

## **Sports US Hopes for First Volleyball Medal Since 1992** *Julie Goldberg*

*Voiced by Parke Brewer*

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*The United States has not won an Olympic medal in women's volleyball since taking the bronze medal in 1992 in Barcelona. VOA Sports Editor Parke Brewer takes a look at one of the top veteran players on the team, Danielle Scott, who hopes to help the Americans break the drought in Athens.*

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Danielle Scott has not always been just a volleyball player. In high school she also played basketball and softball, and was on the track and field team.

At Long Beach State University in California, Scott was a three-sport standout.

She ran sprint events and competed in jumping events. The 1.88 meter Scott averaged 11 points and 6.7 rebounds in her three-year career as a basketball forward.

She was a three-time collegiate volleyball All-American. The middle blocker helped her team to the 1993 collegiate national championship and was player of the year.

Her career .421 hitting percentage is the all-time collegiate record. In 1993 Scott earned Big West conference honors in both basketball and volleyball, becoming the first athlete to earn such an honor in two sports the same year.

She left Long Beach State in late 1993 to train with the U.S. national volleyball team. While training, she completed her liberal studies degree at San Diego State University.

The Baton Rouge, Louisiana native said she stuck with volleyball because she excelled more in it and put more effort into volleyball than the other sports.

Danielle Scott joined the national volleyball team full time in 1994, earning a spot on the Goodwill Games, World Cup, and World Championship teams.

In 1996 she helped the United States win the World Grand Prix title with victories against Cuba, Brazil and China.

Now 32, she made her first Olympic team at the age of 24 when the U.S. team finished seventh at the 1996 Atlanta games.

After those Olympics, Scott played professional volleyball in Italy and Brazil.

The national team coach at the time, Mick Haley, wanted her to come back and play for the national team, but Scott was not interested in taking a pay cut to play in the United States.

Danielle Scott rejoined the U.S. national team in 1999 when team officials agreed to let her play in professional matches overseas between national team commitments. She helped the Americans win the bronze medal at the 1999 Pan American Games.

Scott traveled to Sydney, Australia in 2000 for her second Olympic Games, where the Americans placed fourth. She also led the United States in hitting percentage, kills and blocks during the season.

It was back to playing in professional leagues for Scott after Sydney, and competing on occasion for the national team.

In 2001, Scott played for a club in Brazil and also for a team in Japan's women's Volleyball League. The following year she played for a club in Italy.

For team USA, Scott was named most valuable player at the 2001 World Grand Prix, earning best scorer and best blocker awards as the United States took first place. In 2002, she started all 11 world championship matches, averaging 10.6 points per match, as the United States won the silver medal.

Danielle Scott helped the Americans earn their Athens Olympic berth with a third place finish at the 2003 volleyball World Cup.

She says she can see differences in this year's Olympic team compared to the one she played on four-years ago.

"We have a lot more experience than we did in terms of veteran players returning, and again Toshi Yoshida is the head coach now so he can fully implement all of his philosophies, his techniques and styles and his system to the game," she said.

Scott also said the experience from the 2000 Olympics and the young talent on the team will allow the United States to be competitive in Athens. The team is rated second, but Scott said that is no guarantee for a medal.

"We do not want to get beyond ourselves in confidence, because it is a whole new level once you are at the Olympics," she noted. "The slate is wiped clean and so you just have to concentrate on the things that you do well, play as a team and work towards your goal."

Before returning to the professional Italian volleyball league after Athens, Danielle Scott hopes to wear an Olympic medal around her neck.

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