

## Your Purpose, Your Passion....

***"If you can't figure out your purpose, figure out your passion. For your passion will lead you right into your purpose." T.D. Jakes***

Peter van der Ven is an unassuming chap if you were to see him at a volleyball match or a coaches meeting. He is a handful under six feet tall and his brown mop of hair perpetually disheveled on his head is starting to turn gray. But what is catching about Peter is his eyes: they are dark and always looking past what he sees, as if he is a step ahead of you constantly.



Peter van der Ven is a coach (referred to as a “trainer” in most of Europe) from Zeeland in the Netherlands. He is a level 4 volleyball trainer which allows him to coach up to Professional teams and National Youth teams in his native country. He used to play but realized as his body started to buck, his newest contribution would be on the coaching side of things.

When Peter’s daughter Iris started to show an interest in volleyball in 2009, he says he “dove” back into it. The Netherlands has their youth start with sports at a young age and swimming is the first sport taught, but a TEAM sport is next and that tends to grab a hold of the Dutch youth. There are very few individual sports to which the Dutch have made an impact. But in team sports, they are threats in soccer, volleyball, hockey, basketball, etc. The young are taught at the youngest of ages the value of team and it shows.

As Peter saw the Dutch volleyball clubs around him, he noticed that very few boys were playing; it was mostly girls that were taking up the sport. He asked maybe one of the most important questions of his life at that point: “Why?” He talked with other coaches and officials from the NeVobo, the Netherlands Volleyball Federation and even players to try to find an answer. And he did.

The Dutch volleyball model was predominantly technical training and development and Peter saw this as a deterrent to boys who want to PLAY! He wanted to develop a game that got boys playing right away with less emphasis on technique and more on what will bring more boys into our sport: the attack. “Boys want to learn by game play.” He says.

[Smashball](#) was born.

Peter, working together with NeVobo, developed the rules, a playing field and put the skills into four levels. He saw this as a way for boys to play each other, even with different skill levels. He designed a ball special for the sport that is lighter but with a hard cover and extreme graphics that catch the eye of a boy from across a gym floor. Part of the genius of Smashball is the speed to which boys are playing. In a recent clinic he did at a local athletic club in Eindhoven, his court was playing Smashball in 11 minutes...ELEVEN minutes! He refers to stage one of Smashball as the "At once" stage. Get them playing and they get hooked. "By using a training model that entails drive, movement and competitions, boys will thrive and find affiliations with the sport." Peter says confidently.

The net is lowered to the wrist height of the smallest player on the court. The ball is played initially with a bounce. Skills are added as the players progress up the levels, all moving up as they succeed in a set of skills. In a fairly short time, boys AND girls are passing, setting and attacking on the lower net. As they progress and grow, so does the net height.

At a recent [Smashball rollout in South Dakota](#), the kids were so taken with the new discipline that they asked for days after when the next Smashball clinic was.

Peter oozes passion as he speaks of [Smashball](#). Spending a few hours with him is an infusion of energy and expertise. He is the supreme trainer of a sport he played an important role in inventing but the ease of which it's able to be played and advanced through makes it a viable training tool for both boys and girls and is starting to spread into the United States where the boy's game continues to be a source of frustration for USA Volleyball and the Region's alike. It's time to look at other avenues and Peter van der Ven has posted a street sign.

The numbers are proof enough. Since the inception of Smashball in 2010, boys volleyball in the city where Peter worked in the Netherlands has grown over 500%. That kind of growth makes it a volleyball variant to "dive into." There are 1100 volleyball clubs in Holland and over 150 offer Smashball. Over 13,000 kids in the Netherlands are playing Smashball in PE classes and NeVobo now points to over 4000 boys playing volleyball in Holland with 400 new members just this past season. The Az. Region has less than 400 boys playing club all TOTAL!

The passion to which Peter speaks of his new life's mission is the kind of stuff we all wish we had in our lives. Our kids, families, sport, and occupation: Peter has melded them all together into Smashball. His garage is full of boxes of shirts and Smashballs, his kids participate and model the sport and his wife is a beam of support. His office is replete with books he has written in several languages ([that you can order here](#)) and he continues to grow Smashball through clinics, seminars and training sessions at clubs throughout Europe.

Passion in our sport is sometimes misplaced with winning and ego. And then there are people like Peter who use their passion for growing the sport in places it needs it. He is to be applauded and admired.

Smashball- it's coming to the Arizona Region and a gym near you SOON!

