

## **Talent-Max, Inc. Serves Up Athletic Team Insights and Performance Improvement for SUNY Albany Volleyball Program**

The **State University of New York at Albany women's volleyball team**, under the direction of **Head Coach Kelly Sheffield**, finished the 2007 season with a 24 -10 record and the program's first-ever NCAA Division I Tournament victory. While the credit for UAlbany's success goes directly to its coaches and athletes, Coach Sheffield and his program also worked with **Talent-Max, Inc.**, a provider of industry leading talent assessment, training and coaching solutions to corporate, educational and athletic program clients throughout the U.S. Utilizing the company's **Athletic Team Success Insights** process during the 2007 season, Sheffield says that his athletes and coaches not only learned a great deal from their experience but that the work contributed to the program's success.

Following UAlbany's 2006 America East Championship and NCAA Division I tournament bid season, Coach Sheffield's squad lost eight players, including five starters and four seniors who had been the backbone of the program's rise. He anticipated adding seven newcomers to the roster and was determined to continue to build upon the program's recent successes. In January 2007, Coach Sheffield contacted Sue Medley, an experienced collegiate volleyball coach and member of the Talent-Max, Inc. staff, to explore how he could put the company's coach and athlete insight assessments and team building processes to work for his program.

Working together with Talent-Max, Inc., Coach Sheffield and his staff implemented a three-part program:

### **I. Athletic Success Insights Certification Training for Coaches**

- Coaching staff members each completed an online coaching insights assessment.
- Each coach received his/her own personal feedback report.
- Utilizing the feedback report, coaches received three individual debriefing sessions with a certified Talent-Max coach with discussion focused on:
  - Improving staff communication and staff effectiveness.
  - Coaches' communication with athletes and the impact on athlete development.
  - Approaches to developing effective training sessions and (maximizing) improvements in individual and team performance.
  - Approaches to developing effective strategies for match management.

### **II. Success Insights Team Applications**

- Each athlete completed an online player insights assessment and received her feedback report.
- **Improving Individual and Team Performance Workshop** – current staff and athletes.
  - Communicating effectively with others.
  - Developing strategies for improved approaches to training and competition.
  - Program, team and individual development and roles.
  - Coach/player sessions utilizing Success Discovery Worksheets.
  - Exploration of **Performance Outcome Equation** to improve individual and team success.

### **III. Newcomer (Student-Athletes) Success Insights**

- Newcomers completed online assessments and Success Discovery Process worksheets over the summer before reporting to campus.
- Player analysis by coach, feedback debriefing and team integration.

## **Talent-Max Inc. Serves Athletic Team Insights and Performance Improvement for SUNY Albany Volleyball Program** (continued)

The experience aided Sheffield and his staff in better understanding their athletes. "There was an occasion when one athlete was having an issue with another team member, and we weren't sure how to handle it," Sheffield said. "Then we showed her both her and the other player's profile reports and she immediately understood where her teammate was coming from.

"On another occasion, an athlete was not performing well during a practice. She was just not having a good day, not making the right decisions or the right plays, and I told her to leave the drills. When one of our assistant coaches told her she would be all right, the player broke down and started crying. Later, after discussing the situation with Sue and reviewing the player's report, I discovered that when this individual gets angry, the best approach is to leave her alone to cool off. There were other times during the season when the Talent-Max, Inc. partnership paid dividends," Sheffield continued. "The tools really helped us as coaches communicate more effectively at different times before, during and after a match."

While he knows the team's successful performance in 2007 had much to do with the talent and leadership of his team, and the guidance of his coaching staff, Sheffield attributes the team's improved communication and ease of the new players' transitions into the Great Dane program to the Athletic Team Success Insights system. "Our athletes really opened themselves up to this process, and there's no question it helped instill a high level of trust among the players and the coaches."

"I continue to refer back to what we learned during the process and look forward to continuing to benefit from our relationship with Sue and the Talent-Max, Inc. team," Sheffield concluded.