

COACHING Volleyball

Spring Issue

A Publication of the American Volleyball Coaches Association

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Indoor/beach coaches share tips

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Also in this issue: Two-Year College Success Stories • Magic Numbers • NAIA Men's Volleyball

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We're always excited to share what the Two-Year College community is up to. We asked some coaches to share their favorite success stories with us – and we were more than impressed with their submissions. Here, we spotlight some names you probably already know and let their coaches describe their two-year college backgrounds.

12 Two Sports, One Staff

The growth of beach volleyball has been more than impressive – and schools from all levels and locations are finding ways to add a program. At this past AVCA Convention, a few head coaches sat down to share how they went about adding a program without stretching themselves too thin, introducing indoor players to the beach game, and managing resources in order to be able to field a team year-round.

18 Magic Numbers

What began as a simple discussion about how to score points blossomed into a statistical analysis that helped identify benchmark standards for elite men's and women's teams. Then, learn about how Dan Ames took a brand new program at Dominican and built them up to a DIII NCAA Tournament bid by finding ways to maximize the talent on his roster.

22 NAIA Men's Volleyball

The volleyball community has seen unprecedented growth in nearly all sectors over the past few years. We're excited to share that the NAIA has added men's volleyball as their 26th National Championship. Check out the details and learn more about our partnership with Motor Men's VB and our shared mission to grow the game.



COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON VOLLEYBALL

On the Cover

Have you been thinking about adding a beach program, but your administration wants you to run the ship? Check out our feature on how a few coaches went about managing the task of handling two programs and transitioning players to and from the beach game. It's manageable, but you have to think outside the box to make it a reality.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

From the Desk of ...

Mark Rosen, Head Coach – University of Michigan

I AM VERY EXCITED to begin my term as president of the American Volleyball Coaches Association. I feel blessed each and every day to be a part of the profession of volleyball coaches, and the opportunity to give back to that profession is very gratifying. When I was young, my father used to tell me, “If you can find a way to make your passion your profession, you will have found the key to a happy and successful life.” He also used to question my sanity when I was a young coach, making a few thousand dollars a year and just scraping by. I’m glad that I stuck through those times and found a way to make my passion into my profession, and I do believe he was right, because I love the life it has created for me and my family.

Ok, so every day isn’t sunshine and roses. The morning after getting eliminated from the NCAA tournament or after losing a tough match to our arch-rival doesn’t feel all that great. But there is no better feeling than when one of our student-athletes “gets it” and takes a step forward, either in the gym or in life, and you witness them growing up right before your eyes. Those matches when your team has a breakthrough win and you see their confidence grow – these are the moments that I value as a collegiate coach.

The next few years in our sport are going to see a lot of changes and some exciting times. I see our current recruiting model being one that is not sustainable. As recruiting moves earlier and earlier, all sides want it to slow down. It’s easy to say, but it is difficult to make that change in a highly competitive environment. The NCAA has recognized this issue and the current legislative changes are reflective of their desire to slow the process down. I find it interesting that everyone I talk to – club coaches, high school players and parents, college coaches – all think recruiting should slow down, but as soon as legislation is introduced, everyone is trying to look for loopholes to aid

in early recruiting. I know it is the competitive nature of the business that drives this behavior, but hopefully we can stay the course and actually change the way we recruit in the future.

The growth of the men’s game is also at a critical crossroads. We see many smaller universities adding the men’s game to drive enrollment at their institutions. This has created many more opportunities for men to compete at the college level. We have not seen that growth at the NCAA DI level, where gender equity issues and financial constraints are more impactful. It is exciting to see John Speraw, the USA National Team coach, be the driving force behind MotorMVB, a passionate non-profit group working hard to grow the men’s game at the highest collegiate level.

It is imperative that we hold each other accountable to following the rules that govern our associations and sport.

My passion for this profession is one of the driving factors in wanting to serve all of you in a leadership position with the AVCA. I love the growth and I don’t think volleyball has ever been healthier. This growth is also what scares me as we move forward. Every step forward creates unintended consequences that we all must be aware of. As support for our programs goes up and salaries rise, the pressure to succeed increases. With that pressure, we have to be conscious of how we move forward and make sure we maintain a professional environment.

It is imperative that we hold each other accountable to following the rules that govern our associations and sport. We all know recruiting is crucial to our programs and

without success in recruiting, success on the court is impossible. We can’t allow that importance to steer us in a direction that we are going to regret. If we aren’t willing to approach each other when we see something detrimental to our profession, then we are doomed to follow the path of other sports that have gone before us. Yes, most of us would like to have the prestige (and paychecks) they enjoy, but do we want the collateral damage they have endured along the way?

As evidenced in our growing attendance numbers throughout the country, we are headed in a great direction. We are gaining more and more support from our athletic departments as they see the potential in our sport. We see participation numbers growing at the club and high school levels, raising the athleticism and skill level of incoming college players to an all-time high. I believe our best times are still ahead of us and we can eventually become a revenue-producer.

My hope is that we can manage that growth and still maintain a professional climate that we can all be proud of. I hope we can keep a culture where the student-athlete comes first and know we are being great stewards of our sport and the coaching profession.

I hope this article does not come off as too much like the “Jerry McGuire” manifesto. Hopefully we can all take a stand for the integrity of our profession and still maintain a healthy, competitive spirit that we can all thrive in. In the words of our football coach here at Michigan ... “Who’s got it better than us? No-body!”



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Our Game

Kathy DeBoer

ACCORDING TO A SURVEY conducted by the AVCA in the fall of 2016, 73% of DI volleyball coaches thought it was bad for a prospect to make a decision on college prior to her junior year. These coaches expressed this sentiment while at the same time making verbal scholarship offers to freshman and sophomores.

No one outside of our community can understand why we continue to do things we think are bad; no one inside of our community is the least bit surprised. Competition, by definition, means "keep up or lose out!"

College administrators, especially those dealing with Olympic sports, join coaches in their distaste for early recruiting; they see offers and commitments from underage prospects having a negative impact in admissions, on transfers and posing possible legal exposure for their institutions.

Parents, too, are raising concerns as they feel compelled to fund unofficial campus visits, often well before their child is interested or ready to decide on a college. Bigger clubs have hired full-time recruiting coordinators to manage the communication between college coaches and young prospects, since direct contact is impermissible by NCAA rules until July 1 after the junior year. Recruiting services also adjusted their pitch, warning parents that waiting until their child is interested in looking at colleges is irresponsible, and that early, proactive marketing is needed to compete for college roster spots.

On campuses near major highways or large events, college staffs, hesitant to turn away a prospect who may have a talented teammate, are hosting 50 or more unofficial visits annually, with full knowledge that most of those visiting will never play in their program. Major college summer camps have become a combination tryout/recruiting seminar, with a growing emphasis on drawing middle school prospects.

In 2017 the NCAA answered the

request from AVCA and coach associations in softball, field hockey, soccer and gymnastics to create legislation to save us from ourselves. The DI Student-Athlete Experience Committee (SAEC), along with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), were tasked with engaging constituent groups (coaches, compliance officers, faculty representatives) for input on workable solutions.

Two primary ideas emerged:

- Move the allowable date for official visits from September 1 of the senior year in high school to September 1 of the junior year. (Proposal 2017-111 – adopted final)
- Set this same date – September 1 of the junior year – as the first allowable date for an unofficial visit with the coaching staff (Proposal 2017-112 – rescission period) and prohibit any conversation during an institutional camp or clinic about recruiting until this same date. (Proposal 2017-113 – rescission period)

Proposals 111, 112 and 113 are not volleyball-specific, but will apply to all sports except football and basketball, who have versions of these restrictions already in place.

The NCAA DI Council also considered two DI women's volleyball-specific proposals: The first increases quiet periods in the recruiting calendar by adding December, January and February until President's Day weekend, along with Memorial Day weekend (Proposal 2017-45 – adopted final); the second stipulates that any days spent working camps or clinics more than 50 miles from campus count as part of the 80-day maximum (Proposal 2017-25 – rescission period).

Reactions to these proposals have been mixed: some believe it is irresponsible not to try to fix a system so many believe is broken; others fear that the proposed fix will further restrict direct contact between college coaches and prospects/parents,

exacerbating the black market of third-party involvement; still others are concerned that shifting visit costs from parents to colleges will widen the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" among schools; and others celebrate this same cost shift as narrowing the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" among families.

More often than I like, I hear volleyball coaches say, "Don't let us become like basketball." When I drill down on what is meant, the slight is always related to ethical behavior around recruiting. Whether right or wrong, we see our sport as having more professional integrity, and we see that integrity eroding.

What we generally do not see is the reason: the bigger and more popular volleyball gets, the higher the stakes. And like every other sport, the more we have, the less ethically we will behave. The very things that we want – higher salaries, more fans, more media – are creating the culture that we fear – loss of collegiality, dishonesty and a diminished sense of community.

The "basketball comment" always comes with examples: a story about an illegally poached player; a tale about a string of decommits; a rant about a status-seeking "gatekeeper" in the club community; or incredulity around a practice for wooing middle school children to camp.

I want what you want: a popular, thriving sport with well-paid coaches, full stands and a large television audience, AND a sport that is led by coaches that respect each other, behave ethically, share their gifts and show gratitude.

The only chance we have to achieve this combination is to learn from basketball about the perils of success and to care enough about our culture to be intentional about preserving it.

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Blackjack!

By Matt Huskey, Assistant Coach – Saint Louis University

AS COACHES, we are always looking for ways to increase competition and fun in our practice gym. Sometimes that means we head to the white board and draw up a new drill, but other times, we have found that simply changing the way we score some basic drills is just as effective as coming up with a brand new drill.

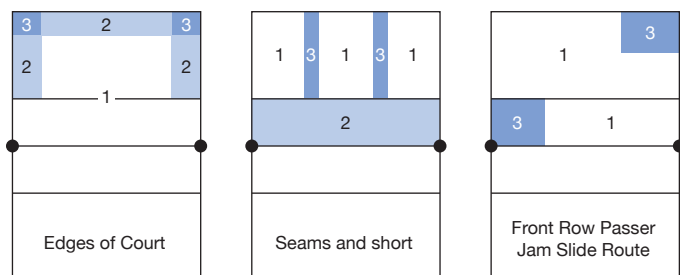
One of the scoring models that we use a lot in our gym is blackjack scoring. Blackjack scoring is a very simple and very versatile way to score drills that you are already using in your gym. Yes, it shares the name of a popular casino game. (At this time, a disclaimer seems appropriate: we do not promote gambling. There is no money exchanged in this drill. The odds that you will have fun and compete are ALWAYS in your favor. In fact, the only similarity to the casino game is that we go to 21 points. I suppose you could call it “21,” but it doesn’t sound as cool.)

Blackjack scoring is a competition to 21 points and we typically use it in player vs player scenarios as opposed to team vs team scenarios. You can use blackjack at a variety of different skills and you can adjust point values to emphasize specific things you want your team to improve on. When we use Blackjack, we usually have 1 point, 2 point, and 3 point values. It is also fun to add “Double Down” and “Bust” opportunities. When a player decides to “double down,” it’s a good opportunity for them to work on their confidence and their ability to perform in a “clutch” moment. Adding the “bust” element forces players to think and be a little more strategic about how they score points.

I think Blackjack will make more sense when you see some examples of how to use it. Here are three different drills to use blackjack scoring on:

Serving

Place all of your team on the same side of the net and have them all compete against each other. Use cones/floor markers to mark off 1 pt, 2 pt, and 3 pt zones. First person to 21 wins. If they go over 21, they go back down to 11. “Double Down”- If a player yells “Double Down,” the whole gym stops and watches the player serve (to add pressure). If the player serves a ball into a 3 point area, they double their points. If they miss, they go back to zero.



Attacking

Blackjack is a great way to score attacker vs attacker drills. By giving the players more ways to score more points you can quickly see which attackers have the most range and the most creativity in your gym. We have our attackers play against a full defense because it gets our defenders involved in the competition (just like in the game, they need to take pride in preventing attackers from scoring, even if it doesn’t directly result in a point for them personally). We will play this off of a coach-initiated serve. We will have an OH in Zone 5 and a DS/Lib in Zone 6. This allows our attackers to work on their pass-to-attack footwork. “Double Down” – If a player yells “double down,” they will get a Serve Receive Ball quickly followed by a transition ball entered to the DS/Lib on her side of the court. If the attacker kills two balls into a 3 point zone, they double their points. If they only get one kill to a 3 point zone, they keep their points. If they do not kill a ball to a 3 point zone, they lose all their points.

We tape down the lines for the zones because we play it with a full defense. If you do not play it with a defense, cones or floor markers will do.

Setters: Decision Making

Another way that you can use blackjack scoring is to reward good decision-making for your setters. This would need to be played in more of a 6 vs 6 drill. Choose how you would like to initiate the ball (free ball, attacked ball, serve) and alternate entering the ball to each side. One thing that is a secondary benefit of using blackjack scoring for setter decision-making is that you are simultaneously training the opposing middle blocker’s eye sequence. They are immediately made a huge part of the drill as you can give points for setters creating one-on-one situations and fooling the opposing middle blocker. Play a regular scored set to 15 or 25 points and add the additional points earned by the setters decision-making on the first ball. Cater the scoring to fit the areas your setter needs to improve on.

For example:

- 1 point – Setting a ball that a hitter can swing at aggressively
- 2 points – Setting Middle Attacker
- 3 points – Creating a One-On-One Situation

Example #2:

- 1 point – Jump Setting a ball that a hitter can swing at aggressively
- 2 points – Kill on a Setter Dump
- 3 points – Setting “against the grain” (Setting in the opposite direction that the Setter is moving)

Mobile Game to Keep Team Engaged

By Dan King, Former Assistant Coach – Nova Southeastern University

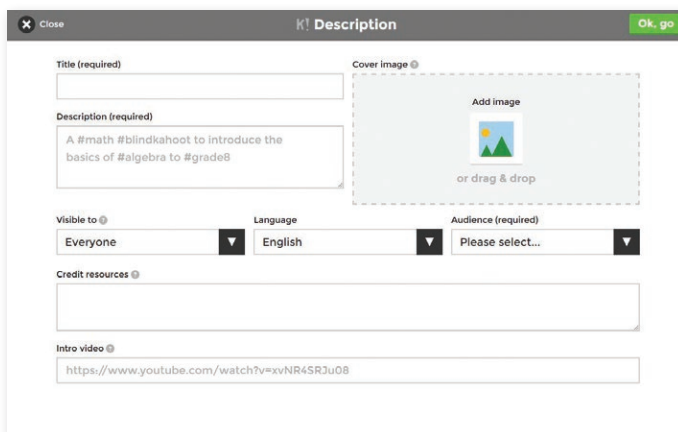
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ONE OF THE MORE POWERFUL ways that we have found to reach our athletes is by using technology that they can interact with – TiVo in practice, Volleymetrics in film sessions, heat-mapping apps that allow them to track themselves or opponents, group messaging with GroupMe or wearable technology.

To that list I would like to add Kahoot!. Getkahoot.com is a web-based discussion, quiz and survey tool that allows the user to create various Q&A scenarios that their teams can engage in via their mobile devices. We use their quizzes, and our athletes love them! Prior to the team meeting the staff, the captain or a designated athlete signs on and creates their quiz. Once saved, the group is given a sign-in code that they enter into their mobile device entering them in that session. Once the question is flashed on the screen, a timed response and point system is used to tally a running total – the sooner you answer correctly, the more points you receive. The competitive atmosphere is awesome!

There are some limits to what Kahoot! can do. There is a limit of 95 characters for questions and 60 for answers. There is no limit to the number of questions that you can ask per session – but they encourage you to keep the sessions to 10–20 questions so that engagement levels stay high. The number of players that Kahoot! can accommodate is in the thousands, but the bandwidth required for numbers that high would need to be excellent.

I would highly encourage anyone looking to find a new way to engage with their athletes to check out getkahoot.com and create a profile ... Good Luck!



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Why Are We Training the Athleticism Out of Volleyball?

By Jim Miret, Front Range Volleyball

THERE IS NO DENYING that volleyball when played well is one of the most exciting spectator sports around. It's thrilling to watch as players combine high levels of athleticism and skill with the execution of complex tactics in a team setting. The highest levels of volleyball require the expression of truly athletic qualities such as power, explosiveness, agility, quickness and dynamic movements.

So why are so many coaches training the athleticism out of volleyball? I realize that this topic is taboo among many coaches and professionals in the volleyball scene, but it is important nonetheless and warrants an investigation if we truly want to continue to grow our sport and foster the expression of athleticism in our game.

Many of us learn best by doing, so before I continue I want you to try an experiment to illustrate my point. After a quick warm-up, take a standing position with your toes slightly behind a sideline. Have a friend or colleague give you a ready, set ... go, and from that standing position sprint about five yards. Done? Great! Now ask yourself these questions: What did your body do to move? What did your feet do to move your body?

If you weren't paying attention to your body positioning or movements, try the sprint again. This time, pay particular attention to the movements your body utilizes to transition from standing upright to sprinting across the sideline.

You can also try this experiment with the athletes on your team. Line them up on a sideline and have them perform the same task, and be sure to film them.

The falsehood of the "false or negative step"

From that standing position a few things probably happened to engage the sprint. First, your body leaned in the direction you

wanted to move. Next, your hips loaded (dropped slightly) to help you generate power. Lastly, one of your feet stepped back to help drive you forward. Take a look at the film of your team sprinting across the sideline. It's probable that most of your players performed similar movements to complete the five-yard sprint. In this instance our bodies are making adaptations to move quickly and powerfully. (Side note: I don't think our bodies always select the most mechanically efficient way to move. Just pick up a set of golf clubs for the first time and go play 18 holes with no instruction and no practice, and you will see what I mean.)



CSU VOLLEYBALL

When we want to sprint forward from a standing position we usually see one foot drop in the opposite direction of the movement to help propel us forward. Many coaches call this a "false step" or a "negative step" and believe that any movement away from the direction you want to travel is wasted movement and should be avoided.

In my experience as a coach and my many consultations with movement experts, I have learned that this "jab" or "drop" step actually puts the body in the most powerful position to move as it engages the stretch-shortening cycle of our muscles, and gets our foot behind our center of gravity so we can drive in the direction we want to travel. According to Dalton Oliver, a professor of sport and exercise science at the University of Central Florida, athletes who maximize the stretch-shortening cycle of their muscles are able to generate more speed and power in their movements, and changing direction is a primary example of using the stretch-shortening cycle to increase power. According to Oliver: "If you watch a tennis player during a volley, a pitcher during a windup or an MMA fighter before he launches a powerful blow, all of them create movement in the opposite direction first to recruit more power from the SSC."¹ This results in the expression of a more powerful and explosive movement, which we know is an important component in playing high-level volleyball.

Still unsure of the science? Let's apply these ideas directly to the sport of volleyball, using the skill of blocking as our frame of reference. Do the same five-yard sprint experiment, this time with your body parallel to the net. On the count of three, turn to your right and sprint about five yards. What did your body do that time? I'll bet if I were filming your movement I would see your hips drop, a quick drop-step and your body leaning into the movement.

It's common practice around the United States for coaches to teach their blockers to take one big step when blocking to cover a lot of ground quickly. And why not – this makes sense to some degree. I want my blocker to make a blocking move to the left, so I will teach her to take a big step in the direction she wants to move. In order



to compare the big step to the drop-step it's important to consider the criteria we use to evaluate the effectiveness of the movement. Is it most important that my blocker simply makes it to her blocking assignment, or is it more important that she get there with speed and agility? We must consider if this big step is the most effective use of movement. Does the big step blocking footwork allow my blocking move to be powerful and dynamic? My experience and conversations with movement experts tells me no.

Support of the big step over the drop-step in blocking is rational thinking, but not informed coaching. While I am training my blockers to move and cover ground with the big step, I am also programming their movements to be slow. Instead, why not train players to drop or jab step in the opposite direction they want to move to create a more powerful, quick and dynamic movement.

I often hear coaches tell players to keep their feet still, or to be stopped on defense. This type of instruction will only make the players' reaction to the ball slower because

it is not engaging the stretch-shortening cycle. Getting my feet to be still or stopped is nothing that we observe in top-level international volleyball or professional tennis players as they prepare to react to the ball.

At this point in the article you might be thinking to yourself, "This information is great; I follow your logic, but I don't think I can execute this with my team." If you are thinking this, you're not alone. As a fellow coach, I fully understand the limits we all face as coaches. Too often we are short on time and can't introduce new and complex topics to our teams, and in some cases we lack the high-level athletes to execute those complex skills. Is a drop-step or split-step movement a complex skill to teach and learn? Absolutely. However, not training a skill because I don't think I have the athletes to correctly execute the move is like preventing my child from participating in track because I don't think she will be an Olympic sprinter in the future.

Simply stated, the first obstacle to achievement is often ourselves, not those external

factors we worry so much about. As coaches, it's our responsibility to select training and drills that will maximize the level of our athletes (whatever level that might be), and not to dumb down our instruction to the perceived level of our athletes' ability. If I train my players to execute a split-step movement pattern when they pass and defend, I've just made them faster and more dynamic than they were before. Are they now magically faster or more dynamic than the best volleyball players in the world? Likely not. But, they are certainly better than they were yesterday – which means I've done my job.

Volleyball requires explosive and quick movements. The human body will move quickest when we allow the body to use the stretch-shortening cycle of the muscles – this is scientifically proven. These are not "wasted" or "false" movements. The jab step, pre-hop, drop-step and split-step are essential footwork patterns that we can teach players to engage their athleticism to create dynamic movements in many parts of the game. We must move in order to move.

¹ Oliver, Dalton. "Why You Need to Understand the Stretch-Shortening Cycle." <http://www.stack.com/a/stretch-shortening-cycle>. 9 June 2014.

Making it Count

Two-Year College Success Stories

From the AVCA Two-Year College Coaches Committee

For many volleyball players all over the country, two-year colleges offer a perfect platform for athletes to hone their games and grow both as people and players while they prepare for the next stage of their career. Earlier this year, we asked our two-year college coaches to share some of their favorite success stories from previous seasons. Both in their own words and by listing accomplishments, these coaches shed some light on the origin stories of some of their favorite athletes – and it showcases precisely how these great competitors went on to achieve great things both on and off the court.

Jekaterina “Kate” Stepanova Missouri State University-West Plains

Kate Stepanova helped guide the 2008 Missouri State University-West Plains team to a 38-15 record, its 10th consecutive NJCAA Region 16 Championship and a seventh place finish in the NJCAA Division I National Championships. The following season, she guided the 2009 team to a 27-9 record, its 11th consecutive Region 16 championship and a second place finish at the NJCAA Division I National Volleyball Championships.

Kate earned several individual awards, including All-Tournament team honors in the 2009 national tournament and NJCAA All-American honors both seasons, as a second team honoree in 2008 and first team honoree in 2009. She also earned first team All-American honors from the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) in 2009.

Kate made her mark in the Grizzly record books as well. She is second in career attack attempts (2,584), fourth in career kills



FLORIDA STATE VOLLEYBALL

(1,127), fifth in career points earned (1,347) and career attacking percentage (.327), and seventh in career digs (999).

She graduated from Missouri State-West Plains in May 2010 with an Associate of Arts in General Studies degree and transferred to Florida State University where she helped guide her team to the 2011 Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) volleyball championship and a final four appearance in the 2011 NCAA Volleyball Championship Tournament. She was recognized as an All-American by the AVCA and *Volleyball Magazine*, in addition to all-conference honors. In addition, she competed on Florida State's inaugural beach volleyball team in spring of 2012, helping them achieve success nationally.

Kate received her degree in Social Sciences from Florida State in May 2012 and transferred to Florida International University, where she played on the beach volleyball team in 2013. She was named to the AVCA's Collegiate Beach Volleyball All-American Team in 2013 and was her team's MVP.

In December 2013, she graduated from Florida International with a Master of Science in Recreation and Sports Management. In January of 2014, she spent the spring playing professionally in Puerto Rico, then moved to a team in France for the 2014-2015 season. Kate most recently played professionally in Switzerland for the 2015-2016 season. She was inducted in the Missouri State University-West Plains Athletics Hall of Fame in September of 2016.



FLORIDA STATE VOLLEYBALL

Fatima Balza

Western Nebraska Community College

Her coach claims that she is easily one of the most talented players that she has ever played with – she was her teammate at WNCC before moving into a coaching role. Without question, she's one of the best players to ever play at WNCC, winning multiple national championships in her time there.

In 2007, her first year at WNCC, she was recognized as the Region IX Freshman of the Year and helped her team win the NJCAA National Championship. She also earned All-American Honorable Mention recognition while recording 413 kills and 210 blocks.

In 2008, her sophomore year at WNCC, she was tabbed as the Most Valuable Player for Region IX. WNCC finished in third place nationally and she garnered First Team All-American honors. Additionally, she was named the WNCC Female Athlete of the Year and selected as the Midlands Female College Athlete of the Year in the state of Nebraska by the *Omaha World Herald*. She led the team with 632 kills and notched a .466 hitting percentage. She was one of the only players in WNCC history to amass over 1,000 kills.

She soon enrolled at Penn State and competed in all 38 matches of the 2009 season. She started in 37 of those matches and finished second on the team with 171 blocks and averaged 1.47 blocks per set. That was good enough for 10th in the nation and third in the Big Ten. She recorded nine blocks in both the national semifinal against Hawai'i and again in the NCAA Championship versus Texas.

During her senior year at Penn State she played in 81 sets and started in 26 of the 31 matches played. She finished her final year with a .386 hitting percentage, a 32-5 record and an NCAA national championship.



ROCKHURST ATHLETICS

Preecy Seever

Johnson County Community College

According to her coach, Preecy Seever is the ultimate fighter. "She is what I call a freak of nature – a species of her own ...she may look like a lanky, skinny pretty girl, but that's just what you get on the outside. She moves in such an explosive manner, jumping, hitting and blocking with power. She is competitive and strives to be great."

"Preecy got pregnant at the end of her senior year in high school. She chose to have the baby and be a mom; but she did not let that stop her from pursuing her dreams of playing volleyball in college. She had a long road ahead of her to get back into shape, get back into school and transition to a new program. Now, most players have to do these things to compete at the college level, but she also had another huge priority – her son. Juggling school, volleyball and being a mom, she is truly amazing!"

Her freshman year at JCCC in 2012, she got sick with mono for the last month of the season. She learned what it was like to be a great teammate even when you can't be on the court contributing. She received honors that year even though she was out for a good portion of the season. That's indicative of just how impactful she could be on the team.

During her sophomore year, she was a captain and any opponent knew exactly who Preecy was when it came time for them to play JCCC. She helped the team finish in 3rd at the National Championship in Toledo, Ohio. Additionally, she was named as an All-Conference Player of the Year, All-District and to the All-Tournament team – not to mention tabbed as an All-American.

Preecy is not only a stud athlete, but she is an incredible person and mom. She could have gone to many schools after JCCC, but she chose to be close to her son and raise him while continuing her education and volleyball career at Rockhurst University on scholarship. She helped lead Rockhurst into the postseason and was again named as a DII All-American in both her junior and senior seasons – and she was named AVCA DII Player of the Year.

"I cannot say enough about how proud I am of Preecy Seever and the amazing person she has become! She will always be a huge factor in our program's success and we would love to have her come back to help in years to come!" ☺



WESTERN NEBRASKA COMMUNITY COLLEGE



2 SPORTS 1 STAFF

Making Beach Volleyball Work for You

Jonathan Winder – Washington (now Fresno State) beach head coach/assistant indoor

Jason Kepner – College of Charleston (indoor and beach head coach)

Patrick Hiltz – Louisiana-Monroe (former indoor and beach head coach)

There are many ways to approach adding a beach volleyball program – one of the biggest challenges is to simply get the ball rolling. During the 2017 AVCA Convention, Jason Kepner (head coach of both indoor and beach at the College of Charleston), Jonathan Winder (former beach coach at Washington, now head coach at Fresno State) and Patrick Hiltz (former head coach of indoor and beach at Louisiana-Monroe) hosted a discussion on the challenges of adding beach volleyball to an existing indoor program. For each of them, the situations were a little bit different when it came to getting their beach teams up and running. Here are some of their takeaways.

Defining success for your beach program can mean a variety of things depending on your situation. There are three important

questions to answer for your players when it comes to transitioning the indoor squad onto the sand:

Why did you start the beach program?

Why do you believe this will benefit them as players?

What are they going to get out of this experience of participating in both sports?

Jason Kepner with the College of Charleston was an early adopter of beach volleyball, and at the 2017 AVCA Convention, he sat down with some other coaches that took a similar plunge to detail some of the issues he encountered and challenges that they overcame to get the program up and running. While some schools have the luxury of bringing in all-new players, many schools kick-start their teams by utilizing the indoor rosters that they already have.

Kepner just wanted to get things going in the first season and has evolved his approach to things like scheduling, competition and roster composition on a year-to-year basis. There is no “master plan” that he sticks to – rather, he constantly evaluates the state of his program and identifies the best way to grow the program at an appropriate pace. Tweaking your operations in all phases helps keep both programs on track to maximize success.

Initially, all of his athletes played for both programs to get the ball rolling. They’d compete in the indoor season and then transition to the beach game when spring rolled around. In their current situation, they now have five beach-only kids, which allows some of the indoor players to sit out due to injuries, burnout or other situations. They’ve also added a part-time beach assistant that gives them an extra pair of hands and set of eyes. They want to ensure that they’re giving the players quality training in both sports without wearing them out and over-taxing themselves as coaches with multiple practices in a single day.

Jonathan Winder was coaching at Washington when they decided to take the leap and add a beach program. He makes no bones about the fact that they started a beach program specifically to help improve the indoor team. When they started, everyone on the indoor roster was required to play on the beach squad. In those early seasons, Washington played the minimum amount of matches (eight) – however, once the Pac-12 added the sport, everyone started to feel a little more invested in the success of the team; the move especially helped the players develop a sense of purpose and competitive spirit.

Because the team wanted to be competitive on the beach, they added some walk-ons to the roster and scheduled a few more matches to provide more experience. They were also able to add two scholarships that were designated for grad-transfers. Washington wasn’t recruiting exclusively for the beach, but if an athlete reached out to them about joining the beach team, they would have the capacity to take them on.

As they learned in that first year, there would be challenges involved in transitioning indoor-only players to the beach game. With injuries, or a general dislike for the game, the coaches had to do quite a bit of program management. The roster was comprised of some kids that were naturally competitive and wanted to strive to reach the national championships, while others saw the game as an afterthought and would do anything they could to get out of it. They were eventually able to bring in some beach-only players, which helped to ensure that the roster was filled with players that wanted to compete and have success.

As the sport continued to grow, they added a few matches each season in an effort to not only keep up with their competition, but to try and compete at a high level. Their beach training pays off when it comes to improving their indoor skills, giving them a chance to work on passing and communication.

When Patrick Hiltz arrived at Louisiana-Monroe in 2013, the school had already officially added beach volleyball, but had yet to start competing. The first thing he set out to do was get practices organized – so he began searching for an assistant that could help deliver beach instruction. The roster already had some players that were recruited for their beach abilities with the intention of starting the program once they arrived.





2 SPORTS | 1 STAFF

In that first year, Louisiana-Monroe had just two beach-only players, which meant that the roster had to be filled up with indoor kids – and sometimes, indoor kids that weren't particularly excited about being asked to play on the sand. Once they get into the swing of things, however, the players would tend to fall in love with the sport. They would continue to add a few beach-only kids up to the point where the roster would consist of about half-and-half indoor and beach athletes. The goal was always to eventually separate the two rosters entirely, allowing indoor kids the chance to play beach if they wanted, but it wouldn't be a requirement. Some players were intent on only training their indoor skills, so having more flexibility with the beach roster resulted in improved team dynamics. The addition of some beach-only kids resulted in some early success once the season began.

Managing the logistics of both programs can be a challenge, especially for a coach that's heavily involved in both sports. At Louisiana-Monroe, for example, their lack of lights necessitated that the beach practice had to be in the afternoon. Indoor practice would start immediately afterwards, so Hiltz would send an assistant over to the gym to get the indoor team started and would hustle over once the beach practice concluded.

Scholarships are also a factor that must be considered when adding a beach program – and it's a situation that can vary wildly from school to school. For Kepner, a big selling point to his athletics director was that he wouldn't have to fund additional scholarships in order to get the program started.

Kepner stresses the importance of having a defined set of goals before you take steps to fill out a beach roster. For him, this meant that everything they did as a team was geared towards competition. In the fall, every practice is set up to compete at the highest level that they can in the indoor game. When they transition to beach, everything becomes all about having success in that realm. Everything is planned and executed with a purpose: to prepare for upcoming competition. They do lots of research and pay close attention to the wear and tear on the athletes. The gentler surface of the beach means that they see a lot fewer knee injuries and cuts down on the repetitive pounding that indoor practices consist of.

When it comes to recruiting, Kepner has gotten some recruits specifically because they want to play both sports. It's crucial to keep in mind, however, the idea that "everyone plays both" has

plusses and minuses. On the other hand, keeping everything entirely separate can also create challenges. Certainly, you don't want to miss out on a recruit because you have a rigid policy about how you structure the rosters.

When it comes to finding and recruiting players, you must consider what you and your administration want to get out of each program. Did your administration just add beach to help resolve gender equity issues? Do they want to field a successful indoor team but beach is an afterthought? If you're a coach that's going to do both sports, remember that on some level you'll always be pulling away from one team to make the other successful. If you care a lot about having a winning program but your administration doesn't, it's going to be a tough situation.

Sit down with your administrators and find out what they define success as. When it comes to managing your time, budget, rosters and transitioning kids back and forth, you need to find a balance that helps achieve the level of success needed to retain your job. If your indoor team is going to take a hit for a year or two while you build up the beach program, make sure you're on the same page with the administration. If your goal is to have success in both sports right away, make sure you bring in some assistants that can be dedicated to working with the beach players. The nature of the calendar dictates that the beach kids won't get as much of your time in the fall, and the indoor kids won't get your full attention in the spring. You must have a clear vision of what you want to accomplish or you'll find yourself in choppy waters.

Remaining flexible when it comes to managing the transition from indoor to beach has helped Kepner decide how to pursue success with both teams. Growing up as someone that played both, he would allow himself two weeks to get acclimated to the sand before diving into competition. Thus, when his College of Charleston team would come back from break, they'd do about six weeks of indoor play, schedule an indoor competition, and then have a couple weeks of transition before starting their beach schedule. That worked fine in the early years, but as athletes started doing more year-round work and beach volleyball continued to grow, they found themselves getting beat handily in their first weekend of matches.

As the seasons have gone on, Kepner has moved to doing less indoor-only work in January. This season was the first that his beach assistant managed to talk him into not doing any indoor work at



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all. When they got back, it was straight to the beach starting in mid-January. Kepner believes there is some benefit to getting all the extra beach reps, but the lack of indoor work gives him pause. They are committed to monitoring their results every year and assessing the impact of their approach to training. Where do they see improvement? What do they end up sacrificing? What issues did they have to address? One of their big takeaways was that in order to come out of the gates and compete in their opening weekend, they needed a bigger transition window. Adding some beach-only kids to the roster helps them be a little more prepared earlier in the season.

Early on, Kepner would also wait a couple of weekends into the beach season to start competition in order to allow for a longer indoor training period and more transition to the beach, but now scheduling is driven largely by when you can get matches, what teams are hosting events and what you can manage budget-wise so that you need to be ready to roll right when the season starts.

To still get some indoor work, they'll have some players come in for morning workouts and do some individual training, but there aren't any full-squad indoor practices.

Kepner also noted that one of the hardest things was to go from the indoor game's level of interaction and feedback to taking a seat and shutting up on the sideline for each match.

One thing to keep in mind is whether your school is on the semester system or operates in quarters. For schools on the semester system, once you go through the season and the championship concludes, there's no opportunity to get some indoor work in. For schools on quarters, there's a window where some indoor work can be implemented before the players leave.

When Washington added a beach volleyball program, the intent was explicit: to make the indoor team better. When it came time to recruit, they were upfront about beach volleyball being a tool to improve the indoor team. If they weren't on board with that, they simply wouldn't be brought in. In their first season, they scheduled seven matches, then gradually moved to 11 (including the Pac-12 tournament) and are since up to 20+ matches. The increased scheduling has a lot to do with the fact that they now had seniors that graduated, finished their indoor careers, and could now focus entirely on beach. This allowed them to start training at an earlier date – instead of needing all the indoor kids to play, now they only had to bring along perhaps four. They can have their indoor kids going through their entire two-hour segments while the beach-only players can do full beach practices. Having a part-time assistant and a volunteer assistant for the beach team allowed the other coaches the freedom to move back and forth.

When March rolled around, Washington brought the indoor kids over to join the beach kids to give them a roster of roughly 12. After the Pac-12 tournament, those indoor-only kids would go back to the indoor-only workouts for the rest of the year.

Previously, they experimented with a system in which the players practiced on the beach Monday/Wednesday/Friday and spent Tuesday/Thursday indoors. Because they were continuing to do conditioning, it became pretty taxing. The feedback from the players wasn't entirely positive. When they shortened the beach season, the feedback improved; early on they played two- and three-week schedules and quit moving the players back and forth.

The big-picture goal was always to improve the indoor team, while the goal for the beach team was simply to be good by the end of the season. They decided to enter into each beach season with the mindset of competing really hard and devoting maximum effort to being successful on the beach – and soon they would start playing at a higher level by the time the conference tournament rolled around.

The concept was simple: get as fit as they could, become as good as they could be, and get a bunch of touches. They used the Pac-12 tournament as a way to gauge their success at the end of each year. Many times during the season, the particular opponent wasn't that important – they just went into each match to improve as a team and see what they could learn. Being in the Pacific Northwest, each weekend brought some new weather conditions or playing surface – every experience was all about preparing for the tournament. Because the season was on the shorter side, the players found it easy to have some tunnel vision and devote maximum effort into growing as beach players.

At Louisiana-Monroe, Hiltz took the measure of immediately placing his entire indoor roster on the beach squad once the semester changed over. When the players returned from break, beach was in their 20 hours, and everyone on the beach roster would be out there getting work in. Around the middle of February, they got the players together to make a decision on what the travelling roster was going to look like – the program didn't have the budget to travel with 25 players throughout the season. They'd settle on a roster of about 12, and after that, the indoor players that didn't make the travelling roster started doing their 20 hours of indoors.

Logistically, that's where things would get tricky for a coach. It can be tough to find the time to work around indoor player class schedules and beach program obligations. Because of the time crunch, indoor scrimmages usually aren't possible because the coach is either at a beach event or recruiting at a qualifier.

Like Winder, Hiltz also had a player that was dead-set on focusing strictly on her indoor game, and was initially reluctant to suit up for the beach team. By her third season, though, she was competing in his top flight and refers to herself as a beach player when she goes back to work with her former club.

In that sense, coaches need to become evangelists for the game. After all, training has been done on the sand since long before beach volleyball was an official collegiate sport. Indeed, there's no indication that training on the sand hurts your court game in any capacity. Work on selling the beach game; present it as a training program – and if they're still not excited, make sure they have an alternative workout plan for the spring that might make playing beach more appealing.

Introduce kids to the sport gradually – maybe bring your middles out to the beach on a nice day and let them get acclimated. They'll start enjoying themselves, their confidence will grow and their doubts about beach might dissipate. For example, middles might ask why they need to play beach: you're going to pass thousands of balls on the beach and you can't hide. Work with your partner and figure it out – it'll help you grow as a communicator and a player.

At College of Charleston, Kepner discovered that one of the biggest challenges was that, because of the stage of growth that the sport was at, many schools were fielding a roster of indoor kids that hadn't been recruited to a program where both indoor and beach

participation was expected. Once you start to turn the corner, however, another problem presents itself: telling kids that want to play beach that they need to stick with indoor because of roster size.

The good thing about beach athletes is that they're typically self-motivated. The pseudo-individual nature of the sport means that if players are going to be very dependent on you for guidance and motivation, training is going to be more of a challenge. Having on-campus courts helps in terms of getting them to work out on a regular basis.

Winder stresses the importance of clearly defining what the beach experience is going to be like at a particular school. Be upfront about the fact that beach is going to involve a lot of independent work. At Washington, for example, it's going to be chilly and rainy at times. Be straightforward about what the players should expect coming into your program.

Above all else, communication is the key to navigating the challenges of coaching two sports. Keep in touch with your administration and know what they're expecting from you in both programs. More importantly, be aware of which one is going to get you fired. Once those guidelines are established, break it down amongst your staff and make clear who is going to be responsible for which responsibilities. Communicate your expectations to the athletes. Let them know who needs to be on the beach and how often. Have clarity of purpose.

Most importantly, make your players and staff understand why you started a beach program and why they'll be better off because of it. ☺



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MAGIC NUMBERS

Building Your Program Using National Standards

With Mark Hulse, Head Coach – Loyola; Dan Friend, Head Coach – Lewis; Matt McCarthy, Associate Head Coach – Lewis; Dan Ames, 2017 DIII Men's Coach of the Year

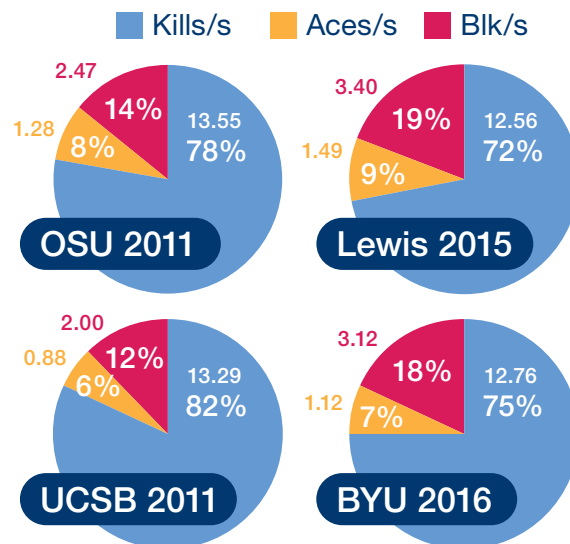
THE STAT SHEET RARELY TELLS THE WHOLE STORY of a match or season – but there's plenty of value in studying the numbers when it comes to putting the performance of a team into greater context. For a group of men's volleyball coaches, the benefits of digging into the data became apparent when they got together to answer a relatively simple question: What's the best way to score points?

What began as a mission with a singular focus quickly grew into something a bit more broad: By looking at the teams that reached the final four (in both men's and women's volleyball) since 2011, is it possible to determine precisely in which areas a team needs to excel in order to compete for a championship?

What they discovered is that you can almost always find a set of standards in a given season that the teams that are left at the end have in common. If you know what you need to be good at, you can begin to tailor your practices to emphasize those skills and maximize your time with the athletes. One you reach the final four, all bets are off – the challenge is to make it to that stage in the first place.

In analyzing the data, it becomes apparent that the magic number of points-per-set is 17, and the key to winning is figuring out how you're going to get to that standard. Allowing that the opponent is going to give you 7-8 points in errors, etc., what can you learn about your team to best reach that mark? Are you going to be an exceptional blocking team? Do you have a stronger attack? UC-Irvine in 2012 and Loyola in 2014 racked up more kills, hitting that 17-point threshold by swinging aggressively. In 2015, Lewis scored a bigger chunk of their points by having strong blockers – something like that can become a focal point depending on your personnel and training. Being able to find a particular strength can be the difference in reaching the final four and winning a championship, provided the other areas of your game are sound.

Path to 17-point Distributions

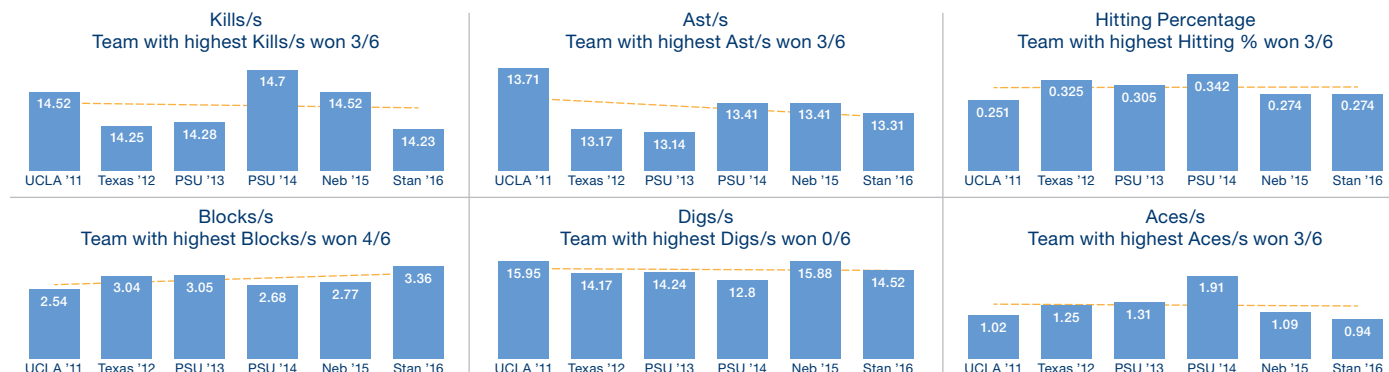


What the numbers revealed was an affirmation that there are different ways to win a title – the tricky part is figuring out what your particular team is going to have the best chance to succeed at and best utilizing the pieces you have on the roster.

Blocks, as it turns out, are a pretty strong indicator of post-season success. Being excellent at digging, however, doesn't necessarily reveal itself as a trait of championship teams.

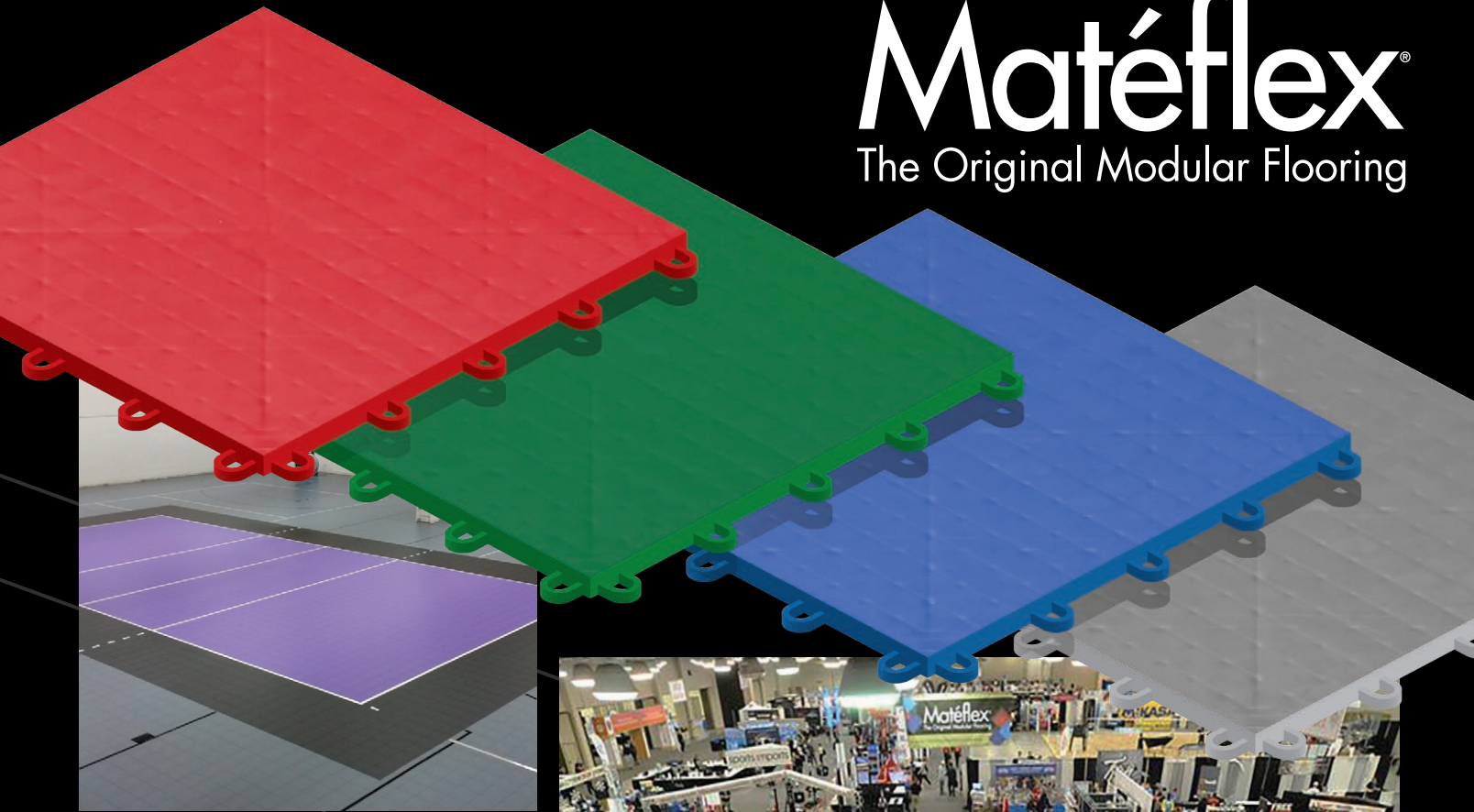
Why is this? Perhaps it's because the teams that are recording higher digs-per-set are likely teams that are letting opponents hit the ball at them too much. Take a look at how blocks and digs stacked up across the DI women's championships.

Women's Championship Trends



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When you take a look at teams that did eventually win the championship, certain trends become apparent. On the women's side, kills-per-set is trending down recently, and assists-per-set are trending down correspondingly. Aces-per-set, though, are up for the past couple of champions. Given that teams are scoring more aces, the kill numbers are going to go down a little. Notice how many times the team that won was the best in a particular category. On the men's side, the team with the most kills-per-set won the tournament three out of seven times. The teams with the best digging percentage have not yet won the tournament in either the men's or women's game. For the men, the best blocking team has only won once, while the women's champion has been the best blocking team four times. All-in-all, aces ends up being a great indicator of predicting a championship team. The best-serving men's team in the tournament has won the title five out of seven years.

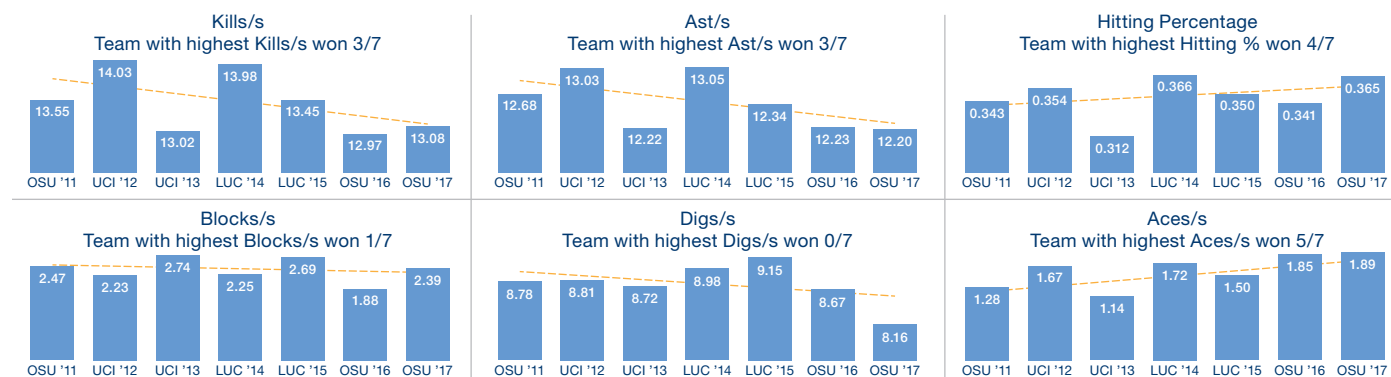
Not everyone has the means and time to sort through stats for

hours on end, but just putting your program into larger perspective can work wonders. If you're a coach that's suddenly mired in a losing streak and you can't figure out what's going wrong, take a step back and look at the national standards. Where are those areas in which you can squeeze a few extra points out?

Dan Ames, the former coach at Dominican University, was looking at quite the uphill climb for his first-year program in 2014. By looking at the numbers that Dominican posted for the next four years and comparing them to the DIII final four teams, you can see the statistical growth of the program at work, reflecting how he and his staff focused on particular areas – hard work that culminated in a 26-2 record and a 2017 AVCA DIII Men's Coach of the Year award.

You can see the change in top teams from year to year. For example, look at Springfield, New Paltz and Stevenson. Springfield had a year in which they were the top team in digs-per-set and another year where they excelled in blocks-per-set – they showcase

Men's Championship Trends



Men's DIII Final Four Comparisons

Final Four		Team	Games	Attack					Set		Serve		
Year	Team	Rank	sp	k	k/s	e	ta	pct	a	a/s	sa	se	sa/s
2014	Springfield	1	103	1314	12.76	446	2573	0.337	1239	12.03	198	404	1.92
2014	Juniata	2	123	1502	12.21	546	3149	0.304	1397	11.36	188	453	1.53
2014	Carthage	3	108	1392	12.90	540	3043	0.280	1305	12.1	159	382	1.50
2014	SUNY New Paltz	4	123	1640	13.3	584	3305	0.32	1518	12.30	232	554	1.90
2014	Dominican	DNQ	98	1138	11.61	488	2895	0.225	1078	11	95	230	0.97
2015	Stevens Institute	1	119	1532	12.9	494	3246	0.320	1403	11.8	188	372	1.60
2015	Springfield	2	112	1398	12.48	470	2823	0.329	1322	11.8	200	450	1.79
2015	SUNY New Paltz	3	122	1616	13.20	564	3266	0.322	1508	12.4	217	589	1.80
2015	Nazareth	4	132	1620	12.3	551	3372	0.317	1497	11.30	175	561	1.30
2015	Dominican	DNQ	99	1222	12.34	474	2889	0.259	1139	11.51	107	292	1.08
2016	SUNY New Paltz	1	123	1647	13.4	488	3123	0.371	1517	12.3	265	595	2.20
2016	Springfield	2	116	1504	12.97	445	2771	0.382	1409	12.15	217	470	1.87
2016	Stevens Institute	3	132	1588	12.00	540	3495	0.3	1480	11.2	230	403	1.70
2016	Stevenson	4	122	1538	12.6	537	3322	0.301	1440	11.80	171	400	1.40
2016	Dominican	DNQ	95	1143	12.03	475	2737	0.244	1070	11.26	107	307	1.13
2017	Springfield	1	104	1322	12.71	319	2424	0.414	1244	11.96	250	528	2.40
2017	SUNY New Paltz	2	130	1663	12.8	710	3434	0.278	1560	12.00	272	652	2.10
2017	Wentworth	3	125	1512	12.1	518	3246	0.306	1397	11.18	236	440	1.89
2017	Stevens Institute	4	130	1587	12.20	573	3342	0.303	1480	11.40	176	396	1.40
2017	Dominican	5	96	1277	13.3	434	2696	0.313	1165	12.1	129	349	1.30
Final 4 Teams		Avg	120	1523	12.68	520	3121	0.324	1420	11.82	211	478	1.77
Final 4 Teams		Max	132	1663	13.4	710	3495	0.414	1560	12.4	272	652	2.40
Final 4 Teams		Med	120.5	1508	12.655	506	3136	0.310	1400	11.8	193	422	1.65
Final 4 Teams		Min	95	1138	11.61	319	2424	0.225	1070	11	95	230	0.97
National Champs		Avg	112	1454	12.94	437	2842	0.361	1351	12.02	225	475	2.03

an ability to consistently perform up to high standards and adapt their strategies depending on the personnel in a given season.

For example, look at how they performed in 2017. Their efficiency was excellent; they hit .414 as a team. You simply don't see that very often. That's a team that you aren't going to serve and try to get out-of-system too often.

One thing that came to Ames, as he scanned the numbers, was the general idea that if you can get a team out-of-system, you're more likely to score some free points. Rallies play a more significant role in the DIII game. Using Dominican as an example, look at service aces-per-set. That first year, everyone on the roster was a freshman (17 of them). They weren't allowed to jump-serve, they weren't asked to do anything more advanced than simply keep the ball in-bounds. Looking at the men's championship trends, aces-per-set is a strong indicator that a team has championship potential. When Ames started out, he didn't necessarily pay too much attention to the serving ability of players he recruited, as long as they could get it in-bounds. As he started to emphasize the importance of knocking a team out-of-system, though, serving skills became a larger point of emphasis.

When you look over to blocks-per-set, they managed 2.47. That same group of freshmen was blocking well enough to rank fourth nationally. Correspondingly, they were also high in digs-per-set. The philosophy for those first two years as a program was essentially to get the ball in-bounds and trust that the defense can create some points. Once the defense was established, the numbers began to improve offensively each year. In DIII, Dan suggests, the top four or five programs are going to put up numbers that rival DI-II schools – strong in service aces-per-set, high kill efficiency rates, lots of blocks-per-set, and probably not too high in digs-per-set. As you move down the rankings, those

numbers start to even out, the hitting efficiency numbers come down.

What Ames set out to do was identify the things his team was going to be strong at. If you and your staff have the time to sit down and crunch the numbers, the stats will show you exactly where your strengths are and what you need to work on. At Dominican, they knew they were going to be a strong blocking team from the first season – even freshmen can manage blocks if you put them in the right spot. When it comes to attacking, there are more pieces that need to work together, and if all those components aren't clicking, you'll have low numbers.

In Dominican's fourth year, they qualified for the NCAA Tournament. Numbers-wise, they were able to compete right up there with the top teams.

Hitting that top tier largely comes back to scoring, specifically, trying to hit that magic number of 17. In the DI-II game, and similarly in the DIII game, teams tend to give up around 8 points-per-set in errors, whether it be service errors or attacking or something else. You can see where Dominican went from scoring around 15 points for the first few seasons before jumping up in that qualifying year to just over 17. They found ways to make up that last bit of ground and bump their play up to a new tier.

The overall improvement in the program was no accident – Ames made a deliberate effort to focus in on traits of his team that would help them take steps towards competing with top-tier programs. Though it may seem daunting, putting statistics to use can help create a roadmap that can be used to plan practices, work on individual training and shape in-game tactics. Improvement doesn't come overnight, but doing your homework and putting players in a position to succeed is the first step towards winning at the highest levels. ☺

Dan Ames coached at Dominican through 2017, and under new Dominican Head Coach **Dan Pawlikowski**, the program's upwards trajectory has continued – reaching the 2018 Final Four and winning the NACC.

Pass	Dig		Block					Set	Scoring		Errors		
re	dig	dig/s	bs	ba	total	blk/s	be	bhe	pts	pts/s	te	e/s	p/m
88	895	8.69	47	424	285.0	2.76	56	14	1771.0	17.2	1008	9.79	32.52
120	1078	8.76	84	525	372.0	3.02	57	42	2036.5	16.6	1218	9.90	39.29
75	1084	10	52	368	236.0	2.2	38	22	1787.0	16.55	1057	9.79	34.10
104	1024	8.30	77	365	259.5	2.10	37	25	2131.5	17.33	1304	10.60	42.06
115	979	9.99	48	388.00	242	2.47	47	23	1475.0	15.05	903	9.21	29.13
77	1212	10.2	47	474	284.0	2.4	31	24	2004.0	16.84	998	8.39	32.19
111	956	8.54	56	427	270.0	2.41	50	12	1867.5	16.7	1093	9.76	35.26
135	1064	8.7	62	304	214.0	1.8	33	31	2047.0	16.78	1352	11.08	43.61
134	1082	8.20	49	523	310.5	2.40	33	28	2105.5	15.95	1307	9.90	42.16
107	967	9.77	49	333	215.5	2.18	30	18	1544.5	15.6	921	9.30	29.71
139	969	7.9	98	272	234.0	1.90	75	13	2146.0	17.45	1310	10.65	42.26
117	892	7.69	63	454	290.0	2.5	70	19	2011.0	17.30	1121	9.66	36.16
126	1230	9.30	74	471	309.0	2.3	48	37	2127.5	16.12	1154	8.74	37.23
113	1068	8.8	83	436	301.0	2.5	81	22	2010.0	16.50	1153	9.45	37.19
79	898	9.45	47	299	196.5	2.07	58	18	1446.5	15.23	937	9.86	30.23
71	856	8.23	53	333	220	2.11	44	23	1791.5	17.20	985	9.47	31.77
145	1010	7.8	66	306	219	1.7	39	23	2154.0	16.57	1569	12.07	50.61
142	1145	9.16	82	390	277	2.22	62	20	2025.0	16.20	1182	9.46	38.13
113	1131	8.7	71	472	307	2.4	84	19	2070.0	15.92	1185	9.12	38.23
73	917	9.6	58	369	242.5	2.5	25	19	1648.5	17.17	900	9.38	29.03
113	1044	8.69	67	409	274	2.30	52	23	2005.3	16.70	1187	9.86	38.30
145	1230	10.2	98	525	372.0	3.02	84	42	2154.0	17.45	1569	12.07	50.61
113	1017	8.73	60	389	264.8	2.35	47.5	22	2010.5	16.585	1137	9.71	36.68
71	856	7.69	47	272	196.5	1.7	25	12	1446.5	15.05	900	8.39	29.03
94	983	8.76	61	376	256	2.29	52	19	1928	17.17	1075	9.57	34.69

Men's Volleyball Becomes 26th NAIA Championship Sport

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) has announced that men's volleyball will become the association's 26th national championship sport, effective for the 2018-19 season. The National Administrative Council (NAC), a membership group comprised of NAIA athletic administrators, unanimously approved the motion.

"The combination of an exciting sport, an attractive college-bound demographic and an affordable facilities-friendly model has driven growth in men's volleyball across the country," said Kathy DeBoer, executive director of the American Volleyball Coaches Association. "I applaud the NAIA for offering these young men a championship experience as soon as 2019."

In order to gain national championship status, a sport must be sponsored by a minimum of 40 varsity institutions, completed at least two national invitational competitions and get approved by the NAC. There are 40 institutions that have declared their intent to participate in men's volleyball in 2018-19.

"It is exciting to see the growth of not only this sport but also the association with the addition of men's volleyball as a National Championship in the year to come," said Jim Carr, President and CEO of the NAIA.

"It's very exciting that men's volleyball will be a championship sport next season," said Missouri Baptist Head Coach John Yehling. "When I became head coach at MBU in 2002, it was an emerging sport and to see the growth of the sport since then has been outstanding."



Announcement of the addition of men's volleyball at Midway University

"For our association to hit this milestone is historical," said Grand View Head Coach Donan Cruz. "It is a testament to the institutions that were pioneers in our league that set the foundation to build on and much credit to new programs over the last decade that surged the growth to advance our sport to championship status."

The last sport to earn championship status was competitive cheer and competitive dance in 2016-17. Prior to that, it had been 22 years since the NAIA added a championship sport.

In the span of just one week in late 2017, three NAIA universities – Life University, Cumberland University and Midway University – all with start-up grant support from MotorMVB Foundation, announced

they would add men's volleyball starting in the 2018-2019 school year.

The total of the three grants from MotorMVB is \$45,000 over a two-year period.

The MotorMVB Foundation (www.motormvb.com) is a non-profit organization, founded by U.S. Men's National Team Coach John Speraw, with a mission 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.

To learn more, visit www.motormvb.com.

From the NAIA and Motor Men's VB





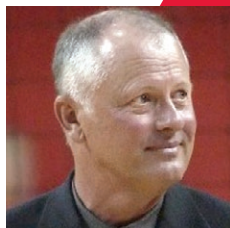
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WRITER'S DESK

Choosing to be Uncomfortable in Coaching

Terry Pettit

IT'S PRESIDENT'S DAY and I am sitting in a purple coffee shop on 4th Avenue in Tucson, Arizona. The password for the internet is *buysomething*. I did. I am enjoying a cinnamon bagel with cream cheese, a mocha and an occasional licorice scottie to celebrate my last regular column for *Coaching Volleyball*.

You are not here. And why should you be? There are junior tournaments in St. Louis, Omaha, Detroit, everywhere really, where you are either coaching, parenting or recruiting. Not so long ago I was there too as a coach for our daughter's 17 open team. That was seven years ago.

The other night I reviewed the final scores of every match that I coached at Nebraska, and there was not a year that I couldn't identify at least a few matches that I could have made better decisions. Even though I have not coached a college match in nearly two decades, I think I understand the game better now than when I was coaching. And you do too. And it brings me to this point which I have made repeatedly in columns and books:

Experience is only valuable with reflection.

If you are like me, you may find it difficult to watch the last match each season, particularly if your team did not perform well. But if you can watch the match with a certain detachment, you are likely to see that it didn't play out quite like you thought it did.

There are some players you thought were disasters but the video shows they played better than you thought. You may notice that your team's base position wasn't effective against transition. You may see that you lost the match much earlier when your schedule didn't include someone with the athleticism of your final opponent. If you are really lucky, you may begin to see that there is a pattern that appears in several of the season-ending matches that you've coached. This is where courage comes in. Unlike your players, you are not likely to have someone pushing you to adjust.



When I work a head coach, the first question I ask is, "How do you keep yourself from reaching your goals?" It is a deceptively simple question that does not allow for excuses. If I phrased the question, "What keeps you from reaching your goals?," it would be easy to deflect responsibility by saying the following:

- I don't get enough support from my athletic administration.
- I can't get a tough opponent to play outside our conference in November.
- Millennials don't want to separate themselves from the group. No one wants to take charge.
- The better athletes all want to leave this state.
- My middle attacker refuses to communicate with my setter.
- My Athletic Director is only interested in women's basketball.
- Our academics are so high we can't get the better players in school.

There may be some truth in any of these observations just as there is some truth in angina. But the truth doesn't lie in symptoms, it lives in the heart. And the heart of a great coach is his or her ability to adjust after recognizing patterns in their own behaviors and decisions that keep a program from moving forward.

Every coach needs a dark night of the soul where they are willing to ask themselves and others who care about them, why they are not getting better. The coaches that need it the most are the coaches who have experienced success and have enshrined a system, a way of relating to players, their use of data or their philosophy of recruiting. Because something worked in the past, they cannot bring themselves to change.

During the Olympics, I watched as downhill skier Lindsey Vonn was interviewed after her second practice run. She was watching her closest competitor come down the hill as she spoke. When the announcer asked her what she would do on tomorrow's practice run she answered, "I noticed that Sofia Goggia took different lines

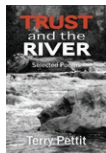


PHOTOS: NEBRASKA VOLLEYBALL

than I did on the middle section of the hill. I will try those lines tomorrow and see if they work better.”

Lyndsey Vonn was two days from her final Olympic downhill competition. She has won four World Cups, an Olympic gold medal and was the number one rated women’s downhill skier in the world, and yet she was watching her competition to see if she could learn something from them and perhaps make an adjustment.

The coaches who aren’t stuck when they are in the second half of their careers are the coaches who have chosen to be uncomfortable. They continue to learn. They continue to explore new ways of training, preparing and relating to players. They coach as if they are on a balance board, a tight rope or downhill skis. They keep their eyes on the target but with each breath they are making adjustments and looking for different lines to get better.



Terry Pettit, author of “Trust and the River”
at www.terrypettit.com

Editor’s Note – The AVCA is so fortunate to have had Terry as a regular voice in our magazine throughout the years, and we are incredibly grateful for his time and wisdom. We wish Terry the best, and we hope to continue to offer him an outlet for his insight when so inclined. I hope you’ve enjoyed his contributions as much as we have.

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Fill the Gaps: Creativity on Social Media

David Portney

“SHE’S GOT GAPS, I got gaps. Together, we fill gaps,” Rocky Balboa said in the first “Rocky” film when talking about his girlfriend, Adrian. I’ve long utilized that quote not for my personal relationships, but to analyze what we all need to do to increase the exposure of what we’re doing in the media: fill gaps.

As an Olympic sport, the recognition we get in volleyball is full of cyclical bursts of extreme attention, hype and big crowds soon followed by the “oh, volleyball” eye roll we’ve all seen one too many times. What this means is that we can never be too settled in our ways. We must be constantly analyzing the media landscape, finding the gaps, then filling them.

There is no question the progress that’s been made in national, regional and local markets has been tremendous. A lot of that is the result of the hard work by you and your staffs. I recall a time when just starting your program’s own volleyball-specific social media accounts was something to celebrate. While it still is to some degree (and it’s not

too late if you haven’t yet), we now must focus on growing our reach on these platforms.

The million-dollar question is, of course, how do we do that? The truth is it’s not one-size-fits-all, but a general thread weaving through it is to do something no one else is doing. Look at the football, basketball and volleyball competitors, and most importantly our own coverage, and figure out a way to stand out. What are they and we NOT doing that you’d think would be pretty cool?

For example, one thing we’re all getting good at is keeping our fans updated on scores, stats, recaps, etc. While there’s no doubt it’s important to do so, it leaves a lot to be desired. Since I’ve spent a couple of years in minor league baseball and remain close to a few people in that industry, I like to pick their brains. Volleyball and minor league baseball have a lot in common in that the “business” is booming and media coverage isn’t all that mainstream. Like us, they must be their own media. Many teams in the minors utilize the “80/20 rule” when

it comes to social media. That means 80% of their social media posts are NOT about what’s happening in between the white lines, while the other 20% is.

Instead of constant in-set updates, maybe take the foot off the gas a little since there’s a chance your followers may not want their timelines flooded with 30–50 tweets in a two-hour window. Obviously, there are exceptions, and some programs have followings that require regular updates of what’s happening on the court, but I would assume the majority do not.

Instead, fill the gaps. While a stat update with an image of a player could be cool, perhaps post that same image with a creative or funny caption instead. Also, don’t be afraid to give behind-the-scenes looks that showcase your teams’ personalities. I know this seems counter-intuitive, and as I type this I can already hear the feedback: “You want us promoting less volleyball!?” My answer to that is no – I want us to grow the base. The fans that live and die with every point are reliable and will continue to be there; now we need to go after the more casual sports fan. Considering how people consume social media content in 2018, it is our responsibility to adapt to this ever-changing landscape.

Change is hard. I get it and struggle as well. However, you’re constantly tinkering with how you teach, instruct and mentor your players, and I don’t see this as much different. As a sport that is growing, but still a long way away from the mainstream, it’s on us to serve the social community with what they’re looking for. They want fun and creative looks at what makes your volleyball team special with score updates and box scores mixed in. The beauty is you don’t need a 30-win season to acquire that. You just need a smart phone, the desire to grow your fan base from your players’ parents to the general community, and the ability to fill the right gaps. If Rocky and Adrian can see it, then so can we!



STANFORD



GETTING FIT

Stronger – Together

Ken Kontor

THE AVCA and **Performance Conditioning Volleyball** have teamed up for a joint educational effort that advances the physical development of the volleyball player at the AVCA Spring Conference.

At this particular Spring Conference, the AVCA has put together five workshops devoted exclusively to volleyball strength and conditioning. Topics and presenters include:

Training Jumpers - Tim Pelot, United States Olympic Committee Senior Sports Physiologist

Injury Prevention: Keeping Them in the Gym - Matt DeLancey, Strength & Conditioning Coach - University of Florida Volleyball

How We Track Performance in the USA Volleyball Gym - Jimmy Stitz, USA Volleyball Women's Sport Physiologist

Integrating Volleyball Injury Data into Performance Training

Decisions - Kyle Norris, MS, LAT, ATC, VPI Biomechanics & Sports Science Consultant AVCA

No Numbers? No Clue! - Giuseppe Vinci, VolleyMetrics Founder

This is such a great lineup of leading experts. These presentations will address a wide variety of topics, much of it based on the experience of elite volleyball play at the highest levels, and much of this information can be used to create a solid foundation of understanding the conditioning process specific to volleyball, and the different considerations that must be taken into account when establishing an effective strength and conditioning program. The question now becomes, how can you use that information based on the resources you have and the conditioning environment you are in? Every situation is unique. This is why Performance Conditioning Volleyball has developed the "Fit-to-a-T" 7-T System of Program Design. Now you can take that and apply it to your specific situation.



BYU MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Enhanced Learning - The Extra Step

The AVCA and Performance Conditioning Volleyball have taken special steps to make your attendance a truly unique learning experience and to help take your strength and conditioning program to the next level.

Here's How (from the AVCA)

For a volleyball team to succeed, many people need to be good at their jobs, yet we offer few professional development opportunities for performance tracking. This conference will address that component of volleyball by engaging experts in strength and conditioning to work in small groups with you. The best part is, if the volleyball coach attends for the training technique track, the strength coach comes for free! We call it seamless integration. This seamless integration is achieved through planning and communication between the volleyball skills coach (head coach), the volleyball strength and conditioning coach, and by the inter-education of each coach. The goal is a better performing, injury-free volleyball athlete and a path to winning championships. Seamless integration is a regular feature in **Performance Conditioning Volleyball**.

Here's How (from Performance Conditioning Volleyball)

Each AVCA Spring Conference attendee

will receive free a three-month subscription to the Performance Conditioning Volleyball "Fit-to-a-T" 7-T System of Program Design Library, a \$49.00 retail value. You'll have access to the world's largest volleyball-specific strength and conditioning library backed by 23 years of information. You'll begin with the **Starter Library** that introduces you to the 7-T System. Authors include: Arlo Gaggestein, John Cook, Vern Gambetta, Art Garcia, Julie Kaiser, Bill Neville, Robert L. Brown, Ali Wood-Lamberson, Danalee Corso, Anna Collier, John Speraw, Miloslav Ejem, John Kessel and many more.

Then you'll get the Library Index, organizing the over 250 articles from over 100 authors indexed in two ways, by the 7 T's of program design and by the four pillars of volleyball conditioning: speed, movement, power and recovery/endurance. Plus we introduce you to a "Way of Thinking" in designing your program by organizing an annual calendar that fits your needs to a T. Plus, the Library is updated each week with a new article. By August you should be ready to take your team to the next level of conditioning – with you and your strength coach working together seamlessly.

Take advantage of this unique opportunity and sign up today! My thanks to the AVCA for making this happen.

For more information, go to avca.org/events/spring-conference.html.

Blocking, Digging and Scheming

What the Men's and Women's Games are Stealing from Each Other

By Krista Rice & Nick MacRae

Part 2 - Defense

From blocking, digging and team defensive schemes, as our game changes we see more similarities between the men's and women's games. In contrast to how we discussed offense in part one of this two-part article, part two will discuss what each game has stolen from the other throughout the evolution of defense. Some major differences that still exist include the use of the triple block in the men's game, and the opportunities for defensive contacts in the women's game. An additional factor is the height at which men and women play above the net. As the physicality of athletes increases, considerations for defensive systems are evolving.

One element women's programs have implemented from the men's game is the use of the swing block. For athletes with good body control and mechanics, the dynamic move

improves the quality and size of blocks, in turn eliminating more space at the net and channeling the ball to back court defenders. An adjustment made to increase efficiency of the move is to implement a modified swing block, where the player opens to the hitter rather than to the sideline, which reduces drifting and poor spacing on the net. Additionally, keeping arms bent rather than extended assists with speeding up the press to seal the net sooner. This adjustment allows for more control while maintaining the athleticism of the move.

While the triple block is widely utilized within the men's game, the use of scheme blocking is common for many women's teams. Considerations for which scheme to utilize comes down to your team's physicality and ability to eye sequence, in addition to the offensive strengths of the opponent. A spread blocking scheme can be implemented versus opponents with fast tempo sets to the pins, or when the offense is simple. The bunch blocking scheme is effective

against teams with complex offenses or who run numerous quick sets. An overload blocking scheme is best utilized against a 5-1 offense with two hitters, or if there is weak attacker in three hitter rotations.

Once a scheme is decided on, it is necessary to decide what we are doing with individual blockers and what the defense is doing behind the block. Start with the middle, then work to the pins. Questions to ask include: is our middle reading, are we fronting the opponent quick attacker, or are we committing? Are we staying neutral and using a pin blocker to help if the quick attacker gets set? After blocking decisions are made you, must identify off blocker and back court defense responsibilities. Does the off blocker have tip responsibility with three defenders responsible for hard driven shots? Does the off blocker come back towards the 10-foot line to play defense, with two back row defenders in the angle while the line defender has all tip responsibility? With numerous styles and systems to work with, it is important to have a plan that best works for your program and athletes.

In the men's game, there is more of an emphasis on first ball side-out distribution, because the rallies aren't as extended as we see in the women's game. Due to a difference in the rate at which the ball is terminated in the women's game, the tendency is that there are more attacks in transition. With more balls attacked and increased number of defensive contacts, the women's game should look at dig grades (just like we look at the passing grade scale on FBSO) paired with setter transition distribution.

Although there are differences that present themselves between the men's and women's games, coaches on both sides can learn from each other. As coaches, the openness to experiment with new strategies and techniques defensively can expand not only the skill set of our student-athletes, but also the intelligence.



Nick MacRae
Long Beach State



Kris Berzins
Loyola (Men)



Brad Keller
UCLA




Sarah Rauen
North Dakota St.



Krista Rice
Central Michigan



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