



**WATCH THIS:** Catch the free **World Series of Beach Volleyball** tournament and festival in Long Beach, California, or watch live matches on NBC Aug. 23-28. [Wsovb.com](http://Wsovb.com)

**This will be your first time competing in the Olympics without May-Treanor. Your new partner is April Ross. How are you feeling about the change?**

"I feel right at home. I've learned to find some peace in the chaos. I've had a couple years to get used to a new partner and to be on this journey without Misty. I love her and think about her constantly, but the reality is that I'm with April and I love April and I love what we're doing. I'm getting a new friend and

a new partner in all this. It's a really blessed situation. I love chasing the Olympic dream. The Olympic spirit lives in me every day. I feel it all the time."

**How did you team up?**

"Right after Misty and I won gold [in the 2012 Olympics], I hugged April and said, 'Now let's go win gold in Rio.' That's when it started. I have no idea where it came from. She hugged me and awkwardly laughed. [A couple months later], she reached out again and was like, 'Hey, you know about that thing you said, what's behind that?' And

I'm like, 'Aw, man, there's no one else I'd want to play with.' It was obvious to me that she had everything I wanted in a partner, and she would help me grow and learn and we could be the best in the world. We're certainly on our way."

**You're also a mom. How do you keep that balance?**

"When I'm home, I plan my entire schedule around my kids. I'm threading the needle every single day. The hardest thing about my job is being away. I want to use the word *devastating*, but I'm not allowing myself to feel

that emotion because it's a beautiful journey I'm on. My husband makes it all possible. This is a full team effort. Our storyline for the Olympics is really big. It's bigger than us. With that comes a lot of responsibility."

**The NCAA held its first women's beach-volleyball championship this year. How do you feel about playing a part in that?**

"I'm so proud of the people behind the scenes who got it done because our sport deserves that. I think it was the fastest adopted sport in NCAA history. There are no boundaries for where volleyball is popular. I expect the rise of beach volleyball to be the same."

**You had shoulder surgery less than a year ago. Has that changed your game?**

"My first tournament back was in March; it was a grand slam in Rio. We've had many tournaments since. I just feel like I'm getting stronger."

**You've been a featured athlete for the World Series of Beach Volleyball for the past three years. What do you like about it?**

"The atmosphere is amazing; the festival, the music. You've got the Junior Tournament, people wearing costumes and the best athletes in the world. It's a really big deal. My plan is to come home a gold medalist with April and defend our title in Long Beach."

**Then what?**

"I don't even care. I want to put my whole heart wherever I'm at and enjoy it. If I'm riding on fumes, because the goal is to obviously win the gold medal and all the madness that comes with that, I don't care. I've lived that before. It's a beautiful, beautiful chaos."

## NO MORE PENCILS, NO MORE BOOKS

All over the world, athletes are spearheading an effort to ditch the textbooks to teach kids in a new way. **RIGHT TO PLAY**, a nonprofit organization involving more than 300 professional athletes, uses the power of play to help more than 1 million disadvantaged children overcome the effects of poverty, conflict and disease. The programs use sports and games to teach concepts ranging from long division to malaria prevention. As they head to Rio de Janeiro this month for the Olympics, three Athlete Ambassadors share the reasons for their support. [RighttoPlay.com](http://RighttoPlay.com) BY AMANDA OGLE



< **Tatyana McFadden**

UNITED STATES PARALYMPIAN

"I lived in an orphanage for the first six years of my life, so I relate with not having anything. By teaching these less-fortunate children values through play, I hope to encourage an enthusiasm for life like I have."



**Brianne Theisen-Eaton** ✓

CANADIAN HEPTATHLETE

"In one class, the teacher used a version of tag to teach the kids about even and odd numbers. As soon as we began to play, they were laughing and high-fiving. When the kids came back to the classroom, they talked about what the game had taught them. North America needs more of this in schools — just playing; that's how kids have fun and learn to understand real-life experiences."

^ **David Boudia**

UNITED STATES DIVER

"Sports have shaped and molded me into the person I am today. I believe every child should have the opportunity to be empowered by play and learn to overcome adversity and struggles together."

