

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT.

MARCH, 1984.

Students of Asian history tell us that just before he died in 479 B.C. Confucius, that grand old coach of Chinese volleyball teams for almost half a century, was reported to have said "Only place to find Volunteer are in Standard Oxford Dictionary, between vacuum and voyeurism.

Two thousand five hundred years later and very little has changed, particularly in the State of Victoria, where the shortage of "enthusiasts" willing to contribute a little of their time to volleyball is now threatening to severely restrict the game's development. A case in point is the ever increasing difficulty that the Coaching Commission is experiencing in finding eight coaches for our eight State teams. Unless there is a marked change in attitude it seems quite probable that within a year or two we will be unable to send all of our teams to National Championships because some won't have coaches. It is to be hoped that this major problem in 1983 eases somewhat in the year ahead, otherwise Victoria's pathetic performance in National competition last year will become commonplace. For those unfamiliar with the results of the 1983 Championships, let me briefly touch on one Victorian record that we could well have done without: for the first time in our volleyball history, not one of our 8 State teams won a gold medal last year.

At the same time it must be admitted that our performances have not been helped by a State Government whose penny pinching sport funding program puts us at a serious disadvantage by comparison with our colleagues in other States. Just one example - the A.C.T. Association with 1200 volleyball players receives a grant of \$20,000 i.e. more than \$16 per head. In Victoria our per capita grant of \$2.75 per head is the lowest paid to any volleyball association anywhere in Australia.

Our membership figures for the year showed no improvement and at times we were hard pressed to hold 1982 levels due to some of the weaker Associations falling by the wayside. Whether these losses were due to the difficult economic conditions prevailing at the time or were the outcome of inexpert or apathetic leadership in these small and vulnerable units is difficult to assess. Suffice it to say that the Associations who showed growth in 1983 were invariably those with competent administrations.

The playing highlight of the year was the Australian v. Chinese Universities Test Match played at the new Sports and Entertainment Centre in September. The game would not have taken place at all if the A.V.F. had not finally agreed to waive an exorbitant fee and if the Centre management had not been able to acquire the necessary poles, nets, etc. just a few days before the event.

However, it did go on and for just under an hour (the time taken to win yet again in three sets) the Chinese demonstrated their skills, and made many of the 1200 spectators wonder whether the Australian team had progressed or regressed, even after numerous overseas trips in recent years.

There were two lessons to be learnt from the Chinese visit, firstly that the Sports and Entertainment Centre is a magnificent stadium, although far too costly for minor sports and secondly that high class overseas teams visiting us will do more to improve the standard of the game in this country than any number of Australian teams travelling overseas. It is to be hoped that the A.V.F. have recognized this fact and waste no time in implementing it.

Whilst on the subject of the national body, it will be remembered that prior to the start of 1983 Victoria and two other States had dis-affiliated from the A.V.F. until such time as the principle of majority rule was re-introduced and the Board was able to demonstrate its ability to extricate itself from the financial chaos that threatened to wipe out the national body in a matter of months.

Begrudgingly and after much acrimony over a period of several months, the A.V.F. President and his minority government agreed to the constitutional changes that we requested. On the second point however - the future solvency of the A.V.F. - we had to battle much harder because the national treasurer had gone to ground without providing any realistic information as to the current situation, let alone the future.

Repeated invitations to visit Victoria were declined until in June the President came in his stead and painted such a rosy financial picture that a majority of those present were convinced that we should re-affiliate. Sad to say, some statements made that day proved to be somewhat less than accurate. However at the Annual General Meeting of the A.V.F. in September, the President and every Board Member standing for re-election were defeated by huge majorities. Sanity had returned and the stand that Victoria and others were forced to take had been completely vindicated.

Whilst events on the national front took the limelight, the V.A.V.A. sub-committees, V.R.C., V.C.C., and V.C.V.C. continued in their usual efficient manner whilst the V.V.L. (State League) broke all records in only its second year of operation and is now acknowledged to be the best volleyball competition in Australia.

Innovations introduced over recent years have given volleyball in this State a new image and as the conditions appertaining to sport continue to change, so will it be necessary to alter some aspects of our operation which for years have been regarded as sacrosanct. Such changes are not always welcome in the first instance and take time to become accepted - so it was in 1983 and surely will be in 1984.

The acceptance of change depends on many things, not the least of which is the vision of the administrators who must ultimately bear the responsibility for the decisions taken. In this respect I owe a great deal to the members of the Executive Council who have been most generous with their assistance and support over a difficult 12 month period. I thank them sincerely for their efforts which proved invaluable and were directly responsible for the progress made during 1983.