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## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

A person who is asked to coach a competitive team has every right to be given a clear understanding of what coaching entails. The following job description will serve to introduce the coach to the broad spectrum of responsibilities she acquires before she begins practice.

### Head Coach

Title: Head Coach

Responsible to: Athletic Director

Function: To co-ordinate all aspects of the assigned interscholastic sport and to work cooperatively with all personnel in maintaining a quality program within the policy framework of the school district.

#### Duties:

1. Be responsible for all matters pertaining to the organization and administration of the coaching of the team under his/her direction. Enforce all rules of the league, state and national association as they pertain to the respective sports.
2. A completed and signed parental permission form and physical examination card shall be in the hands of the coach or athletic office prior to an athlete beginning practice. Assure that players and coaches under his/her jurisdiction understand the training rule policy. These forms are to be returned to the athletic director promptly.
3. Cooperate with the administration, athletic director, fellow coaches and students to promote the best interests of the entire athletic program.
4. Work with the athletic director in the appointment and dismissal of assistant coaches in grades 7 - 12.
5. Have meetings with assistant coaches to coordinate coaching methods at different levels; assign duties to all assistant coaches; assist the athletic director in evaluating the performance of assistant coaches in grades 7 - 12.
6. Conform to athletic department policy in ordering equipment and supplies for the sport involved.
7. See that all candidates for a team have returned a properly completed insurance form (if necessary.)
8. See that all candidates for a team have had a physical examination and have returned the physical examination/parental consent form before the first practice session.

9. Prepare a roster of all team members. Have participants fill out the athletic eligibility form from which the master eligibility list will be compiled. Both should be in the athletic office and principal's office one week prior to the first game.
10. Assume responsibility for conduct of contestants in sport involved.
11. Assume responsibility for a group until all athletes are dressed and have left the building. This responsibility can be delegated to an assistant coach. Secure all gates, dressing rooms, locker and gymnasium or field house facilities before leaving the area.
12. Accompany and supervise the team to and from all contests.
13. Plan and supervise all practice sessions. Suggested length is not more than two and a half hours.
14. Work with trainer-equipment manager in selecting reliable student managers and student trainers; assign their duties and supervise their work.
15. Conform to athletic policy to assure that students are not given keys to enter buildings when the coach is not present.
16. Conform to school policies in handling injuries; report all serious injuries immediately to the athletic director.
17. Attend scheduled school meetings unless excused. During sports season, coaches should check with principal or department chairperson as to what transpired at a meeting that the coach was unable to attend.
18. Turn in a complete inventory of all equipment to the athletic director at the conclusion of the season.
19. Complete and return a Coaches Annual Report form to the athletic director within two weeks after the last contest.
20. Complete and return a supplemental pay voucher to the athletic director after all responsibilities have been fulfilled.
21. Complete all requirements mandated by State and National agencies.

Assistant and Junior High Coaches

Title: Assistant and/or Junior High Coach

Responsible to: Head Coach, Athletic Director, and Principal

Function: To cooperate with the head coach in the assigned interscholastic sport in maintaining a quality program within the policy framework of the school district.

Duties:

1. Cooperation by the junior high and assistant coaches of each sport with the head coach, athletic director, and the principal in performing the following duties related to the school athletic program.
2. Assure that players under his/her jurisdiction understand the training rule policy. The signed parental permission form shall be in the hands of the coach or athletic office prior to an athlete beginning practice. All parental forms are to be returned to the athletic director.
3. Support the head coach in conducting the athletic program of that particular sport and total athletic program of the school district.
4. Remain loyal to the head coach and to the team. He/she may have to give up some of his /her own thoughts regarding team strategy, etc. to fit into the overall pattern as set forth by the head coach.
5. Attend all practices beginning the first day to the end of the season along with being available for all staff meetings and scouting assignments.
6. Assume the responsibility for maintenance of facilities and personnel in the absence of the head coach.
7. Report all injuries, misconduct, or other unusual situations to the head coach, athletic director, or principal.
8. Assist the head coach in checking in and inventorying all equipment at the end of the season.
9. Assume all duties as assigned by the head coach.
10. Complete and return a Coach's Annual Report form to the athletic director within two weeks after the last contest.
11. Complete and return a supplemental pay voucher to the athletic director after all responsibilities have been fulfilled.
12. Perform other duties as assigned by the head coach or athletic director.

13. Complete all requirements mandated by the State and National organizations.

Once an individual understands the duties and expectations of a coach, he/she can make the decision to devote his/her teaching abilities to "coaching" a small group of skilled young girls in an effort to develop their individual and team excellence.

Defining the term "coaching" is complicated by the fact that those persons affected by the ability and influence of a coach perceive the coach differently. The school administrator views the coach as the teacher who directs the competitive play and behavior of the girls who represent the school. The team sees the coach as a highly skilled teacher who builds game skills, teaches competitive play, and fosters an appreciation for both virtue in cooperation and excellence in competition.

Coaching is highly skilled teaching of a limited number of individuals. Coaching develops skills beyond the fundamentals and combines the abilities of individuals into a team effort with the focus on enthusiastic competition in the spirit of fair play, good sportsmanship and friendship. The experience and demands of competitive play are complex and all persons concerned undergo a degree of intensity of effort and psychological stress.

The following list of topics is designed to assist the coach in preparing for the competitive season.

- Coaching is teaching - depth teaching of the advanced skills and strategies of the sport volleyball.
- Coaching requires expert knowledge of the sport.
- The coach must be willing to be a specialist.
- The coach must be willing to devote a large amount of time to a relatively small group of students.
- A coach must be sensitive, firm, insightful, adaptable, and flexible. A coach must be consistent.

#### Personal Knowledge

Every coach needs to refresh and review before beginning the season. This may consist of concentrated readings, attending workshops or clinics, or visiting other coaches and teams to observe and ask questions. Many theories of play and techniques of skills and strategy change over time. It is the coach's responsibility to be aware of changes.

## COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Many coaches do not recognize the importance of their approach to coaching and its effect upon the athletes on their team. Becoming a successful volleyball coach takes time and effort. Coaching an interscholastic athletic team is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. Coaches are expected to prepare in advance, learn the basic skills of the game, and care for the personal growth of each player regardless of the individual's skill or ability. Therefore, coaches should think about developing their coaching philosophy prior to meeting with the athletes.

To develop a coaching philosophy, a coach should know the developmental principles of the age group, the local school system's philosophy, aim, and objectives of its interscholastic athletic program, the athletes' desired outcome from participation, and his own coaching objectives. While the psychology and evaluation of human performance is complex, the important developmental principles which must be considered by every junior high volleyball coach are as follows:

1. Coaches should teach the basic movements that develop hand-eye, arm-eye, and body coordination.
2. At first, players should not specialize by position. Junior high athletics are an introduction to team sports, so participation and mastery of all skills is the priority. Once a team is selected, specialization by position can occur.
3. Junior high age athletes may be accident prone because of their lack of mobility and coordination.
4. Players are interested in organized games but not in complicated game rules.

As a coach develops his personal philosophy towards athletics, he should make sure that it agrees with the local school system's philosophy, aim, and objectives of interscholastic athletics. The following statements of philosophy, aim and objectives of interscholastic athletics are general and could be found in any school district's athletic handbook.

### Philosophy

A program of interscholastic athletics is a relevant part of the total program of instruction of the city schools. The very fact that it is a significant part of the total instructional program requires careful attention to matters of instruction, emphasis and scope. Specifically, the aims of such a program are:

- to develop as fully as possible the health and welfare of all students
- to provide advanced training beyond that taught in physical education classes and intramural activities
- to instruct the new skills necessary for achieving the highest possible level of accomplishment within the context of the total school program
- to instill attitudes of sportsmanship, discipline, healthy competition, and school spirit

- to teach health habits necessary for proper physical development and athletic participation
- to provide adequate athletic programs and facilities for boys and girls

### Aim

For the player, interscholastic competition offers increased opportunity for improving player skills, developing and increasing physical vigor, promoting true and lasting friendships, and learning that the rules of play are similar to the rules of everyday living.

For the student body, the interscholastic athletic program provides a fine foundation for the development of good school morale, for being sportsmanlike hosts, and for exercising the qualities of fair play and courtesy.

For the community, interscholastic athletics provides a fine school-community relationship, creating for the community a program of education and entertainment through athletics.

The objectives for an interscholastic program could include the following:

1. To meet the needs and interests of those students who are gifted athletically.
2. To meet the urge for competition which is basic in the American tradition and to develop the will to excel.
3. To develop each participant's knowledge and use of the fundamental skills needed to participate in her given sport.
4. To develop good community relationships and attitudes toward athletics.
5. To teach habits of health, safety, cleanliness, and physical fitness.
6. To develop each participant's moral, social, and spiritual values.
7. To provide opportunities to exemplify and observe good sportsmanship, which is good citizenship.
8. To stress and encourage always the importance of good sportsmanship.
9. To provide opportunities to make lasting friendships with teammates and opponents.
10. To give all students the opportunity to become members of a team.
11. To teach that a penalty follows a rule violation.
12. To give a student an early understanding that participation in athletics is a privilege that carries responsibilities.



Coaches should support a philosophy of athletes first, safety second, and winning third. Upholding this philosophy means that every decision a coach makes is based upon first, what is safe and best for the athletes and secondly, what may improve the athlete's or team's chance of winning. Such a philosophy does not suggest that winning is unimportant. Winning is fun and exciting if it is kept in perspective. Coaches who expect junior high athletes to perform like professional athletes and who value winning above all costs lead to an acceptance of cheating and a view of the other team as the enemy. Striving to win is essential for enjoyable competition. Until the coach instills this desire, he will be cheating his athletes out of the enjoyment and development athletics can bring to young, personable people.

The coach who is committed to his program and athletes must be alert to student motives for participation. While students may participate for a number of personal reasons, some may be only distantly related to the accepted objectives of the coach. Junior high age students participate in competitive athletics for the general purposes listed below:

- Enjoyment of activity or of the specific activity.
- Social opportunities and comradeship with friends.
- Personal satisfaction (some socially desirable, some less desirable.)
  - Glory, status, recognition
  - Outlet for aggression not permitted in many other activities in society
  - Need and desire to master skills. The need to succeed; to complete something at a high level of effectiveness; ambition to accomplish
  - desire for attention of adult (teacher, coach, parent, etc.)
- Encouragement by friends or adults.

How attitudes develop and spread is an interest of critical concern for all coaches. Suffice it to say that the attitudes of the athlete's peer group are extremely important to most junior high age students. The coach must be a strong enough leader to create positive attitudes and a socially desirable climate in a competitive activity. Finally, as the coach prepares his philosophy, he should remember the following essential elements of a good competitive sports philosophy when coaching junior high athletes:

- Know your motives for coaching.
- Make your own education a priority.
- Work with every player on your team.
- Work on basic skills.
- Demonstrate the importance of fitness habits.
- Use positive reinforcement.
- Teach fair play.
- Emphasize both learning skills and sportsmanship.
- Help players set and evaluate individual goals.
- Keep winning in perspective.
- Encourage lifetime involvement in sports.
- Work with the whole person.
- Make sure equipment and facilities meet safety standards.

- Encourage skilled volunteer leadership by all participants.

## **ORGANIZATION & ADMINISTRATION OF A VOLLEYBALL PROGRAM**

### Pre-Requisites for Student Participation

The medical examination is the first and most important measure to be considered in the proper health supervision of the athlete. In most schools, it is a routine procedure for the athlete to have a medical examination prior to her acceptance in a school sponsored sports program. An examination should be given each academic year and should be sufficiently thorough to evaluate the student's health status. It should include weight, nutrition, heart, blood pressure, lungs, abdomen, glands, and general health of hair, skin, and nails. It is most desirable to be able to give the examinations free of charge or at a reduced cost before the beginning of the athletic season. Continuous medical supervision of all students engaged in competitive athletics should be maintained and re-evaluations made as the physician or coach deems necessary. After a confining illness or injury, the athlete should be re-admitted to athletic participation only upon recommendation of the medical doctor.

Cumulative records of the health examination, dental records, description of injuries and illness of the athlete should be maintained. The record makes decisions concerning participation more meaningful and protects the school system and coaches against claims of injury while in the competitive program.

Each athlete should carry health and accident insurance. If the student does not have such coverage, the school system should make available such insurance at a reasonable cost to the participant. Personal liability insurance should be the concern of every coach and athletic director. Parental permission slips may have little legal value, but they do serve as statements of parental acknowledgment that their daughter is participating in athletics.

### Academic Eligibility

Since the beginning of athletic competition in schools, athletic eligibility has been a questionable pre-requisite for competitive participation. Academic regulations, rightly or wrongly, are based on the assumption that scholastic achievement is the primary purpose of schools and that varsity sports take time needed for study. Many administrators feel that unless definite standards of academic achievement are maintained as a form of restraint, some students and coaches would focus all time and effort on their sport and neglect scholastic responsibilities. Any student should be allowed to try-out for or to participate in any school activity as long as she is a bona fide member of the student body and fulfilling its institutional requirements. Students under temporary suspension or probation for disciplinary reasons should not be allowed to participate. Members of a team should be shown no special favors, nor should they be made to meet any requirements not expected of other members of the student body.

### Conduct during the Game

The game should be played for the benefit of the players - not the coach, officials, spectators, or school. Toward this goal, the following suggestions are offered.

Players should focus only on playing the game. There is no time for a thinking player to make comments to opponents, officials, or spectators during the course of a game. Students should respect their opponents for the competition they are providing. Unsportsmanlike or disrespectful conduct can never be condoned, even in the most undesirable situations. Certainly this includes players' conduct toward officials. Facial expressions and gestures can be as undesirable as verbal expressions of displeasure.

Players and sympathetic spectators tend to react as the coach and players react. Less sympathetic spectators react to the coach and players' reactions and if the coach or team's response is questionable, the result is an overemotional situation in which the game is taken away from the players. It is never acceptable for the coach to yell at officials or opponents, or allow his emotions to be uncontrolled. The coach should be able to control spectator and player actions through the respect they have for the coach's judgment and personal control.

Spectator conduct is the concern of the school administration, student body, the team and the coach. Spectators tend to react to the coaches and players, and a team's conduct can do much to bring about favorable spectator response.

### Hosting Games

Visiting teams are invited guests and as such should expect and receive certain social courtesies and physical comforts. They should be provided with their own dressing facilities - a clean private place to dress, shower, and rest between matches. There must be a safe place for storing equipment and valuables. On the court, teams should be furnished an area of their own with benches or chairs for coaches and team members. When the visitors arrive, they should find a clean, safe playing court.

The host school is responsible for providing practice/game balls, first aid supplies and emergency medical information if the situation should arise.

### Away Games

A coach should accompany teams traveling from their school from that team. When preparing for departure, use the following items as a checklist.

1. Check with proper school administrator for mode of transportation.
2. Notify the team members of time and place of departure, length of trip, and estimated time of return. If at all possible, include a map and a set of directions to the away game site (for the parents.)
3. Take the necessary playing equipment; towels, first aid supplies and player emergency medical consent forms.

4. Announce what constitutes appropriate dress for the team members. Short trips are often made in playing uniforms but players may wish to wear warmer clothes for the return trip.

When traveling, natural enthusiasm is to be expected as the group anticipates the match, but extreme emotional displays should be restrained.

Upon arrival at the host school, have the athletes walk as a group into the building to the dressing area. After dressing, the athletes should report to their team's area at the match site. Once everyone is together, a short team warm-up should be conducted by the game captains or designated leaders. This settling-in period is very important in establishing both the physical and psychological readiness of the team. The team warm-up must not be without a purpose. The warm-up must be well organized and with an intended result in mind. After the team warm-up, the squad may be separated into varsity, junior varsity teams for more intense warm-up of skills or assigned roles of taking statistics.

After the contest, the team members should shake hands with their opponents. No one is excused from this responsibility.

### Equipment and Facilities

A coach inherits existing facilities, and frequently, limited equipment. Much can be done to improve both, even with a limited budget, if small amounts are put into improvements over a period of several years. The secret to adequate and improving facilities is constant attention and maintenance. The requirements do not demand a great expenditure of capital. Program needs must be defined and priorities established. This involves coaches and the athletic administrator.

### Uniforms and Dress

Uniforms are important to a team. First, they distinguish one team from another during competition. Secondly, the uniform is designed to permit the freedom of movement that is necessary and appropriate for a particular activity. Third, uniforms develop and support team morale and unity. Uniforms should be washable and require little or no ironing. Uniforms should never make the wearer self-conscious. Whenever possible, every team member should wear the same style and color uniform. A player should not "share" another player's uniform. The uniform need not be expensive. However, good quality material and workmanship cost less in the long run.

### Responsibilities of the Coach

The coach is ultimately responsible for the safety, welfare, and conduct of his/her players. He/she is responsible for all those students on his/her team (athletes and managers) and their behavior. A coach must recognize this as he/she assumes the leadership responsibilities that accompany coaching. The following serves as a list of general responsibilities and duties for anyone involved in coaching.

**General Responsibilities and Duties:**

1. The coach is a leader. In accepting the position as coach, an individual assumes the responsibilities of conducting him/herself in such a manner that he/she is a fine example of good sportsmanship and upright conduct.
2. The coaches in the various schools are responsible to the school principal and the Athletic Director. The Athletic Director holds the junior high coaches responsible for carrying out the styles of play and the teaching of fundamentals as the varsity head coach may determine. At the same time, the junior high coaches should be tempering their coaching styles in keeping with the stages of development of the junior high athlete and the junior high program.
3. The head coach in any interscholastic sport sponsored in the high school has been given authority to determine the style of play to be used in that sport on the high school and junior high levels. The state athletic association and the school system's Athletic Board have determined the limitations upon athletic schedules. Junior high school coaches are expected to cooperate fully with the senior high school athletic staff by fulfilling responsibilities that will help further the athletic program. Included in these responsibilities will be scouting assignments during the sports seasons involved.
4. The coach shall be responsible for all matters pertaining to the organization and administration of the coaching of the team under his/her direction.
5. The coach shall enforce all athletic rules and policies of the school system. The coach will be held responsible for any violation.
6. The coach shall be the first person to enter the building. Under no circumstances will a player enter before the coach arrives.
7. On all occasions the coach shall be the last person to leave the building. The coach must be the first to arrive and the last to leave.
8. The coach shall promote community and school interest in the athletic program through the use of local newspapers, radio, and television stations, and school announcements.
9. The coach shall file, with the Athletic Director, an accurate, up-to-date roster with the home telephone number and guardian/parent of each player.

**Guiding Principles:**

- Remember that you are a teacher first.
- Judge the athlete by what she can do.
- Promote success and the morale of your team.
- Be alert for the safety and health of your team.
- Develop teamwork and loyalty.
- Stress sportsmanship and courtesy.
- Insist on high scholarship and fair play.

- Be friendly and courteous with parents.
- Respect the officials.
- Uphold the name of your school.
- Establish and demand strict adherence to rules of training and conduct.
- Handle all injuries and accident reports immediately.
- Cooperate with other coaches in meetings and assignments, and adhere to the regulations established by the national, state, school, and league athletic associations.
- Promote community interest in the athletic program of your school.

#### Pre-Season Responsibilities and Duties:

1. The coach shall be sure all participants have a physical card and insurance form on file with the Athletic Director.
2. The coach shall outline and give to each participant a copy of the training rules and policies.
3. The coach shall complete the eligibility form provided and return it to the building principal and Athletic Director.
4. The coach shall explain to the participants the eligibility procedures that will be followed.
5. The coach shall have a "parents meeting" after the team has been selected and prior to the first game. This meeting will be used to introduce the coach and his/her assistants to the parents. At this meeting, the coaches will explain their purpose for the program and their expectations of the athletes. This meeting will also be used to answer any questions the parents might have for the coach.

#### Responsibilities when Reducing the Squad:

1. The coach shall not reduce the number of participants during the preliminary practice sessions until the squad has practiced one week.
2. Keep notes on each player as it can help to make decisions later.
3. Whenever a coach needs to talk to a player privately, be sure to have another adult present.
4. When reducing team members, be sure to talk to the individuals separately and alone and explain to them why they are being "cut." Tell them what they can do to improve for the next season. Be honest, but be kind.

#### Season Responsibilities:

1. The coach shall notify the building principal, Athletic Director, and parents if a player is dismissed from the team.

2. If a player leaves the team, the coach must notify the building principal, Athletic Director, and parents.
3. The coach must keep accurate records of:
  - Equipment
  - Uniforms
  - Daily attendance
  - Statistics
4. The coach should keep players, parents, and administration informed of the team's progress throughout the season.

**Practice Responsibilities:**

1. The coach shall organize and plan each practice session. It is recommended that junior high practice should be 1 1/2 - 2 hours in length. High school practice should be 2 to 3 hours in length.
2. The coach shall maintain control of players at all times. Discipline is an important ingredient for success in athletics.
3. At no time shall the coach allow players to roam the building. Keep them in the specified areas. If the players are to remain in room prior to the coach's arrival, make this room and time a "study" period where the athletes are to complete any homework or study for any future tests.
4. The coach shall contact the building principal when practice is canceled or changed.
5. The coach shall advise the building principal and Athletic Director of any practice sessions on Saturdays or holidays. No practice sessions on Sundays.
6. The coach shall select a time to end practice and adhere to the ending time. Remember that parents will probably be picking up junior high players.
7. The coach shall give the players a minimum of 15 minutes to leave the building.
8. Before leaving, the coach shall:
  - Check the playing area for cleanliness and any equipment that has been left out.
  - Check the locker rooms for cleanliness and make sure the showers and lights are turned off.
  - Close all windows and doors.
  - Turn off all lights.
  - Make sure all doors and gates are locked.



## Game Responsibilities and Duties:

1. The coach shall secure the proper game help and prepare the playing area.
  - Clean the playing surface, check game equipment and playing surface for anything that might endanger a participant.
  - Scorer, timer, scoreboard operator, line judges, etc.
  - The Athletic Director or building principal will acquire crowd control help.
2. The coach shall involve as many players as possible
3. The coach shall report the game results to:
  - The newspaper
  - Radio station
  - Building principal for school announcements
  - Any statewide associations that keep track of this information
4. The coach shall secure the building.
  - Locker rooms (home and visitors)
  - Turn lights out
  - Windows closed and doors and gates locked
5. The coach shall inform the players of the expected return time for out of town trips. The players should inform the parents.

Responsibilities of the Captain and Student Manager

Too often the captain of a squad or team is merely a title that carries with it little or no responsibility. A captain should be more than the person who meets with officials to deliver instructions from her coach or the one who raises his/her hand to indicate that the team is ready to play. How much responsibility the captain should assume depends upon her leadership ability, the age and maturity of the team, the coach, and the situation. The captain should have a good rapport with the coach and the team and act as liaison between them. The captain should have complete understanding of and know the reasons for the plan for practice and games. The captain should lead the team in enthusiasm and seriousness of purpose.

Specific responsibilities might include:

1. Conduct warm-up for practice and games.
2. Directing changing patterns of play during the game while on the court.
3. Offer encouragement to team members when needed.

The student manager or managers can be very valuable to the coach and team. Again, their duties may vary with their age and maturity.

Some of their responsibilities might include:

1. Providing game equipment and first aid supplies at all practice sessions and games.
2. Keep records as assigned by coach.
3. Put equipment away at end of practices and games.
4. Conducting visitors to proper areas.

### Awards

Requirements for achieving an award vary greatly, often depending on the philosophy of the athletic department of the school. In the case in which a definite team is selected at the beginning of the season, it seems appropriate that all members should receive the same awards. Some programs do give full and equal awards to all members on the selected squad while other programs require fulfillment of a quota system of total amount of participation. Whichever system, a definite policy and definite standards must be established before the season begins and the participants informed.

## COACHING STYLE

Once a coach decides upon his/her coaching objectives, he/she needs to plan how to achieve those objectives. There are three recognized coaching styles.

The first method entails the coach making all the decisions and demanding that players follow instructions without asking questions. This is described as the "authoritarian" style that advocates the "Do as I say; do not ask questions" method of instruction. This style may help the athletes learn to follow orders, but will not necessarily help the young athletes develop thinking skills and personal qualities.

Another style, which may seem easier to adopt if the coach has little experience, is to let the players run the program. This is the easiest style to put into practice. Just "roll out the ball" and let the athletes pick teams and scrimmage the whole practice session. There is little danger of the coach making uneducated or embarrassing mistakes. Unfortunately, the greatest shortcoming with this style is that the coach will not be helping the players learn skills and values. Furthermore, poor supervision will increase the risk of injury.

The third coaching style is to let the players share in the decision-making process. Unless young people are given the opportunity to express opinions and make decisions, they will not become responsible adults. This coaching style, the "cooperative" or "we" approach, is the most difficult to develop because athletes and coach both want to win, but may have different ideas about how to accomplish this task.

With the "cooperative" approach, the coach must decide how much he/she needs to structure and organize the program and how much input he/she should encourage from his/her players. The coach should keep in mind that players' suggestions often may not really contribute to the total scheme. But if athletes are made to feel important and that some of their ideas will be adopted the athletes will work harder.

A cooperative coaching style will help the coach develop a good working relationship with his/her players. If the sport season is an "I" venture, the coach may be unresponsive or defensive to suggestions thus causing a breach in player-coach relationships. With the "cooperative" style, the coach's approach would be to sit down with the individual player or team and ask, "What can WE do to achieve our mutual goals?" A "we" style coach can give direction and provide instruction when needed, but he/she also knows when to let the athletes make decisions and assume responsibility for their play.

The athletes will show more respect and be more willing to listen if they know that the coach is genuinely interested in their opinions. Such a coach-athlete relationship is especially valuable when teaching values and good sportsmanship.

## TEAM SELECTION

An announcement that practice and try-outs will be held for students interested in participating on the school's volleyball team usually signals the beginning of the competitive season. This announcement acts as the first step in the screening process, because those volunteering are already motivated and enthusiastic to participate.

The first practice sessions should be designed to review individual skills and drills for basic play. These periods actually serve a dual purpose. First, they reacquaint the players with the game and its basic skills. Secondly, these early practice sessions give the coach an idea of the overall skill level and potential ability of the group. These practice sessions should be planned and organized to accommodate large numbers.

Conducting the first practice sessions often proves to be the most difficult task the coach encounters during the year. It is during these early sessions, that the coach begins to look for those experienced players who already possess a high level of skill and game ability and for those players whom the coach feels have the greatest skill potential and coach ability. The coach must also realize that no matter how many years of experience he/she has, there will be mistakes in player selection as long as players retain their individuality and coaches their human fallibility. However, a prudent coach will develop a sound method to select his/her players while keeping in mind that no two players develop at the same pace physically, mentally, or emotionally.

The content of these early sessions is largely determined by facilities, number of participants, available time and the coach's plans for participation.

### Evaluating Individual Skills

Evaluating the skills of an individual is a difficult task particularly in a team sport where it is initially difficult to determine an individual's effectiveness as part of a team. Certain individual skills, such as the volleyball serve, can be observed apart from team play. But many reaction type skills that are an intricate part of play are observable only in a game situation.

Possibly the best method of evaluating individual skills is a simple estimation of each candidate's skills on a coach-designed checklist. The coach identifies the basic skills he/she feels are important. Later, during a scrimmage, these skills may be checked and rechecked as to the athlete's ability to consistently perform correctly the skills. Another series of tests of basic athletic ability could also be given. A jump and reach test and a shuttle run for quickness are examples.

### Evaluating an Individual's Game Ability

Once an individual's fundamental skills are evaluated, it becomes the task of the coach to evaluate a player's game ability. What a coach is trying to determine is the athlete's ability to combine his/her skills with the necessary elements of game knowledge, game sense, and competitive drive for effective team effort. As such, the athlete must be viewed in relation to his/her teammates and her teammates evaluated in relation to

the individual athlete. Thus, an individual must be seen in many different combinations to determine whether it is her game ability that is being seen or if a particular group of players is responsible for her play.

Evaluating Leadership, Attitude, and Competitive Drive

Over a period of time, a coach can identify certain types of behavior that generally indicate a player's ability as a competitor. These are listed below.

- Ability to function under physical and emotional stress in a competitive situation.
- Ability to play one's own style of game regardless of the tactics of the players of the other team.
- Ability to change tactics based upon the other team's style of play.
- Ability to maintain a high level of skill regardless of the skill and behavior of the opponents.
- Ability to maintain emotional stability while others are losing theirs. Experience is a major factor in developing game stability.

In addition to good basic skills and team play, there are other factors that must be considered in selecting an individual for competitive play. Perhaps the most important quality is the competitive drive of the individual. The coach can evaluate a player's game spirit by observation and response to the following questions:

- As a defender, does she refuse to give up, no matter what the score or the number of times the opponent has beaten her?
- After making a mistake, can she be in the next play without dwelling on the mistake?
- Does she approach every game and every situation with a positive attitude toward winning?
- Can she make the most use of her skills, no matter what the conditions of the playing area present or the level of skills presented by the opposition?

Innate game sense is also an important factor. Players with this quality are a definite plus for any team. Such players prove to be excellent playmakers and solid defensive players. In evaluating this quality, a coach might ask the following questions:

- Can a player sense when a standard pattern of play is not working and do the unexpected?
- Can the player specialize at more than one position?
- Is the player coachable?
- Can the player sense her position on the court in relation to her teammates and opponents?
- Can the player change her mind when the situation changes?

### Squad and Team Organization

Before the final selection of players is made, the coach must decide whether he/she will organize a distinct team or teams, or a single squad. There are advantages and disadvantages for both patterns of selection.

#### Team Selection-Advantages

1. A unity of feeling and security develops within each team.
2. The players work with the same people immediately and a team unit can be formed quickly.
3. If there is a varsity and junior varsity, separate practice times can be scheduled.
4. Time is not wasted in organizing for drills and scrimmages at practice sessions and line-ups will not vary greatly.
5. If there are two coaches available, the group is naturally divided for coaching purposes and there is carry-over from day to day with the same coaching personnel.

#### Disadvantages

1. With the early selection of players, player evaluation mistakes can be made. Late developing players may be lost to the program.
2. Players may let down since they have made the team for the season.

#### Squad Selection-Advantages

1. The teams are flexible and deserving players can be moved up or down easily as the season progresses.
2. Players must maintain a high level of skill consistency to maintain their position.
3. The players of lesser ability will try to improve their skills since there is a chance of moving up.
4. There is a squad unity that promotes greater interest and support in both varsity and junior varsity matches rather than the varsity being the only important game.

#### Disadvantages

1. Time may be needed before practice to organize the total squad into groups for drills and scrimmages since there are not any definite units.
2. It may be difficult for two coaches to work with this type of structure.
3. There is constant pressure on the coach and uncertainty among the players, for the coach is always selecting and moving players.

The squad or teams should be selected, if possible, at least two weeks and no later than five practices before the first game. This will give the coach time to work with these groups and formulate a team. It is important that the players in each group work and scrimmage together so that they can play as a team in the next match. There is a danger, particularly with squad organization, that in an attempt to find the strongest group, too many changes may occur and players never play as a settled group before the match.

The selection of one or more permanent teams is a difficult chore. The coach and team are committed to the selection for a season. However, organization during the season is comparatively simple. The selection of a squad is easier initially but demands more time and effort on the part of the coach throughout the season. The flexibility offered by the squad arrangement generally produces the best competitive results. Possibly the best arrangement of personnel, is to combine the best elements of team and squad organization and apply those principles to the total volleyball organization. This will depend upon the individual coach's experience and maturity.

### Player Combinations

Combining individuals for team play is a very difficult decision for any coach. Finding six players and their substitutes that mesh physically and psychologically is not quickly accomplished. Many teams do not necessarily "come together" until late in the season.

For junior high volleyball teams, all players should receive instruction in all the skills. Later, as the coach and players become more familiar with each other, certain players will acquire specific duties and player positions.

Since all players have the responsibility of passing, a player should be able to anticipate the ball and position herself to pass the ball to the setter or another teammate depending upon the game situation. Thus key physical characteristics in any player's profile would include speed, quickness, flexibility, and the ability to achieve rapid recovery. Key mental characteristics would include knowledge of the skills and strategies of the volleyball game and the ability to read the other team's tendencies or intentions.

A setter must possess all the game skills and display intelligence and game sense as well as complete knowledge of what the coach wishes to accomplish. As the designated playmaker, the setter must have quick feet and body agility in order to position herself in proper position to receive the pass and then set the ball to a hitter. Body balance and body position related to the hitter are important factors for a proper set to occur. Psychologically, she is the team's spark plug; with calmness and control, she organizes and encourages the other members of the team.

Spikers/blockers are frequently physically tall with a strong jumping ability. Effective spikers must develop the ability of controlled suspension while aggressively spiking or dunking the ball over the net. The success of the spike or dink is dependent upon timing, precision, and direction of the force imparted to the ball. Good blockers must be able to read the setter's set and react. The ability of blockers to shift positions quickly and time their jumps with the opponent's attack is important to any team's overall success. A good blocker is not timid but is aggressive. A blocker takes pride in her ability to stop the other team's attack.

Diggers like the setter must possess all the game skills. Diggers are the last line of defense. Diggers must have a keen sense of the flow of the game in order to react to the opponent's attack. Diggers must have complete body control as they must react to a variety of game situations and pass a volleyball that is hit with a varied amount of force and speed and directed to all parts of the court. Thus a smart mind along with swift feet and quick reflexes are normal characteristics.

There are two different methods to compose a team. The coach has a choice of: (1) choosing team tactics to suit the players, or (2) choosing players to suit the team tactics. In most cases, only the first option is possible since the coach must choose his team from a specific group of players. Suitable tactics must be selected to use the individual abilities of the players for an optimal team system. Gradually a coach may try to develop the players' abilities to use more effective team tactics. This means that a coach must compromise between his ideals as a coach for the capabilities of the players.

To compose a team, a coach ideally needs tall and mobile players. However, on a junior high school team, there are never enough tall and skillful players to pass the ball, to forcefully spike a ball, and to excel in back court play. A coach has to form his/her team out of players with different physical, emotional and social abilities. A coach must take this diverse group of athletes and choose an optimal team system that puts each player in a position to have some form of success. This is a very difficult task because a number of other factors must be taken into consideration. These include experience, mental attitude, team spirit, and desire.

For this reason, it is almost impossible to simply state how a coach should ideally compose a team. However, there are some sound principles for determining a team's composition:

- All the players should be able to play effectively in both the front and backcourt positions.
- The players should be distributed around the court to achieve a balance in attack and defensive abilities (in pairs or groups, tall and short, setters, diggers, and attackers/blockers.)
- A mixture of temperaments is necessary. A team needs a catalyst as well as neutralizers.
- There should be at least one or two experienced or "cool" players in reserve to be used as substitutes in case of emergency.
- The coach should always be looking for players to keep the team strong and in high spirits.
- Each team member will have a consistent, successful serve.



## TEACHING AND COACHING VOLLEYBALL

### Understanding the Learning Process

Before you can effectively teach the skills and strategies of volleyball, a coach must understand how the athletes learn. Learning physical skills is a process with measurable progressions and goals that change as skill level improves. The learning process must involve both the coach and the athlete. A coach's role is to ensure that proper techniques are presented and that the athletes enjoy their participation in the sport. This requires motivation on the coach's part and on the athlete's part.

Both coach and athlete must have an understanding of why they are involved in the sport volleyball. That means that a coach must know why he/she is teaching the selected skills and also investigate the expectations and goals of the athletes involved in the program. When these variables are clearly understood and accepted, learning can begin to take place.

For simplicity, three stages of learning are recognized and labeled beginning, intermediate, and advanced.

### Mental or Beginning Stage

The goal of the beginning stage of learning is to develop an understanding of the concepts, principles, and mechanics involved in volleyball. The principles of execution should be established. Drills aimed at developing this level of understanding emphasize mechanics rather than the integration of the skill into playing situations.

Three important guidelines should be utilized when presenting materials during this phase of learning:

1. Explain the reasons why a skill is executed.
2. Present as few principles as possible without compromising the message.
3. Movements and postures that the athlete will do naturally do not need to be discussed.

This phase of the learning process should be the shortest of the three. A coach will want to move on to game-related skills as soon as possible.

### Practice or Intermediate Stage

During this stage, the focus is on learning to perform the skills. Coaches will spend most of their skill-teaching time in this phase, especially if they work with young or beginning volleyball players. Because players will begin to refine a motor program for performing a skill, the learning environment should parallel the competitive environment as closely as possible.

### Automatic or Advanced Stage

This final stage of learning assumes that skills have been established in set, game related motor patterns. The player can at this phase focus on tactical applications. The subtleties of tempo control and ongoing competitive adjustments can be addressed. Although skill refinement is a goal of this phase, refinement is accomplished through a focus on playing the game.

### Developing a Teaching Plan

To meet the needs of the athletes in each of the phases of learning, a coach will need to develop a teaching plan. Each coach will have different individual strengths and weaknesses that will make this teaching plan unique from any other teaching plan. However there are several important issues that should be addressed when devising a teaching plan.

- Assessing fitness and skill level
- Developing a seasonal plan
- Planning practices
- Selecting drills
- Selecting an appropriate teaching style

### General Principles of Teaching Volleyball Skills

There are many principles of teaching and each school of thought about teaching modifies the concepts. The following list of principles have universal acceptance and have been found to be successful.

- Keep any presentation simple by using carefully chosen words.
- Use as few words as possible. Be sure to use consistent, memorable, and meaningful cues.
- Demonstrate the skill frequently. Visual instruction often has more impact than verbal instruction.
- Describe the desired end result and encourage the athletes to explore ways of achieving that result as long as the technique is biomechanically correct.
- Provide cues, hints, and technical information as needed.
- Communicate clearly why a skill is being taught and why it should be performed in a prescribed manner.
- If possible, answer a question with a question. This process involves players in the learning process by encouraging problem-solving through exploration.
- Make all learning activities compatible with the skill level of the players.
- Keep activities challenging and fun.
- Use drills that duplicate the way a skill will be used in competition.

### Teaching Concerns

As a coach presents new skills, additional concerns need to be taken into consideration.

1. Speed of Execution - Each player should perform skills at the fastest speed possible without sacrificing correct execution.
2. Perfection of Movements - Players should strive to perfect their movements, postures, and ball-contact skills during the beginning phase of learning.
3. Effort - Players should exert maximum effort at all times, during practices as well as games. Remember, a player plays the game of volleyball the same way she practices for a game.
4. Imagery - Visualizing a complete skill give an athlete an opportunity to review correct techniques, cue their motor program, and see a clear image of what they are trying to accomplish.
5. Become a Student of the Game - Volleyball is a multifaceted game. In addition to understanding the rules, a coach must understand the elements of the sport and how to teach skills. Take the time to watch other successful coaches. Go to as many volleyball games as possible and watch other teams. Play the sport, as experience can be a beneficial teacher. Finally, join a coaches' association and attend the clinics.

### Teaching and Coaching the Game

Before a coach or player can really learn the various systems, theories, tactics and their application to the game volleyball, a coach or player must understand the nature of the game itself. Volleyball has many unique characteristics with which the coach and player must become familiar with before he/she is able to successfully teach and apply the skills.

Volleyball is distinguished by the following elements.

1. A Rebound Sport  
The fact that volleyball is categorized as a rebound sport means that players never maintain possession of the ball. Rather, the ball is contacted briefly and then directed to another player. The only exception to this is the serve.  
  
In most other sports, athletes can compensate for poor body position at the time of possession by moving into a more advantageous position. Because a player cannot catch the volleyball and then move to a better position to release the ball, players must learn to position themselves correctly BEFORE contacting the ball.
2. Intermediate Contacts  
Common volleyball strategy encourages the use of three contacts per team possession on each side of the net. Because two of the three possible contacts are not the final contact, controlling the rebound of the ball is important. This need for controlling the ball highlights the necessity of moving

into position for an intermediate contact BEFORE contacting the ball.

In addition to good ball control, cooperation among team members is essential. For this reason, the interaction of players and the development of teamwork are dominant themes in learning the skills of volleyball.

3. A Congested Playing Area

Volleyball is unique in that a high concentration of people play in a small area. The congested playing area makes it vital to organize the positioning of players and their movements. Balanced coverage of all parts of the court is an important goal to achieve before any team or player can achieve any type of success.

In achieving balanced coverage, the relationships between players positioned next to each other must be considered. Team dynamics become a prime coaching concern because of the congested playing area.

4. Little Immediate Positive Feedback

Because playing volleyball itself offers few opportunities for immediate positive feedback, some difficulties are created in the learning process. Each player needs to be able to identify and perform correct skill techniques and be able to "teach" these same skills and techniques to other players. As players learn to recognize and appreciate the correct execution of the volleyball techniques, those players should make positive compliments to the other players who are demonstrating those correct skills.

5. A Game of Transition

The roles of offense and defense can be confusing. Volleyball does have offensive and defensive skills, but they are not as separate as they may appear to be in other sports. The ball does not stop between the time a team takes an offensive role and when it must play defense. And a team may switch frequently between offense and defense without a point being scored or a violation being called. Volleyball players must understand the nature of this game of transition. To be successful, a team must be able to shift between offensive and defensive alignments fluidly.

There are four ways to score a point in volleyball: a service ace, a stuff block, a controlled defensive play resulting in an attack (known as "transition"), and an unforced error.

A *serve* has been described as both an offensive and defensive skill. It is offensive because the server directs the velocity and trajectory of the ball. It is defensive in that the serve is intended to, at the least, disrupt the opponent's offense and, at the most, cancel it.

A *stuff block* is clearly a defensive play. A controlled dig is also defensive and can lead to a point through team offense.

The opponent's *unforced errors* can be credited to a tough defense that intimidates the other team into attempting shots not usually found in their attack game plan. A team's overall discipline and

consistency is reflected in the opponent's errors.

It is often said that the best offense is a good defense. This is particularly true in volleyball. Traditionally aggressive offenses are sometimes handicapped by unforced errors that result in lost opportunities for points. Vice versa, the conservative defense, which simply waits for the opponent to make mistakes, is not likely to produce success. **TO BE SUCCESSFUL, TEAMS MUST STRIVE TO BE AGGRESSIVE DEFENSIVELY TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO SCORE POINTS.**

6. Imbalance of Offense And Defense

Probably more than any other team sport, the offense has a tremendous advantage. The offense achieves success (by scoring a point or side-out) over 60% of the time.

7. Non-contact Sport

Volleyball is a team game with a physical barrier (the net) that prevents most direct one-on-one contact. The players are in control of their own games, and in many respects the players control their own success and failure, regardless of the skill level or actions of their opposition.

In volleyball players must learn to control their frustrations and aggressions. Volleyball players must play within themselves and compete against self-imposed standards more than compete against opponents.

8. Lack of Time Constraints

The rules of volleyball present no time limit. Teams compete until one team scores at least 15 points and have a two-point advantage. As a consequence, the winning team must score the last point. A volleyball team cannot run out the clock as in football.

Because no time limit can stop play, there is constant pressure to score points. Players must learn to create opportunities to score points so that they can win a volleyball game. Players waiting for the other team to make enough mistakes to lose a game can produce a loss for their own team.

9. A Player-Dominated Game

Volleyball is more a player-dominated game, rather than a coach-dominated activity. Communication between the coach and athletes is restricted. As a result, a team must prepare thoroughly before each competition. Players must also learn to adapt to the changing situations that occur throughout a volleyball game without relying on the coach's comments.

10. Players Must Be Able to Play Many Roles

The rules of volleyball require that players rotate to each of the six positions on a volleyball court unless a substitution for them occurs. Therefore, volleyball is dominated by the theory that all players must become equally skilled in all phases of the game. Having a team in which all players are equal in all respects has been the goal of coaches for years. Unfortunately, this is an unattainable goal for most coaches. Players must understand the rotation concept, the limitations of specialization, and the rules of the game. Each player must become familiar with playing in all portions of the court and must be equally comfortable in the front or back row.

Players need to also understand that even though coaches try to train all the players to be perfect in all the skills, this task is almost impossible in the real world situation. There are simply not enough hours available to train everyone equally well. Consequently, most coaches will teach all the skills to everyone but will work within the rotation rule to build limited specialization.

#### 11. Unique Skills and Playing Zones

Running, shuffling, sidestepping, diving, rolling, and various combinations of these skills comprise the movement skills used in volleyball. It is during practice time that the athlete learns to perform a series of movements that will lead to a successful execution of a skill without having to think about each step.

Further, the underhand pass is unique to volleyball. In most sports, the ball is contacted with the feet, the hands, or an implement of some sort. Because contact is made with the forearms, special eye-arm coordination is required.

Finally, in volleyball, there are two additional unique zones of play. Most sports are played at a level between the top of the head and the knees, in something we call the MIDDLE zone. Volleyball also involves two additional zones. Many balls are played very close to the floor in the LOW zone. For this reason, players must become comfortable diving, rolling, and using flying recovery techniques, all of which are standard skills.

The other zone used in volleyball is the HIGH zone that spans from the top of the athlete's reach to a point 10 feet or more above the floor. Because much of the game of volleyball is played in this high zone, jumping skills are frequently needed.

It is important that the coach and player understand each of the above elements. The coach and player must learn the importance of the many specific roles a player is responsible for during the course of the volleyball game and each role's significance as it pertains to the total team picture.

Volleyball is a unique activity in many respects. Coaches and players need to familiarize themselves with the various offensive and defensive schemes permitted in volleyball. Coaches and players need to learn how the skills are applied during the tactics of an actual game. Players need to develop a general proficiency in all the skills and understand the role of limited specialization in the success of a team's efforts. Players need to understand how their emotions affect their ability to perform in a game and how their feelings and emotions affect the players around them.

## PRACTICE SESSIONS

Coaches have long been concerned about the organization and administration of practice sessions and the relationship between practice and learning. Research reinforces the assumption that practice usually leads to learning. Although practice does not insure perfection, it enhances a person's ability to learn a motor skill and develop an optimum performance level. The length of practice sessions, their frequency in a given period of time, and the work-rest ratio within a practice period are largely determined by the coach, the players schedules, and knowledge of current sport techniques.

Most competitive volleyball teams at the junior high or high school level are limited in their practice periods by state and local regulations. Another factor is the availability of local facilities. The season is approximately twelve to fifteen weeks with three or four designated practice days and one, two and sometimes three competitive events a week during the competitive season.

Practice sessions afford the time for players and coaches to develop individual talent and team skill and spirit. The competitive event is, in actuality, the proving ground for the effectiveness of the practice sessions. The importance of planning for specific outcomes from these sessions cannot be over emphasized.

Practice sessions have three basic purposes: conditioning, skill development, and psychological readiness. Each of these purposes has individual and team implications. The purposes and general plans of practice sessions should be made known to the players. Daily practice plans should be written and include specific items covered and organization of practice. At the close of the practice session, an evaluation should be made to note general progress, suggested drills or improvement upon current drills, and any suggested changes for the future practice sessions. Any visible individual or team strengths and weaknesses should also be noted. Notes covering players' responses, attitudes, and psychological state are helpful for planning future practices. Each practice session should be planned with consistency, skill progression, and flexibility as needed.

Early in the season, emphasis is given to general conditioning and individual skill development. During the latter stages of the season, the focus of practice sessions should be on achieving team balance and coordination of the offensive and defensive systems. The last portion of the season is devoted to maintenance of physical and psychological readiness and refining team skill and strategy in preparation for the tournaments. Emphasis will vary each session and each week. As intensity and quality of play develop, specific individual skill practices may be combined and then included with offensive and defensive pattern drills.

### Conditioning

Conditioning is either general or specific and is both physical and mental. General conditioning results from permanent positive habits of health, diet, discipline, and exercise and is maintained through continuous work and mental discipline. A specific conditioning program has the purpose of developing a balance of an individual's strength, agility, quickness, and endurance as they relate to specific volleyball activities.

Physical and mental preparation varies with each individual. It is generally assumed that mental preparation is more complex than physical conditioning. This is because an individual's mental and emotional responses to internal and external influences are difficult to measure. Unlike physiological changes, mental and emotional changes can be viewed only by external behavior rather than by exact measuring devices.

No training program, however sound, can be effective unless the participant is convinced of its effectiveness. In the same reference, the most effective program can result in mediocre results and performance if the individual's mental state is not in harmony with his/her physical readiness.

A practice session begins with a period of warm-ups. Warming up is the process that produces the physiological changes that prepare the individual for strenuous physical activity. Warming up improves performance and prevents injury by two essential means:

1. A rehearsal of a skill or a complex series of skills before competition fixes the nature of the task that is to be repeated later in the individual's nervous and muscular system. Most athletes agree that a warm-up before the match will enhance their performance during a match. Most coaches use a warm-up before practice or match to psychologically prepare the team for practice or the match.
2. A warm-up before practice or match can prepare the body for the stress of the activity. Strength, quickness of movement, bodily coordination, and accuracy are improved as well as the increase of muscle and tendon elasticity that tends to lessen the possibility for muscular injury.

The conditioning program should focus on the areas of physiological change that enhances a player's skill. They are listed below:

- Increase in strength.
- Increase in muscular endurance.
- Increase in cardiovascular and cardio respiratory endurance.
- Increase in flexibility.
- Improve neuromuscular coordination.

### Conditioning Through the Activity Itself

There is increasing evidence to indicate that the greatest gain and benefits from warm-up procedures come from activities that imitate as closely as possible the movements that are to be used in the sport. Practices, drills, scrimmages and the competitive match itself provide the best conditioning for the sport. Physical development in this setting does not happen by chance, the coach must carefully plan for the best results.



The proponents of this type of conditioning contend that conditioning and skill development can be accomplished simultaneously, thus permitting skill development to be developed quickly. Some seasons are so short that separate conditioning programs are detrimental to skill development, yet conditioning is of prime importance to a competitive team.

### Length of Practice Session

Current research has not been helpful in defining the length of practice periods or the absolute amount of rest needed between practices for specific sports. There are some generally accepted and proven principles that should guide the coach when planning the practice sessions.

1. Spaced or distributed practice is superior to massed practice in many situations. How to distribute the practice for maximum efficiency is complicated by the nature of the task and the maturity of the learner.
2. The practice session workload is governed by work efficiency and the player's recuperative ability. In most practices, the obvious objective is to achieve the greatest total amount of work without developing fatigue that cannot be dissipated with normal rest by the next day. Some practice sessions will not be sufficiently strenuous for the coach to be concerned about the fatigue element.
3. It is generally accepted that planned practice sessions, scrimmages or games take up no more than six days per week. Early practice sessions occurring before the start of school may last from 2-4 hours in length. After the start of school, practice sessions should not last longer than 2 ½ hours. The purpose of the practice, the condition of the athletes, and the demands of the daily schedule determine the length of a practice session.

### General Content of Practice Session

The content of each practice session should be governed by the purposes of the specific session and condition of the participants. Each session should be planned with a concern for the participants and how they best learn. The following principles should be considered when planning a practice session:

- Practice should be satisfying and the learner should have a sense of accomplishment at the end of the session.
- For repetition to be effective, the learner must be rewarded or reinforced in some positive manner.
- The participants should be motivated by the challenges of the session.
- Controlled speed during the early stages of learning may produce best results if quickness and accuracy are to be involved in the finished performance.
- Practice scrimmage tempo should mirror the speed and tempo of an actual game.
- The more highly conditioned the athletes, the fewer the rest periods or breaks are needed in the actual practice session.
- Some learning can take place without actually performing the skill. While physical practice is better than mental practice, mental practice is better than no practice at

all. Thinking through the correct physical response, in combination with actual practice, may be the most effective learning combination for most individuals.

- If at all possible, keep everyone working.
- The most efficient learning practice will include a progression of drills that lead to a game simulation drill or scrimmage.

A general plan for a daily practice is described below.

**Team meeting:** This will be a short meeting to discuss any player-coach concerns, previous day's practice, scrimmage, or game and the objective of the day's practice.

**Team Warm-up:** This is a period of general exercises that involve the major muscle groups. Begin gradually with light work and then increase the workload. The final series of exercises should include the basic movements included in the game. If there is to be a long talk during practice, it should come at the very beginning. Short talks can be made during practice that acts as rest periods. Moments of instruction should never be ignored, but lengthy talks should never occur during practice. A team warm-up can include the following:

- Stretching
- Calisthenics
- Aerobic Exercises
- Plyometrics
- Basic skill movement drills without a ball
- Dives and rolls

**Practice of Fundamental Skills:**

1. Underhand Passing
2. Overhead Passing
3. Hitting
4. Serving
5. Blocking
6. Digs, dives and rolls
7. Emergency skills
8. Net retrieval
9. Communications

**Basic Tactics:**

1. Offensive Systems
2. Defensive Systems
3. Transition
4. Communications

**Team Scrimmages:**

1. Partial team
2. Full team

**Team Cool-down:** This is a period of tapering off from the hard physical workload and from intense

emotional involvement. Mild activity can facilitate this cooling down period. The coach should take this time to personally talk to individuals, offer encouragement, or patch up any disagreements. A team cool-down would include:

1. Light aerobic activity
2. Stretching
3. Team Cheer/Discussions

## **DEVELOPING PLAYING SYSTEMS**

The greatest challenge of coaching a volleyball team is melding the individual players into an effective team. The ultimate objective is one cohesive unit that can organize its collective talents in a tactical fashion against an opponent. A successful volleyball team relies on its ability to adjust and react to spontaneous situations as they occur. A coach must therefore develop systems of play that make use of the combined skills of the individual athletes.

### **Principles and Considerations**

1. Attempt tactically only what the players can execute technically correct.
2. Develop systems that are appropriate to the competitive levels of play.
3. Expose the team's strengths and camouflage the weaknesses. A coach must evaluate each member of the team to determine what assets and weaknesses that athlete brings to the team. Developing playing systems that best display the athletes' strengths and camouflages the weaknesses should be the goal when developing a playing system for a team.
4. The systems of play should be easy to practice. The amount of time required to learn the system should fit into the season schedule and into the allotted training time.
5. Each playing system should be accompanied by a consistent communication system. The most efficient elements of communication are one-syllable words in easily heard tones. Players should also be able to communicate with their hands, using different combinations and numbers of fingers to indicate particular plays.
6. The playing systems should incorporate tactical flexibility. A team should be able to adjust to the opponents strengths and weaknesses and the different game or match situations.

Playing systems are dynamic, that is, constantly evolving and changing. While brand new systems are rare, a team's playing system tends to develop along the lines of a coach's experience and the abilities of the individual athletes. If a coach tends to look at each rotation as a new offense and defense many tactical possibilities will occur.

When considering a volleyball playing system, a coach must decide upon how much specialization of individuals will be used. Young players should be able to sample all playing positions in volleyball. Later, as a player develops and discovers a specific role in the game, specialization will occur. Whatever the

decision, a coach should put the player into a position to experience the most learning success. A player's volleyball experience should be a positive experience. It is the coach's responsibility to make sure this happens.

In determining which playing system to be employed, a coach must keep in mind the strengths and weaknesses of each team member. A coach must also determine those elements that his/her team can control and those that either cannot be controlled or are a low priority. Those player skills such as setting, hitting, serve reception, and blocking and those team attributes such as serving order, player chemistry, and floor defense need to be considered. These are the key elements of the game for which a coach must plan.

A coach must select a playing system that maximizes the team's abilities. The following aspects will need to be taken into consideration when deciding upon a playing system.

### Setting

Setting is an intermediate contact. Without consistent, controlled setting there will be few terminal contacts from the attack. Setters must make split-second choices, often while chasing down a less-than-accurate pass, and have to execute precisely. Setting is a most difficult skill that requires outstanding athletic ability. Because of the importance of setting, a coach should develop the offensive system around the available setters and their level of abilities.

### Hitting

The actual spiking of the ball is a terminal attack. It is a glory skill. A strong attack can be a momentum changer. In serve-receive situations, a strong successful attack will cause a side-out, thus preventing the opponent from scoring. A strong attack will lead directly to points if the opponents cannot dig the spike.

### Serve Reception

A team can have the best setter in the world of volleyball. The spikers can be fearsome during warm-ups. A team can make the gym and the opponents shudder during pregame warm-ups. Yet, when the game begins, all the above is for not if a team cannot successfully pass the other team's serve. If the players pass the ball all over the gym, the setter becomes an average sprinter and the fearsome hitters become spectators. With a good serve-receive, the offensive system becomes useless.

### Serving Order

For the younger players, the serve can be a deadly weapon. No matter how large a lead, it will not be enough if the other team possesses players who consistently serve powerful and accurate serves. A coach must decide how effective is the team's serving game and whether good servers are preferable to good hitters, passers, or setters. Hopefully, all the players will be able to combine the skills of passing, setting, hitting and serving into being a consummate volleyball player. Reality, however, says this will not always be the situation. Once the players, develop a consistent, accurate serve, the coach must decide in what order the players will serve and weigh that service order against the other responsibilities of the players.

### Chemistry

The perfect team on paper, in terms of balanced responsibilities, can be shattered on the court if the athletes playing next to each other cannot get along. All the refined skills in the world cannot make up for teammates who do not communicate.

### Floor Defense

Most team systems are built around the offense. Yet the defense can score points. A coach's dilemma is whether to put good defenders on the court instead of big hitters. Also how important are ball handlers who never let a ball touch the floor without relentless pursuit? Just how important are those players who can shut down the opponent's attack? These are important considerations when determining a playing system and who plays within that system.

### Blocking

At the developmental level of volleyball skills, blocking is a minor skill. There is little need to form a block because strong attackers are generally inconsistent. As the skill levels increase, especially in the upper grades, every team develops good attackers that need to be stopped at the net. In order to block the other team's attack, players are taken from one defensive position (digger) and placed in another (blocker.) Do the digger to blocker trade-off favor your team's abilities? Knowing when to block and whom to block is a very important coaching decision. The selected volleyball system should be designed to coordinate the who's, where's, and when's of blocking.

## SPORT SAFETY

Safety awareness is as important to interscholastic sports as learning the skills of a sport. All instruction and coaching should include appropriate safety measures. It is always the responsibility of the coach to supervise the preparation of athletes for competition so that the possibility of injury is minimized. Athletes are as safe as the environment established by the coaches. The following is a basic list that can be used to contribute to a safe environment:

1. The coach will perform daily inspections of the facilities and equipment.
2. Report dangerous or damaged equipment to the proper authorities immediately. Do not permit the players to enter onto an unsafe court.
3. The facilities and equipment are clear of obstructions near the playing area.
4. The coach will have available an accurate and up-to-date squad roster with home telephone numbers and guardian's name.
5. The coach will always have available the athletes' emergency medical cards.
6. Rules, equipment, and courts are modified to adjust the physical demands of the sport to the appropriate level of the players.
7. The coach will instruct the players to warm-up properly prior to practice sessions and games.
8. Players are not allowed to play when they are injured.
9. Medical approval is required for participation following serious injury or illness.
10. Players are taught to treat bruises, sprains, and floor burns with ice packs to reduce swelling and pain.
11. Practice sessions are reasonable in length and planned to include brief rest periods and water breaks for players.
12. Game rules are properly enforced by coaches and officials.
13. Players are properly conditioned for practice sessions, games, and match play.
14. Precautions are taken to prevent over-heating, including the availability of water for players at all times.
15. Emphasis is given to safety and prevention of injury in teaching skills and all elements of team play.
16. Vehicles transporting teams meet safety standards and drivers are properly licensed adults.

17. Players are taught and encouraged to wear proper equipment such as kneepads, footwear, and gym clothes to prevent chafing, blisters, and floor burns.
18. Coaches are knowledgeable of a plan to respond to emergencies if they occur.
19. Players are properly matched for size and skill level.
20. First aid kits are available which include ice packs, elastic bandages, anti-bacterial spray or soap, band-aids, tape, square bandages, gauze, and tape cutters or scissors.

Coaching styles have much to do with establishing a safe environment for players. The following suggestions can be used by coaches to help prevent injuries during practice.

- Be creative and flexible, but be prepared and well organized for practice sessions and matches.
- Design drills to meet the special needs of each player and the team.
- Plan and adhere to a practice outline. Include warm-ups, drills, team meetings, and scrimmages.
- Involve all players throughout practice. Make sure all players have a specific responsibility during a drill. Provide as many teachable opportunities within a drill as possible. Keep to a minimum the time spent standing, sitting, or waiting in line.
- Plan instruction and competition by taking into account individual differences in skill and experience. Teach skills in their proper progression.
- Create game-like situations during practice. The better-prepared athletes are for games, the better the players will play and perform during a match.

Despite all of the above mentioned precautions, some injuries will occur. The athletes expect the coach to be able to deal with the more common injuries. Most injuries will be minor problems such as bruises, blisters, cuts, floor burns, and sore muscles. But the coach must also be able to recognize serious injuries and know correct emergency procedures. The following procedure is recommended for coaches when giving emergency treatment to an injured athlete:

1. Administer first-aid.
2. Notify parents or guardians for instruction for a serious injury.
3. Call ambulance if needed.
4. Coach, faculty member, or parent to accompany injured player to hospital.
5. Stay at hospital with player until a parent or guardian arrives.
6. Brief the parent or guardian on what has taken place and then return to practice/match.
7. Make no commitment as to school paying bills.

8. Inform building principal and athletic director as soon as it is convenient.
9. Follow-up later by contacting the player's parents or guardians as to the player's progress.

In summary, if an injury occurs and a coach is in doubt of its seriousness, render necessary first-aid but do not move the athlete. Summon professional assistance. Never send a hurt player back into practice or a game. A minor injury without proper treatment can easily become more serious. Give immediate first-aid assistance, and then refer the players to the school or family physician or the local emergency room if follow-up care is required. When returning an injured athlete to activity, check that the player can perform all the game skills without pain. If in doubt, ask the athlete to obtain a medical clearance from a physician.



## COMMUNICATION IN VOLLEYBALL

A factor in any program's success or failure is the ability of the coach and his/her team to communicate with each other. Successful coaches know how to communicate effectively. Coaches should keep in mind the following three suggestions when talking with their players:

1. Communication involves sending messages and receiving messages. Many coaches are good at providing information, but poor at listening to what players have to say. Coaches should LISTEN to their players.
2. Speaking, or verbal messages, is only one form of communication. Many times non-verbal messages, such as facial expressions of joy, sadness or anger and behaviors of kindness are stronger than anything a coach can say. When talking with players, remember that HOW you express yourself is often as important as WHAT you do. How a coach talks with his players is heard before what you say.
3. Successful coaches, faced with the pressures and excitement of competitive sports, think carefully about what they say and the emotions they communicate. Inappropriate comments or gestures can only harm the player-coach relationships.

A coach can improve his communication skills by adopting a positive approach. The positive approach emphasizes praise and rewards to strengthen desirable behavior. This approach not only helps athletes to value themselves, but also enhances a coach's credibility. In contrast, the negative approach uses punishment and criticism to eliminate undesirable behavior. The negative approach increases fear of failure, lowers the player's self-esteem and lessens the coach's credibility.

The positive approach can be put into practice by a coach following these suggestions:

1. When an athlete performs a skill, even if he/she commits several errors, look for something specific in the performance worthy of praise "Look for something right!" Scolding and berating players reduces the player's feelings of self-worth.
2. Reward the players' performance and efforts regardless of the game results. The coach or players cannot control many factors that determine the outcome. These include the performance of the other team, the calls by the officials, the quality of the facilities, and "luck."
3. Reward frequently when players are first learning a skill. Reward occasionally once the skill is well learned.
4. Reward small improvement. Some players may never become great players.
5. Look for opportunities to praise players for showing desirable social and emotional skills. Good sportsmanship, teamwork, and cooperativeness deserve to be noticed.
6. Choose carefully how to reward the players. Use trophies, patches, ribbons, and specific certificates

as end-of-season rewards. However, small rewards based upon meeting game performance skills should be used. Athletes should learn that playing sports brings its own rewards: a sense of accomplishment, pride and a feeling of competence.

Every young person is a potential winner, even though they may disguise themselves as a "loser." Don't let their appearance fool you. Coaches should help the young athletes reach their full potential by "catching them doing something right." Do this enough times and these young athletes will feel good about themselves and produce good game results.

### Misbehavior

A coach can use the positive when dealing with a player's misbehavior. One technique is to ignore the behavior, neither reward nor punish it. This approach is usually effective when an athlete is misbehaving to seek attention. Ignoring the behavior teaches the player that unacceptable behavior does not gain recognition.

Sometimes, though, a coach cannot wait for the misbehavior to extinguish itself through non-reward. If a player is spoiling practice or endangering herself or others, a coach must take immediate and prudent action. Take the player aside, tell her that the misbehavior must stop and what form of punishment to expect if she chooses to continue with the inappropriate behavior. One warning is sufficient. If the misconduct persists, administer the punishment. Always use punishment sparingly; it is the behavior, not the person, that is being punished. A good method is to simply remove the player from the activity. Never use physical punishment. For most young athletes, sitting out or a demotion in playing status or time is sufficient punishment to eliminate continued misbehavior. When the punished player returns, try hard to make her once again feel like a valued member of the team.

### Goal Setting

The positive approach in player-coach communications can also be used for setting individual or team goals. Goal setting should be done by all teams. Coaches and athletes need to take the time to think about what they want to be, what they want to do, what they want to have, and where they want to go in order to create goals. Thus, goals are important because they focus an individual's and a team's energy towards desired outcomes.

Coaches and athletes, by their very nature, are goal oriented, Unfortunately, they will pursue negative goals as well as positive goals. Setting positive, practical, realistic, and attainable objectives and developing a plan of action to attain those goals can lead to individual satisfaction and team success. Continued success will enable coaches and players to think of themselves as worthy and deserving of victory. This process develops the "winning attitude" that all coaches desire in their teams.

Below is a plan that will enable a coach to guide his/her athletes in developing goals and creating a strategy for achieving each goal:

1. Determine what your goals are.
  - school

- team
  - individual
2. Write your goals down, positively and specifically. It is important that goals be communicated to the sub-conscious mind positively and specifically. The sub-conscious mind "directs" one's goal achieving efforts and must have clear goals to be effective and efficient. Mental repetition of the positive, specific goal (mental imagery) implants the desired outcome firmly in the sub-conscious mind enabling an individual to draw upon the mind's great power.
  3. Balance the goals. Balance among an individual's school, team, and personal goals assures that all aspects of life that are important and enjoyable will receive attention.
  4. Place the goals in order of priority. Some goals are more important than others. An individual should concentrate her attention and energies on achieving these goals. This is known as "singleness of purpose."
  5. Develop an action plan for each goal. Establishing goals does not alone guarantee success. A plan of action is needed to guide an individual's or team's effort. A plan of action should include:
    - Tasks to be performed.
    - The person responsible for each task. The person whose goal it is, and who is ultimately responsible. Frequently the assistance of another person is required in achieving a sub-task.
    - Identify potential obstacles. Special preparation, avoidance, and circumvention of obstacles aids success.
    - Setting target dates. A specific date for the completion of tasks and sub-tasks is a strong motivational tool.
    - Visualize the goals mentally and physically. Accomplish the goals mentally. Try to see oneself accomplishing the goal. "Feel" the success of completing the goal. Visualization is a strong stimulus to action.
    - Review the goals each morning. Set the day's priorities.
    - Reward for successfully accomplishing a goal. It is important to reinforce accomplishments along the way towards attaining a goal. Reward achievements with something that recognizes the accomplishments and stimulates further efforts.

**REMEMBER:**

- \* Think it!
- \* Believe it!!
- \* Visualize it!!!
- \* Become it!!!!

## GAME PREPARATION AND COACHING

Two of the greatest challenges of coaching are the preparation of athletes for competition and helping the players adjust to the various situations that occur during a game. A coach needs to prepare his/her athletes for the competitive experience as well as guide and aid his/her players through this experience. This is done so that the players can perform to their potential as well as ensure that the players' participation is a positive learning experience.

### Team Preparation for Match Conditions

A coach should prepare his/her team for competition as early as possible by creating game-like situations during practice. A coach should inform the players of the conditions of the court (lights, floor, spectators, etc.) The coach should create practice games to check the form of the team, to evaluate the abilities of the players, to achieve the required tactical plan and to make sure the players are able to execute the game plan. It is during these intra-squad scrimmages that the "first six" and the needed substitutes are selected. During these preparatory games, a coach should make any changes to improve the tactical plan and, if necessary, change players. A hard or stressful practice the day before a game should be avoided. Rather an intense and sharp practice to review the basic skills and game plan should be used.

### Meeting of the Team before the Match

The coach should arrange a meeting of the complete team before the match. This meeting should be short, clear, and encourage the players to give their best efforts. Using a few but noteworthy words, the coach sums up the importance of the match, the goals of the team, and repeat the principle points of the game plan. Any player questions should be answered at this time.

### Pre-Match Warm-up

The team should arrive at the host school not later than one hour before the beginning of the match. The players change into their uniforms, etc. prior to the team warm-up. The players should begin their preparations at least thirty minutes before the match. A gentle warm-up consisting of stretching exercises should take about ten minutes. The last twenty minutes prior to a match are pre-determined by state, national and league rules: four minutes of ball handling drills by both teams, then each team has the court for six minutes for hitting, etc. while the other team is off the court continuing ball handling drills, and the final four minutes is used by both teams for serving. Without a sufficient warm-up, the players will not be able to give their best performance especially during the first game.

The Warm-up period is also used to get the players acclimated to the court and its surroundings. The mental warm-up is as important as the physical warm-up as all drills should increase the players' self-confidence. The players should "break a sweat." Team spirit must be emphasized.

### Pre-Match Coin Toss (Choice of Side or Serve)

During the warm-up, the court, the ceiling, and the area surrounding the court should be evaluated to determine if playing on one side of the court has an advantage over the other side.

A team should choose first serve if:

- the opponents are poor in serve reception.
- it has a safe and effective serve.
- both teams are equal.
- it has a good defense and may score first points from defensive play.

A team should choose side if:

- one side of the court gives some advantage, or the other side of the court gives some disadvantage such as lighting, clearance above and around the court, dark background, sun glare, etc.
- at the beginning of a rally scoring game (the team on the offense is always at the advantage.)

While warming up, during opening ceremonies, and introductions, coaches and players must give a convincing demonstration that they intend to leave the court as winners.

Just before the players take to the court, the coach calls the players together and gives the last advice and orders.

### During the Game

In the early stages of the game, a coach must determine if the players are capable of accomplishing the game plan. The coach also evaluates each player to determine their physical and emotional readiness. The coach must also determine the other team's strengths and weaknesses and inform the players of any changes in game plan.

During the first game, the coach evaluates the physical and emotional readiness of each player and must decide to substitute or wait. A coach needs to let his/her players know that he/she has confidence in their abilities. In some matches, it may take the first game or longer before the team jells. The coach should never show that there is a loss of confidence in the team. The tactical plan should not be altered unless it definitely will not work.

Attitude is important. Both teams have a chance to win. A coach should not allow any player to give up, to stop trying for any ball. One player's lack of commitment will ruin the team's performance and morale. Volleyball is a game of momentum. A game is not over until the last point has been played. In most matches, a weaker team always has an opportunity to win. The players can only take advantage of this if they are prepared to make the sacrifices to do so. If a team believes it can win, then no matter what happens, it will have the team spirit and self-confidence to take advantage of any break down by the opponents. It is the responsibility of the coach to encourage and guide his/her team through these opportunities.

There are many critical points or psychological barriers that occur throughout the course of a game. The first barrier is from three to four points, the next from ten to eleven points, and the last from thirteen to fifteen points. It is very important at what point a team passes through these barriers. A coach must try to ensure his/her team passes through these barriers first. If the opponents are first, then a coach must encourage his team to fight back and get into the game. This can be accomplished by breaking the opponent's rhythm due to changing tactics, calling time-outs, making substitutions or delaying or speeding up the game. On the other hand, if a team has the initiative and momentum and is scoring point after point, that coach should not do anything to slow down his/her team. That coach needs to be careful so that his/her team does not lose the initiative, thus permitting the opponent to get back into the game.

### System Variations

During the game, there will occur many situations that cannot be foreseen or effectively dealt with using the prepared team system. In these situations (due to the opponent's reaction tactics) a team needs to have different variations or improvisations of the basic system to combat the opponent's tactics with success.

As much as possible, these variations and improvisations should be consistent with the basic system used by the team and abilities of the players. These variations should be prepared in theory and practice and gradually these changes will become part of the overall team system. In addition, players need to be instructed on how to adapt their individual techniques to the opponent's offense and defense and be able to improvise on the court. The more experienced and skillful the players, the better they will be able to solve these situations successfully.

### When to Call a Time Out or Make a Substitution

A coach should call a time out or make a substitution if:

- A team loses more than three consecutive points.
- The team becomes disorganized or confused or players are out of position.
- The team is psychologically upset or losing their morale.
- The opponents have changed their tactics with success.
- The team cannot carry out the predetermined game plan.
- The players are not reacting quickly to the opponent's tactics or not showing determination.
- A coach wants to stop the opponent's rhythm or interrupt the flow of the opponent's game.
- The opponents have reached one of the psychological barriers first and his/her team is two or more points behind.
- A player is tired, injured, or has lost his/her concentration.
- A player does not follow the tactical plan or instructions.
- The coach wants to enter a substitute player with special skills or abilities to strengthen the front or backcourt play.

### The Use of Time Outs

There are only two time outs permitted for each team in each game. A coach should not waste them. The coach should prepare notes prior to speaking to the players during a time-out. As soon as either side calls the time out, the players should meet at the sideline. Everyone must listen. The coach should not tolerate quarrels, arguing between players, or discussion.

During the time out, the coach should be concise and constructive, not destructive. If the team or some players are playing badly, a coach should still find "something positive" to say. A coach should not describe in detail a team's or player's faults, rather a coach should provide instructions on how to improve a team's performance or player's techniques. Remember that players need advice that can be applied now, not a training session. If the team formation is wrong or needs adjustment, then the players should be told the changes and adjustments as quickly and briefly as possible.

The coach should aim to improve the team's performance by giving advice on how to enhance performance during a time out. A coach should not shout. A coach talks calmly and optimistically, giving advice or orders, reassuring the team and giving confidence. A coach who complains, becomes angry, or loses his temper is demoralizing to a team.

It is of great importance to a coach to find the personal approach to each player in relation to each player's type of personality. Depending on the game situations, a coach should try to relax the players in order to take the pressure off them or a coach may need to "light a fire underneath them" to increase the desire to win.

Finally the coach should check to see that the players use the advice or instructions given during a time out. If not, then substitute at once.

### How to Substitute

As the coach watches the first six players, he/she must evaluate their technical and tactical performance as well as their attitudes and spirit. If a player does not give his/her full effort every play, that player will affect the overall team performance and a substitution must be made.

A coach should not change players if his/her team has the initiative and is scoring points. Follow the proverb, "Don't change a winning team." Often a coach tries to substitute and give reserve players a chance to play when the team is ahead and has momentum. Such a move can disrupt a team's floor chemistry and break the momentum causing a game to be lost. For the same reason, it is not useful to substitute players too often as the team can lose the flow of play and the players could lose their concentration or confidence. However, if a coach must substitute, young, inexperienced, and excitable players should not be used in critical or deciding moments. Rather, these players should be given their chance against a known weaker team or if the team has an insurmountable lead. This will permit these players to compete without added mental pressure and they will be able to demonstrate their skills. A coach should not replace these players after a mistake so as to not discourage them.

When a coach does substitute, the substitute should receive instructions from the coach and then enter the game under the prescribed rules of play. After the substitution has been made, the coach should tell the replaced player the reason for the substitution and offer some positive comment based upon the player's performance or instruction as to what the player should do to improve his/her performance.

Sometimes it is better that an essential player (captain, floor leader, experienced player, etc.) is not substituted for if that player is having problems. The substitute may have better technique but may harm the physical and mental psych of the player or upset the chemistry of the team.

Substitution of players is a difficult decision to be made by a coach. Often times, there just isn't enough time to weigh the advantages or disadvantage of a substitution that isn't planned. This is where a coach's experience and knowledge takes effect. For the younger coaches, remember that this experience and knowledge of when and whom to substitute most likely came from a previous mistake that is not forgotten by the coach.



## GAME EVALUATION

To guide his/her team successfully, a coach needs objective information on the performance of his/her players. The best way to get such information is from statistical game analysis. There are a number of reasons for a coach to use statistical charting. The three best are:

1. To determine strengths and weaknesses of the team
2. To determine strengths and weaknesses of the players for selecting starting line-ups
3. To determine what skills and tactics that need to be addressed in practice sessions.

Since a coach is not able to record every action of each player during a game, a coach should let an assistant coach or players on the bench record information. They may use a simple system that observes the players' actions and record the results on prepared sheets (Positive-Negative Chart) or by using a tape recorder. A coach can then use the player and team statistical analysis, compiled after the match, to assist in making decisions for the next match. Films or video records of match play are also invaluable resources if available. However, statistics and video films are only aids and cannot replace the commentary of the coach and his/her intuition.

Right after a match, whether the team wins or loses, the coach should offer a few well-chosen words. A coach must be careful not to lose his/her temper if the team has played badly. Rather, it is more important to emphasize what was done correctly. The next day, once the coach has had a chance to prepare a proper evaluation, the team and coaches should meet together in a quiet place to discuss the match. Everyone should be involved. Players should be given the opportunity to evaluate and interpret their performance. The coach then gives his/her interpretation.

It is not necessary to discuss all aspects of the match. The coach should list some positive and negative conclusions concerning the team's ability to carry out the tactical plan. All conclusions should be given with the idea to improve the team's and players' skills and tactics. No one single player should be singled out for negative criticism.

During a post-match evaluation the following should be discussed:

- The success of the players in carrying out the tactical game plan.
- How each player fulfilled her part of the plan.
- The spirit and involvement of the team and of each player.
- The major element in the victory or defeat.
- The evaluation of the behavior of the players.
- The resulting conclusions relating to the next match and the required training.

Again during the course of discussion, a coach should not dwell on the lack of technique or the faults of the players. Rather the team and coach should concentrate on their interpretation of the results for a better performance during the next match.

## COACHING TIPS

### Communicating Effectively

We need to make sure we communicate with our players and parents effectively on and off the court -- as well as with other coaches, to learn from those more experienced and to teach those who are less. Communication is vital to every program's success.

#### 4 Words to Eliminate in Coaching: But - You - Can't - Try

One thing to remember when it comes to communicating, the perception of the listener is what eventually determines the outcome, not the intention of the speaker. With just a little effort, we can improve our communication skills, get our point across more effectively, and avoid bruising of those fragile athlete egos along the way.

When attempting to deliver constructive criticism, we often sever the construction from the criticism by inserting a "but" between the two. "That was a great effort, but next time try to get the ball to the setter." All the player remembers is "Next time get the ball to the setter." thus the praise has been lost. By connecting the two with a more positive twist, both the praise and the instruction are absorbed, "That was a great effort, and next time we'll definitely get a swing on it."

Just as we tell our players, "There is no I in Team." As coaches we must remember, "There is no U in Team, either." Like it or not, as coaches, we are a part of our teams as well. Using you can implant an invisible barrier between a coach and players. By getting down off our pedestal and talking with our team, athletes feel less like they're being lectured to and more like they're being helped. "We need to make sure we're down low in a defensive posture facing the hitter when they're hitting."

The power of positive thinking can be a truly effective weapon. Conversely, negative thoughts can bring down even the most powerful juggernaut. As Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right." It's rather easy to tell a player not to do something incorrectly ("We can't serve in the net anymore!"). It's much tougher, and our challenge as coaches, to tell them how to do things correctly ("Concentrate on a good toss and solid contact, and we can get every serve in."). Cutting out can't (and also don't, won't, never, etc.), helps us to concentrate on the positive and eliminate the negative. How many times has a player asked, "Can you tell me what I'm doing wrong?" By using more positive phrasing in our coaching, players will soon be asking, "Can you tell me what to do to get it right?"

The old adage, "All you can do is try," really has a defeatist attitude. "The least you can do is try. The most you can do is succeed." By telling an athlete "Try to get to your defensive base after every attack," they now have the out of taking one step towards their base and saying, "Well, I tried." They are correct. They did try and they accomplished what we asked of them, they did not, however, ever get to their defensive base. By saying, "We need to get to defensive base after every attack," we are implying the necessity to try, but we have also raised the expectations and goals for our players, and athletes will normally rise (or fall) to meet those expectations. In those instances where we feel "try" needs to be used, try using "attempt" or "strive".

### Positive Discipline Guidelines

Minimize verbalizing. If we're talking, our athletes are less likely to be involved and participating. Effective communication is based as much on our effective listening skills as on verbal skills. We need to talk with our athletes, not at them.

Establish authority early. In other words, be prepared; know what needs to be done; confront discipline problems early before they get out of hand. Relate in a warm, natural way, but without ever becoming a peer.

Avoid screaming. Fair, confident requests or statements are usually far more effective than violent, threatening demands.

Avoid sarcasm. Show the same respect that you wish to receive.

Get to know all of the athletes by name and develop an understanding of their individual and collective personalities as quickly as possible. The best coaching behaviors are those that are clearly directed at specific individuals.

Strive to view problems from the athlete's perspective. Always keep in mind the possibility that something we are doing may be the cause. Assume initially that there is a justifiable reason.

Avoid public criticism. Although public praise can be very effective, public criticism is usually a poor choice of action. It frequently forces the athlete to react defensively, which creates a worse problem than the one we first sought to correct.

Develop a direct and sincere approach to praise. If an athlete is told what is good and why, they are more likely to repeat that behavior. A mere "OK" or "good" really says nothing and soon has little or no effect on athletes. However, don't give praise when it's undeserved, it must be an earned reward.

Have a sense of humor, but don't make learning a joke or use humor that depreciates our athletes or ourselves.

Be enthusiastic and encourage enthusiasm.

Be fair with attention, praise, and opportunities. Fairness doesn't necessarily mean equal, but rather that every athlete has an equal opportunity to earn such attention or praise within their own skill or maturity level.

Give our athletes our complete attention when speaking with them. Such attention is a sign of respect for both the athlete and what that athlete has to say. Those who wish to receive respect must be willing to give it, also.

Say "no" without feeling guilty; Say "yes" without feeling resentment. When we're uncertain what to decide say, "I'll think about it and get back to you..." then follow through on your deadline.

Say "I'm sorry", "I don't know", or "I made a mistake" when it's appropriate. Acknowledging errors without being apologetic will usually enhance our credibility rather than detracting from it.

Empower our athletes. Delegate responsibility in doses that our athletes can handle and from which they can learn. Most athletes will live up to our expectations if our expectations are based on a realistic assessment of their skills and maturity.

Be predictable. Predictability doesn't mean that our behavior is always the same, it means that our reactions to our athletes' behavior is consistent.

Be a model when it counts -- when the pressure's on.

Discipline quickly and briefly without holding a grudge. Welcome back the athlete as an equal once the punishment has been administered.

Use corrective behaviors that are different from the ordinary. Silence, a sharp command, a scowl or a simple clap of the hands are all effective means of correcting misbehavior in the proper circumstances, as long as they are not used repeatedly.

### Legal Responsibilities of Coaching

The legal responsibilities of coaching are generally defined in 3 areas: supervision, instruction, and facilities & equipment.

Any responsibility for the safety and welfare of an athlete that a coach may have is a legal duty.

1. Duty to properly instruct. Knowledge of and teaching of proper and correct techniques is important, however so is teaching skills in a progressive manner. In other words, we must build from the simple to the complex in teaching skills. We need to learn to walk before we can run.
2. Duty to warn of inherent dangers in a sport. A general rule is that a person cannot assume the risk in a danger he does not know.
3. Duty to provide proper supervision. The duty in supervision is a vast one. It includes inadequate supervision as well as lack of supervision. Generally, less experienced athletes require more supervision.
4. Duty to provide a safe environment. Facilities need to be properly designed, constructed, maintained, and used. If a facility is used for activities other than what it was designed, one must be able to justify why and how it is safe for that activity.

Protective equipment must be mandatory when required for safety. It should also be free from

defects and maintained in good condition. Athletes need to be warned of the dangers of misuse of the equipment.

Jewelry of any sort must be removed. It can permanently scar the wearer or a teammate in even minor collisions. No gum chewing should be allowed during training. The risk of the gum ending up in the windpipe when performing many of the skills is simply too great.

The playing area should be regularly swept and checked for safety. Hustling athletes should be allowed to concentrate on the ball, not dangerous obstacles lurking just outside the court area. Make sure sweats and other articles are well off the court, or on chairs or benches.

Keep towels available to mop up wet spots on the floor. Make sure shaggers do their job in drills to keep balls out from under foot.

Use common sense and make the sport as safe as it can be.

5. Duty to provide health care. This includes pre-injury care (medical exam, conditioning, proper training), emergency injury care (first aid & CPR training and emergency protocols), and post injury care (rehabilitation & returning a player to competition safely).
6. Duty to teach and enforce rules and regulations. Any rules of the game (national, regional, and club) must be taught and enforced. Rules that are not enforced are not rules at all.
7. Duty to safely transport athletes. This includes transportation to and from practices as well as tournaments.
8. Duty to follow due process. Athletes have fundamental rights guaranteed to all U.S. citizens under the 14th Amendment.

## SIX KEYS FOR MOTIVATING ATHLETES

From the book *The Master Teacher*

First to motivate athletes, just telling them what to do will work with some, but it will not work with a gym full. We, as coaches, must always teach athletes how to perform their skills. Also we must tell them how well they are performing their skills at the present time. In addition, we must show our athletes precisely how we want the skills to be done in the future. These steps take time and, for some, individualized instruction. But they are vital when it comes to initiating motivation. If we simply instruct, correct, or evaluate without taking these actions, we may actually decrease some athletes' interest and motivation.

Second, motivating athletes includes refusing to accept poor performance as "the best they can do." Once we allow ourselves to accept poor performance, motivating becomes twice as difficult. We don't have to rant and rave about poor performance. Neither do we have to act disgusted. But we don't have to react in silence either. To motivate, we must say something--directly to the athlete. Fortunately, there are many ways and means of accomplishing this task. These techniques range from mentoring to giving a formal reprimand. Regardless of the approach we use, we are relating to the athlete that standards are important. We are teaching the athlete that standards count. Above all, we are communicating that the athlete is capable of performing at a higher level-- and this kind of communication is motivating.

Third, if we want to motivate all athletes most of the time, we must never take good work for granted--or let it go unnoticed. Rather we must recognize the effort given. We should glorify the work, when it is done in satisfactory as well as superior ways. Coaches may think, "Everyone knows what is a great effort." That is not true. If we want to motivate athletes to higher levels of athletic achievement, we must explain what we exactly want from the athlete in terms of observable and measurable levels of performance. Then explain why that superior level of effort is important.

Fourth, a basic key to motivating is giving positive reinforcement extensively to ALL athletes to promote and encourage improvement. To be the most effective, however, we must personalize positive reinforcement. We must be specific in our praise. Our athletes must know precisely what the coaches are talking about. The athletes must know that we are honest and sincere. And, we must thank the athletes for showing improvement. In the process, we must remember that what motivates one athlete may turn another athlete off. Therefore, we must find the type of praise and recognition that is motivational to the individual--and use it.

Fifth, a basic key to motivating includes working to build a personal relationship with each athlete--on the level at which the athlete is ready to begin. This means treating each individual as real, live human beings who are unique. When your motivational approach recognizes, appreciates, and respects each athlete's individuality, then the athletes are most apt to respond positively to both your words and actions. When you develop a personal relationship with your team, you will be the first to notice that you praise, correct and motivate differently--and with more success.

Sixth, to motivate athletes remember that you can't separate your respect for the task at hand from your athletes' point of view. You can't talk before you listen. And you can't offer advice and give directions until you have listened and gathered information. That is, you can't make these mistakes and motivate students. If you listen first, you will motivate much more effectively. We know that people cooperate with those who listen to them. And we know people aren't as likely to follow those who don't listen to them.

## **ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD TEAM**

### **SHARE A COMMON GOAL**

The team (players and staff) must know that they are all in search of a common goal. They must give all of themselves in a relentless pursuit of that goal. They must trust and firmly believe that all members of the team will do whatever it takes to reach that goal.

### **TRUSTS IN EACH OTHER**

If there is doubt that a coach or player isn't committed to the goal, it tears down the strength of the team. We must have a trust and faith in our teammates and coaches.

### **PASSION FOR EXCELLENCE**

We must have a passion for excellence. This passion needs to extend to every contact with the ball. This passion is at the heart of a strong work ethic in all areas. It should drive us to improve daily.

### **GOOD COMMUNICATION**

A good team has good communication. There is constant talk about what has just happened what is likely to happen and what or how each individual will respond in certain situations. On a good team the setter and the hitter are sure to compliment the passer if a good pass was made. The hitter compliments the setter when a good set is made. If the setter makes a good set off a tight pass the passer compliments the setter and lets the setter know that the next pass will be kept off the net to make it easier. The hitters and setters need to give each other constant feedback. A tendency might be that the hitters only give feedback when they do not get a kill. Neither the setter nor hitters can assume that the other knows what was wrong - it must be communicated in a civil fashion. Screaming "higher" at the setter when the ball is set too low is a command - not communication.

Communication off the court is equally important. Whatever talk there is outside the gym needs to be constructive. If complaining takes place, it is the responsibility of whoever might be listening to not allow it to continue. Talking about a problem with someone with the goal of finding a solution is constructive.

### **PLAYS WITH EMOTION**

A good team plays with emotion There is a celebration after winning a point or side out regardless of how it was won. Teammates draw strength from one another.

### **FEEDS OFF EACH OTHER**

A good team learns to "feed off each other." A team player will still give to the team, even if she isn't necessarily having a great day performing. If I have not executed a skill perfectly, but my teammates have somehow made a good play out of it, I need to rejoice in our good play, instead of sulking about my error. I can often "make up" for my skill error by the way I choose to act about it. I can always control my attitude. One of the great things about being on a team is the fact that I have teammates that can pick up the slack if I have a bad day. In an individual sport, if I'm not performing well, my only hope is that my opponent has a worse day. If I learn to feed off my teammates, I can often work through the trouble spots and turn my performances into a positive one.



**LOVES WHAT IT'S DOING**

On a good team, people take part because they love what they're doing. They take part because there is nothing that they would rather be doing.

**EXTRA WORK**

Players on a good team are eager to put in extra work. They want areas of weakness in their game to become areas of strength. They look forward to any extra time that they might have to work on these areas.

**STRONG LEADERSHIP**

Leadership is a must. The staff and other players respect the leader(s). A leader helps form a communication bridge between players and coaches. She is able to head off problems before they become issues, and take issues from players to coaches (and vice versa) if necessary.

A leader sets a standard of excellence for others to follow. She is consistent in her attitude and actions, on and off the court.

"Success has always been easy to measure. It is the distance between the team's origins and the team's final achievement...." Michael Korda