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SPORTS

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**28th Annual NAGVA
Championships in
Portland combine
competition and
culture**

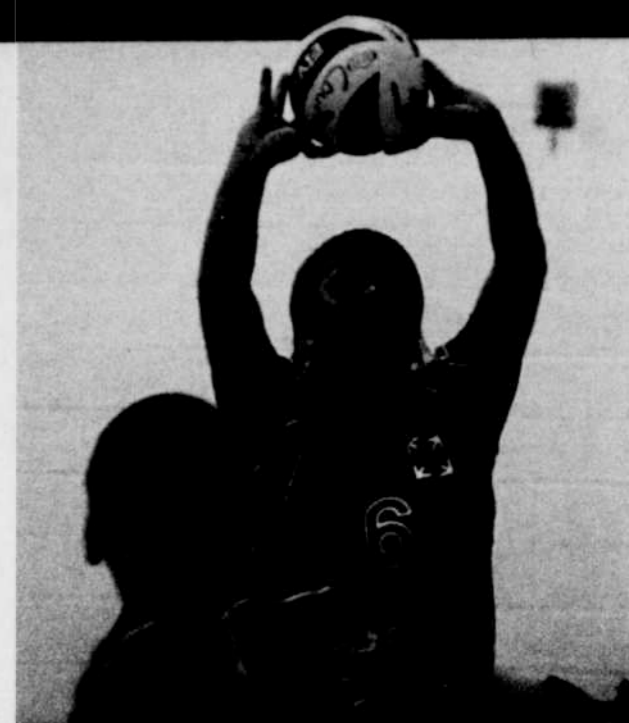
By RYAN J. PRADO

When the announcement hit the wire in summer 2009 that Portland would play host to one of the nation's largest gay sports championships, eager players and spectators alike could almost hear the squeaks of sneakers. Anticipation mounted for the set-ups, the cross-court spikes, the aural "thwap!" of congratulatory high fives. This Memorial Day weekend, the arrival of the North American Gay Volleyball Association's 28th Annual National Championships will make those dreams a reality.

Portland Gay Volleyball organizer and NAGVA Championship organizer Sean Walker has seen and heard the excitement swelling from tournament players, as well as from Portland's LGBTQ community at large. And not just because the tournament—held at the Oregon Convention Center—will feature 118 teams from across the nation, Canada, Puerto Rico and Mexico; or because there will be 24 courts in action simultaneously for bracket position; or even because this is the first time in nearly 10 years that the championships have been stationed on the West Coast.

The community is excited about all that, too. But what the Portland NAGVA tournament has that no other past championships have is a consortium of off-court events to supplement all that on-court competition—some of it behind-the-scenes, but most of it open to the public.

"This is one of the first tournaments that we've had where we've had these type of events for the players," explains Walker. "In the past, there really haven't been a lot of events going on geared toward the players. It was just based on playing at the facility and then kind of go-



PHOTOS COURTESY NACK.ATHENS PHOTOGRAPHY / NACK.COM

Portland Gay Volleyball is welcoming the North American Gay Volleyball Association's 28th Annual National Championships this Memorial Day weekend. The tournament will draw 118 teams from across the nation, Canada, Puerto Rico and Mexico.

"We usually don't have that many local spectators, but it seems like we may have more people coming out from the [Portland] community. ... That's going to be something new and different for us."

- NAGVA VICE PRESIDENT
ROB WARREN

ing and doing your own thing at different bars or wherever you wanted to go. Instead, we've provided quite a few outlets for players to enjoy themselves and meet other players."

NAGVA Vice President Rob Warren acknowledges the unique approach to community building that Portland organizers have taken with the championships, and hopes it will translate into more attendance during the actual tourney play.

"We usually don't have that many local spectators, but it seems like we may have more people coming out from the [Portland] community who aren't involved in NAGVA, and who maybe have never seen a volleyball tournament," says Warren. "That's going to be something new and different for us."



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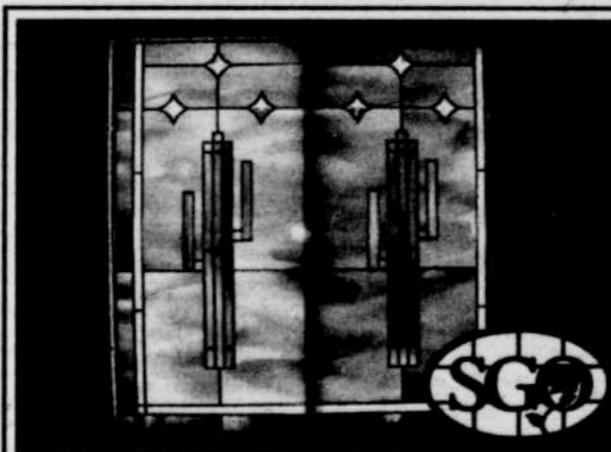
209 SW 4th Avenue, Portland (503) 445-7699

For other STD & HIV screening times and info about other events & services for guys into guys:

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