

Basic Instinct



Brazilian coach Cilene Drennick draws her worldly experience to help connect with the players on her Instinct Volleyball Club

Cilene Drennick thinks big, which puts her right at home in the Texas junior volleyball scene.

A former professional indoor player with Olympic experience, the natural-born Brazilian founded Instinct Volleyball Club outside of Dallas in 2009 and needed only three seasons to produce a national championship team.

Instinct's 17s team won the 17 American Division title at the 2011 USA Volleyball Girls' Junior National Championships held

June 25-July 4 in Atlanta.

A foreigner coaching a U.S. team is not a new phenomenon, but Drennick has added a dimension that focuses on teaching skills beyond volleyball — all with a heavy accent.

"Our 17s team had such a fantastic result for such a young club and we are very proud," Drennick says. "I am more proud of what we are doing preparing these kids for life. We are creating discipline, commitment and respect in our players. We want them to leave this

club better people."

Along with character in her players, Drennick is building momentum. She saw her 2011 club numbers reach more than 130 players from ages five to 18.

She played professionally all over Europe as well as in Brazil for 16 years. Her stint with the Brazilian National Team lasted from 1983 to 1997, including an Olympic appearance in Barcelona in 1992. She played for some of the top coaches in the world including four



GOOD TIMES: The Instinct 17s from Dallas celebrated often at the USA Volleyball Girls' Junior National Championships.

who coached at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing (Bernardo Rezende with Brazil men; Marco Bonitta with Poland women; Giovanni Caprara with Russian women; and Jose Roberto Lages Guimaraes with Brazil women).

Former coaches say her intensity and passion were elevated even for a Brazilian player. Brazil Junior National Team Coach Luis Omar called her play contagious.

She has infected her club players with the same enthusiasm, many who are earning



COACH AND PLAYER: The fire Cilene Drennick brought to the game as a player for the Brazilian Women's National Team is now displayed on the sidelines as coach with the Instinct Volleyball Club of Dallas.

college scholarships through Instinct. Kierra Holst (Coppell, Texas) is bound for the University of Oklahoma on a full volleyball scholarship in the fall of 2012. She played on the 17s team that won the national title. But at 6-5 she was not type-cast as a one-dimensional net player.

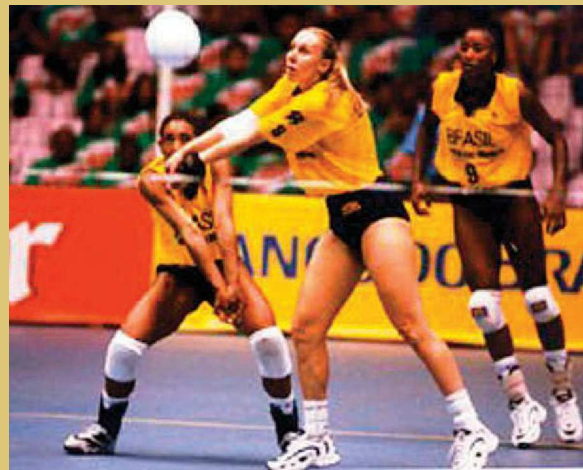
"The thing about Cilene that makes her different is that she makes you play every part of the game," Holst says. "With her she makes you try to play every position. I played middle and right side and this upcoming season she is thinking about making me a left side."

Holst says the team has fun with Drennick's Brazilian accent and fire in practice. "She really emphasizes Brazilian technique, which is all about effort. You never let a ball hit the ground when she's in the gym. I have never played for a coach like her before."

Emily Hardesty, who was named the most valuable player in Atlanta for the championship 17s team, says her coach instills a sense of urgency on the court. "She is an expert of the game and she coaches with so much intensity and passion that you would believe she is playing with us on the court," Hardesty says.

Drennick, 43, says one of the keys to the rapid success of Instinct is the individualized training. "We are changing how these kids think. They are going to school and eating differently and studying better," she says. "That's going to change their lives after volleyball."

The opportunity to move for Drennick to the U.S. came in 2001 when her husband, Eduardo, wanted to earn his MBA in the Unit-



ed States. Cilene was pregnant in 2001 and she gave birth to her daughter, Nicole, shortly after the couple settled in United States.

"I just gave up the game and was a full-time mom," she says. "I did that for five years and then my daughter was in kindergarten and I was home with not much to do. I felt empty."

After working with a few clubs in the area to get back in the game, Drennick saw a void. "The training was not specific enough and not enough attention to the players as individuals," she says. "I saw a need for better conditioning."

Eduardo, who still maintains a full-time job as a vice-president for a Dallas-based company, helps with the club as a coach. Cilene is a hands-on trainer of the 17s team.

"I have lived so many of these experiences in volleyball," she says. "I hurt my ankle one month before the Olympics in Atlanta (1996) and was not able to be on the team for

Brazil. So when my players get sad about something, I tell them it's nothing. You have to have lived to teach and share your own experiences."

Instinct is unique in that it has a sports nutritionist on staff and has implemented a mini-volleyball program borrowing from the methodology Brazilian clubs have been using for more than 15 years. They play with a lighter ball and smaller court. Drennick's daughter Nicole, now 10, is immersed in the program.

The junior climate in Texas is competitive with top clubs vying for the area's top players. "There are some people not happy I'm around because I am very competitive," she says. "But I like the challenge." 🏐

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