

COACHING Volleyball

Fall 2019

A Publication of the American Volleyball Coaches Association

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Block Party

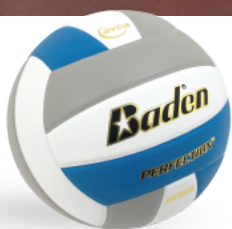
Top coaches talk blocking
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VASSAR MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Features

10 Block Party

Coaches around the country are noticing that blocking can play an important factor in swinging the momentum of a given match, whether it helps take a strong attacker out of their game or provides a spark for a defense that could use a boost. We spoke with several top coaches about how they value blocking, what they do to train their players and how they choose to track the success of their blockers. Check out this article featuring Sharon Clark (Butler), Heather Olmstead (BYU) and Mary Wise (Florida).

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Would you rather master a couple of very specific coaching skills or have a decent grasp on many of them? As it turns out, you don't have to choose. In this article, Richard Gary (Vassar MVB) breaks down the core competencies that will help you excel in the coaching profession. One of the most critical components? Understanding your own strengths and assembling a staff that can touch all the other bases.

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24 Money Talks

You might have noticed that the group formerly known as Motor Men's Volleyball recently rebranded to the forward-looking First Point Volleyball Foundation. As a continuing part of their efforts to increase both diversity and participation opportunities for athletes at all levels of the men's game, a historic gift has been made by USA Volleyball, pushing the movement to add six new men's programs in the SIAC over the top.



MATT PENDLETON

On the Cover

Nothing can rattle a great attacker quite like running up against a strong block. We spoke with some of the best coaches in the game about how they choose to value the skill of blocking and what they look for with regards to the skill in recruiting. See what they had to say about training, reading the opponent and practicing while limiting repetitive jumping motions.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

From the Desk of ...

Mark Rosen, Head Coach – University of Michigan

LET'S TALK about everyone's favorite topic – coaching ethics! I've had many conversations in last two years with coaches who have an issue with the direction of ethics in our profession. I've heard it all ... operating outside of NCAA recruiting rules, poaching committed recruits or players who are currently playing on NCAA rosters, not following the rules and regulations for training, using ineligible coaches and practice players in training sessions, providing extra benefits for current student-athletes, suspect camps and clinics for the purposes of getting around the NCAA recruiting rules ... I could go on and on.

In almost every one of these conversations, I replied by asking two questions:

1. Have you had a conversation with that coach?
2. Have you turned that information in to your compliance office or the NCAA?

In most instances, the answer is NO!

One of the things I continually tell our student-athletes, my family and staff is "be part of the solution instead of part of the problem." That means we continually ask our student-athletes to hold themselves and their teammates to high standards. This is vital to success – if someone on the team skips a workout or goes half-speed in a drill, who suffers? The entire team. If we as coaches don't hold each other to a high standard of ethics, who suffers? The entire profession! If we get to a place where the only way to be successful is for everyone to skirt the rules, we all suffer! If our sport goes where others have, and turns into an environment where the only way to succeed is to find ways around the rules, we all suffer!

I know it can be uncomfortable to call out a colleague that you see doing something wrong. Often it is someone in your conference and someone who you might have a good relationship with.

You might even convince yourself that you didn't actually "see" the violation occur, so how could you bring it up? If you *see* something, or even if you didn't see it, but have reason to suspect something happened, say something! We all need to understand it is our responsibility, as the stewards of the profession, to seek accountability. If we don't, how can we expect someone else to?

What does this process look like? I can tell you from firsthand experience that there is great power in having a personal conversation. If you feel strongly that someone has done something that is not in the best interest of our profession, give them a call.

I find you will get one of two reactions. The first is the individual might not have known it was against the rules. They are often happy you reached out because it allows them the opportunity to get out in front of the issue and fix the problem on their own terms.

Likewise, someone who knows they were operating outside the rules might initially sound the same way. They might say they didn't know, or they had a different interpretation of what the rule is, but in the end, they now know people are watching and they will be held accountable. In both situations I typically mention that they should talk to their compliance office because I will be talking to mine. Hopefully this will be a great deterrent for future behavior.

A second and critical part of the process is to document the conversation and follow up with someone in a compliance capacity.

This might mean notifying your own compliance office about the violation and asking them to follow up with the other institution or the conference. Without this important step, the person who is violating the rules might not be motivated to follow the rules in the future. If you don't, you're missing a necessary piece in keeping

behavior in our sport at the highest level. Coaches need to understand that following the rules is essential to our employment, and if they're working outside of the rules, they could (and should) lose their jobs.

Those that aren't an NCAA DI coach might be wondering, how does this apply to me? It's a global issue that involves everyone in the volleyball community. If a DI coach is doing something against recruiting rules, there is a good chance they are working through a club or high school coach to do it. I would hope every high school or club coach would consider this: If a coach is willing to break the rules to recruit my player, what are they willing to do once my player is in their program?

I believe people of character do the right thing, even when no one is watching, and people lacking character do the opposite. For this reason, I would love for everyone associated with coaching to understand that having coaches act with integrity is important for volleyball's future. You give your players great advice when it comes to academic or social fits for a program – I hope you are giving them the same quality advice when it comes to playing for a coach with strong coaching ethics.

I hope this doesn't come off like our profession is not in a good place. We have great coaches in our profession who are concerned about our sport. That is why so many have raised concerns with me. In my opinion, our sport is very healthy right now and growing at a phenomenal rate. It's our responsibility to ensure positive growth.

Best of luck as you move through the remainder of your season! I'm sure many of you are so focused that you won't even be reading this until after the season ends. I hope to see everyone at the AVCA Convention in December. It's going to be fun to see which four teams make it to Pittsburgh, and the AVCA Staff has a lot in store for us!



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Our Game

Kathy DeBoer

WITH THE OMINOUS HEADLINE, *Participation in High School Sports Registers First Decline in 30 Years*, the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) released their annual report in late August. We study these numbers closely, plotting volleyball data on graphs, comparing our growth or decline to that of other sports, looking for trends by state and region, cheering increases, worrying about declines. In reviewing the 2018–19 report, we are celebrating, since the handwringing issues seemed to belong to other sports.

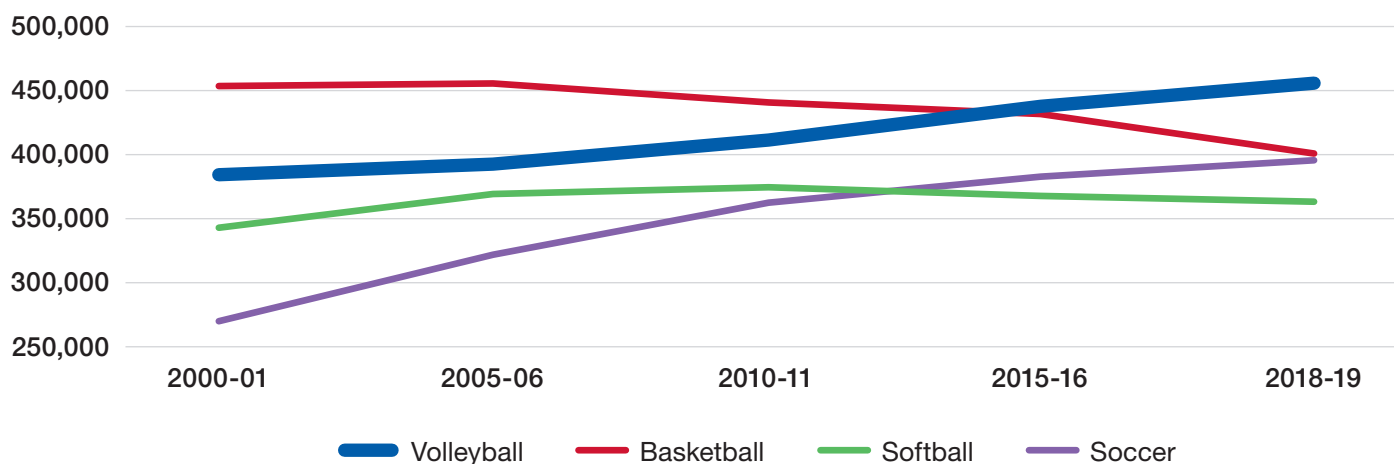
Here are 10 facts gleaned from the data:

1. Combining the growth in girls', boys' and beach, volleyball gained almost 10,000 participants!
2. Girls' VB added another 6,225, the largest gain by any sport, and remains the top team sport for girls in U.S. high schools.
3. Texas reported that 50,501 girls play high school volleyball in their state. This number ranks 4th highest among all team sports, surpassed only by football in Texas, and football and boys' soccer in California.
4. All was not good news: from a state-by-state perspective, declines in girls' high school participation continue in upper midwestern states. Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Nebraska and Iowa have all seen double-digit drops over the last 14 years, and collectively decreased by another 1,200 girls year-over-year.
5. Boys' VB added 2,891 participants to finish with 63,563, a 4.7% year-over-year rate of growth, the best of any broadly sponsored sport.
6. The last time more than 63,000 boys played high school VB was 1970–71, when 63,544 took the court, and this number included 14,000 in Canadian provinces.
7. 35% of the 63,563 boys, over 22,000, are suiting up at the 944 programs in California.
8. Beach VB, only tracked since 2015–16, added another 477 participants, reflecting 20% growth year over year. The 2,920 participants come from just two states: California with 683 boys and 1,286 girls and Arizona with 951 girls.
9. Other team sports with significant increases year over year were girls' soccer adding 3,623, girls' lacrosse adding 3,164, and boys' soccer adding 2,715.
10. Sports with noticeable drops year over year were football (30,829), girls' basketball (13,340), boys' basketball (10,604), softball (5,823) and baseball (4,357).

NFHS data is not knowledge any more than the stat sheet handed to you after a match. You must look at the numbers in context and analyze trends to make the data informative. What follows are four observations from the NFHS's data:

1. Sports preferences change over time:
 - a. In 2008–09, 444,809 girls played high school basketball and 406,081 played volleyball. Ten years later, 399,067 girls are playing basketball, an 11% decrease, and 452,808 are playing volleyball, an 11.5% increase.
 - b. In 2008–09, 49,326 boys played high school volleyball and 1,112,303 played football. Ten years later, 63,563 are playing volleyball, a 29% increase, and 1,006,013

Girls' High School Team Sports



- are playing football, a 10% decrease.
2. Small groups of dedicated volunteers create new opportunities for kids; in fact, it's the only way growth happens.
 - a. With Colorado voting to sanction high school boys' volleyball this past spring after years of building "club" opportunities, Ohio leaning toward sanctioning with 126 boys' teams in place, and Minnesota adding 500 high school boys per year, high school growth will hit new records in the next five years. All of these new boys' programs were started by parents, girls' coaches and USAV Region representatives who wanted to give boys a chance to play and invested their time, money and expertise to provide programming.
 - b. High school beach, called sand volleyball in the report, is only sanctioned in Arizona, but the AAU has organized and run school-based competition in California for enough years that CIF included participant numbers in their NFHS report. The Florida Region is running programming for 53 schools through the Sunshine State Athletic Conference, and several other regions and beach clubs are looking to sponsor high school beach events. None of the events cash-flow; they are investments in our sport, our future and our kids.
 3. Title IX did not kill boys' volleyball, and Title IX will not block boys' growth.
 - a. In 1971, the year before Title IX was passed, boys' volleyball had 63,544 participants, boys' soccer had 78,510 and boys' lacrosse had 3,520. By 1985, boys' volleyball had dropped to 7,059, soccer had more than doubled to 180,281 and lacrosse had quadrupled to 14,901 – same time frame, same law.
 - b. The difference was what happened on the girls' side: in 1971, girls' volleyball had 17,952 participants; that

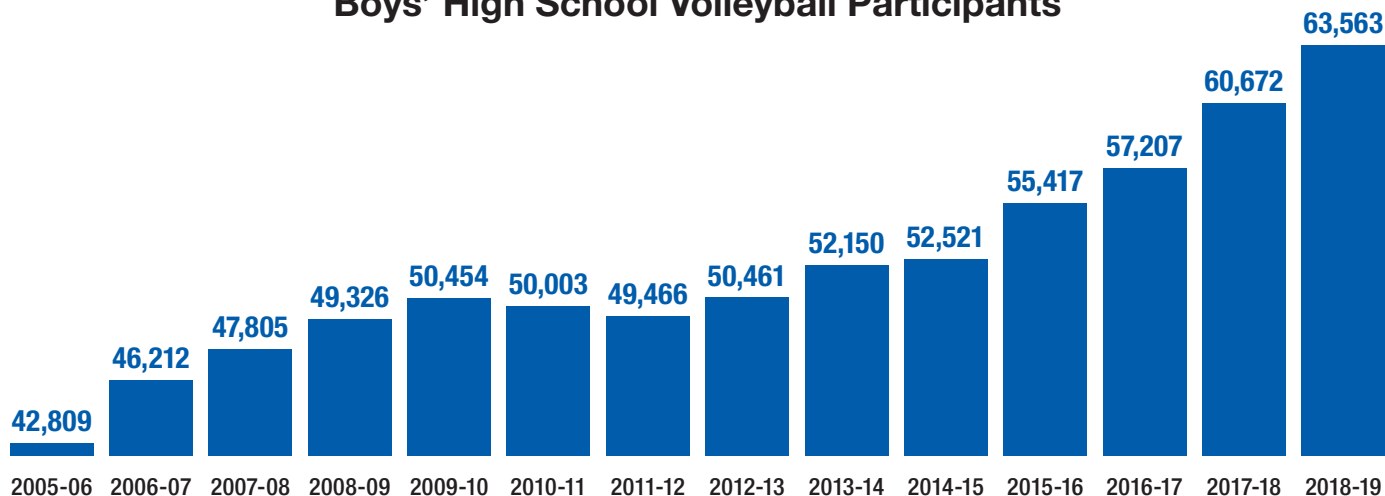
number ballooned to 259,857 by 1985. The geometric growth on the girls' side meant volleyball became known as a "girls' sport"; this was toxic for boys' volleyball.

- Soccer and lacrosse never suffered this adverse impact, as girl's participation lagged dramatically behind boys', with girls' having only half the opportunities as boy's by 1985.
- c. Our success in developing boys' volleyball will be a test of whether we, as a sport and a culture, have grown past this psychological barrier that cost us so dearly in the 1980s.
 4. Early specialization is causing attrition in high school participation, especially in rural states.
 - a. Small schools are hardest hit by specialization because they don't have the student population to sustain multiple teams of single-sport athletes.
 - b. Early specialization also means late-comers and late-bloomers can't make high school teams.
 - c. Add population-driven school consolidation, and girls' volleyball has suffered significant declines in the upper Midwest. We are not alone: softball, basketball and baseball have also had participation drops in most of these states.

If you like source documents and digging in the weeds of data, go to the Participation tab on the NFHS website (NFHS.org). You can compare sports, states, and years. For volleyball-specific data aggregated by the AVCA Research team, go to the High School tab on the AVCA website and look under the Research tab.

Our headline: *Boys', Girls' and Beach Volleyball All Post Record Numbers in High School Participation!*

Boys' High School Volleyball Participants



Measuring Up: Serving with Radar Guns

by Jared Goldberg, Assistant Coach - Harvard University (Men and Women)

NOW THAT THE SEASON has arrived, it's endlessly exciting to talk tactics and strategies ... but it's also time to talk tech! This past year we started setting up a radar gun in our practices to measure service speeds for our men's team. While the speeds may range from player to player, the concept of how we are using the information stays pretty consistent. We took the assumption that the harder a serve is, the tougher it is to pass. That being said, we had each player on our team keep track of their top-three fastest serves all-time on our practice whiteboard. Any serve that was out of bounds or in the net was not counted. While the top speeds ranged from 43 MPH all the way to 71 MPH, our goal was for each player to become more consistent in their top range, and potentially raise their fastest serve. Our players really bought into the idea and all had their own goals in mind. When using the radar gun, we would never give a set standard for speed, as each athlete's serve was unique. That being said, once we had a baseline for an athlete, it was easier to show them when they were being too aggressive as opposed to not aggressive enough.

When it comes to purchasing radar guns, there are a couple different features to consider. Some radar guns are point-and-shoot and have to be personally operated at all times, and others can be set up to automatically track any objects moving above a certain

predetermined speed. Another feature that you may consider as you look into using a radar gun is whether or not you want to have a display board that automatically shows the speed. This past year we purchased a radar gun and display boards that automatically tracked all movement above 30 MPH. With a limited staff, we did not have the extra bodies to stand behind the servers and call out speeds. Having said that, you would save a good chunk of your budget if you had the extra staff available for when you wanted it. Depending on the features, you can spend anywhere from under \$100 to a couple thousand dollars for a high-quality radar gun.

When it comes to serving stats in matches, I ultimately only care about the point-scoring percentage of an athlete. Having the MPH being tracked from serve to serve in practice is a great way for visual athletes to quantify what their best serves look like. As our athletes really bought into the radar gun, it was a great investment for us. I know plenty of coaches that own a radar gun that has sat in their office for years and is rarely used. I think the most important component of using the radar gun in practices is the consistency of how often you use it. Players will not buy in when you only bring it to practice once a month, but if it is part of a daily routine it may have the potential to increase your team's service pressure.

Wilson Drill

Number of Players: 10–12

Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective

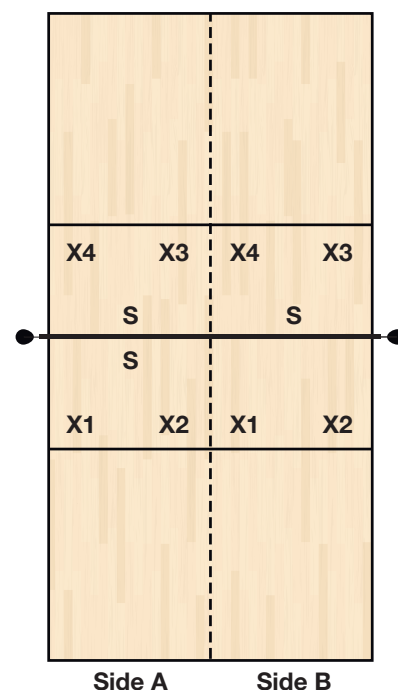
To work on reading tips defensively or approaches on offense. Also, great for practicing transition off the net and defensive postures.

Directions

1. Drill can be run with two setters (Side A) or with a duck-under setter (Side B).
2. Player X1 tosses the ball over the net. Either player X3 or X4 passes the ball to the setter. The setter sets a second temp set to the opposite player who passes. That player tips the ball over the net inside the 3-meter line. X1 or X2 digs the top, and play continues with the setter setting a second temp ball to the player who did not pass.

Variation

This drill can also be run with the setter setting front or back quicks to the non-digger.



Rapid Fire Serve Receive

Number of Players: Up to 8

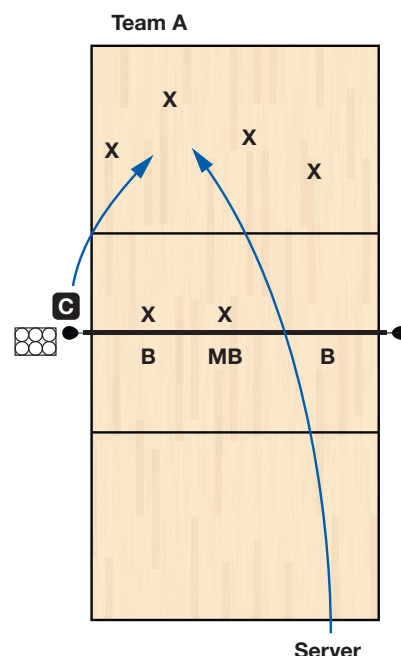
Number of Balls: Steady supply

Directions

1. Ball is served to Team A. Team A passes, sets and hits. Team A is quickly served to again and repeats rotation. Next ball is entered rapidly by a coach from the side, thus making them reshape their patterns quickly.
2. After clean kill, coach calls out new rotation, beeps and slaps, then immediately a serve comes.
3. Players must recognize when a coach calls a new rotation and beeps.

Variations

1. Can play 6-on-3 or 6-on-6.
2. Make team rotate all positions in certain amount of time by getting a perfect kill in each rotation.



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Unintended Consequences in Volleyball

By Jim Miret, Front Range Volleyball

WE ALL KNOW the rule of unintended consequences: you create a company, make a rule or pass a law hoping to create a desired result and the opposite response or result takes place. We can liken this to large social media companies like Facebook and Instagram, which were created with the intention to connect the world and make it easier to stay in touch with family and friends. The unintended consequences of social media platforms have made it easier for people to argue about politics, to take extreme stances and find like-minded people, or to bully others from the safety and anonymity of a computer screen. People now engage these mediums so often that we barely interact with each other on a personal level, another unintended consequence of social media.

Unintended consequences are also present in sports, even in our own sport of volleyball. The original intent of creating the Libero position, as we understand it, was to increase the length of rallies in the men's international game. You can make the argument this has had the intended effect in the women's game. But on the men's side the Libero has put teams in system more often in serve reception, leading to higher side-out efficiencies. Now, many men's teams have adopted the tactic of serving the jump topspin at high velocities to try and take the opponent out of system, leading to a higher percentage (25% or higher) of service errors. Both increasing the SOE (side-out efficiency) and increasing the service errors are unintended consequences of the Libero position.

These unintended consequences have changed and will continue to change how we play volleyball. Therefore, we thought it would be fun to look at the current state of volleyball in the United States and make some suggestions to the powers that be, for rules changes that we think could help the game and help players develop higher-level skills.

Starting with Juniors

For all age levels of USAV Junior competition

- Use international substitution rules (six team and one entry per position). Right now, too many teams are limiting the overall skill set of their players with front-row attacker specialists being subbed out for back-row specialists, resulting in youth volleyball players learning to play a very limited portion of the game. This rule would help more players develop into all-around players because the platooning of substitutions for the entire set would not be allowed. It might also attract more athletes from other sports, like basketball, soccer, etc., because if you were a very good athlete you would be allowed and expected to play the entire game – just like they are getting to do in those other sports, but not always in volleyball. The rest of the world uses this rule for their youth players, so it is time volleyball in the



UCLA MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

United States joined the club. We also believe this rule should be implemented in the women's collegiate game.

For 14 and younger age divisions

- Make a wider center line and make it a fault if you touch the line with your foot/any part of your body. Most middle school players haven't yet developed the body awareness to stay on their side of the centerline when the set or pass is tight. This rule change would help them learn to control their bodies on tight balls and would decrease the amount of ankle injuries to youth players.
- Do not allow the Libero position. Along with the adoption of the international substitution rule, players would develop all-around skills and would be expected to play the entire game, not just three rotations at a time.
- Use the following net heights for girls' youth players:
 - 14 and under: 7' 0"
 - 13 and under: 6' 6"
 - 12 and younger: 6' 0"
- Lowering net heights based on age would help youth players learn how to actually play the game of volleyball without the constant discouragement of hitting or serving into the net. A lower net would allow players to learn how to develop a proper arm swing, approach and blocking

mechanics. The lower-height net would also allow players to serve a lower, faster ball, and this lower serve would allow the passers to see more aggressive serves and develop better ball control skills.

- Open-hand tipping should be illegal in 14 and younger ages. Along with the lower net heights, the players would be able to learn how to hit and spin the ball to different areas of the court, having a two-fold effect: 1) As attackers they would learn how to manipulate their wrist to move the ball around, and 2) from a defensive standpoint, the players would learn how to read at younger ages and increase the quality of ball control. I believe this would also extend rallies, a critical skill for youth players to develop.

In the men's game

- Serving errors are a sizeable issue, due to the ability of teams to side-out at 70%+. Since teams are able to side out at such a high rate, it makes sense that men's teams are forced to serve the toughest ball they can create to disrupt the opponent's offense. The high rate at which men's teams are missing their serves does not make for much of an exciting game to watch. This idea comes from men's U.S. National Team coach John Speraw: Have a specific number of service errors allowable per player, and treat them like fouls in basketball. Each player would get a certain number of service errors before they would foul out of the match. I think this is an intriguing idea, as players could be very aggressive so long as they were not in danger of erroring out of the match. If a player is getting close to service erroring out (fouling out), they may choose a less error-prone serve, like the jump float. We would hope more serves would be made, and now more plays would be run, giving the men more chances to showcase their terrific athleticism, both on offense and defense.
- Free Blocking: I actually saw this rule tried out in a USA men's scrimmage in the late '90s. Basically the blockers can block any contact. So, if a pass or dig is close to the net, the blocker has a right to try to block the ball. After a set, the blocker is free to go and block the ball before the attacker has attacked it. As I watched the scrimmage match unfold I observed a few key elements: passers on both teams tried to pull their passes off the net, so the offense ran a bit slower, which gave the blockers and the defense more time to make decisions and react to the play. When the ball was passed or dug close enough to the net for the blockers to have a shot at it, the athletic moves the setters had to attempt to try and make the play by taking the ball away from the blockers was impressive and, as a spectator, very entertaining.
- Allow an optional fourth blocker. This would be a back-row player who would be allowed to block at the net, if the team chooses to do so. But this player would not be allowed to attack in the front court. With the advent of the BIC, there is almost always pressure on the three main positions along the net. With the speed of sets we are seeing at the men's international level, adding a fourth blocker would give the defense a chance to slow

an attack down, or get a block point. The men's game is great to watch from a sheer speed and athleticism perspective, but some rules to promote more rallies would make that game even more spectacular, in my opinion.

For all levels of indoor play

- Stop changing sides in the deciding set of the match!
 - I have never understood this rule for the indoor game – both sides of the court should be equally fair in an indoor match. Changing sides in the middle of the game can also disrupt the flow of the game, often to the detriment of one team.
 - As a side note, parents of junior players should stop changing sides every time their team changes side of the court. I attend HS matches and never see parents changing sides after a set, so why do I see them changing sides in club?

All proposed rule changes above have the intended consequences of creating more rallies, allowing for young players to develop into all-around players, and developing volleyball into a more exciting spectator sport at all levels. I hope you enjoyed our journey into the rules changes for better volleyball!

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BLOCK PARTY

DEFINING A
DIFFERENCE-
MAKING SKILL

Sharon Clark, Head Coach – Butler, Heather Olmstead, Head Coach – BYU, Mary Wise, Head Coach – Florida

THE ART OF BLOCKING

in volleyball is a tricky one to master from a physical standpoint – and it's even more challenging to quantify effectiveness. It's not all about getting a stuff. A successful block can be touching the ball and slowing it down, affecting the attackers by forcing them away from their favorite shot, and channeling the ball to positions of defensive strength. Butler, BYU and Florida have been among the best blocking teams in the country over the last few seasons – how do they structure their training? What information are they using to measure success? How do they break down the fundamentals to train players who are relatively new to the skill? We sat down with Sharon Clark (Butler), Heather Olmstead (BYU) and Mary Wise (Florida) to seek a better understanding of what precisely has made them successful blocking teams.



Clark



Olmstead



Wise

CV: What is it about your team that makes them so effective when it comes to blocking?

Sharon Clark: We spend a tremendous amount of time working on blocking in practice – we'll even spend time with blockers on boxes to get extra reps [without more jumps] – but it's taken me years to get to the point where I'm willing to commit as much time to blocking as we do. Gradually, it became a big part of our defensive scheme. I attribute part of our success to the decision we made to work on developing independent hands on a near-daily basis. Blocking is not often trained as much at the

TOP: MATT STANLEY

BLOCKING THE HARDEST SKILL IN VOLLEYBALL

high school and club levels, so it takes time to get your players to understand the value of each component of blocking. We also tend to recruit players that have a knack for finding the ball, and, as they develop, that translates into more quality touches on the ball. Personally, I have always loved blocking because when I was playing, I was undersized but had a really good vertical – so my ability to block would take opponents by surprise. It can affect the match in small, unexpected ways.

Heather Olmstead: The fact that we're a strong serving team is one of the big reasons that we ended up as an effective blocking team. From a personnel standpoint, we had good servers that were putting the opponents out-of-system and preventing them from getting a good or perfect pass on first ball sideout. We also had experience on the pins, and our senior setter was one of the best in the country (averaging almost 1 block/set). Our middles were also experienced players who were well-trained and had excellent eyes – they were great at getting into the face of the attacker. The road to a strong block starts with quality serving and having personnel that understand the tactics you want to use and execute them effectively.

Mary Wise: You have to consider the length on our roster over the past few years – and not just the middles. At the pins, at the setter position, there is considerable length. When you have that combination of players, you don't have a significant liability in any of the six rotations. The talent and length of the players is important – but especially in the context of the system that Dave Boos [Assoc. Head Coach] brought to our program, which emphasizes the great visual IQ skills that are needed to be good at blocking. The eye sequencing that he taught our players was a big factor in their success – and the longer players are in the system, the better they understand and execute it. The other piece of the puzzle is to be a great serving team. We emphasize the serve because of how much we've seen the two skills correlate to each other.

CV: What's your approach to training blockers?
How do you break the skill down in practice?

Clark: I believe in training part-to-whole, so we part out each aspect of blocking and break the skill down into three zones. There's the low zone, which includes footwork, speed and directional change, so we spend time working to get them comfortable with the movements. Then, we work on the middle zone, which is our core strength and body alignment. The high zone consists of shoulders/wrists/hands and eye sequencing. When we break it out that way, it becomes more palatable for our players, otherwise they're used to someone just telling them to go block or find the ball. It's crucial to get the three zones working together smoothly – blocking is a rhythm thing, especially when it comes to translating lateral speed into vertical quickness.

Olmstead: We spend a lot of time on the skill, even though we recognize that blocking correlates poorly to winning games. We just simply can't have it be a weakness for our team. It may

not be the factor that tips the scales, but all things equal, blocking can be a big help. Sometimes we'll spend twenty minutes a day on "ball-setter-ball-hitter." We'll also break into small group sessions to go over fundamentals – we want them to have good eyes, feet and hands. If they can develop habitual footwork patterns and can also train their eyes, that's a good foundation. We assess during live play in the gym and make use of video after practice. The concept is simple; what you see is what you know – what are the players seeing? We work on the eyes so that they know what to pay attention to as the play is developing and can incorporate that information more seamlessly into live play. Many of the footwork patterns that we want our players to learn are incorporated into the pre-practice warmups. By focusing on the smaller components in non-play settings, we can ensure that the actual jumping reps are as valuable as they can be. We'll also bring in male practice players to handle the attack, which helps limit the jumps our own players are taking.

Wise: We don't do as much coaches-on-boxes-hitting-balls as some schools do – we've always been a little wary of doing that because of potential hand injuries. The blocking reps that we get are mostly against live hitters. However, we also break it down and spend a lot of time focusing on what the eyes should be tracking and when. Blocking is one of the forgotten skills when players are younger, and understandably so; players aren't big enough to present a meaningful challenge at the net. In some ways, blocking is the last skill to develop, so they come out of high school and club without any real experience executing tactical blocking. Thus, we have to spend a lot of time with freshmen just making sure they understand how important decision-making is.

CV: Sharon, explain the idea of developing
"independent hands" and how you accomplish that.

Clark: We'll spend 30–45 minutes outside of team practice working on long training boxes that allow them to move laterally





BYU VOLLEYBALL

BLOCKING THE GRINDER SKILL

handle it physically. If you're going to swing block, you need the ability to quickly read the situation and make a decision, and then manage a lot of moving parts when you're swinging – and that's one of the big differences from static blocking; your weight and direction are changing as your arms are moving. If done right, swing blocking can help smaller players build momentum and get a better jump.

Wise: We do swing block, but we don't use it across the board. There are few things in volleyball that are all-or-never ... the game exists in the gray. It's a skill that takes time and you need to commit to it, and it becomes a detriment if you're undisciplined. It really takes a commitment to understanding when and how you're going to do it but anything that gets you higher is beneficial if you can do it in a disciplined way.

CV: What are you trying to emphasize when it comes to teaching blocking?

Olmstead: We want early eyes so we can have early movements. Good vision equals good movements. Early on we're okay with our blockers being late; we want them to see and react [not guess or gamble], so at first they'll be late as they learn the process, but as they train, their speed will improve and they'll be on time. It's important that they understand that hitters hit where the set takes them. Watch the set – if it's inside, they're going to go inside. If it's right, they're going to tip. If it's wide past the antenna, they're going to go for the corner. If it's off the net, they're going to go deep corner. We continuously reinforce those facts and they start to see the patterns during live play. We also don't want our blockers chasing holes; we'll start our defenders where the most balls go and let them read and dig from there. Blockers chasing holes disrupts that read for the diggers. We also don't triple block because it limits the outside hitter in transition. We trust our defenders and so it's more valuable for us to have someone ready to kill the ball.

at the net [without jumping] – it allows them to focus just on their hands and find the ball. We also get to work the wrists without having to worry about jumping. Generally, they'll face off against a coach on a box. We want to slow down the skill to almost frame-by-frame and let them know what it both feels and looks like to find the ball – to not only stop the ball, but also affect the direction of where we want it to go. When we do that enough, we'll switch to a coach hitting off the ground and then live play – letting them progress all the way to seeing a hitter coming at them. The timing can be difficult to learn – you need to be fairly athletic to be a good blocker. A lot of players think that blocking is just jumping up high. You also need general shoulder and core strength, so you can have good hang time and simultaneously make a decision about your movements once you're up there.

CV: Do you train your players to swing block?

Olmstead: We train the entire team to swing block. We use a bunch read, so we start near the middle of the court. We want the wing blockers to touch the quick or, at least, get hands up and then make dynamic moves to the pin if the ball is set outside. They need compact, explosive footwork patterns – so we train them the crossover-2 and crossover-3, so they have those tools in the toolbox. Once they have those down, muscle memory kicks in. If we're all seeing the same things on the court, our system works pretty well. This season, our personnel saw the same things and made quick decisions on how to get to the ball and that translated into an effective season for us. If the players are seeing things differently, blocking looks pretty messy.

Clark: We do both swing blocking and a more straightforward block – some players have the aptitude and the physicality to swing block, and some don't, and the same applies to static blocking. We don't fix things that aren't broken – we try to enhance and increase skills that are already there. If we get someone that's more of a blank slate, then I like to teach swing blocking if they can



MATT STAMEY

Wise: What we've tried to do is sequence out how that reading process happens and how to use your eyes to make quick decisions. In younger players, their eyes will simply follow the ball. The collegiate game is too fast for that to make you an effective blocker. We teach them how much time to spend on the first contact; how much time to spend on the setter; and, when to move your eyes to the hitter. Ball-watching is one of the most crucial habits to break when players come into the program.

Clark: When we do "ball-setter-ball-hitter," it's all about watching the play develop and making early decisions. Why guess where the attacker is going when you can see where she is going if you look at the right things? For example, what percentage of time is the setter going to set outside when she's beyond the 10-foot line and what clues do she give you to know that? Can you clearly see the numbers on the setter's back – which often indicates that she's going to run a quick? Most setters can't set the middle when they're in emergency-setting mode, unless they are trapped [by the net] and then they can't push the ball outside. Noticing little details will help a good blocker become a great blocker.

CV: How do you know if your blocking is effective?

What feedback do you give? What stats do you take?

Wise: If successful blocking is only defined by stuff blocks, then it would be extremely difficult to keep blockers motivated



BYU VOLLEYBALL

because they get so little feedback. Quality blocking, however, is also defined as channeling the ball to the defender that you want digging the ball; it's the block taking away a shot and forcing the hitter to do something different; it's the hitter making an error ... all of these are good blocks. Our feedback, as coaches, cannot be strictly telling players to get a stuff and rewarding them with positive feedback when it happens; that's not enough. We need to notice and give feedback in practice when the block setup and the block timing is done correctly, when they use their visual IQ to make a good read, when they're technically sound, and when

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the hitter knocks it out of bounds. In all of these situations the blocker has done their job. Likewise, if the ball was channeled to the right digger, they've done their job. But, if the hitter is in a compromised situation – particularly if the set didn't give them many options – that's the ball that our blockers need to get their hands on and block! So, part of the feedback equation is noticing all the little details, but also tracking our success when our block has the advantage.

Olmstead: We track how many times we're being "tooled" so that we know how we're performing. Numbers don't always tell the story here as many times it depends on who is [blocking] on each side of you [i.e. their size and blocking skills.] Our staff does a good job of scouting the opponent to help us approach blocking in a tactical way. We want our blockers to know setter tendencies and hitters' favorite shots. If we are going away from our "bunch-read," our default blocking system, we'll make the players aware of that ahead of time. We also want our hitters to know they can make decisions they think can lead to a stuff.

Clark: We track playable touches with the middles, but not everyone else. However, we avoid getting too much into blocking

stats to keep our players from feeling like they aren't good at it. A focus on the terminal blocking percentage can mentally affect them because it takes so much effort and so many attempts to succeed, and the stats look so low by comparison.

CV: What is it about blocking that's important to know?

Clark: Over time, I realized that the hallmark of our team was blocking, which stems from the kind of kids that we recruit. Our confidence and the ability to swing momentum within a match was coming from the ability to block effectively. We've been able to diffuse great hitters or at least slow her down or keep her under her average. When the opponent is used to getting their points a certain way, it can throw them off when your blocking makes them alter their approach. Besides, a stuff block is the only skill that gives the whole team an adrenaline rush; you can see it by how they react – it can be a momentum changer!

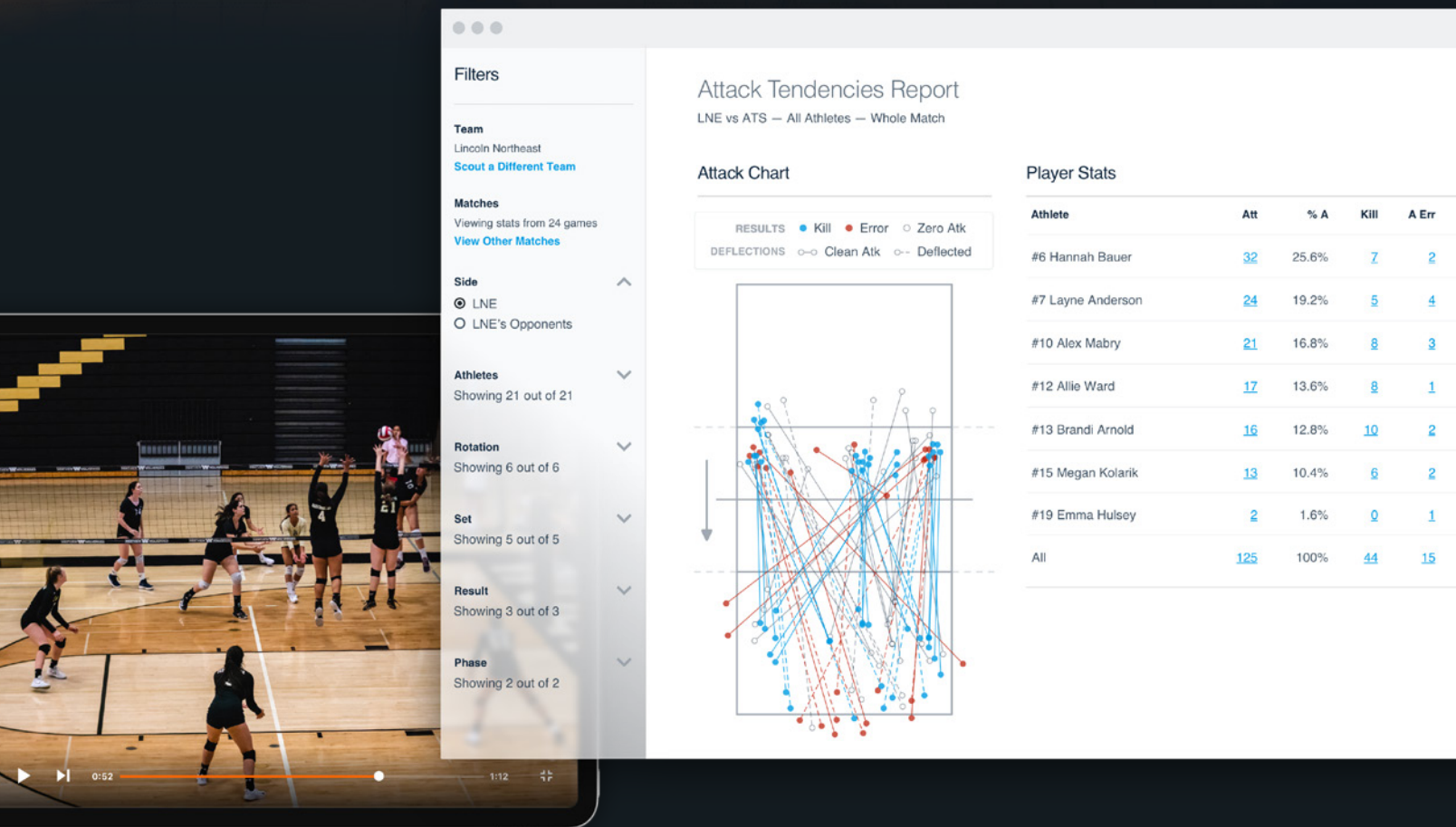
Wise: Good hitters will sniff out weak blockers; they are hard to hide in today's game. We tell our weaker blockers we just need you to block the balls you should block. There are hitters in the women's game that are going to get their kills – there's no blocking scheme that will stop them – so take advantage of the opportunities you get to make them change shots or channel their attack and, most importantly, move on, whether you succeed or not. ☺





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Build It Up

10 Coaching Competencies

It's not possible to be great at all of them

By Richard Gary,
Head Coach – Vassar Men's Volleyball

THERE SEEM TO BE as many models for successful coaching as there are successful programs. There are coaches with great personalities, who light up a room and inspire with every word. Others are more focused and aloof, even introverted. Some appear to be true technicians, breaking down every movement, while others are motivators, driving outcomes and not getting caught up in the small stuff. Strategists and generals in one gym, hands-off sweethearts in another.

No matter the approach, their teams have enough players performing at or near the top of their potential and the level of their competition to consistently win. With all of this variety at the top, how can a coach determine the most useful habits, processes and systems to cultivate in order to build and sustain success?

A small digression ... I believe the worst advice, advice that is offered in every coaching talk, is “be yourself.” If the coaches offering this were being specific, I think the advice translates to a warning not to model everything you do on another coach. But even this can be frustrating for a new coach because our models for coaching are the biggest resource we’ve got, and while it’s true that we can’t just cut and paste another coach’s being into our gym, there are so many important things we should be taking from them, and “be yourself” just ignores this.

Kevin Hambly once said that he was a very aggressive player, and that he had to learn a different way of interacting during competition when he became a coach. His behaviors, born out of “being himself” were freaking out his players. Karch Kiraly’s playing personality would be nearly unrecognizable to the U.S. Women he now coaches. The fact is that those coaches cultivated new habits,

fought tendencies, resisted temptations and avoided “being themselves” in significant ways. They saw others doing something different and said “that’s what I’m going to have to do to get where I wanna go.”

The point is, we need to look at other successful programs and incorporate every winning facet we can in order to build and sustain success. The closest version of “be yourself” that should be said is “be the absolute best version of yourself, knowing that you’re a flawed being, that ‘you’ will need to change, grow and improve, and that through focused growth and self-awareness you can make big strides in guiding a program.”

Hopefully we can agree, therefore, that there’s value in picking and choosing the competencies and habits of successful programs. Another common piece of coaching advice is to “steal everything.” This idea fits more into a model of change and growth, and it offers us an opportunity to start building a model of the areas we should identify to plunder. A winning coach may drink vanilla lattes, but that may or may not lead to success. However, if that coach gets a latte with a player and chats about their goals every pre-season, there may be some helpful behavior to model.

In attempting to identify the areas we should be plundering, let’s try to build a model of a successful program, and from this framework we can start filling in the valuable next questions: “How am I creating this competency?” and “If I’m not creating this competency, what can I do about it?”

At its most simple, there are four outcomes that reflect sustained success. The following outline offers each and suggests key competencies to explore in creating them.

1 Enough individual players PHYSICALLY perform at the top of their level

- a Recruitment
- b Strength and conditioning (get strong in off-season, body at/near peak during competition)
- c Health management (sleep/diet/etc.)
- d Trainings create opportunity for peak physical performance in key times

2 Enough individual players MENTALLY perform at the top of their level

- a Recruitment
- b Coaching game management
- c Mental toughness has been established through training/meetings/sports psych/etc.
- d Training practices that create resilience under pressure
- e Team chemistry is effective
 - Team-building
 - Bonding, chemistry
 - Training to build rapport and ability to work together
- f Player/coach relationships are managed
- g Distractions are held to a minimum
 - Arrive relatively on time for games, organized travel structure
- h Competitive environment is fun to play in (supportive fans, campus respect, etc.)



3 Enough individual players have enough SKILL to perform at the top of their level

- a Recruitment
- b Trainings build skills efficiently
- c Off-season is utilized for development, players work on their own to grow competencies outside of “go time”
- d Staff communicates and helps in goal setting to effectively guide players through their skill development

4 Individual players TACTICALLY perform at the top of their level

- a Recruitment
- b Coaching/game management in-game
- c Training strategic adjustments
- d Scouting and game planning



Within each of these four pillars there are some commonalities, some strategies that overlap and can be refined into core competencies that every program must address. There may be a million ways to execute these competencies, but the goal here is to identify them and ask how your program works to achieve them.

The 10 Competencies

Recruiting

(the common thread in all 4 pillars)

- 1 Identify talent – done by some or all of the following:
 - a Grinding the trail to see every player
 - b Building relationships with clubs/recruiting coordinators
 - c Office drudgery – combing lists, websites, videos and databases
 - d Sort through prospects who contact you (Not always possible)
- 2 Evaluate talent
- 3 Attract talent to your program/winning the recruiting battles

Training

- 1 Create optimum physical performance at the right times
- 2 Build resilience under pressure
- 3 Increase team bond to have positive reactions to stress
- 4 Develop skills in the sport – players improve
- 5 Tactical aspects of the game are honed



Game management

- 1 Scouting plan is established
- 2 Players have the training to execute adjustments/planning
- 3 In-game mental game is effective
- 4 In-game adjustments and strategies are employed
- 5 Valuable observations made during games (stats/charts/intuition/etc.)

Player management

- 1 Coach/player communication is effective
- 2 Team goals understood
- 3 Team expectations clear
- 4 Conflicts get resolved or minimized so as not to interfere with other needs
- 5 Sufficient level of off-court bond established
- 6 Players have understanding of how to develop skills in the off-season
- 7 Players are motivated to develop skills in the off-season

Staff management

- 1 Staff works together to cultivate every zone
- 2 Innovations, growth, active staff development
- 3 Work is spread among support in order to maximize team output

Logistics management

- 1 Team travel, logistics planning executed so as to avoid distraction
- 2 Comfort and nourishment are at least adequate
- 3 Added value can be made from travel (bonding, improved meal quality, etc.)
- 4 Administration supports team to its fullest
- 5 Campus supports team to its fullest

Tactics developed

- 1 Strategies and tactics established to utilize personnel
- 2 Video analyzed – of opponents and your team

Extra mile development

- 1 Audience building for matches – creating winning crowd feel (and attracting recruits)
- 2 Extra travel opportunities (international trip, bonding events, etc.)
- 3 Alumni relationship cultivated (models a successful future, builds extra funding, etc.)



Strength and conditioning

- 1 Players motivated to work in off-season
- 2 Knowledgeable about effective programs/training practices to maximize outcome
- 3 Sequencing effective in order to peak physically in the right times

Health management

- 1 Knowledge of best practices for maintaining health
- 2 Discipline/motivation regarding best practices for maintaining health

Going through this list, a self-aware coach is going to recognize one unavoidable fact: No single person can be great at all of this. How we prioritize each competency and grow, hire, recruit and push our administration to fill in the gaps can often be the difference in sustaining success. There's always work to be done! ☺



Drawing a Crowd

Marketing the Clash of the Titans

RECENTLY, the AVCA had the opportunity to sit down with Mary Eiland, the Associate Director of Championships Marketing at the NCAA to talk about how attendance trends have evolved in recent years, and subsequently, how that affects marketing strategies for the DI Women's Volleyball Championship.

AVCA: You've been in your role for 20 years. What changes and trends have you seen during that time?

Eiland: The growth of the game as a whole has impacted the DI Women's Championship. It seems that we have a lot more avid fans to talk to about the championship. I would also say the level of play has gone up dramatically, and that impacts people's interest in the game. It's so fast, so strong, it's dynamic—I think the game has always been good but you really see the difference in the entertainment value that it provides.

Our target market at this point is people who have an affinity for volleyball. We reach out to everybody who shows an interest—whether they played, coached, had family who played, or just like the sport. Cities that we go to may market to casual fans, but when we look at the majority of the people who attend our championship, it's those who have an exposure to the game somehow.

AVCA Volleyball is the only sport in the United States where the broadly played game is on the women's side. How does that impact attendance?

Eiland: The audience for volleyball is not as easy to get as it is for those championships where you have built-in fan bases. We have to work a little harder at lead generation for volleyball. That's a big part of our efforts—how do we identify those who are engaged in the sport or have an interest so we can establish a relationship and talk to them about volleyball year-round?

Within our messaging, we always say if you're not going to be there, tune in, but our

primary focus is to make sure we are getting as many people in the arenas, stadiums and gyms for all rounds of the championship.

AVCA: How has social media, which is still a relatively young phenomenon, impacted volleyball?

Eiland: We exert a significant effort on social media. It's something that is a little subjective, but from an exposure standpoint, it's huge for us. Social is great because you can spend your money effectively and target those who are thinking about volleyball. I think one of our biggest problems early on was that people didn't know the sites for early rounds. Being able to make people aware and promote in those markets is huge for us. We don't see direct ticket sales from it, but we know that it is a driver of attendance both from viewership and in stadium.



Mary Eiland (third from right) works with her team to market the NCAA Championships each year.

AVCA: Why has the women's championship been in the Upper Midwest for so many years in a row?

Eiland: There's a lot that goes into the site selection process, including whether they have hotels, space for the coaches convention and expenses. We're looking for cities that have a strong volleyball community, and where we feel the event will be supported.

AVCA: When do you start putting a plan together for how you're going to sell

championship tickets, and how do you activate that?

Eiland: We start working on it about 14–15 months in advance, beginning with the previous year's championship. We have people who plan and buy in advance, so we do our first push then. We also allow the [upcoming] host city to do an initial push. That phase goes on until sometime in January.

Then, we're a little bit quiet until August. The host city is working very hard at that time; they're at events throughout the summer. We work with the host city to determine a date that has a significance in the community whether it's the start of the season, a home match coming up, whatever date they want to do a big pre-sale. Our marketing plan really relies on the host to spend the summer and early fall making sure that everybody in the city is aware of what's going on.

AVCA: Do college volleyball fans travel to the championship?

Eiland: It depends on the team and how far they're traveling. The general rule of thumb is a two-hour radius. However, we all know that Nebraska fans are coming regardless. We usually have a good showing from Texas. Some fans would obviously prefer their team be there, but they'll come anyway. When some teams make it to the championship, it's a little harder [to sell tickets], because we know they're not going to have as big of a fan base that will travel. We have to adjust for that.

AVCA: Is it helpful to the efforts of marketing the championship that AVCA has a convention at the site?

Eiland: Definitely. It's great for our fans to see the coaches there, whether they're participating [in the championship] or not. Seeing the coaches in the stands means a lot and it's cool for them to see the big-name coaches. We've really tried to present it as the culmination, the place you want to be. ☺

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Money Talks

USA Volleyball Gift Pushes Historic Investment Over the Edge

THE SOUTHERN Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAC) announced in September the addition of men's volleyball as the league's 14th-sponsored sport with the support of a \$1 million grant from First Point Volleyball Foundation and USA Volleyball. Men's volleyball will begin its first year of competition in 2020–21. The \$1 million grant is being funded with \$600,000 from First Point Volleyball Foundation, a non-profit started by John Speraw, Head Coach of the U.S. Men's National Volleyball Team and UCLA, and \$400,000 from USA Volleyball. Central State, Benedict, Fort Valley State, Kentucky State, Morehouse and Paine will all sponsor NCAA Division I-II men's volleyball and will debut in the spring of 2021. A six-team conference tournament also will take place at a date and site to be determined.

"We are extremely pleased to receive this generous investment from First Point Volleyball Foundation and USA Volleyball. I am convinced that the impact of this gift will not only be felt on the campuses of those participating SIAC member colleges and universities, but this gift could also serve as a catalyst for increasing African-American participation in men's volleyball throughout the United States. Moreover, as one of the most popular sports internationally – particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, HBCU sponsorship of men's volleyball will also create international recruitment opportunities for SIAC member institutions. Finally, much credit must be accorded to the presidents and athletic directors of all of the participating SIAC member institutions for collectively working together to embrace this historic opportunity."

First Point Volleyball Foundation and USA Volleyball have both made diversity a strategic priority initiative and Jamie Davis, USA Volleyball's CEO, believes the impact of HBCUs offering men's volleyball will be

profound. "USA Volleyball is proud to be supporting this SIAC initiative to bring men's varsity volleyball programs to six HBCU schools. As the National Governing Body for volleyball, we strive to increase the diversity and inclusion in our sport. I applaud the leadership and vision being shown by Commissioner Moore and all six of the schools' presidents and athletic directors which will surely increase the participation of African-American men playing volleyball and lead to new athletic and academic opportunities for young boys. This program will serve as a new path to the podium for these men to potentially join our national teams and represent Team USA across the globe," Davis said.

John Speraw added, "We talk at USA Volleyball about the path to the podium. It is not outlandish to think that a young man playing in the SIAC conference in 2021 could be an Olympian in 2028 or 2032. Our work at First Point Volleyball Foundation is providing more opportunities for young people and it is also building our pipeline for more success at the international level for Team USA for decades to come."

The historic rollout began in Frankfort, KY, as President Christopher Brown II announced that Kentucky State University will be the first named grant recipient and will be adding men's volleyball beginning in the 2020–2021 school year. In addition to the Kentucky State announcement, press conferences took place where new men's volleyball programs will be announced at Central State University in Wilberforce, OH; Benedict College in Columbia, SC; Paine College in Augusta GA; Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA; and Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, GA. Kentucky State University, Central State University, Benedict College, Paine College, Morehouse College and Fort Valley State University each will be receiving \$150,000 from First Point Volleyball Foundation and

USA Volleyball over a three-year period as part of the SIAC grant program.

"It has been terrific working with Greg (Moore) and the SIAC Conference," Speraw said. "We are thankful for the many generous volleyball donors from across the country that have supported First Point Volleyball Foundation and allowed us to provide support to the SIAC and to new college programs to come."

About the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference

The SIAC is an NCAA athletic conference consisting primarily of historically black colleges and universities with headquarters in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. The SIAC includes 14 member institutions (Albany State University, Benedict College, Central State University, Clark Atlanta University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Lane College, LeMoyne-Owen College, Miles College, Morehouse College, Paine College, Savannah State University, Spring Hill College and Tuskegee University), which are located within a contiguous six-state footprint (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee and Ohio). The SIAC sponsors seven men's and six women's sports and is a proud member of the NCAA Division II. For more information, visit www.thesiac.com.

About First Point Volleyball Foundation

Founded in 2016 by Wade Garard and John Speraw, Head Coach of the USA Men's National Team and UCLA Men's Volleyball, First Point Volleyball Foundation exists to provide opportunities for young people to mature and develop through volleyball. Specifically focused on growing boys' and men's volleyball in the United States, First Point Volleyball Foundation initiates and celebrates FIRST POINTS, whether that is a first point of a new NCAA team, or a new

high school team or a first point of competitive volleyball for a 12-year-old. First Point Volleyball has raised \$3.1 million in less than three years and has helped start 17 new collegiate men's volleyball programs. The Foundation has three strategic initiatives: (1) Growing collegiate opportunities; (2) Growing high school boys' opportunities; and (3) Extending our Reach Diversity Initiative – expanding volleyball opportunities to boys and men of color. www.firstpointvolleyball.com.

About USA Volleyball

Founded in 1928, USA Volleyball is a non-profit organization recognized by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) as the National Governing Body for the volleyball disciplines of beach, indoor,

sitting, snow and beach ParaVolley in the United States. With more than 370,000 registered members, USA Volleyball conducts national championship events, coaching and referee certification programs, and grassroots development across all disciplines in a lifetime sport in which all can participate. USA Volleyball's teams have won an Olympic medal in every Olympic Games since 1984, four Paralympic medals since 2004, and numerous World Cup, World Championship and Continental Championship titles. For more information on USA Volleyball, visit www.usavolleyball.org. #PathtothePodium

About Boys' and Men's Volleyball in the United States

Boys' volleyball is exploding. It is the fastest growing team sport in the United States for

high school boys, growing at 22% over the last five years. The second fastest growing sport grew by only 10%, and football decreased 9% over the same five-year period. With 63,563 boys playing high school now, it is projected that 100,000 boys will be playing by 2026. Minnesota added 1,000 boys' volleyball players and 51 high school teams in the last two years alone. Colorado just officially sanctioned boys' high school volleyball, and sanctioning initiatives and pilots are underway in 18 additional states. New men's volleyball programs have been initiated in 80 universities in the last five years alone – mostly at the DII, DIII and NAIA levels. In 2018, First Point Volleyball Foundation provided Saint Francis College-Brooklyn (a Division I institution) a \$100,000 grant to add men's volleyball beginning in 2019–2020.



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Finish Strong

Making a Media Push

David Portney

IF YOU THINK your team is about to enter, or is in good position to have an impact, in the postseason, the time is now to make sure the media strategy is ready to go. As volleyball coaches, it's easy to get tunnel vision this time of year with the entire season on the brink. However, with that urgency comes an increased interest in both fans and media that can be converted into lifetime relationships with your program.

Let's say you're all in. Get on the phone! Late autumn is traditionally the busiest time of year for sports media as fall sports are in their postseasons (especially football), and basketball season is just getting started. Their email inboxes are flooded, so if you can get them on the phone, you'll have an advantage. Keep in mind they may not be aware of your program, but often just a brief explanation of your postseason situation and schedule goes a long way. Be direct. Tell them the significance of the match, and you will have a seat waiting for them. Even if the person you speak with can't attend, they might be able to track down another staffer to cover it.

I'll be honest. It's tough finding the time to line up a series of phone numbers and make robocalls. While by doing so you're putting yourself in the best possible situation, shooting off emails is the next best alternative. First, write one template in a Word document that can be altered to accommodate the individual/media outlet. The email should be as short as possible, but include the following items: name and who you are, high school/college team, all pertinent details about the match (time, place, opponent, what's on the line, parking), and a direct invitation.

Remember, this is a quick sales pitch! It isn't necessary to explain the entire season's story quite yet. The fact that you're in the postseason is good enough for the media,



ADRIEN OLUCHON/UNSPASH

but once they commit to attend, then feel free to pass along more information that could be useful.

Obviously, it gets a little trickier if the postseason match is happening outside of the area covered by a particular media outlet. In that case, try a different tactic. Even if they wouldn't send someone a long distance to cover it, that doesn't mean they aren't interested in publicizing what happened. This only means you'll have to show a little hustle.

One option is to write a brief recap and send it to the appropriate media contacts. It can be short – in the neighborhood of 200 words that can be publicized online. If you choose this route, I would also suggest attaching a horizontally cropped photo from the match to accompany the story. The more content you provide the media, the more likely they'll use it.

A second option is utilizing the same video used in recording matches to edit and send to the media. Whether it's high school or college, almost all programs are recording some video for their own use, but that can be easily converted into highlights. It can be chopped up into one to two minutes showing a handful of the top plays from the match. From the media's

perspective, it can potentially make a sports broadcast or find its way on their website and/or social media accounts.

A third option is to record your own interviews. Yes, I know that sounds weird, but hear me out. A microphone can be plugged into the headphone jack of a smartphone (about \$30) that is surprisingly high-quality. A coach, player or parent can interview anyone on the team, and the file can be passed along to media outlets. They will most likely end up cutting out the questions portion of the interview, and only share the answers.

The theme here is to not let perfect be the enemy of good. It's perfectly fine to not be a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, a Monday Night Football-quality camera operator or a Bob Costas interviewer. As long as you're providing media outlets with content, there's a chance they'll use it. These three options can be combined, but you might need some assistance from dedicated staffers or parents to pull that off.

Whether you're participating in a home match or hitting the road for the postseason, there is no better time to fully engage the local community and media. You never know when one match, or one moment, will be remembered for a lifetime.



GETTING FIT

Giving Parents a Positive Direction – Coaching Recovery

Ken Kontor

Performance Conditioning Volleyball has long advocated the seamless integration between the strength and conditioning coach and the volleyball skills coach in order to gain a handle on total workload to avoid over-training/use and abuse. A key factor in avoiding overdoing it is to ensure proper recovery. What can the coach do to address this issue? Bring in the parents to help in the process.

Gaining support of parents can be a difficult task for any coach. But support can be achieved much more easily if the parent becomes part of something, a part of the team.

The need is there

The volleyball coach and/or performance coach only gets to see their athlete a few hours a week. In this short time, they are responsible to ensure every player is properly recovered from the workout/practices and game schedule. The coach can educate the athlete themselves on recovery or have them rely on their friends and teammate for direction, but the obvious answer is the people who spends the most time with the athlete – the parents – are the masters of guidance and accountability. Gaining parental support and helping the athlete advance in their recovery is definitely a win-win situation. Parents have the ability to ensure their athlete is doing everything they can to recover, regardless of the push-back they may give – they are still their parent, not their friend.



LOUIS HANSEL/UNSPLASH

How to be the best recovery coach?

If you are attending the AVCA Convention in Pittsburgh, be sure to attend the presentation done by Rob Rose, President, True Athlete Performance, and regular contributor to *Performance Conditioning Volleyball*. The lecture is scheduled for 10:15am on December 14th. Presented will be Steps of the Parents as a Recovery Coach:

NUTRITION Package

1. Eating properly for proper recovery
2. Meal balance
3. Healthy snacks during the day
4. NO FAST FOOD

MORNING Exercises

1. Research shows that doing a simple morning exercise routine helps boost recovery.
2. Research also shows that morning workouts help with focus, and it leads to students performing better in school.
3. Sample morning workout will be presented.

SLEEP Package – the No. 1 way to recover from any exercise or workout

1. We need HGH! In order to recover, we need human growth hormone (HGH). The only time that our body will naturally secrete that is during sleep.
2. We need to get into REM sleep as fast as possible and stay there as long as possible.
3. Tricks to get into REM and stay there:
 - a. GET OFF THE PHONE!
Athletes should not be on their phone, computer or TV for at least 90 minutes before they go to bed.
 - i. We know your athlete will push back on this, but I beg you to STAY STRONG.



Rob Rose, President,
True Athlete Performance

- b. Dark. Keep the room as dark as possible. The darker the better.
- c. Cold. Keep the room really cold – say, 68 degrees.
- d. Take a five-minute hot shower right before bed.
- e. Drink a milk-based protein shake.
- f. The room is for sleeping and sleeping only. No TV, no phone, no computer, do not do homework in bed, and do not eat in bed.

INJURIES

1. Please, please, tell your coach and trainer as soon as your athlete gets injured.
2. Keep lifting!
 - a. Even if you are injured, you should lift.
 - b. The secrets of Contralateral Training

This is a sample of what is going to be presented. Be sure to attend. If you can't attend be sure to catch the next issue of *Performance Conditioning Volleyball* where Rob will present more information on the topic.

Following: A Skill We Need to Start Practicing

By Connor Wexter

LEADERSHIP is an often-discussed skill that is central to the success of sports programs, but what is infrequently discussed is the reality that the number of leaders in an organization is always outweighed by the number of followers.

Where Does Control Lie?

In team sports, leaders often have a misconstrued feeling of strength. Although the leaders in an organization may create a vision, their vision is empty without passionate people believing in it and working towards it. Those who carry out the vision hold power and can be the catalyst as to whether change does or does not occur.

The masses are tough to compete against due to sheer numbers, even with the power of leadership at our disposal. Recent examples at all levels of sport especially display this “mob mentality” at work when coaches are fired for unhappiness among players. Poor team culture and vision leads to uninspired followers. To appease the masses quickly and simply, administrators look to replace coaches instead of teams. It allows a new leader the opportunity to stimulate community and excitement towards a better vision.

If control lies in the masses of our teams, how are the masses kept accountable? What can be put in place to teach diligent and active followership? What makes us believe that we can lead without understanding first how to follow?

Development of followers

Regardless of our titles or years of experience, we all follow someone. Hierarchies exist in organizations, and people will continue to have to lead up and down in any organization. As we wait for opportunities

to lead, should we want those opportunities, what needs to be done?

1. **Be a role model of effort** – Remember that as a follower, we need to work diligently to carry out the vision that we have created with our leaders. Leaders and followers maintain a relationship. An open and honest dialogue is crucial to transparency in that relationship. Followers should feel comfortable to question leadership and hold leaders accountable for their actions. When working towards a common goal, it is much easier to work hard when investment can be seen and unquestioned from both sides versus a more toxic culture where hard work and openness are not valued or appreciated.

2. **Respect** – Understand that although respect should be earned and reciprocated, we are only in control of our own actions. We need to treat others as they look to be treated. If we desire respect, we must first display it to others. If respect is not felt in the relationship, it is the duty of the follower to communicate those feelings in order to remain transparent. Finding and sharing perspective or opinions about a shared vision allow for followers to feel engaged in open and honest communication. Communicative respect between followers and leaders leads to trust in the relationship, and trust is the basis of all credibility.

3. **Love** – In athletics, talking about love can be uncomfortable, but we need to understand expressing how we love someone unconditionally can be a powerful tool of communication. We are not expressing romantic love, but instead talking about agape love. Agape love, from its Greek origin, focuses us on a genuine care for one another that is selfless and unconditional. Earning and giving agape love takes time, effort and considerable work. It takes self-awareness and communication from both leaders and followers to maintain love in a relationship. When love is felt and reciprocated, visions are carried out without question. Embracing the duality of love takes hard work, but it is worth our efforts to achieve.

We don't have to lead

After becoming a diligent and active follower through love, respect and being a role model of effort, it is the natural progression to become a leader, right? What if we have athletes who do not want leadership roles? What if our assistant coaches do not wish to become head coaches?

We use phrases in athletics such as, “be a leader, not a follower.” There is no greater insult to diligent followership than the expectation and feedback that it is not a powerful enough role. It is the equivalent to glorifying an attacker for killing a volleyball, without understanding that the libero with a perfect pass and the setter who located a pristine ball also are responsible for that kill. We work together to achieve great things. Would you only give rings to your starting athletes for winning a championship?

There is also always room for growth if we understand that even diligent followers can still function and operate at a higher level. We as people grow with every event that happens in our lives. Our reactions to those events create and shape the person we become, and we are in total control of those reactions.

Be the change

We have the power and ability to change the top-down view coaches and athletes often have in athletics. Leading and following are tough skills, but neither would exist without the other. Value both sides of the symbiotic relationship between the two, and understand that it takes hard work to make any organization, especially those in sport, thrive. Through love, respect and hard work we can achieve amazing accomplishments in sport, but we need to reflect and analyze if we are being present in the responsibilities we hold as followers with the same effort we do when we insist that others “step up” and be leaders. Being a great follower is being a great leader; we just need to reframe our perspective.



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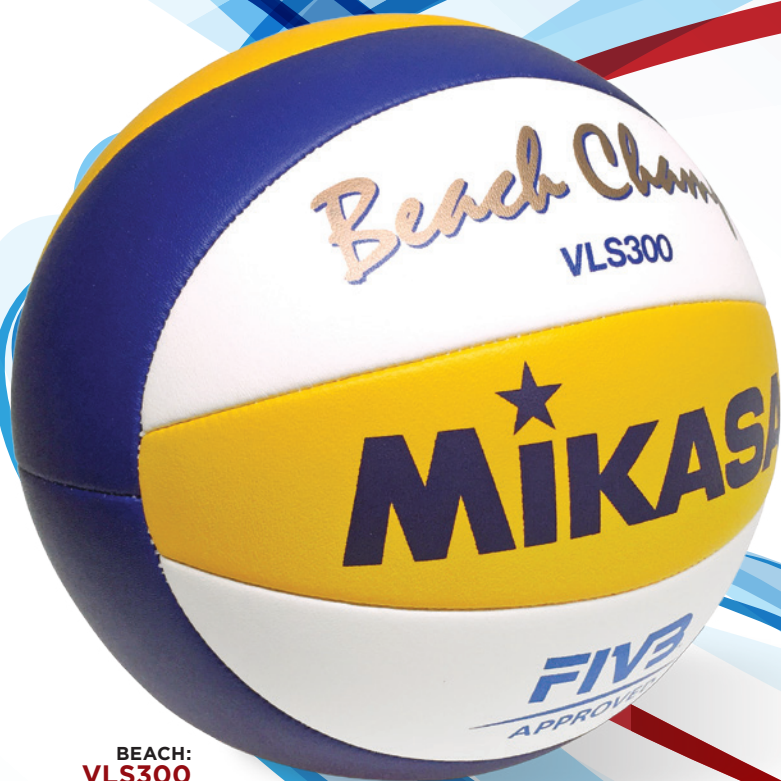
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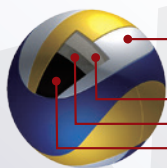
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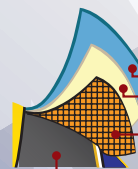
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