

Tamalyn Tanis has proven herself in various roles in the sports and fitness world. When Virginia Amateur Sports had a seat on the board and a desire to get volleyball back into the list of sports offered, Tanis' name was floated by board member Libby Blankenship. Her expertise and interests made her a natural fit to be the newest member of the VAS Board of Directors.

Coaching Cave Spring High School's team to five state championships in volleyball is a career accolade matched by very few. Building upon her love of volleyball, she runs the Shamrock Tournament -- the largest travel volleyball tournament in southwestern Virginia -- and is certainly one of the guiding figures in the volleyball arena in this part of the state.

"I've known Libby for about 10 years from back at the [Roanoke Athletic Club]. She helped my team with conditioning when I was coaching," Tanis said of her association with Blankenship.

Tanis has a passion for fitness that matches her dedication to volleyball. An owner of Roanoke Valley CrossFit for five years, Tanis is a coach and trainer at the facility. She also competed in the CrossFit event in the Commonwealth Games in 2018.

Volleyball and CrossFit were two events that were in the Games, but have been dropped in recent years. Look for them to return, although volleyball might be in a different time of the year. As a coach of scholastic teams and travel programs, Tanis said the summer time frame is problematic for attracting teams. The previous model was organized similar to the baseball competition, with players vying for placement on one of four teams. Tanis hopes holding the Games earlier in the year could attract whole teams across a spectrum of age groups that would increase participation.

The 6-person volleyball, held in an all-star format from 1992-'98 was for 18-and-under girls, but the possibility of adding competition for adults is a possibility. Sand volleyball is the only adult volleyball currently offered in the Games.

At this point, Tanis' ideas are only in the discussion phase but her passion for volleyball is so thick that she emits enthusiasm about the ways the sport can be reintroduced to the Games.

"This is all just in the air right now," Tanis said. "They hope my experience and connections within the region can help find the optimal time to run a tournament and get volleyball going again."

Her enthusiasm for volleyball is matched when discussing CrossFit, which had been a part of the Games from 2016-'18. Tanis sees creating a competition for individuals or teams as a natural extension of the mission statement of "Inspiring wellness and competition."

For the uninitiated, CrossFit is not just conditioning; events can be timed through a workout or scored based on the number of reps completed within a time parameter.

"Maybe you do as many rounds as possible of 10 minutes to get a score. There could be kettle bell swings, pull ups, box jumps," Tanis said. "Or you can do it for time, reps, or max. Maybe the top five can go on to a blind workout. There are so many ways to think outside the box. You're supposed to be able to do anything and preparing for the unknown is part of the fun."

CrossFit has divisions based on the competitiveness – RX for elite competitors and scaled for those who are more recreational.

Tanis said the biggest unknown she faced was trying to keep a business afloat during the forced shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Roanoke Valley CrossFit loaned equipment for at-home workouts as Tanis and her staff did all they could to keep the members active and motivated while the shutdown continued.

Looking forward to a post-Covid world, Tanis is excited for the possibilities the Games will have and the excitement the competitors will feel to get back out there, hopefully in a way that seems normal.

“I’m anxious to do more,” Tanis said. “Hopefully things will open back up fully and we can get back to normal again.”