

St. Alexander's Newsletter for Volleyball Coaches

NETWORKING

Winter 2009

BE A STUDENT OF THE GAME

Like a subject in school that you may not have understood, sometimes volleyball requires you to do some homework. There are many changes to the game and this has even caused seasoned veterans to go back to the drawing board and study.

There are numerous sources to look at in your quest to become a more knowledgeable coach. The first is to find a high school or college coach in your area and pick their brains. You can learn a lot by just discussing and asking questions. Throw in a good cup of coffee and the evening could be very interesting.

Another resource to consider is to attend a game or watch one on television. Observe the constant movement, court communication and substitution patterns. Look for strategy hints and the execution of set plays. Although your players may not be as skilled, think of how you can develop their talents to play on a competitive level in the future.

There are many books and video's on how to teach volleyball. Many websites offer coaching materials that you can purchase online or go to the sport section of your local bookstore.

The most informative and current resources are found on volleyball websites. There are many sites that provide insight, materials, player and coaching strategies.

One of the best places to look is college websites. Coaches are always looking to be more visible in an effort to market their school programs. You will see statistics, practice drills, conditioning ideas and other very helpful information.

Check out these helpful websites:

<http://volleyball.about.com>

<http://www.volleyball.com>

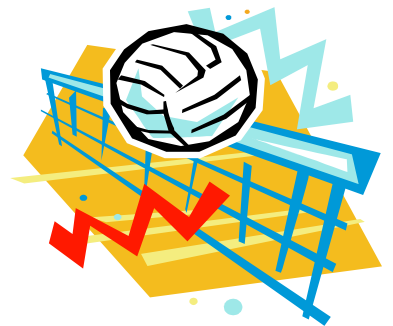
<http://vodpod.com/tag/volleyball>

<http://sportsvl.com/volleyball/links>

<http://www.avca.org/>

[Volleyball 101.com](http://www.volleyball101.com)

Volleyball '09



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR
Coaches!**

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KEEP PRACTICES INTERESTING!

Like the cold weather, the middle of the volleyball season can seem pretty long and tedious. This is especially true if your team is not playing well. Winning is very motivating but losing can stifle even the most enthusiastic player. There are some things that you can do to spruce up practice and add some zest in your team.

Incorporating some type of **competition** into your drills makes them more exciting. You can play something like “first group to a certain number wins.” Three on three with quick scoring and a short court is also fun. You don’t have to reward the winners with anything tangible, just acknowledging that they came in first will typically suffice. Establish some competitive rules and have your players battle it out.

Timing players while they perform a skill is very motivating. For example: “How many serves can they get over in a set amount of time” or “How fast can you run to the net?”

Relay races are a great source of fun. Have your girls in small groups and let them run, hop, skip, do some skills and tag the next person. Players love to slide on their knee pads so when they get back to the group, have them slide into the finish line. This will also help to avoid collisions.

Obstacle courses are a lot of fun. Set-up some cones, a hoola-hoop, scooters, something to jump over, and mark a beginning and ending spot. You can have them pass or set somewhere in the mix. Don’t get too complicated but really challenge them. Obstacles courses are great for building stamina. You can also add push-ups or pull-ups to increase strength.

The last thing that you can do, and you don’t need a gym, is play a “**game show.**” Ask questions about positions, skills, coverage, rules or form. Keep points for each right answer. If you can’t get your gym, this is a good way to keep your team together and interested.



WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A WINNER

With volleyball becoming more and more competitive, many of you may be chewing your nails trying to decide what the best game plan should be. One key question that surfaces in every coaches mind revolves around the issue of who should get into the game? How much do you use your bench?

The answer is always debatable but there are several factors to consider. How competitive do you want your team to be? If winning is the ultimate goal, than only your best players should hit the court.

This may cause some heartache with both the children and the parents, but it is your team and your philosophy. You shouldn’t feel guilty, especially if you are fair and consistent. Is it more traumatic for a player to sit out and cheer for her team or be humiliated when ten straight balls are served at her in front of a large crowd?

The other mode of thinking is to just play everyone, especially in the lower grade levels. If your team is pretty even in terms of skills, what could it hurt to give everyone some court experience?

A compromise may be to find “role playing” opportunities that get children into the game in positions that highlight their strengths. One may be a good server or another may be a great passer. If you utilize a player for a specific skill, it creates a “win-win situation for the individual and for the team. They get on the court to perform something they are good at, and the team benefits from the contribution.

Keep in mind that your starting line-up may not always be your most talented players. Finding the right combination of starters is so important. What is the point of playing six great athletes who lack the **chemistry** needed to successfully gel on the court? You may have a scrapper in the bunch who dives for every ball and brings your team’s spirit up. Her skills may not be as good as the others, but she may make your team play much better.

Don’t underestimate the power of chemistry. Communication, movement and teamwork are just as important as basic skills. Explore, experiment and be creative in your approach to the starting line-up.

KEY TIPS FOR CORRECTING BASIC SKILLS

SERVING:

- Step with the opposite foot
- Toss the ball out in front of the body (overhand)
- Follow-through and point to the target
- Use a place in the serving area that increasing probability that the ball will be in-bounds

PASSING:

- Wide body base
- Square shoulders to target
- Thumbs together, wrists down, elbows locked
- Absorb the impact of the ball and guide it to the target

SETTING:

- Feet to the ball early
- Use legs for power
- Hands over the forehead with index finger and

thumb almost touching

HITTING:

- Wait a split second to see the set (lower levels)
- Approach from the ten foot line
- Use arms for jumping momentum
- Snap wrist on contact



DEFENSE:

- Stay low on the court
- Watch opponents body to gauge direction
- Maximize pursuit and movement
- Heels don't rest on the floor until the ball is dead

COMMUNICATION:

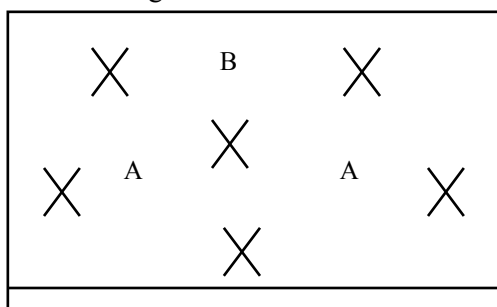
- Players talk with each ball contact!
- Make sure your players know the key court words such as "touch" or "mine"

Advanced Serving

LOOK FOR THE COURT WEAKNESS

Once your players can serve with some degree of consistency, it is time to take them to the next level. Target serving means exploiting a weak spot on the opponents court and aiming the ball right at it. This involves checking out the receiving teams defensive positioning before making contact on the serve.

From elementary to college, there are certain parts of a volleyball court that are more vulnerable than others. Check out the following half court:



net

A= **The alleys** between players. This is always a good spot to serve to because the other team will have to move and communicate to get the ball.

B= **The blind spot**. No matter what grade level, this is often the best spot to serve to. Look at the diagram and you will see that it requires three players to make a decision. Often the player in the middle will not get out of the way in time and the ball will drop untouched. The trick is to keep the ball deep, but not out of bounds.

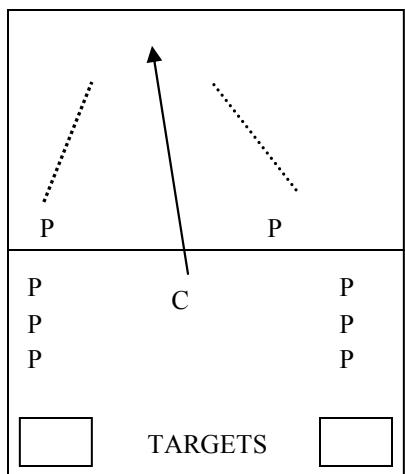
C= **The setter**. (Not pictured) If you are playing a team who is using a setter coming in from the back row, serve at the setter. Her movement often disrupts others and the person hiding the setter will have to awkwardly get around her to get the ball.

Put cones on the opposite court to mark the weak areas and have your players work on target serving.

DRILL IDEAS!



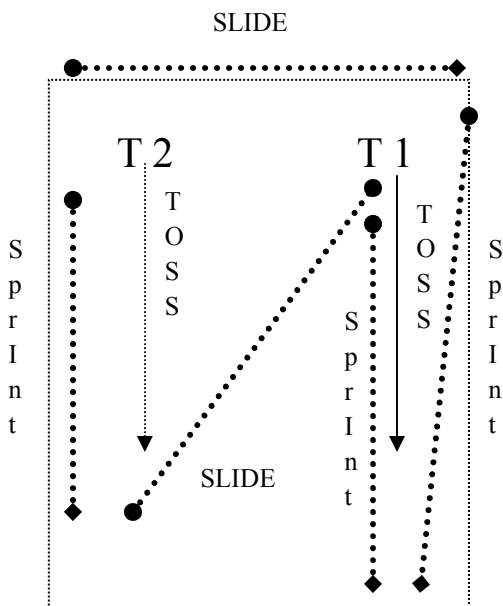
SAVE THE BALL!



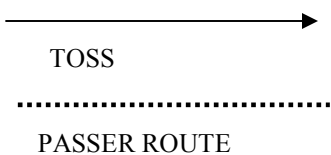
1. Two passers (P) start the drill by holding the net with one hand
2. Coach (C) tosses the ball over the net to the back row of the court
3. Passers chase down the ball
4. The passer who can reach the ball calls it and gets it up into the air simulating the second hit
5. The other passer tries to bump the third hit into the corner of the opponents court



CONDITIONED PASSER



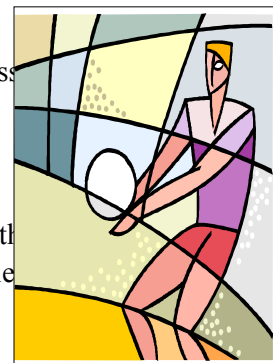
1. Passer sprints from the end line to the position across from tosser #1 (T)
2. Ball is tossed by tosser 1 and passer bumps the ball right back to her (tossers chase errant ball)
3. Passer sprints to tosser 1 spot and slides diagonally to next position across from tosser #2 (T)
4. Ball is tossed by tosser 2 and passer bumps the ball right back to her (tossers chase errant ball)
5. Passer sprints to the end line
6. Passer slides in ready position behind the tossers and the drill begins again.



GO FOR IT THE BALL!

There are several ways to save a ball from an errant pass and your team, depending on their skill level, should practice each one. Start with easy tosses and then get increasingly more difficult. (Only try the skills that are appropriate for your team's skill level).

1. **Run Through:** Sprint toward the ball, drop inside shoulder, contact the ball with full range arm swing while continuing to run through the ball.
2. **Knee pad slide:** Sprint toward the ball, drop to knee pads to improve the angle, attempt to pass court (if it's not the third hit).
3. **Sprawl:** Lunge forward and push off of the front foot while extending the arms.
4. **Roll:** The roll should only be taught to the more experienced players. Sprint toward the ball, touch the ground as the ball nears the floor, the body and an arm extends out to contact the ball, the legs tuck while the head tuck while the body rolls to get back in position.



"I've worked too hard and too long to let anything stand in the way of my goals. I will not let my teammates down and I will not let myself down."

- Mia Hamm

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MOTIVATION

The first step in understanding motivation is to make **effort** the center of your coaching philosophy. You have to reward players who try hard. It's important to acknowledge those that excel naturally, but you also have to find a way to consistently recognize the small steps of improvement from your lower ability players. Determine each individual player's level of success and reinforce progress with consistent communication.

The second step is to create an atmosphere of cooperative learning. Set up situations where the whole team has to pitch in to accomplish the goal. Let them push each other in a positive manner for the sake of achievement..

"If each player can serve three balls over the net in a row in three minutes, the whole team will not have to run after practice. Those of you that finish right away have to help those who are struggling." The more the whole group is invested in the outcome, the better the results.

Finally, and probably the most obvious, you should strive to make each player feel indispensable and critical to the overall success of the team. This is easy to do with starters, they know how important they are. The real challenge is making your bench feel just as valued. If the player on the bench is thriving and enjoying the game, you are truly a winning coach...no matter what your record is.

LEAGUE NOTES

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From Cathy Sullivan, Director

St. Alexander's volleyball league has it's own set of "*house rules*." These rules are adaptations or special exceptions to the official IHSA Volleyball guidelines, which we adhere to. These *house rules* are created to make our league more competitive, fair and enjoyable for young children. If a situation is not covered in the house rules, IHSA rules always apply.

Please be sure to have your players bring two sets of shoes in the winter. This spares the gym supervisors the time spent cleaning up a wet floor. Respect the host facility. Make sure your team picks up after a game.

GLOBAL WARNING! With this endless array of bad weather, be sure to check our website for information and cancellations to the schedule.

WWW.Parishathleticleague.com

NETWORKING IS...

A newsletter designed to provide insight and information to the coaches in the St. Alexander's Volleyball League.

All articles are written by
Barb Butcher

Questions or comments are always
welcome.

BarbB3@msn.com

St. Alexander's Bulletin Board

Keep the lines of communication open between players, families and coordinators

Reward hustle

Try different leaders out in practice...
Someone may surprise you

Take chances with your starting line-up until you find the most productive group

Ask the game official questions after the game about calls that you did not understand

Keep winning in perspective and be a good sport when your team struggles