

CHAPTER 4: COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND DEVELOPMENT

PHILOSOPHY

The game of volleyball is rapidly changing. Players are doing things at levels that would have been called impossible a decade ago. This is a sport that even young players can play at a very high level. Indeed, it is the years of volleyball experience, not age, which determines what a player can do on the court. The All-Japan Elementary School Championships has more than 7,000 schools in the program and the players, all under the age of 11, could beat most American high school teams. As their programs gain experience coaches will need to be creative, to change the demands, the systems, game play and even the court sizes for the more experienced players. And remember, **everything changes**; what you knew as volleyball “back then” has changed, so live and learn.

Take a couple of minutes and write down a brief draft of a personal working coaching philosophy here (two or 3 sentences). ➡

Volleyball coaches support a philosophy which attempts to put winning in its proper perspective. Simply stated, it is “player development over winning”. Supporting this philosophy means that every decision a coach makes is based first on what the coach thinks is best for the athletes, and second on what may improve the team’s chance of winning. Do not misunderstand this philosophy; **IMPACT** and **USAV-CAP** are not saying that winning is unimportant. **Striving to win** is essential for enjoyable competition. In beginning to develop ways to put a coaching philosophy into practice, consider the ideas on the following pages.

Pat Head Summit’s Coaching Philosophy: *the Definite Dozen*

1. Respect yourself and others
2. Take full responsibility
3. Develop and demonstrate loyalty
4. Learn to be a great communicator
5. Discipline yourself so no one else has to
6. Make hard work your passion
7. Don’t just work hard, work smart
8. Put the team before yourself
9. Make winning an attitude
10. Be a competitor
11. Change is a must
12. Handle success like you handle failure

THE IMPORTANCE OF COACHES

Coaches may have more importance than anyone else on a number of players’ lives. A coach may be the only role model they can trust or may be the escape from a difficult situation. Young athletes are going through tough developmental stages in becoming an adult. There are huge differences between the needs of the “younger” and “older” players in each program, even though all are junior players. If coaching the opposite sex, coaches must be especially cognizant of their position of power and the sexual/gender implications of such a position.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents notes that young adolescents have much discretionary time and a lot of it is unstructured, unsupervised, and unproductive for the youngsters. Only about 60% of their waking hours are committed to school, homework, eating, chores or jobs, while about 40 percent are discretionary.

NOTES:

**Quick –
What do you coach?!**
If you just thought to yourself....“Volleyball!” ... then you just failed this IMPACT Clinic!

Just kidding ...but the important thing to realize is that we coach PEOPLE - little people or big people, they are all still people! Keep this important distinction in mind as you think about and create your Coaching Philosophy.

Carnegie’s Task Force also found that 92% of 1987 high school graduates had begun drinking alcohol prior to graduation; 56 % had begun drinking in the sixth to ninth grades. Again, in 1989 they found that by age 17, about 25% had engaged in behaviors harmful to themselves and others (sexual activity, using drugs/alcohol, antisocial activities, and failing in school).

The suicide rate among adolescents 10 to 14 years old more than doubled from 1980 to 1985. It emphasized that the period from 10 to 15 years of age is one of extreme vulnerability, in large part because of the great physical, social and emotional changes that occur in adolescence. More recently, in the 1990s it was determined that suicide had become the second leading cause of death for teens aged 13-18 years old. Carnegie’s report (A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours, 1992) also states that

“Young adolescents do not want to be left to their own devices. In national surveys and focus groups, America’s youth have given voice to a serious longing. They want more regular contact with adults who care about them and respect them, more opportunities to contribute to their communities, protection from the hazards of drugs, violence, and gangs, and greater access to constructive and attractive alternatives to the loneliness that so many now experience.”

Additionally, a recent study of role models done at the University of Oklahoma of the average high school student body (and more specifically, athletes) confirms the huge responsibility that coaches have.

Top 4 Role Models for Students	Top 4 Role Models for Athletes
1) parents	1) parents
2) teachers	2) COACHES
3) siblings	3) teachers
4) classmates	4) siblings.

More importantly, 35% of the athletes in this study actually placed their coaches first in their lists, ahead of their parents!

Researchers from Michigan State University say 75% of today’s teenagers quit organized athletics by the age of 15. Coaches must keep these studies in mind as they work with the junior players in their programs.

The main reasons given for this attrition?
“I was not having fun.”
“The coach was a poor teacher.”
“I lost interest.”

Thanks to Tom Crawford, a former USOC Coaching Development director, for sharing this adaptation of a poem by Haim Ginott, originally describing the impact of teachers on students, at a U.S. Olympic Committee conference on youth sport. USA Volleyball’s IMPACT program and many of the other United States Olympic National Governing Bodies use it in their coaching accreditation programs

The IMPACT of Coaches
 I have come to the frightening conclusion
 I am the decisive element on the court.
 It is my personal approach that creates the climate.
 It is my daily mood that makes the weather.
 As a coach, I possess tremendous power
 To make a child’s life miserable or joyous.

I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.
 In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will
 be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.

---an adaptation of Haim Ginott

Another appropriate item to share originated with Gary Walton, formerly with the USOC Coaching Development Office:

“Ten Characteristics of Highly Successful Coaches”

- 1. Committed to individual integrity, values and personal growth.**
- 2. Profound thinkers who see themselves as educators.**
- 3. Well-educated (formally and informally) in a liberal arts tradition.**
- 4. Long-run commitment to their athletes and institution.**
- 5. Willing to experiment with new ideas.**
- 6. Value the coach-player relationship, winning aside.**
- 7. Understand and appreciate human nature.**
- 8. Love their sport and work.**
- 9. Honest and strong in character.**
- 10. Human and therefore imperfect.**

COACHING POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Coaching Objectives - Many coaches do not ask themselves the key questions, “Why do I coach?” and “What is my coaching philosophy?” Too often coaches get into this profession and go about their business without thinking about the effect they are having on young athletes. Coaches speak eloquently about youth development and having a good time, but when the match starts they revert to yelling about any error and keep lesser-skilled players “riding the pine”. Their words are not reflected in their game conduct. Coaches need to state their personal mission in writing, so parents and players can read it; this reflects the coach’s **core values** in coaching.

As a new coach, it is easy to let one’s own self-esteem be closely tied to the victories of the group. With young players and the many varied skills demanded by volleyball, errors are the rule rather than the exception. Remember that **players** are gaining invaluable experience now that will usually show up **next** season, so be patient!

Establishing Foundational Beliefs - Great religions, enduring philosophies, established systems of government or law are all characterized by a few key principles; short but powerful statements that embody the essential truths of that religious, philosophical, or governmental system. These are the foundational beliefs upon which everything else within the system is built. Without such foundational beliefs, a consistent, strong and enduring structure cannot be built.

If one desires to build a great volleyball program it is also necessary to have consistent, strong, enduring foundational beliefs. But these beliefs cannot be built on sand; they must be built on substance. So a very important question is, “On what foundation should the system be built?” This foundation is many times based on societal beliefs about the characteristics of a coach that may not necessarily be true.

Some prevalent myths about coaching, which **IMPACT** hopes to dispel by the end of this course, include:

- If one has played the game, this makes one a good coach
- If one has played the game, this makes one a better coach than those who have not played
- If one has coached for many years, s/he must be a good coach
- The best trained coaches are needed more on the elite levels, rather than on the beginning levels
- Volunteer coaches cannot be fired
- Volunteer coaches should not be held to the same standards or expectations as “paid” coaches

Along these same lines, in answer to an FAQ on their website, the West Virginia HS Activities Association states:

There is no such thing as a "volunteer" coach. If an individual wants to coach, whether paid or unpaid, they must be a teacher, substitute teacher or authorized certified individual.

John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, said this in an interview (American Coach, 1988):

“When I was coaching I always considered myself a teacher. Teachers tend to follow the laws of learning better than coaches who don’t have any teaching background. A coach is nothing more than a teacher. I used to encourage anyone who wanted to coach to get a degree in teaching so they could apply those principles to athletics.”

HOW MANY GREAT TEACHERS HAVE YOU HAD?!

WHY were they **GREAT?!**
List some reasons **WHY** you include them on this list...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now....go out and DO each of these and YOU will likely be one that is remembered on someone else’s “Great Coaches” list!

NOTES:

Teaching is More Important Than Training - The best volleyball teachers are like loving parents. Their care for children, combined with volleyball, produces the best result. Coaches must spend as much time teaching players with less ability as much as, or even more than, those with more ability because a team on the court is only as strong as its weakest player. Just like parents should not compare their children to each other – coaches must also treat each player fairly. And more Training time is more important for a young player than Competition time – ***we'll discuss this more when we get to Motor Learning in Chapter 5!***

Legal Duties and Responsibilities - As covered in Chapter 2 under the Risk Management section, coaches must be knowledgeable in the areas of **Injury Prevention, First Aid and Rehabilitation of Volleyball Injuries**, and their **Legal Responsibilities and Liability for Negligence**. Coaches must take these into account as they develop their coaching philosophy. Remember that coaches have the legal duty to keep adequate records and:

- Provide a safe environment
- Properly plan the activity
- Provide proper instruction
- Evaluate students for injury or incapacity
- Match and equate players
- Provide adequate and proper equipment
- Warn of the inherent risks in volleyball
- Supervise the activity closely
- Know emergency procedures and first aid



FUNDAMENTAL COACHING PRINCIPLES

Have Patience - This is especially true at the youth volleyball level! There will be countless errors as these young athletes play under the same demands as an Olympic team competitor. With no time to hold the ball and figure things out, there will be many judgment and timing errors, so focus on good technique. Recent motor skill research notes that it takes 10 years or 10,000 hours to become a skilled player in a sport.

Know Your Athletes – Part of this is knowing where your athletes are developmentally – not just chronologically! A basic knowledge of human growth and development (more SCIENCE!) is essential to being able to take advantage of critical “windows of trainability” for both boys and girls. There are critical windows for developing mental, emotional, and physical skills in young players – you don’t want to miss those windows! **We’ll cover this more in Chapter 5.**

“We must have responsible coaches out there who, based on sound principles, will teach effectively and efficiently.”

~ Bill Neville, 1984 U.S. Men’s Olympic Team Assistant Coach ~

Process and Performance Over Outcome - Volleyball coaches must focus on process over outcome. The development of the player as a whole person is most important. Off-the-court behavior is controllable and by helping players learn to control their lifestyle, coaches help them control the flow of their game. Certainly, winning is fun and exciting. However, in the unique sport of volleyball winning may be out of any one player’s control. The emphasis must be on the performance of the players over the outcome of the game. There can only be one winner at any level. ***It’s simply fact that half of the volleyball teams playing on this very day throughout the world will lose!***

Success is not just winning on the scoreboard, but in knowing the players did their best to play their best. Thus, a team can win on the scoreboard (but not succeed), or lose on the scoreboard (yet still triumph). Winning is also fun and exciting if it is kept in perspective. Adults who expect their players to perform like Olympians and who value winning above all other goals spoil the pleasure found in playing the game.

Winning at all costs leads to an acceptance of cheating and a view of the other team as the enemy. Remember, the kids come to have fun, to learn new skills and to play in a program that will enrich the quality of their lives. Share with them the concept that “We will be successful. We may lose some matches, we may win some matches, but we will be successful.”

Help Every Player in the Program - Give every player equal attention, regardless of skill level. The more skillful players will receive more opportunities to play, so pay particular attention to the less-skilled during practice. It is impossible to predict a young athlete’s ability potential until given real encouragement and assistance.

Separate the Performance from the Performer - Young players too often tie their self-image to their performance. Coaches must not make this same mistake. Make sure every criticism is constructive, sandwiched between compliments and correction, clearly separated from the player’s ego. One of the most important things coaches can do is to build every player’s self-esteem, no matter what their skill level.

Be Consistent - Coaches are very important role models for their young players, whether inside the gym or out. Coaches must always demonstrate what they believe in, model it in practice and reinforce it when it is seen. Coaches need to let their athletes know that coaches are human and will make mistakes, and so will athletes. Coaches should demonstrate to players how to believe in themselves and what they are doing. Coaches should also earn respect and then accept respect. Help each athlete develop in mind, body and spirit, not just in technique.

Be Demanding and Disciplined, Never Demeaning - Perhaps old coaching styles do live on though tradition, but a coach's style must be based on the laws of learning. If screaming, yelling at or putting down a player was the best way to teach, then English, Science, and primary school teachers would all be using that method. Many coaches' actions, if brought into a classroom in front of a principal watching him/her "teach" would get that coach sent quickly to counseling and psychiatric sessions, and possibly even fired. Coaches must make sure they are **teaching**, not taking out their frustrations as a former player or setting unrealistic expectations. Even the pros make errors after decades of learning and kids will too. Coaches should never be demeaning to their athletes.

Coach Smarter, Not Harder - Experience is a great teacher, but coaching clinics and other learning opportunities are essential. Sharing ideas with fellow coaches and not keeping "secrets" that work will reinforce and challenge everyone's ideas. The ideas here and in all levels of the CAP courses will provide coaches with much more efficient ways of coaching. Coaches need to be aware that at this level they generally won't have the same amount of time to train their athletes that the higher levels do.

Be Innovative, Not Imitative - This is hard to do, but it is suggested coaches do not just copy others. Do not ask for just one more drill. Do not demand the exact recipe for this year's program—including practice plans. This **IMPACT** Clinic will help coaches discover the ideal plan for this year, but also will enable them to create what their programs and players need to be successful. Players should also be involved in this process. Indeed, one key goal of all Junior Olympic Volleyball and youth volleyball programs should be to look for any and all ways to involve the player in problem-solving. The program and each player will benefit more from such a standard of coaching.

Quality Over Quantity - In practice, drills that are game like are much more valuable than non-game-like motor programs and habits. Players should spend their time doing single-person, against-a-wall drills or most pair drills outside of the practice session. When coaches are with them, they must teach them the angles and tactics of the game relative to the net and game like ball flights. If there are too many players for one net, create nets by using court lines, walls and spaces between courts that are part of your gym space. Learning increases when the number of response opportunities increases. Coaches must blend game-like habits in "high repetition" drills. Be aware of when the quality of the contact suffers from mindless quantity of contacts.

No Fear of Mistakes - Coaches need to develop the atmosphere in their gym where there is no fear of making a mistake. Sloppy performances are not to be tolerated; however, practice is a place to continually try new things, not just those already known. This means that as skills are learned, many mistakes will be made. There must be a blend of self discipline – to perform the fundamentals daily and perfectly and not fear the errors when attempting unperfected skills.

NOTES:

Related to this topic, John Cleese, of Monty Python fame, wrote an excellent article with the title, **“No More Mistakes and You Are Through”**, from Forbes, Magazine (U.S., p. 126+, May 16, 1988), highlighting excerpts from his "The Importance of Mistakes" speech which is worth reading.

The renowned social psychologist H. Stephen Glenn has a wonderful motto about making mistakes, taking new risks, and doing new things, since they are part of the process of learning to be the best you can be:

“MISTEAKS R WUNDERFULL OPPERTUNITEEZ 2 LERN!”

Athletes Will Become Better Players if They Coach

If coaches want their athletes to become better performers of a skill, have them teach that skill to someone else. Coaches, former players themselves, have been heard to say such things as, “I never learned to really see the block as a player, until I had to coach my players to do so – now I consciously see the block each time I hit.” Coaches should give their players the opportunity to coach other, usually younger, players in the game of volleyball.

Regression to the Mean - Volleyball, like anything else, is governed by the mathematical principle of “regression to the mean.” This simply means that a skill done either above or below a player’s average action will **more than likely** return toward the average action in the next performance. The coach’s job is to help players steadily raise that “average” performance by striving for perfection in every drill, a consistency that can only come through repetitive practice.

People unaware of this fact find themselves using punishment and negative reinforcement. This is caused by the fact that an above average performance - those actions we find easy to praise and positively reinforce - will probably regress to the mean. It seems that the attention directed at the improvement serves to inhibit the next action. This regression makes one underestimate the effectiveness of reward. One might even think the attention caused a lack of concentration on the subsequent - and likely less perfect - attempt.

At the same time, when a player performs below average, many people discipline or exhibit negative kinds of attention, after which they see improvement in the next action. Even though this is also because of regression to the mean, people tend to overestimate the effectiveness of punishment. Their experiences mistakenly seem to prove that punishment works and praise does not.

Those interested in learning more about this topic should go to the library and get a copy of *Discover* Magazine’s July 1985 issue, where this was first covered in an article called **“Decisions, Decisions.”** Coaches would also gain a lot of insight into coaching errors from the book by Tom Gilovich, **How We Know What Isn’t So: The Fallibility of Human Reasoning in Everyday Life.**

Positive vs. Negative Errors - Given the number of errors the players will make, it is important to help them find good things in the many mistakes. Each skill has an ideal ball placement and many inaccurate placements. Look for the good and help your player make good mistakes. For example, it is better to set a ball too far off the net or too high rather than too close to the net or too low? Toshi Yoshida, head coach of the 2004 USA Women’s Olympic team, stresses this daily calling them **“Good Misses”** (too far off) and **“Bad Misses”** (too tight).

Penalties of Any Sort Should be Minimized - The ideal penalty is **not playing** rather than wind sprints or push-ups. When someone should be penalized in a drill, have them sit out for a time period or until a teammate replaces them in the “doghouse” of sorts. Through the concept of “winners stay on,” many great beach and indoor players have learned by watching when they were younger and then keeping the court when older.

What coaches should use, if they feel such physical discipline is required, is short court-sized sprints, block jumps and spike approaches. A better option is to reduce a workout load by a small factor as a reward (but still working out) to emphasize the positive image of exercise. At the same time, make the punishment the denial of the chance to train or exercise. Otherwise, the workout desired is seen as a punishment, creating an all-too-present attitude that “exercise is bad”.

Teach Attitudes - A “bad” attitude is simply one that prevents an individual from improving. Many coaches, even at the higher levels of volleyball, find they must first teach players what makes a “good” attitude. Development of a good attitude must begin on the court. In a related way, both movement and communication skills, including talking on the court, must be emphasized at the entry levels.

Coach Democratically - Coaches must share coaching responsibilities with players. This is part of making a true team; as a result, the team will have many “coaches”, (not assistants, equal status). Former YJOVD Grassroots Commission member Marty Miller put it best by noting the “fallacy of adult wisdom”; emphasizing that adults seem to think that all knowledge resides only in the adult coach’s brain. The best teams share all levels of coaching with the players, including Olympic teams. Call timeouts and let the kids tell themselves what to do; coaches are often surprised at their players’ insight.

Talk Attention- Many coaches spend a great deal of time worrying and talking about distractions that exist. Get away from such talk and instead focus all efforts on teaching each individual how to attend to what is important. Better concentration in practice will help speed skill development. However, no player can concentrate 100% of the time. Teach players when to relax and when to re-focus. Let them practice this important skill. **Ask questions-** learning is best when the athletes must figure out most of the answers. This may be a bit slower way of teaching, but the result is better players. This is called the Socratic Method of coaching and it is the model that *IMPACT* and USAV-CAP coaches should follow. Once the skill, idea or technique is understood, coaches ask questions rather than dictate answers. Volleyball is a game for the players; the coach has very little involvement in the higher levels of the game. Players must learn problem-solving skills and decision-making skills in practice, not just in the game.

The goal is that players will no longer have the habit of whirling their heads to the team bench after an error to get the “answers” from the coach. Teach them to teach themselves.

When speaking to players, use “I” and “we” phrases such as, “*I see...*,” and “*We need to...*,” not the “*you*” that puts them on the defensive. Ask, do not just tell. And when questioning them, do not just ask “Yes/No” questions, where a simple yes or no answer can be made. Ask questions requiring more than these two monosyllabic responses.

When calling a group of players in for a teachable moment, ask the question that caused this moment to occur and then look around. Then ask the question of the person intended. Instead of, “*Cody, where should we be when the second contact is made by the opponents?*” ask “*Where should we be when the second contact is made by the opponents?*”...pause and look around at all the players ... then finish with the intended player’s name, “...Cody?” This way **everyone** stays intent on figuring out the answer to the question even if not called upon.

Another hint that works wonders is to use the word “*and*” anytime coaches are about to use the word “*but*.” No matter how many compliments coaches say before they say “*but...*,” once that word is said, the door is closed and players do not hear or remember the compliments or positive wording. Use “*and*” and you will be just that much further ahead in your coaching skills.

Foster the players’ ability to ask internal questions so they can make good judgments without the coach’s presence. At the same time, coaches should show them why it is desirable to strive in the direction they know is best for that player. “*We*” also promotes team unity.

There is no “Trying” in Volleyball! - There is nothing a volleyball coach asks that a player cannot do; thus, “*I can’t*” must be changed to something like “*How many times out of 10 can I do it?*” In the same way, “*trying*” simply provides an excuse for not doing something, and “*I’m trying*” must be changed to “*I will*.” Trying does not exist on a court—either one does it or one does not. Each and every trial is a new opportunity to improve. Remember Jedi Master Yoda in the Movie Star Wars? To paraphrase this very wise coach, “**Do or do not. There is no try.**”

NOTES:

Be Nonverbally Positive - Speaking is only one form of communication. Non-verbal communications, such as gestures of hostility and happiness, facial expressions of joy or sadness, and behaviors of kindness or anger all express clear messages to players. Remember that how one expresses oneself is often as important as what is actually said. Faced with the pressures and excitement of competitive sports, coaches must think carefully about what they say and the emotions that are communicated. Teach players about teamwork, gestures and actions – their own and the coach's.

Be a Good Model - While the coach need not be a volleyball *player* to be a good volleyball *coach*, the coach must be a good volleyball *model*, since ***words have little meaning to beginning motor skill learners***. It is essential that coaches have a good idea of how to model fundamental skills. Show players what is wanted, do not just tell them. When given the opportunity, participate at clinics rather than just watch – this will help hone the coach's own skills.

Teachable Moments - A coach's effectiveness as a teacher depends on his or her ability to recognize "teachable moments". These are the times when a valuable lesson can be learned by stopping a drill or even a scrimmage to comment on an incident. However, coaches must exercise caution in stopping play too frequently or players will lose interest and not listen. Many playing mistakes do not need a comment. Indeed, the coach's attention should be on what should be done, or what was done right, rather than on what was done wrong. Talk individually as much as possible, even if saying the same things a dozen times. This is preferred and has more impact than lecturing the whole group ... unless the whole group is making the ***same mistake*** and needs the ***same feedback***.

A coach should create what is needed from the ideas and information gained from this book and clinic, as well as other sources and training experiences. Remember, ***what you emphasize is what your players will do***. Each skill has fundamental keys that the players must know and understand. If correct fundamentals are emphasized, a coach will have a good team. Do not clutter their minds with all sorts of small details. Players can help their teammates and younger players as long as they know the key things that should be done.

Attend to Desired Results - Attention at this level is a powerful reinforcement. If coaches give their attention to mistakes, even if this attention is ***negative*** in words or action, they are reinforcing the error's existence. Players and coaches tend to give too much attention to errors. Teammates who moan and groan about an error or spend a long time comforting the player who erred are slowing down their development. Coaches and players need to learn to ignore the mistakes and instead focus on the next play where they still have control over what will occur. There should be no crying over spilled milk, or over a teammate's error. A player can make one mistake, that of a bad skill execution, but must not make a second one by grieving over it.

Players also lead coaches down this negative path by asking the universal question, "*Coach, what am I doing wrong?*" This forces the first words out of the coach's mouth to be about an error and focuses on one of the million ways to do a skill incorrectly. Help the player ask the right kind of question and you will be making a big step toward focusing on the right things rather than the wrong ones.

Cooperation Development - Teamwork development takes place both on and off the court. There are going to be a large number of errors made in volleyball and a coach must never get frustrated at these errors. Players are not making mistakes on purpose. The coach's job is to help every player to react to their teammates with actions that help a teammate. Touching helps build cohesion. Train players to slap hands or huddle in the middle after a play to say or do a positive action on the next play.

Competition and Self Discipline - Competition is a great motivator. Everyone wants to play. In youth volleyball, the teams should first learn to cooperate with each other. The ball is the first opponent for a learner in volleyball. Drills and competition should first be cooperative in that both teams play against the ball, rather than each other. Continue to develop this competitive but cooperative attitude in drills at all levels. At the same time, self-discipline creates standards of performance from within. Thus, the second level of focus is on oneself. This is also a key part of the team sport of volleyball. No one player can win a volleyball game alone. The focus in practice and the game should be in improving one's own performance, to contribute to the team performance, not worrying about winning or the opponents. The will to win is important, but the total development of each individual is far more important.

It comes down to self-control. The sooner players realize that only they can control how they react and how they deal with everything on the court and in life, the better their lives will be. They cannot control the bad pass of a teammate; they can only control how they will deal with it. Every great team understands the concept of "bettering the ball", which is the individually developed attitude to improve on every previous contact, no matter what it was.

Under the stress of game play, the only thing coaches can be sure of is a certain amount of regression in skill level. This “game slippage,” as Vince Lombardi called it, requires both players and coaches to over-learn. Such over-learning requires discipline. There is no room for excuses on the volleyball court. Coaches must know each individual’s abilities and demand improvement yet not make demands beyond the player’s real capabilities. Players need to make and keep promises to themselves; coaches can help a great deal with this task.

“Since we learn best in training situations that are basically game-like, we should incorporate three contact drills as often as possible. I am convinced that the best hitting drills are pass, set, hit (P-S-H), the best setting drills are P-S-H and the best passing drills are P-S-H. Likewise, the best defensive drills are dig, set, hit combinations.”

- Marv Dunphy, 2000 Men’s U.S. Olympic Team Coach, 1988 Olympic Gold Medal Coach

We MUST Let Them *PLAY* - Thousands of years ago Plato said, “it is the essential nature of man to play”. Stuart Brown has spent decades studying how life can be enhanced through play. Visit the web site for the Institute for Play (www.nifplay.org), where their trademarked motto is “PLAY is Cross-Training for Life.” Brown writes that he has found that “...*general well being and play are partners, and that it accompanies the most gifted in their adult achievements. Perhaps it allows access to the giftedness that we all possess.*”

“Our major new functional hypothesis is that play enables animals to develop flexible kinesthetic and emotional responses to unexpected events in which they experience a sudden loss of control. Specifically, we propose that play functions to increase the versatility of movements used to recover from sudden shocks...Furthermore, we propose that play is often stimulated by novel or unpredictable stimuli and is, thus, related to, although different from, exploration.”

- Training for the Unexpected by Marc Bekoff et al, Quarterly Review of Biology, Vol 76, #2.

The research on play also reveals that the opposite of “play” is not “work” but actually is “depression”. Letting kids play develops leadership skills, adaptability and flexibility.

Improving a Little Can Win a Lot - Improving a small amount in one’s game of volleyball can result in winning more in the long run. The mathematical theory of Finite Markov chains is where this can best be seen, and is found most easily when pitting two players head-to-head, as in tennis. If two players have identical abilities, then they have the same probability of winning each point. If 100 points are played, each will win 50 points.

However, if one player is able to increase his or her ability over that opponent by even just a small amount (to the point of winning 55 out of the 100 points), then things start to happen.

NOTES:

“The great performers perform as they do, and do so with such ease, because they love what they are doing.

It’s not work.

It’s play.”

- Chuck Hogan, Director of Athletics and the Intelligence of Play -

The probability of winning a game is now 62%; of winning a set rises to 81% and winning two out of three set matches soars to 91%. The longer one plays a better player, the more ways there are to beat the opponent. Volleyball is similar, complicated by six opponents and five teammates. Still, research at Brigham Young University found that if one team is equal to their opponents, thus having a 15-15 season, if they get just one point better than every opponent, it will become a 20-10 season.

Eye Focus Errors - While going through the motion without the ball can be a valuable rehearsal for beginners, all players must make sure the action is still as game-like as possible. Without the ball to focus on, players look at some non game-like place (such as the floor), and the skill action is not as valuable as it could be. Some common errors and the correct focus include: blocking—looking at the top of the net instead of through the net at the imaginary hitter; spiking—looking at the floor rather than up at the falling imaginary ball; extension rolling—looking at the floor rather than up for the imaginary ball coming over the net. Make sure players' eyes are looking where they would in the game, during any rehearsal or no-ball dry run.

Constructive Sandwich - Start with a positive comment/compliment ("*Great hustle, that is just how we do it*"), then follow with next contact instruction ("*If you swing faster, you will hit the ball higher and it will clear the net on the same ball next time*"). What was done is done, and the focus must therefore be on the future. Then close with another positive statement/compliment.

Coach Proactively, Not Reactively - Train players to remember in advance of a situation; do not yell and react after the fact. In the same way, the idea is to coach, not just to state the obvious. Too many coaches communicate what was wrong, rather than coaching on how not to make the same error next time.

Eliminate Dead Time - Avoid or change drills that have players standing around. This can cause boredom and even lead to discipline problems. Coaches may even need to be more of a wandering ball feeder, so players can turn to the coach to get a ball, rather than chase a ball into a far off corner while the other players wait around.

Practice What You Preach - Explain and model the behaviors you want the players to have in practice, match play, road trips and instructional situations. Encouragement, team support, information sharing and feedback are all very important in behavioral change.

Avoid Sarcasm - Marv Dunphy once said, "*There is no room for sarcasm in coaching.*" This is especially true with younger players and those who have only played for you for a short amount of time. Some coaches can and have used teasing and sarcasm in a positive way. The key thing is, it can be easily misinterpreted and coaches may not even know that it is happening. Just say what you think and refrain from sarcasm when coaching Junior Olympic Volleyball hopefuls.

Shout Praise, Whisper Criticism - In a related way, do an instant replay of a great play on the court with the ball -- with the coach holding the ball and moving it in "slow motion" and providing exciting commentary on how good the play was. Create and give athlete nicknames that are only positive, empowering and good. Make sure no negative nicknames are used.

Teach Observation Through The Net - Players focus on the ball too much and not the opponent. Teach them to look at the court/players while the ball is flying in the air. For example, in the skills of blocking and defense, once the set is made, players should take the eyes off the ball and look at the attacker. After setting, the setter should look at the opponent's defense and talk to her hitter. Players on the bench must know what the other team is doing, and by the end of the game they must be able to report on who their best players are, who talks the most, who is the most verbal player, how many serves were put over, and how many free balls the opponents give. Split the watching of "our team" stats with "their team" stats.

Right Here – Right Now Focus - If coaches have a player who continually focuses on the past/errors, rather than playing in the "Right here/Right now" focus that players must learn, insert a teachable moment, for example:

Have the player play several points while holding on to some sort of bag or suitcase, maybe even two bags or wearing a backpack; then point out for everyone how much better they play without having to carry such "baggage" as the past can be.

Use Positive Charting – Rather than having the coaches "Radar Detection" being turned on only for errors, start "positive charting" to increase everyone's (even parents) awareness, of how many good things a player or the team is doing. Look not only for things like proper skill execution, but also for the team building side such as great hustle and encouragement. Be honest, with the goal being to have about the same number of "positives" charted (2-6 is great) for each player per practice. Review them at the end of training, and summarize at the start of the next practice.

Make Things Game-like - It is much easier and faster to develop coordination and spatial awareness when players are young. Gymnasts are a good example of a youngster's capabilities. What coaches should know is that just by teaching the many fundamentals through game-like drills they will broadly develop every player's coordination, anticipation and imagination. The end result of practice is to be able to play the game of volleyball well. There are thousands of errors that a player can make in each skill. What coaches want to focus on in practices is improving on the fundamentals for each individual. There is no need to spend large amounts of time in completing non-volleyball actions to develop a base of coordination. The multitude of coordination demands found in volleyball actions will provide this base. The more like the game and skills of volleyball the drills are, the sooner players will have success in the game.

Do not rush ahead to the many options that are found in the game. Keep the focus on doing the fundamentals well. Do the **BASE** and game-like pass/set/hit drills often, and build competition into practice drills to make it worth their while. No matter what the player's age, volleyball should be enjoyable, especially in practice. Help every player see the improvement, no matter how small it may be. Help every player determine personal goals as well as the team's goals.

Ask these game-like questions of each program and each coach:

- What % of the time when spiking in a game, do players hit against no block – and what % do players hit without a block in practice?
- What % of points scored in a game start with a serve?
- What % of volleyball is mental and what % of the time is the mental side of the game taught in practice?
- What % of serve reception is done before the ball crosses the net and what % of the time are players learning the same over the net information when they and a partner pass on same side of the net?
- What % of "free" balls does the team get in a game and what % are used in wash or other games started by a coach?
- What % of the time does the ball come from outside the court in a game, compared to what % a coach initiate drills/games from outside the court?
- What % of the time does the ball change angles in a game, vs. during a partner drill?
- What % of the time can a player run under the net in a game, or throw a ball to the setter?

Three Is The Magic Number - The general pattern of volleyball play uses all three contacts. The fundamental pattern of RECEIVE-SET-ATTACK should be developed early on, while also improving single-skill actions. One of the inherent advantages of focusing on the three fundamental skills of receiving, setting and serving is that rallies will last much longer. The idea is to build a strong skill base in these three key skills.

This will enable the players, when more experienced, to have success in spiking and additional skill options. Long rallies mean the players are learning to contact the ball, not how to retrieve the ball or watch a teammate run after yet another error.

However, this cooperation is not seen in most levels of play. Instead, one sees the first contact turning into the team's last contact, either because of a reception error or because the first contact is sent back over the net. There is a greater chance of error using all three contacts, partly because the second contact target area—the setter— is not large, especially when compared to the target area of an entire half court for the returned ball.

NOTES:

Remember, this one-touch “teamwork” is further developed by most partner and wall drills. These drills teach players to return the ball to where it came from. In such drills, the final goal is accuracy that requires no movement by the partners. Yet the cornerstones to success in volleyball are movement and rebounding the ball to a target, that target rarely being one which is from where the ball just arrived. Coaches should refrain from using partner, wall and single-player drills. Instead, foster cooperation and develop game-like habits in groups of three or more to re-create the angles seen in a game. There are fewer contacts in triplet drills, but it is a matter of quality over quantity. When the players are in your gym, keep them in groups of three or more for most drills. Indeed, youth volleyball is in many ways just a fun combination triangle drill with opponents also involved.

When the players leave the gym, they will often only be able to practice against a wall or with one other friend. It is not that coaches should discourage such extra practice. It only means that they should make extra effort to help the athletes overcome the straight line habits and work on the game-like angles of the game during the organized practice sessions. It will pay off quickly in successful, improved, three-contact teamwork instead of ping-pong-like, one-contact efforts.

COACHING SKILLS

Too often practices are seen to have most players touching the ball a couple hundreds times, with a couple of them getting lots more touches (the setters), and one person getting more than any one player...the coach! The sooner the players start hitting, setting, serving *THEMSELVES*, the sooner they will get better. Coaches hit so many balls in old style trainings that they have to hit the ball side arm to save their shoulder! And where ...*ever*... in a game will diggers face a *sidearm hitter?!* Let the players learn what coaches already know so the result is a team of assistant coaches, rather than “the one adult in charge.”

Coaches will need to be involved in certain wash drills they create. There is a key skill that each coach must be able to perform with the ball– that of hitting at/near players for replaying wash drill errors for success, or for developing team defensive skills. Never forget that players must learn this skill as well, yet there are times when the coach will need to perform this action.

Whoever it is, the attack should have control, a high toss and readable actions. They should be volleyball-like attacks and the ball should fall from a game-like height, so the players can learn proper timing.

There is no reason to hit using a sidearm or roundhouse action if none of the opponents have such hitters. At the same time, should the opponents perhaps whiff balls and do all sorts of off-balance hitting, the coach, on a stable hitting platform if doing team defense over the net (NOT on a chair!), should attempt the same shots at times. For taller coaches the floor is the hitting platform. Too many coaches toss lower, easier to time (for the coach) balls, that are not like the high sets one side will attack and the other side will defend against. These lower set balls are to come only in the quick hitting areas of the net.

Coaches must learn the skill of keeping their eyes on the player being coached, even if running the drill. Have another player “feed” you balls on your hip; you should not have to take your eyes off the performers to look for the next ball. Learn to give feedback to one player even as you are giving a new ball to the next player. The job of the feeders and ball collectors is very important in every drill; it is not a time to loaf. Contacts increase when collectors do their job. Collectors must cooperate so everyone learns more.

Coaches may have to serve some but the players should also serve. No coach ever won a game by how good his/her service was; it is the players’ game. Coaches must pay special attention to developing a setter in practice and let the setters set, set, set. The time coaches spend to make the setter better makes all the hitters better, while the converse is not true.

PRE-SEASON PLANNING

Successful coaches begin planning their programs before the season begins. Many problems can be avoided if coaches take the time to think through what they want to achieve and how they are going to do it. While everyone plays volleyball in the backyard and at picnics, many coaches are not comfortable with how to teach volleyball by the rules. Because volleyball is not on television very often, coaches and athletes often do not have a good image of what the many skills really look like.

Some suggested activities that will help with planning your programs:

- Find out as much as possible about the organization of USA Volleyball programs by reading this Manual and speaking to program administrators and experienced coaches.
- Increase personal knowledge about coaching by attending coaches’ training programs (USAV-CAP) and reading books on how to coach volleyball. Coaches will get many ideas about drills and practice that can be filtered and used with their teams.
- Purchase and study USAV-CAP’s Performance Coaching Series DVD’s for video clips of the best technique models. Utilize drill creation and practice planning web sites and tools.

- Attend local collegiate or high school matches and practices. This will help coaches see skills being done properly and they can adapt the fundamentals and drill ideas for skills for use in their practices.
- Videotape or get copies of volleyball games from television or from college and high school coaches. Players and their parents also need to see how the game is played at higher levels so everyone involved can relate what they are learning to the future.
- Arrange meetings for both players and parents, both for the whole program as well as individual groups or teams. These are ideal times to ask for volunteers to be assistant coaches, administrators, etc., and to help out in many other ways.
- Be sure to set up emergency plans, including access to any gym used. Be aware of locked doors, phone locations, etc., when using facilities after hours and on weekends. Have a phone chain that will allow participants to be reached quickly.
- Arrange for sports medicine training for all staff through the local Red Cross or other agencies.
- Practice Plans - By referring to the practices and drills described in this manual, coaches will have information needed to write specific practice plans. One of the very unique and creative things about volleyball is how the coach can create many good drills from the **BASE** drill ideas presented. The last thing coaches need to get is a book of hundreds of volleyball drills. Look for ideas to improve existing drills, but do not use non- game-like drills just to do something “new”. Drills are simply solutions to problems your team is experiencing. Learn to create the solutions your team needs.

With as little time as most teams have to practice, everything should be as game-like as possible. Good coaches use good drills often, and just change the challenges within the **BASE** drill formats (see Chapter 6). Any clinic attended will supply numerous drills that can successfully be adapted both to youth and to higher levels of volleyball.

When introducing a new or unfamiliar activity, it may be helpful to make some additional notes on practice plans. It is likely that coaches will need to modify these plans as the situation dictates. They are simply guidelines to follow; it is the success levels of the players that should move the practice to a harder drill, not the lesson plans. There is no such thing as doing a good drill too often. Establish medium-high success levels before moving on to make solid and confident players. Just be creative and encouraging in all effort and performances.

Make sure to be conscious of the playing ability of athletes. If there is trouble with a drill, look at the choices and make adjustments for the players. It might be that the explanation was the problem—perhaps the coach just talked about it, rather than showing it. Be flexible and try to progress at a speed compatible with the abilities of the players.

Equipment for each practice should include at least one volleyball per player and a net set at the proper height for every team. While water breaks may not be actually scheduled into each plan, remember to include breaks or even use them as a subtle reward for good effort or drill work.

TEAM BUILDING

Teamwork is the essence of life, and volleyball is the ultimate TEAM sport. Unlike other sports where one person can dominate to score the winning goal, baskets, or whatever - this game cannot be dominated without teammate help.

NOTES:

USA Volleyball has looked long and hard at how best to build a team, and this section focuses on sharing other ideas with each coach who may have had to do the same. No volleyball team can be successful with players who put themselves ahead of the team - selfishness destroys volleyball teams. As the great John Wooden once wrote, **"The team is the star, never an individual player."**

Coaches must take time to find out as much as they can about their players. This is even more paramount to the non-school high school coach or the Junior Olympic coaches who do not see their players daily. A favorite way to learn about a new group of athletes is the "Volleyball Player" drawing that includes 10-15 important questions for players to answer about themselves. Asking open ended questions during travel or down time at tournaments builds on this base.

This also will provide the coach with key info to best meet the team needs, and better determine each player's role on the team, which is an essential task for team success. Helping each player, and the team as a group, set well-defined "SMART" goals is also a way to help build your team. Creating a list of team goals is an excellent team building exercise!

A coach will get what he or she tolerates, so reward all positive efforts during team play. Use Positive Charting, and "Hollywood Star" ideas to acknowledge the efforts/ improvements/ teamwork moments the coach want to develop. Recognize sacrifice, for without it a team or player will never know its own potential.

On the court, the best teams know the concept of **"Bettering the Ball"**. As players push their own personal envelope, doing things they have never done before in becoming the best they can be, they will err. The poor pass should be made better by the player setting it, while the imperfect set is bettered by the attacker. Errors are just part of playing on a team, while what a team does with the errors is more important.

If two individuals are an Olympic Beach team, they have on the team the following members:

1. The teammate I am
2. The teammate you are
3. The teammate I think I am
4. The teammate you think you are
5. The teammate I think you are
6. The teammate you think I am
7. The teammate I think you think I am
8. The teammate you think I think you are

The dynamics blending facts and opinions, the dance of perceptions and realities, is where all problems develop. The image a coach thinks he or she projects is likely different from the one the players perceive which may be anywhere on the continuum of coaching, from total control freak to complete player dominated training.

Group Needs - Each team has needs, and the top three that too many coaches fail to meet are known as affiliation, influence and most important, those of competency.

- **Competency**

Competency is perhaps the most important of these three key needs, for on a team of 12, only six can show on-court competency as players at any one time. This is why it is suggested that coaches play mind games, riddles and brain teasers with the players, for it is often the non-starter who first figures out the answer. Or who teaches the team how to bowl...or surf...or dance, etc.

- **Influence**

Influence needs allow the players to guide and impact the direction of the group/team. If coaches are comfortable with two or three different places to eat out with the team then let the team decide. Let them set the team rules and consequences, with the coach's guidance. Make sure each player has a fair shot at getting the jersey number they want. Teach them pre-match warm up options and let them pick the ones they want to use. Listen to their music on the radio. Even let them run practices or pick a favorite drill or game to play.

- **Affiliation**

Examples of affiliation needs are found just by looking around the gym or classroom. Several will have volleyball t-shirts on. Players and coaches are affiliated with the family of volleyball when wearing sport uniforms. Teams have songs, slogans, hair ribbons and socks...and other special ways of associating with the team. Public signs of unity are important.

Touching Builds Cohesion - As mentioned earlier, touching builds cohesion. Many of the fun warm ups/cool downs can serve as team building exercises, not only through problem-solving, but with the players making physical contact with each other in the activity.

This is also where coaches should have the team participate in non-volleyball activities where these non-starters excel, such as musical "concerts," ropes courses, other sports warm-ups/cross training, etc. Circle back rubs, trust games like the "blind walk", "cookie machine", back massages with the ball, and so on also work towards this.

Team Building Examples - There are many good books on the specifics of team building for corporations and teams. Some ideas that are common in volleyball include such activities as "*Varsity Mentor*" and "*Secret Sisters*". Others team building activities include:

- Sleepovers,
- Drawing Objects with one "coach" and one "player" back to back not seeing how they are doing
- Filling out USAV Goal Setting forms or creating SMART goals
- Team Dinners with kids cooking
- Team Fundraisers
- Team shirts including Tie dyed shirts
- Player handbook with pictures
- Movie clips that matter to each kid
- Stand all team members on spare tire and many other physical challenges that are positive, powerful and done by the team.

More team building ideas may be found on the on-line **IMPACT Resources** pages at www.usavolleyball.org.

A LOOK AT WINNING

Again, the simple fact that is too often forgotten is that HALF the teams playing every match ...LOSE! This section is from **Sportscope**, which has asked **IMPACT** to share this information with all USA Volleyball members. This important topic traditionally has been filled with clichés. At one extreme is the belief that winning is the only thing and at the other is that winning does not matter or is not important. Reality is probably somewhere between these two extremes. The importance of winning has been considered by virtually every adult involved in youth sports. Unfortunately, glib clichés may interfere with a thoughtful consideration of the problem.

Clearly, there can be too much of an emphasis on winning; however, those who advocate the position that winning is not important often miss the point that without an attempt to win the contest, the activity is no longer sport. **The essence of sport is trying to win**; without that attempt, the activity is of a different nature. For example, if two athletes of dramatically different skill levels are playing tennis, often the superior athlete will begin to teach the less-skilled athlete. While admirable, teaching is not sport. Two individuals on a golf course who are more interested in being together as friends change the situation from competitive sport to a social interaction.

Regardless of each coach's personal point of view on this subject, emphasize that while winning is an essential part of sport, youth sports have many other complementary goals. A key point is to get both athletes and parents to acknowledge that while winning is an important part of sport it must be kept in perspective with the other valuable aspects of youth sports such as social development, fun, fitness, etc.

THE DOUBLE GOAL COACH

On their website (www.positivecoach.org), the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) advocates what they call the "Double-Goal Coach" philosophy. Certification through this program ensures that youth sports and school coaches have gained knowledge of what is called "Honoring the Game", which is a "deeper, more focused evolution of sportsmanship."

NOTES:

Double-Goal Coaches have learned up-to-date, research-based strategies, tools and techniques in sport psychology and Positive Coaching. In their definition, the Double-Goal Coach strives to win and at the same time uses sports to teach life lessons through Positive Coaching. Thus, winning (the first goal) is important, yet doing what is best for the athlete (the second goal) is of equal importance. Coaches interested in becoming a Certified Double-Goal Coach should visit the PCA's website for more information on this program.

WHAT "WINNING" DOES

With the "double goals" from above in mind, the following section contains some points to consider in any fruitful discussion of the importance of winning in junior volleyball.

Winning Builds Confidence - The old cliché "show me a loser and I'll show you a loser" is often cited here. Winning does build confidence, especially when that winning represents a true accomplishment, i.e., "I have beaten a worthy opponent." **However, winning against other teams when they are not at the same skill level does little to bolster self-confidence.**

Winning Gains One Access To Rewards And Special Privileges - Clearly, winners and highly-skilled athletes often get better fields, more recognition, greater prestige, more fans, more rewards, trophies and ribbons and perhaps even local TV and media coverage. Denial of this phenomenon does little to keep winning in a healthy perspective.

However, in youth sports programs the adult leadership must continually be watchful that the younger, less-skilled and less-experienced athletes are not denied fair access to the opportunity to learn and participate.

Winning Increases In Importance As Kids Get Older - Win-loss records prior to the age of puberty have little effect on the respect and regard that kids have for their youth sport coaches. During the teenage years, win-loss accomplishments do influence the respect young athletes have for their coach.

Research clearly shows that prior to age 12, 75% of the youngsters would prefer to play for a losing team ... than sit on the bench of a winning team!

Such facts emphasize the importance that coaches of younger athletes should not merely mimic the behavior of successful coaches of older youngsters.

Winning Increases Motivation - While this statement may seem self-evident, research findings point out situations where winning can be quite de-motivating. For example, when the probability of success (i.e., winning) is very high the contest often lacks the excitement and vigor of a more closely-contested match. **A perceived probability of success of approximately 50% produces higher levels of motivation than higher or lower probabilities of success.** So in these less-than-competitive match situations, **set goals within the contest.**

Winning Becomes A More Appropriate Goal If the Definitions Are Broadened- For example, winning can be defined as self-improvement and/or as goal attainment. Improving on one's previous performance or attaining previously set goals can be interpreted as success in a setting where by definition there are only a limited number of winners (i.e., 1st places). If sport is to be viewed as beneficial for children, it must benefit the majority of participants in a meaningful way, rather than be limited to the elite few who ultimately win the actual contest.

Winners Handle Failure Better - A .300 hitter in baseball means the player is "out" seven out of 10 times at bat. The difference between a good .300 hitter and a mediocre .250 hitter is only one more hit in every 20 times at bat.

Winning Does Not Ensure The Quality Of The Performance - One can perform well and still finish second; conversely, one can perform poorly, yet still win because the opponent also failed to perform well. Mastery programs where the athletes are asked to meet a minimum level of performance often produce higher levels of performance than do competitive programs.

Winning In Youth Sports Is Relative To Whom You Play - That is, winning often depends more upon who does the scheduling than the performance level of the athletes. If a coach schedules his/her team against only inferior opponents, their won-loss record might be good but the accomplishment is clearly devalued. Relative skill level is a crucial factor in sport at all levels.

Winning Is How It Was Won, Not Whether It Was Won - Winning within the boundaries of the rules and ethics of sportsmanship can place a great premium on winning without distorting the basic sporting values which many would like to see children learn. In fact, a strong argument can be made for the fact that true sportsmanship cannot exist unless there is an honest desire to win. **Playing fair when one has no concern about the outcome of the game does not adhere to the same level of ethics as when one wants to win the contest and adheres to the same standards of fair play and good sportsmanship.**

Winning Involves Maturity - Winning in youth sports programs is most influenced by the athlete's state of physiological maturity. It is more important than coaching, individual effort, equipment or any other normally valued aspect of sport. "Clean-up batters" in the Little League World Championships (a contest for 12-year-olds and under) have been found consistently to be post-pubescent in terms of physical maturity. Coaches often are given credit for an outstanding season when they simply have had the more physically gifted/mature athletes.

**"Players get better every day from the Competitive Cauldron."
 "We keep score on everything we do in practice."
 "The only environment you truly develop a player in is in a competitive arena."
 At UNC, you lose in practice every day."
 ~ Anson Dorrance ~**

Winning Is Evidenced In Achievement - Successful youth sports coaches reinforce participation, effort and achievement, in that order. As a young athlete's age, maturity and experience develop, successful coaches shift their emphasis from simply participating to trying hard with one's best effort. As age, maturity and experience factors continue to develop, the coach's emphasis changes further to reinforcing doing well, achieving performance goals and winning the contests.

THE COMPETITIVE CAULDRON

This is a term that has grown more and more popular in the athletic world the last few years. It seems that everyone is using the phrase...*but what does it mean?!* The concept's popularity has been attributed to Anson Dorrance, legendary head coach of the University of North Carolina Women's Soccer Team and the former U.S. Women's National Team head coach. Dorrance's teams have won a mind-blowing 18 of 25 NCAA national championships held in the history of collegiate women's soccer, while compiling an unbelievable record of 602 wins - 27 losses - 18 ties in the 27-year history of the program - a shocking winning percentage of .944 percent.

Dorrance holds an "A" level coaching license from the United States Soccer Federation, and has analyzed and made a science (and career) of coaching female athletes. It appears that no one may know the ins and outs of that better than Coach Dorrance, who says that the best way to motivate most men is with intensity and personal challenges, but he also understands that this same approach doesn't work well with most women. Unlike most men, most women do not naturally enjoy competing against their friends and teammates. Women tend to value their relationships over the competition and it is important to lead women athletes by relating to them personally. However, Dorrance and others feel that competition (the *Competitive Cauldron*) is a major key to developing players, so keeping score to track every player's progress, every practice in everything they do, is the key to getting women - and all athletes - to compete and win.

In order to compete successfully in any sport or arena, coaches must encourage very competitive practices, whether coaching males or females. So, one of the first things any player has to learn, then accept, and then believe in, is that it is not just okay to compete against, defeat and even pound on your teammates ... it is expected ... and it is for the good of the group - *the team*. This means that in the Competitive Cauldron everything in practice is recorded, scored, ranked and - at the appropriate levels - posted for the players to see.

NOTES:

In volleyball, players can be scored on their fitness levels, speed, endurance and agility, as well as their skills - serving, passing, setting, hitting, blocking, digging, etc, and in games of 2 v 2, 3 v 3, 4 v 4, 6 v 6, etc. If it is worth doing in practice, then the results should get recorded.

And so for Dorrance every drill, every practice, every day and every week, every player on the squad knows exactly where she stands in comparison to every other player in every facet of the game. Thus, players earn the right to play by proving it on the practice court head-to-head against their teammates. They know that winning in practice results in more personal playing time, but it also means their relationship group - *the team* - wins. Results are posted every day on the board. Someone is going to be at the top of the list, and someone is going to be at the bottom. Those near the top may play more than those at the bottom.

Some might think, "*that's pretty cruel,*" or "*what about that kid at the bottom of the list? I would never want my child to play for such an insensitive coach.*" Dorrance's rationale is that competitors and champions want to move up the rankings, and can't stand being near the list's bottom. The rankings motivate players to succeed - to **win**.

**"We see people not as they are,
but as we are."**

~ Barry Oshry ~

One example he talks about is how one year a freshman was near the bottom of that list, losing every 1 v 1 competition that season. *Not one single victory*. This player could have been crushed and defeated, but instead went on as a senior to *never lose* a 1 v 1 game - this senior won every single one. Oh, and by the way, this player went on to captain the USA Women's Soccer Team (Carla Overbeck), which ended up winning an Olympic Gold Medal.

In another example, another UNC player competed on the U.S. National Under-20 Team, and they lost a game to the Norway squad. After the game the US coach said, "How does it feel to finally lose a game?" Without missing a beat, the player replied, "Coach, at UNC you lose in practice every day." Dorrance has a mentor from whom he learned this idea of recording and ranking everything - Dean Smith, another legendary UNC coach, let him watch his practices. He learned it from him.

The Competitive Cauldron concept has taken off, with some of the best club, high school, collegiate and international volleyball coaches now using the same methods in their practices to successfully prepare their players - male or female - for the competition they will face on the court during matches. The USA Men's National Team uses this system, keeping stats during practices on a whiteboard next to the court, and leaving them up all week, sometimes longer.

Find ways in your practices to give your athletes the chance to practice being competitive and to find a way to win. A good way to start is by holding a special kind of linear ranking tournament, sometimes referred to as a Bjerring Tournament (originally created for the Canadian Volleyball Association by a British Columbia mathematician named James Bjerring). The tournament is based on the premise that everyone will play "with" and "against" everyone else the same number of times. At the end the results will rank order athletes from number 1 to 24 based on their playing ability. Linear Ranking Tournaments can be played in a 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 format at the start of the season....maybe used at the start of every practice throughout the year. Challenge your athletes by recording stats in practice - **challenge them to win in practice**.

GENDER MATTERS: WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW

The following information was approved for inclusion in this **IMPACT Manual** by **Kathleen J. DeBoer**, author of **Gender and Competition: How Men and Women Approach Work and Play Differently**, Coaches Choice Publishers, 2004.

So, you still say that coaching girls is no different than coaching boys, right?! Well, not exactly... each views the world in different ways which influences how they practice and how they compete. The best of both worlds might be to train each of your athletes, male or female, to "**practice like a girl**" and "**compete like a boy**".

As much as we'd like to deny it, as much as we'd like to think that all athletes are the same, male or female doesn't matter...the fact is it does matter. How female athletes view such things as teamwork, chemistry competitiveness, motivation, leadership, feedback and criticism is very different from the way male athletes view them. The coaches that understand these differences and vary their coaching approaches based on this information - whether males coaching females, females coaching females, males coaching males or females coaching males - are going to succeed in motivating and training their teams to win more than those coaches who do not understand this.

Karch and Susan: an Illustration

The following story, paraphrased from the book Gender and Communication, is one told often by DeBoer to illustrate the point.

One day two collegiate head coaches, friends and colleagues who knew each other quite well, were talking in the gym bleachers while on a recruiting trip. The male coach said casually to the female coach, "Can I ask you a personal question? Why aren't women competitive?" This question was asked in a very matter of fact tone that seemed to assume he was stating a truth and simply wanted the rationale behind it.

The female coach stiffened. "You're crazy," she bristled. "Women are competitive!" "No," he said assuredly. "Women aren't competitive like men are competitive." She snapped back, "I can't believe I'm hearing this - we are too!"

The male coach then recounted a memory from his days as a USA Men's National team assistant coach.

The team was playing an important match against (back then) world power Russia and were poised to upset them, proving that USA Men's Volleyball was among the world's best. Late in the 5th game the head coach called his last timeout and made a few tactical adjustments. Then he turned to the team's best player, a guy named Karch and said challengingly, "It's time for you to step it up. You're our best player; you're one of the best players in the world - show that now! Win this thing for us." Karch set his jaw looked the coach in the eye and nodded. The team cheered, took the court again and Karch proceeded to take charge of the match, playing with incredible aggressiveness, assuredness and energy which invigorated his team. Team USA won that match.

The male coach in the bleachers recalled that timeout and subsequent win as masterful motivational coaching and filed it for future reference. Several years later this same coach was in a similar situation with his women's collegiate team. They had a chance to beat a perennial NCAA DI power and the scene was the same - 5th game, close score, last time-out.

So, the male coach turned to his best player in the huddle and repeated the words of his mentor: "Susan, it's time for you to step up. You're our best player. Tonight, you can prove you're one of the best players in the country. Win this thing for us - now!"

Susan looked away, paled slightly, looked at the floor and said through clenched teeth, "You don't have to put this all on me." Everyone else on the team looked uneasy and had physically moved away from each other. Susan, still looking away, just said, "Come on, let's just play."

What the coach had intended to be the most dramatic timeout of his career ended with a whimper instead of a bang. The team managed a weak cheer and silently returned to the court.

Susan's play after the timeout was tentative and error-filled. She shanked a pass into the stands, hit the ball so far out that only the gym wall stopped it, and on match point, her team let a "free ball" land on the floor between two players. Point, Game, and Match to the opponent.

As he finished his story the male coach moaned, "I've never been so upset in my life." "They didn't even compete - they gave away a chance of a lifetime." Still wounded from the loss, he demanded, "Now do you see why I think women are not competitive?"

His female colleague replied, "You're an idiot! I knew when you were telling me the story that what was said to Karch was not going to work with Susan."

MALE WORLDVIEW

Who's got the whistle?
How do *I* get the whistle?
When I get the whistle...how can I **keep it**?

FEMALE WORLDVIEW

Do we **NEED** someone with a whistle?
If so, is the person using it appropriately?
If I ever get the whistle, should I use it?

NOTES:

That exchange was the genesis for the DeBoer's Book. She was that female coach and she wanted to figure out in her head what her gut had told her was true.

Gender Cultures

Male culture sees the world very differently than the female culture views it. While males view their world as a hierarchy or mountain to be climbed & conquered, females see it as more of an interconnected web where everyone is on the same level playing field. Males see and speak in action and result oriented words - in verbs. Females see and speak in nouns and are relationship oriented. Males look at life as an "I win-you lose" scenario, while females see it as an "I win-you win" or "I'll lose so you can win" scenario.

**"Female teams engage in more 'Count Drills' (Minimal game like work).
Male Teams engage in more 'Compete Drills' (Minimal technique work)."**
~ Observation made by Bill Neville at the 1990 Olympic Sports Festival ~

Males tend to think more in pictures, and focus more outcomes - females think more in words, focusing more on the process. Males bond more through action and find their identities through opposition, while females bond through interaction and find their identities through connection. Each worldview results in very different responses to coaching.

Gender and Brain Development

The left brain actually develops earlier in females and the right brain earlier in males. As a result, females from an earlier age tend to rely more on verbal skills to understand their world. Males on the other hand, tend to rely more on physical movement and spatial awareness. Males have a larger amygdale - the part of the brain that works primarily on instinct, therefore, they react more in a Fight or Flight (anger or withdrawal) manner. There is some disconnect between their emotions and language (feelings and words). Females have a larger corpus callosum - the part of the brain that connects the two hemispheres, therefore are better at multi-tasking and processing emotional situations verbally.

Males have higher levels of testosterone, which means they are more aggressive, more risk-taking and more independent. Females have higher levels of serotonin, which means they tend and befriend each other ... they "herd to be heard", and take risks only for relationships and connectedness. Left brainers tend to tune in more to subtlety and nuance - too much information is very distracting. Right brainers are better able to hone in on a specific task and tune out extraneous information.

MALE SYSTEM
 -Fight or Flight
 -Overt Aggression
 -Battle to Bond
 -Premium on Proving Self
 -Trains to Get Ahead

FEMALE SYSTEM
 -Tend and Befriend
 -Covert Aggression
 -Bond to Battle
 -Premium on Expressing Self
 -Trains to Get Along

Left brain thinkers think in words:

"When you start becoming reflective about the process it undermines your ability. You lose the flow."

~ Jonathan Schooler ~

Right brain thinkers think in pictures:

"...allowing people to operate without having to explain themselves ... enables rapid cognition."

~ Malcolm Gladwell ~

Practice vs. Competition Ramifications

The Practice situation calls for athletes to be more analytical, focusing on the details - postures, positions, precise routes. It requires them to be process oriented through part to whole teaching and step by step breakdown of the skill and tactics. Practice is repetitive drilling to master skill performance. Practice is very much coach centered with primarily verbal feedback. So which gender feels more "comfortable" in this type of situation? Yep - females!

In comparison, the Competition situation on game day is very much integrative, rewarding athletes for having a "big picture" focus on their opponent's weaknesses, their defensive system and blocking habits. Game competitions are outcome driven and the method is irrelevant to the outcome - one can play lousy and still win. Athletes who can tune out extraneous feedback and have better reactive responses will be more successful in the game situation. Competitions are very player focused with athletes relying more on spatial and perceptive feedback. And which gender feels more "comfortable" in this type of scenario? Right again - males!

Self-Confidence, Praise, Feedback and Criticism

Females tend to deflect praise and internalize criticism, whereas males tend to do just the opposite - they will deflect any criticism of their athletic abilities or performance and internalize any praise, however faint, as their just due.

“I spend most of my time working to convince each boy that I coach that he is not quite as good as he thinks he is, and I spend most of my time working to convince each girl that I coach that she is better than she thinks she is.”

~ US National Soccer Head Coach

Absolutely give feedback - the absence of it is worse than any negative feedback. Especially for girls, always praise in public, but criticize in private - or you may experience the “sympathy backlash” from her teammates. Teach your athletes to accept compliments in an appropriate manner. Understand that self-confidence increases with success, conditioning and the perceived weaknesses of the opponent (**Coaching Volleyball**, Oct. 2004).

What does all this mean for you in your role as a coach?

- Respect the Other Gender’s Paradigm; don’t give in to it.
- Respect your Own Gender Paradigm; don’t give in to it.
- Use Sport as a means to achieve balance in yourself and your athletes.
- **The challenge of coaching is to prepare a team in a left-brain environment (practice) to perform in a right-brain activity (competition).** ~ Mary Jo Pepler ~
- Recognize and help them distinguish the natural predispositions to self-effacing speech (females) and the self-promoting speech (males) from the reality (**Coaching Volleyball**, Oct. 2004).
- For men and boys, push their envelope, their comfort zone, to include more time focusing on the details and repetitions of skill development...then let them compete!

When coaching women’s and girls’ teams:

- ✓ **Practice COMPETING!**
 - × Practice Competing as much as they Practice Technique
 - × Create the stresses of competition in practice
 - × Push their envelope - their comfort zone - increase the practice time spent in Competitive Drills
 - × Know your team and don’t overdo it
 - × And balance competitive drills with calming, process-oriented “count” drills
- ✓ The coach’s effectiveness will be based on their ability to relate to their players
 - × Coaches must establish a **Platonic Connection, a personal connection**, to their players beyond the game; female players need to feel their coach cares about them personally, or has a connection with them beyond just in the game.
 - × Care for your players above and beyond their athletic ability and contribution to the team
- ✓ Verbally deal with competitive stresses
 - × Teach your players how to handle them
 - × Deconstruct situations so players know what is going on
- ✓ Monitor Self Esteem
 - × Monitor the Success/Failure ratios in practice drills such as:
 - ☑ Single Contact Count; Multi contact Count
 - ☑ Single Contact Compete; Multi Contact Compete
 - ☑ Game-like modifications/Wash drills
 - × Talk their language in motivation, criticism and feedback

**MALES must first
BATTLE to BOND
and
FEMALES must first
BOND to BATTLE**

NOTES:

What You Need to Know to Compete:

- Accept your Inner Girl; use her strengths and don't give in to her weaknesses.
- Find your Inner Boy; use his strengths and don't give in to his weaknesses.
- Use Sport as a means to develop your full potential; the Yin/Yang; Heart/Strength

In other words, have your athletes practice like a girl and compete like a boy and you will have *trained the complete athlete!*

CARE TO REVISE YOUR PERSONAL COACHING PHILOSOPHY, NOW?!

Take a moment to edit the draft of your coaching philosophy here, based on the material just covered. Keep a copy of your Philosophy in your coaching file. At least once a year, preferably before your season begins, pull it out, read it over and do some revising if necessary. Especially if moving up or down an age group to coach.



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 under the Resources tab, then click on the Education/IMPACT/Articles links.

- [Linear Ranking Tournaments/Bjerring Tournament Formats](#)
- [Competitive Cauldron; sample score sheets](#)
- [Training Without a Net or Friends](#), John Kessel
- [Team Building Ideas and Quotes](#), John Kessel
- [Kessel's Handy Guide to Ruining a Player](#), John Kessel
- [USA Volleyball Athlete Development Competencies](#)
- [USAV Junior Volleyball Coaching Application](#)
- [USAV Pre/Post Season Coaching Evaluation Form](#)
- [USOC Coaching Effectiveness Evaluation Tool](#)
- [Get to Know Your Volleyball Player Figure - Front & Back](#)
- [Goal Setting Worksheet](#)
- [USAV/NCAA/NAGWS Rules Comparison Chart](#)
- [From Positive to Perfection](#), John Kessel
- [John Kessel Blogs](#) at www.usavolleyball.org

⇒ ALSO LOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY OR ON-LINE:

- Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. ***A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours***. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York. 1992.
- ***Outliers***, by Malcolm Gladwell, Little, Brown and Company, 2008.
- ***The Talent Code***, by Dan Coyle, Bantam Books, 2009.
- ***Gender and Competition: How Men and Women Approach Work and Play Differently***, by Kathleen J. DeBoer, Coaches Choice publishers, 2004.
This is a MUST READ for ALL coaches, male or female, coaching either gender! This book candidly addresses gender differences and discusses in detail the impacts of these differences on communication and competitive behavior. Kathy DeBoer, current Executive Director of the AVCA, is also a USAV-CAP Cadre member, a former elite athlete, collegiate volleyball coach, and athletic director. Most examples are volleyball-related. The author discusses practice, match and recruiting situations, as well as the larger issues of dealing with superiors, players and assistant coaches.
- ***She Can Coach***, Edited by Cecile Reynaud, Human Kinetics Publishers, 2005. Examines the profession of coaching from the perspectives of 20 top female coaches in 13 different sports. More than a playbook of X's and O's, this resource is designed to inspire, motivate and challenge women to excel as coaches.
- ***The Man Watching: A Biography of Anson Dorrance, the Unlikely Architect of the Greatest College Sports Dynasty Ever***, by Tim Crothers, Sports Media Group Publishers, 2006. This isn't just a book about a soccer coach, but about the man and how he has inspired the 200+ young women he has coached to believe that anything is possible.
- ***The Vision Of A Champion: Advice And Inspiration From The World's Most Successful Women's Soccer Coach*** by Anson Dorrance, Huron River Press, 2005. This 5th printing is co-authored with fitness writer Gloria Averbuch If anyone still believes that coaching girls is no different than boys - this will prove otherwise.
- ***Catch Them Being Good: Everything You Need to Know to Successfully Coach Girls***, by Tony DiCicco, Colleen Hacker & Charles Salzberg, Viking Adult, 2002. DiCicco coached the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team to victory in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta & Hacker is a psychology consultant for the team. Most of the examples in the book focus on soccer, but coaches of all sports will learn a great deal from this straightforward guide based on impressive experience.
- ***"No More Mistakes and You Are Through"***, John Cleese, *Forbes Magazine* (U.S., p. 126+, May 16, 1988)
- ***"Decisions, Decisions"***, *Discover Magazine*, July 1985 issue
- ***How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reasoning In Everyday Life***, by Tom Gilovich
- ***Linear Ranking Tournaments***, on CD available from Mike Fleming at www.LinearRanking.com.

NOTES:
