

Volleyball Drills for Champions

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Editor



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Drill Finder

● = Primary drill function
○ = Secondary drill function

Drill #	Drill	Serving	Passing	Setting	Hitting	Blocking	Digging	# of Players	# of Balls
1	Serving-Wall	●						1	1
2	Serve Under Elastic	●						1	1
3	Serve and Accelerate	●					○	1	1
4	Target Serving	●						1	20
5	Progressive Serving With Follow	●						1	1
6	Serve and Run for 21	●						1	1
7	Four-Before-Two Serving	●						2	1
8	Serving "Horse"	●						2	2
9	Serving for Points	●						2	4
10	Around-the-World Serving	●						1	6-8
11	Platform Orientation		●					2	1
12	Points of the Compass		●					1	6-8
13	Warm-Up Passing		●					1	2 carts
14	Rapid-Fire Passing		●					3	2-3
15	Zig-Zag Passing		●					2	1
16	Passing Wave	○	●					12	6-8
17	Trigger-Point Passing	○	●					3	1
18	Passing for Options	○	●					8	6-8
19	Three-Person Pass Stat	○	●					3	12
20	Servers Versus Passers	○	●					2	8
21	Points in a Row	○	●					3	2 carts
22	Three-Point Passing Game	○	●					2	2 carts
23	Five-Person Free Ball			●				5	2-4
24	Pinwheel Setting			●				3	6-8
25	Crosscourt Setting Weave			●				3	1
26	Fan Drill			●				2	2-6
27	Setting Off Defense		○	●				2	4-6
28	Set and Cover			●			○	2	4-6
29	Back to Front, Front to Back			●				1	20
30	Decision Setting			●				2	6-8
31	Setter Pressure Isolated			●	○			4	20
32	Setting Situation Plus Five			●				1	12
33	Setter Versus Blocker			●		○		5	12
34	Setting Choices		○	●	○	○	○	8	2
35	Three-Step, "3" Tempo Hitting			○	●			2	12
36	Line/Crosscourt Attack Competition			○	●			6	30

Drill #	Drill	Serving	Passing	Setting	Hitting	Blocking	Digging	# of Players	# of Balls
37	Multiple-Toss Hitting				●			1	12
38	"3" Ball Transition Hitting			○	●		○	3	6-8
39	Two Vs. Two Pepper Over the Net		○	○	●		○	4	6-8
40	Over-the-Net Pepper		○	○	●			6	4-6
41	Left Vs. Left Attacking			○	●	○		4	20
42	All Balls to the Middle		○	○	●			12	4
43	Transition Attack One Vs. One				●	○		3	12
44	Crosscourt Attacking			○	●	○	○	10	12
45	Plus Seven		○	○	●	○		8	12
46	Plus One, Minus Two		○	○	●	○	○	8	4-6
47	Partner Block and Cover					●		2	12
48	Block With Elastic					●		1	6-8
49	Read the Hitter					●		2	6-8
50	Block, Reload, and Block					●		6	40
51	Three-Person Block					●		9	4-6
52	Box Blocking					●		1	20
53	Block Off Boxes					●		3	20
54	Blast the Seam				○	●		3	20
55	Middle Blocker Movement				○	●		3	8
56	Blocking Series					●		6	20
57	Read the Setter				○	●		9	12
58	Five Vs. Five			○	○	●	○	10	2
59	Shadow Blocking					●		2	8
60	Dig Under Net						●	1	12
61	Acceleration						●	3	20
62	Left Side Hitter Plus Five						●	9	12
63	Middle-Angle-Line Digging						●	4	12
64	Dig and Touch						●	3	20
65	Dig-Tip-Chase						●	1	12
66	Columbus Digging			○			●	3	20
67	Individual Base to Defense			○			●	3	6-8
68	Team Base to Defense			○	○	○	●	12	6-8
69	Four Diggers With a Setter						●	5	20
70	Crosscourt Pepper			○	○		●	2	6-8
71	Fifteen Digs			○	○		●	8	6-8
72	Outside Hitter Vs. Outside Hitter	○	○	○	○	○	●	12	4

Introduction

Drills are like recipes. With the right ingredients and directions, anyone can cook, but it takes a master chef—or a master coach—to mix and vary ingredients to suit the needs of different individuals. No drill will work if it isn't modified to fit the ability level of the players. A drill that works in our gym may not work in yours. But with modifications (such as tossing the ball to the setter instead of using live passers), you can make the drill work in your gym with your players.

We have all put our players through drills that have failed. For some reason, our players did not improve. Perhaps the drill failed because of poor organization or unrealistic expectations. Or maybe our goals were not specific enough. A successful drill includes four key factors: a purpose, a goal, competition, and feedback.

1. *Purpose*: Why are you doing the drill? Drills should be designed to improve skill by changing behavior. Prior to each drill, explain to the players exactly where their focus should be. (For example, "Now we'll try the 'Dig-Tip-Chase' drill. This drill helps us to get better at pursuing balls.")
2. *Goal*: Beyond warmups, each drill should have a goal, a specific number of executions needed before the drill ends. By making the drill goal-oriented, players know exactly what is expected of them. For example, in "Trigger-Point Passing" the goal of the drill is to work your way to the target position.
3. *Competition*: How do you get players to get into a drill? Have them compete. When put in a competitive environment, players will work hard to win, or in some cases work hard just so they don't lose. At the same time as they are competing, they are also practicing the specific skill. Watch how a drill can change once you make it a competition. "Serve and Run for 21" is a perfect example of a simple drill based on competing.
4. *Feedback*: What is your role during the drill? Primarily, your job is to teach. Provide the players feedback, both on their execution and their effort. Your job doesn't end when the drill begins—it just starts. Your focus should be directed at the purpose of the goal: the skill or skills you are trying to improve. You can't watch everything that occurs during a drill, so don't try. If you have assistants, give them

responsibilities. In the "Crosscourt Attacking Drill," for instance, while you are focusing on the outside hitter and providing feedback, have someone else watch the blockers and a third person watch the back row defense. Each coach has a role, just like the players.

This book includes drills for the six main skills of volleyball: serving, passing, setting, attacking, blocking, and digging. The book is designed to give you insight into what some very successful coaches are doing in their gyms. These are our recipes for success.

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Lisa Love, Head Coach, University of Southern California

John Dunning, Head Coach, University of the Pacific

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Greg Giovanazzi, Head Coach, University of Michigan

Jim Stone, Head Coach, Ohio State University

Mary Wise, Head Coach, and Nick Cheronis, Associate Head Coach, University of Florida

Key to Diagrams



Feeder

C

Coach



Coach standing on box

T

Tosser

X

Any player

S

Server



Setter

P

Passer

D

Digger

H

Any hitter

OH

Outside hitter

B

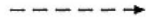
Any blocker

MB

Middle blocker



Blocker or blocking device



Path of ball



Path of player movement (ball in play)



Path of player rotation (ball not in play)

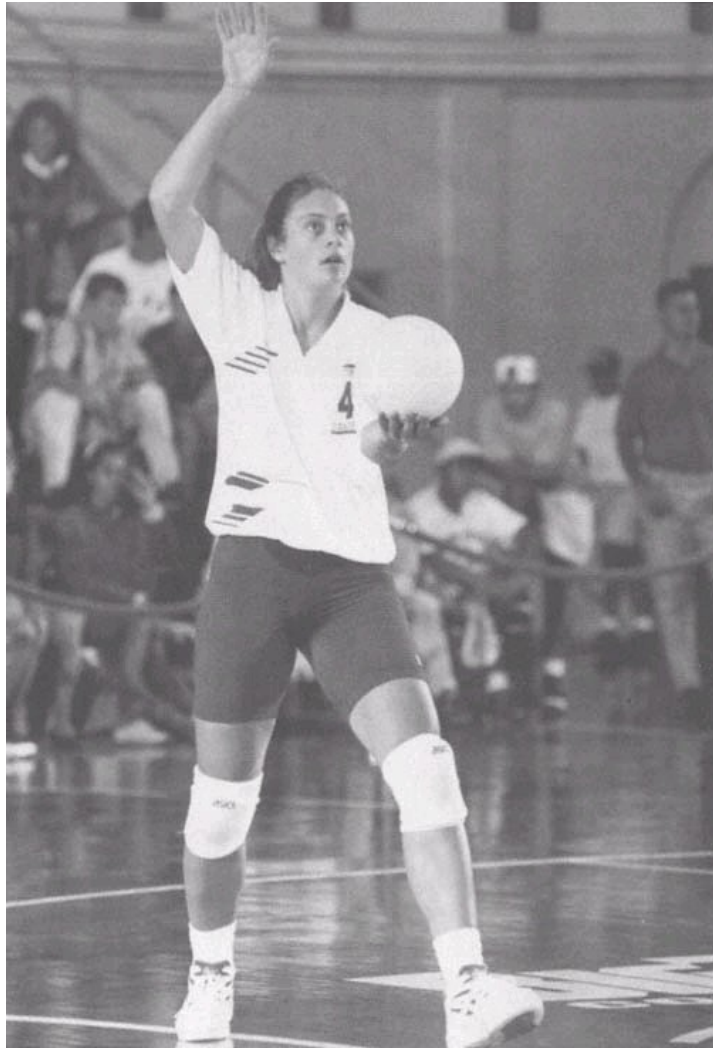


Rolled ball



Target

Key to Diagrams



Courtesy of Pennsylvania State University

Chapter 1— Serving

Russ Rose and Mike Schall
Pennsylvania State University

Before entering into a discussion about the key physical and mental components of serving and about how best to design practice to improve players' effectiveness from the service line, you must answer several questions about your philosophy as a coach. Within each level of play, whether grade school, high school, club, or collegiate, distinct serving philosophies and strategies can be observed. Some coaches prefer to train their players to simply go beyond the endline and "bang it." This has proven successful at some levels despite the increased risk involved and consequently a significantly higher number of service errors. Another philosophy, at the opposite end of the spectrum, emphasizes a low number of service errors by simply keeping the ball in play from the service line or serving tactically to affect an opponent by serving to a specific area of the court. Many coaches choose not to commit to one philosophy or another but instead remain somewhere in

between. The two opposite ends of the idea could best be addressed by saying "serve tough, but keep it in play." Regardless of the stance a coach chooses to take on the serving issue, a firm rationale must exist. Remember, passing will predict your level of play, so you need to have a serving philosophy to enhance winning at the level you are competing on, and this may change throughout the season.

How Does Your Team Score Points?

During the 1996 season, Penn State served the lowest number of aces of any team in the Big Ten, but finished the regular season as conference champions. This statistic may not be as ironic as it initially appears when you consider the following: that same team had the lowest number of service errors, the highest digs per game average, and the highest blocks per game average in the country. Both middle blockers ranked in the top ten in the nation, as well, in blocks per game. For a team that blocks and digs well, service errors eliminate the opportunity for the players to do what they do best and in turn decrease their chance for success. Therefore, a more conservative serving philosophy may be best for that team. Coaches of teams that do not have the luxury of excellent blocking at the net and digging in the back row should consider a more aggressive approach from the service line, since serving provides the first opportunity to score points.

Each team's method of scoring points may vary by rotation. If in one particular rotation the serving team has a distinct advantage over the opponent (i.e., a strong blocking rotation vs. a weak hitting rotation), the server should avoid errors. Conversely, if a team struggles to score points in one rotation, encouraging your server to take a risk or substituting your best server into the game may pay dividends. Therefore, as a coach, you must know the strengths and weaknesses of your team and the individual players who make up your team, as well as have a general knowledge of your opponent. Be willing to take chances as a coach and allow your players the flexibility to "go for it."

Training Your Team to Serve Effectively

Once your philosophy has been established and verbally communicated to your team, force your players to experience serving under gamelike situations. Rapid-fire serving drills provide servers a great opportunity to gain repetitions with the skill but do not allow each player to experience the type of pressure involved in serving in an actual competitive situation.

During competition, a server has the opportunity to serve in one out of six rotations. A player who plays the whole way around the court obviously serves after rotating through the front row and must slow things down mentally and physically to get in the proper mind-set to serve effectively.

Substitutes face a different dilemma, as they must go from being an interested observer who has not played for at least the previous three rotations to being the server and back-row player who is expected to give the team a boost.

The best servers realize the importance of the skill they are about to perform. They realize that the previous rally has ended and the ensuing rally has yet to occur. They, for the moment of possession of the volleyball prior to serving, have complete control of the game. Although in your mind they may have no idea what is going on, they control the destiny of the next rally. This may be a scary thought, but several practice ideas may make serving a less traumatic experience for you and your team.

1. Force your players to serve under gamelike situations.
2. Make every serve count by attaching a penalty to every missed serve, every missed serving area, or to every "lollipop serve." A simple roll or dive for each missed serve will not tax your players physically but may reinforce the importance of serving effectively.
3. Reward your players for serving an ace or forcing a bad pass by allowing them to serve again. After all, in competition, a missed serve is a missed opportunity to score points, while a tough serve often scores a point and in turn warrants another serve by the same individual.

Physical Keys to Successful Serving

Serving remains one of the most basic skills but continues to give coaches headaches when trying to teach it. At the very core of serving is the problem of hitting a ball over a barrier that is 9 m away. To accomplish this task, many different approaches have been taken. Players have been taught to serve beginning at the 3 m line and gradually step back with each successful serve. Some coaches have instructed players to serve off a wall and then give it a try on the actual court. Some coaches will have players simply practice their tossing of the ball, so the player gets the feel of how high and how far in front the ball needs to be placed. To learn how to serve or to learn how to serve more effectively, a player must serve. Do not underestimate the ability of your athletes to

figure things out for themselves. Provided they understand several key principles, they will get the ball over the net and hopefully develop a tough, consistent serve.

The first key to emphasize with your players is avoiding extra movements or thoughts that hinder the specific goal at hand. Make the skill as simple as it really is. The players should focus on the target and exhale as they prepare themselves physically to initiate the serve. The toss sometimes causes players more problems than it really should. Teach your players to toss the ball with one hand, normally the hand opposite the serving arm. This will free the serving arm to prepare for striking the ball. Players should toss the ball in front of the hitting shoulder slightly higher than their maximum reach to allow the arm sufficient time to gather the necessary momentum to strike the ball. The serving arm should follow a simple throwing motion with the elbow high and drawn back in preparation and through the path of the ball at follow-through. The ball should be contacted through its center to allow for the preferred "knuckleball" effect. This floating action will occur regardless of how players hold their hand, but a suggestion would be to start with an open and strong hand. Players should not attempt to disguise the area of the court to which they are serving, since the server stands more than 9 m from the passer. Players should instead face the target and finish through the target, leaving no doubt as to where they intend to serve.

Coaching Cues

You may find the following cues helpful reminders for your players during practice:

1. Avoid extra movement.
2. Toss in front of hitting shoulder.
3. Keep elbow high and back.
4. Contact middle of ball with middle of hand.
5. Follow through to target.

Summary

You must establish a serving philosophy that will best fit both your personality as a coach and your team's personnel. Your players, after learning the basic components of the serve, must continue to improve

their level of proficiency to the point where they can serve tough and in the court. Allow your players to experience gamelike situations in a practice setting to give them the necessary experience in dealing with the mental and physical aspects of the skill.

1— Serving-Wall

Purpose

To aid in developing the technique and movement control to serve consistently.

Procedure

1. Tape to the wall a picture, name, or object for each player. Make the target the size of a volleyball and locate the bottom of it 8 ft above the ground.
2. Each server starts 5 ft from the target and does full routine and serves at the target. After each serve, server takes a step (3 ft) forward (for missing the target) or back (for hitting the target).
3. Time the drill (2–4 min). The person farthest from the wall wins.

Key Points

1. Control the speed of the ball.
2. Repeat a routine and repeat technique.

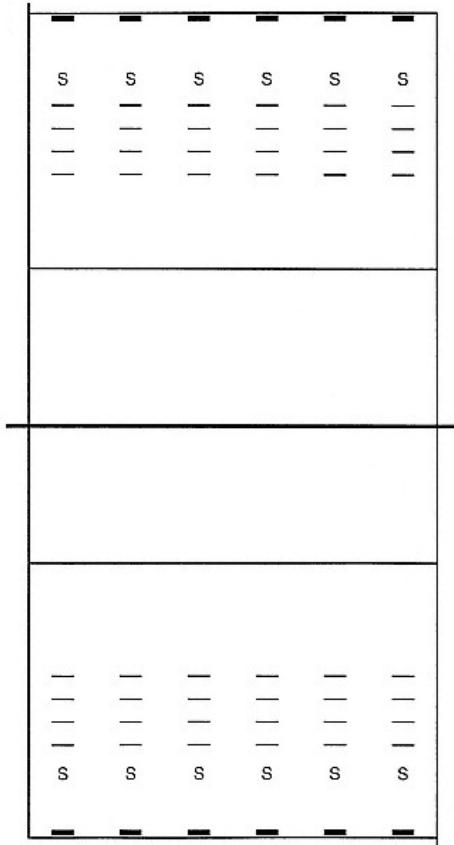
Variations

1. This is a simple drill designed to get high repetitions in a very focused setting.
2. There is no need to change the difficulty.

Equipment Needed

One target on wall for each player

One ball for each player



1
Serving-Wall

2—

Serve under Elastic

Purpose

To encourage the development of a low, flat, hard serve. This type of serve is much more difficult to pass.

Procedure

1. Stretch elastic about 18 in. above the net by attaching to antennae. You can also place multiple antennae across net to focus upon a particular zone or to facilitate drawing elastic tighter.

Key Points

1. Player must serve with a quick arm motion to drive the ball deep into the court.
2. Hand contact on the ball must be on the center of the ball in order to achieve a flat trajectory. Many young players will contact under the ball with a low elbow, and this will make the ball travel higher above the net and thus easier to pass. A low, flat serve is much harder to pass.

Variations

1. Raise or lower elastic.
2. Place targets on floor.

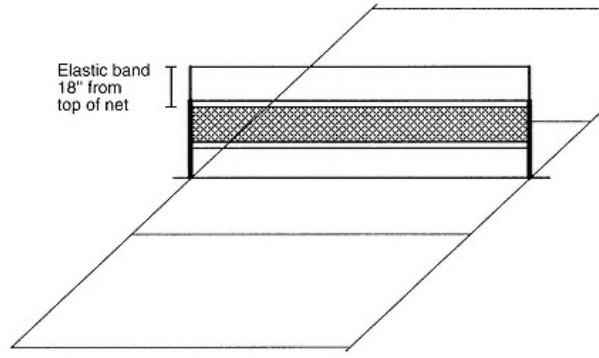
Equipment Needed

Elastic stretched over net between antennae

Several antennae (to support elastic)

Cones for targets

One ball for each player



2
Serve Under Elastic

3—

Serve and Accelerate

Purpose

To emphasize serving and pursuit.

Procedure

1. Players serve, one at a time, to a designated area.
2. Players immediately go to their back-row positions.
3. Coach tips or attacks ball to an area within the back-row player's area of responsibility.
4. Player accelerates or digs the ball, then retrieves the ball, and returns to the serving line.

Key Points

1. Serve to the designated area.
2. Get to defensive position quickly.
3. Accelerate or dig the ball to the target.

Variation

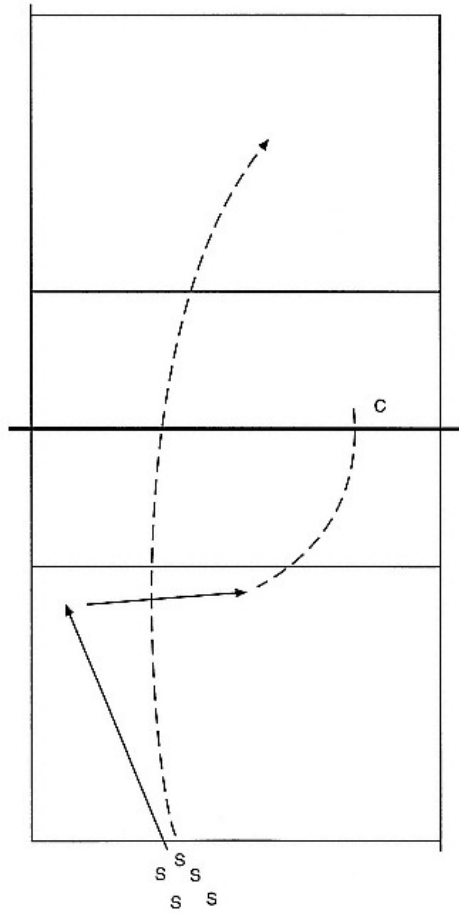
1. Coach directed—make the balls hit or tipped realistic depending on the player's designated back-row position.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings (use cones or tape)

One ball for each player



3
Serve and Accelerate

4—

Target Serving

Purpose

To improve your players' ability to serve all six zones of the court. The goal is control.

Procedure

1. Divide team into team A and team B; place them on opposite sides of the net.
2. Place cones outlining a specific zone on each side of the net.
3. Coach will score +2 for a serve within the zone and -1 for a service error.
4. Players serve one at a time for 1 min.
5. Coaches compare scores and award a punishment to the losing team.
6. Follow this procedure for each of the six serving zones.

Key Point

1. Players should concentrate on the specified zone.

Variations

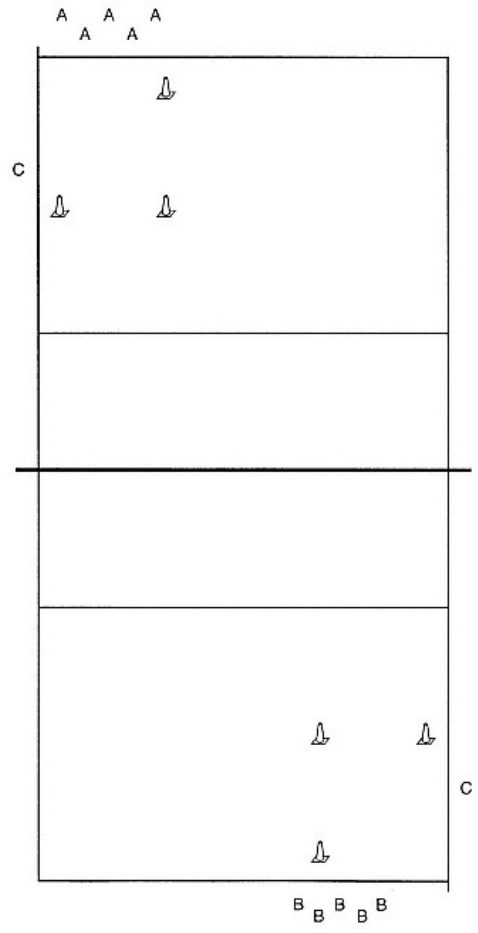
1. Vary the size of the zone according to the skill level of the players.
2. Place elastic across the tops of the antennae to force a lower, flatter serve.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings (use cones or tape)

About 20 balls



4
Target Serving

5—

Progressive Serving with Follow

Purpose

To teach players not to make consecutive serving errors.

Procedure

1. Warm up arms.
2. Each player has a ball and serves to the "6" zone (and retrieves the ball).
3. If in, next serve goes to a difficult zone.
4. If an error, next serve must be in the "6" zone or player goes back to zero.

Key Points

1. Players should have a consistent "6" zone serve. As the ball control improves, they can move to different zones.
2. Two consecutive service errors are not acceptable.

Variations

1. Concentrate on zones.
2. Increase physical task difficulty.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings (use cones or tape)

One ball for each player

1	6	5
2	3	4

5
Progressive Serving With Follow

6—

Serve and Run for 21***Purpose***

To teach players to serve accurately and at the same time to take risks.

Procedure

1. Begin with half of the team at each endline of a court and a coach on each side of the court.
2. Servers will serve from both sides when ready.
3. Run to get the ball and get the score on the serve from coach. The coach will determine which area the serve landed in and announce to players how many points their serves earned (either verbally or by holding up the appropriate number of fingers).
4. Serve from new endline. Repeat process for a timed period (e.g., 4 min).
5. Stop after 4 min to see who achieved the team goal of 21 or more.

Key Points

1. Refocus after running by doing a routine.
2. This is a test of servers' accuracy (their skill).
3. This is a team drill; we are only as good as our worst server.

Variations

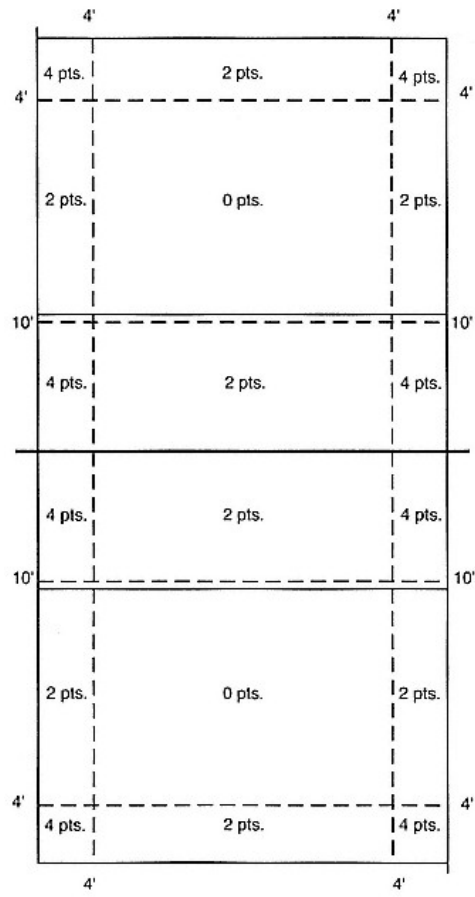
1. To change difficulty:
 - Move dots closer to or farther from the side and endlines.
 - Change the point system.
 - Stretch elastic between tops of antennae—each serve for points must go below elastic.

Equipment Needed

One court, one net, antennae

One length of elastic (optional)

One ball per player



6
Serve and Run for 21

7—

Four-before-Two Serving

Purpose

To encourage aggressive serving with accuracy.

Procedure

1. Pair up players (into groups of two).
2. One partner serves; the other judges and retrieves balls.
3. Goal is to serve four into zone before making two errors (serve into another zone is neutral).
4. Switch upon completion.
5. Change zones.

Key Points

1. Focus is on good toss and contact.
2. This drill deals with twofold goal of serving aggressively and accurately while avoiding errors.

Variations

1. Serve flat, below the height of the antennae.
2. Add physical task (five jumps) to serve with heart rate up.
3. Alternate zones.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings (use cones or tape)

One ball per pair of players

	A ₁	B ₂	
	1	6	5
	2	3	4
	4	3	2
	5	6	1
	A ₂	B ₁	

7
Four-Before-Two Serving

8—

Serving "Horse"

Purpose

To help players serve zones in pressure situations.

Procedure

1. Player A calls out a serving zone and then attempts to hit that zone.
2. If A hits, then player B must match the serve or get a letter. If A misses, then B gets a chance to call a zone and hit.

Key Point

1. Players must challenge others' weaknesses to make them better in serving to all areas.

Variations

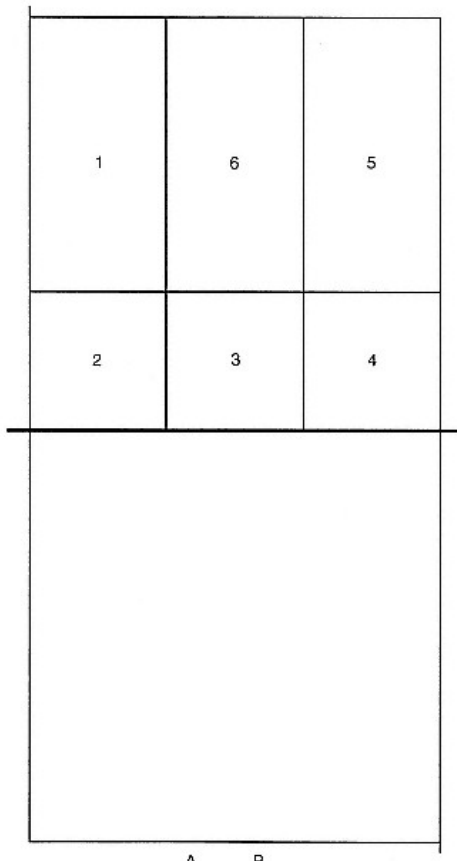
1. Add jump serving to increase difficulty.
2. Call "short" or "deep" to decrease difficulty.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings for zones (use cones or tape)

One ball for each player



8
Serving "Horse"

9—

Serving for Points

Purpose

To show players that serving to zones is more important than simply serving "in."

Procedure

1. Player A must accumulate 15 points before player B.
2. The two players alternate serving.
3. Players get +3 for hitting a serving zone, called by the coach, +1 for serving "in" but missing the zone, and -1 for service error.
4. First player to get 15 wins.

Key Point

1. Always know the score and what combinations it will take to get to 15.

Variations

1. To increase difficulty, play "make it, take it." A player who hits the zone continues to serve until she misses, thus alternating with the other player.
2. To decrease difficulty, do not count service errors.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings (use cones or tape)

Two balls for each player

1	6	5
2	3	4

A B

9
Serving for Points

10—

Around-the-World Serving

Purpose

To improve accuracy of the serving skill; to strengthen players' confidence in serving all areas of the playing court.

Procedure

1. Server stands anywhere behind the baseline.
2. Drill begins when server attempts to serve area 1 (see diagram).
3. Once hitting area 1, the server progresses to area 2, then 3, 4, 5, 6.
4. If at any time a service error is made, the server goes back and begins at area 1.

Key Points

1. Have a set concentration routine. Don't rush.
2. Never miss a serve by serving into the net. It is always better to serve long.

Variations

1. To increase difficulty:
 - Increase number of times players must hit target.
 - Make areas small.
2. To decrease difficulty:
 - Widen areas.
 - Don't penalize for missed serves.

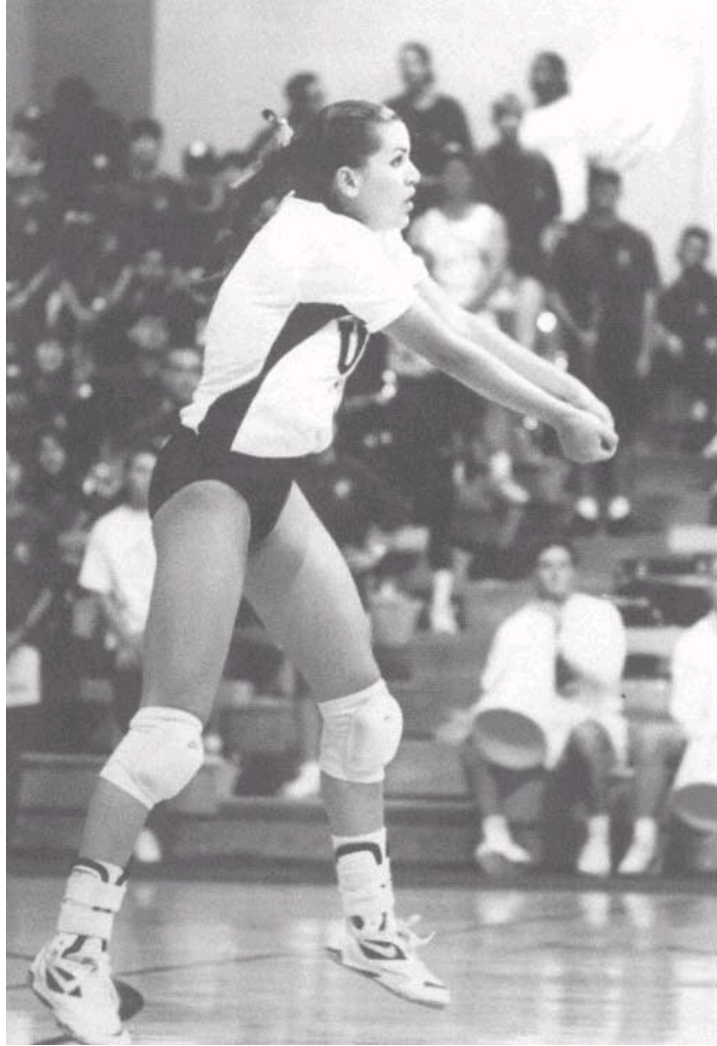
Equipment Needed

Full court with net

Court markings (use cones or tape)

Six to eight balls

1	6	5
2	3	4



Courtesy of University of Southern California

Chapter 2— Passing

Lisa Love
University of Southern California

Passing is the foundation of a team's offense. Offensive tempo and play execution both revolve around a team's ability to pass accurately. Without consistent and accurate passing, your team can't exploit the talents of its attackers and setters. The components of passing involve footwork and movement, platform orientation, and timing. While all three components work together to create an efficient passing motion, each area can be trained independently and focused on specifically.

Footwork and Movement

The best passers in the world pass with their feet shoulder-width apart, one foot slightly in front of the other, knees flexed 90 degrees, and weight on the inside balls of the feet. We refer to this position as the passer's base. A strong base allows the player to enjoy ball control, because a strong base allows the player to pass with the legs and hips. Good footwork and movement

skills help a player achieve this strong base more often and be in a balanced position. The distance players need to travel to pass the ball will determine which footwork they use. There are two options: a shuffle step (for short distances) and a crossover step (for longer distances). We use more specific cue words when referring to these movements and call the shuffle step a step-split and the crossover step a lead-crossover-split. This language helps emphasize the split, which creates that strong base. Several movement fundamentals will help players to be more efficient with their footwork.

1. Starting position should be relaxed, with weight on inside balls of feet, knees flexed comfortably, and shoulders loose.
2. The first step to the ball is with the foot closest to the ball.
3. Movement should be level without bouncing the shoulders. (Tip: Ask players to pick a spot on the wall or net. When they move, their line of vision should stay parallel, not jump up and down.)
4. Weight should remain on inside balls of feet for quickness between steps.

Platform Orientation

The passing base gives the passer stability, and a properly formed platform (arms) gives the passer flexibility to adjust. The platform is formed by joining the hands with the padded part of the thumbs pressed firmly together, wrists rotated forward and down, and elbows locked. The platform is extended away from the body as the athlete bends at the waist and shrugs the shoulders, trying to touch shoulders to ears. The shoulders should be over the knees; if there were a piece of string hanging from the tip of the shoulder, it would fall in front of the knees, not touching the leg. The head remains still—with eyes, rather than head, moving to see the ball. A few platform fundamentals are essential in providing the passer the ability to adjust to a variety of situations.

1. The platform is formed early, behind the ball, and not swung to meet the ball. (Tip: Picture catching a ball. The hand moves in a line directly to the ball. Don't thrust the hand forward and then move it to the side to catch the ball.)
2. There is significant space between the triceps and the torso, which means that the platform is formed by thrusting arms forward, not down.
3. The shoulders are rotated to redirect the ball to target, rather than the platform swinging to direct the ball.

Timing

A sense of timing is important in establishing rhythm and tempo in passing. Good footwork and proper platform preparation optimize the passer's chances of consistently passing the ball at the same point in the execution

skill. Similar to a hitter striving to attack the ball at the same point in the arm swing, a passer wants to pass the ball at the same point in the passing motion. Ideally, this point is when the ball is approximately knee height away from the floor (which indicates that the proper base has been established) and 1 to 2 ft in front of the knees (which indicates an early platform preparation). The player begins the passing motion by moving the legs and hips at a 45-degree angle to the target, meeting the ball at a knee- or mid-thigh distance from the floor. It is the legs and hips, not shoulders, that move the platform. The least amount of platform motion is desired because motion increases the chance of error—a "shanked pass." After contact, the passer will follow through to the target by lifting the platform slightly. The idea is to try to keep the ball on the arms as long as possible, as if cradling the ball on the arms. This is done most easily when the player is in base position; however, some situations require forfeiting the strong base position, for example, a fast jump serve, a floater that drops or rises unexpectedly, or a misjudged serve. Regardless of body position, it is imperative that platform preparation and orientation not break down. The platform should always be formed early, extending to meet the ball, with shoulders reorienting to redirect the ball.

Coaching Cues

You may find the following cues helpful reminders for your players during practice:

1. Move level with weight on inside balls of feet.
2. Form and extend platform early.
3. Lock elbows and press wrists down.
4. Use the hips and legs to pass, not the arms.
5. Reorient shoulders to redirect ball. Don't swing the platform.
6. Keep head down and follow ball with eyes.

Summary

Passing requires good footwork, platform orientation, and timing. At ready position the passer is relaxed, balanced, and ready to move in any direction. Stepping with the foot closest to the ball, the player moves in a direct line behind the ball while beginning to form the platform. Just prior to passing the ball, the feet are split, creating a strong base, and the platform is extended ready to meet the ball. Moving legs and hips at a 45-degree angle to the target, the player meets the ball approximately 1 ft out over the knees, knee- to mid-thigh distance from the floor, and follows through to the target by lifting the platform slightly. If these movements are executed properly, the athlete naturally continues the weight shift forward.

11—

Platform Orientation***Purpose***

To practice early preparation of player's platform and understand the different angles at which to cut the ball off to redirect back to target; to reinforce shoulder orientation, rather than swinging platform.

Procedure

1. Players partner up, one at the net and one at the baseline. (The net is a good visual reference, but players can pair up anywhere in the gym if court space is limited.)
2. Player at the net has the ball and throws a line drive one step to partner's right (baseball toss or two-hand overhead toss, but velocity and accuracy are key).
3. Player at the baseline steps and extends the platform outside of the body's midline to cut the ball off, dropping the inside shoulder to redirect ball back to the target.
4. Players do this 10 times left, 10 times right, then switch roles.

Key Points

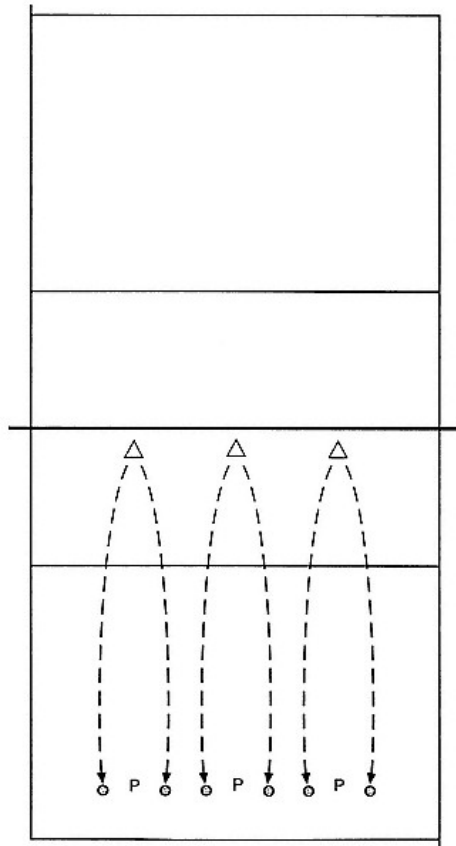
1. Do not try to move body behind ball to take ball in body midline. The idea is to practice passing balls outside midline and to learn how dropping a shoulder helps manipulate ball to target.
2. Players pass the ball at the point where they can see the ball without turning their head, instead of letting it get behind them where they have to swing platform.

Variation

1. Players throw ball directly at partner's head/chest, and partner has to choose which side to fall away to in order to pass the ball, working angle of platform to redirect ball to target.

Equipment Needed

One ball for each pair of players



11
Platform Orientation

12—**Points of the Compass*****Purpose***

To emphasize movement and footwork as well as passing technique. This is a primary passing drill.

Procedure

1. A passer is stationed opposite the net from a coach.
2. The coach will enter a ball in the direction of the passer but never to the passer.
3. The coach will enter balls to the right and left, and in front of and behind the passer, at the discretion of the coach (each and every point of the compass).
4. After each pass the passer returns to the neutral starting position.
5. Each pass should be directed to the target setting zone.

Key Points

1. Proper footwork should be stressed here. Shuffle steps are best when going side to side. Front-to-back movements are generally a little more difficult, and coaches can teach the required footwork they prefer.
2. It is important that during the movement, the passer's head is not bobbing up and down, but rather remains level and stable.

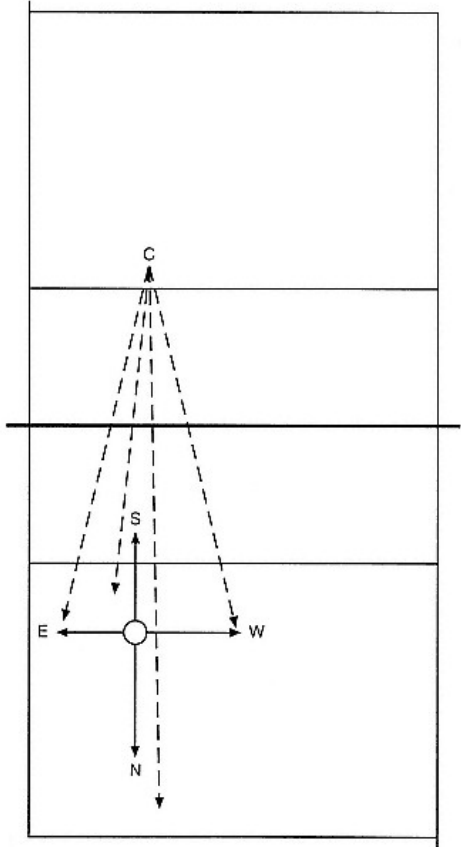
Variations

1. The coach can vary the difficulty by progressing from an underhand toss, to a "soccer throw," to a "chip" (underhand serve), to an easy overhand serve, to a full serve.
2. Most players will have more difficulty moving to one point of the compass than to the others. The coach should work on the difficult directions by providing more serves to that point of the compass.

Equipment Needed

Marked target zone (use cones or tape)

Six to eight balls



12
Points of the Compass

13—

Warm-up Passing***Purpose***

To warm up by jogging; to work on communication on serve receive; to practice organized, specific passing.

Procedure

1. Coaches toss or serve to person on right or left side of the court. Middle person is there to communicate with and distract the passer. Passer passes to net, jogs to net, catches the next pass, and brings the ball to coach on same side of the net. Run drill 3 min each step.

2. Step 1: Coaches serve from 1, players pass from right side of court.

Step 2: Coaches serve from 2, players pass from right side of court.

Step 3: Coaches serve from 2, players pass from left side of court.

Step 4: Coaches serve from 1, players pass from left side of court.

3. Coaches decide on four technique specifics (e.g., move feet, platform, etc.), and players focus on the same one for each 3 min period.

Key Points

1. Jog the whole time to warm up.

2. Stay focused on each technique item.

Variations

1. Coaches can start with underhand tosses.

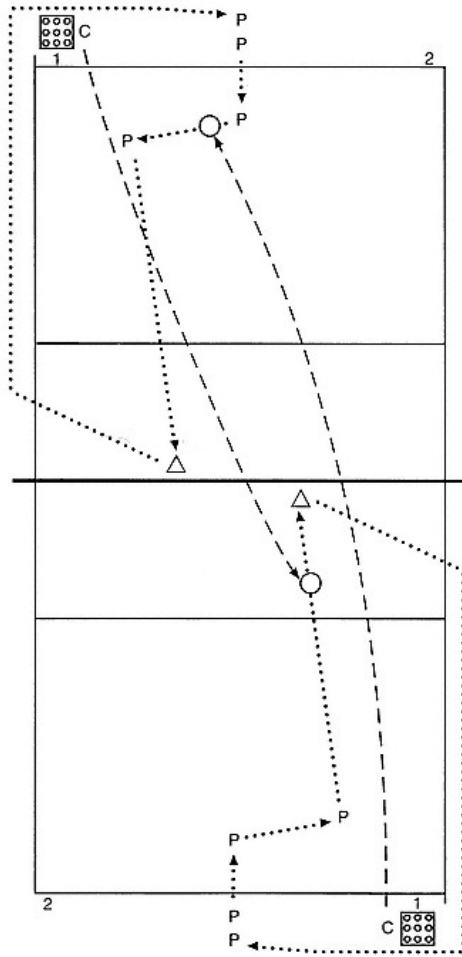
2. Coaches can chip ball over the net.

3. Coaches can vary the velocity of their float or topspin serves.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Volleyballs (two carts)



13
Warm-Up Passing

14—

Rapid-Fire Passing

Purpose

To provide numerous passing repetitions in a short time.

Procedure

1. Three passers on one side of the net.
2. Three tossers/servers at 20 ft from net on opposite side.
3. Targets on same side as passers. Both servers and targets start with a ball. Servers initiate balls to passers for 10 reps; then group rotates.

Key Points

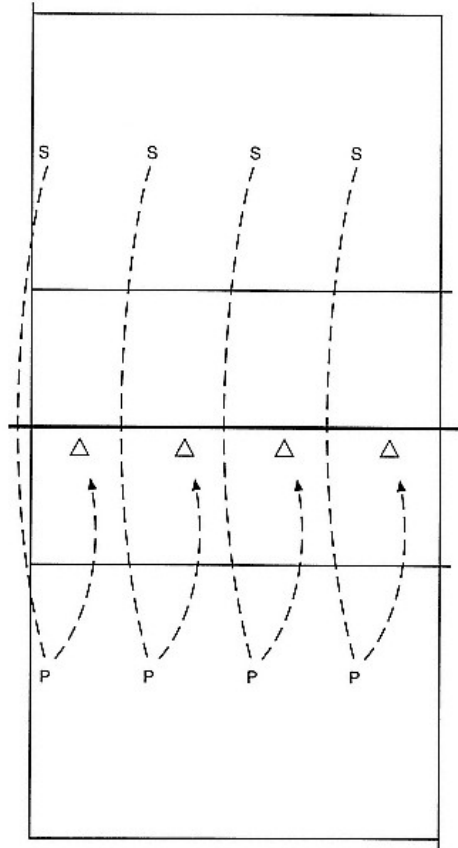
1. This is a great drill for warm-up.
2. Allow for concentration on passing.
3. As soon as ball is tossed/served, target bounces second ball under net to server.
4. Tosser/servers must concentrate on giving a good ball to pass, not on fooling or beating the passer.

Variation

1. Move the tosser/servers behind the baseline for a more gamelike serve.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae Two or three balls for each group of three



14
Rapid-Fire Passing

15—

Zig-Zag Passing***Purpose***

To help players focus on form when they are tired. This player-directed passing drill provides many reps; good conditioning drill.

Procedure

1. Players partner up, one at net and one at baseline.
2. Tossers at net toss ball two-thirds deep into court.
3. Passers move forward to pass ball back to partner, then move to next position at baseline.
4. Tossers rotate with passers (see diagram).
5. Drill continues for certain number of successful rotations or desired length of time (two to three times around court/18 well-passed balls).

Key Points

1. Practice efficient footwork—split feet to pass ball.
2. Work on taking ball same distance from floor and same distance from body each time.

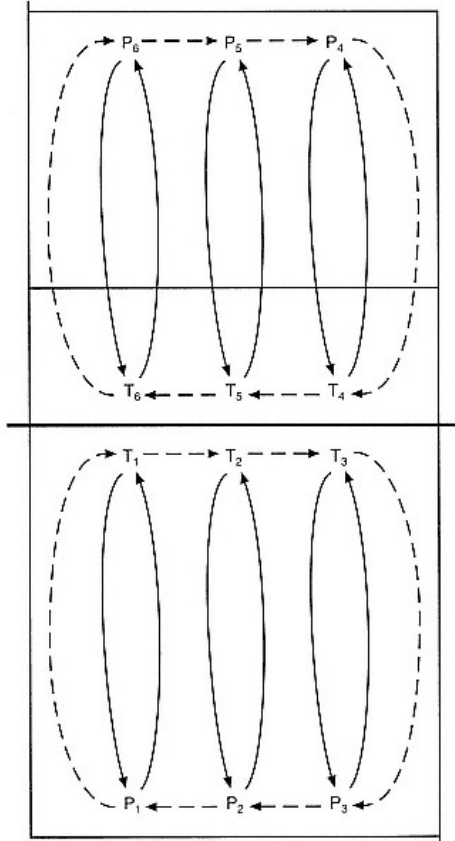
Variations

1. Speed up: push the pace.
2. Switch direction of rotation.
3. Start passers at 10 ft line and move them backward to pass.
4. After passing, passer moves forward to pass tipped ball from tosser (good simulation of pass and coverage).
5. Start over with shanked pass or overpass.

Equipment Needed

Half-court or full court depending on number of players

One ball for each pair of players



15
Zig-Zag Passing

16— Passing Wave

Purpose

To allow many repetitions with only one court; to incorporate team serve-receive responsibility.

Procedure

1. Group A serves on one end.
2. Group B passes on same side.
3. Group C passes on opposite side.
4. Group D serves on opposite side. After 10 successful passes, all players "wave" (rotate).
5. Servers serve 10 balls; then the group waves.

Key Point

1. This drill is good to test transition after losing a side-out, because the players change roles between serve and receive.

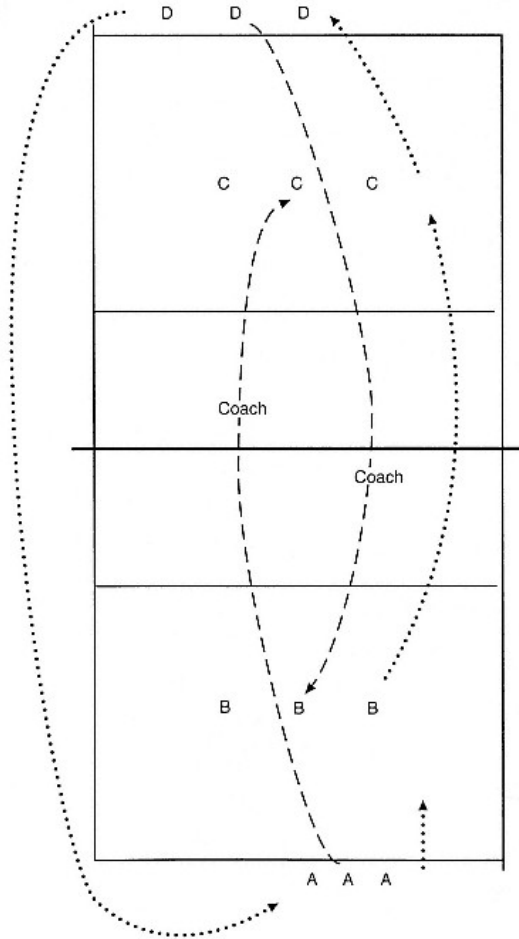
Variations

1. Decrease the number of passes to make it more difficult.
2. Coaches can serve to make it easier.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



16
Passing Wave

17—

Trigger-Point Passing***Purpose***

To practice serving and passing in a competitive situation.

Procedure

1. Three players are on the court: server, passer, target. One player is the server, one player is the passer, and one player is the target and is stationed in the setting position.
2. The goal of the drill is to become the target player. Each time a player becomes the target player, that player earns 1 point.
3. Changing roles:
 - The passer can become the target player by passing three balls in a row to the current target player so that the target player can catch the pass by moving only one foot (one step away).
 - The server can become the target player by serving three balls in a row that the passer cannot pass within one step of the target player.
 - The server must serve the ball into the half-court area occupied by the passer. A ball going outside that zone or a missed serve counts as a "minipoint" for the passer (one of the three in a row).
 - When either the passer or the server earns three in a row, that player gets a point and becomes the target player, and the former target player takes the position of whoever just won the point (the server or passer).
4. The first player to get 5 points wins the drill.

Key Points

1. Remember, three in a row is the key.
2. The pressure builds as the server or passer gets to two points, as the next ball will result either in a point or in the loss of points and a "reversal."
3. You will find that players will get "stuck" in the position that they lack skill in. This is a good thing, as they will automatically receive more repetitions on the skill they are weakest in.

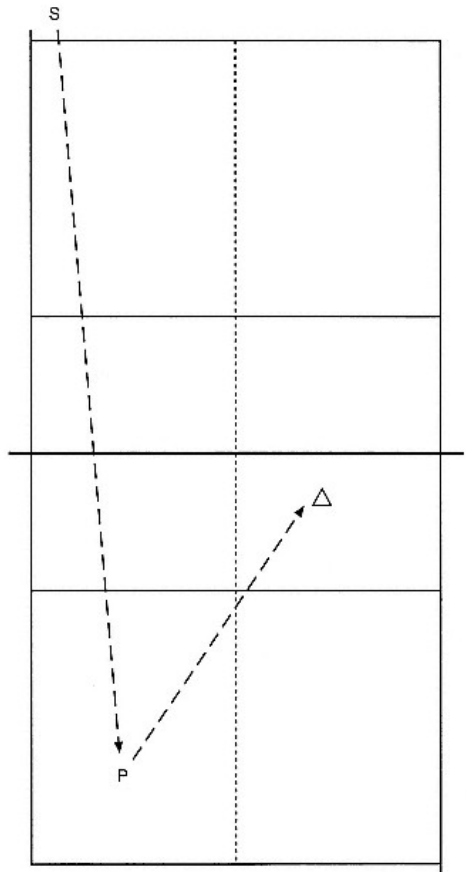
Variation

1. Increase or decrease the number of points required to "win" the drill.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

One ball for each group of three players



17
Trigger-Point Passing

18—

Passing for Options

Purpose

To work on team serve patterns; to get players to understand "degrees" of passing.

Procedure

1. Place tape on floor to show target for pass (box).
2. Group A serves to group B. Group B is in a passing pattern.
3. Scoring:
 - Every perfect pass above the top of the net, inside box, counts as 3.
 - Passes inside the 10 ft line, but outside the box, count as 2.
 - Passes off the net, outside of the 10 ft line, count as 1.
 - All others count as zero.
4. When Group B reaches 15 points, the groups switch.

Key Points

1. Emphasize "team" serve receive: "calling the ball," "turning and opening," providing supportive movement in order to rotate.
2. Players need to focus on five perfect passes.

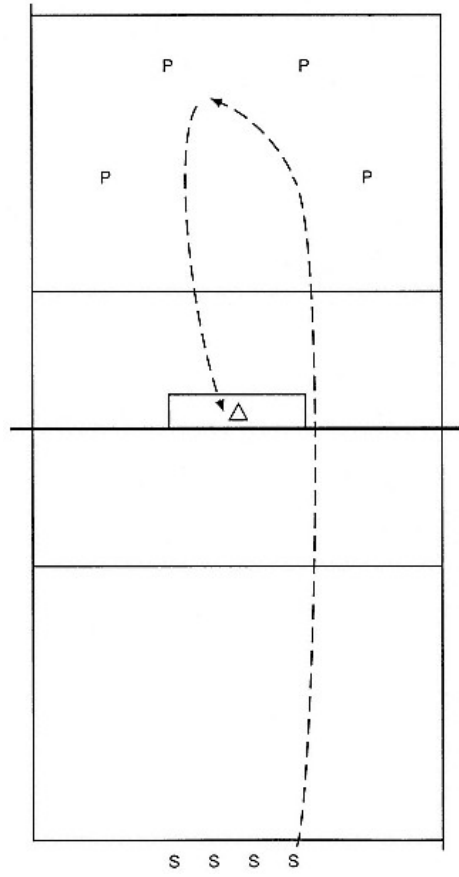
Variations

1. To decrease difficulty, have a coach serve.
2. To increase difficulty, reduce the number of passes allowed to reach 15 points.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



19—

Three-Person Pass Stat

Purpose

To test team serve-receive ability.

Procedure

1. Players serve/players pass.
2. Passer follows pass and becomes a new target.
3. Target becomes server.
4. Server goes to passer line.
5. Coach rates each pass:
 - Perfect pass, with setter having three options, scores 3.
 - Good pass, with setter having two options, scores 2.
 - Fair pass, with setter having only one option, scores 1.
 - Poor pass, with setter having no setting options, scores 0.
6. After 25 passes, coach totals the team score to determine whether the goal was met. If goal wasn't met, team then passes 25 more.

Key Points

1. Players must work together as a team.
2. Players must not let a bad pass affect the next pass.

Variations

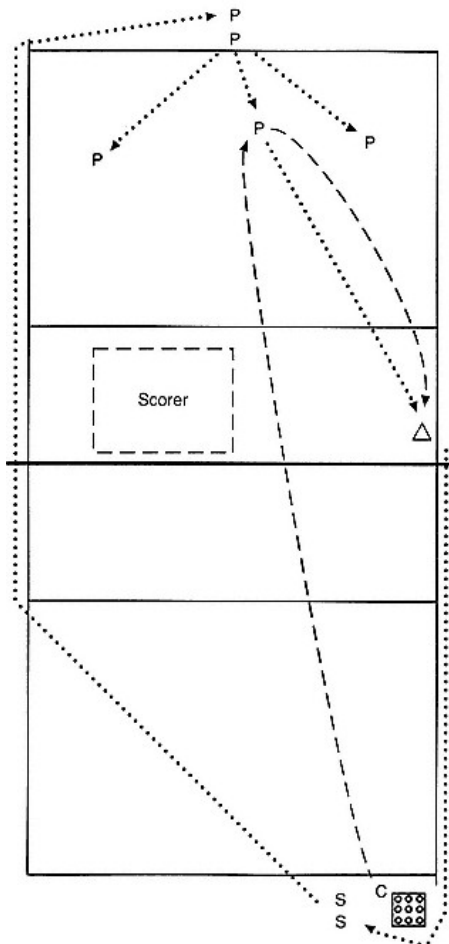
1. Have coaches serve.
2. Change scoring system.
3. Set goal higher or lower.
4. Have player pass and then hit.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Pass stat sheets (25)

Twelve balls



19
Three-Person Pass Stat

20—

Servers Versus Passers***Purpose***

To help servers recognize the need to always serve tough; to give passers experience in receiving tough serves. This drill emphasizes passing every ball to target.

Procedure

1. Two passers and a coach as target on each side of the net.
2. Two servers on each side of the net.
3. Server from side A serves to passers on side B. Server from side B serves to passers on side A.
4. Scoring:
 - Servers earn 1 point for every nonperfect pass.
 - Passers earn 1 point for every perfect pass or service error.
5. First two-player group to score 15 wins. Servers and passers switch.

Key Points

1. Passers: Get into a good rhythm passing. Concentrate on passing every ball to target.
2. Servers: Serve aggressively to win. Attack and pressure the opponent.

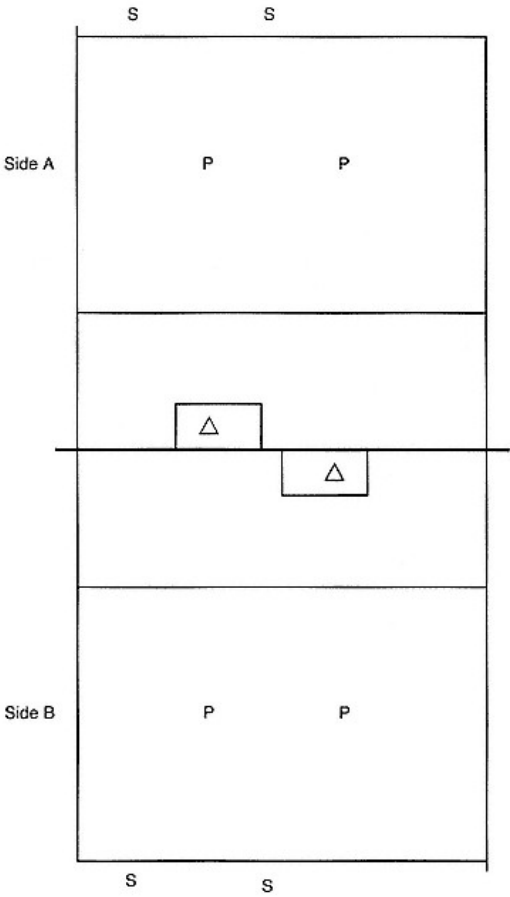
Variations

1. For beginners, do not count service errors as a point for passers.
2. Decrease target area as the level of passing improves.
3. If your team passes with three passers, use three passers rather than two.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Eight balls



20
Servers Versus Passers

21—

Points in a Row

Purpose

To provide repetition for serve receive. By setting specific goals, execution is required for the passers. High-level volleyball requires executing skills "in a row."

Procedure

1. Multiple servers.
2. Three passers covering court.
3. Servers serve tough serves to passers.
4. Passers must pass to the target and meet scoring expectations.

Key Point

1. Passers must concentrate on making consistent passes without dwelling on the last service ace or bad pass.

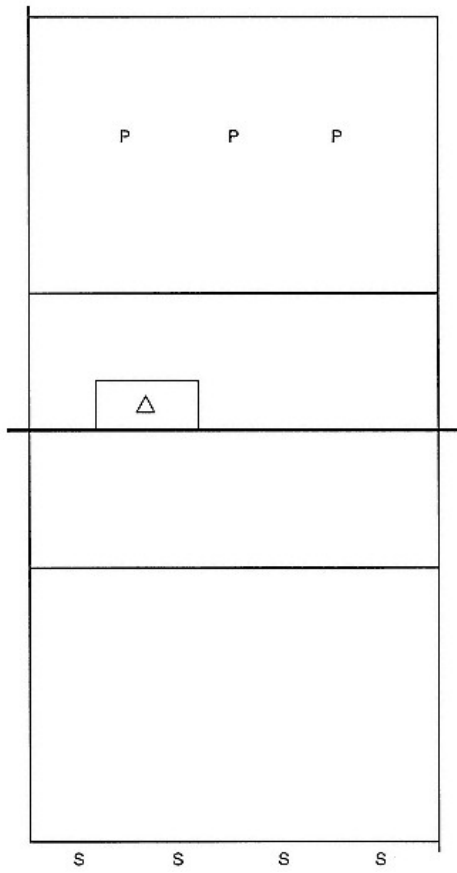
Variations

1. Scoring is essential to create reps and pressure to perform. Examples:
 - Pass 30 good/perfect passes—last 5 in a row.
 - Get five sets of five perfect passes in a row.
 - Get 5 points: to get a point, pass three perfect passes in a row.
 - Get 30 points: 1 point for perfect pass, subtract 3 points for ace.
2. In order to make the servers accountable, give the passers + 1 for a serving error.
3. Beginning—50 good passes.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Volleyballs (at least two carts)



21
Points in a Row

22—

Three-Point Passing Game

Purpose

To teach players to sustain their focus.

Procedure

1. Servers and passers.
2. There is a target at the net who is the judge (coach).
3. Any ball the judge can catch within one step is a point for passer; any other ball is a point for server.
4. To win, passer (or server) must score 3 consecutive points.
5. Switch servers with passers after each game.

Key Points

1. Passing "set-able" balls.
2. Seeing the ball out of the server's hand.
3. Executing consistently.

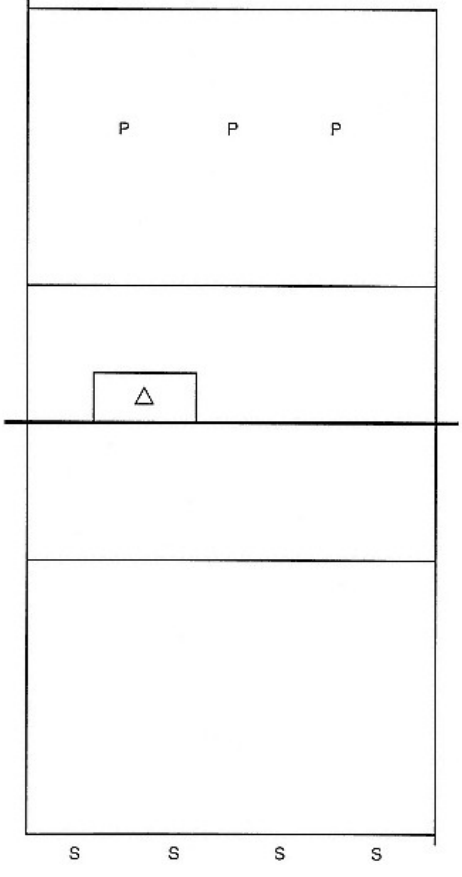
Variations

1. Tighten accuracy of pass.
2. Play a "match." Three in a row equals one game. Play to three out of five games.

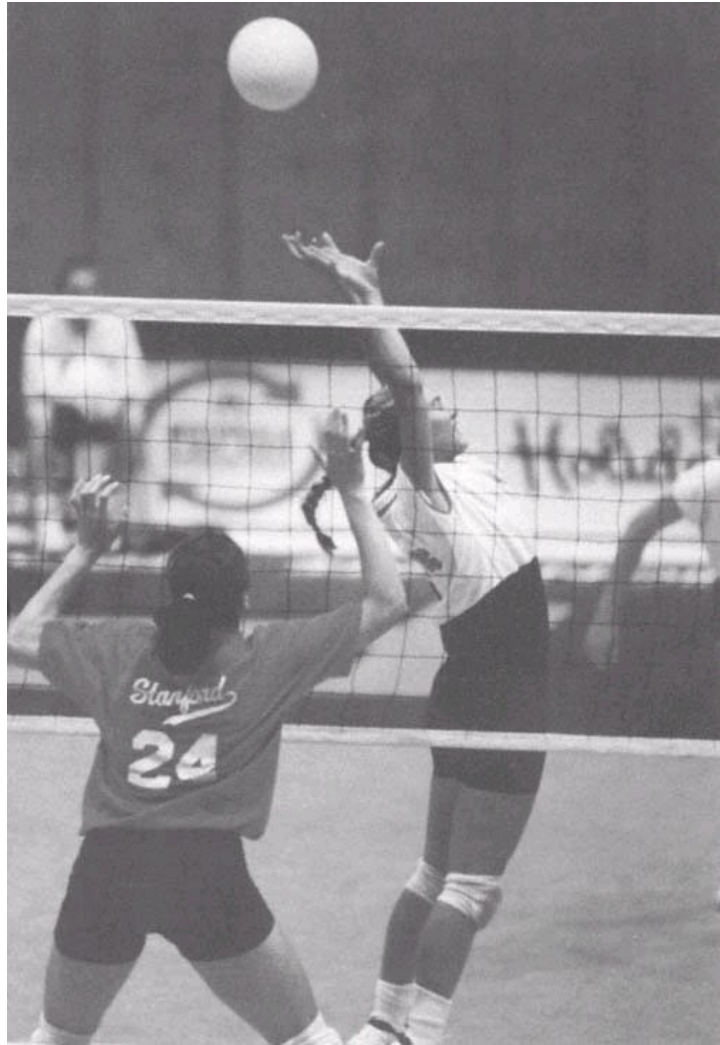
Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Volleyballs (enough balls to keep the drill moving without interruption)



22
Three-Point Passing Game



Courtesy of University of the Pacific

Chapter 3— Setting

John Dunning
University of the Pacific

During the past ten years I have made teaching setting a very high priority in my life. I love to talk to people, experiment, and tinker with all of the aspects of the skill and the setter's position. There is an endless number of areas on which we can focus to try to help any player improve setting skills or to specifically help setters. Any time I get a chance to work with a player on setting I find myself getting very focused and very curious because of the uniqueness of each player.

A great many people have helped me to learn what I know about setting, and many have convinced me that I really don't know much at all. I am now convinced that the joy of learning comes from the players themselves. There is a uniqueness in the way that any player does a skill, and part of the teaching/learning process is paying attention to that uniqueness. I spend most of my time watching players, continually trying to redefine the foundation on which I want to help players build their skill.

The first step that I would urge coaches to take is to go through a process of forming in their minds what it is they are going to teach and why. This may sound obvious, but many ideas are used in teaching because the teacher did it that way or someone told the teacher it was the best way. There is no best way, but each of us must find a way and let that way continually grow and evolve.

A second step for all of us might be to take a serious look at the learning process. There are lots of books and other resources for us to use to improve our teaching skills, but the athletes are probably our best resource. Each athlete learns in a different way, but we cannot have a completely different process for each person. There probably will not be time to focus so much on individual perfection and still focus on the team's needs. We need to decide on a basic process and then cater to the learning needs of each player. One thing we need to include is the idea of learning transfer. Do we ever have players who seem to do skills well in a simple drill and then revert back to old ways in a multiple-skill drill? Do we ever have players who perform team skills well in drills and not in competition? The way we teach, the way we learn, and the process we use all seem to affect how well we perform when we are on center stage.

The process we use in instructing may be just as valuable as what we teach. Setters need to set and they need to set in game situations as much as possible, but up to the point of pure competition there must be focused learning. We need to "play the game" to the best of our ability and our team's ability when we are competing. To be as good as we can be, we really need to be above the level of most golfers, who constantly think, "What is my swing thought for today?" There are enough things to think about with respect to strategy, systems, and so on; why clutter our minds with practice thoughts?

A primary part of focused training is what I call single-item focus training. Players need to be put in the easiest training situations that begin with simple setting of a ball back to the tosser, and then progress to much harder situations. The idea is to toss players a ball with their focus on just one part of the setting technique—the follow-through, the hand position, and so on. Any feedback has only to do with the technique, not the result of the set. Desire to perform may inhibit real focus on the skill training, so we try to develop situations with a very specific focus. We can then design situations with greater physical demands or with different levels of distraction from the focus so as to begin to develop learning transfer.

The primary drill I prefer to use to develop transfer is called the "Fan Drill" (presented later in this chapter). The drill is designed to provide a systematic way to address each situation that might arise in a match. This

drill also allows for single-item focus training to occur. There are hundreds of ways to use the Fan Drill, so I won't go into specifics, except for one particular situation. We call the highest level of the drill "plus five." The coach chooses four different game situations and tosses high and tight, at the 15 ft line, in the net near left front, and at the right antenna. The player penetrates from a designated court area to the net and then moves to set from a toss to one of the four areas. If the set goes to the designated target, then the player gets +1 and returns to the start; if the set is not accurate, the player gets a -1 and returns. Players must get +5 to win, and no score goes below zero. The coach may choose to have one specific focus in the drill to aid a player in transferring learning to a high level.

The last step in teaching transfer is to place a setter in a 6 vs. 6 situation and ask the player to focus on a specific technique during team play. This is very difficult to do, and reminders will probably be necessary until the technique is part of the player. The coach's focus will be tested during this drill, and if the coach fails, the player may well fail. The next level of focus is competition. Players must be taught not to practice or focus on skill at this level so that they can focus on the game. This is more important than it sounds and may be a key to competition.

Coaching Cues

You may find the following cues helpful reminders for your players during practice:

1. Square shoulders to target.
2. Use full arm extension.
3. Know the target.
4. Maintain neutral body position.

Summary

There is a great deal more for any setter to learn than technique, including rules, systems, special situations, strategy, communication, and leadership. I am trying very hard to provide a broad base of experiences for setters to learn from. My mind races faster than a golf ball heading for water when I think about setting. I hope that yours is racing faster than mine.

23—

Five-Person Free Ball***Purpose***

To provide setting reps off a free ball pass. Setters need reps off a pass, not just a coach's toss.

Procedure

1. Setter at net; two passers in backcourt; two players in target position.
2. Two balls in play at all times.
3. Ball starts at target. Ball is tossed to passer, who passes free ball to setter; setter sets forward; ball comes from right back; setter sets back. Both balls stay in play; all contacts overhead.

Key Points

1. Because pass is off a free ball, setting accuracy is expected.
2. Target should not have to move to retrieve sets.

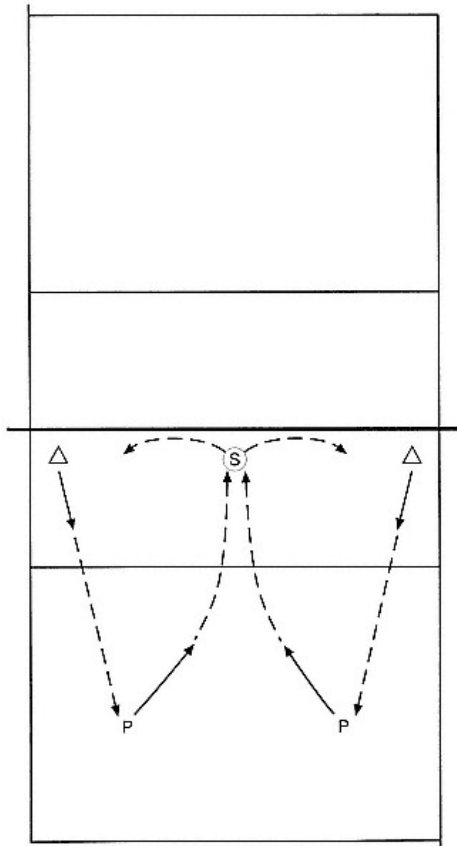
Variations

1. Change target positions along net.
2. Have the passer go around cone on endline or sideline—increasing the difficulty of the pass will produce less-than-perfect passes.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Two to four balls



23
Five-Person Free Ball

24—

Pinwheel Setting***Purpose***

To teach nonsetters to set off poor passes. Each player needs to be competent in setting in the event a team is out of system and a player other than the setter must play a ball.

Procedure

1. Coach stands at 3 m line.
2. One player stands in left front corner and one player stands in right front corner.
3. A line of 3, 5, or 7 players stands in middle back.
4. Coach tosses to right back, the next player in the line sets to left front.
5. Coach tosses to left the, next player in the line sets to right front.
6. Players rotate to the front corner after setting, then to the middle back.

Key Points

1. Get to ball quickly, or "beat the ball."
2. Face target: shoulders, hips, feet line up directly to target.
3. Extend arms and use legs to set ball crosscourt.

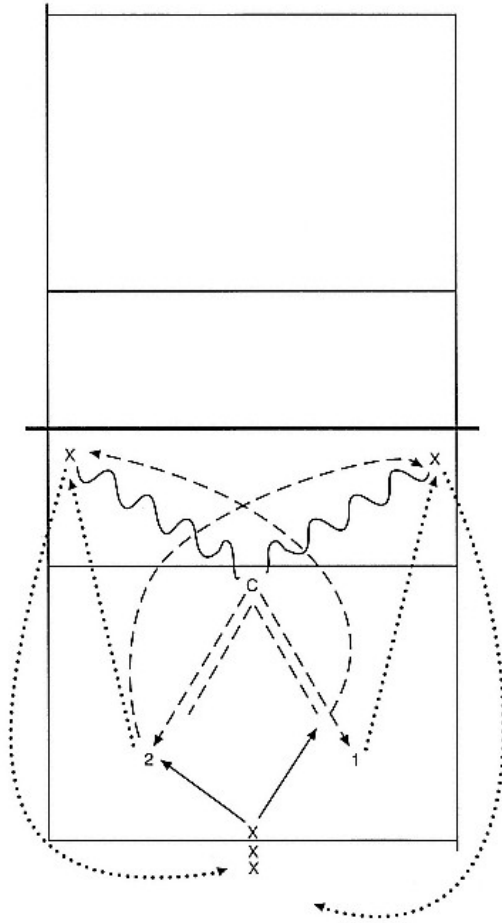
Variation

1. Toughen tosses by coach.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



24
Pinwheel Setting

25—

Crosscourt Setting Weave***Purpose***

To improve team setting skills; to encourage proper decision making regarding where to set from deep court locations; to strengthen player's hand by requiring high, properly located sets. This is a good drill for warm-ups, as it allows for many contacts in a short duration.

Procedure

1. Players assume base starting position.
2. Player A initiates drill by setting the ball toward the left back position to player B.
3. Player A, after setting, quickly moves toward the backcourt behind player B to the right back backcourt position.
4. Player B is directing the second ball contact as a very high crosscourt set to player C.
5. Player B quickly follows the direction of the crosscourt set to establish a new base position in right front.
6. Player C now sets the third contact on the ball to the right back backcourt position where player A is waiting.
7. Player C weaves behind player A to the left back backcourt position to await the pass from left front.
8. Players continue setting and weaving until they execute 100 consecutive accurate contacts.

Key Points

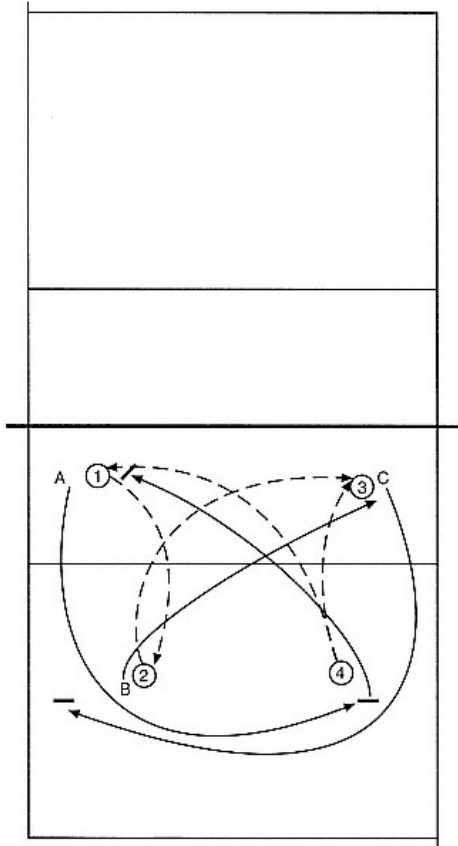
1. Players need to move quickly between contacts to establish a base position before the ball arrives, but stop their feet while setting.
2. All players must communicate consistently by calling out the number of set they are executing.

Variations

1. To increase difficulty:
 - Limit the number of players to eliminate long lines and enhance cardiovascular workout.
 - Raise the number of consecutive accurate setting contacts to be completed.
 - Specify the target zones by taping boxes in the desired areas.
 - Utilize a stopwatch, insisting on a time limit for success.

Equipment Needed

One ball



25
Crosscourt Setting Weave

26—

Fan Drill***Purpose***

To provide a structure to be used in teaching a wide variety of setting skills. This drill can be used with one to five players by rotating them from setter to target to line.

Procedure

1. Coach begins at C1 and tosses 1, 2, 3, . . . balls from that location.
2. Coach moves to C2 and tosses desired number of balls.
3. Coach then moves to C3, C4, . . . C10, C9, C8, C7, . . . C1.
4. The setter sets to the chosen target.
 - Target gives feedback as to the location of the set.
 - Coach sets accuracy goals and provides single items of focus for training (e.g., footwork, hand position, follow-through, etc.).

Key Points

1. Set to the target: consistent accuracy needs to be developed.
2. Focus on two items during each set of tosses and sets.
3. Refocus on each play: do not let one play ruin the next.

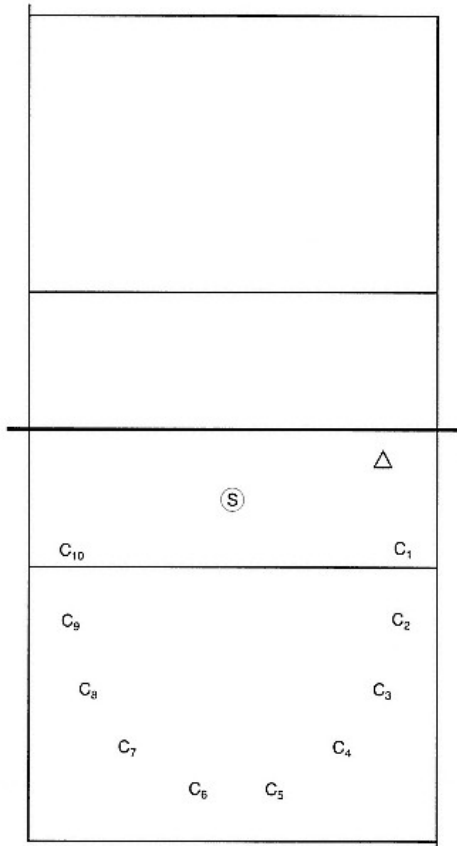
Variations

1. The speed of the drill affects the difficulty.
2. Vary the amount of movement required to set each toss.
3. Make the setter move to the net from specific locations before or as the toss is made.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Two to six balls



26
Fan Drill

27—

Setting off Defense***Purpose***

To improve a setter's ability in defense transition. This is a good drill for beginning setters. Coaches must create opportunities for setters to deliver balls off serve receive, off a free ball, and off a dig.

Procedure

1. Setter starts right front.
2. Player B is right back while coach enters balls from left front to player B. Player B passes to the setter.
3. After a successful number of sets, player B moves to middle back and then left back.

Key Points

1. Setter should concentrate on picking up the ball off the digger's arms.
2. Players need to get to ball early—"beat the ball."

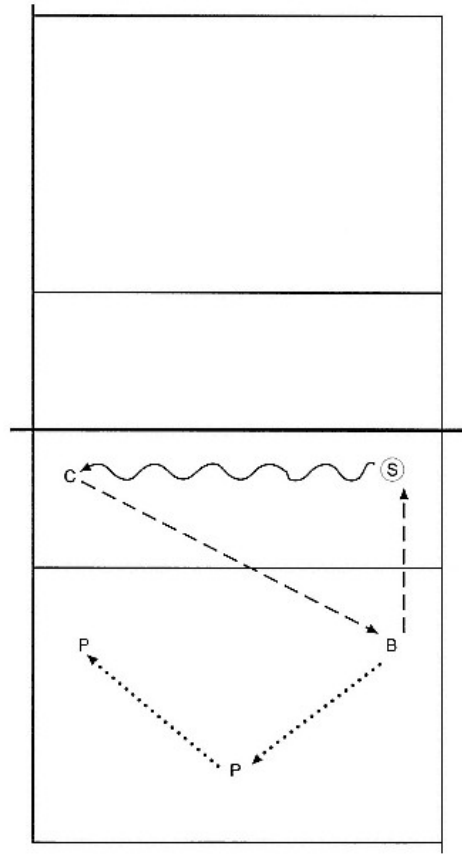
Variations

1. Increase difficulty by having coach hit balls at player B.
2. Decrease difficulty by tossing balls to player B.
3. Add attacker for player to set.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Four to six balls



27
Setting Off Defense

28—

Set and Cover

Purpose

To teach setters to cover in a low position and then return to a defensive position.

Procedure

1. Coach stands on a box or chair in the left front.
2. Two setters start in the right back.
3. Digger starts in the middle back.
4. Coach hits a down ball to the digger, who passes to the setter.
5. The setter sets an outside set, then immediately gets into coverage position.
6. Coach then hits or tips the ball at the setter in the setter's coverage position, simulating a blocked ball.
7. Repeat.

Key Points

1. Emphasize immediate transition into coverage and then back to defensive position.
2. Force setters to square up to target.

Variations

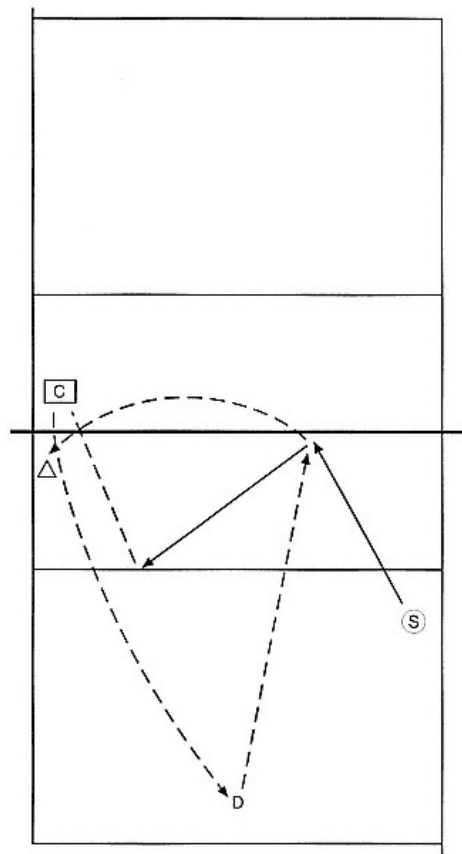
1. Coach can control speed, difficulty of first contact, and difficulty of the covered ball.
2. Vary the sets that the setter will make.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Box

Four to six balls



28
Set and Cover

29—

Back to Front, Front to Back***Purpose***

To teach setters to front or back set from any position. In learning to do so, the setter can "set against the flow," that is, set the opposite direction from where the setter is moving.

Procedure

1. The coach is stationed in the backcourt with a large supply of balls.
2. The setter is at the net in the starting position.
3. The rule for setters is that they must set the opposite of the direction that they are moving in. A setter who is moving forward must back set. A setter who is moving backward must front set.
4. The coach tosses balls in rapid succession, in front of, then in back of the setter. The coach can control the difficulty by the speed of the successive tosses and the amount of movement needed by the setter.

Key Points

1. The setter needs good footwork here. The coach can train the feet here as well as the hands. When setters are moving backward, they should not "backpedal" but rather turn and run.
2. Because this is a controlled drill, count only "good" sets to target.
3. Setters must never turn their back on the coach, but keep their "face to the ball."

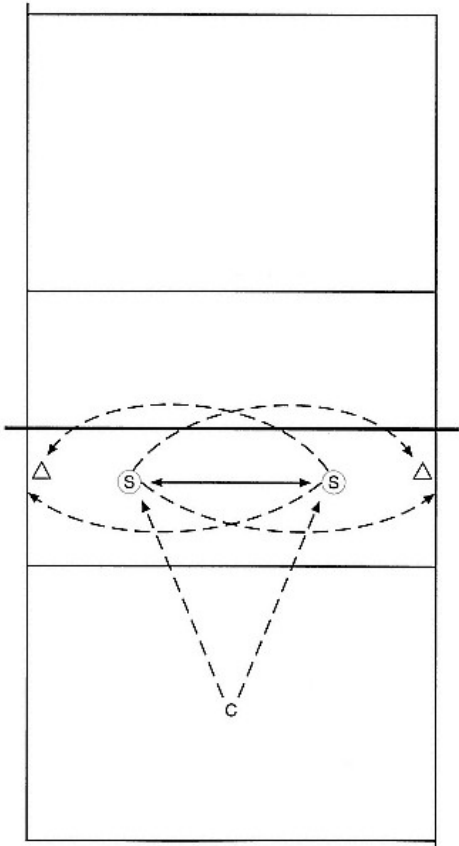
Variations

1. Use as conditioning by entering balls at a rapid pace.
2. Add hitters to the target zone and require a certain number of successful attacks to the end of the drill.
3. For more advanced setters, the setter can be required to jump set every ball.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty balls



29
Back to Front, Front to Back

30—

Decision Setting

Purpose

To help setters maintain neutral body position while front or back setting. This is the first step in teaching setters to be deceptive.

Procedure

1. Coach stands 15 ft from net with ball.
2. Coach tosses to setter at net, center court.
3. As ball approaches setter, coach calls "front" or "back."
4. Setter sets to target, depending on what was called, front or back.
5. Repeat.

Key Points

1. Keep body in neutral position.
2. Don't give away your setting choice by leaning backward to back set or by taking the ball too far in front of body to front set.

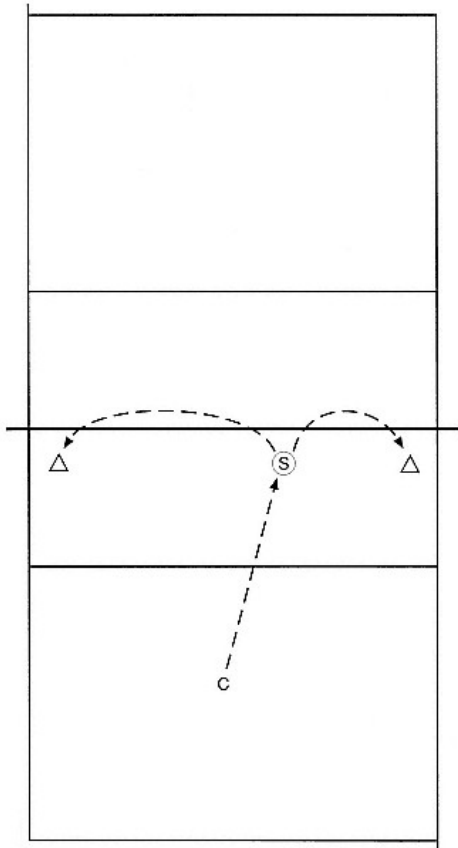
Variations

1. Coach makes the call later.
2. Coach can make tosses or passes more challenging.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



30
Decision Setting

31—

Setter Pressure Isolated***Purpose***

To teach setters to make correct choices under a "pressure" situation.

Procedure

1. The setter assumes the passing target location.
2. All hitters create a numerical attack order known to the setter. Hitters are responsible for remembering who they follow in the order. The order is constant.
3. The hitters scatter to different approach position bases and may alter those positions as the drill progresses.
4. The coach tosses a series of passes as each hitter approaches while calling to the setter the desired set. There are three hitters approaching at all times. *Only the hitter whose turn it is should be set.*
5. The setter delivers an accurate set to each hitter.
6. A successful attack is a hard-hit shot passing completely over the net and in bounds. The setter completes the drill with 16 successful attacks.

Key Points

1. Maintain composure regardless of the length of the drill or the origin of an error.
2. Continue to focus on execution and communication throughout the drill.

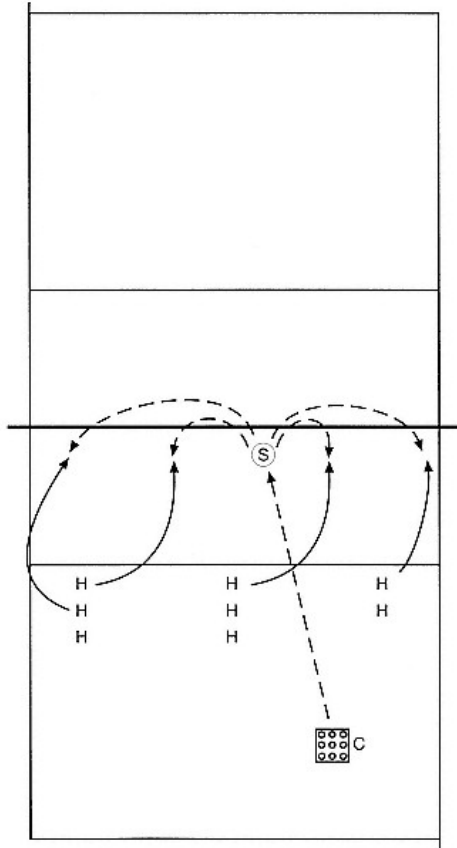
Variations

1. To increase difficulty:
 - Faster pacing by the coach.
 - Raise the successful execution standard.
 - Require a time standard for completing the drill.
 - Specify a court area that the hitters must attack into for a successful contact.
2. To decrease difficulty:
 - Slower pacing by the coach.
 - Lower the successful execution standard.
 - Rehearse only one type of set with all hitters originating from the same base point.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

About twenty balls



31
Setter Pressure Isolated

32—

Setting Situation Plus Five***Purpose***

To focus on a few selected situations (we choose four, out of habit) that setters face and ask them to perform accurate sets in those situations.

Procedure

1. Use two setters.
2. Coach chooses four situations that the setter will be put into in a game situation—for example, (1) pass at 10 ft line in middle of court, (2) pass into net, (3) pass to left front of court, (4) pass to setter's base position at net.
3. Setter transitions to net; coach tosses ball to one of the four selected locations; setter moves and sets ball to selected target location (e.g., high set to left front). If set goes to target, setter gets a plus; if not, a minus. If setter gets a plus, another ball is tossed. If setter gets a minus, the next setter transitions to set and the first setter returns to starting spot. Scores are kept; no one goes below zero; first setter to +5 wins.

Key Point

1. Through tossing by the coach to the same four different spots, consistent, repeated movements and body positions will produce accuracy.

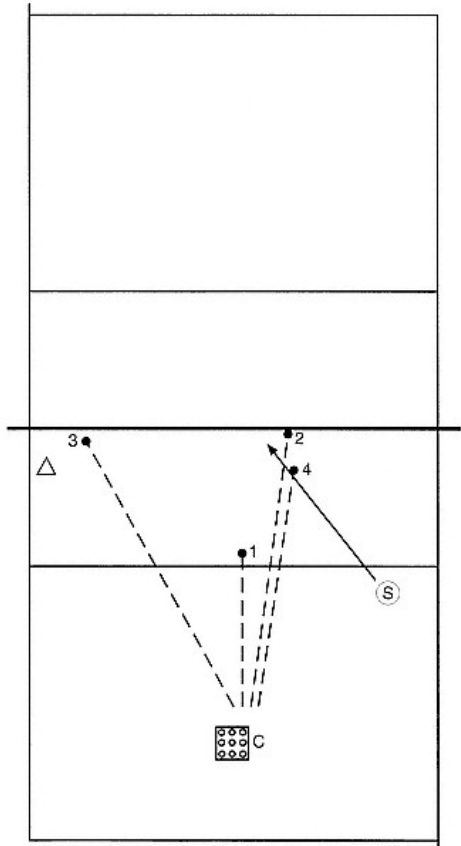
Variations

1. The number and difficulty of the situations greatly affect the overall difficulty.
2. The location the setter transitions from affects the difficulty.
3. How close the set must be to target to be a plus greatly affects the difficulty (right back, left front, etc.).

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



32
Setting Situation Plus Five

33—

Setter Versus Blocker***Purpose***

To have your setter recognize the position of the blocker on the other side of the net. This will enable the setter to set away from the middle blockers.

Procedure

1. Setter waits at target.
2. Blockers are in blocking position on the other side of the net.
3. Blocker (middle blocker) makes a decision to block left side or right side just prior to the set.
4. Tosser tosses the ball to the setter, who sets left side or right side, opposite of the movement of the middle blocker.

Key Points

1. Setter needs to see the blocker and the blocker's movement.
2. Setter must set a hittable ball.
3. Setter must cover after the set.

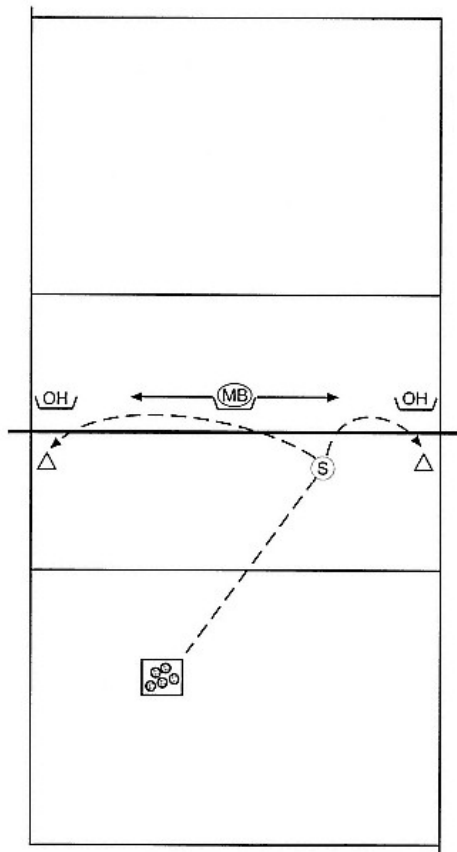
Variations

1. Blocker can release earlier for younger setters.
2. Toss can vary, or passers can be added to make it more difficult for the setter.
3. Have setter set from different positions on court.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



33
Setter Versus Blocker

34—

Setting Choices***Purpose***

To get setters to make good setting decisions. As the drill is initiated with a free ball, a setter should be able to make a good choice where to set. This is a more advanced form of the setter versus blocker drill.

Procedure

1. Team A (with setter A) receives a free ball.
2. Team A gets 1 point for winning the rally and a bonus point if setter A gets the hitter in a one-on-one situation. Team B gets 1 point for winning the rally and a bonus point for any stuff block.
3. Rally score to 8, then rotate players.

Key Point

1. Setters need to make good choices, and they *must* cover.

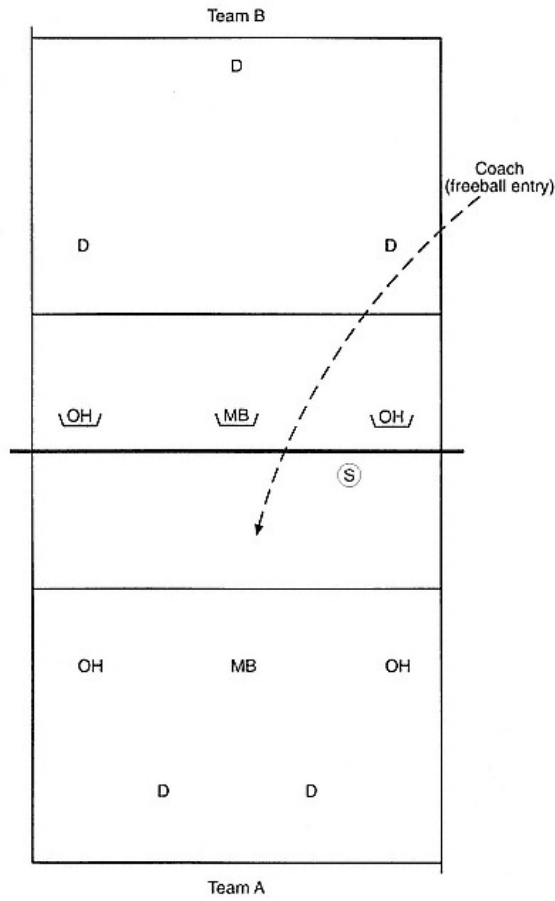
Variations

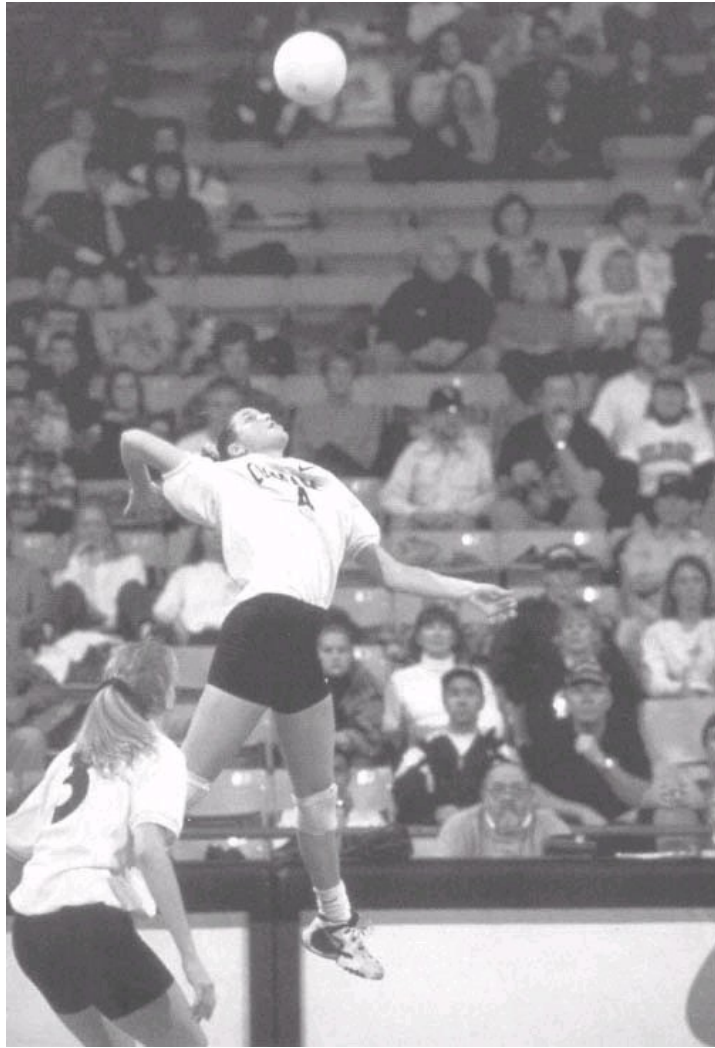
1. Increase difficulty by having team B serve to team A.
2. Decrease difficulty for setter by having middle blocker release early to one side.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Two balls





Courtesy of University of Colorado

Chapter 4— Attacking

Brad Saindon
Australian Women's National Team

The spike! It is one of the most dramatic and dynamic single moments in all of sport. The sheer beauty and athleticism of a well-executed spike can take one's breath away. It is the home run, the slam dunk, the touchdown strike, the slap-shot goal, and the 300-yard drive of volleyball.

Many forget that volleyball was originally invented to be a "less strenuous alternative" to the sport of basketball. The idea was to volley the ball back and forth over a high net. It was a game of cooperation. One can imagine subtle waltz music playing in the background while noontime athletes batted the ball among themselves. However, one noontime, the game at the "Y" changed forever when one overly aggressive warrior jumped up above the net and smacked that basketball bladder with all of her might. Can you imagine the faces of the shocked members of the team across the net? Did that first spike sail the length of the gym? Did it draw the face of an unknowing and unprepared player? It was the advent of the spike that led volleyball out of the sphere of low-intensity recreation and into the intense and dramatic sport that has gained a worldwide following.

The spike is the climax of every volleyball play. Teams endeavor to pass the ball accurately to the setter so that the setter can accurately deliver the ball to the spiker. The defensive team tries to limit the ability to get the ball

to the spiker. If the spiker does indeed get the ball, the defense must muster all of their resources to defend the mighty blow about to invade their airspace. In modern volleyball, defending these cannonballs is considerably more difficult. Spikers are running all over the place striking from here and there, from the front court, the back court. One hitter is over here, another is over there—no wait, he is over there now! One spiker is already in the air here, but the ball is set over there! *Duck!* Volleyball has emerged from frontal assault to guerrilla warfare, with fakes and combinations and motion and speed and deception. We should thank that first-ever spiker!

Spiking a volleyball is also one of the most difficult motor skills in all of sport. Think of what this skill requires. The spiker is moving forward, in the air with no stable base, directly toward a barrier. Spikers must hit a ball moving in a completely different plane from the one in which they are moving. The spiker must strike the ball precisely at the exact time to spin the ball as desired. The ball must clear that high barrier and pass one, or two, or even three blockers intent on not allowing it to pass them. The spiker must then land under control, without touching the barrier or the opponent's territory. Then the player must be ready to play again in an instant (or at least be ready to jump even higher in celebration of match point!). We even have the coolest statistic in sport: kills. Better than points per game, goals, strokes, yards, completions, or anything else. A kill. Of course this generally refers to killing the rally, killing the ball, or killing the point, as opposed to bodily harm inflicted. We have all seen an occasional spike that could indeed cause trauma.

Spiking generally determines the outcome of a match. Statistical analysis of volleyball matches shows that somewhere around 80% of the variance in match outcome can be explained by hitting stats. It is very rare for a team to lose if that team has better spiking statistics. Obviously, spiking is critical to a team's success. A team with great spikers can win "big" with less-than-perfect passing and setting. Great offense usually beats great defense in volleyball.

There is no one way to spike a volleyball. However, there are some widely accepted guidelines to which most prominent spikers generally adhere. Usually the spiking approach starts well behind the 3 m line. The spiker generates power for the liftoff through a short (three or four step) but powerful accelerating run-up. When the player leaves the ground off both feet, the left foot is forward (for the right-handed player) much as in throwing a baseball. This gives spikers some mechanical advantage with their body, and some tactical advantage by "opening" the body to receive the ball (at least from in front of the setter). Recently there has been a trend of spikers leaving the ground off one foot, particularly from behind the setter. It is best for right-handers to leave off the left foot.

Most spikers carry some momentum in the air and drift forward subsequent to contact with the ball. This allows spikers to keep the ball in front of

them, and that improves vision. Hitters need to develop vision during the spike to see the blockers and hit around them. Most spikers' arm swings are much like a throwing motion, and contact occurs high and in front of the body. Most spikers snap their wrist over the top of the ball, imparting overspin on the ball that helps drive the ball toward the floor. Most spikers contact the ball with a wide-open hand, with as much of the hand as possible contacting the ball. Most spikers blame the setter if they hit the ball out of bounds.

Young players will develop a style that is natural for them. Some parameters are important; others may be superficial. Repeatable footwork is important and can be introduced and trained by throwing a tennis ball over the net using spiking footwork. Arm swings will generally mimic an athlete's throwing motion, limited by how long a player can stay airborne. Thus the efficiency of the arm swing becomes paramount. Training an arm swing on the floor may not transfer to an arm swing used in the air.

Most of the training for spiking should be as "live" as possible. Spiking in a game rarely occurs from precise and exact conditions. Spikers must respond to poor sets—low or high, off the net or tight. Spikers must involve themselves in the play leading up to the spike. They must learn to pass or dig first, and then make themselves available to hit. In a game the spiker is always (or almost always) confronted by a blocker or blockers. Practice should be the same way. If there is spiking there should be blocking; only then can a spiker learn to see the block and hit around it. Players must learn to react to all the variables that will confront them in a game. Of course, a coach must lead the team up to live conditions, but live situations should occur frequently as skill develops.

Coaching Cues

You may find the following cues helpful reminders for your players during practice:

1. Contact in front of the shoulder.
2. Execute a quick approach.
3. Recover and cover.

Summary

Nowhere is athleticism more evident than in a 100-mile-an-hour spike delivered from somewhere near the stratosphere. The action seems to go into slow motion. The spiker's hand hits the ball sounding like a rifle shot. The ball hits the floor before the spiker does, with a sound that is, uniquely, volleyball.

35—

Three-Step, "3" Tempo Hitting***Purpose***

To teach high-set attackers the speed, timing, and effort needed to attack at their highest point.

Procedure

1. Raise net to 8 ft or higher. Attackers must pass or dig to a setter, who sets a high set. Hitter approaches and attacks. Non-high-set hitters retrieve balls.
2. Attach a blocking device to the net with top at same height as the net was in step 1.
3. Attack versus two blockers.

Key Points

1. Wait and go fast, instead of early and slow.
2. Use speed and a big effort.
3. Contact the ball at a high, extended point.

Variations

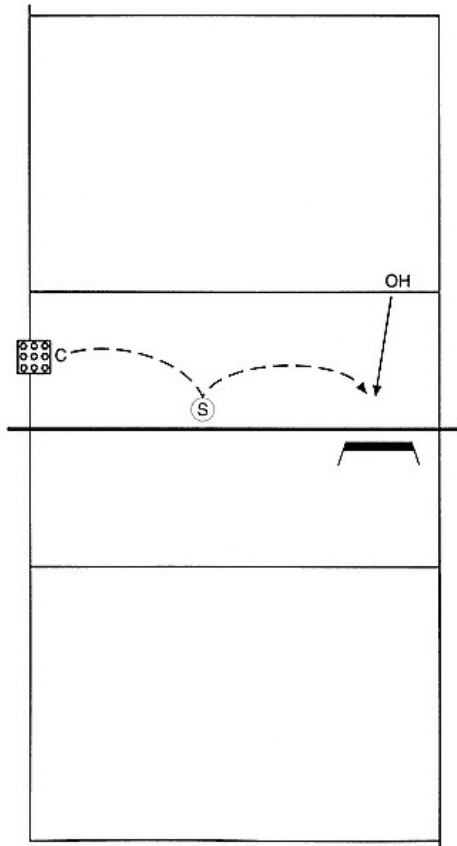
1. No passing or digging first will make the drill easier.
2. Locating targets on the court will add to the difficulty.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

One blocking device

Twelve balls



35
Three-Step, "3" Tempo Hitting

36—

Line/Crosscourt Attack Competition***Purpose***

To enhance the attackers' efficiency of hitting line and crosscourt.

Procedure

1. Two attackers start at their assumed positions—attacker 1 (A1) at left front and attacker 2 (A2) at right front.
2. Two setters start at their positions on same sides of net (S1 and S2).
3. Two tossers start at their positions, T1 and T2.
4. Drill is initiated when T1 tosses ball to S1, who then sets A1, who proceeds to hit line or crosscourt (coach's choice).
5. After A1 attacks, T2 initiates T2's ball, which is followed by the same progression.
6. Tossers alternate until each attacker has had 15 attacks.
7. Scorers (SC) count the number of balls that were hit into the designated zone by each attacker. Attacker who hits the most balls into the designated area is considered the winner.

Key Points

1. Finish arm and hand toward the intended target.
2. Transition back into hitting position after each attack.

Variations

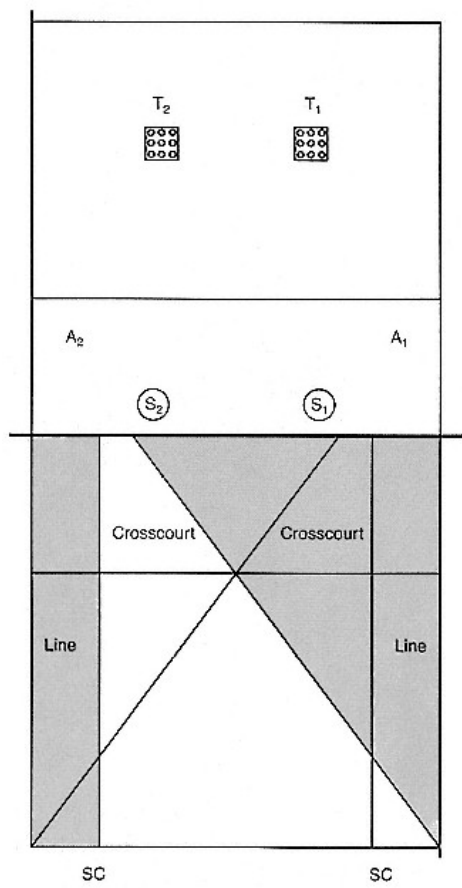
1. To increase difficulty:
 - Narrow area of the attack zone.
 - Alternate hitting one ball line and the next crosscourt.
 - Coach gives verbal signal of the line or crosscourt just prior to attacker's contact.
2. To decrease difficulty:
 - Widen area of attack zone.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Tape or cones to mark zone areas

Thirty balls



36
Line/Crosscourt Attack Competition

37—

Multiple-Toss Hitting***Purpose***

To teach hitters to adjust to sets at different heights and transition of net between attempts.

Procedure

1. Coach is at net with 10 balls.
2. Attacker starts at 3 m line.
3. Coach tosses balls at irregular intervals, with tosses of different heights.
4. Attacker hits and retreats as far off the net as possible before next toss.
5. Coach tosses 10 balls.

Key Points

1. Stay patient and wait for toss.
2. Attempt to remain explosive.

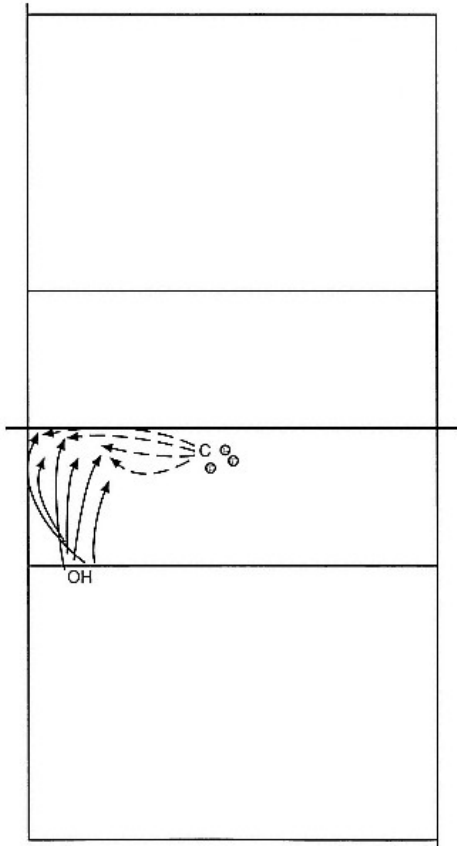
Variations

1. Count only balls hit in bounds (e.g., must kill 7 out of 10).
2. Add one or more blockers.
3. Add full defense.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



37
Multiple-Toss Hitting

38—

"3" Ball Transition Hitting***Purpose***

To teach attacking using three different types of transition footwork.

Procedure

1. Attacker is positioned in serve receive.
2. Ball is served, attacker passes to setter, setter sets attacker, attacker hits.
3. Immediately coach hits ball to attacker, who digs and attacks.
4. Tosser tosses to a digger behind attacker (who is in blocking position).
5. Attacker transitions and attacks.

Key Points

1. Work on three types of transition footwork:
 - Receive serve and hit.
 - Dig and hit.
 - Block and hit.
2. Stay late and behind set.
3. Take care of pass and dig first.

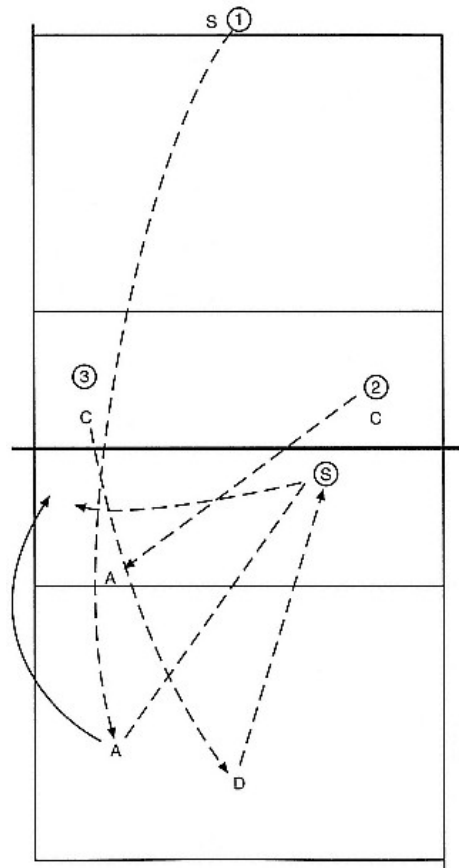
Variations

1. Add a blocker/full defense.
2. Must kill all three for a big point.
3. Three big points to get "out" of drill.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



38
"3" Ball Transition Hitting

39—

Two Versus Two Pepper over the Net***Purpose***

To teach the importance of ball control in order to hit.

Procedure

1. One player is positioned near the net, and the other player is positioned about 6 m off the net, directly in line with a partner.
2. A second group of two is across the net in the same formation.
3. A ball is tossed from one side of the net, over the net to the passer/hitter.
4. The back-row player passes the ball to that player's partner, who sets the ball off the net, closer to 3 m line, back to the first player, who then hits the ball in control across the net to the back-row player on the opposite side of the net (just as in playing "doubles").
5. As the ball goes over the net, the players sending the ball over the net switch positions (hitter becomes setter).
6. Play continues in this manner. The idea is to keep a rally going. If the ball goes out of play, simply toss another ball into play.

Key Points

1. This is a ball control drill! When playing the ball over the net, players should execute only what they can control.
2. If the ball can't be spiked, set it or pass it over the net, but keep the rally going.
3. No blocking is allowed in this drill.

Variations

1. Begin drill with serve from passer/hitter.
2. Have coach reenter ball where drill ended (hitting error: coach tosses to that hitter).

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls

40—

Over-the-Net Pepper***Purpose***

To teach attackers to hit the ball into a specific area of the court while also stressing general ball control. This works well as a warm-up.

Procedure

1. Two teams: left front, right front, left back on each side.
2. The ball is put in play by the coach to either side. The ball is passed, set, and attacked and kept in play as long as possible.
3. Once the ball crosses the net, the attacking team rotates, from the waiting line to left back, to left front, to right front, to the waiting line.
4. Left front player is the attacker.

Key Points

1. The ball should be hit to the designated area of the court (crosscourt).
2. Emphasize the need for the attacker to keep the ball in front and see the court.

Variations

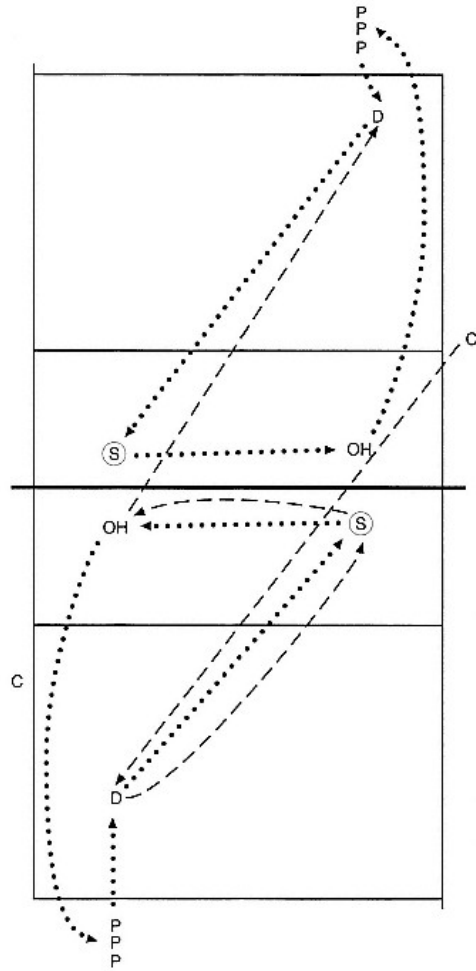
1. For younger players, emphasize the ball control aspect of attacking (keep ball in play).
2. Make this a competitive game for experienced players—progress from emphasizing ball control to emphasizing termination of the ball (keep score).
3. Rather than always attacking crosscourt from the left side, hit line from the left side by adding a right back and a middle back player. Hitting from the right side is also an option.
4. Add blockers.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Cones for boundaries

Four to six balls



41—

Left Versus Left Attacking

Purpose

To teach hitters to kill a ball against two blockers.

Procedure

1. One left side attacker on each side of the net starts at that player's base position (see diagram).
2. One setter on each side of the net starts at base position (see diagram).
3. Each attacker will receive a total of 10 sets from the setter on the attacker's side of the net.
4. Coach alternates tossing to the two sides of the net.
5. The object of the game is to see which attacker can terminate the most balls out of 10 versus an opposing block. Player with the most kills is considered the winner.

Key Points

1. Keep set in front in order to see block.
2. Adjust feet to allow for hitting line or angle.
3. Learn how to hit off blockers' hands.

Variations

To increase difficulty:

1. Add diggers behind the block.
2. Play continuous game with every ball being set to the outside hitters.

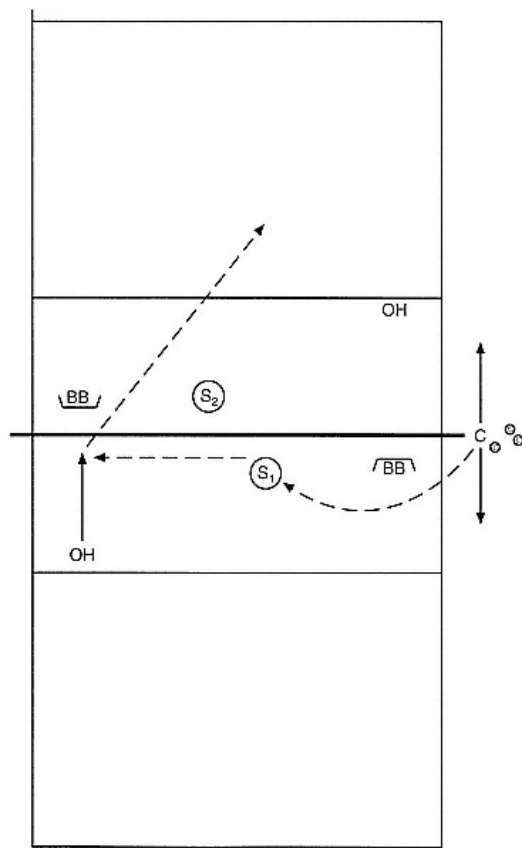
To decrease difficulty:

1. Have only one blocker.
2. Have no block and two defenders. Play right versus right or middle versus middle.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty balls



41
Left Versus Left Attacking

42—

All Balls to the Middle

Purpose

To get middle hitters to transition consistently.

Procedure

1. Coaches alternate entering free balls to teams A and B. The setters must set the middle hitter off the free ball as well as any transition ball. Play a rally score to 5 points, then rotate in new middles. If setter can't set middle, then the other team gets a free ball.

Key Point

1. Players should focus on getting off the net as far as possible on every transition.

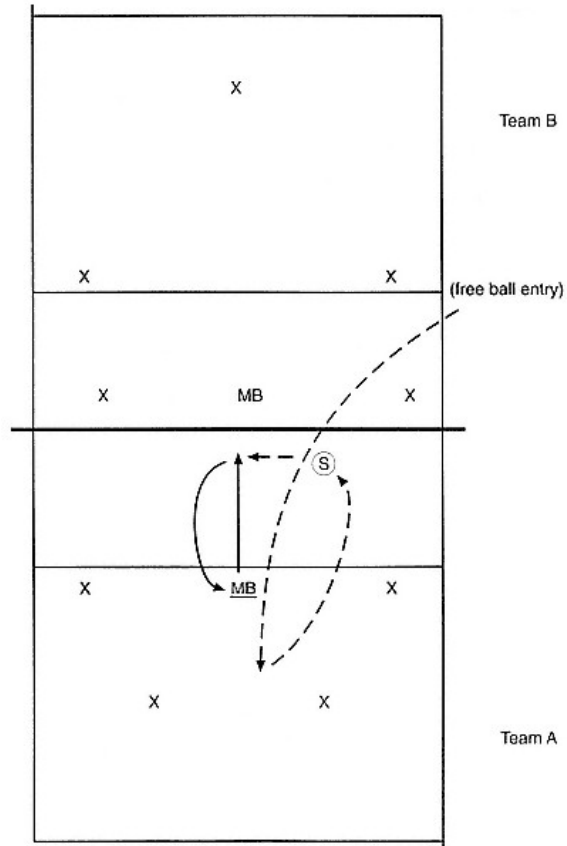
Variation

1. Increase difficulty by having teams serve to each other instead of entering a free ball to each side.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Four balls



42
All Balls to the Middle

43—

Transition Attack One Versus One***Purpose***

To teach hitters how to transition—to go from offense to defense or from defense to offense.

Procedure

1. Tosser (or setter) on each side.
2. Ball is tossed (or set) to hitter, who attacks versus block.
3. If ball gets by blocker, then the blocker becomes an attacker, simulating transition (attacker becomes blocker).
4. If ball is blocked, another toss (set) goes to attacker, simulating a blocked ball being covered and attacked.
5. If attacker hits out of bounds, another ball is tossed (set) to that same attacker.

Key Points

1. Quick, strong approaches.
2. Transition off the net in order to take a full approach.
3. One versus one blocking skills.

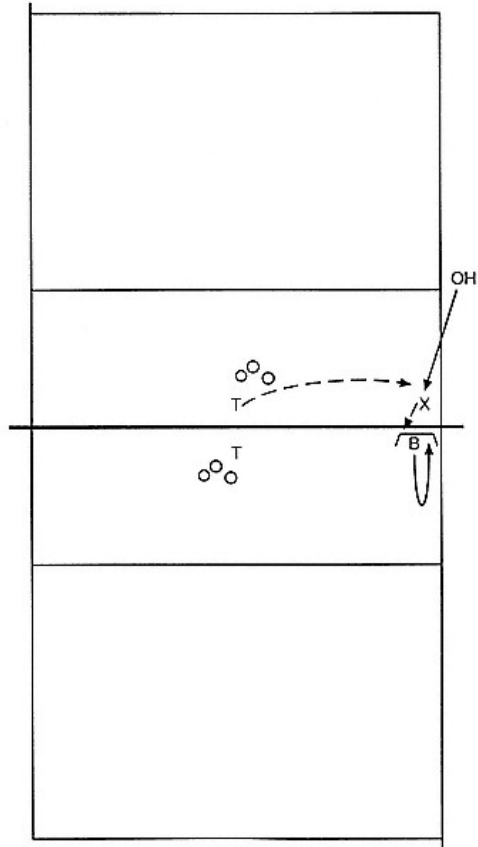
Variations

1. Put defense around block.
2. Put MB into drill, so attackers are hitting against two blockers.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



43
Transition Attack One Versus One

44—

Crosscourt Attacking***Purpose***

To teach hitter to kill a ball attacking angle against two blockers from defensive transition.

Procedure

1. Five versus five (setter is right front blocker).
2. Coach enters ball to opposite side.
3. Ball is passed to setter, who sets the outside hitter.
4. Hitter faces two blockers who are blocking line. Hitter tries to kill the ball angle.
5. Hitter attempts to score. No tips allowed.

Key Points

1. Left front players must dig and attack.
2. Only sets to the antennae.
3. Left front player can hit line if block cheats too much crosscourt.

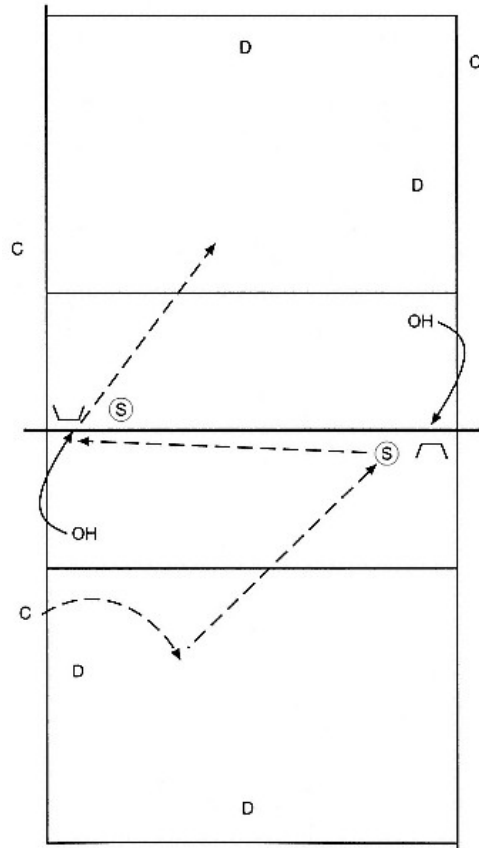
Variations

1. Left front players hit different zones in front of setter.
2. Six versus six; block takes away crosscourt *or* line.
3. Change score to 3 points in a row.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



44
Crosscourt Attacking

45—

Plus Seven***Purpose***

To develop the ability to terminate the ball against a solid block and defense. Attackers will also gain experience passing and then hitting.

Procedure

1. One passer/hitter (OH) and a setter on one side of the net with a full team on the opposite side of the net. Two "on deck" passers/hitters wait.
2. Passer/hitter 1 passes a down ball to the setter and attacks a designated set.
3. A swing that results in a kill gives passer/hitter 1 a score of 2; a ball kept in play but not killed is worth zero, and an error (hitting out of bounds, or being stuff blocked) earns a score of -1.
4. Passer/hitter 2 swings.
5. Passer/hitter 3 swings.
6. The first player to reach 7 is the winner.

Key Points

1. Control the first contact with a good pass to the setter.
2. See the block and defense as the approach is made.
3. Terminate the ball while keeping errors to a minimum.

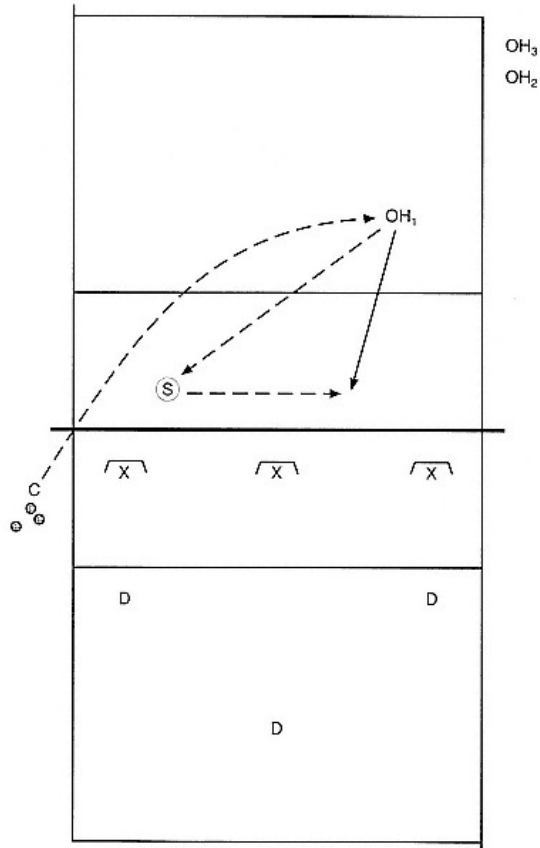
Variations

1. If attackers are primary passers, force them to pass a serve as opposed to a down ball.
2. Use back-row players to pass down the balls when middle attackers are competing.
3. Change defense to force the hitter to adjust shots appropriately.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



46—

Plus One, Minus Two

Purpose

To teach attackers that a kill is better than an attempt, and an attempt is better than an error.

Procedure

1. Player A plays a rally score versus player B. Each takes turns attacking against the same defense.
2. If a player gets a kill, it counts as 1 point.
3. An attempt counts as nothing (not as a kill or an error), and an error counts as -2 points.
4. Game is first player to 5 total points.

Key Point

1. Keep set in front in order to see blockers. Find the weakness in the defense to kill the ball.

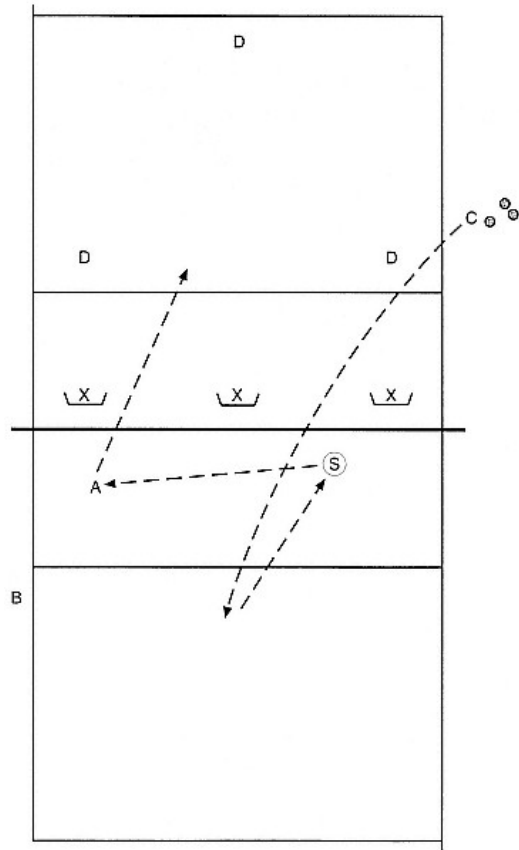
Variations

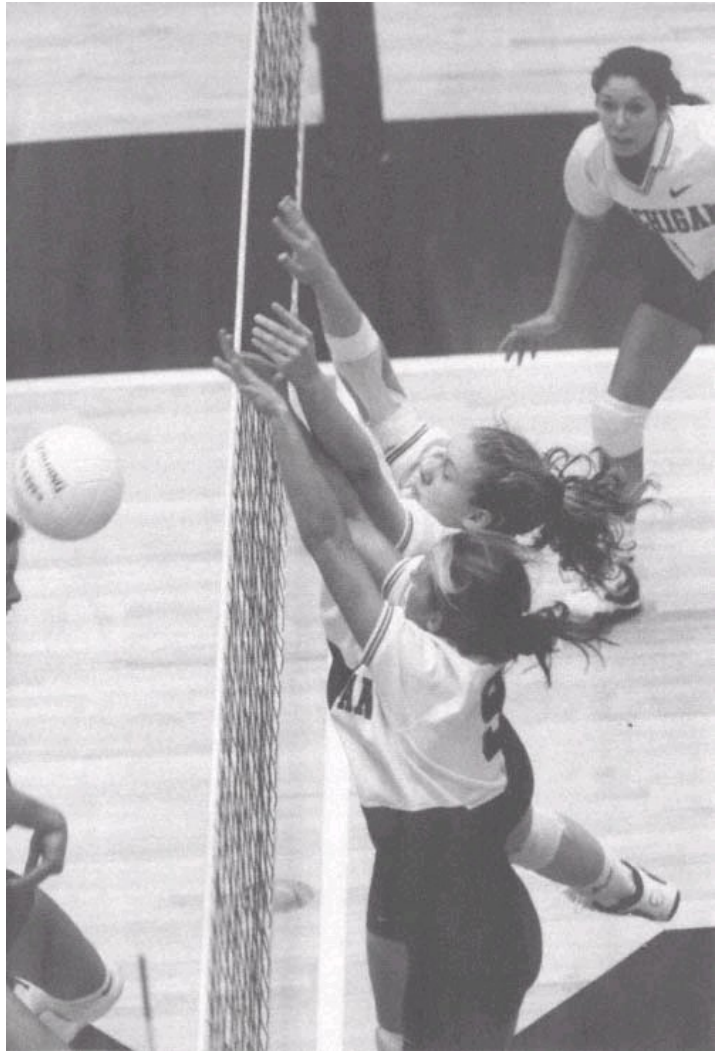
1. To decrease difficulty:
 - Change the scoring to +2/-1.
 - Use only one blocker.
2. To increase difficulty:
 - Let players A and B pass and hit.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Four to six balls





Courtesy of University of Michigan

Chapter 5— Blocking

Greg Giovanazzi
University of Michigan

The block is a team's first line of defense. For some it is the primary defensive option. For others it is just a part of the defensive scheme. In either case, the block is a valuable skill—one that with the least amount of training can yield the greatest dividends for just about any team.

The philosophy of the block varies from team to team and is dependent on your personnel as well as the opposition's ability to attack. Fundamentally, the block takes two forms in the concept of team defense. First, the block is a part of the whole. It takes an area of the court away from the opposing offense while the diggers take another. A second philosophy is that the block takes everything it can, going for as many stuffs as possible. There is less structure in the second case, and this is a situation, most likely, in which your team plays against very high levels of attacking.

Area blocking is the first concept. Our block will take an area of the court away, most likely where the opposition can attack the ball most effectively, and

our defensive players will be situated around the blockers. The philosophy is of the block as the primary line of defense and the diggers as secondary. Complementing this scheme is the idea that we take a relatively small area with the block and don't reach into an area that is considered the domain of the diggers.

This system is best designed for smaller, quicker teams with good ball control. Teams around the world that employ this scheme include the women's teams of Japan, China, Korea, and Peru.

Read blocking would be better suited to a bigger team that doesn't play great defense and whose forte is the block. Put simply, the credo here is that if we block it we don't have to dig, set, or spike it. Here the blockers situate themselves in the area that they believe is the most likely spot the attackers will spike into. Blockers are allowed to make late changes, jump into hitting seams, and reach outside of their body—anything to get the stuff. Since blocking is a very aggressive skill, in many ways this philosophy complements the assertive nature of the skill. Most men's teams as well as the women's teams from the United States, Russia, and Cuba use this system.

When teaching blocking, stick with a couple of very simple and direct concepts. There are two primary technical cues: (1) vision and (2) sealing the net. These two ideas are inextricably linked and are paramount to successful blocking. Vision, put simply, means that every contact on the other side of the net must be seen and recognized. If our players are watching the ball they will not have success as blockers. Instead, they must, first, *see the pass*.

- Is it coming over? (If so, get ready to hit it.)
- Is it a poor pass that is off the net? (If so, it will probably be set to a predictable hitter—go get 'em!)
- Is it a good pass? (If so, hold your spot and be defensive, expecting anything. Stay balanced and ready to move in either direction.)

Second, players must see the set. The setter's body will tell you a lot. It will give hints about where the ball will be delivered. This will give you and your defense a jump on the attack. Third, the players must see the hitter. Here is the tough part. After the setter delivers the ball, take your eye off the ball and pick up the attacker's approach. In the majority of cases the hitter will tell you where the attack is going.

The other primary cue is sealing the net: keep your head down, eyes up, and slide your hands over the net and onto the other side. The result? Stuff blocks and points! If your players are watching the ball and not the hitter, they will have a tough time sealing and penetrating.

Sound footwork is essential in allowing the blocker to move to the best position. Since as coaches we are dealing with a limited amount of gym

time, designing techniques that carry over from one skill to another is optimum. We employ two very simple types of footwork for all ball handling, defense, and blocking: the shuffle step and the crossover step. Sidestep to all locations nearby, and use the crossover in all emergency or long-range situations. The shuffle is ideal in blocking because the hips stay square to the net. It takes great vision and recognition to utilize this step as a middle blocker trying to get to the outside. All end blockers should use only the shuffle.

The crossover is essentially running. Always have your athletes lead with the leg in the direction they want to move (going right, use the right leg first). A vital element of the crossover step is to get both hips back to the net. Square up!

Coaching Cues

1. Vision sequence (passer, setter, hitter)
2. One move (seal the net, slide over)
3. Head down, eyes up
4. Surround the ball
5. Recover (expect deflections and digs in your blocking area)

Summary

Blocking may be the easiest skill to teach and may require the most common sense of them all. As a coach, get on a box or stand and just hit the ball into the blockers. Very little feedback is necessary. If the ball goes on their side, they aren't sealing the net. As athletes become more adept, start to vary the height of the toss so that they learn timing. Move the box off the net to add depth-of-set reality and, finally, move to blocking live attackers. Ideally, coach-initiated blocking drills are best. Since the goal is to attack into the block, it is best that you don't encourage your players to acquire this tendency when you're going to receive any stuff in the face! Progress quickly to live drills that require your athletes to employ the vision sequence. Using videotape, close up and on the eyes, can really help.

As stated earlier, blocking is an aggressive skill. Design your blocking drills to encourage this aspect of the skill. Give the athletes a sense of success and they will believe they are (and will become) good blockers. Drilling on this skill for only 10 minutes a day can reap benefits for your team, manifested not only in points but also in all-around more passionate and aggressive play.

47—

Partner Block and Cover***Purpose***

To work on the fundamentals of blocking.

Procedure

1. Blockers can be grouped by position and located on the court where block practice is desired (e.g., right side blocker near right antenna blocking outside sets).
2. One partner is located at net near blocker so partner can see each block clearly. Others are on the other side of the net covering each block.
3. Blocker performs a block without a ball being hit. Coach then hits a ball at the block. Partner informs blocker of the difference between non-ball block and live block.
4. After five pairs of blocks per player, players rotate.

Key Points

1. Learn from your partner through verbal feedback.
2. Make the non-ball block form perfect and be able to repeat it when a ball is hit.

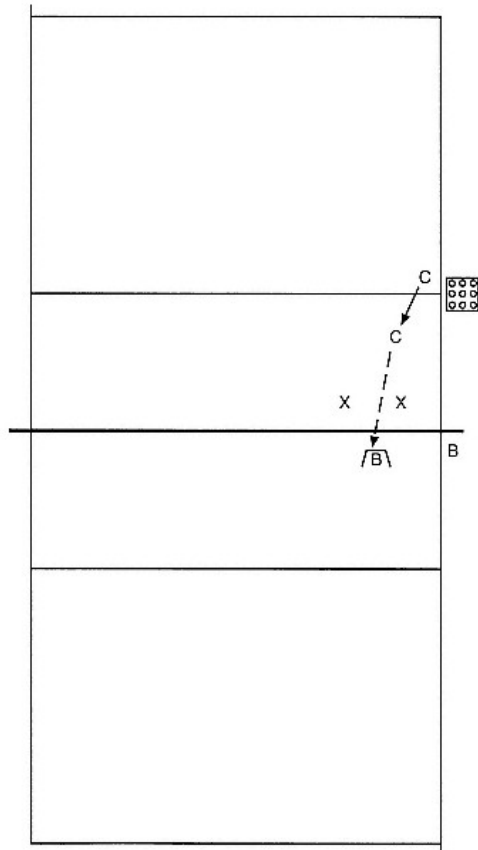
Variations

1. The coach can move between the 10 ft line and net, thus making the timing change.
2. Add a second blocker.
3. Varying where the coach faces will get the blocker to first front the hitter and then block.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



47
Partner Block and Cover

48—

Block with Elastic***Purpose***

To teach blockers to penetrate the net with hands. Successful blocking depends not on how high your hands go, but rather on how far they go over to the opponent's side.

Procedure

1. Stretch elastic across net, approximately 4 in. above net.
2. Either from box or floor, coach attacks ball into block.
3. Blocker reaches across net with hands under elastic.

Key Points

1. Reach over net as far as possible.
2. Do not swing arms.

Variations

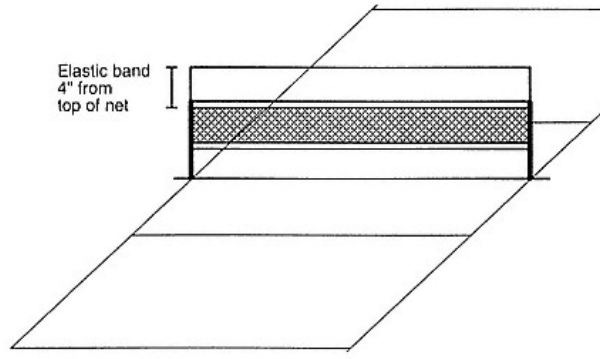
1. Coach moves along net before attack.
2. Coach hits a variety of shots.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Elastic stretched to antennae

Six to eight balls



48
Block With Elastic

49—

Read the Hitter***Purpose***

To teach blockers to look at the hitter after the set is made. This drill encourages the blocker to block without ever seeing the ball.

Procedure

1. The coach is positioned directly behind the blocker, on the same side of the net, and near the 3 m line.
2. A spiker is positioned across the net and opposite the blocker, near the opposite 3 m line.
3. The coach tosses a ball over the net, directly over the blocker's head (like an "overpass") so the spiker can hit the ball back into the blocker's side of the court.
4. The blocker must "read" the actions of the hitter and attempt to block the ball.

Key Point

1. Restrict the area that the spiker can hit into. Remember that this is a blocking drill and you want the blocker to touch lots of balls. If the blocker misses a block, the coach may want to protect her face—the coach is in artillery range!

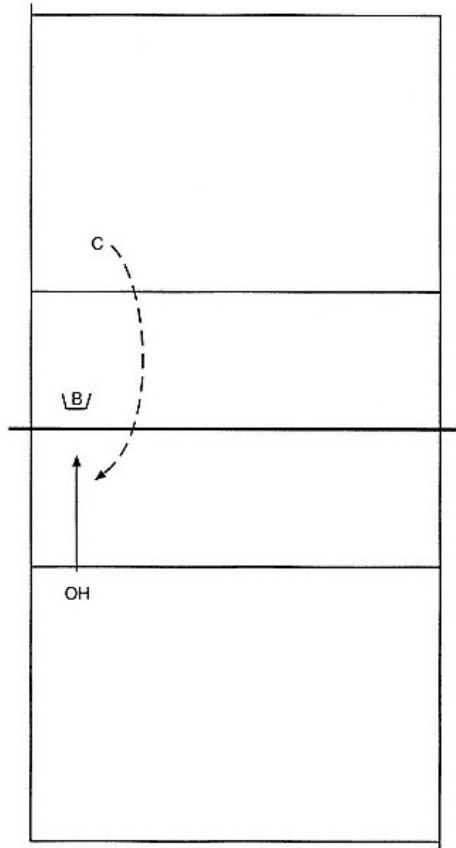
Variations

1. The coach can add additional movement for the blocker by tossing the ball more to the left or right of the spiker. For the blocker, this further emphasizes fronting the spiker's angle of approach.
2. A middle blocker can be added near the outside blocker, but not right next to the outside blocker. The middle blocker should allow the outside blocker to "set up the block," and then close the block by reading the position that the outside blocker has established.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



49
Read the Hitter

50—

Block, Reload, and Block***Purpose***

To rehearse and enhance proper blocking footwork and technique.

Procedure

1. Five players assume their positions on five attack boxes.
2. Three blockers line up in a single-file line preparing to block.
3. The remaining players are responsible for retrieving balls or feeding the attackers.
4. The five attack boxes are placed an equal distance from one another.
5. The drill begins when blocker 1 (see diagram) jumps and blocks attacker 1 (A₁). After landing, the blocker immediately recoils and shuffle-steps to the second box/attacker.
6. The drill continues until the blockers have attempted to block all five attackers.

Key Points

1. Penetrate the net low and fast.
2. Move efficiently when moving to the next box.
3. Keep an equal distance from the net.

Variations

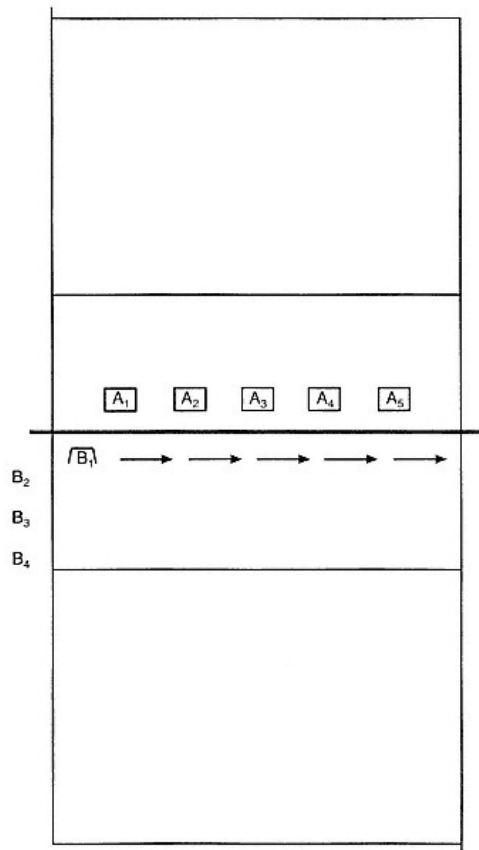
1. To increase difficulty:
 - Have three boxes (left, center, and right) and work on moving faster and longer distances.
 - Add elastic tape in order to increase the speed at which the players' hands penetrate the net.
2. To decrease difficulty:
 - Have players block only one box so they can focus on hand positioning

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Elastic to stretch from antenna to antenna

Forty balls



50
Block, Reload, and Block

51—

Three-Person Block***Purpose***

To work on the fundamentals of team blocking without adding a hitter; to focus on blocking movement and technique, on blockers working together, and on transition after blocking.

Procedure

1. Each group of three blockers will be given five blocking opportunities.
2. Coach will call out a set, which the blockers will then move as a unit to block or defend.
3. Blockers will then quickly return to desired base positions.
4. Coach will then call out another set, and so on.
5. After five blocks, a new group of three blockers steps in to work together. Ask groups to watch each other and learn from each other.

Key Points

1. Focus is on specific footwork or one single technique item (e.g., staying balanced, penetrating net, keeping hands in front of face) for each set of five block attempts.
2. The blockers must learn to work with their partners.
3. This drill must be done with the idea of repeating balanced movements.

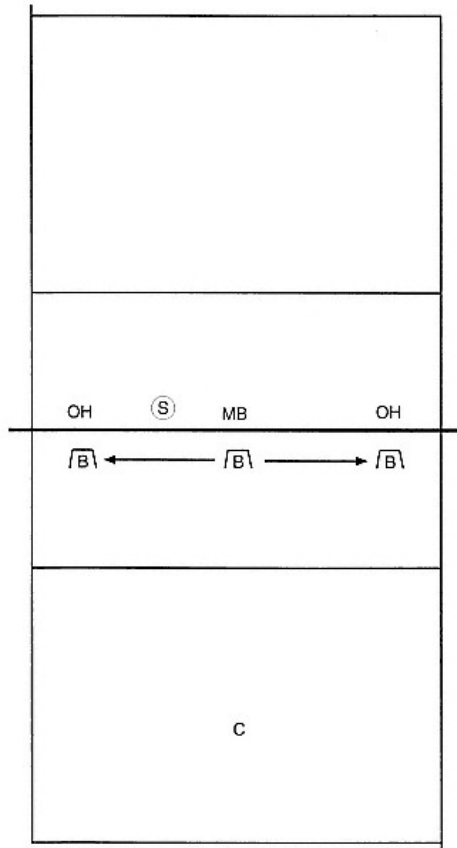
Variations

1. Have a larger or smaller number of blocks per group.
2. Ask the blockers to block and then transition before returning to base positions.
3. Add transition and a setter to set tossed balls in transition for the blockers to attack.
4. Add a second group to the other side of the net to defend the first group in transition.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Four to six balls



51
Three-Person Block

52—

Box Blocking

Purpose

To learn—in a controlled setting with attacker on box—sealing the net, footwork, and timing.

Procedure

1. Coach is on stand.
2. Coach tosses ball to self.
3. Coach attacks into blocker(s).

Key Points

1. Focus on sealing the net.
2. Put both hands around ball.
3. Be aware of timing.

Variations

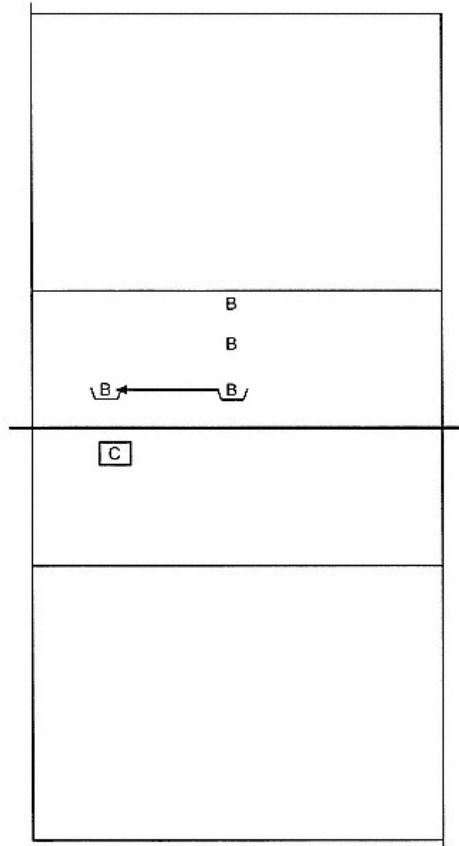
1. Vary height and depth of toss.
2. Add footwork and live attacking.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Box

Twenty balls



52
Box Blocking

53—

Block off Boxes***Purpose***

To provide repetition against an attack in a controlled drill. Blockers will gain repetitions in blocking an attacked ball.

Procedure

1. One coach on a box in left front simulating left side attack, another coach on a box in right front simulating right side attack.
2. One blocker on opposite side of the net in right front, middle front, and left front, with extra players lined up behind them.
3. First, middle blocker blocks coach's left side attack with right front player. All blockers will then alternate the directions they will block.
4. After each block, players return to their respective lines.

Key Points

1. Blockers must key on penetrating across the net.
2. Blockers should avoid getting fooled by the hitter.
3. Emphasize correct footwork for middle blockers.

Variations

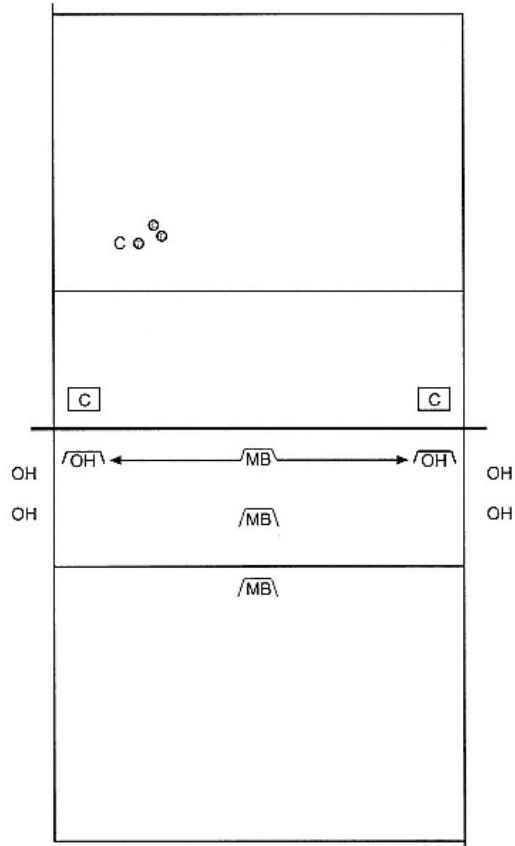
1. The speed and tempo are controlled by the coach.
2. Drill ends after a specified number of blocks is reached.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Boxes

Twenty balls



53
Block Off Boxes

54—

Blast the Seam***Purpose***

To work on two-player blocking versus a live hitter.

Procedure

1. Hitters are instructed to attack the seam of the block (between the middle and the outside blocker). Any block that stuffs the ball or controls the ball in play should count as a point. Blockers stay for 5 points, then rotate; -1 for net violations.

Key Points

1. With hitters instructed only to attack seam, blockers can concentrate on blocking an area rather than reaching and trying to stuff.
2. This is a good drill for blocking repetition with controlled setting and hitting.

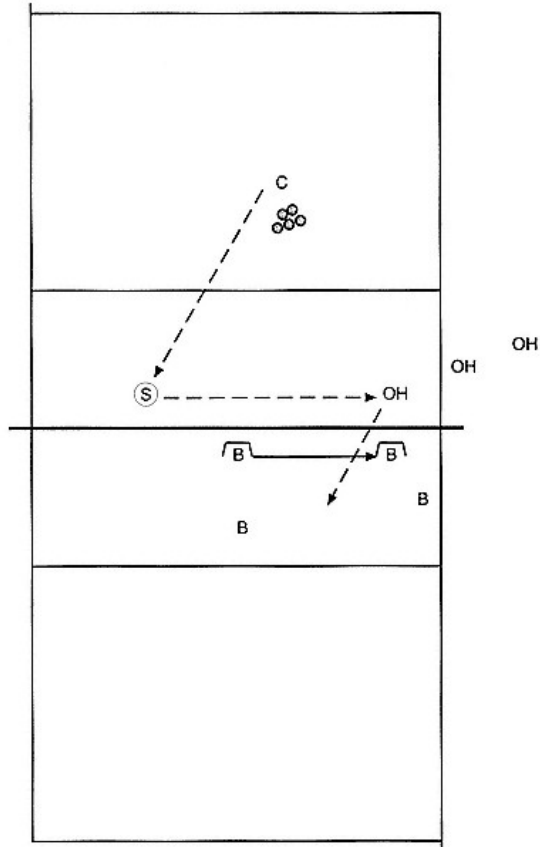
Variation

1. Add another hitter to increase difficulty.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty balls



54
Blast the Seam

55—

Middle Blocker Movement***Purpose***

To train middle blocking footwork.

Procedure

1. Narrow the court by placing three to four antennae at sidelines approximately 6 in. apart. These antennae simulate an outside blocker.
2. Outside hitters attack versus antennae and middle blocker (MB).
3. Setter sets either hitter—MB tracks set.

Key Points

1. Tosser keeps MB moving quickly but not out of control through speed at which the ball is tossed to setter.
2. Setter attempts to fool MB.

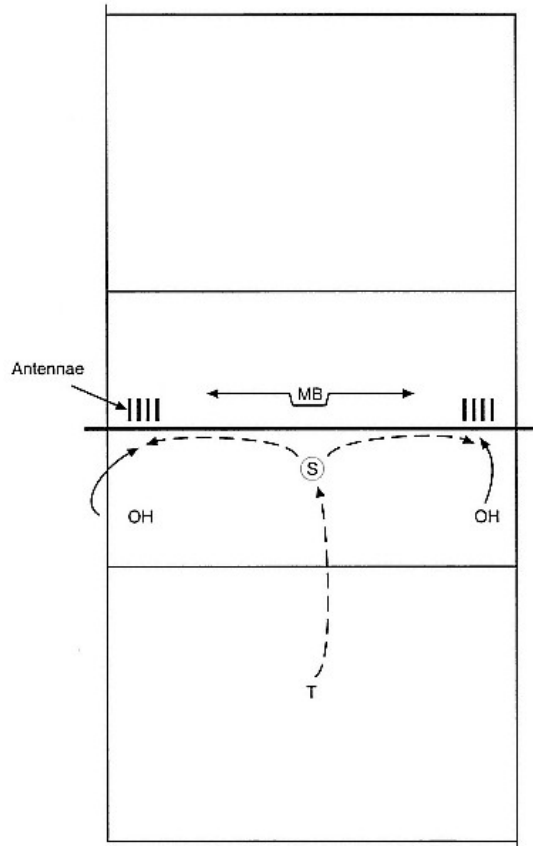
Variations

1. To increase difficulty:
 - Place digger crosscourt.
 - Keep score—a ball blocked on hitting antennae is a point for defense.
2. To decrease difficulty:
 - If hitters are not able to attack, remove setter and hitters and have coaches hit off box in place of live hitters.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Eight balls



55
Middle Blocker Movement

56—

Blocking Series

Purpose

To teach blocking and team movement along the net while using different set locations.

Procedure

1. Three "attackers" stand on the floor along the net with a ball. Blockers move to block a "1," then a "4," then a "2," then a "5" (or different zones along the net using your team's terminology). Blockers need 10 blocks (net violation is -1) before they are out.

Key Point

1. Players need to concentrate on proper movement and hand positioning. Although timing of the block is not stressed, blocking at different positions along the net is.

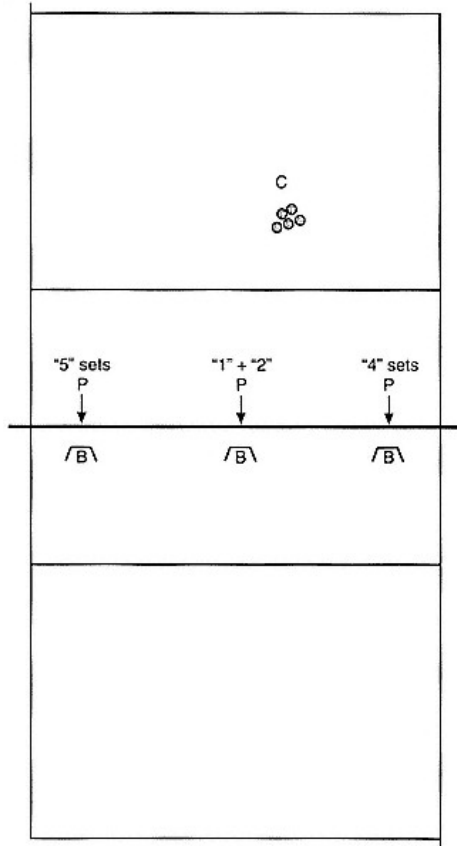
Variation

1. Change the blocking series in any manner.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty balls



56
Blocking Series

57—

Read the Setter***Purpose***

To teach middle blocker the skill of reading the setter. This drill emphasizes this "reading" process and then stresses middle blocker footwork and closing the block to the outside blocker.

Procedure

1. The coach is on one side of the net with a setter, a left side attacker, and a right side attacker.
2. A full team of six is on the other side of the net.
3. The coach tosses a ball to the setter, who then front sets or back sets at own discretion.
4. The middle blocker reads the setter, moves to close the block with the outside blocker.
5. The ball is attacked into the defensive team's court.
6. The defensive team defends the attack and develops a transition attack back at the coach's side of the net.
7. Players on the coach's side play the ball out to its natural conclusion as best they can (three on six).
8. At the end of the rally, the coach tosses another ball to the setter, and the drill repeats.

Key Point

1. The focus of the drill is on the middle blocker's technique, even though there is lots of action going on around this player. Make sure the middle blocker is focused on the setter as the set is made.

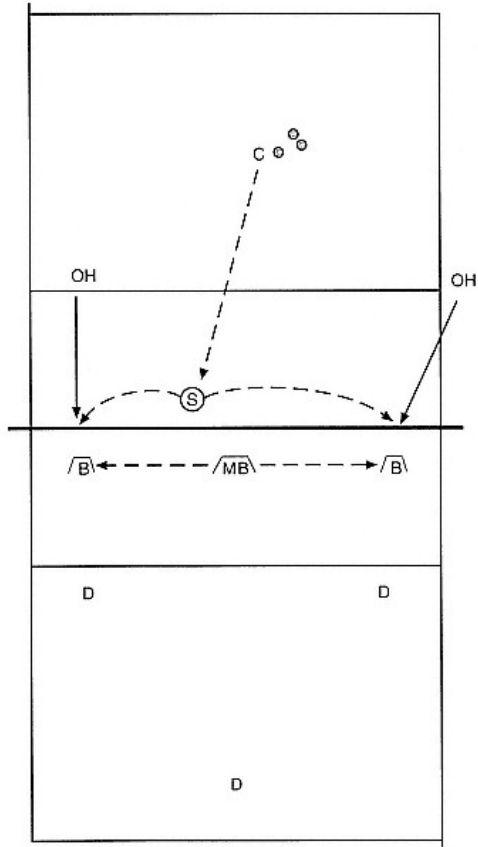
Variations

1. Add a third hitter (a middle attack) to the coach's side of the net to increase the number of "reads" the middle blocker must make.
2. Put a passer in where the coach was. The pass is a variable that a middle blocker will be able to read in a real game situation.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



57
Read the Setter

58—

Five Versus Five

Purpose

To enhance the blocker's ability to read the hitter's approach and take away the hitter's angle.

Procedure

1. Team A and team B are on opposite sides of the net, occupying each position except middle front.
2. Down balls from coach initiate play. Alternate the sides that receive the down ball.
3. Setter, who plays right back, can set all available hitters.
4. One team must win both rallies to earn a point. If the teams split the rallies, a wash occurs, and the process is repeated.
5. Each game is played to +3, with the winning team staying on the court.

Key Points

1. Blockers will block one-on-one. They must read the hitter and block accordingly.
2. Defense should position themselves around the block.

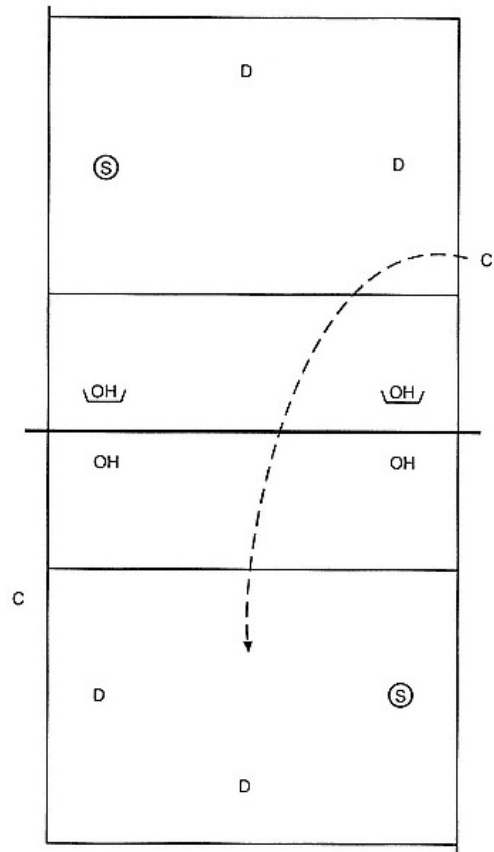
Variations

1. Vary the initiated ball to allow for more/less control depending on skill level.
2. Serve the initiated ball to emphasize passing.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Two balls



58
Five Versus Five

59—

Shadow Blocking

Purpose

To focus the player's attention on the attacker.

Procedure

1. Coach stands behind blockers with ball.
2. Coach tosses ball to attacker on opposite side of the net.
3. Attacker hits the ball as blocker is forced to watch attack, not ball.

Key Points

1. Watch the hitter's approach, then body, then hand.
2. Don't try to find the ball!

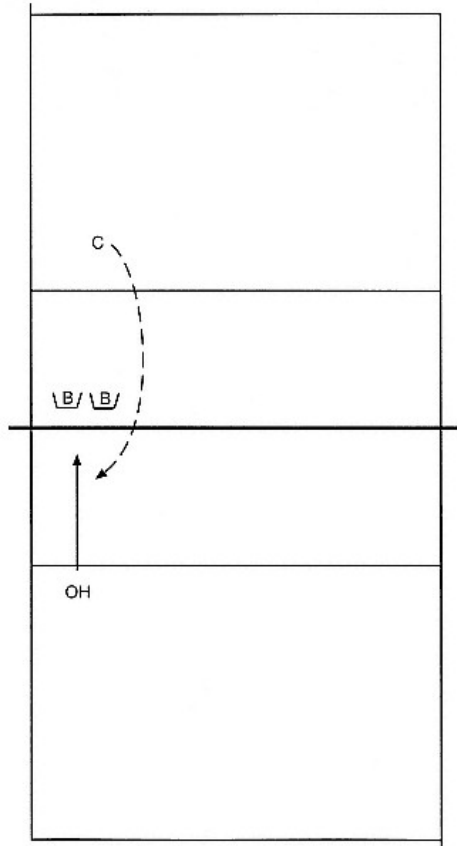
Variations

1. Vary the toss to move block and attacker.
2. Add second blocker.

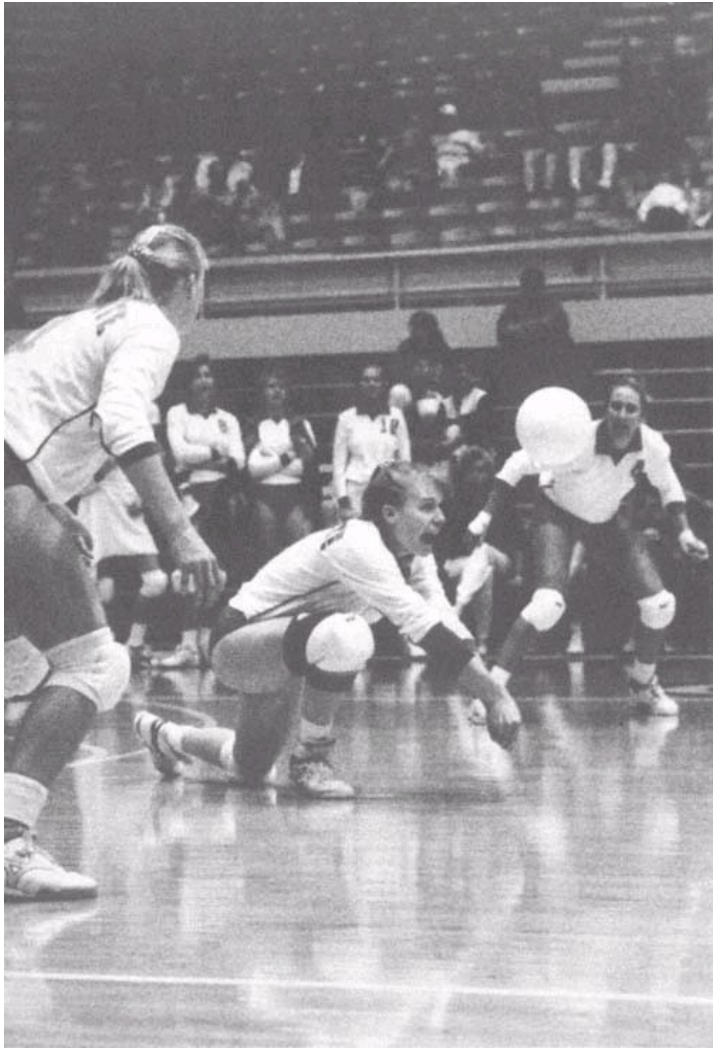
Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Eight balls



59
Shadow Blocking



Courtesy of Ohio State University

Chapter 6— Digging

Jim Stone
Ohio State University

In the sport of volleyball, it is important to understand that side-out offense only prevents points from being scored by your opponent. In order for your team to score points, they must defend an opponent's attack, or they must serve aces. In most collegiate matches, service aces account for under 20% of the points scored. This figure is even lower in international matches. This means that a majority of the points scored must come either from stuff blocking an attack to the floor or by digging an opponent's attack and transitioning to offense.

Blocking is the first line of defense in defending an attack. Backcourt defense is the second. The two are interrelated, and your team must spend many hours on coordinating the two lines of team defense. The block responds to the opponent's attack by either aggressively attempting to stuff block the ball or defending a specific area of the court. The defenders not involved in blocking must respond to the attack along with the actions of the blockers in order to keep the ball from hitting the floor.

The most common technique used in defending an opponent's attack is a much more complex skill. The attack is coming at the defender at a high rate of speed and at a wide variety of angles. Many times the defenders must also field balls that have been deflected off the block. The defenders must not only be able to play the ball into the air; they must also be able to direct the ball to an area of the court that sets up for a counterattack.

Good team defense quite often reflects a team's desire to win a match. A good defender has mastered the skill of playing the ball in a variety of body postures and can accurately play the ball to an area that allows smooth transition to offense. The good defender also has the physical and mental toughness to accept the challenge of playing an opponent's hardest attack and keeping the ball off the floor. A good defensive player competes against the hitter and the ball in order to keep the ball in play. To master these skills takes a tremendous amount of time, energy, and repetition.

Key Concepts of Developing Good Defensive Skills

1. Keep the court in front of you. Good defensive players always have the ball and the court in front of the body. They move forward to play the ball. Too many times, defensive players get caught in the middle of the court, with court area behind the body.
2. When the ball is being attacked, have your feet on the ground with weight on your toes.
3. Always have your hips lower than the ball upon contact.
4. Always dig the ball to a target. Just up in the air is not sufficient unless it is an emergency save.
5. Focus most of your time and attention practicing balls attacked within 4 ft of your body. If you are properly positioned, this will comprise most of the attacks by your opponent.
6. Practice the manipulation of your platform (forearms). Many times you cannot get your entire body to the ball. You must direct the ball to target by turning your platform to the target.
7. You must start your defensive court position around the block.
8. Know the difference between ready posture and digging posture. Ready posture is a medium posture designed for movement prior to the attack. Digging posture is your posture as the ball is being attacked. This posture is low and coiled, ready for quick movement.

9. Pursue every ball. This is the fighting attitude that good defensive players possess.
10. Of all the skills of volleyball, defensive skills are the most time-consuming to perfect. A good defensive player understands the importance of repetition.

Reading the Opponent's Attack

Along with developing skills of playing the ball, a good defensive player has the ability to anticipate or "read" the attack. Good defensive players use the following keys:

1. Determine the tendencies of the hitter. Most hitters will hit in the direction of their approach.
2. Place yourself around the area of the court that is taken away by the block.
3. If the set is off the net, hitters tend to hit crosscourt. Close sets tend to be hit down the line.
4. Watch the shoulders of the attacker. Hitters will hit in the direction of their shoulders.
5. The elbow of an attacker will drop if a soft shot is being hit.
6. Most hitters hit a soft shot if they do not have an explosive approach or jump.

Coaching Cues

You may find the following coaching cues helpful during your practices:

1. Keep behind the ball.
2. Dig to the target.
3. Set up around the block.
4. Read the hitter.

Summary

To score points, you must either block, dig, or hope the other team hits the ball out of bounds. A good defensive team will be able to wear down and frustrate the opponent, forcing attack errors. Generally, the better defensive team will win close matches.

60—

Dig under Net

Purpose

To train players to stay low on defense. This is a good drill for young players.

Procedure

1. Defensive player is under net, feet on center line.
2. Coach attacks ball to defender, who digs ball back to coach.

Key Points

1. Stay low.
2. Do not touch net.
3. Keep feet on ground, weight on toes.
4. Have hips lower than ball at contact.

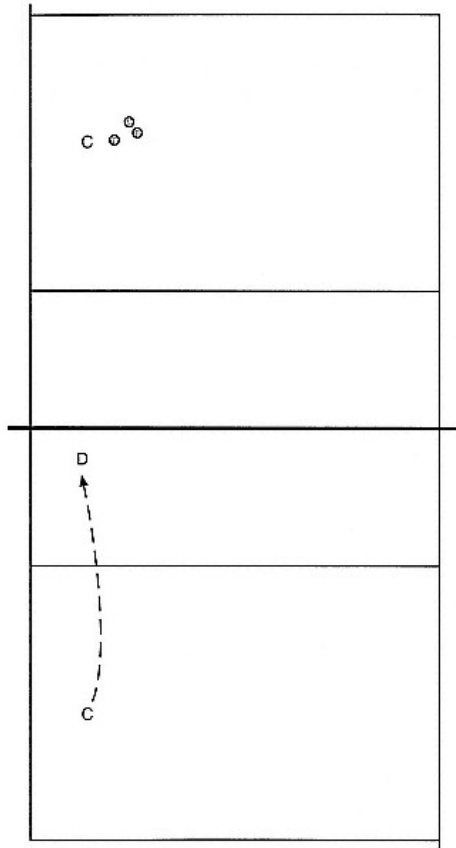
Variations

1. Have coach at each endline attacking ball alternately.
2. Defensive player digs, then turns around to receive next ball.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



60
Dig Under Net

61—

Acceleration***Purpose***

To work on a basic perimeter defense emphasizing run-throughs and emergency skills.

Procedure

1. Coach stands on side A with a bucket of volleyballs and several feeders.
2. One right back player, one middle back player, and one left back player stand on the endline of side B with one "on deck" player in each spot as well.
3. Coach tips the ball to force the right back player to accelerate and dig the ball to target. Then the ball is tipped to the middle back and left back. After digging the ball, the player immediately retreats to the endline in preparation for the next ball.
4. Coach goes through this procedure from a left side attack, middle attack, and right side attack.

Key Points

1. Stay low.
2. Accelerate to and through the ball.
3. Go for every ball.

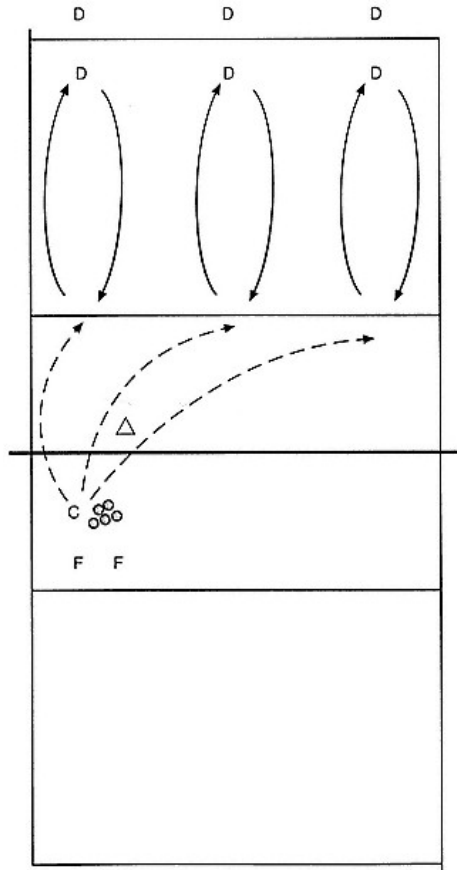
Variations

1. Players can go through the drill for a predetermined number of attempts.
2. Players can go through the drill for a predetermined number of perfect passes.
3. Players can go through the drill for a predetermined time.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty balls



61
Acceleration

62—

Left Side Hitter Plus Five***Purpose***

To teach left side of the court to play defense with control before transitioning to attack; to practice team support of four primary players in the drill.

Procedure

1. To set up drill, locate any left side players at left front and left back of one side of court, with extras off the court near the net. Have a full defense on the other side of the net and a setter on same side as left side hitters.
2. Coach will simulate a left side attack, crosscourt to two left side diggers. They must dig to setter, who must set to coach, who will catch the ball. L₁ will move to back row, L₃ will move to front row, and L₂ will move off court.
3. If a dig goes to target, diggers get +1; if not, they get -1 (can't go below zero). As soon as diggers get +5, second part of drill starts.
4. Coach hits to left side diggers, who dig and transition. Setter may set front or back row, and players attack versus full defense (team side plays out each ball). If hitter gets a kill, then +1; if not, then -1. The hitters must get +5 to end drill.

Key Points

1. Dig accurately first.
2. Drill can't be done without great effort.
3. Players must work as a team.

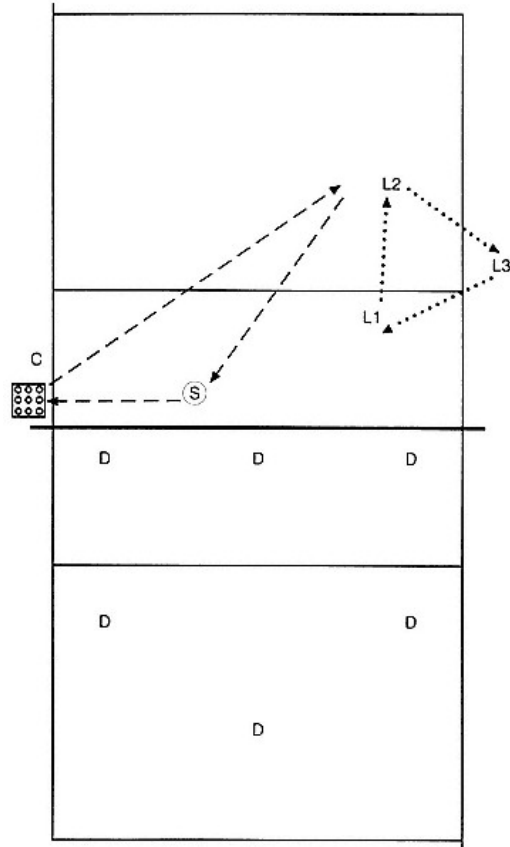
Variation

1. To make very difficult, make hitters return to step 1 if they ever make a digging error during step 2.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



62
Left Side Hitter Plus Five

63—

Middle-Angle-Line Digging***Purpose***

To work on over-the-net digging combined with basic defensive footwork. This drill teaches players how to dig from attacks originating at different points along the net.

Procedure

1. Three attackers on stands (left, middle, and right).
2. Attackers hit, diggers dig in sequence: middle—angle—line.
3. Dig all three positions: left back, middle back, right back.

Key Points

1. Work on footwork and defensive stance.
2. Be stopped at attacker's contact.

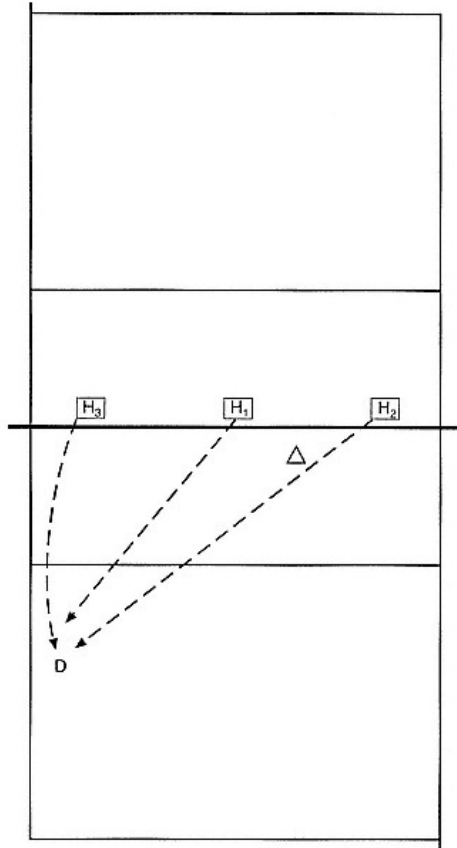
Variation

1. Add a blocker and have the digger cover.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twelve balls



63
Middle-Angle-Line Digging

64—

Dig and Touch***Purpose***

To perform defensive repetitions combined with conditioning.

Procedure

1. Coach on stand in left front opposite diggers.
2. Three diggers: right, middle, left back.
3. Coach hits ball to right, then middle, then left.
4. Digger digs ball, then sprints to touch objective and returns.
5. Ten digs each.
6. (Right and left back can run to net, middle to place off court.)

Key Points

1. Focus on dig first, then running to target.
2. As you get tired, focus on technique: using legs, staying low.

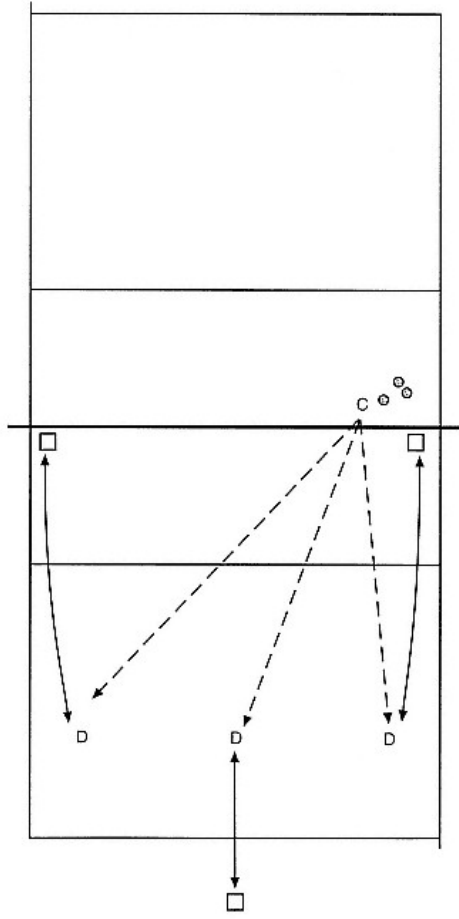
Variations

1. To increase difficulty:
 - Add tips.
 - Add digs.
 - Have players start by lying on their stomachs. After each dig, the player returns to base on stomach.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty or more balls



64
Dig and Touch

65—

Dig-Tip-Chase***Purpose***

To teach players to dig three different defensive shots consecutively: attack, off-speed, off the court. This is a good drill to teach "defense mentality"—pursue all balls.

Procedure

1. Divide team into groups of three—first player steps up.
2. Coach attacks a ball, then tips a ball, then throws a pursuit ball.
3. Player makes play on all three balls and goes to end of line.

Key Points

1. Player must be stopped whenever coach is making a play on the ball.
2. Players must be in balanced position before each ball is introduced so that they can move in any direction.

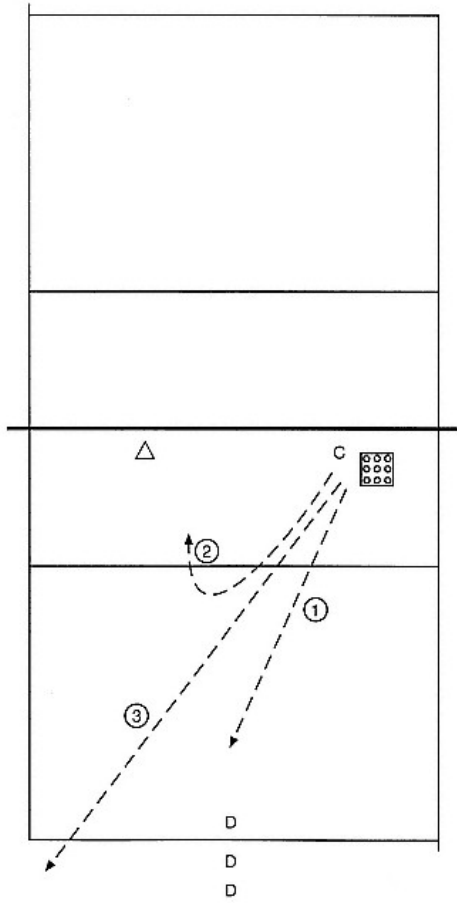
Variations

1. Hit harder.
2. Force player to go to floor for each ball.
3. Speed up time between each introduction of ball.
4. Use criteria on number of balls dug to target (e.g., two out of three).

Equipment Needed

Half court

Twelve balls



65
Dig-Tip-Chase

66—

Columbus Digging

Purpose

To practice attack control and digging control.

Procedure

1. The coach will alternate sides when hitting a ball in to start a play.
2. Diggers will dig, then prepare to hit a back-row attack. After the ball is hit over the net, players rotate as shown in the diagram.
3. Play continues until the ball is out of play; the coach then hits a new ball into play.
4. Drill is over when setter sets 50 balls from within a 5 ft box taped on the floor. Coach keeps track of the digs that are set within the box.

Key Points

1. Players need to work hard to be in position and in balance to control the ball.
2. Players need to communicate and use great effort.

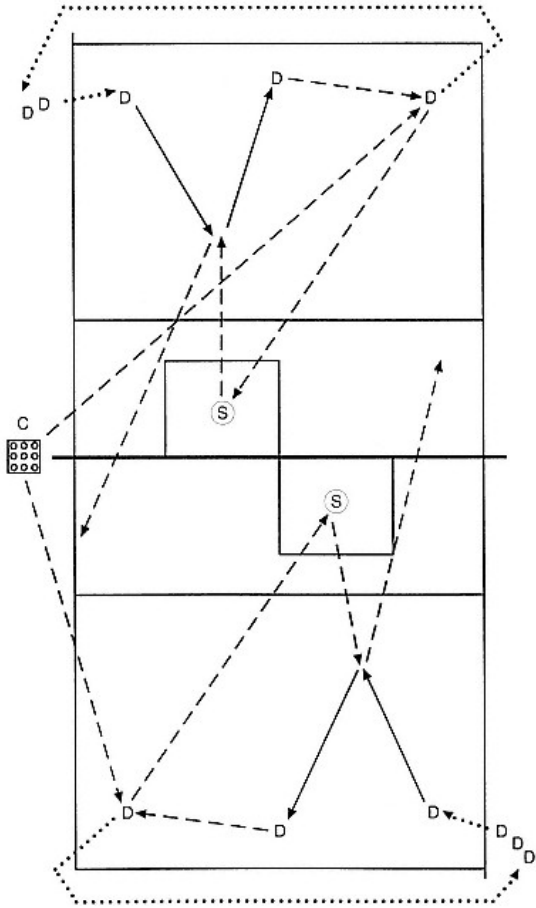
Variations

1. Make box bigger.
2. Have players rotate only after ball is out of play.
3. Make goal easier or harder.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty balls



66
Columbus Digging

67—

Individual Base to Defense***Purpose***

To teach proper defensive movement on the court. This drill works on the specific footwork patterns diggers use by position.

Procedure

1. Players start in "base" position and wait to move to defense when the ball hits the setter's hands.
2. Drill starts with coach tossing to setter.
3. Setter sets to a coach, who hits to the defender.
4. Next player needs to move into base quickly as ball travels back to setter. Movement can be trained in all areas from both sides of the court.

Key Point

1. Players need to start in a low balanced position and move in the same position.

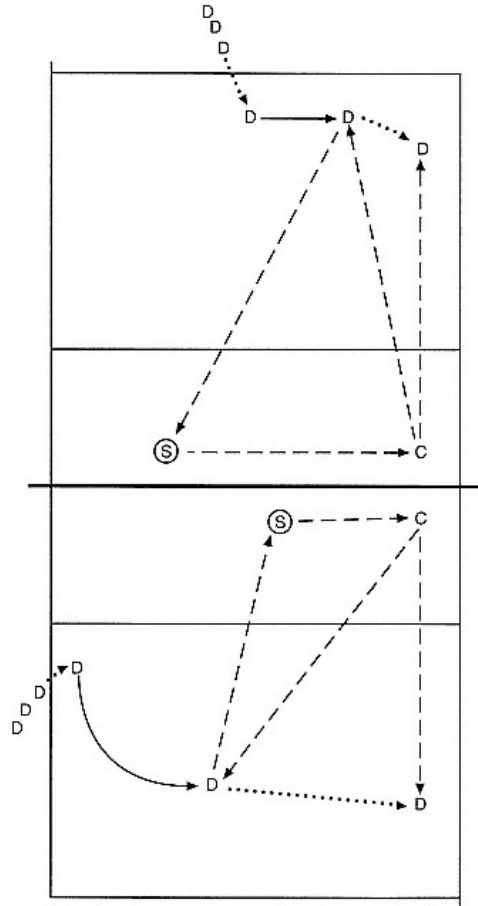
Variation

1. Increase difficulty by having players move after the ball is set.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



67
Individual Base to Defense

68—

Team Base to Defense***Purpose***

To introduce team defensive positions. This is the next step after individual defense has been mastered.

Procedure

1. Two teams of six are on the court.
2. The coach is positioned on a box in the area that the attack to be worked on is generated from.
3. The box should be positioned far enough off the net to allow the blockers on the coach's side of the net access to their positions and some "operating room."
4. The defensive team starts in their base positions. The coach slaps the ball indicating that the ball was set to the coach.
5. The defensive team moves to their assigned defensive positions.
6. The coach attacks the ball into the defensive team's court. The defensive team defends, generates a transition attack, and attacks the ball back against the coach's team.
7. A rally ensues; however, the coach's team can't attack the ball from the area where the coach on the box is located. The rally is played out to its natural conclusion.
8. After the rally, the defensive team returns to their base positions and the coach generates the next attack.

Key Point

1. Emphasize quick, orderly movement from base positions to defend particular attacks.

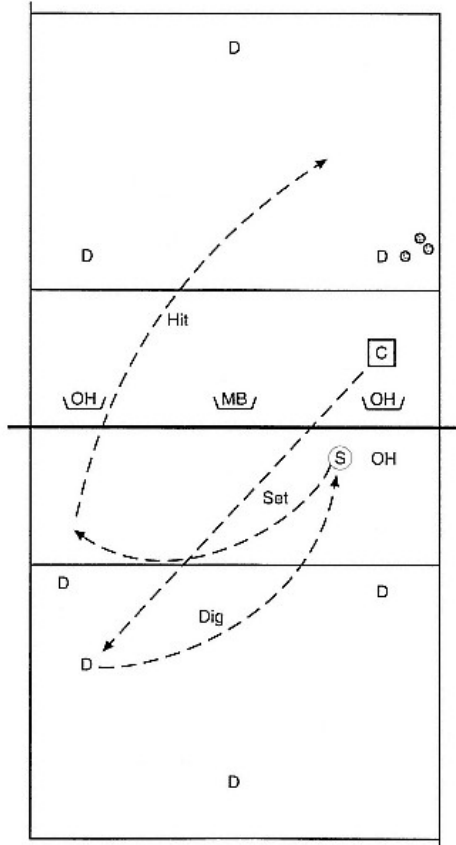
Variations

1. The coach can modify the strength of the attack, the location of the attack, and the amount of time given to the defensive team to reach their assigned positions. The coach can attack from the left, middle, or right side of the court.
2. Hit harder off box.
3. Change location of box: left, middle, right.
4. Decrease time for players to get into defensive position.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



68
Team Base to Defense

69—

Four Diggers with a Setter***Purpose***

To develop team defense and the ability to play next to teammates. This drill is often used in pregame warm-ups.

Procedure

1. One player occupies each of the following positions: right back, middle back, left back, left front, and right front (setter).
2. One coach stands in the right front simulating a left side attack, while another coach stands in the left front simulating a right side attack.
3. Coach in right front initiates play by attacking a ball to any of the diggers. Setter then sets the dug ball to either coach, and live play continues.
4. When a ball hits the floor, another ball is immediately put in play.

Key Points

1. All players must stay alive as diggers. Emphasize no-help defense.
2. Practice reading the hitter.
3. Communicate with teammates.
4. Extra players retrieve balls and talk.

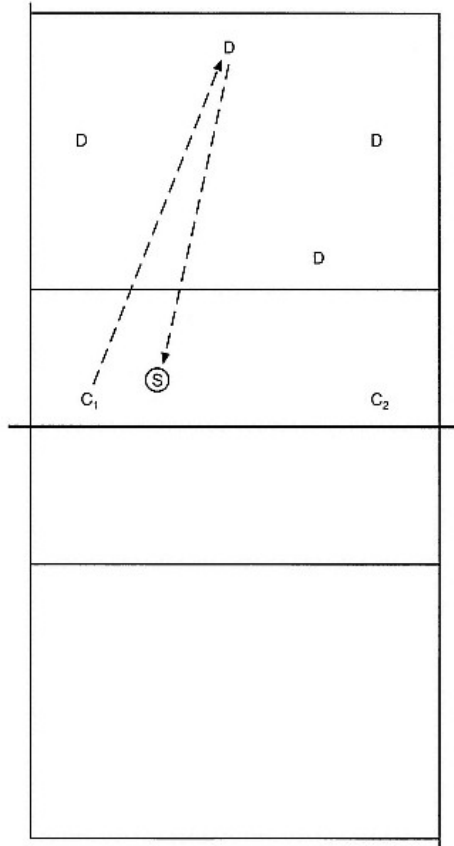
Variations

1. Coach controls the difficulty of the drill.
2. Players can be rotated according to time (2 min per group) or after a mistake is made.

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Twenty or more balls



69
Four Diggers With a Setter

70—

Crosscourt Pepper

Purpose

To practice attack control and digging control. This drill is an advanced defensive drill. It is designed to teach players how to go from defense to offense.

Procedure

1. Put tape on floor, forcing LF to hit crosscourt.
2. Digger receives attack, transitions to attack.

Key Points

1. Drill requires high level of ball control.
2. Teach players to control the dig; then hitting is easier.

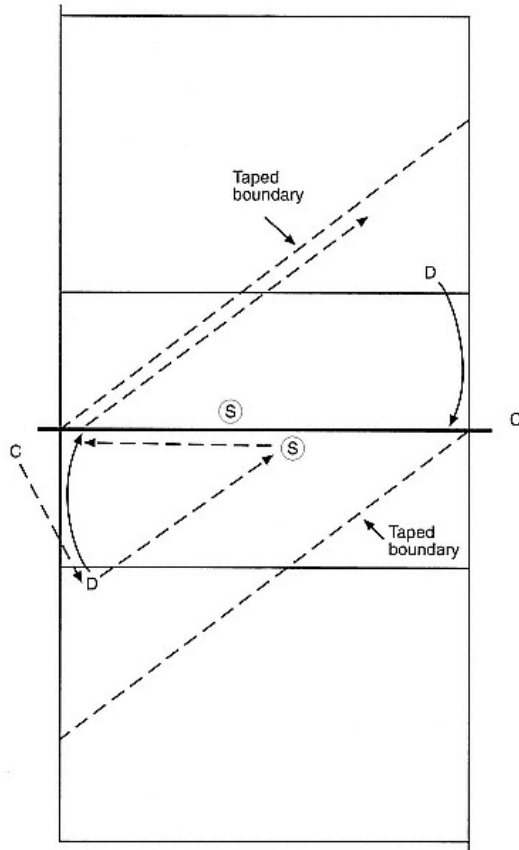
Variations

1. Put block up.
2. Add left back player.
3. Go RF versus RF (setter back sets).

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



70
Crosscourt Pepper

71—

Fifteen Digs

Purpose

To get players to understand that teams must dig to score points consistently.

Procedure

1. Usually played 4 vs. 4 (1 setter, 3 back-row players).
2. Begin by entering a down ball to team A. Both teams attack from the back row only.
3. There are two ways for either team to score:
 - One point is scored for each successful dig as determined by the coach within each rally.
 - One point goes to the team for the other team's hitting error.
 - No point is scored for winning the rally.
4. Play to 15 points.

Key Points

1. Any successful first contact should be counted as a point regardless of whether it is a free ball, a down ball, or an attacked ball—as long as it is a successful contact.
2. Players rotate off court after each hitting attempt.

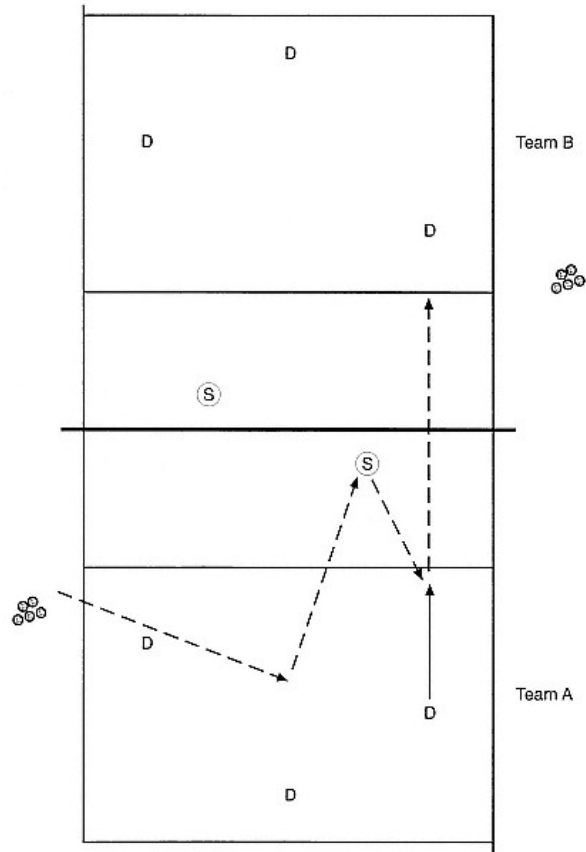
Variation

1. Add blockers (4 vs. 4 or 6 vs. 6).

Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Six to eight balls



71
Fifteen Digs

72—

Outside Hitter Versus Outside Hitter***Purpose***

To work on defense against a live hitter.

Procedure

1. Team A serves at team B.
2. Team B passes to the setter. The setter can set to the outside hitter or to any back-row player. The ball is attacked at team A.
3. Team A defends the attack and if possible generates a transition counter against team B's attack by setting to their outside hitter or any back-row player.
4. The rally is played out to its natural conclusion in this manner.
5. After the rally, the coach tosses a second ball into play. The second ball is tossed to a back-row player on team B, who must immediately pass a free ball over the net to team A.
6. Team A generates an attack against team B off this free ball, and a second rally ensues in the same manner as the first.
7. The drill is made up of a series of two rallies. Team B gets the first attack on the first rally, and team A gets the first attack on the second rally.
8. To score a point, one team must win both rallies. If team A wins one rally and team B wins the other rally, that situation is considered a wash, and no points are scored in that sequence.
9. To start the second sequence of the drill, switch the team that serves.
10. The first team to score 5 points (winning both rallies five times) wins the drill.

Key Point

1. A team must win two rallies in a row to score a point.

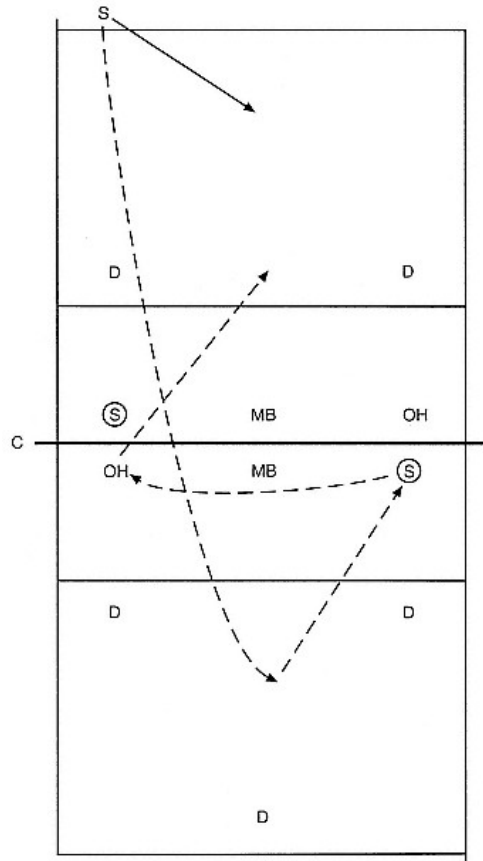
Variations

1. Make the only front-row hitter a middle hitter to practice defense and transition offense of the middle attack.
2. Put a right side hitter in right front and the setter in the back row so there are two hitters in the front row.

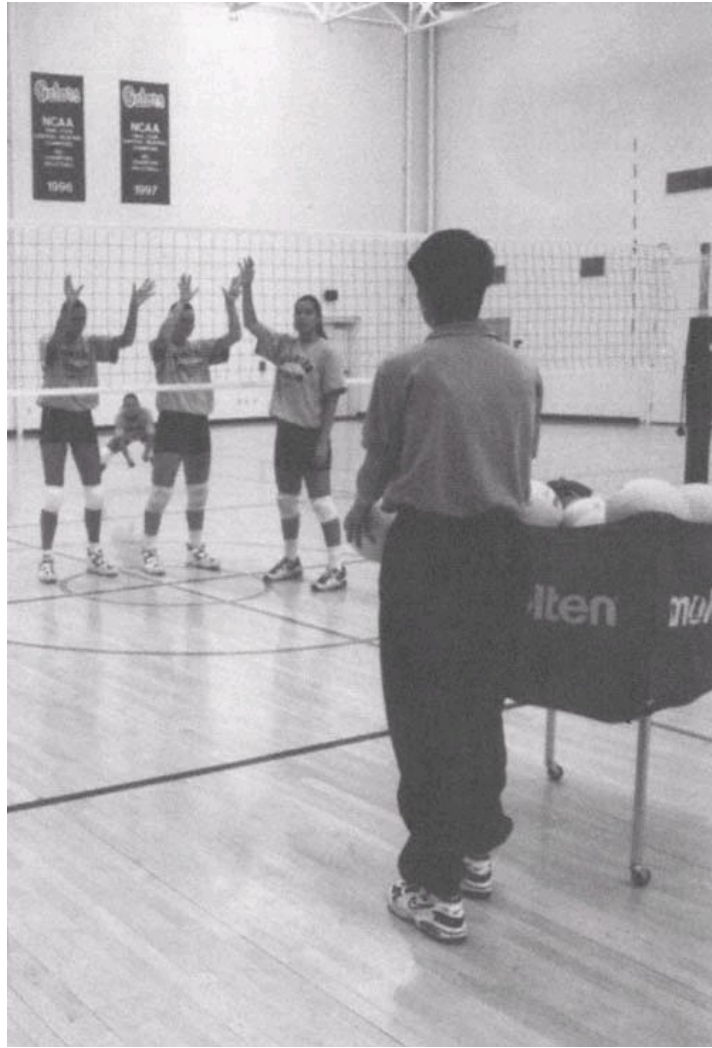
Equipment Needed

Full court with net and antennae

Four balls



72
Outside Hitter Versus Outside Hitter



Courtesy of University of Florida

Chapter 7— Drill Design—Changing Behavior in the Gym

Mary Wise and Nick Cheronis
University of Florida

Not a week goes by that we aren't asked the question, "Do you have a good drill that will help my team's _____?" The blank can range from individual skills to social interaction and everything in between. This is not an easy question, as every player and team has special needs. A drill that works in our gym will not necessarily work in yours, even if the players' abilities are similar. A better question is, "What is the best way to design a drill to help my team improve?"

In trying to improve skills, coaches are trying to change behavior. Drill design is the backbone to changing behavior in your gym. For example, suppose your team is having trouble communicating. In this case, part of the drill you design might include having players count the number of times they call "mine." Design a simple circle drill in which players move through various passing stations, and tell the team that the drill is over

when they reach 50 "mines." You are now sending the message that calling the ball is the most important part of the drill. Understand that in every practice and in every drill you are trying to change behavior.

Drill design takes on three basic forms: circle drills, group drills, and wave drills. These are in addition to the typical six-versus-six drills that we all use, such as wash drills, bongo drills, and other forms of scrimmaging.

- *Circle Drills.* These are drills where players perform multiple skills at different stations on the court. Typically, players will perform a skill, move to another area, and perform a second skill, then retrieve or hand the ball to the coach before getting back in line. These drills are excellent for exposing players to multiple skills while working on cardiovascular conditioning. They are also excellent for the beginning of practice to get players moving. However, they aren't ideal for coaching instruction. Usually by the time the players get back to the start of the circle, they have forgotten what you have told them.

- *Group Drills.* These are the drills where the bulk of coaching instruction can take place. Usually one group is performing a key skill while other groups are performing other skills or are helping the drill with shagging. A typical organization of this drill is group A passes, group B sets, group C attacks, and group D retrieves balls. After a set number of "counts," the groups rotate to a new task. These drills are best in the middle of practice where the coach is emphasizing skill development, and players can get multiple contacts for each specific skill.

- *Wave Drills.* These are drills where players move from back row positions to front row positions (and vice versa) after a certain count. These are good drills when a coach has more than twelve players and only one court. The idea is to get each player to play both front and back row and learn offensive *and* defensive systems.

As we sit down to plan a practice, the first thing we address is the needs of the team. If we are in the middle of the season, our team needs could vary from preparing for an opponent to developing skills. If we are in the off season, we will concentrate on our players' goals for development and include our team goals. At this point, we begin to design the drill. We have a few drills that we reuse, but we almost always modify them to suit the current team.

We all have limitations in the gym. Many times high school and club coaches envy us because we get to work with our team on a daily basis.

However, the NCAA places very rigid restrictions on the student-athlete's time. We are all on a time schedule of some sort, so drill design becomes extremely important. You should be constantly looking at maximizing your time and number of contacts with the goals of each practice. You can do that with effective drill design.

About the Authors

Mary Wise

University of Florida

University of Florida head coach Mary Wise leads an incredible assembly of top volleyball coaches who contributed practical player-training exercises to *Volleyball Drills for Champions*.

Wise has taken her team to the NCAA Final Four four times and has won seven consecutive SEC conference championships. She was named Tachikara/AVCA Division I National Coach of the Year in 1992 and 1996. She also served as head coach of the USA World University Games team in 1995.

Wise has been an NCAA Division I head coach for 16 years and was a four-year Division I letter winner while playing volleyball for Purdue University. She has also coached summer volleyball camps for 20 years.



Courtesy of University of Florida

Wise and her family live in Gainesville, Florida. When away from the volleyball scene, she enjoys spending time with her family, going skiing, and attending little league games.



Courtesy of Pennsylvania State University

Russ Rose

Pennsylvania State University

Rose has coached the Lady Lions since 1979, piling up over 600 wins and 15 consecutive appearances in the NCAA tournament. Before joining the Big Ten in 1992, the Lady Lions played in the Atlantic 10 conference—and never lost a regular-season match, compiling a 49-0 record. Coach Rose was selected as American Volleyball Coaches' Association Coach of the Year in 1990 and 1997.

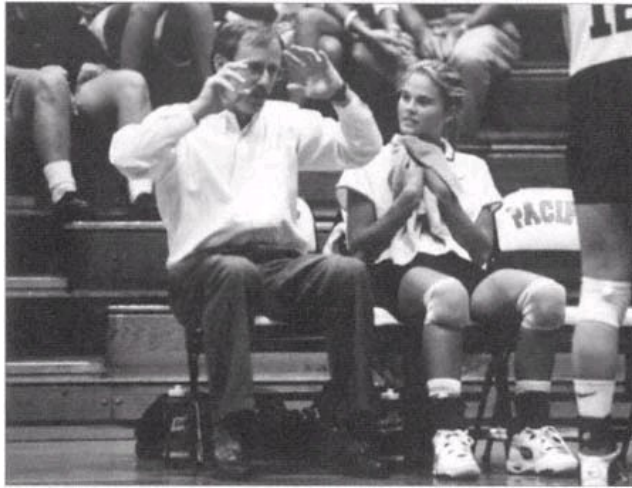


Courtesy of University of Southern California

Lisa Love

University of Southern California

Lisa Love has been the head coach of the lady Trojans since 1989, and was named Associate Athletic Director in June of 1991. Prior to her appointment at USC, she built the University of Texas at Arlington program into a national powerhouse over seven seasons. Her teams have won over 350 NCAA Division I matches. Love has also served as President of the American Volleyball Coaches Association.



Courtesy of University of the Pacific

John Dunning
University of the Pacific

John Dunning began coaching at Pacific in 1985 and promptly led his team to two consecutive NCAA national championships. His Pacific teams have won more than 80% of their games, even while playing in the extremely competitive Big West Conference. Other honors include finishing as NCAA national runner-up in 1990, three Big West Conference championships, and selection for the NCAA tournament in each year at Pacific. Dunning served as President of the American Volleyball Coaches' Association in 1993 and 1994.



Courtesy of University of Colorado

Brad Saindon

Australian Women's National Team

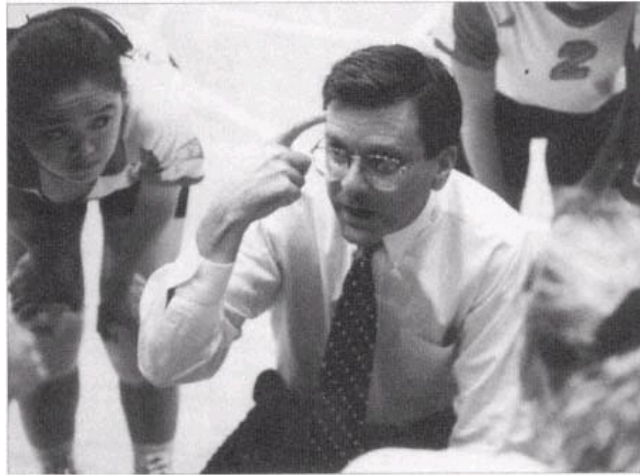
Saindon began the University of Colorado women's volleyball program in 1986. His Colorado teams achieved a 181-112 record, including seven consecutive appearances in the NCAA tournament, until Coach Saindon was selected to coach the Australian Women's National Team in 1997. The players Saindon recruited at Colorado have continued their success under their new coach, Pi'i Aiu, Saindon's long-time assistant, including a Sweet Sixteen appearance the season after Saindon's departure.



Courtesy of University of Michigan

Greg Giovannazi
University of Michigan

Giovannazi began coaching the Wolverines in 1992 after two years as the top assistant coach with the US Women's National Team. His Michigan program has produced at least two Academic All-Big Ten players each year. In 1995, Michigan made its first postseason tournament appearance since 1981 and in 1997 qualified for the NCAA tournament for the first time. Prior to arriving in Ann Arbor, Coach Giovannazi spent ten years as first assistant coach of the UCLA men's and women's volleyball programs, participating in a combined total of six NCAA Final Fours and earning three national championships.



Courtesy of Ohio State University

Jim Stone
Ohio State University

Stone began coaching the Buckeyes in 1982. His career as a head coach includes over 350 NCAA Division I wins, and his Ohio State teams have finished in the top three in the Big Ten each year since 1989. Stone's 1991 Buckeyes went undefeated in the Big Ten and finished as NCAA semifinalists while starting three freshmen. Stone was named National Coach of the Year for 1991 by the American Volleyball Coaches' Association.