

## CHAPTER 9: IMPACT PLUS - THE HISTORY, DIFFERENCES, RULES, TACTICS AND STRATEGIES OF THE JOB OF BEACH COACH

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

We hope you will enjoy this handbook put together for you as a USA Beach Volleyball Coach. The lessons in beach are not only fun to learn, but will help improve both your beach and indoor game. Feel free to contact us with any questions regarding the USA Volleyball Beach Programs.

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For more information on USAV Beach Programs please refer to our website: [www.usavolleyball.org](http://www.usavolleyball.org). For information on the USA Junior Beach Tour please refer to: [www.usabeach.org](http://www.usabeach.org). To find follow our beach national teams on tour go to: [www.fivb.org](http://www.fivb.org) and [www.avp.com](http://www.avp.com)

USA Volleyball would like to thank the following beach volleyball experts for their contributions to this manual: John Kessel, USAV Director of Membership Development (Grassroots) and) Disabled Programs; Danalee Corso, USAV Beach Coaching Cadre member; Dr. Peter Vint, USOC Director of High Performance; Keith Murless, USAV International Beach Referee.

### WELCOME TO THE BEACH

Thank you for participating in USA Volleyball's Beach Coaching Clinics (BCC) and Beach IMPACT Clinics. The BCC/B-IMPACT is an introductory Clinic designed to meet the following needs:

- Introduce indoor coaches to the necessary tools to run successful beach programs;
- Provide beach coaches with a forum to exchange ideas and develop teaching skills;
- Create an introductory Module of USAV's Beach Coaching Accreditation Program (BCAP), run in conjunction with USAV's CAP and VCAP programs.

This Clinic covers the following areas:

- Key differences between the beach and indoor
- The role of a Beach Coach
- Aspects of coaching and pedagogy
- The Basic Skills: Serving, Passing, Setting, Attacking, Offense Options, Blocking, and Defense
  - How each skill relates specifically to the beach game
  - How each skill should be executed and the Keys and Keywords for teaching.
  - When, where, and why specific skills, drills, and strategies should be utilized.

### WHY PLAY BEACH VOLLEYBALL?

Doubles provides the best in random, game-like volleyball experiences with a high number of contacts per person.

### NOTES:

Each player's weaknesses are practiced throughout the game. If you're a bad passer, you get served; if you're a bad setter, your partner is served and you must set...you are forced to become a better player. Other reasons to play beach:

- To extend your range on defense, because you are required to cover the entire court.
- To develop better communication and teamwork skills.
- To enhance strength and conditioning through increased movement demands.
- To learn to equally contribute to the responsibility of every play.

Whether it's on the beach or grass, 4's or doubles, outdoor volleyball is a fun, effective way to gain valuable playing experience and to get an edge on other players. Play hard, play often, and play outdoors to become better all-around.

***"A lot of indoor players are specialists, but on the beach you need to play all phases well, and you need a lot of ball control."***

***~ Karch Kiraly, 3 time Olympic Gold Medalist (1984, 88 indoor, 1996 Beach)***

## **HISTORY OF THE BEACH GAME (by John Kessel)**

Beach Volleyball was first played in the USA during the 1920s played only for fun and recreation. Only in the last years, this discipline has received world-wide recognition, starting with the California Beach Volleyball Association which led to the formation of the Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) in the US. FIVB President Dr. Ruben Acosta, whose driving commitment coupled with the collaboration of 217 affiliated National Federations and the enthusiasm of more than 50 millions players, established Beach Volleyball as the newest Olympic Sport (Atlanta – 1996) and as one of the most popular summer sports on the globe.

Beach Volleyball should also be grateful to all the Kings and Queens of the beach who dedicated their lives to this sport and preserved the legacy of a life-style imitated by players throughout the world. The beach has always been their home, and the only prize they ever sought after was victory. The spirit born in the early 1920s, combining fair-play and enthusiasm, has been kept alive to this day.

**1947** The first official doubles tournament held at State Beach, Santa Monica, CA. It was organized by Holtzman and won by Saenez-Harris.

**1960s** In France the winners of 3-on-3 games earned 30,000 francs in tournaments at La Baule and in les Sables d'Olonne. In California, the first Manhattan Beach Open took place.

**1976** Menges-Lee won the inaugural World Championships in front of 30,000 spectators at State Beach and Pacific Palisades, CA. The event offered \$5,000 prize money.

**1983** The Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) founded (July 21, 1983).

**1987** The FIVB allowed the naming of the first Beach Volleyball Men's World Championships on Ipanema Beach Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The popularity of beach volleyball rises as the women form the Women's Professional Volleyball Association (WPVA.)

**1992** The US professional tours (AVP and WPVA) hit an all-time high with 26 and 17 events respectively. Beach Volleyball bursts onto the international scene as a demonstration sport in the Olympic Games in Spain.

**1996** The inaugural Olympic Beach Volleyball competition transforms the atmosphere of the Atlanta Games. Capacity crowds in the 10,000 seat stadium cheer the world's best were teams in fierce competition. The men's gold was won by double indoor Olympic champion Karch Kiraly (USA) and his partner Kent Steffes. Jackie Silva, and Sandra Pires (Brazil) won the women's gold. Meanwhile the FIV World Championship Series was being launched by the FIVB.

**2000** USA Volleyball stages the Olympic Challenge Series, giving USA hopefuls nearly a million in prize money over 6 events. At the Sydney Olympics, USA's Dain Blanton and Eric Fonoimoana upset #1 ranked Ricardo-Emanuel of Brazil to win gold. USA's other three teams all tie for 5<sup>th</sup> place while the Australians Nat Cook-Kerri Pottharst grab the gold. USA Youth (U18) and Junior (U21) teams begin and target FIVB Youth and Junior World Beach Volleyball Championships. Deaflympics and Disabled Beach Volleyball begin.

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**2001** The AVP under new leadership revitalizes the tour and commits to developing equal opportunities for the women. For the first time in decades, all US professional beach volleyball athletes are united on one tour.

**2004** Playing under the lights for the first night-time Olympic beach volleyball competition, Misty May-Kerri Walsh capture the US's first Women's gold in Athens, while Holly McPeak-Elaine Youngs bring home a bronze. Dax Holdren-Stein Metzger just miss the medal round with a 5<sup>th</sup> place finish.

**2006** USA Volleyball establishes *USAV Beach Programs* as its own department within USAV, with staff and ultimately full offices in Southern California.

**2007** USA produces its first double gold at the World Championship, as May-Treanor-Walsh win their third title and Todd Roger-Phil Dalhausser upset Ricardo-Emanuel in the semis.

**2008** After an historic Opening Ceremony USA has its best Olympic showing ever. Jake Gibb-Sean Rosenthal and Elaine Youngs-Nicole Branagh take fifth, while USA's top-ranked duos, May-Treanor-Walsh and Rogers-Dalhausser win double Olympic gold...a first for any country in beach volleyball's short Olympic history.

**2008** and beyond New teams take a stand on the FIVB World Tour, as several different duos win medals culminating with Jen Kessy-April Ross' gold at the 2010 World Championships.

### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BEACH & INDOOR

#### INDOOR

- Number of contacts dependent on position
- Skills are highly specialized
- Trajectory of ball is flat
- Platform at 45 degrees or less
- Targets are usually fixed
- Fewer rallies played out of system
- Multiple variables of offense
- Strategy is collective and predetermined
- Elements have nominal effect

#### BEACH

- Number of contacts high
- All skills and required
- Trajectory of ball is higher
- Platform at 45 degrees or more
- Targets based on spacing-relationship with partner
- Higher percentage of rallies played out of system
- Limited number of variables of offense
- Strategy can be individual and spontaneous
- Elements play crucial role

#### COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS OF THE BEACH GAME:

- ***“Beach makes your indoor game sloppy.”*** This is true if your beach game is sloppy. Beach is physically demanding, and many athletes making the transition do not have the endurance to maintain proper execution of skills. If an athlete's skills are degrading due to fatigue, they must first work on their physical conditioning.

#### NOTES:

- **“You don’t need drills for beach, just play games.”** Properly designed drills help develop motor patterns and tactical responses specific to beach. While high level training should mimic the randomness of the game when possible, it is important to target training to specific objectives through the use of well designed drills and game like scenarios.
- **“To get better at each skill, you need to rep out each skill individually.”** While this type of training is good for beginners, higher levels need to participate in training that encompasses timing, judgment, anticipation, reading, tactics, and cooperation.

## BASIC BEACH RULES

**Match Format:** Match play = Two out of three sets to 21. Third game is to 15 using Rally scoring, with no cap. A Team must win by two points. **Teams switch sides every 7 points, every 5 in 3rd game.** Warm-ups total 10 min: 4 min informally, then the coin toss, then 5 minutes of formal shared. **In warm-ups, players may hit or serve from any direction, from either side or end of the net. Share nicely!** At coin toss the captains choose serve/side/receive and declare their teams’ player serving order.

**During the Set:** The team that wins the coin toss chooses serve/side/receive for set 1. The other team makes the remaining choice, and both teams declare their service order. Serving team must comply with requests for blocker to move. There is a “Technical Timeout” (TTO) after the 21st point of sets 1 and 2. There is no TTO in the event of a 3rd set. Each team may also call one timeout per set. **All timeouts are 30 seconds, but give the teams 15 seconds to reach the player box, and to return: 60 sec total.** At the end of each set, the teams return to their player boxes for a 1 minute break. The referee allows the team that lost the first coin toss to choose serve/side/receive for set 2. After this selection, the other team makes the remaining choice, and both teams declare their player service order. If there is a deciding 3rd set, the Referee will conduct a second coin toss. Remember that teams switch after every 5 points in the 3rd set. Play to 15, win by two. At the end of the match, both refs and all players shake hands at the ref stand.

**Playing Actions and Faults:** *These are similar to indoor volleyball, but with several important differences.*

- Position Faults: There is no positional requirement other than both players must be on their court at the moment the serve is contacted.
- Service Order: Players must alternate service. At the coin toss each captain indicates who will serve first for her team.
- Screening: Serving team may not impede the receiving teams’ view of the server and the ball. The receiving team typically raises a hand to request that the opponent move.
- Delay: The maximum time between rallies should be 12 seconds. Extra time allowed after big rallies. Teams who fail to prepare for timely service are sanctioned with a (yellow) warning. Subsequent delays are (red) points.

**Blocks:** The block contact counts as your first team contact. This often leads to “four hits” calls against the blockers’ team. Note that the blocker, following her block, MAY make the second team contact.

### TIPS FOR CONTACTING THE BALL LEGALLY:

- “Open hand” tipping is illegal (signal is “illegal attack”). To Tip legally, the fingers must be “rigid and together” or knuckles used.
- Hand setting: Setting is judged very strictly. **Think “old school” indoor volleyball.** The hands must act together smoothly, or a “double-hit” should be called. **Spin is not in itself a fault ... but spin is very often an indication that a fault has occurred.** Sets that visibly pause, or in which the ball is re-directed (perhaps by a swinging body position) are “held ball” faults. **Beach setters face their targets squarely and handle the ball cleanly.**

**First ball:** If a player DELIBERATELY uses open-hand action to contact ANY ball, that contact must be judged as a set. **There is no special rule for first team contact: ALL contacts using setting action should be judged strictly.** EXCEPTION: Open hands may be employed *and double contact allowed* in the act of “hard hit ball defense.” In defensive play, the referee must judge whether an open-hand defensive contact was *reactive* defense. This is a legal play, OR did the defender have time/distance to *choose* to defend in an open-hand manner? A “double hit” could be called in this case.

**Setting over:** Legal only if the setter is clearly facing directly toward, or back-setting squarely toward, her target. A setter who sets over the net while off-angle or while her body is pivoting should be called for an “illegal attack”

**Plane of Net:** You may only contact the ball within your own “air-space” (as in international indoor volleyball). Setters may not “gather” a ball back to their side over the net by reaching beyond the vertical plane. Attackers must only touch that part of the ball on their side of the net (though follow through after contact is legal). Blockers may penetrate the plane over the net and block only after an attack hit (like indoors).

**UNDER the net:** You may play any part of the ball, until it has passed completely through the plane. Encroachment: is legal in beach volleyball. **There is no centerline.** Pursuit: is legal. Pursuit works just like indoors... **You may pursue under the net... even through your opponents’ court!**

**Interference:** Is the most difficult call that the second referee must consider. **Interference is a fault that results in a point, not a replay.** If a player interferes with her opponents’ play, she must be called for the fault. Note that contact between opponents does not always constitute interference, (bump knees, step briefly on toes etc) and that interference can occur without physical contact (example: fallen player under net prevents defender covering short).

**Simultaneous Contact:** If teammates touch the ball simultaneously **this counts as TWO team contacts.** Either player may make the 3rd contact.

**Net Contact:** contact with the net **while playing the ball** is a fault. Small contacts away from the play may be overlooked.

**Ball Marks: The ball is “in” if it physically touches the line.** Line movement can be confusing, but contact of ball-to-line is the rule. Players may occasionally request that a lines-call be reviewed and judged, using the “ball-mark” left in the sand. Be aware that “splash” of soft sand, or bumps and hanging lines can all confuse the judgment. The referee has the final say. **Smooth sand and well-tended lines are critical.** The referee(s) must offer an explanation.

## WHAT BEACH COACHES DO AND HOW THEY DO IT

### **Training...breaking away from the personal trainer model...**

For the beach coach, practice should be the top priority, with 90% of your time and effort focused on training and preparation. It is important to understand your athletes’ goals and abilities. You should collaborate with them in order to create a plan in which you share ownership while keeping them focused on their goals.

Training goals should be written down and referred to when creating the daily practice plan. Training goals should be evaluated on a regular basis, depending on how often you are working with your team or athletes.

The beach coach can be the glue that keeps all parties working together...athletes, trainers, sports psychologists. Identify the members of the “team” and draw them together in an effort to make sure all parties are working in unison.

## NOTES:

### **Competition...breaking away from the indoor model**

During competition, the coach must participate solely as an advisor, not a participant. Do not over coach!

On the AVP Tour the coach is permitted on court in a “box.” The coach can only talk during timeouts and between sets. The coach cannot call timeouts or address the official. This is the system that is used by several regions in their youth programs, most notably, the Florida Region.

On the FIVB Tour, the coach is not allowed in the box during competition, cannot communicate with his or her team during competition, and can only be on the court leading up to the 20 minutes prior to the match. During the match there is no communication between the coach and the team. This is the system currently in place on the USA Junior Beach Tour.

One key importance is to know the etiquette:

- Do not address officials
- Do not call timeouts
- Do not cheer or instruct during play

### **Scouting...what are you looking for?**

- Can you sense momentum shifts?
- Can you see consistent patterns developing?
- Can you create a plan for your team to counteract the opponents' tendencies?
- Can you create a plan for your team to exploit the opponent's weaknesses?



### **Other aspects of coaching...It's how you teach, not just what you teach.**

Think back to IMPACT training and apply those same principles to the beach.

### **Ethics and Responsibilities**

- Know the boundaries of your competence. Know why you are doing something and let the athletes know why.
- Continue to educate yourself. Volleyball in all forms is a growing game.
- Avoid harm: understand injury prevention and first aid. Get certified in CPR. Be mindful to evaluate every athlete for injury/incapacity and refer those showing signs of injury to a sports medicine professional.
- Match players with similar skill levels and warn of inherent risks. Supervise closely.
- Provide a safe environment and proper instruction...Is the sand free of debris and deep enough? Are there obstacles that might be hazardous?
- Drills should not double for conditioning. Fatigue can lead to poor skill acquisition and biomechanics while increasing the risk of injury.
- The volume and intensity of work must be inversely proportionate, simultaneous increase is risky!

### **Principles of Effective Learning**

- 4X4 Learning..."Chunk" the skill information for the players into 4 Keys; give 4 keywords to describe each of the 4 keys.
- Constructive Sandwich = Praise + Correction + Praise. Be mindful of target words, for example, use "now" rather than "but".
- Focus on performance over outcome and separate the performance from the performer.
- Implicit vs. explicit learning: rather than tell them how to do it, lead them to the answers through Guided Discovery. Asking the players more questions than you give them answers creates more meaningful and effective learning when they reach their "Aha" moments.
- Limit progressions when possible and teach the whole skill at game speeds. Key 1: Tell, show, and let them try. Key 2: Tell, show, and let them try and so on, until all Keys have been taught and practiced.

## SYSTEMS OF PLAY IN THE BEACH GAME

This portion of the chapter is intended to introduce Beach Coaches to the key concepts of how to go about implementing a “*system of play*” for their teams. Coaches will need to have a fundamental understanding of the basic methods of organizing and designing individual player tactics and team strategies. For example, your team’s systems of play must include a Blocking “system” consisting of appropriate communication, strategies and tactics.

Coaches need to design systems of play, individual tactics and team strategies that are appropriate for their own personnel’s level of understanding and level of play, as well as for the level of the competition they will play. One key concept is that a team should not attempt tactically what they cannot execute technically.

As with the skill development information in Chapter 10, the information here is not meant to represent all the possible options available to coaches when seeking to learn and implement appropriate systems of play for their team. Rather, it is meant to provide a broad overview of some of the more fundamental beginning-to- intermediate level tactics and strategies.

### SERVING SKILLS

***Tactics and Strategies ... when, where, and why?***

***Consider your goals:***

- point on ace,
- point on opponent’s out of system play,
- forcing a tactical outcome,
- reducing number of opponents’ outcomes.

***Understand the elements:*** Serving into the wind the wind is best...allows you to strike the ball harder and achieve drag crisis. Also try: serving across the wind, serving with the sun behind you, serving with the sun high, serving high balls in the rain.

- **Key Tactics for Floater Serves:** Use the wind by serving into the wind or across the wind. For more advanced servers, try using the wind to achieve drag crisis...ball dropping when served into the wind. Other advanced techniques include striking the bottom of the ball to drop the ball short, serving at the top of the tape to achieve the dribbler, and serving a loopy deep floater over the passer’s outside shoulder. For beginners encourage them to serve high middle with the wind at their back.
- **Key Tactics for Jump Floater Serves:** Using the wind, serving into the wind or across the wind.
- **Key Tactics for the Sky Ball Serve:** Good in wind, sun, night matches.

### PASSING SKILLS

***Tactics and Strategies ... when, where, and why?***

In general, the pass should have a higher trajectory than in indoor, and be two to six feet off the net, depending on the setting partner’s preference and whether he or she is primarily an overhead hand setter or a forearm bump setter.

## NOTES:

**Understand the elements:** Generally the passer should pass the ball forward and not push it too much toward the middle. However, in the wind the passer must alter his target and keep the pass low. In bright sun or rain that might impede the setter's vision, the passer should also keep the pass low.

### **Receiving Serve**

Where the passer stands when receiving a serve depends on many different factors. What type of serve will the passer likely be receiving? Where is the server standing? Does the passer know the server, know his or her serve motion, and the typical trajectory of his or her serves?

If the wind is at the passer's back he or she can expect the ball to drop and move as it crosses the net. The passer may want to move up a step and be ready to move laterally. If the wind is in the passer's face, he or she can take a step back as it will be very difficult to serve shallow.

### **Where to start**

A rule of thumb is to stand in the back third of the court, about six feet from the back line with each player covering roughly half of the court. Most serves are unlikely to land in the first 10 feet, and if they are (in the event of a Skyball, for instance), the passer will likely know this early from the ball's trajectory. Some athletes like to "tempt" the server by giving him some open court. For example, the passer moves toward the center to "suggest" a serve down the line, or moves deeper to elicit a short serve. This puts pressure on the server and may force a service fault.

Standing too far back, however, can make the passer vulnerable to a jump serve or other top-spin serve that has a sharp downward trajectory. Positioning the passer too close to the net increases the chances that the passer will be forced to back up just as he or she is contacting the ball or to take the ball overhead. Thus the passer must be prepared to adjust his position based on the opponent's serve.

### **Splitting the Court**

The convention is that each player is responsible for half the court, and the person diagonal from the server calls the serve and is responsible for the middle area. The rationale behind this is simple: a ball served diagonally takes longer than a ball served down the line; therefore the player diagonally opposite the server has more time to react to the ball and therefore can cover slightly more area. This means that the cross court player should be prepared to take a step or two towards the middle of the court, allowing the non-passing partner more time to cover the down-the-line serve.

This arrangement is certainly not cast in stone. If one player is a better hitter the team might elect to let him or her take more middle. If one player is tired, injured etc., the rested or healthy partner may want to take care of the middle. The most important aspect is that passing responsibilities are communicated in advance. Players should never assume that their partner knows the serve is his. Call early and often. Once a call is made, the partners should stick with it - unless it is so wrong that the designated person could never pass it.

### **Calling the Ball**

Calling a served ball out is the responsibility of both players. If one can see that the ball is going out, he or she should call it out - independent of which side that player is on. This becomes especially important on skyball serves where the passer may lose sense of the court boundaries.

## **SETTING SKILLS**

### ***Tactics and Strategies ... when, where, and why?***

Good beach setting must well executed considering stricter beach rules. The setter should deliver a set that puts the attacker in his comfort zone and is appropriate for opponent's defense. Unlike indoor, the setter should not be deceptive. Beach Setters should use their whole body, with lower contact point than indoor.

The beach setter must consider the attacker's ability—how will they be most successful? What type of block are they facing? How will the wind affect the set?

**Understand the elements:** a good setter must consider the elements. In strong wind the setter should keep the ball lower and opt for bump setting. Putting forward spin on the bump set can stabilize the ball in the wind, making it easier for the attacker to track the ball. If the sun is directly overhead, the setter should keep the ball low and have the hitter attack from the part of the court least affected by the sun.



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### **After the set:**

The setter's responsibilities are not done after he or she sets the ball. The setter must then look to the other side of the court and help his or her partner by calling the open court. Additionally, the setting partner needs to be prepared to cover his or her hitter in the event that they get blocked.

The most general way of telling the attacker where and how to attack is to call the open court. Usually the setter will look at the back-court and **look for where the defender isn't** and call that.

When giving the attacker a call use consistent, meaningful words like "line", "angle" or "no one". Words like "ok", "sorry", or "hit" are ambiguous or worse. You may not have time to say "hit line" or "roll cross" so the following conventions have emerged:

- **"Line"** means the open shot is down the line. The hitter can try to roll down the line (usually over a blocker) or try to spike the ball crosscourt, where presumably the back-court defender is. A call of "line" does not mean that the blocker is necessarily blocking line; it means only that the open court is line.
- **"Cut"** means the open court is close to the net and a sharp angled shot is in order. This usually means that the back-court defender is deep in the middle of the court and possibly favoring the high line shot.
- **"Angle" or "Cross"** means the open shot is cross-court. The hitter can try to roll cross-court (usually over a blocker) or try to spike the ball down the line, where presumably the back-court defender is. A call of "cross" does not mean that the blocker is necessarily blocking the cross shots; it only means that the open court is cross.
- **"Nobody"** means that no one is up to block. (A call of line or cross/angle/cut implies that someone is blocking.)

## **ATTACKING SKILLS**

### ***Tactics and Strategies ... when, where, and why?***

What is a successful attack? Ideally it results in a direct point. However success can also be measured by forcing the opponent into an out of system play, taking the opponent out their comfort zone offensively, or causing the opponent to alter defensive strategy. Because there is only one blocker and one defender, successful attacking includes well executed controlled shots to specific areas of the court.

**Understand the elements:** Attack timing on the beach is crucial. As in the indoor game, the three phases of the attack (approach, jump, and swing) must coordinate, but are also challenged by the external factors of sand, wind, and sun. Errors in timing coupled with the effects of the elements often result in a break in the kinesthetic chain causing a timing error and an unsuccessful attack.

While the attacker's approach length may vary slightly depending on the elements, it should generally remain consistent.

## **NOTES:**

To maintain consistency and to be a deceptive attacker, the hitter should face the same spot every time no matter where the set is located. When the attacker is on-hand (right handed attacker on the left side and vice versa) he or she should face deep cross to deep middle and learn to hit all angles from there. When attacking on the off-hand side (right handed attacker on the right side and vice versa) the hitter should face the middle of the court. It is important to teach the athletes to approach in this manner, as their natural tendency will tend to be to approach flat on a wide set and sharp on an inside set.

A good attacker will prepare before the serve by inventorying as many external factors as possible, *before* the serve... where is the wind and sun, what is the opponent's probable defensive alignment, how consistent is the setter, etc.

### ***Offensive Strategies***

Unlike the indoor game where there is nearly always a double block and the defense plays the perimeter of the court, in beach there is only one blocker who has the responsibility of deciding whether to block or "pull". This leaves the single defender to cover the bulk of the court, often leaving the perimeter vulnerable. Thus the attacker should focus on taking away the opponents' defensive strengths. For instance, if the opponent has good block penetration, a set off the net will force the blocker to pull or give the attacker more room to shoot around the block.

Another good strategy is to play high-odds offense. Attack the ball in a way that is most likely to win the point - not necessarily in the flashiest manner. It could be that a high line shot deep in the corner wins the most points for a team. Most defensive players focus on the hard angle hit first, so attacks that clear the block and avoid the hard angle are usually the most successful.

Learning to recognize the opponents' defensive strategy and make adjustments is an important skill for beach athletes. If coaching is allowed, there is only one timeout in which the coach can communicate adjustments to the athletes, so it is vital that they are taught to recognize and react on their own.

If an attacker is continually being blocked or dug, he or she should take a self-inventory: "Am I too predictable? Am I in too early? Am I facing the same spot (cross court or deep middle) every time? What shots have scored on them? Do I approach as if to hit hard every time?" Defy predictability, modify the game plan.

### ***The Option Play or Over on two***

Most players expect a sequence of pass, set, attack, and are not mentally prepared for nor are they in position to handle a ball that crosses the net on the second contact. The opportunity for this play occurs when the opponent's blocker moves into position early, opening up a large area of court for the setter to hit or dump the ball. This seldom-used play is entirely valid, legal, and within the spirit of competitive volleyball.

Remember, handsets over the net must be directed behind or in front of the direction the upper torso is facing, directly in line with the shoulders, and not to the side. For instance the ball cannot be intentionally be set over the net if the setter is facing one of the sidelines.

The option set is a pass that is higher and closer to the net than normal which allows the partner the option of either setting or attacking the ball ("hitting on two"). This strategy can be employed is when one player is being served most of the time. You can turn the tables on your opponents by option-setting your partner every so often. The potential disadvantage of an option set is that the pass travels too far and hits the net or actually travels over the net.

## **DEFENSE - BLOCKING AND DIGGING SKILLS**

### ***Tactics and Strategies ... when, where, and why?***

Beach defensive strategy focuses more on playing the percentages, with the goal of getting the ball up to where one's partner can effectively attack or set the ball.

### ***Digging***

The backcourt defender, or digger, can choose to hide behind the block in base before the ball is set, or simply to go to his or her predetermined side of the court. The key objective is that before the ball is attacked, the defender is not hiding behind the blocker. He or she should be halfway in the court and able to see the attacker.

## IMPACT 2011

The objective is a dig with a higher trajectory (apex) than in the indoor game, so that the blocker can land, turn and get underneath to set.

A good defender will make an inventory before each play. What is the partner's blocking call and what does this mean to the defender? What part of the court is he or she responsible for? What shots are more likely than others given the blocking formation? What are opponent's tendencies? What is the likelihood of an on-two attack?

### **Blocking**

The average blocker should have a goal of taking as much space away from the attacker as possible, reducing defender's area and limiting defender's number of responses. Every inch of block penetration (on a well formed and timed block) reduces the defender's area by 20 square feet!

Examples of a successful block outcome are: block for point, block for deflection to the defender, block to force opponent transition.

### **To Pull or Not to Pull?!**

Determining when to pull can be the most challenging skill to learn. The first thing the blocker must consider is his or her own blocking ability, then the attacker's abilities. The blocker should inventory these two items before the play, so that during the play the blocker needs only to focus on the set quality.

The final item to inventory when decision-making is the quality of the set. The farther the set is off the net, the more likely the blocker should pull. As soon as the blocker sees the set, he or she should be able to recognize the trajectory of the ball and determine whether to block or pull.

### **Block-Defense specialization**

Many top teams choose to have a dedicated blocker-defender system. If one player is more effective blocking, then that player may take over the main blocking duties by running to the net or "running up" after contacting the serve. This leaves the defender to "stay back." As a result, the blocker, who mostly takes over the defensive setting function, must have excellent setting skills. However, each player should continue to develop his or her blocking and defensive skills because in a tournament, physical overload and fatigue of the net player may arise, and because each player may often play with different partners, each with differing strengths and weaknesses. The successful beach player possesses all skills and can play either side of the court.

## HYDRATION STRATEGIES

With any sport played outdoors the proper steps must be taken in order to prevent heat exhaustion and other environment induced illnesses. This concern is heightened when playing beach Volleyball. Because of the constant exposure to wind, sun and heat many players suffer from dehydration or heat exhaustion. Players must be aware and take the proper steps to prevent such problems from hindering their performance.

Sweating is the way our bodies cool off when we are exercising. Athletes run into trouble when their bodies are no longer able to sweat.

## NOTES:

In certain environments and climates sweat loss can be as high as three quarts or more per hour. Sometimes it can take two days to fully rehydrate all the cells in the body.

Don't be fooled into thinking that if you are not thirsty your body is properly hydrated. Waiting until you are thirsty signals you are already on the road towards dehydration. If the body is not replenished heat cramps, mixed heat syndrome and heat exhaustion can follow.

Experts recommend taking in at least 64 ounces of water over the course of a day just to maintain good health; however when training or competing an athlete's needs will exceed this level. Just as you have probably heard of pasta or carbo loading, you can also drink an extra 32 ounces of fluid above your normal intake two days before the event, and drinking 64 ounces above normal the day before the event. Reducing or eliminating alcohol and caffeine levels also will aid in reducing the dehydration process, due to the manner in which both substances cause the body to excrete fluids.

Sports drinks can be beneficial in maintaining peak performance level, replenishing valuable minerals and electrolytes that have been lost during exercise. Sports drinks should only be consumed in great quantities during extensive competition because they tend to contain a great deal of sodium. (Note that "energy" drinks with high caffeine content are NOT the same as sports drinks and should be avoided.)

As competition or training progresses it is important to refuel the body with a light lunch and snacks. The key to eating during competition is light snacking throughout... a heavy meal will cause a majority of the blood to go to the stomach to aid in the digestive process, leaving the athlete feeling lethargic. A piece of fruit, a bagel, pretzels, or a sport bar are good options. Not only will these not cause your digestive system to be working overtime, but they will replenish some of the carbohydrates and nutrients that have been lost throughout the day.

Overtraining (OT) can be a serious problem with beach volleyball athletes, who generally are very self-motivated. OT is usually preceded by a period of under-recovery. Signs of OT are:

- Decreased performance
- Intolerance to training, (physical or psychological)
- Burnout, loss of joy in competition, prolonged recovery
- Decrease in speed and/or endurance
- Increased RHR

Methods to combat, or better yet...prevent OT include:

- Scheduling time for REST and RECOVERY!!! This includes both Physical and Mental Recovery
- Beach Athletes must Re-Hydrate and Re-Fuel with Proper Nutrition
- Re-align and address muscular imbalances with stretching, yoga, etc.
- Re-lease soft tissue work... have a massage, or ART
- Other recovery modalities... steam baths, hot/cold packs, or sauna



***“Most performances are spoiled by slight overtraining than by slight lack of fitness... An athlete who is 50% conditioned for an event will do better than an athlete who is 0.5% overtrained.” ~ Bobby McGee (world class triathlon coach and expert in overtraining)***

### **Quick Tips for Player-Refs**

At the simple level, the losing team refs the next match with one player being the only referee, while the players are to keep the score, calling it out with each service. At the highest level there is a first referee (overall in charge), second referee (assisting), scorer, lines persons (4), ball retrievers, and sand levelers.

**Referees must ref!** Work teams are assigned to a court for a reason—to provide non-biased officiating for the two teams playing. Although most players will claim always to call their own violations, this is rarely the case. In many cases, players will make a violation and not know it, as well. It is for these reasons that a neutral party must referee a match.

## IMPACT 2011

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**Let the players play.** Although you are the referee, your job in a tournament is a small one. Unlike indoor volleyball, the official plays a smaller role in the process of the game. Some tournaments require the referee to keep score, others do not. In a clean match, you may not even be needed. Call only what you see and let the players decide the outcome of a match. Calling a match too tightly on both sides will only defeat your purpose as an official and take control out of the players' hands.

**Making calls.** If you see someone net or throw a ball, call it quickly and with confidence. Volleyball players have easily bruised egos and are quick to argue a quiet or hesitant call. Even referees make mistakes, but if you make one, make it with confidence so you are not questioned. Most players do not like replays, but if you are in doubt on a play, explain what you saw and tell the players to play it over again.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

⇒ If you want to read more about the volleyball topics below, or others related to this chapter, download and print out the articles found at [www.usavolleyball.org](http://www.usavolleyball.org) under the Resources tab, then click on the Education/IMPACT/Articles links.

- ***Volleyball Jargon & Acronyms***, by John Kessel
- ***Inspiring Words for the Gym***, by John Kessel
- ***About the Libero Position***
- ***How Can I Spike Harder***, by John Kessel
- ***IMPACT Plus Basic Statistics & Charting***

