

TECHNOLOGY RULES

San Diego area juniors player Kenzie Aries is on the cutting edge when it comes to the recruiting process.

By Mike Miazga

Kenzie Aries first started dabbling in computers very early in life. "I started using the computer when I was about four or five doing Disney software," said Aries. "And then I graduated to the Reader Rabbit software where I learned how to read via the computer."

Her first interaction with HTML (hypertext markup language) happened with the site www.neopets.com.

"It's a kid's site for virtual pets," said Aries. "I then discovered you could 'pimp out' your Neopets home page with HTML. Learning this made more people come to my online Neo-shop, so I earned more and more Neo-points—the currency of Neopets.com. I earned over 350,000 Neo-points. I also learned, unfortunately, another lesson—I got my account phished. Someone got in and took all my Neo-points."

Aries later kept up the site www.beaconsbeach.com which highlights Beacon's Beach—the area where she lives near. Aries used to sell lemonade and soda to the surfers at the beach as a child.

These days, Aries has taken her knowledge of cyberspace and applied it to her volleyball career.

A 6' junior setter at San Dieguito Academy in Encinitas, Calif., Aries put together and maintains her team's website at www.ridethatpony.com (which was featured as a *Volleyball* Web site of the month in the January 2007 issue). Aries was an All-CIF Division III San Diego County first-team selection this past season for a San Dieguito team that finished ninth in the state.

But that's only the half of it.

Aries, whose full first name is Mackenzie, and her father, Rod, also put together her own personal volleyball recruiting site at www.kenzilla.com.



Aries' personal volleyball website allows college coaches to watch a variety of her playing videos.



Aries has also utilized the YouTube website to post her playing videos.

While the site features the requisite player dossier with stuff like height, standing jump, volleyball and academic accolades, it also features a plethora of video showing Aries playing. It's all right there for a college coach to see without having to open a package, pull out a DVD and put it into a computer or DVD player.

"In the time it takes to open a DVD from a prospective athlete, turn on the DVD machine and find the remote, a coach would have watched Kenzie's intro video and the coach would have known, in less than four minutes, if they wanted to recruit Kenzie," said Rod Aries.

Aries has taken things even a step further. With the help of a friend, Aries also uses the extremely popular YouTube site (www.youtube.com) to post her playing videos. Several of her videos had over 6,000 views as of mid-April.

"In terms of college coaches, it's really beneficial," said Aries. "It's way easier than first starting off with mail and then going to e-mail. Sometimes people don't check e-mail

everyday. It can get annoying because you want a response right away—yes or no. This way they can see everything right there and e-mail me right away instead of having to wait for a reply."

And college coaches have taken notice. Rod Aries provided *Volleyball* with a number of comments from coaches that had viewed her videos on the site.

Rod Aries also uses a program that can detect how many times an e-mail his daughter sends gets opened and how many times it gets forwarded. One coach opened the e-mail 12 times for a total of 27 minutes and 19 seconds. The city where the e-mail was opened at is even available. About the only thing it didn't say was if the person was drinking decaf or regular coffee while viewing it.

Aries estimates it took about 50 hours of work to get her site up and running. She said she does about 70 percent of the work with her dad helping with the rest.

"I mostly do the easy stuff and my dad does the harder stuff," said Aries. "I do stuff like content updating. It's one of those things where you are at home and you could either be watching 'South Park' or working on the site. A lot of times, I go for 'South Park.' I missed the episode where 'Chef' dies and I was sort of annoyed about that. But if you want it bad enough, you force yourself to do the work. But it's paid off because about 30-40 coaches have been to the site and I've had a lot of positive feedback on it."

Aries expects this trend in technology to gain major momentum.

"I would be surprised if more people don't do this in the next couple of years," said Aries, who plays for the San Diego Volleyball Club and also plays in local beach events with partner Cory Santos.



Aries helped lead San Dieguito Academy to a ninth-place finish in California this past season.



Aries was an All-CIF Division III San Diego County first-team selection as a junior.

"It's way easier. It's a lot easier than sending a DVD or a VHS. The best part about a recruiting page is the fact it is much easier for coaches. My dad says it is like speed dating for college coaches and high school athletes. I was on an unofficial visit to a college (recently) and while talking to the coach there, I noticed she had a stack of VHS tapes and DVDs. I mentioned that must take a lot of time to review, and she replied something to the effect of, 'Well, the DVDs I put in my desktop computer, but with those VHS tapes I actually have to get up and put them into the TV room, so that's one big strike against them.'"

Ideally, Aries is hopeful her cyberspace initiative will help make her dreams of playing in college come true.

"It would be really nice to play in college," said Aries, who sports a 4.15 grade-point average. "Academics come first, but I really like to play. I understand I'm not the best out there, but I know I can play in college. I want to play. It's a fun sport and I want to make the best of it while I can actually play. It's a lot of hard work doing all of this, but it's really worth it. My site allows me to get in front of other coaches who might not normally see someone like me." ■

The Other Extreme



Billy Allen

Former Cal State Northridge men's player and current Sports Shack club coach **Billy Allen** has been generating plenty of YouTube publicity of late. His volleyball recruiting video spoof has been the talk of the volleyball Internet community. The six minute-plus comedy piece had over 2,500 views during an initial two-day run on YouTube. The video can also be seen at www.ketchallen.com.