go into my baggy blues and it’s like a relief,” Sinacori said.

In the past, some have been curious about the shorts and asked if they could wear spandex instead. The answer is always no. These days, no one questions the baggy blues.

“They just want to wear them,” Winsor said. “To be the team that wears the baggy blues is a badge of honor.”

The players agree.

“I think for Xavier girls it holds kind of a power above other teams,” Sinacori said. “I mean, having the most state titles in volleyball is obviously a huge thing and I think the baggy blues kind of go along with that.”

Freshman libero Olivia Lenz said other teams look at Xavier, and its 11 state titles, differently when they play at their schools.

“When we walk into other people’s gyms (they say), ‘Oh, it’s cute basketball shorts.’ We’re like, ‘It’s not basketball shorts. It’s different,’” Lenz said. “‘Yeah, I’m at Xavier. On this team. You’re not.’”

The baggy blues symbolize Xavier traditions, incredible athletic successes and, for Sinacori, the opportunity these girls have to attend such a prestigious school.

“We have the privilege to look different and have different uniforms than everyone else because there’s no one in the entire state of Arizona that wears our baggy blues,” she said.

The volleyball uniforms inadvertently symbolize something else as well. They highlight some of the difference in expectations between men and women in sports.

The Arizona Interscholastic Association bylaws have no rule about wearing spandex. They simply state that a team must all wear the same thing.

“The shorts prove that you don't need to have spandex, you don't have to have your butt hanging out to prove that you play volleyball,” Lenz said. “It doesn't matter if you wear boys' stuff or girls' stuff—it's not even boy stuff. It's just longer shorts.”

Winsor echoed that sentiment, saying it is more about how they play and not about what they wear.

“You don't have a team without a uniform. I mean, you got the team, you got the skill, you got the kids, but what are you wearing?” Winsor said. “So, we're still (wearing) the old traditional baggy blues and that will continue on.”