

COACHING Volleyball

Off-season Issue 2017

A Publication of the American Volleyball Coaches Association

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Building Bridges



**Developing the
college-club relationship**

Also in this issue: Setting Benchmarks with Statistics • Side-Out Ambassadors • Board Updates

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Features

10 High Marks

Kyle Mashima is a statistics guru that's very interested in mining volleyball-related data for indicators that might help you determine what areas of coaching to focus on with your team. Naturally, different statistics have varying degrees of impact across the many levels of volleyball. In this article, he examines a consistent set of stats across age groups to illustrate specific things that can help you make the tweaks that elevate your team from good to great.

16 Building Bridges

We've been examining the dynamics at work within various relationships in the sports community, and that trend continues with this piece, framed around a panel featuring top club coaches, directors and coaches with collegiate recruiting experience. Check out this feature that dives into the nuances of the college-club relationship, and showcases numerous perspectives on issues that directly affect the student-athletes and the recruiting process.

21 Board Updates

The AVCA is pleased to announce that several new appointees have started their terms of service on the AVCA Board of Directors. Check out who these new faces are and which areas of the community they'll be representing. If you haven't checked out our Board of Directors information lately, visit www.avca.org and find out who you can contact to raise awareness of various issues, reach out to with questions and perhaps become directly involved with our mission of growing the game.



On the Cover

With recruiting and relationship-building becoming an increasingly crucial component of running a program, we asked some club coaches, directors and collegiate recruiters about the best ways to develop a positive environment for recruiting and maximizing the opportunities for your student-athletes.

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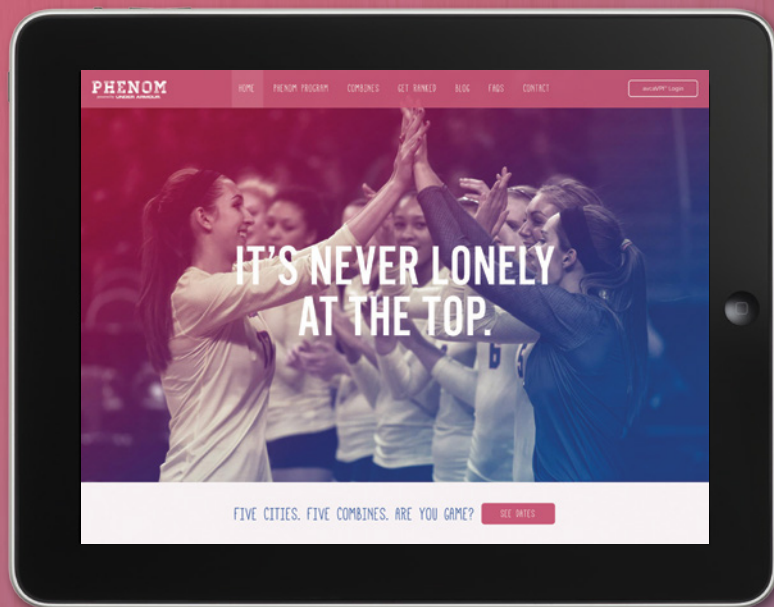
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

From the Desk of ...

Christy Johnson-Lynch, Iowa State University Head Coach

ALL TEAMS go through training cycles. At times we're amping up, at times we're tapering, and at times we train very little or not at all. When we don't or aren't allowed to work with our players, coaches can feel a little helpless. We hope our athletes are getting in the gym or on the beach on their own, we hope they are improving their skills and working hard, but it's hard to know. So what can we do to have an impact and to keep our players engaged in the off season?

Back (way back) when I was a collegiate athlete, one of the most crucial times in my development was the summer I spent at home. A couple of my volleyball friends and I got together two to three days per week to play. No parents, no coaches, not a single adult to give us feedback. We not only peppered – we invented new varieties to keep us entertained. My favorite was “slide pepper,” where you had to set your partner so they could take a slide approach to hit the ball. I also learned to hit the ball off my opposite hand to simulate a ball off the block, a move I use to this day, much to my players' disdain. We did do a lot of setter training, and then we'd get bored and play. We gave each other feedback, but mostly we just figured things out on our own. I improved a tremendous amount that summer and reported for fall practice the most prepared I had ever been.

We need to encourage and challenge our athletes to take charge of their own development. It's a mistake for players to think they need us to get better, that they don't have the ability to improve on their own. Unfortunately a lot of young people never develop this skill. As a society we have structured our children's play to death. They grow up with adults explaining how games should be played, coaching them every step of the way, and even stepping in to

problem solve on their behalf. It's no wonder, absent a coach on the sideline, athletes aren't quite sure what to do.

Spending time in practice playing one-on-one, doubles, triples and quads is worthwhile for many reasons, one of which is to give players options for games they can play on their own. Each off-season we hand out a laminated sheet of these games – deep court, short court and narrow court options. We also give them a matrix so they can easily set up queen of the court tournaments depending on the number of players in the gym that day.



Assigning a book in the off-season and discussing when they return can help keep athletes motivated and connected. Every few years our team reads the book *Man's Search for Meaning*, and it always has a powerful impact. Webinars and articles on the USA and AVCA websites, for example, are a great resource to pass along. Theplayerstribune.com has some wonderful articles as well. And there are so many inspirational and educational podcasts that are free and accessible anytime – Rich Roll,

Finding Mastery, TED TV and Coach Your Brains Out are a few of my favorites.

Of course, the off-season is a critical time for strength and conditioning. Help athletes set goals in vertical, speed, agility and strength to keep them motivated. Have your strength coach or your team select a “lifter of the month” to acknowledge hard work and send the message that the off-season matters. This could also be a great time to address nutrition education and goals as players have more time to invest in meetings and food logs. Sports psychology issues like visualization, mental toughness and confidence are at times better addressed in the off-season, as players have more free time and tend to be less stressed. It's a nice time for players to take a step back, take a breath and evaluate where they are and their goals for the next season.

Finally, coaches should never underestimate the importance of leadership in the off-season. Check in with your leaders to find out how it's going, discuss what is going well and identify areas where they could use some help and guidance. Encourage leaders to strengthen their “leadership muscles” during this time. If leadership is about influencing others, there is no better time than when coaches aren't around for them to impact the team's effort and attitude.

Teams don't have to press the pause button, or worse yet take steps backward, when volleyball “school” is not in session. In fact something quite the opposite is possible. By taking charge of their development, our athletes can make great strides in the off-season, reporting back to us in better shape, better skilled and better prepared.

Christy Johnson-Lynch



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Our Game

Kathy DeBoer

IT WON'T SURPRISE YOU that the AVCA, as a coaches association, spends a lot of time tracking on trends in the profession, i.e. who is getting hired, who is getting fired, who is moving voluntarily. Looking at the A-5 conferences (Big Ten, Pac-12, SEC, ACC and Big 12) gives us a read on what is happening across our profession, as these jobs are the most highly sought and come with the highest salaries and expectations.

In the last two years, 17 of the 64 jobs in this sector, 26.5%, have changed leadership. Two veteran coaches have retired (Liskevych and Dunning), two BCS coaches have moved from one A-5 job to another (Watson and Hambly) and one left voluntarily for family reasons (Kordes); that leaves 12 jobs where the head coach was fired or pushed to resign – and still more change may come.

When coaches lose their jobs, I want to know why. If it's because they didn't win enough, I breathe a sigh of relief. There are lots of reasons teams do not win. Administrators know these and, if there

are no character or culture issues, a quality coach often gets another chance. All three A-5 coaches fired for losing at the end of 2015 had other jobs as college coaches before the start of the 2016 season.

What is harder to recover from is "hostile culture" reasons for losing a job. These firings can be "for cause" or come with buy-outs depending on the nature of the issues and the language in the coach's contract. Dismissals rarely happen at successful programs, as administrative tolerance and player/parent tolerance for negative behavior is higher if the team is winning. In today's environment, however, even winning coaches can lose support quickly if the situation around their program or in the institution changes.

Three reasons account for higher turnover in today's marketplace. First, *volleyball is succeeding*, meaning more fans are paying attention, more media is covering the sport and wages are rising; second, the focus on student-athlete welfare has put *coaches under greater scrutiny*; third, *easy public sharing of information* means that any player or parent

can alert others to coaching behavior they find offensive, abusive or disparaging.

I got an email a couple of weeks ago which expresses the fear of a lot of coaches:

... the power is in the hands of the parents, one complaint and a coach could be let go. It doesn't seem there is anyone who is the voice for the coaches, who have worked their entire career, endless hours to build a program, and a parent threatens and complains and the coaches lose their jobs without much cause ... it's the culture of youth sports, high school sports and now college sports for parents to be over-involved and players to feel entitled.

So what are the defenses coaches can use to avoid a capricious dismissal?

For those in higher profile jobs, contracts are certainly one. The financial downside for an athletics department in "buying out" a volleyball coach is significant, so getting language clear on expectations and "cause" for termination is important for both the coach and the administration.



STANFORD DAILY

Contracts, however, simply determine the financial terms of a dismissal – not whether it will happen or not. The reality is most athletics directors will not risk their own career to defend a volleyball coach perceived to have “gone rogue.”

Coaches cite losing as the main reason for terminations, and, peripherally, losing is in the mix: *it is much harder to be an effective coach when your team is unsuccessful.* Everyone, from your spouse to the popcorn vendor, becomes a critic and an expert. Keeping your confidence and your cool takes self-awareness and self-control.

Looking deeper into coaching changes, however, points to other factors as equally determinative. Of the 12 involuntary A-5 departures in the last two years, five were for losing, seven for “hostile culture.”

It is becoming increasingly clear that coaches must be able to control their emotions under duress. They will not be given time to mature into self-control like those of us who started our careers in a bygone era. We worked for administrators who either didn’t care enough about volleyball to concern themselves with our behavior or were former coaches themselves who often sided with us when dealing with player or parent complaints.

When Kevin Hambly was president we talked regularly about what the AVCA could do to get coaches through “the idiot stage” of our careers. This is the time when we are transitioning from the player, full of ego and competitive fire, who relied on athleticism and skills to “make things happen” on the court, to the coaching role where these traits are just as likely liabilities as assets.

Coaching success depends on teaching skills, motivating others and assessing potential – competencies we don’t have and must learn on the job. When players don’t listen, or don’t understand or don’t deliver, or when we simply don’t know how to solve a problem, we get frustrated and, depending on our temperament, lapse into rage or sullenness.

In today’s volleyball marketplace, with social media making every exchange public, omnipresent parents, fans second guessing us and non-coach administrators under

siege regarding student-athlete welfare, this is behavior that can cost a coach their career.

We have many young, passionate coaches in our community. For some of us, they remind us of our younger selves: learning to coach through fits of rage, masking incompetence with sarcasm or surliness. The problem is that mellowing in the obscurity

of an empty gym, our path through “the idiot stage,” is no longer an option for them.

Let’s be intentional about “speed-mentoring” them to grow in both knowledge and emotional maturity.



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Four-ball Attacking Drill – All Positions

by Kim Maroon, Assistant Coach – Florida Gulf Coast University

- 1st Ball: Serve Receive**
- 2nd Ball: Blocking to Transition**
- 3rd Ball: Defense to Transition**
- 4th Ball: Out of System**

THERE ARE A MILLION variations you can create with this drill, but I will explain the simplest version. Each player in a position goes through the four-ball sequence three times and then we switch to the next position. We allow all of our pin attackers to act as outsides and opposites. Typically, we have three blockers on the opposite side, with no floor defense. We have coaches on boxes in LF and RF across the net, but slightly off the net so players can still block in front of them. The coaches on the boxes can be replaced by live attackers.

Outsides

- 1. Serve Receive** – Usually the OH and a DS/Bro pass in position 5 (left back) and 6 (middle back) respectively. The server (coach or player) can serve either person, then the OH attacks off that pass.



(Option - Change which rotation you are in: move the OH to position 1 (right back) like they are in RO1 or even put your OH in position 6 to run a swing offense.)

- 2. Blocking to transition** – Have them block the OPP and then transition to attack. We typically use a coach on a box and only hit/tip to position 5 or 6.
- 3. Defense to transition** – Off blocker defense against the OH. Typically we have a coach on a box that forces them to play the first ball and then attack.
- 4. Out of system** – Either coach on the box attacks the setter and position 5 (libero) steps in to set the OH out of system.

**We exchange and enter balls quickly, which keeps the tempo of the drill more game-like.*

Opposites

- 1. Serve Receive** – If your opposite passes, allow them to pass and attack similar to the OH. We also make sure to train serve receive attacking in rotations the opposite cannot pass in.
**Practice them attacking a 2 ball in a crossing pattern out of serve receive. The second ball, if entered quickly, forces them to return to base immediately and get ready to block and transition, similar to a game situation.*
- 2, 3, 4.** Same as Outsides except reversed for the right side.

Middle Blockers

- 1. Serve Receive** – Still use the OH and DS/Bro to pass, but change rotations so middles and setters are coming from different places. We typically let our middles “audible” in this scenario, so they learn good decision-making based on passes on the net or off the net.
(Bonus points for attacking behind the setter in two-hitter ROs, especially from off the net. Adjust also where middle serve receives short ball in zone 3 and runs pattern after passing)
- 2, 3. Blocking to transition** – We force our middles to transition on two balls here, because they typically have to block multiple areas on the net and transition to attack. We have them block a variation of the opponent’s OH, MB and OPPs for two balls and then attack after each dig.
(Don’t forget to mix up where the opponent’s MBs are hitting from (quick 1, 31 or back quick)
**Make sure middles transition with setter front row and back row. Bonus for attacking behind setter in two-hitter ROs)*
- 4. Defense to transition** – In our system, if our middles take a “false step” they become tip coverage behind the single pin blocker. So, the fourth ball is defending a tip, digging it high enough to allow them an opportunity to transition to attack.

Serving – Balloons And Tic-Tac-Toe

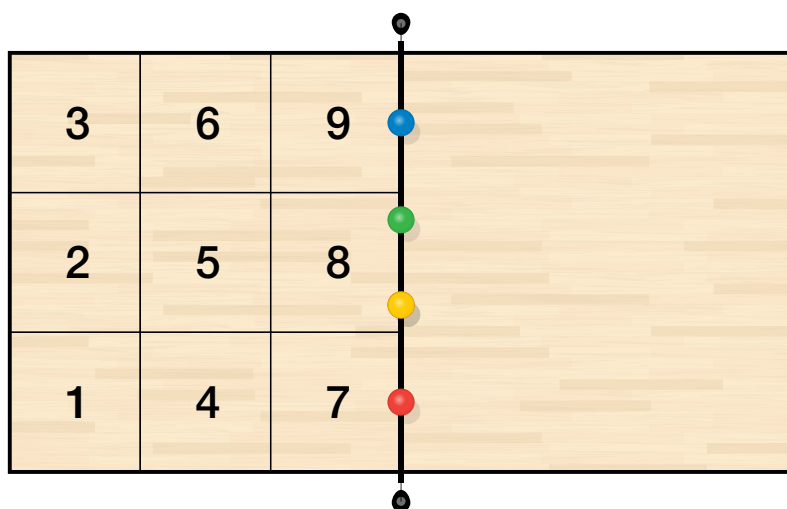
by Greg Shell, Assistant Coach – Central Connecticut State University

I LOVE THE AVCA CONVENTION. It's a great place to reconnect with coaching friends, watch some great volleyball and pick up different approaches to skill development. There was a heavy emphasis on serving in Columbus, and a lot of very deliberate strategic serving in the Final Four matches as well. Jill Kramer and Trent Kersten from TCU did a really cool presentation on what they have used in their gym to train serving that I really enjoyed, and I wanted to share a few things from it.

The premises behind the presentation were two-fold. First, that a serve on a flatter trajectory, particularly one driven into the seams on the court, is the most difficult to pass well (trajectory, movement and serving to space being the three biggest factors to forcing a difficult pass). Second, putting your athletes behind the service line is a great way to allow them to "figure it out" and is the most effective way to help them refine their serves to different areas of the court. I loved the means of feedback Jill and Trent used – balloons.

The basic setup for all of this is to have ordinary helium-filled balloons tied to the net at the height that you'd like the ball to cross the plane. Trent's research showed that balls within 18" of the top of the net caused the most difficulty, so that's about what we have used in our gym. We have used a four-balloon alignment, spaced across the net at even intervals, with space between the outside balloon and the pin. The goal is for players to serve so that the ball hits the balloon and continues through to a target area.

The second part of the basic setup was to lay out a grid on the side of the court you are serving to. Trent and Jill used a nine-zone grid, laid out like a push-button phone, so the overall court setup looks like the diagram below. (They used string tied to weights to line out the grid – I think to save the sanity of a manager or two.)



This allows you to work on serving not only on a flat trajectory, but also on driving the ball to a particular depth.

The servers work right to left, and working to serve through the balloons, pictured as colored boxes.

Most of us tend to fall into patterns where we are most comfortable, including where we like to serve from. By varying where your servers are starting on the back line, and having them work from different spots, you can really help their confidence and comfort in executing the one skill that is entirely in their control. The balloons can really help with visualizing a good point for the ball to pass through on its way to a target.

To work on accuracy in a competitive environment, think about playing tic-tac-toe against an opponent. While still working to serve through the balloons for trajectory, players compete in alternating serves. Just like a regular tic-tac-toe, players can block their opponent's line if they can place their ball in the zone. To really increase mindfulness, have players call their shot before serving – if they hit a zone they have not called, they don't get to claim the zone. Another variation of this would be to allow the opponent to decide where a player has to serve from – it would force players to work on getting the ball into certain areas from places at which they might be uncomfortable.

I can't do justice to an hour-long presentation in a short space, but I hope this gives you some ideas for ways to train serving in your gym. Thank you Jill and Trent!

Side-Out Ambassador Program 2016 Winners

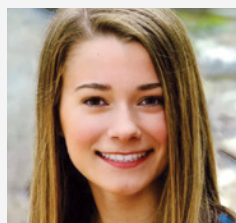


The Side-Out Ambassador Program presents opportunities for students to receive recognition and scholarship funds, encouraging them to continue a life of setting and achieving their goals. Ambassadors raise funds for breast cancer research through a Dig Pink® event while learning important lessons about health, community and perseverance.

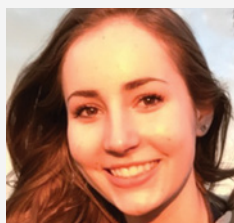
The ambassador program is open to high school juniors, seniors and college-aged students who are focused on uniting their communities, inspiring those around them and fundraising for The Side-Out Foundation. Participants do not have to play volleyball.

Those who do play volleyball are automatically eligible for one of three special awards. Together, Side-Out and the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) offer awards to Side-Out ambassadors who are also involved with the sport of volleyball. The Side-Out/AVCA National Dig Pink® Award is given to three ambassadors who demonstrate extraordinary commitment to the sport and to their community.

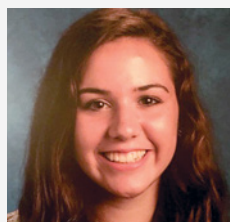
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Broadview Heights, OH

Gina Valderrama
The John Cooper School
The Woodlands, TX

Kayley Wood
The John Cooper School
The Woodlands, TX

Sara Burgos
Lenape High School
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Performance Benchmarks (Stats) for the Rest of Us

By Kyle Mashima –
SoloStats



The more coaching clinics you attend, the more you are encouraged to take stats. The “Moneyball” trend has reached volleyball. Using stats to drive decisions is a given at the elite level and is moving into the high school and club segments.

Taking stats is one thing but what does it actually mean to have a 55% Side Out rate? Whenever clinicians are asked, the answers they give are based on benchmark stats for the National Team, FIVB and Collegiate DI. But what about the rest of us? What are the relevant benchmarks for club and high school teams?

Stats for the Rest of Us

The good news is that Rotate123 LLC has been collecting stats from matches played by the rest of us through its SoloStats product for five years. We have identified the key stats and have done a correlation analysis to show which stats matter the most for winning. This data is broken down by age and level of play ranging from 12U to college, and is based on more than 20 million stat entries and over 500,000 sets from matches played. This article will take you through this in a step-by-step manner.

How We Analyzed the Data

First we purged the database of scrimmages, incomplete matches and teams with less than 10 matches. This was to ensure that we had a full season of stats. Next we scanned our data to review the reliability of in-rally stats. We found that other than receive ratings, the in-rally touches were recorded in an inconsistent manner. Hence, we will not have percentage-based calculations, other than Side Out and Point Scoring. We won't have, for example, hitting efficiency and kills %.

To “normalize” the stats, we chose games that were played to 25 points – not 15-point tie-breakers and no matches greater than 25 points. This way, we are able to provide Kills per Set numbers that are based on a consistent 25 points.

We divided the stats by level of play. Below is a breakdown of the number of sets in each level of play:

- High School Varsity: 152,842
- Club 16: 62,673
- High School JV: 45,139
- Club 14: 43,759

- Club18: 37,977
- University: 22,452
- Club 12: 10,900
- Junior College: 6,255

A couple clarifications are important. These are girls' stats, and the club age groups are double – so 12s includes 11s, and 18s includes 17s, etc.

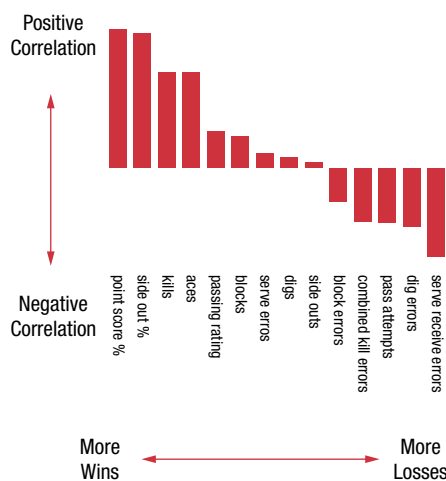
To prioritize the stats, we did a Pearson correlation and looked at the stats' impact on winning or losing. Also, we prioritized the stats according to this correlation and ranked stats based on high-to-low correlations of a stat to winning or losing.

Here are the stats that we used:

- Serve Attempts
- Aces
- Serve Errors
- Passing Rating
- Passing Errors
- Digs
- Dig Errors
- Attack Attempts
- Kills
- Attack Errors
- Blocks
- Block Errors
- Side Out %
- Point Score %

Which Stats Matter for Winning?

Let's take a look at the high school varsity stats as an example of Win-Loss Correlation.

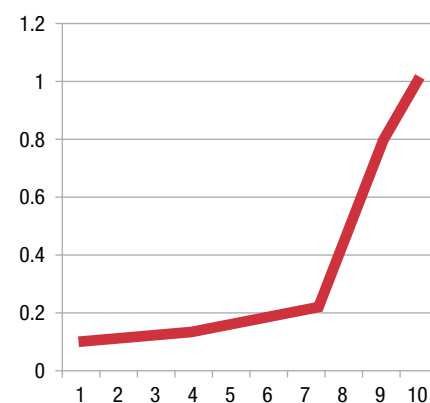
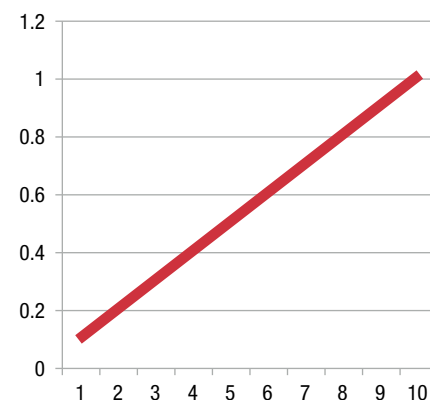


As you can see from the table, Point Scoring % and Side Out % are the most correlated to winning – which is pretty obvious. If you have a high Side Out %, your chance of winning goes up. This is

followed by Kills and Aces. The fact that Pass Rating is less important is a bit of a surprise. The issue is that this contact does not immediately result in a point. This “loose” coupling to the point makes it a lower priority than, for example, Receive Errors – which results in an immediate point loss. And hence, it is very important relative to losing. This makes sense since it's the flip side of Aces.

Tipping Point

It is important to understand the sensitivity of a small change in a stat relative to winning or losing. If the relationship is linear, then each incremental change in the value – for example, aces – will result in an incremental increase in wins. Compare the curves below:



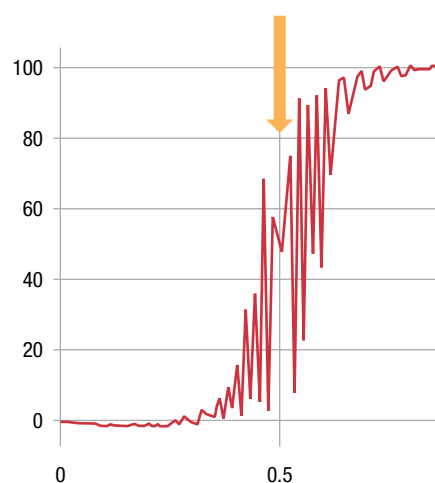
The curve on the top is linear. The curve on the bottom is a “hockey stick” where at a value of 7, the win rate goes up dramatically. We will look at each stat to understand where the “tipping point” is. This is the magic number where your win rate will increase dramatically.

The Stats that Will Win More Games

In this section we will look in detail at high school benchmarks in order of most important to winning and losing.

Point Scoring %

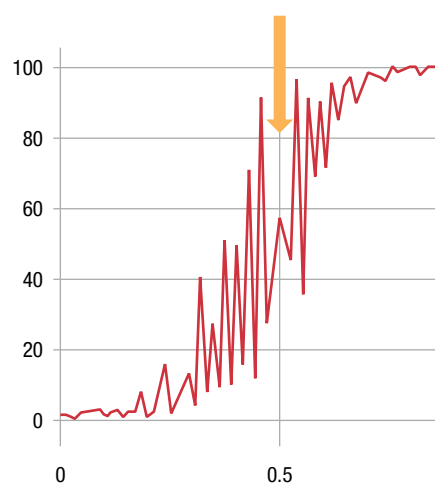
50% PS = 60% wins



Unlike lower levels of play, at the high school play level, the receiving side is stronger than the serve/point scoring side. So by getting to a 50% Point Scoring percentage, your win rate will go to 60%. If you draw a straight line through this curve, it has a steep upward angle. Any slight increase above 50% will dramatically improve your win rate.

Side Out %

50% SO = 50+% wins

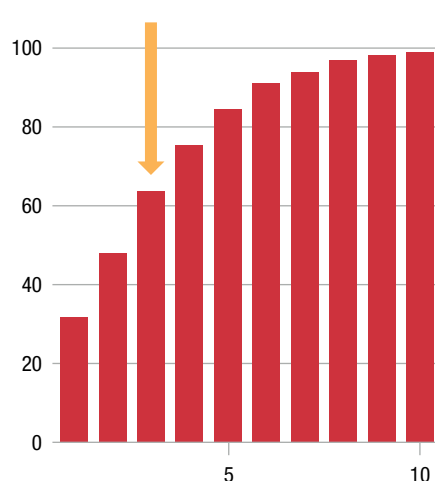


The Side Out curve is also steep. However, since most teams are pretty good

at this level of play, a 50% Side Out percentage only provides a 50% win rate. As you improve your Side Out percentage, your win rate will increase dramatically.

Aces per Set

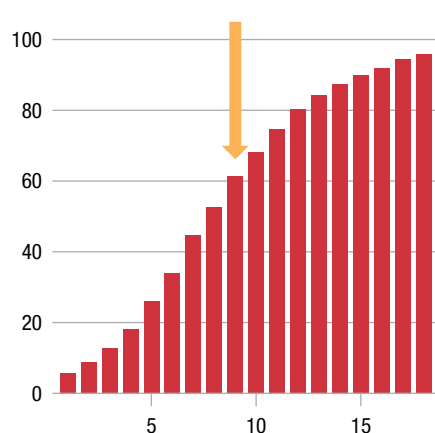
3 aces = 60+% wins



You can see that the left side of this graph is steep, so that each incremental ace results in many more wins. At 2 aces, the team is at about 50%. However, at 3 aces, the win rate jumps to more than 60%. This makes sense, as it is much harder to get aces at high school levels of performance because the serve receive and side out capabilities of the average team exceeds the point scoring rate of teams.

Kills per Set

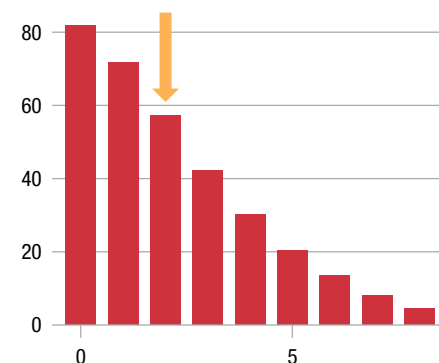
9 kills = 60+% wins



At 8 Kills per Set, your team would be slightly above the 50% win rate. At 9 Kills per Set, the win rate exceeds 60%

Serve Receive Errors per Set

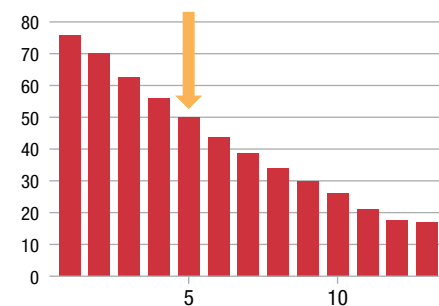
2 errors = 55% wins



On the negative side, Receive Errors are costly and lead towards more losses. This is the inverse of Aces, so it makes sense. 2 Receive Errors per Set looks like the limit of what you want for your team as your win rate is still at 55%. At 3 Receive Errors per Set, you win rate drops below 45%.

Attack Errors per Set

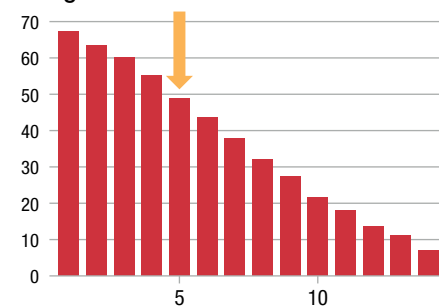
5 attack errors = 50% wins



5 Attack Errors per Set will provide a 50% win rate. Thus, more hitting errors will result in an increase in losses.

Dig Errors per Set

5 dig errors = 50% wins



5 Dig Errors per Set is the limit before losses will exceed wins.

Club 12	Club 14	Club 16	Club 18	HS JV	HS Varsity	Jr. College	University
Pt Scoring %	Pt Scoring %	Pt Scoring %	Pt Scoring %	Pt Scoring %	Pt Scoring %	Side Out %	Pt. Scoring %
Side Out %	Side Out %	Side Out %	Side Out %	Side Out %	Side Out %	Pt Scoring %	Side Out %
Aces	Aces	Aces	Kills	Aces	Kills	Kills	Kills
Kills	Kills	Kills	Aces	Kills	Aces	Aces	Aces
Pass Rating	Pass Rating	Pass Rating	Blocks	Pass Rating	Pass Rating	Blocks	Blocks
Blocks	Blocks	Blocks	Pass Rating	Blocks	Blocks	Pass Rating	Pass Rating
Serve Errors	Serve Errors	Digs	Digs	Serve Errors	Serve Errors	Digs	Serve Errors
Digs	Digs	Serve Errors	Serve Errors	Digs	Digs	Serve Errors	Digs
Block Errors	Block Errors	Block Errors	Block Errors	Block Errors	Block Errors	Dig Errors	Block Errors
Attack Errors	Attack Errors	Attack Errors	Dig Error	Attack Errors	Attack Errors	Block Errors	Attack Errors
Dig Errors	Dig Error	Dig Error	Attack Errors	Dig Error	Dig Error	Attack Errors	Dig Error
Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors	Srv Rec Errors

Stats by Age and Level of Play

Above is a chart showing the relationship of certain stats to winning and losing by level of play and age.

As you look from left to right – younger players to older players – you can see that the game goes from stronger serving to stronger receiving. Aces are the key way to win at lower levels of play while Kills are critical for winning at higher levels of play. This is consistent with our experiences. If you watch a 12s match, you will see ace after ace. Sometimes the game will end after only a few rotations as two or three servers will have long serving runs. This rarely happens in older, more experienced levels of play. The receivers get better, and now it becomes an attacking game.

You notice that Kills become a higher priority in the high school JV to Club 18s level. So at this 17–18s age level the receive part of the game is stronger than the serving part of the game.

You will notice a few other changes – at upper levels of play, Attack Errors become slightly more important than Dig Errors.

In all cases, Pass Rating, Blocks, Serve Errors and Digs are much less correlated to Winning or Losing.

General Coaching Thoughts

Doing rotation-based analysis makes a lot of sense for receive but possibly not so much for serving. What I've found is that the Point Scoring capabilities of your team are not just a matter of having a strong

defensive lineup and a strong serve, but also your opponent. As lineups against opponents vary so much, except in school league play, it's tough to plan your matchups by rotation. I typically try to make sure that the best servers are in all rotations.

Receive rotations are different. By looking at your Side Out Percentage by rotation (any good volleyball stat app should provide this), you should work on improving your worst side out rotations. These “pot holes” will cause your team to get stuck and lose points. Instead of spending an hour at practice on all rotations, focus on the one or two rotations that are the weakest and make progress.

Aces and Kills

At a high level of play, one more ace or kill can have substantial impact on your win rate – upwards of 10-20%. Training your team to accomplish this goal is top priority.

Digs and Pass Ratings

Just because these skills don't correlate highly to winning does not mean they aren't important. Good execution of these skills set up the offense and your ability to score. Think in terms of reducing errors vs. improving quality. For example, you should prefer a 1.70 rating passer with 5% error rates over a 2.0 passer with 10% error rates. Remember, this is not a 5% increase in errors; it is doubling the error rate. In a typical set, 5% = 1 receive error. That could be the difference between winning and losing.

Key Stats by Level

For each level of play, we will look at the seven key stats that impact winning the most. We will point out the tipping point stat for a skill and possible places to focus your coaching.

Club 12 – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	60%	60%
2	Side Out %	50%	60%
3	Aces	6	65%
4	Kills	5	57%
5	Srv Rec Errors	6	38%
6	Dig Errors	5	43%
7	Attack Errors	7	40%

- This is a Serving and Receive only kind of game where there's not much in-rally play
- You need to work on a lot of serving and receiving and probably not that much else
- When serving, go for low error since opponent's side out capabilities are poor
- When receiving, forget quality; just get the ball up and avoid “duck and cover” volleyball
- Scrambling and saving balls is way more important than attacking for kills (it only takes 4 kills to be at 50% but probably very hard to achieve this)

Club 14 – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	60%	55%
2	Side Out %	50%	60%
3	Aces	4	62%
4	Kills	6	57%
5	Srv Rec Errors	5	35%
6	Dig Errors	6	41%
7	Attack Errors	8	38%

- At this level, the game is starting to look more like volleyball. Kill rates exceed Ace rates
- You need to think about long term development vs. winning today
- To improve Side Out, get Lower Rec Errors and Attack Errors
 - Go for every ball aggressively and get it up rather than pinpoint the pass
 - Set off the net, let hitters learn to hit well from off the net, and avoid hitting errors



High School JV – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	60%	70%
2	Side Out %	50%	60%
3	Aces	4	66%
4	Kills	7	59%
5	Srv Rec Errors	4	39%
6	Dig Errors	6	42%
7	Attack Errors	7	43%

- A blend of Club 14 and 16
- Same suggestions apply
 - This is an inflection point in the level of play where the game shifts from Acing to Killing for points
 - Receive control is better for all teams
 - More emphasis on setting and hitting but a lot of emphasis on doing this out of system

High School – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	60%	80%
2	Side Out %	55%	60%
3	Kills	9	61%
4	Aces	3	63%
5	Srv Rec Errors	3	42%
6	Dig Errors	7	38%
7	Attack Errors	7	39%

- A blend of Club 16 and 18
- Point Scoring highly connected to serving – aggressive serving is key since serve errors have lower impact on losing vs aces to winning
- Side Outs and Receive Error + Kills tie together
 - Teach team to go after every serve and get the ball up vs. make perfect passes
 - Attack smart, avoid errors
- Dig Errors – must practice aggressive defense

Junior College – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Side Out %	60%	70%
2	Pt Scoring %	55%	70%
3	Kills	11	64%
4	Aces	3	66%
5	Srv Rec Errors	2	46%
6	Attack Errors	6	38%
7	Dig Errors	5	41%

- Continue to work on receive and serve
- Develop more sophisticated attack and blocking
- Still need to focus on out-of-system play

University – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	50%	60%
2	Side Out %	60%	70%
3	Kills	11	57%
4	Aces	2	61%
5	Srv Rec Errors	2	45%
6	Attack Errors	6	38%
7	Dig Errors	7	42%

- Aces count is lowest here
 - but serve aggressively to force out-of-system play – watch where the received pass goes – if it doesn't break the 10ft line then you have eliminated their middle attack
- Must control receive and attack for efficient kills
- Out-of-system attacking skills are critical for staying in the game

Using Stats

It's important to note that these are statistical averages, and since a rally is a continuous series of touches, each stat has an impact on another. Thus, when you think about improving your stats and your win rate, you need to think in terms of holding all other stats the same and improving one. For example, if you increase your Kills per Set, you need to make sure you aren't also increasing your Attack Error per Set. This last action would negate the win rate caused by more kills.

Conclusion

Performance benchmarks vary by age and level of play. Hopefully, this list of benchmarks will be helpful in guiding your play. Rotate123 LLC will continue to collect and expand its stats database, and by 2018 we hope to have regional breakdowns so that you can look at how you stack up locally.

This is a very early-stage analysis and your input is very welcome. We hope to provide more insights rather than data as we work with these numbers and get your feedback. ☺

Club 16 – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	60%	75%
2	Side Out %	50%	85%
3	Aces	3	57%
4	Kills	8	57%
5	Srv Rec Errors	4	36%
6	Dig Errors	6	43%
7	Attack Errors	7	41%

- This is an inflection point in the level of play where the game shifts from Acing to Killing for points
- Receive control is better for all teams
- More emphasis on setting and hitting but a lot of emphasis on doing this out of system
- Teach players to hit hard but over the net; long is OK while learning
- Learning to serve aggressively but consistently is always important

Club 18 – Key Stats

Priority	Key Stat	Tipping Pt	Win %
1	Pt Scoring %	50%	60%
2	Side Out %	60%	85%
3	Kills	9	56%
4	Aces	3	66%
5	Srv Rec Errors	3	41%
6	Attack Errors	6	43%
7	Dig Errors	6	44%

- Now Kills correlate more to winning than Aces because it's hard to get an Ace since the Receive is better
- Systems will matter more to get an extra 1 or 2 kills. So receive and setting accuracy will be more important than before
- Dig Errors – must practice aggressive defense

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Developing the College-club Relationship

As transcribed by Kinda Lenberg – AVCA Contributor

WHAT DO BEES and pollen, oxpeckers (a type of bird) and rhinos, and club volleyball recruiting coordinators and college volleyball coaches all have in common?

Mutualism.

Mutualism is a term referring to a relationship whereby two seemingly unrelated parties depend on one another, whether it is from a social, financial or biological standpoint, and both parties benefit from the partnership.

Indeed, the alliance between club coaches/directors/recruiting coordinators and college coaches has had to become a much tighter one in recent years, as the quest

to find talented players has taken everyone far and wide. Recently at the AVCA Convention, a seminar focused on this exact concept: building and maintaining relationships between clubs and college coaches. Indeed, benefitting both sides is the goal, and four of the best in the business, moderated by the Junior Volleyball Association's (JVA) Lisa Pierce Wielebnicki, offered their insight gleaned from years of experience in the trenches.

The panel included Ed Tolentino, currently the assistant women's volleyball coach at Xavier. Tolentino brought a wealth of information to the panel, as he has also been an

assistant at the University of Connecticut (at the time of the seminar), Morehead State, Georgia Tech, Michigan, Michigan State, Eastern Michigan and Madonna (Michigan). In addition, he also served as a club coach for Premier Academy in Maumee, Ohio, and M-Juniors in Ann Arbor, Mich. Joining Tolentino was Kirstine Jensen, currently the recruiting liaison/lead trainer/head coach/youth program director for Wildcat Juniors in the Chicagoland area. At the time of the AVCA seminar, she was the associate head women's volleyball coach at Northwestern.

Joining the two panelists who represented the college coaches were Bob Westbrook and



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Jodi Schramm, representing club volleyball. Westbrook is the founder of A5 Volleyball in Atlanta, and serves as the coaching director. He also founded the Front Range Volleyball Club in Colorado. Prior to his club volleyball career, Westbrook also coached at the University of Florida, George Washington and Georgia State. Schramm, who is the owner and a coach at Premier Academy, has more than 20 years of experience in the club coaching/recruiting trenches.

The seminar session began with a question for Westbrook.

Wielebnicki: Bob, how much do you feel a positive relationship between you and a college coach affects the decision-making of a prospect and would a prospect say yes or no to a school because of a good or bad relationship between you and a school's staff?

Westbrook: I think it matters. In fact, it is an honor when a college coach comes to our gym. It is an opportunity for our athletes. I also think that sometimes we don't always like all the coaches that come to the gym and they don't always like us, but we have a professional responsibility to represent,

unless there is some major reason to do differently. It is important for us to support those schools and those athletes and their choices and help them explore the alternatives. Until someone really proves they are not a friend of the program or not a friend of the athletes, then we have to assume that they are. We have to help both sides of the equation to achieve success.

Until someone really proves they are not a friend of the program or not a friend of the athletes, then we have to assume that they are.

—Bob Westbrook

Wielebnicki: Ed, what do you think is the worst thing a club coach or director can do to impede the recruiting process?

Tolentino: If you a) let your personal feelings [show] or b) say disparaging things in an indirect way that would lead the athlete or parents to make their own suppositions about things that may or may not be true.

You can't represent to the coach as if all players are good. These are bright people who are very engaged by their work and they know if these are not finished products. You have to talk about their strengths and weaknesses, their character and who they are as human beings. At the same time, you have to represent to the parents the pluses and the minuses without telling them what to do. Ask questions such as, "Where do you want to live? What kind of school do you want to attend? What does your ideal audience look like? Would you still want to go to school there if you don't play volleyball anymore?" Help lead them to ask themselves the kinds of questions that can help them make the decision to find a connection and a fit, wherever they wind up going.

Wielebnicki: Ed, on the college side, what do you feel is the worst thing a club coach or director can do to impede the recruiting process and do you ever find some coaches just trying to sell their kids?

Tolentino: Yes. It is their professional responsibility to give the players the exposure to college coaches and depending on what



the needs are for that particular school, I think the club directors or the recruiting coordinators are trying to expose those kids to your needs. Now do those kids fit your needs? I think that is the college coach's responsibility to decipher and evaluate. As college coaches, there are tons of kids we get that just won't fit our system or are not talented enough. We have to decipher that. Everyone wants the top-level athlete, there is no doubt. Not every school is going to get that and I think that you have to be realistic as to where you are in the food chain! In other words, you have to find the kid that can fit into your particular system.

You were talking earlier about the club coaches selling their kids, but it is something we deal with on a daily basis, as well. We sell our program! I think that is part of the business. I say this in all my communications with recruits who don't happen to fit our program: "I am here to serve a purpose as a resource and if it is not my school, I would be glad to forward these requests [to another school]. The communication process is a huge piece and I think a college coach's relationship with a recruiting coordinator from a club means they have to be on the same page.

Westbrook: Ed and I have worked together through three schools and so we have a

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good relationship. We have some trust built up about what we are going to say to each other. I think one of the biggest points of conflict is when the player doesn't select a series of schools that actually fit what their skill set is.

Wielebnicki: How do you tell the kid that she is not heading in the right direction for that school?

Westbrook: I tell them they can't play there. Of course, you say it in a more genteel way: "Expand your list of schools. Think about it in a broader-based perspective. Where can you be successful for four years?" This is a life decision.

Jensen: We approach it from the standpoint of you might not meet our scholarship needs, but we might be a school that you are very interested in because of the academics. "What are you really looking for? Where might we fit into that scenario and could you potentially be a walk-on for us?" We try to be a little bit creative with that and not answer with just a "No."

Wielebnicki: Jodi do you ever find college coaches are overdoing it and sending too much information? Where do you draw the line with the coach?

Schramm: Yes, depending on the level of school. Mainly with the major coaches, I don't feel like they overdo it at all—they underdo it at times. I think with the junior college and NAIA coaches, just to be honest, the recruiting rules are different, so I feel sometimes they inundate the kids with a lot of information. Sometimes they continue on with that information to the point where the parents are uncomfortable.

I deal with a coach in our state that I consider to be a mass recruiter. Every kid in our state that is tall and lean and looked good in the state tournament gets a letter from this school. When I sit down to do recruiting meetings, this school is on every one of their lists. They are fairly successful in their conference, so it works for them, but it dilutes the process for the kids and the parents because they don't understand the level at which they can adequately play.

Wielebnicki: Nowadays with recruiting, it is starting so young. You have freshmen in high school who are getting looks and it puts a lot of pressure on the kids. Kirstine,



what do you think about the process starting so young? How do colleges go about it?

Jensen: I confess that we have offered an eighth grader before, which seems like the most insane concept ever, especially coming from such an academic school. [To be involved in a] recruiting process where you feel comfortable offering somebody who is 13 years old is, to me, the most asinine thing ever. Fortunately, we knew a lot about her, her family, her club, and we knew her school, so we felt comfortable she would be a really good fit for us. I wish we didn't have to do it but I feel like everybody is, so we feel like we have to. At Northwestern, we do [have it a little] different because the academics are such a big deal. As a result, we attract a certain group of girls already and some people self-select out because that is not what they are looking for.

Westbrook: One of the interesting by-products of that process of offering really young, gifted athletes is there are some positives about it because the burden is off of them. Usually if they are offered early, there is a reason – even though it may be a gamble. It destabilizes the rest of the girls on the team who won't be offered until they are 17, so they think it is some sort of competitive

race. Often the kids would be fine, but it is the parents who go crazy about it. You can talk to them as calmly as you want to, but they just don't grasp the process. We spend a lot of time soothing the 3, 4 or 5-12 girls on those teams, even if it is a high-level team. We tell them just go through the process and make sure you do your homework.

That is one of the things we really try to make them understand. As the club, we are not their agents. We are the facilitators of the process. They have to do the work – the athletes themselves, not the parents. We want to be part of the process in a positive way, but we have to commit to the message to the parents of the kids who aren't recruited quite as quickly: Be relaxed and let it happen naturally!

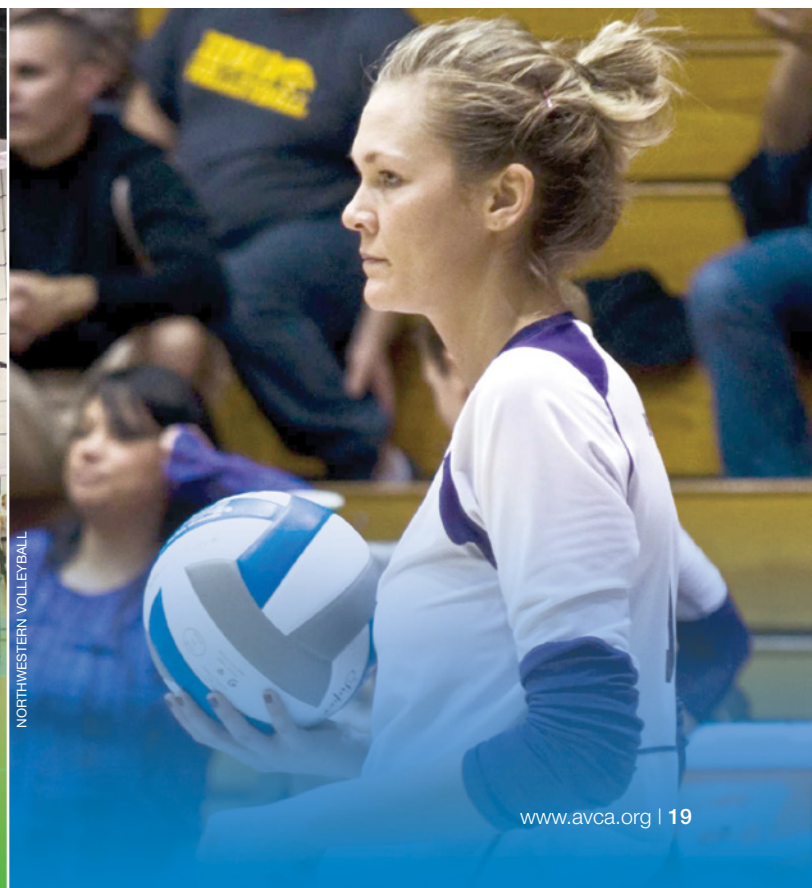
Audience Member: Earlier you talked about colleges not being friendly to your program. Can you talk a little bit more about that as a club director? Maybe the colleges that have burned you, blackballed you, etc.? How do you deal with that?

Westbrook: I have to try to remember that honestly, the important part of the equation is the athlete. Despite my personal feelings, if I think they are running a legitimate program and they are trying to

do their best with character and integrity, then I have a responsibility to represent it that way. In public or private (to the athletes) I will never say a negative thing about that program or coach. I will ask them some questions that may lead them to ask their own kinds of questions, so maybe I am a fan of the Socratic method! People will provide their own answers for that reason. There are two or three instances where I was absolutely positive it was not a good program with integrity and I will eventually say that to the parents, particularly. It takes a lot for me to want to do that because I have to assume until proven otherwise that everybody is trying to do the right thing.

Schramm: We won't send an athlete to that school if I feel the relationship is broken down to the point where I have had an athlete go to that university and something failed in the recruiting process. Whether there are things that are untruthful or there is an integrity issue or whatever that may be, I will simply tell the athlete not to go there.

Wielebnicki: With these offers going out so early (freshman year) and these kids accepting them, there are chances of movement with coaches or we have seen scholarships getting pulled because the kid doesn't



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develop like she should have before it is time to come and sign. Ed, how do you feel about that and what is your take if the kid does not develop?

Tolentino: I think it is a great question because of how young the ages are now for recruiting. I have been a part of programs that have had early commitments and they didn't develop the way they thought they would. I have also had early commitments where a kid got injured and that is tough. For example, I [had a setter who] tore her ACL going into her senior year. The commitment we make to the kid is to that kid, it is not just to her ability to play. I think every school is different, depending on where they are in the hot seat. I understand the pressures of college coaching. Sometimes you don't have that pressure. When we made the commitment to that kid who was injured, we made it to her. We told her, "We are not just giving you the scholarship because you can set. We are giving it because of the character that you have displayed to us. You are a perfect fit for our program." Are we going to take some hits? Sure. You can't just make a reactionary decision and say, "We need the scholarship back and I am giving it to someone else."

As a college coach, I think we have to do our due diligence and that is how I want to operate my business. There are some coaches who operate that way and there are some who don't because they need that player. Is it right? It depends on where you are sitting. Are you sitting on the hot seat thinking, "I need 10 wins this season," or is it truly about the student-athlete experience? There are some kids coming out of their four years who hated it because they were sold a bad bill of goods. The recruiting process was great, they were given this, and told this is what you are going to do. Then they were not given that. I think that is something that will also show the integrity and character of a program.

Jensen: When we are recruiting people, we are not just recruiting them to play in the Big Ten. We are recruiting them to attend a very academic university and they are meeting girls and seeing whether they fit into that group. Obviously, the coaches are a part of it, but they are looking at the bigger picture. We may play in the best conference in the country, but

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you have to want to be here academically. You have to feel like this is a place you want to fit socially. You have to feel like Evanston is a city you really want to live in. We say if you were to come in your freshman year and get hurt in your first practice as a freshman, would you still want to be here? Club directors can really try to help them with that fit and make sure they are not just shooting for the highest level of volleyball they can find. They want the name and the prestige. But when they are a sophomore or junior, are they truly going to be happy? It is our job to help them understand what that fit is for them.

... You have to be realistic as to where you are in the food chain! In other words, you have to find the kid that can fit into your particular system.

—Ed Tolentino

Westbrook: I think it is obvious, but I think with the club-college relationship, we are inextricably intertwined – but it is a very unsettled relationship. We don't know how to create continued integrity and trust for each other. I think that when you look at the big picture in the U.S., we have a really unusual hodgepodge system regarding how we place athletes and how they interact with the colleges and who is representing those athletes.

Wielebnicki: Where do you see one of the major breakdowns between the college and club coach relationship, and give a way to make it better.

Tolentino: I always think it is with communication, whether it is passing along information or building a relationship. There are a lot of assumptions that happen during the recruiting process. Egos aside, you've got to be prepared to answer questions that may not be comfortable – and answer them honestly. Does it burn you at times? Yes. You put the faith in the recruiting coordinators and you have to have the communication, integrity and honesty to follow through.

Jensen: I think that sometimes we fall short in establishing a really solid relationship with a recruiting coordinator. It is our job to identify who that person is who can help us in the recruiting process. For some clubs there is a recruiting coordinator, but there are also a lot of people you have a relationship with who have their toes in the program that you know you can also lean on. Sometimes we fail to build that relationship so they trust us.

Schramm: I think I would say hiding behind communication is an issue. I will be at an event and I have a kid and I know there is a coach at the court watching. I am done coaching and have plenty of time to talk to that coach or maybe I see that coach out and about, but there is no communication. I call it Monday Morning Recruiting. On Monday morning I get emails from coaches introducing themselves and it is a three-page email selling me on the university. I think hiding behind that email when you have the opportunity to have a conversation – even if it is a quick one – serves two purposes: 1) I think that it helps us meet you, and 2) it takes a little bit of the stigma away of recruiting just being a business. When kids (and parents) can see coaches communicate with coaches, it helps everybody understand that it is an overall process with everybody involved. We complain our kids have no interpersonal relationship skills, yet the coach gets up, walks away and then emails. I think it would be really good for kids and parents to see coaches engage more with other coaches at events or practice.

Westbrook: It would be nice if both sides of the equation acted like they had each other's best interests at heart. Clubs often feel that [college coaches] don't care if we exist or not – that we don't matter. There may be some truth to that. I am sure the colleges often think, "I am not getting 'the straight skinny' from these folks and they are not telling me the true deal and don't have my best interest at heart." Just develop relationships that represent that. ☺

For more on the recruiting process and the structural challenges it creates, check out "The Scholarship Chase" blog series, available on the Coaching Volleyball page at www.avca.org.



Learn more at www.teamsnap.com/avca





Cathy George, Michigan State Head Coach and AVCA Awards Representative

AVCA Board Updates

LEXINGTON, Ky. – The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) is pleased to announce the appointment of three new members to the AVCA Board of Directors. The Ohio Valley Conference Assistant Commissioner for Institutional Services/Senior Woman Administrator Stephanie Castera is taking over as the At-large Representative, Michigan State Head Coach Cathy George is the new Awards Representative, and NC State Head Coach Linda Hampton-Keith is serving as the Education & Publications Representative.

“AVCA Board service, while certainly a labor of love, is also a tangible way to make a difference,” said AVCA President and Iowa State University Head Coach Christy Johnson-Lynch. “We are thrilled that Stephanie, Cathy and Linda agreed to share their experience and expertise with us, and I look forward to working with them.”

Their new positions are retroactive to January 1, 2017, and are three-year terms.

Stephanie Castera At-large Representative

Castera has been at the Ohio Valley Conference since January 2014, and in February 2015 the role of SWA was added to her role. She is responsible for NCAA Division I governance, legislative and policy matters for the OVC. Castera also oversees the key programs in the conference and NCAA

such as the NCAA Student Assistance Fund Program in addition to handling the nomination and selection process for the OVC Academic Awards. In volleyball, she serves as the sport oversight administrator, and was a student-athlete on the volleyball team at Ball State University.

She arrived at the OVC with plenty of experience working inside the NCAA. For six-plus years, she worked in the Eligibility Center then went on to work in Academic and Membership Affairs. The Iowa native served as the AVCA Legislative Liaison while at the Association.

Cathy George Awards Representative

One of the most successful coaches in college volleyball history, she has accumulated a total of 597 career victories to her name, spanning three decades at North Dakota State, UT-Arlington, Western Michigan and the last 11 at Michigan State. In 1988 at North Dakota State, she was named the AVCA Division II Coach of the Year, and the following year at UT-Arlington became the first woman to lead an NCAA Division I program to the NCAA Semifinals.

With the Spartans, she has churned out five 20-win seasons, four AVCA All-Americans, and is coming off a 2016 campaign that saw her team record a 25-9 overall record and a fifth-place finish in the powerhouse Big Ten Conference. George

has served on the AVCA Division I All-America Committee since 2014 as the North Region Representative, and will now spend the next three years as chair.

Linda Hampton-Keith Education & Publications Representative

In 2016, Hampton-Keith completed her first year at the helm of the NC State Wolfpack and has made an immediate impact. They finished with their first 20-win season since 2013, and broke the program's ACC record with 13 conference wins.

Prior to her time in North Carolina, Hampton-Keith spent 14 seasons as an assistant coach at the Division I level at Arizona State, TCU, North Texas and Florida International. She also spent several years as head coach at P.K. Yonge High School (Gainesville, Florida), and worked in the USA Volleyball Youth Development Programs.

The FIU alumna previously served on the AVCA Minority and Assistant Coaches Committees in addition to authoring several articles for the AVCA's Coaching Volleyball Magazine, and speaking at AVCA Conventions.

“Whenever I feel anxious about the challenges ahead for volleyball, I look at the quality and depth of talent on the AVCA Board of Directors and think, ‘bring it on!’” said AVCA Executive Director Kathy DeBoer. “Stephanie, Cathy and Linda add even more skills to an already capable and dedicated group of leaders.”

The AVCA is thankful for the leadership of AVCA Hall of Famer Sandy Vong (At-large), Indiana University Head Coach Sherry Dunbar-Kruzan (Awards) and former Florida State University Head Coach Cecile Reynaud (Education & Publications).

Daemen Adds Men's Volleyball

AMHERST, N.Y. – Daemen College officials have announced the addition of men's volleyball to the stable of teams sponsored by the college for intercollegiate athletic competition. The official announcement was made at a press conference held on

campus today at Lumsden Gymnasium, the future home of the Daemen men's volleyball team which will begin competition during the 2018-19 academic year.

In addition, it was announced that a \$60,000 grant from the MotorMVB Foundation was attained to aid in the establishment of Daemen's program. The MotorMVB Foundation (www.MotorMVB.com) is a non-profit organization that's mission is to stimulate the growth of boys' and men's volleyball at all levels in the United States. While there are presently 188 collegiate programs nationwide, the organization's goal is to help fund an increase to 380 programs by the start of the 2026-27 academic year. The foundation's \$60,000 grant will be dispersed over a three-year period.

"We are beyond excited to be adding men's volleyball to the sports offered here at Daemen College," said Director of Athletics Bridget Niland. "In researching ways that Daemen Athletics can continue to have a positive impact on the college's enrollment, it became evident that establishing a men's volleyball program is an avenue worth pursuing. With that being said, I don't think we could have acted this quickly without the great partnership we've built with MotorMVB. I want to thank them for their ongoing guidance and support as we work to bring another quality NCAA Division II program into our coffers."

"Thanks to the generosity of passionate volleyball donors, we are pleased to provide support to Daemen College. The leadership at Daemen has really impressed us and we are convinced that Bridget Niland and Coach Gleason will guide a thriving men's volleyball program for many years to come," said Wade Garard, CEO of MotorMVB Foundation. "Our foundation board chairman John Speraw always says there is nothing more important than providing opportunities for the young people of this country. We are pleased to be able to help do this for boys in Western New York and from across the country who will come to Daemen and enjoy a meaningful student-athlete experience."

Along with the formation of the program and the MotorMVB investment, the hiring of Don Gleason as the team's first head coach was announced today. Gleason, who assisted on coach Stephanie Albano's staff with the Daemen women's volleyball team during its run to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament last season, brings a wealth of experience to the position with previous coaching stops at the Division I and Division III levels. The Hamburg, N.Y., native has been an assistant coach on the women's volleyball staffs at Stony Brook University (2015), the University at Buffalo (2014) and Yale University (2012-13). He got his start as an assistant for both the men's and women's programs at Medaille College in 2011, and later spent the spring of 2013 as a volunteer assistant at the University of Southern California. In addition to his collegiate coaching experience, Gleason has extensive ties to the club volleyball scene, and he owns and operates Oasis Beach Volleyball Club for boys and girls ages 10-18.

Daemen will become just the 27th NCAA Division II men's volleyball program in the country, and the only present team North of the Mason-Dixon Line. NCAA Division II programs compete with their Division I counterparts for the national collegiate championship, and Division III opponents will likely be included in the schedule as well, according to Niland. Daemen will begin as an independent with an eye on joining a conference like the Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association somewhere down the line. Daemen received letters of support in this endeavor from the aforementioned John Speraw, chairman of the MotorMVB Foundation board and head coach of the United States Men's National Team, and from Men's National Team member and Western New York native Matt Anderson.

Gleason will have a full calendar year to recruit team members, eyeing those prospective student-athletes in the high school graduating class of 2018. The Daemen men's volleyball team will officially open play sometime in January of 2019.

AVCA Webinars Ramping Up

The AVCA is pleased to kick off a new batch of webinars, and wants you to be aware of the fantastic presentations that have already taken place this year and are available at www.avca.org/webinars. Missed them the first time around? Don't worry – we keep recordings of all of our webinars and store them for your convenience. Here's what we've already produced this year, and some that you'll want to keep an eye out for over the coming days. For details and information on registering, simply check out the website.

2017 Spring Statistics Webinar Series

"Volleyball Performance Benchmarks for the Rest of Us" – *Kyle Mashima*

"Volleyball & Beach Volleyball Statistics & Overview" – *Giuseppe Vinci*

"Data Gathering: Principles for Paper, Digital, or Service-Provided Statistics" – *Giuseppe Vinci*

"Video as a Teaching Tool" – *Giuseppe Vinci*

"Interpreting Statistics, Scouting Reports, and Beyond" – *Giuseppe Vinci*

2017 Mental Toughness and Leadership Series

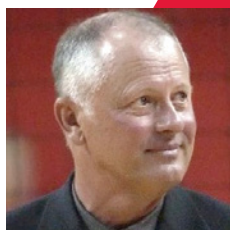
"Developing Your Team to Be 'Athlete Tough' - How to Easily Incorporate Resiliency Skill Development into Your Volleyball Program" – *Bo Hanson (May 9)*

"Want to Build Mentally Tough Athletes? It All Starts with Your Coaching Philosophy!" – *Matt Phillips (May 16)*

"The Science of Humility: How Coaches and Players Can Benefit from Biting into the Humble Pie." – *Ho Huynh (May 23)*

"Energy Is Everything! The Extraordinary Impact of How You Show Up." – *Bobby Audley (May 30)*

All webinars will be recorded and sent to registrants.



WRITER'S DESK

A Guidebook to Volleyball

Terry Pettit

As the players arrive for practice.
With each step, they lift their heads
like antelope and zebra,
listening for the slightest movement.
They acknowledge their coach
With the attention and indifference
a springbok gives a lion
lying several hundred yards
away in the sun.
The court is their river.
Slowly at first, the balls begin to rise.
Some like shore birds dip and dive.
Others are pelicans that swoop
in predictable rhythms.
Later, the balls never rest
but move from player to player,
startled doves before a storm.
There is something beautiful
about this place, the court
where players risk everything
for the ball. They call for it,
and scold when it ignores them.
Sometimes the ball rises
like a blossom above the court
and a setter watches the white skin
barely rotating above
her outstretched hands,
effortless as moonlight.

from *Trust and the River* – Selected Poems
www.terrypettit.com



MICHIGAN STATE ATHLETICS

Make Time for Media

David Portney

THIS TIME OF YEAR is always the most interesting and maddening. For many schools, we're in our summer "off-season" other than the few club tournaments still on your schedule. Maybe we're lucky to take a family vacation (put ... the phone ... down), catch up on the to-do list that's been on the fridge since last summer, or just do nothing at all. However, for those of us who compete in the fall, late spring/early summer usually means the season is just around the corner (yikes).

As you recharge your battery, finalize your schedule and travel plans, order the new uniforms, and choose your starting setter, it's easy to lose focus on your summer's communications and media strategies. Who's streaming your matches? Did the local paper hire a new sports editor? Wait, do they even have a sports editor? When was the last time our Facebook page was updated? Answering these kinds of questions certainly feels overwhelming, especially if you're relatively unfamiliar with these issues to begin with. Remember, you're not in this alone!

If you're fortunate enough to have a rock-solid sports information director (SID) on your staff, sync up with him or her before the spotty summer hours take over the department and school. Just see what they had in mind (if anything), and what the plans are to make sure that your program isn't too far behind when the hours return to normal. Trust me, they always love it when the coach is involved with what they're doing. The same applies if an assistant coach handles those responsibilities. If you are one of those assistants, line up a time to speak with your head coach! Let them know what you're up to, and that you're diligently working on this when your boss isn't looking.

As you kick around ideas, don't forget to involve the players. Whether they're on campus or at home on family vacation, they each can help provide content for your social media sites. Proportionally, student-athletes have larger social media followings than the average college student, so actively engaging with them on those sites will increase the visibility of your own program's accounts. I've seen a lot of schools have their players "take over" their sites for a day (or

Remember, leaving your social media accounts dormant over the summer is not an option. By doing so, you're undermining your own program's ability to maintain current fans and bring in new ones.

Social media is not the only thing to keep track of this summer. Reach out to the local media to either introduce yourself for the first time, or get re-acquainted with some old contacts. There may have been some turn-over since the last fall season, and there's a chance that new person might not be planning on much volleyball coverage this fall. Don't let them make that decision without hearing from you first. Invite them for lunch and/or a tour of your facilities if you think they're worth showing off. I may have said this a billion times in this article over the years, but media folks will *never* turn down an opportunity for free food. It's in their contract. Nebraska Head Coach John Cook did a pretty good webinar for us a few years ago about this very issue, and if anyone has experience dealing with local media, it's him. If you go into our product store and search "John Cook" you'll see it.

Even though the fall season doesn't begin in earnest for another few months, late spring/early summer is the perfect time to address any media-related issues within your program and the community. You don't have to drop everything and handle it immediately, but it just can't be glossed over all together only to be revisited in August. By then, it could be too late. So I implore you: take a bit of time for yourself and your family, and when the battery is back to 100% and the vacation photos have been posted on Facebook to make us all jealous (which we definitely are), put "media" on that to-do list sitting on your refrigerator.



sometimes longer) to shed some light on what they're up to. I've seen countless examples of it being successfully implemented that benefits everyone involved, and more importantly, it helps create a more personal connection between your program's fans and that student-athlete. Only choose the player(s) that you trust to handle such a responsibility, and talk to them ahead of time on what kind of stuff she'll be posting. Using this relatively simple social media tactic can save you and your staff a lot of time worrying about updating your accounts.



GETTING FIT

Freshen Up Your Approach to Vertical Jump Improvement

Ken Kontor

THE BARBELL CLEAN is arguably the best exercise you can do in the weight room to improve the vertical jump in the weight room. Research was conducted in 1993 by John Garhammer, PhD, wherein he compared the wattage of a power clean to the wattage of a dead lift. The clean showed greater wattage, which added to the popularity of the power clean lift to increase power output. What is even more convincing is that the clean movement mimics the jump movement – specificity at its best.

The Clean's Dirty Little Secret

The clean is one of the most difficult exercises to teach. It requires two pulls – one to get the barbell off the ground, the other to put it into position to “rack” the bar on the chest. It takes hours/days/weeks in the gym to learn this technique. It is a sport skill first, and an explosive exercise second. The clean is conducted in the sport of Olympic lifting and CrossFit. The volleyball athlete, especially at a younger age, does not have the time, nor in many cases a qualified instructor, to teach the movement. With all the volleyball activity associated with today's sport, it's time to consider a fresh approach.

What Can Be Done?

In an issue of *Performance Conditioning Volleyball*, Robert Brown, Volleyball Master Instructor with the USA Volleyball Conditioning Accreditation Program, offers the young volleyball player and coach a practical alternative to the barbell clean. According to Robert, the bottom line question is do you want to see a player for 30 minutes twice a week and have them do explosive cleans? What value do we bring to that athlete?

There are alternative exercises that you can do – the dumbbell high pull and clean pull will progress the young athlete rapidly. The techniques are not as complex as other lifts, so the progress can be made quickly. Another exercise is the jump shrug; it can promote vertical jump improvement.

The concern with dumbbell exercises is that the first and second pulls with hip or thigh contact are not there in these lifts. When you are doing Olympic lifts, the major benefits to the vertical jump are from the pull. Doing just the pull eliminates racking the bar on the shoulder at the finish of the clean position. With the pull, the necessary triple extension is achieved without the technical aspect of the Olympic lifts.

Tools

Dumbbells are also more user-friendly in gym environments, where you don't need to have a lifting platform and other tools to do the lifts safely. But as the athlete gets stronger, the dumbbells become less functional due to the increased weight the developing athlete can handle. This is the ideal time to introduce a barbell if the facility can accommodate it. The barbell is capable of providing endless variety, whereas the dumbbell can't. But will the average young volleyball player need to get into those increased loads beyond what a dumbbell can provide? Not in most cases!

Getting to the End Game: Proper Progression

The next issue to consider is how to do these lifts. The first step is to teach a proper, correct Romanian dead lift (RDL), because all of these pulls and Olympic lifts are based on this movement. It teaches the proper position for the dumbbell and barbell pull. The next exercise is to teach proper shoulder shrugging. The progression is RDL to RDL, with a shrug. This puts us in the pull position and gives us three phases – RDL, RDL shrug, and RDL jump shrug. Now we can go to the clean pull and the high pull.

Teach and Correcting the Movements

The final consideration is how do you correct a player who has movement/technique problems? You might see an athlete do a high pull, but jumps back while doing it. Another problem is using all arms on the pull. There are a number of common errors that need to be corrected.

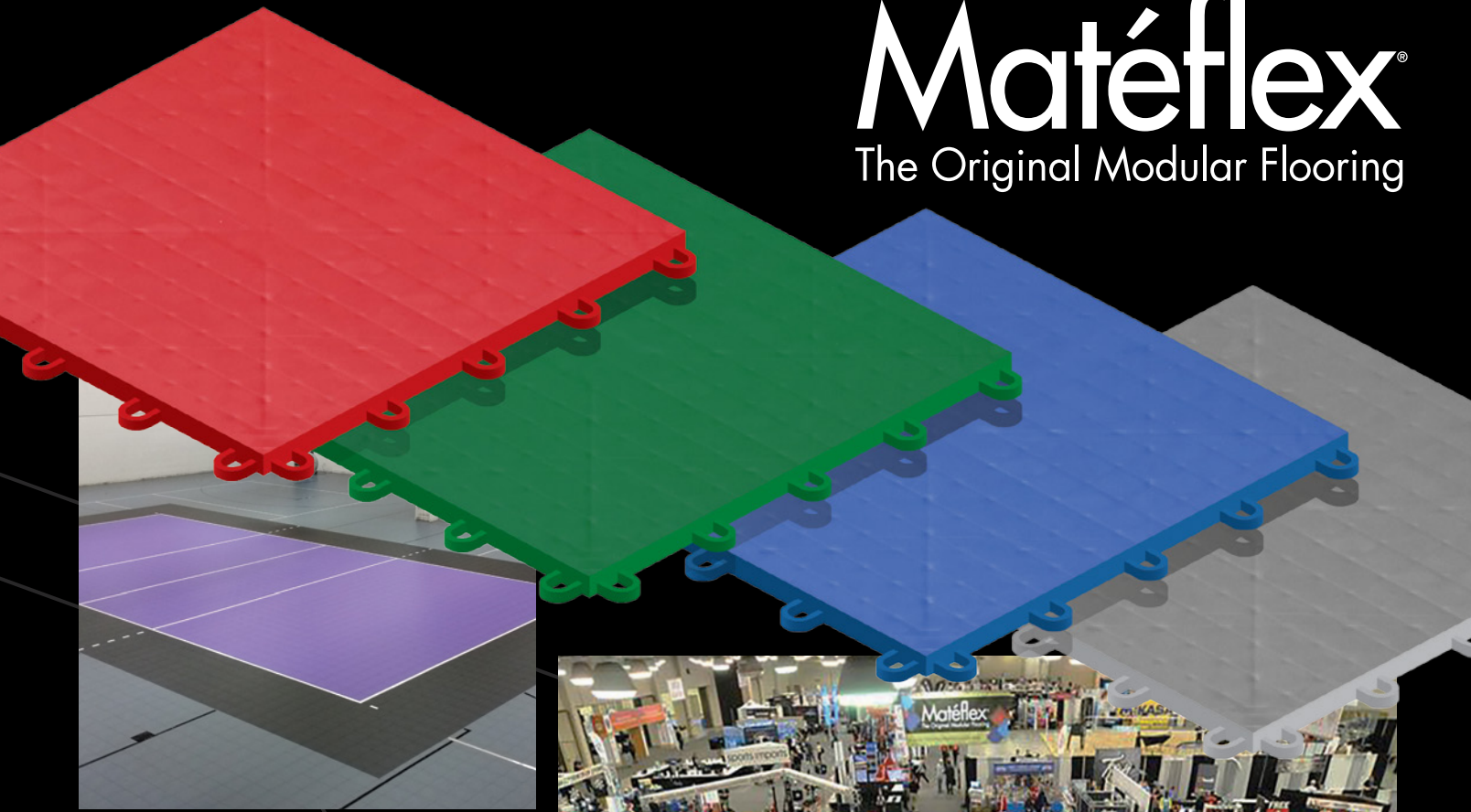
If you want to learn more, we can send you Robert's entire article. It includes an entire entry level program with video of all the exercises. Just drop us an email request at condpress@aol.com.



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New Beginnings: Building a Successful Team Culture



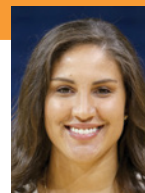
Eric Hammond
Towson



Brad Keller
UCLA



Sarah Rauen
North Dakota St.



Krista Rice
Central Michigan



Marie Zidek
U. of San Diego

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, teams (college, club, high school, etc.) go through a “new beginnings” phase. Whether it’s a new coaching staff, seniors graduating, gaining new players, etc., each of these situations requires the establishment of a new culture and team identity. Here are some tools that can be used to get your “new team” or “new program” off and running in a new direction.

Communication

1. Create a written document about culture and program values. Make sure your team can articulate what the program represents and is working towards.
2. Provide clear standards and expectations for anyone who is important to your program’s success (student-athletes, coaches, academic advisors, athletic trainers, strength and conditioning, etc.). Follow up with a meeting discussing these expectations.
3. Set up small group video sessions to cover training and positional expectations.
4. Set up individual meetings at least one time through each phase of your season to discuss roles, performance and goals.
5. Promote a true “open door” policy where athletes feel welcome to stop by the coaches’ offices. Make time for your student-athletes when they come by, even if you are busy. They are the priority.
6. Place phone calls to student-athletes during break periods to see how they are doing. Promote an environment where verbal communication is important for building relationships.
7. Integrate new players into your culture as early and quickly as possible – through unofficial/official visits, team-building activities, team dinners, etc.

Accountability

1. Create non-negotiables for your program as a staff, and have the team assist



UCLA VOLLEYBALL

with creating standards and expectations; being a good teammate on and off the court, work ethic, bench culture, academic, social, etc. Involving the athletes in the process leads to them being accountable for their own words.

2. Create opportunities to acknowledge positive and negative behaviors. The Awareness Box and Excellence Box can be a great tool. On a marker board, draw two boxes and label them. Throughout practice, anytime someone displays poor effort based on team standards, they go into the Awareness Box, which is essentially a timeout. Set an amount of time that the player must sit out before re-joining practice. The Excellence Box is simply writing the name of someone who displays great effort throughout practice. At the end of a practice, players

can see if they are recognized for great or poor effort, with the goal of eliminating time in the Awareness Box.

3. Establish peer-to-peer accountability in the gym. The players should be setting the tone of drills instead of the coaching staff.

Motivation

1. Create process-driven goals that cover individual and team goals.
2. Journaling – using weekly guided team journaling sessions can be a great tool to track progress. It provides an opportunity for student-athletes to reflect, targeting topics that are important to your program.
3. Set up a schedule for student-athletes to read a daily inspirational quote before practice.
4. Create a team slogan or theme for each year that symbolizes your team identity.

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