

# COACHING Volleyball

Fall Issue

A Publication of the American Volleyball Coaches Association

*avca*

[www.avca.org](http://www.avca.org)

## Set for Success

Charting a  
new path for  
your program  
p. 14



Also in this issue: AVCA Club Awards • Tracking Eye Movements • Meet Rich Kern

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## Features

### 8 2017 Club Awards

The AVCA is pleased to recognize excellence in the club volleyball community by honoring this fantastic group of coaches and directors. Here at the AVCA, we're committed to growing the game and fostering excellence at every level of the sport – and volleyball prowess is fostered in the club volleyball community. Check out some of these individuals that are working hard to ensure that each generation of volleyball athlete is stronger than the last.

### 10 Seeing is Believing

On occasion, we have the opportunity to share some of the fine research being done in the name of improving the sport as a whole. This group of Northern Iowa scholars and students have examined the visual process that athletes undergo and discovered some interesting tidbits about how we should be training student-athletes. Check out this piece that showcases cutting-edge research at work.

### 14 Charting a New Course

Every now and then, coaches find it appropriate to self-assess and try to figure out how to improve the overall state of a program. Iain Braddak (Columbia) has been through this process and collected his thoughts in refreshing a program from year-to-year, week-to-week or even game-to-game. Find out what he has to say about making the most of your situation and getting things headed in the right direction.

### 20 Volleyball Performance Index

As part of an ongoing effort to learn more about the physical attributes that relate to excellence in volleyball, the AVCA often will examine data collected in the course of research to find conclusions that may help identify top talent from around the country. Check out this article for the latest insights.



COLUMBIA VOLLEYBALL

## On the Cover

Every now and then, everyone could use a fresh start. Check out the insights that our contributor Iain Braddak has gleaned from his coaching career, and think critically about the steps you might take to help your team reach the next level.

## Departments

### 3 From the Desk of ...

Christy Johnson-Lynch, AVCA President

### 4 Our Game

Kathy DeBoer, AVCA Executive Director

### 6 Skills and Drills

### 22 Motor Men's Volleyball

Wade Garard

### 24 Writer's Desk

Terry Pettit

### 25 Media Issues

David Portney

### 26 Getting Fit

Ken Kontor

### 28 Pulling the Rope

Assistant Coaches Committee

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# From the Desk of ...

Christy Johnson-Lynch, Iowa State University Head Coach

THE STATE of youth sports has been getting a lot of attention these days, and unfortunately, a lot of that attention has been negative. Young athletes are feeling more and more pressure from both coaches and parents to perform, to play and, most importantly, to win. It's also becoming more difficult for a developing athlete to pursue multiple sports – there is pressure to play on club teams during the off-season, to attend weight workouts and to attend summer camps. They are pulled in many different directions, each coach or perhaps a parent wanting them to put time into one specific sport. Fortunately there is quite a bit of research on this topic, and as coaches, it's important we are informed and thoughtful about the advice and information we give to young athletes.

The science comes down very favorably for playing multiple sports and delaying specialization as long as possible. Multi-sport athletes have fewer overuse injuries. Repeating the same motions all year long increases the chance for injury, while changing sports throughout the year gives certain body parts and muscles time to heal. In fact, single-sport participation is “one of the strongest predictors of injury.”<sup>1</sup> Multi-sport athletes tend to experience less pressure and less burnout. The more sports a child is exposed to, the better the chance they will find something they love and are passionate about. Playing different sports even correlates to better lifelong fitness and becoming an active adult. And finally, we can't get too excited about early success in a sport. It does not guarantee or even correlate with future success. “Motivation to participate and endure the highs and lows is more indicative of a promising future than skill or sport readiness at an early age.”<sup>2</sup>

I've always thought our players that played multiple sports before they came to



ISU VOLLEYBALL

Iowa State tend to be better athletes. They move and jump better. They understand how to be dynamic and spontaneous on the court, they have less injuries and they are more fit. But the biggest advantage may be mental. Athletes that come from multiple sports have often been our greatest competitors. They grow up having to figure out how to compete and win in different ways and in many different environments. They've been exposed to more coaching styles, and they've had to adapt and learn how to be coachable. They've had more opportunities to solve problems, to deal with difficult teammates, and learn things like perseverance and mental toughness. These qualities are not sport-specific.

So what can we do as coaches? We know volleyball does require a lot of skill, particularly at the setter and libero position. At a certain point, an athlete is going to have to focus more time on volleyball if they want to be great. But we need to encourage our

young athletes to delay specialization as long as possible. As a middle school or high school coach, that may mean not requiring or pressuring kids to play club in the off-season or attend summer workouts or camps, allowing their bodies time to heal and recover. We can help athletes come up with a reasonable schedule so they can play different sports throughout the year. As club coaches, we may have to be more supportive and flexible when an athlete wants to play other sports. As college coaches we can encourage our prospects to keep playing basketball, track, softball or whatever it is they also enjoy, even if it means playing with a lower level club team that doesn't require as much time. They might not, at least initially, be as skilled as volleyball-only athletes, but in the long term it just might lead to a better, stronger, more successful athlete.

<sup>1</sup> <http://changingthegameproject.com/what-about-the-single-sport-athlete-specialization-part-ii/gingthegameproject.com>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3871410/>



## Our Game

Kathy DeBoer

### WHY DO WE COACH?

Having just finished our annual salary survey, we know it's not money. Certainly, there are those in our community making mid-six figures, but we don't run out of fingers when counting them. Many, especially in the college ranks, make our living (or a good portion of it) from coaching, but if you look at our wage-per-hour, we could make the same if we did something else and worked a lot less.

I had a conversation with a veteran coach when I was just starting. I had spent 15 minutes whining about my team, my schedule and the hardships of my life, when he asked me: "If there was a rumor that you were quitting, how many people would inquire about your job by the end of the day? I'm thinking it's a lot. What do they see that you don't?"

Having a job that others want, however, does not, by itself, help us deal with the stresses of coaching.

We work in an environment where we expose ourselves to public embarrassment about twice a week. Regardless of our preparation, there are times in every season when our team is getting beat so soundly, so completely, that they look as if we have done nothing.

Having been there, I watch with both empathy and interest the ways that coaches respond in these settings: Do we abandon our team by sitting sullen and stone-faced on the bench? Do we rage at the officials, trying to sell the hoax that it is their fault our team is playing poorly? Do we show we have quit by benching our best player(s)? Do we put our face in our hands or laugh with our assistants, announcing, with our body language, that this bunch of losers is not worthy of our efforts?

From my perch as an inside-outsider, I revere the coaches who continue coaching when their team is getting trounced – those able to quiet their fear, control their anger and stay imbedded in their team's ineptness, not superficially, but genuinely, emotionally, eye-to-eye, hand slap-to-hand slap, those able to "be present" in the messiness.

Yet, matches are simply the public validation of our work. Much more happens in private – the daily grind of practice, the struggle to motivate players we don't like very much, dealing with mental health issues for which we have no training, managing tension within our staff.

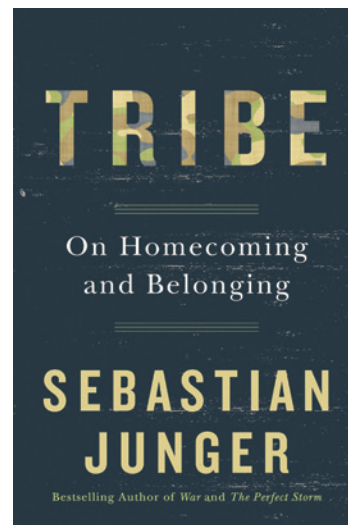
And that's just during season. Afterward, we get the text message about the de-commit of a star recruit; or have the post-season meeting where we find out the transfer of a talented player is all but complete; or get the summons to the AD's office to be handed a letter signed by half our team calling us a bully, an abuser or worse?

Still, given all this, very few coaches quit voluntarily. And, when we are pushed out, we often find our way back in. What makes this activity so addictive?

I'm reading a book by Sebastian Junger called "Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging." The theme is that modern American life, especially for people in cities, is intentionally isolating and, therefore, unhealthy. Junger argues that our society has lionized independence and built systems – schools, suburbs and workplaces – where individuals have only transient interaction with others. We don't need others, and we are not needed ourselves.

He cites statistics on suicide rates, violent crime and substance abuse in the U.S. compared to other "less privileged" societies to make his point that autonomy is not good for human beings. He details what happens during times of natural disasters or wars, how the ways people in a community treat each other changes – strangers help strangers, we become generous rather than stingy, egalitarianism trumps hierarchical. Although it is counterintuitive, symptoms of stress – depression, substance abuse, family violence – all go down during a crisis because, he argues, "we are needed, and don't have time for them."

In many ways, volleyball teams act like tribes, without the life-threatening consequences of a disaster or war. The sport lends



itself to "tribal behavior"; interdependence is built into the rules, and individual success is impossible without assistance from others. On a volleyball team, as in a flood, after a hurricane, on a patrol or in traditional farming communities, we need each other and are needed – both situations affirming to our mental health.

I'm doing color commentary for Kentucky's web-streamed matches on the SEC Network. My favorite part of the assignment is spending 30–45 minutes with a coach before a match talking about their team. The conversation is always before matches, when game plans are intact and hopefulness reigns. What I notice is the worse the team, the more tribal the coach: They defend players, detail progress, cite near-wins and talk about culture, belonging and loyalty.

I see it with players also: The harder the struggle, the more they bond. I see it with our staff: We feel closest to each other during the Convention when we see each other the least, but need each other the most.

We're often quite inarticulate in describing why being part of a team matters to us – we turn it into smarmy idealized blather about family and friendship – when really what makes it unique is that it is hard and what we do matters.

That's why we coach!

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## Block and Decide

By Peggy Martin – Spring Hill College

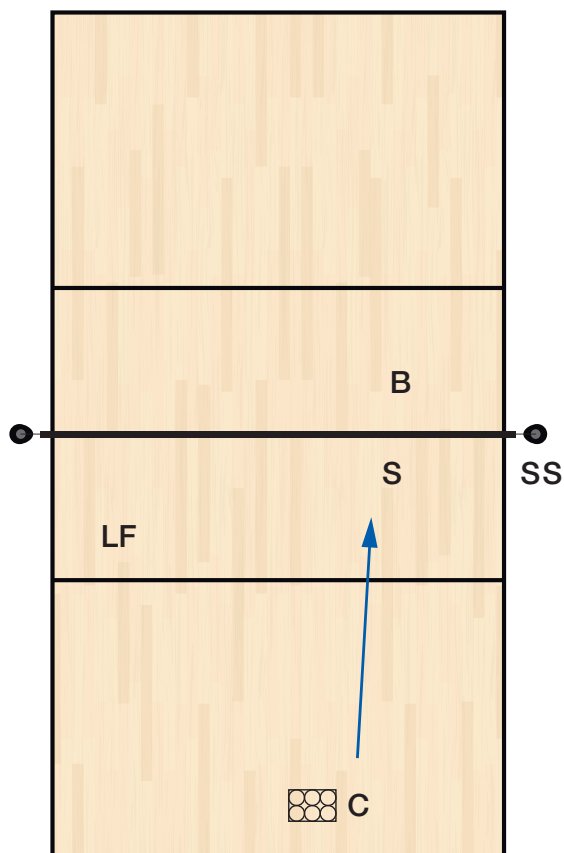
**Objective:** To improve the front-row setter's decision making; to practice executing jump-sets, dumps, attacks and blocks after the initial block

**Equipment needed:** 1-3 setter (or RF players) and a steady supply of balls

**Directions:**

- The setter, or RF player, mock blocks and turns immediately to receive a tight dig (toss) from the coach
- The setter must decide to either jump-set, dump, attack or block without a net-foul
- After the setter begins making consistently good decisions and executing the correct technique, the coach should add an opposing LF blocker to the drill. The blocker's commitment will affect the setter's decision making

**Variation:** Add a RB passer who will either dig the ball to the setter off of the coach's tip or attack over the net



## How to Recruit Your Future Senior Leaders

By Laura Kasey, Assistant Coach – University of Minnesota



WE ALL HAVE a variety of considerations we take out onto the recruiting trail. We need a setter for the 2016 class or we have to find a terminating pin right now. We seek a minimum academic level, a desired level of competitiveness and this ubiquitous term “grit” that we hope is attached to all those other qualities. If we have had

luck with health and planning, each fall will see a new fresh-faced class of four to five student-athletes. They will be a mix of ball-control and big kids and have not only their individual personalities, but they will also have a class personality. So the question is, will you look forward to the season when they represent your senior leadership? And what can you do in the recruiting process to help that answer to be “yes”?

First, pay attention to behavior when you watch recruits at tournaments and matches. How do they handle making mistakes, being coached and being a teammate? How do they speak to their parents? Note that information as you would skill and physicality. Next, create personality or leadership categories that you want to have balanced within your team and within the class. For example: potential leader, probable follower and “needs guidance.” When you look at a possible class, and have two great physical talents committed – but both are probable followers, you may need to shift your sights to a leader as a priority. While an even-keel and mellow group of freshmen or sophomores might go unnoticed as a problem, not having a senior who can shout “Let’s go!” with a high degree of creditability will become a glaring one.

Lastly, if you are recruiting someone for their leadership, make that a part of the conversation early and often. You can begin shaping that role before they arrive on campus. Are they responsive to requests? Can you find early roles to help them develop that relationship with their classmates? Maybe they plan an activity at summer camp, or are in charge of a small part of their official visit (providing their class is visiting together). When they begin their freshman season, you will already have a head start on that three-year process of personal and volleyball growth. There is not much better of a litmus test of your recruiting, coaching and student-athlete development than your senior class.



# The Mystery Blocker Drill

By Greg Shell, Assistant Coach – Central Connecticut State University

I KNOW the “Mystery Blocker” drill sounds like it should be about training blocking, (and it is a live-play drill that allows your front court players to work on blocking technique and movement and in-system attacking against a block), but more than anything, it is about training your setter’s vision and set selection. This is not the first drill I would use in a vision progression, but once you have started making progress in stop-action work, this is a nice way to refine a few things.



CCSU VOLLEYBALL

The ball is entered from the defensive side, and to start, should be entered as an in-system ball (free ball or down ball, probably to the libero). As the ball is passed and is on the way to the setter, the mystery blocker steps to the net on either side of the middle. The offense plays the ball out and runs their play against the four blockers in the front court. The setter’s job is to set the ball away from the mystery blocker with good location – the idea being that you’d likely set away from the middle’s movement, and that if you set toward that movement, you are making life tougher on your hitters. If the ball goes the wrong way, your hitter should be facing a triple block as a pin player, or a double if the ball is set in the middle of the court. There are no tips or rolls allowed – full swings or tooling the block only, as there is no defense behind the block.

There are two keys to making this drill work. First the mystery blocker needs to pick a side on time. The setter needs enough time to read the block and make a decision. You will need to figure out what this looks like in your gym, and will probably be able to go for a slightly later commitment as your setter progresses. Second, the middle cannot cheat – as the mystery blocker steps up, the middle should not shade away from them early, but should be reading the setter and deciding where to go. If they cheat, run quicks, and you likely have a gap up the gut.

To adjust and make it a little more difficult on the offense, vary the difficulty of the ball that is entered, or where that ball is being

passed from. A ball coming over the setter’s back shoulder can make recognizing the block more difficult, as will a pass that is not three option ... a poor pass will also limit options, but if you use a back court attack, a good pipe set can keep the block honest a little longer, but may be difficult to use if the setter is chasing off of her spot.

Scoring can work however you want. Start just by scoring the setter’s decision on where to set the ball – did she work away from the extra block, or make the job more difficult for her hitter? I also like to play a first ball kill game (with a certain number of attempts in each rotation for the offense), and set an efficiency number that works in your gym – a clean kill or a tool down or out off the block would both score, but a ball that is playable off the block is a win for the defense. When competing offense vs. defense, it is critical that tips, rolls and shots are not allowed – if a setter puts up a ball so poor that it can’t be attacked, their side should lose the rally.



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# 2017 CLUB AWARDS

The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2017 Club Awards. The Club Awards program debuted in 2016 and recognizes 10 deserving coaches in the youth and club volleyball community. The AVCA Club Awards Committee selected a Club Coach of the Year in each of the seven girls age divisions (12-18), a Beach Club Coach of the Year, a Boys Club Coach of the Year and a Club Director of the Year. The honorees will be recognized at the Jostens Coaches Honors Luncheon at the AVCA Convention in Kansas City, Mo.

Nominations had to be submitted for consideration, and the coach nominated must have an active AVCA membership. The selections were made by the AVCA Club Awards Committee: Chairperson Sherry Fadool (Triangle); Jill Stucky (NORCO), Bob Westbrook (A5), Ron Kordes (KIVA), Stephen Boyle (Pumas), Brennan Dean (WAVE), Maggie Griffin (VCNebraska), John Sample (TAV) and Dave Weitl (Washington VBA).



## Club Director of the Year

**John Sample**

**Texas Advantage Volleyball**

Few coaches have made an impact on volleyball across the country like John Sample. After 30 years, TAV now boasts 100 teams and 130 coaches spanning both genders with indoor and beach opportunities. At Nationals this year, TAV picked up two golds, four silvers and one bronze, which was the best for any club at that tournament. Sample and his team have developed scholarship programs, work programs, video capabilities, wellness programs and many more that make playing at TAV a lot more than just volleyball. They are also one of the first clubs to offer baseline concussion testing for every player to help diagnose and recover from concussions.



## 18s Coach of the Year

**Mike Lingenfelter**

**Municipiana Volleyball Club**

“Ultimately all I hope for is to give back to the game. The lessons I’ve been taught are sewn into my soul and I’d like to do the same for others.”

In 2017, Lingenfelter’s Samurai 18 Open Team registered 65 wins and took home five first place finishes including the AAU National Championship.



## 17s Coach of the Year

**Michelle Erins**

**Illini Elite Volleyball Club**

A former student-athlete, Erins found that coaching was the perfect way to keep the competitive spark alive. Finishing up her 14th season, she won the 17-Open JVA Showcase at the Dells and finished second at the UltraAnkle Bluegrass Tournament and JVA World Challenge.

Her primary goal as a coach is to “help young women learn how to develop confidence by setting challenging goals and working hard to accomplish them every day. This obviously applies to volleyball, but is also a key life skill that will help them succeed off the court as an adult.”



## 16s Coach of the Year

**Melissa Starck-Bean**

**Kentucky Indiana Volleyball Academy**

She not only serves as the leader of Asics KIVA 16 Red, but also as a role model for her players to look up to. They are consistently ranked among the best 16s teams in the country, and one of the reasons for that is that she stays up to date with the latest training materials and methods. Starck-Bean isn’t afraid to buck the status quo if it can serve as an opportunity to improve her team.



## 15s Coach of the Year

**LJ Sariego**

**Texas Advantage Volleyball**

He serves as the Director of Camps, Clinics and Tournaments at the club. As one of the original coaches of TAV and with over 20 years of coaching club volleyball, Sariego has coached a team at Open Girls Nationals for 16 consecutive years. In 2017, his team was the 15 Open National Champion.



## 14s Coach of the Year

**Stefanie Wigfall**

**Sunshine Volleyball Club**

One of Sunshine Volleyball Club’s mottos is that they strive to teach the fundamentals at the highest level, and Wigfall has done just that. Going into her 14th year of coaching, she has been a four-time Junior Olympic medaled coach. This year, her squad registered a 48-10 record and took home three medals (one silver and two bronze).

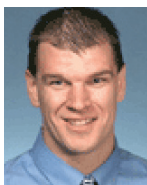


### 13s Coach of the Year

Felix Viera

Orlando Tampa Volleyball Academy

With an impressive 2017 season and record of 88-9, Viera has played a significant role in Orlando girls' volleyball. The OTVA 13s ROX RED squad finished in first place at USAV Nationals 13 Open, AAU Nationals, Big South and AAU Puerto Rico Super Regionals. He was able to take girls that had never played with each other, changed eight of their positions, and make them champions.



### 12s Coach of the Year

Bryon Larson

Adidas Dynasty Volleyball Club

Initially wanting to coach football, he instead was offered a volleyball coaching job at a middle school in Kansas City. Ever since then he's been hooked. Larson not only is living out his passion of teaching and mentoring some of the youngest volleyball players in the country, but winning along the way. This past season, his 12 Black squad finished with an astounding 81-1 record, with championships at the USAV Nationals, Colorado Crossroads and five other tournaments.



### Boys Coach of the Year

Dylan Mulkey

Carolina Union Volleyball Club

The head coach of CUVC 18 Boys Onslaught (18/Open), he's been able to not only win matches, but increase boys' participation in his area. Starting out with just one team in 2015, this season there were three making an impact on the club circuit. In 2017, his squad won 58 matches, a 28-win increase from a year ago. They finished in the top five of the Boys Winter Classic (Open), Florida Fest (Open) and East Coast Championships (Open).



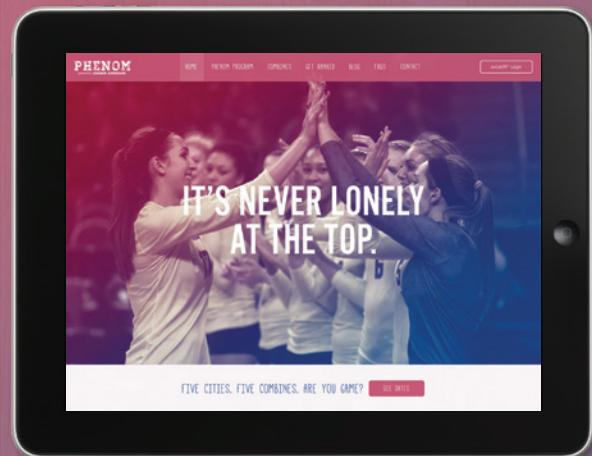
### Beach Coach of the Year

Joe Deimeke

High Performance St. Louis

You don't need to be on the beach to make an impact in beach volleyball, and no one better exemplifies that than the High Performance STL Outdoor Director Joe Deimeke. Through his Outdoor Extension Program, Advanced Sand Program, and free open play at the club, he has been responsible for introducing the beach game to over 500 athletes. He utilizes outdoor volleyball to make the indoor players better all-around athletes, and they have a separate training program for those that have shown a commitment to beach. One of his crowning accomplishments this year was playing an instrumental role in bringing the Gateway Open, St. Louis' first ever beach qualifier, to the region where there were over 80 teams in attendance.

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# Seeing is Believing

## Volleyball and the Quiet Eye

Eryca Hingtgen, Mickey Mack  
Corresponding author: Fabio Fontana, Ph.D.,  
Associate Professor (University of Northern Iowa)

*When appropriate, the AVCA is honored to share research that is specifically conducted in the name of improving the ways in which we coach and examine the sport of volleyball. We received this study, conducted by students and professors at the University of Northern Iowa, and publish excerpts here to offer insight into how we perceive the motor mechanics of our sport. To read the study in full, visit the Coaching Volleyball Magazine tab at [www.avca.org](http://www.avca.org).*

### Intro

The Quiet Eye (QE) is the final gaze fixation on a target occurring right before a sport action (Piras & Vickers, 2011). This visual behavior is associated with improved performance in sport skills such as ice hockey and soccer goaltending (Panchuk, Vickers & Hopkins, 2016; Piras & Vickers, 2011), free throw shooting (Vickers, 1996), golf putting (Vine, Moore & Wilson, 2011), and soccer penalty kicking (Wood & Wilson, 2012). The QE is also trainable, and the performance of an athlete trained to execute a proper QE is less susceptible to heightened levels of anxiety (Vine, Moore & Wilson, 2011). Properly executing the QE should also assist volleyball players returning serves in volleyball. However, there is only a single study examining the QE behaviors for serve return in volleyball (Vickers & Adolphe, 1997). Highly proficient returners look where the server is expected to hit the ball instead of following the ball toss. Proficient volleyball returners also track the flight of the volleyball for a longer duration by focusing on the ball early and waiting longer to start their action toward the ball. Unfortunately, Vickers and Adolphe (1997) focused exclusively on standing serves while the vast majority of serves in collegiate

volleyball are jump serves. Thus, the purpose of this study was to compare the gaze behaviors of collegiate volleyball players during the performance of accurate and inaccurate jump serve returns.

### Participants

Nine Division I collegiate women's volleyball athletes ages 18-23 participated in the study.

After calibration, we asked the athlete to stand in the middle back position of the volleyball court. The position was marked with a line, and it was 356 cm from the end line of the volleyball court. The quality of the serve interferes with the ability to return that serve. Therefore, we established an acceptable range of serving speed and landing area. Returns of serve within 20 to 40 mph and landing inside of the middle back serving area were valid points for further data analysis. We determined speed of serve by using a handheld radar gun (Pocket Radar). All serves were within the allocated speed range ( $M = 31.54$  mph;  $SD = 3.16$ ). The athlete received serves until accomplishing five inaccurate (0-1 level) and five accurate passes (2-3 level). We determined passing accuracy by labeled court markings as follows:

- **3** = determined by the area of court in which the setter would stand (20 cm from the net and 254 cm from the side-line), which was marked off with a volleyball cart positioned on top of a box stand. The opening of the cart was 61 cm by 61 cm in length. The height of the cart represented an approximate height of the setter's hands (Height = 152 cm). Passes rated 3 were considered optimal passes, meaning that the setter would have been in a position where she could have set all three of her front row hitters.
- **2** = marked off on the floor, around the cart, 10 feet from the center line and 4 feet away from each sideline.
- **1** = marked off on the floor 15 feet behind the 10 foot line.
- **0** = marked off behind the one pass line and anywhere outside of the court or over the net. Passes rated 0 were considered the low quality passes, meaning that the setter could not have gotten to the ball in position to set any of the hitters.



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## Data Analysis

The dependent variables of the study were: (1) Pre-serve duration: The duration of the athlete's last gaze before the serve contact; (2) Serve to tracking onset: The time taken for the athlete to begin tracking the ball after the serve; (3) QE: the duration of the last fixation before the returners' first step towards the ball. We analyzed the data separately for each dependent variable using dependent t-tests. The independent variable was passing accuracy. Only the visual behaviors of the 0 (inaccurate) and 3 (accurate) passes were compared during statistical analysis for a clear distinction between accurate and inaccurate passes. We used IBM SPSS Statistics to compute all statistical analyses.

## Results

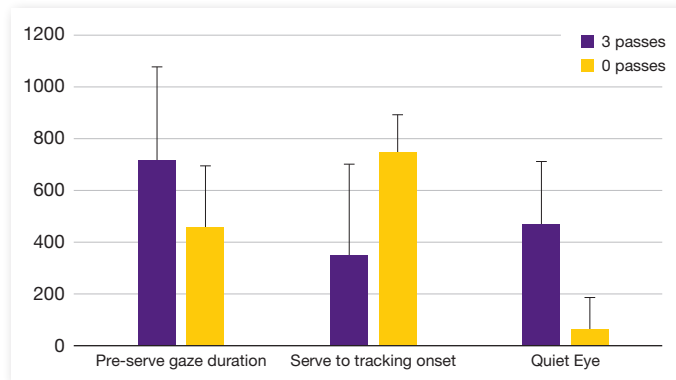
**Pre-serve gaze duration.** The duration of pre-serve gaze durations was significantly longer for accurate ( $M = 709.43\text{ms}$ ;  $SD = 364.99$ ) than inaccurate passes ( $M = 460.36\text{ms}$ ;  $SD = 231.13$ ;  $t_6 = 2.49$ ;  $p = .047$ ).

**Serve to tracking onset.** Athletes took a significantly shorter time to begin tracking the ball during accurate ( $M = 350.29\text{ms}$ ;  $SD = 230.80$ ) than inaccurate passes ( $M = 743.86\text{ms}$ ;  $SD = 142.87$ ;  $t_6 = -4.33$ ;  $p = .005$ ).

**Quiet Eye.** The duration of the QE was significantly longer for accurate ( $M = 467.00\text{ms}$ ;  $SD = 241.16$ ) than inaccurate passes ( $M = 66.43\text{ms}$ ;  $SD = 117.28$ ;  $t_6 = 4.12$ ;  $p = .006$ ).

## Discussion

We found that the duration of the pre-serve gaze was significantly longer in accurate versus inaccurate passes. Gaze times were 50% longer for accurate passes as compared to inaccurate ones. After contact, athletes also tracked the ball significantly earlier and had a significantly longer quiet eye during the flight of the ball when making an accurate pass compared to an inaccurate pass. Specifically, the time taken to begin tracking the ball following contact for an accurate pass occurred in less than half the time required for inaccurate passes. In addition, the length of the last fixation before the returner's first step was seven times longer for



accurate passes in comparison to inaccurate passes. This highlights the importance of teaching long pre-serve gaze duration, early serve to tracking onset, and quiet eye to volleyball players in order to improve their performance in the return of a jump float serve.

## Recommendations

We recommend that coaches teach volleyball athletes to point their initial gaze early and near the area where the server contacts the ball. This can be a difficult message to communicate to athletes. Thus, we suggest that coaches instruct athletes to follow the ball toss for a short period and then **gaze park** their focus at the estimated point of contact until the ball returns to the contact point. We also recommend advising volleyball athletes to track the ball as early and as long as possible during the flight of the ball before taking the first step toward the ball. **Tracking the ball early in the flight** should be a straightforward message: **“See the hand make contact and follow the flight of the ball as quickly as possible.”** However, waiting for as long as possible to take the first step toward the ball seems to go against current practice. It is common for coaches to tell their athletes to “beat the ball” to the return location. However, research suggests that stepping too early disrupts the ability of the athlete to read the play (e.g., Quiet Eye) and make an accurate pass. Therefore, the third simplified recommendation should be to tell athletes to **meet the ball** during the return. Delaying your movement as long as possible seems to lengthen your critical QE time and increase passing accuracy. Therefore, your goal should be to delay moving too soon, which can be accomplished by planning to get to the spot just as the ball arrives. ☺

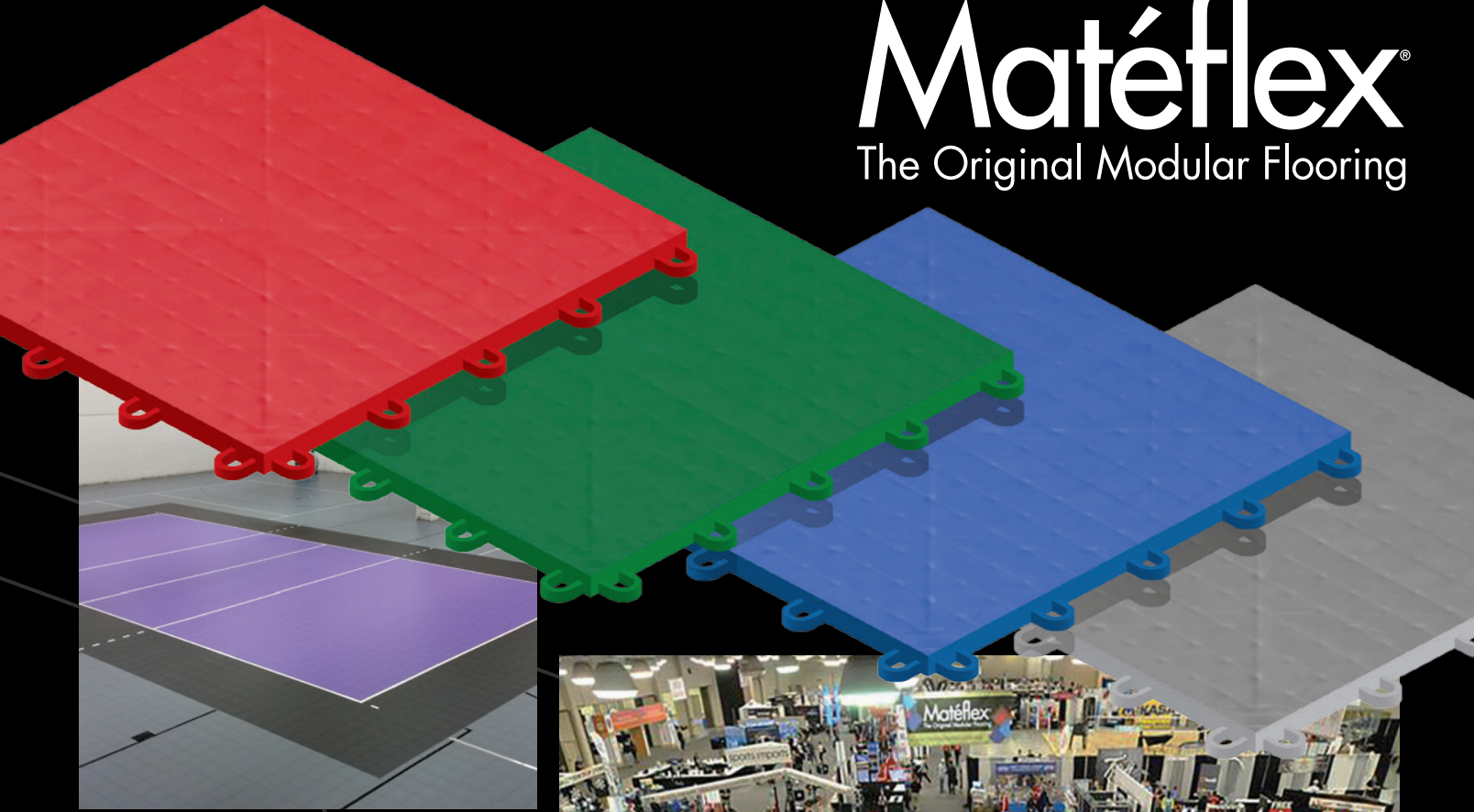
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# CHARTING A NEW COURSE

## A Closer Look at Restarting, Refreshing and Turning a Program Around

Iain Braddak - Columbia University

Some call it a downward spiral, a mental block or just a good old-fashioned losing streak. Whatever you call it, anyone who has played or coached has experienced what it feels like not to be at the top of their game. Sometimes our players aren't quite able to switch gears or move in a new direction. Call it a slump. Call it a breakdown. What you need to do is call in some help.

At the 2016 AVCA national convention in Columbus, Ohio, one presenter had the advice necessary to get your team out of the doldrums and back on top.

Iain Braddak, (former women's head coach – Smith College, Northampton, MA) has been an assistant coach at Columbia University since August 2017. Braddak is a USAV-CAP Level II accredited coach and is a regionally certified official. He graduated from Springfield College in 2010 with a B.S. in Physical Education. In 2012, he earned a Master of Science degree studying Advanced Level Coaching and Sport

Performance. Throughout that time, he also completed a thesis examining the float serve and subsequently presented his findings at the 2013 AVCA convention.

Braddak knows what it takes to turn losing volleyball programs around. Case in point: he inherited a U.S. Merchant Marine Academy team that had gone 12-17 in 2012 and showcased a 20-win season and a combined 32-14 overall mark a mere two years later. The year after his departure, Braddak's recruits at USMMA defeated the Coast Guard Academy for the first time in the 20+ year rivalry.

Braddak definitely had his work cut out for him when he moved on to the head coaching position at Smith College in 2015, and that is where he did some of his most in-depth work "charting a new course." Braddak is the first to admit, it's about remembering that just like volleyball, coaching is a team sport.

As a presenter at the 2016 AVCA Convention, Braddak shared some of his most "ah-ha moments" as he conveyed

innovative yet simple approaches to pushing the "restart button" on failing volleyball programs. According to Braddak, it all has to do with living in the moment, and taking care of your EFFORT and your ATTITUDE.

### Introduction

No matter what level you coach or how talented your athletes, coaching is a simple process of moving people from point A to point B. Coaches sometimes find themselves in situations where they may need to chart a new course, turn direction or problem-solve. This happens year to year, it happens within seasons and even within a match or practice. Problem-solving on a smaller scale is something we are all good at as coaches; we call timeouts, we course-correct, we make subs, we plan practice every day. To chart a new course on a bigger scale, we can rely on those very same problem-solving skills. There are some interesting and research-proven ways to do just that.



### Three Truths and a Lie

Take a look at the four statements that follow and decide which is a lie.

1. People hate change.
2. Change requires patience and perseverance.
3. No one can make us change unless we truly want to.
4. Successful social changes have commonalities: a leader, a message and a purpose.

The lie here, of course, is that people hate change. People are afraid of change, sure, and they often don't understand it. But people don't hate change. In fact, it's all we do. Change is a natural process and we all change every day. Sometimes we even change and forget to tell those around us that we changed. Change is constant; stability however, is an illusion.

One lesson to remember is that it doesn't actually matter what you know or how much information you cram into your brain as a coach. **Consistent behavior over time** creates change. Patterns of repeated behavior, whether intentional or not, ultimately create change. It is a process that requires some forethought, some patience and a lot of effort.

### "It's a Process"

Process is one of those words that everyone loves to use over and over again when you are turning around a program or losing frequently. "Don't worry Iain, it's all just a process." If you're anything like me, you hate when people remind you of the process. However, they may have a point in a different way.

## IT'S A PROCESS

PLANNING  
RECRUITING  
PRESEASON  
CULTURE  
EVALUATION  
LEADERSHIP  
TROUBLESHOOTING

To begin, coaches can sit down to evaluate (E) and plan (P). Through evaluation, coaches can begin to ask: Where is the program right now? What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses? And where do we want to get to? As we begin to plan, we can start to look at preseason (O) as having a massive impact on our new course.

Recruiting (R) is a large part of that process; college-level coaches are the gatekeepers for their programs. Taking care of the recruiting process can significantly impact turning a program around. It's a luxury not everyone has.

Next, it is critical to remember the enormous impact that leadership (S) (both your own leadership and how players lead within your team) has on turning your program around.

Culture (C) and troubleshooting (S) are the lessons worth tackling in-depth.

Some coaches hate the term culture. Some love the term and have intentionally created strong cultures in their own programs.

By definition, culture exists no matter what we do – it's a big deal but a simple concept. Culture is simply the interaction of humans. It's how we convey what's important, what's not important and what we



# CHARTING A NEW COURSE

value. The biggest shift that I can make in a practice session or even a season is refocusing on our culture: our deeply held values and beliefs. To learn this, I started by researching what makes great cultures successful. Here is what I learned.

## Challenge Everything

About three weeks into season, I realized the train was off the tracks. I decided change was in order. Things were bad. I started by challenging everything we were doing. I am not talking about a new direction. I'm talking a completely different 180°-about-face kind of change.

Take head coach Bill Walsh and the San Francisco 49ers, for example. He is considered the mastermind behind one of the biggest team culture shifts in professional sports. In the late 1970s-early '80s, Walsh took a team from 2-14 in 1978 to 6-10 in 1979 and finally to a Super Bowl championship in 1981. I wanted to know how he did it, so I started reading. There was just one answer that came up in every case study I looked at: Control what you can. Further, you only have the ability to control two things: your effort and your attitude. How can I change culture with effort and attitude? Start working harder, stop complaining and start asking the right questions.

One of the best ways I have found to “challenge everything” is through the technique of “inversion.” As outlined in the book “Winning the Brain Game” by Matthew May, inversion is turning problems completely upside down. Not, “How do I turn this program around?” rather, “What would make it impossible for me *not* to turn this program around?”

One way that I start this process of inversion in practice is by initiating what we call “Google Drills.” I ask my players to think like Google® employees. Be creative. Invert everything: middles cannot hit from the middle; we can't run an outside on a good pass, (when we have communication issues) > let's play one set of *silent* volleyball, all back-row attacks have to be set by our libero – It sounds a little strange, but it has created tremendous success for us.

Invert your problems and give players parameters to work within. Pretty soon your players will be doing things they've never done before. How do you think the three middle system or the Libero came about? We ran out of subs, put someone in a different color jersey and told them “you are free!” Inverting problems grows and changes our sport, and it can also change your program.

## Frame-storming

We've all heard of brainstorming, where you come up with a list of ideas and try to think of as many as possible no matter how wild they seem. A frame or a lens is what stands between us and our problems. I suggest that maybe all this focus on the problem in front of us is actually the bigger issue. Instead, let's focus on how we frame the problem. By “frame-storming” we can begin to generate ways we choose to see our problem.

You can begin the frame-storming process with questions like the following: What if it were impossible to lose to this team that we have lost to for 20 years? What if it were impossible for us to have a bad practice? Questioning the norm begins to unlock the patterns you find yourself and your team stuck in. These questions are the magic elixir to statements like “Ugh, we're just going to lose. We've lost to them for the last 20 years.”

## How Do Social Changes Work?

Throughout my evaluation, I learned more about big social changes. Things like why the food pyramid failed, and why whole milk started getting a bad rap in the '90s. Jonathan Haidt, a professor of ethical leadership at NYU's Stern School of Business, presents a simple model of social change in his book “Switch” outlining what he calls the rider, the elephant and the path.

The rider represents our decision-making brain. The elephant is our heart and soul. It's what pushes us forward, sometimes with what seems like no real reason. My personal elephant drives me to sleep past my alarm clock in the morning even when my rider knows I'm going to be late. The path represents our environment. What does our practice gym look like? What does my office look like? What does the locker room look or feel like? We as individuals have an elephant, rider and path, and there is some sense that we as a collective group have all three as well.

So how exactly do social changes work? How can I spark one within my own team? How do you motivate the elephant, direct the rider and shape the path for your volleyball players? Haidt suggests that people don't move simply based on information. Directing the rider alone is not enough, yet it is often the tactic we try the most. To start motivating the elephant, you can start



by finding the feeling that's driving them and shrinking the change in front of them.

Start small and work your way up. When I first got to Smith, we needed to focus on discipline, accountability and equipment care. In the beginning, I asked the team to put away the net after practice. Just the net. In a week, it was the net and the antennas. A week later it was the net, the antennas and the pads. Then it was all three plus the cart. If I had walked in on day one and demanded they put everything away, I may have given the rider direction, but I wasn't motivating the elephant nor was I shaping the path. Shrink the change for the elephant. For the rider, provide as much clarity and direction as possible.

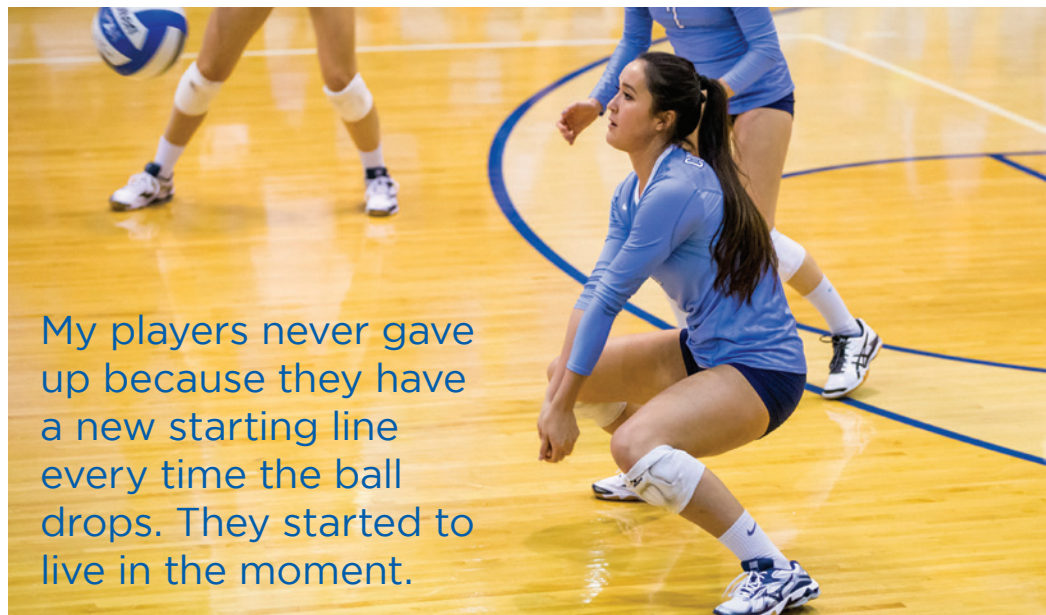
Riders really love when things are going well. My defensive players really bought in right away. They understood the culture, they understood effort and attitude, and they wanted more. My middles, however, couldn't have cared less. So, I began to direct the middles toward the defensive players, and showed them (and their riders) what buying into the culture can do over time. The middles needed a clearer picture of things going well, or a "bright spot," as Haidt calls it.

At the same time, we began to change habits in our program. Every volleyball team in the world has a few habits already established. One of those is substituting; we all do it all the time. We took our habit of subbing and added layers of habit on top of it. For example, when we sub, I asked our players to give a high-five and make eye contact no matter what. It's a small gesture and an easy habit that began to improve relationships on the court. Then we began to ask them to say something encouraging. Layers of habit create lasting change.

After layering habits, another step in social change is to reduce obstacles in "the path." Amazon® really understands this. Have you ever heard of one-click ordering? There are no obstacles in that path. You click a button, it shows up at your door. They got rid of the obstacles for you. How do you get one-click ordering in your program? How do you make it easy to succeed?

### Effort and Attitude

Joel Dearing at Springfield College taught me that we are all capable and responsible for controlling just two things in our lives:



My players never gave up because they have a new starting line every time the ball drops. They started to live in the moment.

**our effort** (how hard we're working) and **our attitude** (how we interpret events). Simple truth, profound impact.

How did we begin to value effort in our program? We started practicing in gray t-shirts. What do you get when you mix a plain gray t-shirt with effort?

A sweaty gray t-shirt.

We practiced in gray t-shirts so that we could see how hard our team was working to get better. In this simple model, more sweat = more effort. We started making practice more enjoyable. We added music, competition and celebration. At the same time, we kept raising the standards and expectations.

Tom Turco, head coach at Barnstable High School, taught me the next lesson about culture. I asked him how he was so successful – how year after year he wins titles and has a culture unlike any of his competitors.

He explained, "Iain, I ask three questions. First, I ask my players what their goals are. Then, I ask them if they trust the coaches to get them toward their goals. Third [and most importantly], I ask them if they are willing to do anything and everything to achieve those goals, and to trust the coaches. Are you willing to ride on a bus for three hours, sit there in your warm-ups, cheer your team on and get back on that bus and come home, while missing your family, your homework and class time? Are you willing to do anything and everything?" When my players started asking about playing time, I asked them if they were willing to do anything and

everything. Playing time questions started becoming extinct. (Might I suggest a similar proposal to your parent group?)

That single conversation changed the way I coach and how I prioritize effort and attitude above anything else.

### Change the Narrative and Beginning Again

As humans, we rarely believe what other people tell us. We sometimes believe what other people show us. We *always* believe the things we tell ourselves.

In turning around our program, I started to give my players stories they could tell themselves. We started first with the "old Smith" and the "new Smith." "Oh, *that* team, *they* lost a lot, *they* were always late, *they* didn't believe they could do it. That's the old Smith." Another way we did that was through new jerseys and better equipment. We decided that if we wanted things to be different, we had to start looking like we took ourselves more seriously. Once that changed, the athletes began to believe that they *were* different.

In meditation communities, there is a concept of "begin again." When you lose track or get distracted, they teach you to simply begin again. I taught my players to "begin again" every time there was an error or negative outcome. At the beginning of a set or match, 0-0 is your score. At the beginning of the season, 0-0 is your record. My players never gave up because they

# CHARTING A NEW COURSE

have a new starting line every time the ball drops. They started to live in the moment.

## Creating Ownership

Ownership is another important ingredient to social/group change. I taught my players that every interaction they had was an opportunity to show ownership of the program. I wanted my players to recognize that we all carry a little piece of this program, and everyone's piece is different, but that we all own our success, growth and change over time.

One way I promoted and valued ownership was by giving players time to speak. During timeouts, in the office, at practice, I wanted to hear what they had to say. One of the best ways to hear them speak was asking for their advice. You may be surprised what's waiting for you on the other side of that question, I know I was.

## Cohesion

There is not a coach out there that is going to say, "We lost because we are too darn cohesive!" One tool I used to promote and value cohesion was our 16-person list.

Here's how it works:

- 1: Is the person whom you get along and have the best relationship with (BFF).
- 2-5: These people are really easy to get along with and you see them every day. You have a great relationship, and they can trust you with some bad stuff and some problems (Friends).
- 6-13: These are the people you sometimes interact with, but struggle to find commonalities (Teammates).
- 14-16: These are the ones you rarely interact with outside of practice or the ones you sort of don't like (Who?).

I asked my team to reflect and work on their relationships with numbers 14, 15 and 16. It's important to include yourself on your own list. There is no way to deeply relate to others unless you start relating to yourself.

Admittedly, there have been times when I was No. 16 on my own list. Self-care and self-reflection are very important when turning a program around. There were also times when my entire team was tied for 16 on my list. We've all been there. That's when I needed to start looking in the mirror and evaluating my decisions, my effort and my attitude.

## Goals vs. Milestones

In our program, we changed from using goals to using milestones. Goals at their best are written down, SMART and detailed – but also forgotten, unused and abandoned frequently. One ineffective goal I see everywhere is the goal "to win." Everyone has that goal. That's not unique, and it's not serving you. Instead, I asked my players to reach milestones. A milestone is a bit different because it's never a moving target. It's nailed down. It always stays right where you left it.

Can we win the first point of the season? Can we win the first set of the season or the first match? Can we pass a 2.1 in a set? Milestones help us build on things. Once you cross a milestone you get another one. If you have milestones in your program that players can achieve, you've already started moving the elephant and directing the rider.

## Troubleshooting

Please know that this culture I'm describing is the end product of years of trying to figure it all out. I've failed more times than I can count. I've screwed up, burned bridges and done some pretty dumb things in the name of what I thought was "coaching." I've also learned ... a lot. One of the biggest lessons I've learned in turning programs around is that many of my missteps were related to two things: my ego and my relationships with others.

A lot of us coaches often have an ego that goes unchecked. We think we are always right. In our defense, our players and parents want us to be right; we're paid to be right. It's kind of our job to be right all the time. Thus, we sometimes forget that we can be wrong. I struggled with this. I also struggled with not having enough of an ego, or rather, enough confidence. Confidence is something you earn. It takes effort and patience. It's the voice in your head that says quietly, "Yeah, I've got this. I prepared. I put in every ounce of effort that I could." Ego is stolen. I strive to find balance here.

When I lacked confidence, it was because I was waiting for someone to come around and tell me that I was a great coach. I was waiting for permission. I was waiting for someone to give me that "lucky break." I realized that if I wanted that, if I wanted to be one of the greats, I had to start earning it and stop waiting for it. I needed to start

turning this program around and give myself permission to do it better than anyone else.

I remembered to find success in other ways rather than just on the scoreboard. If that was my only measure of success, it would have never revealed much about the change I was trying to make. Scoreboards aren't always the best rulers. As a club coach, I found a win every time I was given a compliment about the team, every time I heard a player say "thank you," every time we made a positive step in the right direction of turning the team around. Recognize your impact on the program, even if it's small at first. As Brett Ledbetter points out, it is our character that drives winning.

Sometimes, my mistakes came in the form of relating to others. I started prioritizing my relationships with my players. I talked to my players about why I made the decisions I made. Where you invest your time is critical. You want leadership? Start being a better leader. You want closer relationships on your team, start being a better relater. You want accountability in your program? Start demonstrating (not demanding) accountability. Complaining about the lack of these things is not getting you to point B.

## Conclusion

Do what you believe in. I recognized along the way that I was doing things that other coaches do, even if I didn't necessarily believe in it. Authenticity in coaching is rare but it's critical in order to be present in the moment and do my best for the athletes.

How committed are you to coming back every day? How committed are you to the process and challenge of turning a program around? It will be uncomfortable; you're going to want to quit. Your mental and emotional health may suffer, but it'll be worth it in the end. As I ask my players, "How bad do you want it?"

All of the information you just read is all a magic trick. There are tons of great books, coaches and speeches out there that will outline the trick in detail. They will tell you exactly where to put the smoke and mirrors. It's not about the trick. It's about the magician. Be a magician. Create better experiences for your athletes. Stay committed to the process, and help everyone in your program move forward (even you). Lastly, stop waiting for someone to tell you that you can do it. ☺

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# Measuring the Athleticism of Volleyball Players – a longitudinal study

WHEN UNDER ARMOUR first partnered with us for the High School All-America program in 2008, we were awestruck by the athleticism of the top 24 senior volleyball players in the country. Early on we started poking, prodding and measuring them – seeing how high they jumped, how fast they ran, how hard they hit. Over the years this developed into the Volleyball Performance Index (avcaVPI™), eight physical metrics that comprise the benchmarks by which the athleticism of volleyball players is measured.

This December we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the first Under Armour All-America Match. Here is what we know about these players:

| Under Armour All-Americans | avcaVPI™ | Acceleration (5 yds) | Swing Velocity (mph) | Attack Height (Top of Ball) | Block Touch | Height (Shoes on) | Pro Agility (5 10 5) | Reach (Dom Arm) | Vertical Jump (No Step) |
|----------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Middles                    | 578.22   | 1.20                 | 34.86                | 9'5"                        | 9'8"        | 6'3"              | 5.20                 | 8'1"            | 20.69                   |
| Outside/Rightside          | 578.45   | 1.13                 | 36.09                | 9'4"                        | 9'5"        | 6'1"              | 5.05                 | 7'10"           | 21.38                   |
| Setters                    | 542.08   | 1.12                 | 31.81                | 9'1"                        | 9'2"        | 5'11.5"           | 5.14                 | 7'7.5"          | 20.47                   |
| Libero/DS                  | 494.41   | 1.09                 | 30.33                | 8'6"                        | 8'8"        | 5'6.5"            | 4.90                 | 7'0.5"          | 19.82                   |

In 2012 we started the Phenom College Prep Program at our Convention, adding this invite-only event for players identified by their coaches as having college potential. The combination of avcaVPI™ testing on Saturday and a Sunday morning Talent Showcase has resulted in college roster spots for 75% of over 1,400 attendees.

The data-gathering has been enlightening and the tracking fascinating; we have seen players “mature” into their bodies: Audrianna Fitzmorris, currently a Stanford middle, tested as a 9th grader at the 2012 Louisville Phenom program; already 6'6", she had a 14-inch vertical jump, a 5.6 second pro-agility score, a 28-mph swing velocity, and an avcaVPI™ of 504, a score that ranked her at just 20% compared to college middle blockers. Four years later, as a 2015 Under Armour All-American, she had a 24-inch vertical, a 5.1 pro-agility, a 45-mph swing velocity and a 610 avcaVPI™, moving to 90% compared to her college peers.

We have seen players who started as athletic predictors and stayed there – such as testing Kathryn Plummer as a 10th-grader in our 2013 Seattle Phenom program, where she recorded a shocking 602, the highest setter score we had seen to that point. She returned three years later as an Under Armour All-American and

put an exclamation point on her first score by delivering a 619.

We are still awed by 6'3" Lexi Sun's 4.73 pro-agility, and Inky Ajanaku's 44 mph swing velocity delivered at 10'1" – that's not a jump touch, mind you; that is hitting the ball in a downward trajectory at 10'1" – and 5'8.5" North Texas's Carnae Dillard, scoring a 663, by combining a 10-foot block touch with a 46-mph swing velocity and a 4.77 pro-agility score.

In the last six years, we have gathered avcaVPI™ data on 800 college players across all divisions and 3,500 prospect-aged players who were aspiring to play in college but had not yet made a college choice. Each prospect receives a table showing how her score, at each metric, compares to players at her position already in college.

Over 2,000 of these prospects have graduated from high school. Matching their avcaVPI™ score with the school and division where they appear on a college roster has given us a predictive tool. We can now say with certainty that players with benchmark scores will make a college roster if they choose to continue playing. The avcaVPI™ gives us less ability to forecast exactly where she will play because athleticism, while important, is only one component of the volleyball-player equation.

### College-Ready: Prospects who Match up Athletically with Players at their Position in College

| College-Ready Benchmarks                    | 520+    | 530+       | 510+     | % of Total Prospects<br>473/1192 = 40% | 489+    | 490+    | % of Total Prospects<br>163/835 = 20% | % of Total Prospects<br>636/2027 = 31% |
|---|---------|------------|----------|--|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Primary Position                            | Middles | Rightsides | Outsides | All Attackers                          | Setters | Liberos | All Skill Players                     | All College-Level                      |
| # of Grads w/ College-Ready avcaVPI™ scores | 157     | 34         | 282      | 473                                    | 118     | 45      | 163                                   | 636                                    |
| # on College Rosters                        | 129     | 27         | 233      | 389                                    | 94      | 36      | 130                                   | 519                                    |
| % on College Rosters                        | 82%     | 79%        | 83%      | 82%                                    | 80%     | 80%     | 80%                                   | 82%                                    |
| Division I                                  | 45%     | 35%        | 41%      | 42%                                    | 42%     | 42%     | 42%                                   | 42%                                    |
| Division II                                 | 11%     | 12%        | 20%      | 16%                                    | 15%     | 18%     | 16%                                   | 16%                                    |
| Division III                                | 6%      | 29%        | 4%       | 2%                                     | 8%      | 22%     | 6%                                    | 9%                                     |
| NAIA  | 8%      | 15%        | 7%       | 8%                                     | 2%      | 4%      | 2%                                    | 7%                                     |
| Two-Year College                            | 3%      | 3%         | 7%       | 5%                                     | 8%      | 7%      | 7%                                    | 6%                                     |
| Other (International, NCCAA)                | 1%      | 0%         | 1%       | 1%                                     | 1%      | 0%      | 1%                                    | 1%                                     |
| Decided not to Play                         | 18%     | 21%        | 17%      | 18%                                    | 20%     | 20%     | 20%                                   | 18%                                    |

Note: 19 players are on college beach rosters, and 23 are playing other sports on college teams.

As you can see from the chart above, a remarkable 82% of college-ready prospects are found on rosters as freshman. 42% land in Division I, another 16% in Division II, with 9%, 7% and 6% matriculating in Division III, the NAIA, and Two-Year Colleges, respectively. The other 18% made intentional decisions not to continue playing in college – some based on academics, some personal, some injury-related. They were *all* recruited by multiple colleges, and chose not to play.

AVCA started this research with several goals:

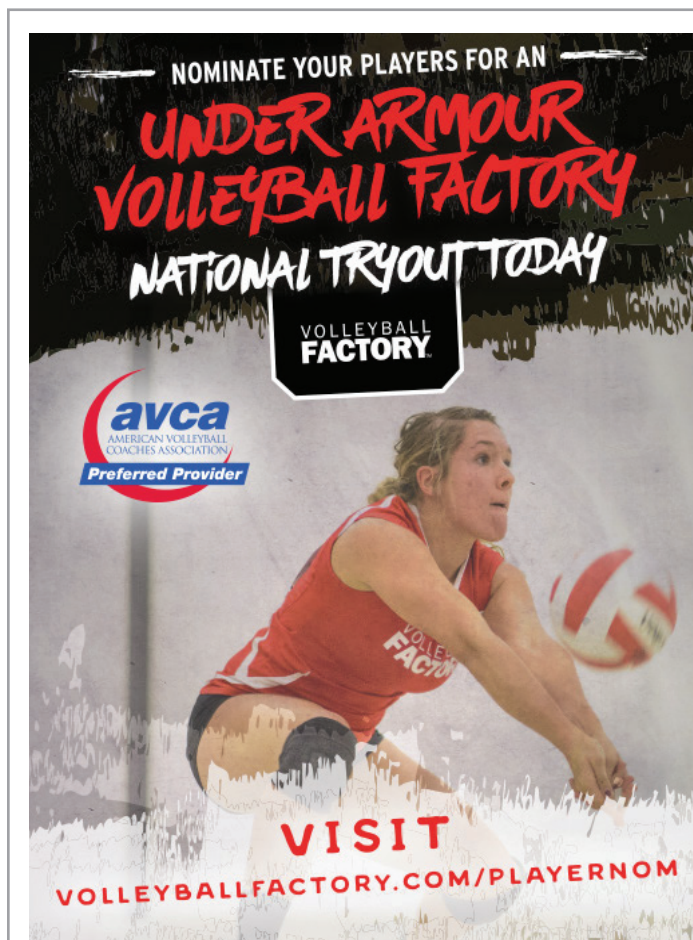
1. Find the volleyball equivalent of the 90-mile-an-hour fastball and the 4.2 40-yard dash.
2. Determine if watching players in match settings is causing us to “miss” prospects with a physical upside not readily visible in a team setting.
3. Create standards and benchmarks for comparison of players that are more reflective of attacking mechanics than “approach touch.”

As an AVCA member, you have access to everything we have researched – the prospect database (avcaPhenom.com), the benchmarking, the college testing results and the All-America metrics. The avcaVPI™ scores will, at times, help you find a “diamond in the rough,” a player whose athleticism allows you to expand your coaching; at other times, the search for that “diamond” will send you on a long walk to an outer court in a convention center where, if you miss warmups, the attacker who was the reason for your trek won’t touch the ball for 10 minutes.

After years of research we know these things:

1. With a few tech tools and training devices, volleyball-related athleticism is relatively easy to measure.
2. Playing on a good team will make players look more athletic than they are, and playing on a bad team will mask a player’s athleticism.
3. Athleticism is in relatively short supply across all sports, so volleyball can’t afford to miss on good athletes who choose our game.

See you in December for our 10th Under Armour All-America Match and our sixth Phenom College Prep Showcase. ☺



# Be Engaged in the Process of 1-to-1 Fundraising

*From the Courtside Seat; Coaches Becoming Better Fundraisers*

By Wade Garard, CEO, MotorMVB Foundation

LET'S SAY YOU ARE TOLD by your athletics advancement team and Director of Athletics to just focus on recruiting and winning, and leave fundraising to someone else. Baloney! I say get involved in the process of major gifts fundraising for your program! Being involved in the process of major gifts fundraising doesn't mean you have to be the one asking. But if you are not engaged in the process of identifying, cultivating, asking and stewarding major gift donors, your overall worth to the athletic department will diminish over time. This is a reality. Volleyball coaches at every level must lead or actively help in developing funding support of your program. Period.

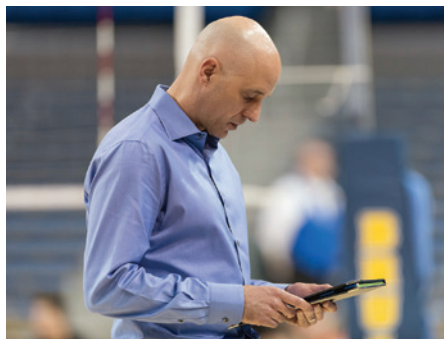
So, let's continue our exploration of how to keep your fundraising hat on year-round. And by the way, assistant coaches must be exposed to and practice fundraising and alumni/alumnae engagement too if they want to be truly ready to be a head coach. The best coaches in the game are engaged in the process of 1-to-1 gifts fundraising.

What do I mean about being involved in the process of major gifts fundraising? I am not suggesting that you always have to be the asker. Most often, before a donor makes a substantial gift, multiple people are involved. Here are some examples of ways you can be involved:

- **Identifier** – Identifies the prospect and lets development team know
- **Strategizer** – Provides insight and strategy to development of a cultivation/solicitation plan for a prospect
- **Ambassador** – Makes compelling statements about the program or department and then listens/gauges reaction and disposition of others (and then lets development know)
- **Advancer** – Warms the prospect and suggests that someone else might want

to come approach them for support

- **Accompanier** – Accompanies the asker on a solicitation call
- **Asker** – Makes the ask (whatever the ask may be – money, time or resources)
- **Reinforcer** – Acknowledges that an ask has been made and thanks prospect for consideration
- **Appreciator** – Thanks donor for contribution (ideally within 24 hours of receiving gift)



Please make it a point to establish a close working relationship with whoever is in charge of fundraising or fund development at your development office/athletic department. And if there is no one assigned to helping raise money in your department/team(s) except you, then embrace your world and just make the decision that you can and will do it all. The best always do.

So here are some practical tips for things that you can say and do:

Making friends and keeping fans happy isn't enough. Your development people will appreciate if you broach the subject of giving, especially when you know the prospect is yet to make his/her first gift. Suggesting that you are hopeful that a fan will be interested in speaking to someone else (in the future) about the prospect of giving allows

you to take temperature while not being the one they have to respond to immediately. It sounds something like this...

*"You know you are someone who I am sure Josh, our athletics development person, would love to meet with at some point in the future to discuss your giving to our program or other areas of interest at the university," and then pause and listen. Share the response with your development team.*

Ask your development officer(s) ... *"How can I be the most helpful with an approach to Jill? Should I try to see if she is interested in having a meeting with you? I would be more than happy to accompany you on a visit to ask her for support."*

Offer to send personal, compelling messages or leave messages with prospects after the asker has asked.

*"I am the head coach of the team who is hopeful that we can improve our facilities/locker room wing over the coming seasons. I wanted to personally thank you for taking the time to meet with Josh in development. Josh will be the one to follow up with you about the gift itself, but I wanted to reach out and see if you had any questions or suggestions for me and to thank you for your consideration."*

Offer to your development officer that you personally thank all donations. John Speraw is a busy coach with two big jobs, and he makes thank you/development calls during his morning commute. (Thank you, Uber and LA traffic.) John makes the time to talk to donors. Make the time. You will be glad as will your department administration that you engaged in the process of 1-to-1 major gifts fundraising.





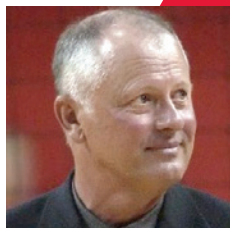
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## The Man Behind the Website You Visit Twice a Day

Terry Pettit

IT IS SATURDAY MORNING in September. At a home on the East Coast, three homes in in the Midwest and another on the West Coast, several volunteers are scanning college volleyball websites, live stats, game tracker, stat master, stat broadcast, conference websites and the NCAA volleyball website for college volleyball scores. The person coordinating this enterprise is Rich Kern, a former civil engineer and avid birder, who has been gathering and sharing collegiate volleyball scores since 1995.

Initially, Rich Kern began reporting Nebraska volleyball scores on a Nebraska state website that included information that the University of Nebraska sports information office provided him. After two years, the sports information office developed websites for each of the sports at Nebraska, and Kern managed the volleyball website for two more years before he started his own website, richkern.com. In the last 20 years, richkern.com has emerged as the “unofficial record” of women’s collegiate volleyball competition in the United States.

You might think that after two decades of providing this service, that with the technological advances that have moved us from cell phones larger than a brick to the current handheld computers we all carry, the gathering of college volleyball scores would be fully automated. You would be wrong. It is labor intensive. Kern and his colleagues will not finish searching for scores until at least 2:00 am on Sunday morning.

There are over 1,300 NCAA and NAIA women’s volleyball teams playing at least one and probably two matches on a Saturday morning in the preconference season. Kern’s team makes an effort to report each score within a minute or two of the end of the match. This means that on Saturday afternoon, each of them may be tracking as many as a couple dozen matches at any given time on several different screens. When Rich described this process to me, the image that came to mind was that of an air traffic controller trying



to watch a combination of passenger jets, FedEx, UPS and private planes circling an airport waiting to land, except that some of them never land.

If team members can’t find a score on the NCAA website, they search conference and school websites, where they may or may not find the score. (Interestingly, there are a couple of prominent NCAA DI schools that are slow to post results on their volleyball website if their school loses.) Sometimes schools may not post the score until the next day and some Division III schools may not post their scores until Monday morning.

Two or three days before the fall season begins, Kern loads collegiate volleyball schedules compiled from the NCAA website into a database so that he and his colleagues know what time a match begins and when it is likely to end. But if a college is playing a nonconference opponent with a common name, like St. Mary’s, and the location is not identified (St. Mary’s - Kansas) he may have to check out several websites before he can be sure which St. Mary’s is on the schedule.

To make things even more complicated, some of the people compiling scores have a home team they want to watch, so they leave their computers while other people take up the slack. It is controlled chaos until the conference seasons begin in the third week of September, when it becomes obvious who the St. Mary’s team is and teams aren’t playing two matches on one day.



The website also has some valuable and some quirky information on the win-loss percentage of coaches at each institution and the average height of each roster. I would personally find it interesting if it listed which players on every roster had helicopter parents and which ones had fighter pilot parents. (A Division I coach explained to me that fighter pilot parents don't just hover over their child; they are willing to go to court if their child is uncomfortable.)

The other sections of the website that many coaches frequent on richkern.com are the RKPI and Pablo rankings for Division I teams. RKPI is Kern's effort to replicate the RPI (ratings percentage index) that the NCAA committee has used in all sports to determine at-large bids and seeding for the NCAA tournament. When Kern developed the RKPI formula, the NCAA did not release the rankings until the season was over. That has changed, and the first RPI rankings are now published after there has been enough competition for them to make sense.

The RPI ranking system is based 25% on wins, 50% on your opponent wins and 25% on your opponents' opponents' wins. It does not value whether or not you played at home or on the road, or how much your team won or lost by.

Where a game is played is taken into account on the NCAA basketball RPI but not in volleyball, which is unfortunate. Men's basketball teams are flying to competitions, frequently on charter aircraft. Some women's volleyball teams are still vaning to road matches, which is much more fatiguing. When I asked Kern why he thought the NCAA did not factor in the value of winning on the road in women's volleyball, he didn't hesitate with his response: "It would take more time and money to do so, and the NCAA cares less about women's volleyball than basketball."

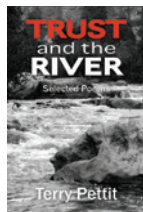
There is also the feeling that the RPI system can be gamed by playing teams that are going to have a positive win-loss record but are from weaker conferences. Because there are more conferences on the East Coast than the West Coast, it is easier for teams in power conferences like the ACC and the SEC to schedule teams that fit this description. RPI doesn't look at whether a team won 3-0 or 3-2, only whether you won or lost.

The Pablo ranking system was developed by a current university professor who wanted to overcome some deficiencies he saw in the RPI system. Pablo is points-based. It doesn't factor in sets won or lost but the total number of point differentiation in a match. Because of that it values a decisive victory more than it does a victory where there is very little difference in the total points scored. Pablo is also more predictive than RPI, and in recent years the NCAA volleyball committee has used it as one of the tools beyond RPI to determine at-large bids and seeding. Pablo does factor in whether the match was played at home, on the road or at a neutral site. The majority of DI coaches that I have talked with believe it is a much more accurate ranking system than RPI.

For several years richkern.com has been a subscription website. Coaches encouraged him to make it a subscription site because they recognized its value and they were afraid if Kern couldn't cover

the costs associated with the site it might disappear. There is a high percentage of Division I and II subscribers with fewer NAIA and Division III subscribers.

Rich Kern and his wife Jeanne are avid bird watchers. They have been to the Arctic Circle, India, Norway, Costa Rica and many other remote places looking to identify rare and not-so-rare birds that you and I are not likely to see. But none of those adventures can take place from August to December when Rich is in his basement tracking 30 matches on the internet, with ears cocked like a telegrapher in an old Western movie, trying to report what the volleyball world is telling him. He is doing it not because it is a profitable business model, but because he and his team see themselves as servants to the growth of the game.



Terry Pettit, author of "Trust and the River" at [www.terrypettit.com](http://www.terrypettit.com)

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# Another Look: Simple Replay Solutions

David Portney

THE CHALLENGE REVIEW SYSTEM, or “CRS” for short, has been slowly rolled out across volleyball over the last few years. While it’s been most visible in the ranks of the larger budget echelons of Division I, that hasn’t stopped programs from all divisions and budgets from giving it a go. That’s why when NCAA Division III Centre College Head Coach James Neyhouse reached out to us about what kind of CRS they’re using, we had to check it out.

I made the 36-mile trek south of our office in Lexington, KY, to Danville for the Colonels’ opening weekend to see firsthand what they had. It’s so innovative, affordable and simple you might slap yourself on the forehead and say, “D’oh! Why didn’t I think of that?!” That’s right ... they use a home security system!

While first purchasing one for his well, home, he realized this is a system that could be easily implemented in his gym. For around \$500 at Sam’s Club, he purchased a system that had 10 high-definition cameras (they look like those little security cameras you’ve seen in all kinds of buildings), and a hard drive that the footage is recorded to. His cameras are set up along the sidelines and end lines on both sides, plus a net cam and one that even hangs from the ceiling above the net.

If you don’t already have one, you’ll need to pay another \$50-\$100 for a monitor to use for the reviews. Once he purchased the system, the only additional cost was running the cables from each camera to the hard drive that needs to feed to the scorer’s table. From there, the down ref controls it all by him- or herself, with no additional staffers needed to assist.

“I had to get some help with running the cables, so we had to get the maintenance

guys to come here to get on the lift. Other than that, I did the rest of it,” said Neyhouse.

Most security systems are pretty user-friendly, intended to be used by the masses. On a monitor, you can easily bring up a camera angle by clicking the thumbnail, which then brings up the angle on the full screen. From there, you can rewind and fast-forward to review the desired play.

“It actually worked really well,” said down ref Kevin Payne, who was also the head coach for NCAA Division II Bellarmine

takes for you to read this, that function will surely be here sooner than later. If not, then do what Centre did, and get creative!

Neyhouse, now in his 13th season leading the Colonels, didn’t even face much opposition from his administration, conference coaches and officials when he wanted to purchase it for the program.

“I talked to my athletics director to see whether or not it was a good idea. Once he saw the explanation and that the cost point was under \$1,000 he was ecstatic about it,” he said.

“With the conference coaches (Southern Athletic Association), I announced during our call we’re going to be experimenting with it this season. Most of them thought it was really neat, and of course they asked where we got the money to do this. Again, when I got through explaining the system, they were all interested in how that might work. Now, one of our conference schools is looking into it as well.”

This can even go beyond the purpose of challenges as he explained:

“I’ve used it in practices to get feedback. I’d go back sometimes and check film. Our sports information department is excited about it because you can easily download clips and take snapshot pictures. They can immediately post it on social media within minutes.”

Don’t be afraid to ask around your department for some help if you think you need it. If you share your gym with other sports, this could be an opportunity for the system to be implemented for them as well, and who doesn’t love that? If you’re still unsure, he wants you to remember this:

“It’s a very small-time commitment on your part to get it going. You can certainly wait until the offseason to do this. Once it’s set up, it’s basically maintenance-free.”



CENTRE VOLLEYBALL

University from 1987 to 2001. “The hardest thing right off the bat was to go back and find the actual play that happened, but since we have forward and reverse it wasn’t that hard. It actually was pretty easy.” The Centre head coach said the only training he needs to give an official is a brief 10-minute demonstration before the match.

We’ve established that it’s affordable with almost every budget, it’s easy to use, and the refs can pick it up in under 10 minutes. There must be a catch, right? Well, there isn’t – other than the fact that the cameras lack a zoom function, making it difficult to use if you’re in a larger venue where your walls are farther from the actual court; however, with technology advancing faster than the time it



Ken Kontor

# Movement to Muscle – In Action

*Mark your calendars:*

*Friday, December 15, 11:45 – 12:45 p.m.*

*This is when Lisa Bartels PT, DPT, PRC will present “Movement to Muscle -What the Volleyball Shoulder Must Do and Feel.”*

*Lisa is the force behind the movement program in M-2-M. At her presentation she will focus on the shoulder movement.*

## The M-2-M Mission Statement - A Review

To educate and empower the sports coach to test proper movement skills in their athletes. Based on negative test results, to provide the coach a corrective exercise program to improve movement skills. After the athlete passes all movement tests, a strength program can be implemented. Movement tests can also be done to ensure the continued effectiveness of the strength program and effects of continuous, year-round sports play, all with the intent of injury prevention.

Based on our mission, this presentation is going to be jam-packed with things you can do to create a healthy shoulder in your volleyball athletes. Here are just a few highlights of what you'll learn:

- Explain the correct muscle mechanics of a healthy volleyball shoulder.
- Learn safe and effective exercises.
- Find out which exercises and muscles you need to use sparingly or avoid altogether.

This point is especially important in preventing muscle compensation created by muscle development imbalances which lead to shoulder pain and possible injury.

### What must a volleyball shoulder do?

It's a tri-planar function that can be summed up with one word: abduction. You will learn the key muscles that facilitate healthy abduction and rotation. For example, the subscapularis is the most important shoulder internal rotator. It maintains the



UMKC VOLLEYBALL

flexibility of the posterior rotator cuff and posterior shoulder capsule. This prevents abnormal and excessive force via the anterior shoulder – specifically the biceps tendon and labrum.

### What are the muscles that can rob the shoulder of healthy ROM?

The number one culprit is the latissimus muscle, which is a huge powerful adductor: It pulls the arm down to the body or the body up to the arm. Remember, abduction and rotation are what is important for the volleyball player. This is exactly the opposite of what a volleyball shoulder must do. This adduction action describes two of the trendiest exercises we are all doing today: pull downs and pull ups. Not good for volleyball.

### What are the “fundamental” and “put it together” exercises for the volleyball shoulders?

*This section is worth the trip to Kansas City. Presented and demonstrated will be fundamental exercises developing the four key muscle areas of a healthy shoulder.*

1. Subscapularis – Pool noodle ball drops with spin-ins
2. Triceps – Back lying dumbbell press
3. Posterior deltoid – Pool noodle spin-backs (resisted)
4. Serratus anterior – Rocker board; back lying mini punches

*Come see us in Kansas City. Lisa and I look forward to meeting you and answering your questions and learning together.*

# Pulling the Rope

By Brad Keller



Marie Zidek  
U. of San Diego



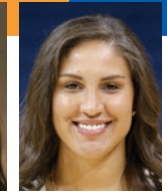
Kriz Berzins  
Loyola (Men)



Brad Keller  
UCLA



Sarah Rau  
North Dakota St.



Krista Rice  
Central Michigan

IN THE 2017 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, the South Carolina Gamecocks advanced to the Final Four for the first time in program history. Along the way, Head Coach Frank Martin became an overnight celebrity. His press conferences were anything but ordinary, and one interview stood out. Coach Martin described how after a frustrating practice, he spoke to his team about the game tug-of-war. "I asked if any of them had been in a tug-of-war. Some guys said yes, some laughed; some had no idea what I was talking about. I said, "This is the way a tug-of-war starts. You have two groups of people pulling in opposite directions. Sometimes, your side starts getting pulled in the wrong direction. Every once in a while, somebody lets go of the rope, and if one person lets go of the rope, your team is done. It's over, and you're going over the line. The whole thing here is I don't care how difficult it gets; you have to hold onto that rope." It was a simple yet powerful message. So what does this have to do with being a good teammate? ... Everything!

What makes an athlete a good teammate? What allows teams to connect and ultimately "pull the rope" in the same direction? If you type into the web browser, "What makes a good teammate?," countless qualities surface. The most common values that jump off the page include respect, trust and selflessness. Even more fascinating, when these particular qualities are used together, they reinforce one another and strengthen the locker room.

**Respect** – In order to win, it is essential to have good locker room culture that fosters the mentality of "pulling the rope." This cannot be accomplished without respecting your peers equally in skills and perspectives. Teammates don't always see everything in the same light; however, they need to understand and respect where every individual is coming from. Having players from

diverse backgrounds pulling the rope can be challenging. Clearly their perspectives will influence how they handle co-existence. Understanding differences and respecting them is a great start. Another way to view this is if someone respects something, they will value and take care of it, like a new car. When we value and respect people, we protect them. Since they will ultimately need each other to achieve the team objective, respect is the starting block.



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**Trust** – This centers on developing genuine and honest relationships. Trust is also a direct pathway to love, the ultimate bond. Teams will not win without trust. There is a saying that goes, "Trust is earned in droplets and lost in buckets." So how do we earn trust? We begin by matching our behaviors with our objectives and then smothering it with consistency. Being reliable in our actions allows others to develop trust. Regularly showing up and displaying strong, consistent work ethic demonstrates that you value the direction. Wearing the right gear, executing drills, tasks, lifts, etc., shows dedication. If one of our players works hard in the weight room for the entire week and then slacks off the following, at that exact moment all of their "earned" droplets just vanished due to the massive hole in the bucket.

Another beautiful part of being on a team is that we have the opportunity to witness one another's most vulnerable moments. We also have the chance to help cover each other's weaknesses. When good teammates support one another during "life" situations,

it is an indication that you have a healthy locker room. We often use the analogy of a foxhole. When things go wrong, when life happens, who do you want in your foxhole? That is a powerful image. Overall, trust might be the most important factor. When circumstances get tough, brutally tough, are we still holding on to that rope?

**Selflessness** – What is the mission? Which direction are we pulling? We have found that when a unit believes and wants the same goal, performance elevates. The issue is that total team buy-in may hinder personal agendas. Selflessness is another form of respect. The willingness to put your teammates before your own personal needs is difficult. My mother always preached, "Sacrifice the me for the we." The best contributors on the team may not appear on the stat sheet. The unselfish actions that occur both on and off the court make the difference. Sharing and celebrating others' successes shows a great deal of compassion, infusing loyalty into your culture. This might be the most difficult virtue for our young generation to practice. The "what have you done for me lately?" idea along with selfish behaviors reveals itself in different forms. Not taking care of academics, tutorial assignments and team activities are all selfish actions. This behavior causes a lack of trust within the walls of your locker room. Even the lowest doses of selfish behaviors can chip away at the foundation of your program. When gripping the rope, you will not want personal agendas and acts of selfishness getting in the way of your team's objective.

**Pulling the rope** – The unique opportunity to teach life lessons through sport is the most gratifying aspect of this job. Being a great teammate is composed of many factors; however, respect, trust and selflessness are three values that will get your team "pulling the rope" in the same direction.

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1983

Karch Kiraly

Lloyd Ball

Tara Cross-Battle

Jordan Larson  
Present

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