

CHAPTER 10: IMPACT PLUS - THE SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter is intended to introduce coaches to the key concepts of how to go about implementing a “*system*” for their teams. Coaches will need to have a fundamental understanding of the basic methods of organizing and designing both an Offense and a Defense. The Offensive organizational system must include a Serve Reception and Transition Offense system for play. In addition, the Defensive organizational system must include a Blocking system and a Hitter Coverage system.

Coaches need to design systems of play 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. For example, if a team does not have accurate passers who can nail passes fast, low and tight to the net, or a setter who can handle them, then they might not (and should not attempt) be able to run that fast, complex offense that their coach learned at a summer coaching clinic.

▼ **Offensive System Organization**

- **Basic Front Row Setting Systems** - may include the 6-6, the 6-3, and the 4-2 (International and Standard). In each case the first number indicates how many players have hitting duties and the second number indicates how many players have setting responsibilities.
- **Basic Back Row Setting Systems** – may also include the 6-6 and the 6-3 systems, but the difference is that the players responsible for setting are in the back row rather than the front.
- **Advanced Setting Systems** – may include the back row, three hitter offenses such as the 6-2 and the 5-1.

▼ **Defensive System Organization**

- **Front Row** – takes into consideration how you deploy blockers in the front row
 - **Zero Blockers** – no player is capable or the coach chooses not to assign a blocker
 - **Single or One Blocker** – not all players are able to or are assigned to block
 - **Double or Two Blockers** – all or select players can or are assigned to block
- **Back Row** – takes into consideration how you position and coordinate your back row defenders behind your blockers.
 - **Player Up** – this refers to the position of the player usually in the #6 position, which is near the attack line.
 - **Player Back** – this is the opposite, where the #6 player usually plays defense nearer the endline than the attack line.
- **Hitter Coverage** – this refers to how the other players will position themselves in case their hitter gets blocked.

As with the information in Chapter 9, the information here is not meant to represent all the possible options available to coaches when seeking to learn and implement appropriate Offensive and Defensive systems for their team. Rather, it is meant to provide a broad overview of some of the more fundamental beginning-to-intermediate level organizational systems.

NOTES:

*There are two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children.
One of these is roots, the other, wings ~ Hodding Carter*

**COACHES Need
to Know THIS
Stuff...**

IMPLEMENTING A SYSTEM

**Application
of Offensive
Systems**

IMPLEMENTING A SYSTEM:

By Stephanie Schleuder, former USA CAP Cadre Member

No matter what system you choose for your personnel, the following list provides the most important aspects of an offensive system which need to be taught in the gym.

☞ **SERVE RECEIVE FORMATIONS**

- **Use your Best Passers to Pass Most Balls from Zones Most Served**
- **What the Setter's Path is to Be**
- **What are the Hitters' Paths and Playset Options.**

☞ **Play Out the Serve Received Ball — Pass, Set, Attack.**

☞ **Cover the Hitter, then "Switch" to Assigned Specialty Positions.**

☞ **Base Defensive Positions.**

☞ **Visual Keys for Transition to Defense.**

☞ **Play Defense**

- **From Dig to Transition**
- **From Down Block to Offense**
- **From Freeball to Offense**
- **Run the Offense from Cover the Hitter to Base Positions**
- **From Serving into Switches and Base Positions**

COACHING HINTS:

- Establish Good Communication Systems.
- Begin with a Walk-Through on the Court without a Ball.
- Make Sure all Players Understand their Responsibilities for Movement and Coverage.
- Introduce the Ball into Coach Controlled Situations (Coach Tosses Serves & Freeballs).
- Gradually Add Opponents (Blockers and Defenders).
- Work Toward Series of Contacts in Game-Like Situations (Serve Receive, Play Out, Hit from Opponents, Transition to Offense, and Play Out).
- The Speed of the Drill is Important—as Players Gain more Skill, Play Faster!
- Discuss and Drill on the Height of the Pass Desired for Freeballs, Dig Transition, Downballs, and Serve Receive Offense.

A COMPARISON OF OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS

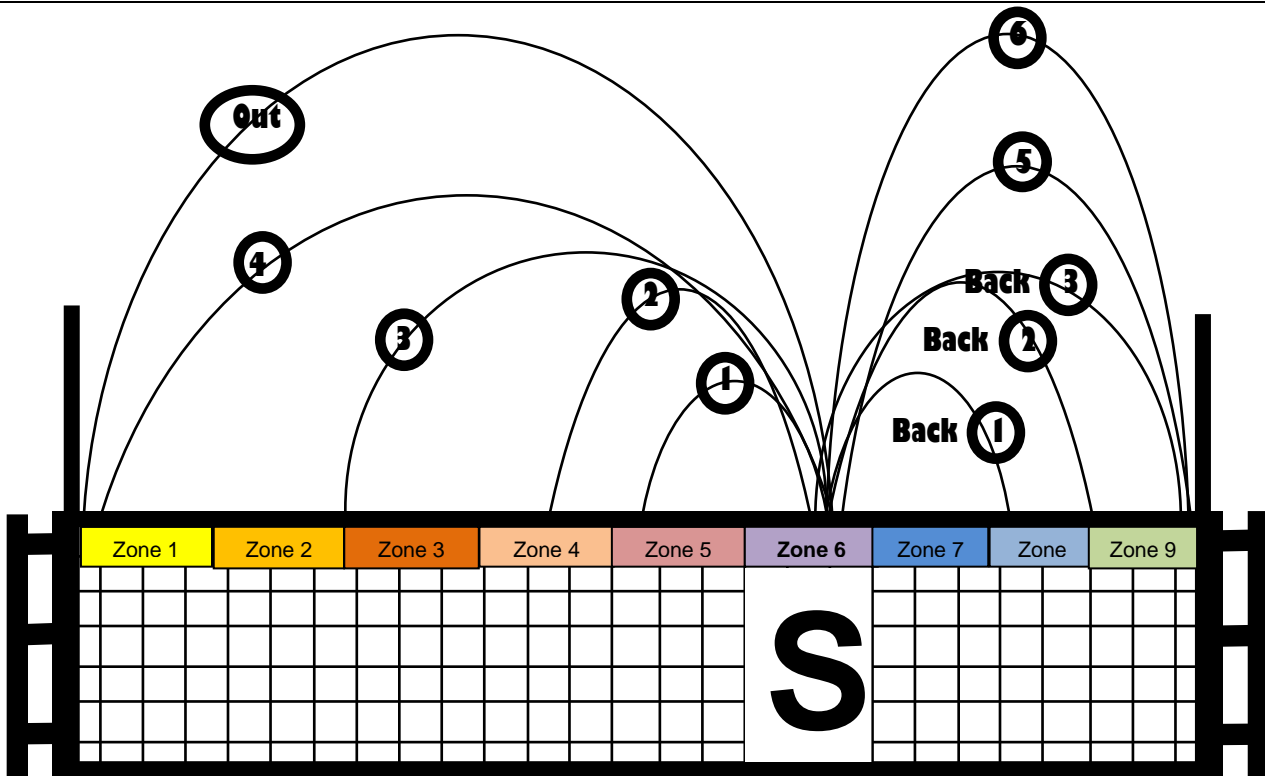
By Stephanie Schleuder, former USA CAP Cadre Member & Diana L. Cole, USAV Director of Education

PERSONNEL NEEDS

TYPE OF OFFENSE	#RSH	#OH	#MH	#S
6-3	1-2	1-2	1-2	3
4-2	0-2	2-4	0	2
6-2	2	2	2	2
5-1	1	2	2	1

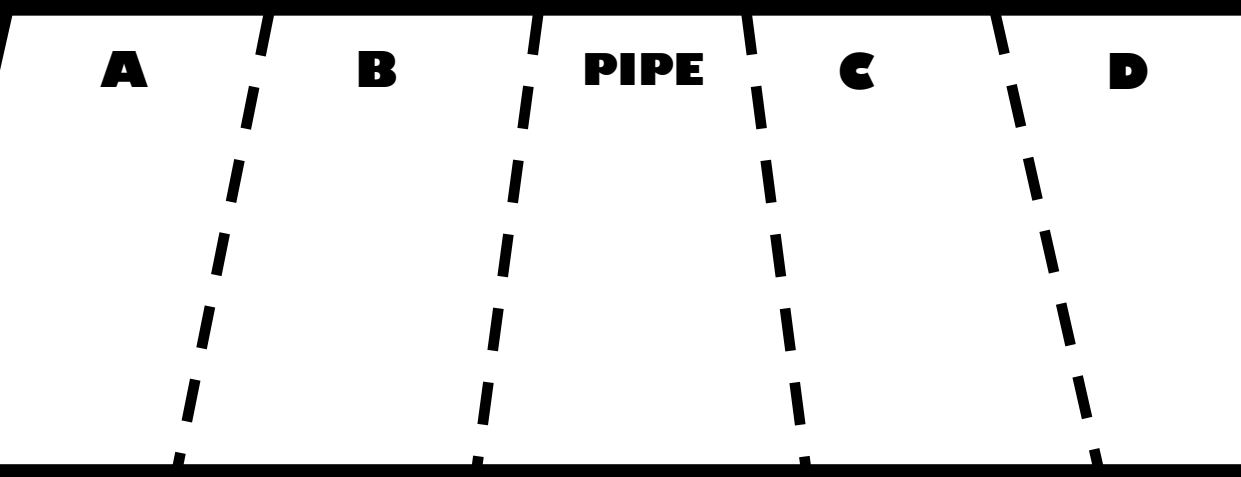
CHARACTERISTICS

OFFENSE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
6-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent lead up to remaining 3 Offenses below - Great Training for Developing 3+ Setters/Young Setters - Passing Not Critical - Setter Movement is Extremely Easy - Less Complexity of Sets & Plays - Setters can Easily See the Hitters - Power Game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited Backset Options - Some Flexibility/Adjustments - Transition Game is Limited - Hitters Must Get Used to 3 Setting Styles
4-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passing Not Critical - Setter Movement is Easy - Less Complexity of Sets & Plays - Setters can Easily See the Hitters - Power Game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited Options - Limited Ability to Adjust - Transition Game is Limited - Hitters Must Get Used to 2 Setting Styles
6-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater Offensive Options - Attackers Can Specialize - Players More Enthusiastic - Increased tactical Options - 2 Good Players Can Share S/H Duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need Good Passing to Execute - Quick Attack is Critical - Greater Setter Movement Necessary - Takes Much Practice - Hitters' Patterns are Complex - Hitters Must Get Used to 2 Setting Styles
5-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One Setter for Continuity - Best Athlete Can be the Setter - Players' Roles More Specialized - Less Serve Receive Pressure - Tactical Matchups are Flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pressure on Setter to Perform - Difficult to Sub a Setter - Players Can be Too Specialized - Setter Must be a Blocker



SOME EXAMPLES OF HAND/NUMERIC SIGNALS:

FRONT SETS	BACK SETS
Out = CLOSED FIST	6 = THUMB UP
4 = 4 FINGERS	5 = All 5 FINGERS
3 = 3 FINGERS	3 = OK SIGN
2 = 2 FINGERS (PEACE)	2 = RING & PINKY
1 = INDEX FINGER	1 = PINKY
Inside (3 1) or Outside "Shoot" = Thumb & Index	



EXAMPLES OF BACK ROW ATTACK VERBAL CALLS

"A" = "RED"	"B" = "SCHOOL COLOR?!"	"PIPE" = "WHITE"
"C" = "SCHOOL COLOR?!"	"D" = "BLUE"	

If you focus on results, you will never change. If you focus on change, you will get results ~ Jack Dixon

**COACHES
Need to Know
THIS Stuff...**

BASIC OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS

**Match the
System to
the Players**

CORE COACHING CONCEPTS:

- ☞ **Get your Best Athletes setting; Try to Teach at Least Half of Your Team to Set.**
- ☞ **The Most Basic Back-Row-Setter Systems are the 6-6 (each player takes their turn at setting when in RB), and the 6-3 (every other player is a setter and sets only when in RB and in CB—looks like a 6-2).**
- ☞ **The Most Basic Front-Row-Setter Systems IS the 6-6 in which Every Player Takes Their Turn Setting when They Rotate to the CF (or the RF) Position, and the 6-3 (every other player is a setter and sets only when in CF and in RF—looks like a 4-2).**
- ☞ **The Next Most Basic Systems are the American 4-2 (A specialized setter will switch into and set from CF) and the International 4-2 (setter switches into and sets from the RF).**
- ☞ **The Most Advanced 3-hitter, Back-Row-Setter Systems are the 6-2 (2 setters on the court are opposite each other, setting from the back row, typically switching into RB) and the 5-1 (1 setter on the court sets in all rotations, switching into RB/RF). The 6-3 can lead up to a 5-1 with the setter setting only when in RF and RB.**

CATEGORIES of OFFENSE:

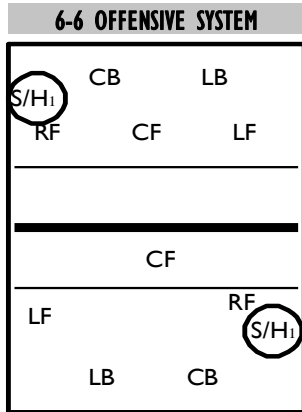
- Within the last few years the **Rally Scoring System** was implemented to make matches shorter so youth tournaments would end at a reasonable hour. This is the simplest scoring system to use — win the rally... and win the point (and the right to serve).
- **SIDEOUT OFFENSE**—This is when the opponents are serving to you. If the Serve Receive Offense does not execute then the opponents score a point.
- **TRANSITION OFFENSE**—When your team serves, a successful execution of dig-set-attack yields a point for your team. A failure to execute gives a point, and the serve, to your opponent.

GENERAL OFFENSIVE CONSIDERATIONS:

- ▶ Remember, the 4 key methods to gain a lead in Rally Scoring (or score a point in Side Out games) are:
 - an Ace Serve
 - a Transition Attack (dig-set-kill)
 - a Stuff Block
 - an Opponent Error (out of your control)
- ▶ The lower the skill level, the more points will be scored by service aces and unforced errors (technical aspects).
- ▶ The higher the skill and experience level, the more points will be scored on blocking and transition (tactical aspects).

SPECIFIC OFFENSIVE CONSIDERATIONS:

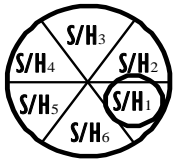
- ▶▶ **Never attempt tactically what you cannot execute technically!**
- ▶▶ Players skill and experience.
- ▶▶ Setter(s) ability.
- ▶▶ Hitter(s) ability.
- ▶▶ Passing consistency.
- ▶▶ Balance “*what do we have to do to win*” at this level with “*building for the next level*”.
- ▶▶ How much practice time do you have.



5 PERSON "W" SERVE RECEIVE

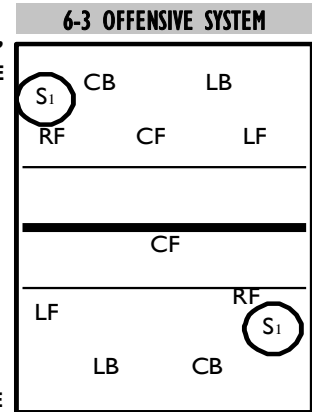
S = Setter
H = Hitter
S = Active Setter

4 PERSON "U" SERVE RECEIVE



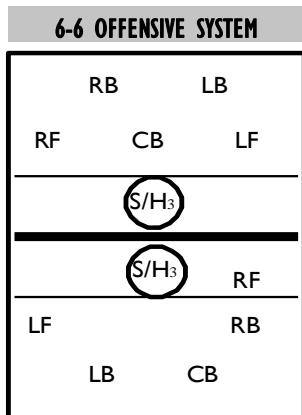
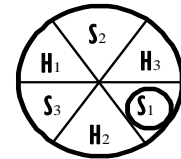
EXPLANATION:

Both the 6-6 and 6-3 systems can use a back row setter, typically setting from the RB (in the 6-6) and the CB and RB (in the 6-3) positions. In the 6-6, each player that rotates into RB will be the setter for that rotation, coming up to set to 3 front row hitters-giving each a chance to play both setter and hitter positions. In the 6-3 system, since every other player is a setter, each of them can set 2 rotations — when rotated into the CB and RB positions (switching to RB "homebase" during the rally to play defense). Both systems can be adapted to use a front row setter as well (see below).



5 PERSON "W" SERVE RECEIVE

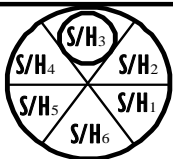
4 PERSON "U" SERVE RECEIVE



5 PERSON "W" SERVE RECEIVE

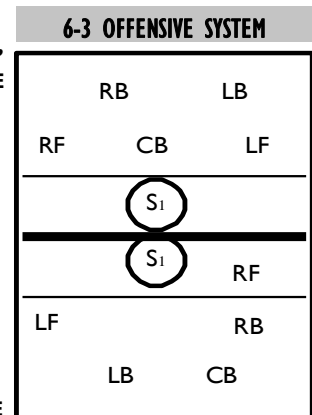
S = Setter
H = Hitter
S = Active Setter

4 PERSON "U" SERVE RECEIVE



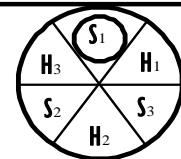
EXPLANATION:

Both the 6-6 and 6-3 systems can also use a front row setter, typically setting from the center front and/or the right front position. In the 6-6, the player that rotates into CF will be the setter for that rotation, allowing all players a chance to play both setter and hitter positions. In the 6-3 system, since every other player is a setter, each of them can set 2 rotations — when rotated into the CF and Right Front positions - - and switching to set from either the CF or RF.



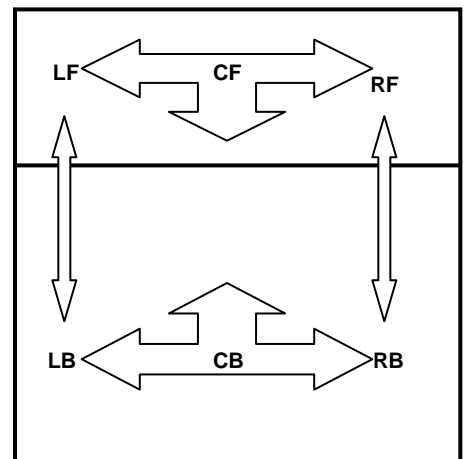
5 PERSON "W" SERVE RECEIVE

4 PERSON "U" SERVE RECEIVE

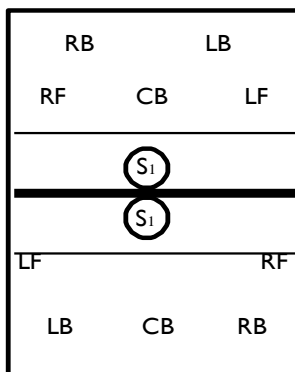


Notes on the Overlap Rule:

- All ADJACENT players must be in proper serving order at time of service by either team.
- AFTER the contact of the serve, players may switch to any position, but must obey rules pertaining to the front/back row.
- Draw out your serve reception patterns to see if you can gain an advantage by manipulating the line up without violating the overlap rule.



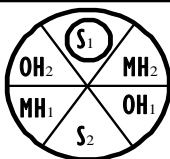
AMERICAN 4-2 OFFENSIVE SYSTEM



5 PERSON "W" SERVE RECEIVE

S = Setter
S = Active Setter
 OH = Outside Hitter
 MH = Middle Hitter

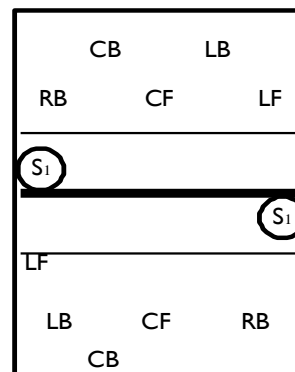
3 PERSON SERVE RECEIVE



EXPLANATION:

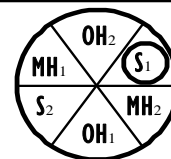
In the American 4-2, the front row setter usually sets out of the CF position to 2 split hitters. In the International 4-2, the setter typically switches into the RF position to set to 2 hitters in front, which limits the use of the backset. However, this also allows the MH to swing in front or behind the setter on a backset play. In both the 5 and 3 Person Serve Receive patterns for any offensive system, you can simply assign the 3 back row players to passing duties and relieve the front row players to concentrate on attack preparation, or if more proficient, you can shift front row passers into the passing lanes, while non-proficient passers step out of primary passing duties (as at the bottom half of the court at right).

INTERNATIONAL 4-2 OFFENSIVE SYSTEM



5 PERSON "W" SERVE

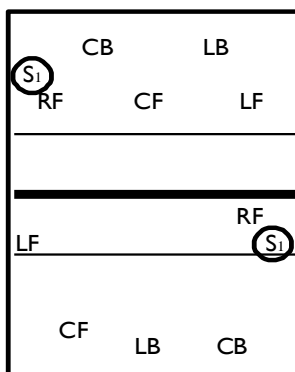
3 PERSON SERVE RE-



EXPLANATION:

In the 5 Person or "W" serve receive patterns for the 6-2 and 5-1 back row setter offenses, when in the back row, the Setter typically has further to run to get to the setter's target at the net. This can be alleviated by using a 3 Person (or 4 Person) Serve Reception pattern, and having the setter "push" the player in front of her close to the net. The Setter may then also move closer to her target as long as she does not create an overlap with her other back row players. As above, you can relieve the front row players to concentrate on attack preparation, or if more proficient, you can shift front row passers into the passing lanes. You can also take into consideration what attack patterns you want your hitters to run from their passing positions, and place them as close to their hitting assignment as possible, as long as no overlap is created. This can also be very deceptive for the opponent.

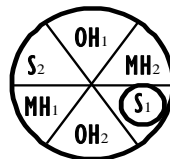
6-2 OFFENSIVE SYSTEM



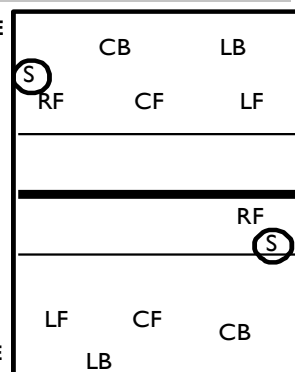
5 PERSON SERVE RE-

S = Setter
S = Active Setter
 OH = Outside Hitter
 MH = Middle Hitter

3 PERSON SERVE RE-



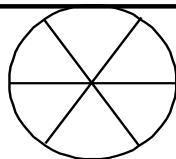
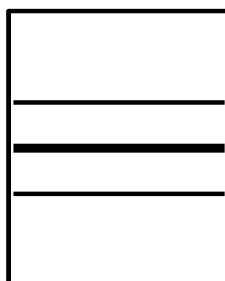
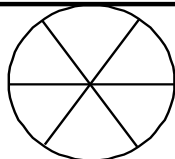
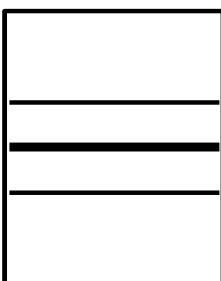
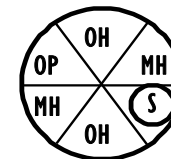
5-1 OFFENSIVE SYSTEM



5 PERSON SERVE RECEIVE

OP = Opposite Hitter

3 PERSON SERVE RECEIVE



Should the Setter LEAD or FOLLOW either the MH or the OH?!

Either option could be to your advantage based on....

- Serve Receive Patterns
- Use of Primary Passers
- Hitter or Setter or Blocker Match Ups
- Stronger or Weaker Rotations Created

Coaches should spend some time drawing out all rotations using each possible scenario to see if one creates a greater advantage for your team. Then PRACTICE it! A great resource for planning in this manner is at www.rotat123.com/usav.

We also suggest that you have a Plan B, and maybe even a Plan C, to go to in EACH rotation if things are not working well. Again, PRACTICE them.

*The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires ~ William Arthur Ward*

**COACHES Need
to Know THIS
Stuff...**

BASIC DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS

**Match the
System to
the Players**

CORE COACHING CONCEPTS:

- ☞ **Get Your Best Blockers Blocking and Your Best Diggers Digging. Put your best blockers where the opponents from attack most often, even if it means moving along the net from their favorite attack position. Put your best diggers in the areas of the court most often attacked.**
- ☞ **The most basic defensive systems are the Zero or One Blocker Systems with 1 or 2 players assigned to cover short shots and tips.**
- ☞ **The 2 Blocker Systems (also traditionally called—by colors - Red, White or Blue, or by names such as 6-Up/Back, Player-Up/Back, or Perimeter/Rotation systems) with One or Zero Players assigned to cover tips, are a bit more advanced.**
- ☞ **The Player Up Defenses are good against teams that do not hit hard and deep but do tip often or hit many soft mid-court shots. The Player Back Systems are good for teams that hit hard and deep, but don't tip much.**

ZERO BLOCKER Systems Include:

0 - 2 - 4

0 - 1 - 5

(see next page for diagrams)

These systems assume that no one on your team can get their hands above the net to block OR that you choose to not have any one block at all, even if capable (such as on a down ball situation where the hitter is standing on the ground or is so deep in the court an effective attack is not possible).

ONE BLOCKER Systems Include:

1 - 2 - 3

1 - 1 - 4

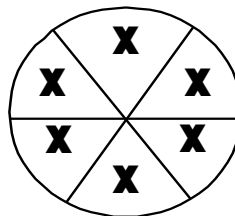
(see next page for diagrams)

These systems assume that you have at least one blocker in the front row at all times who can legitimately block balls. If you have 2, put the blockers opposite each other in the line up, so when in the front row, each blocker blocks the whole net by her/him-self. OR you can only assign one of 2 or 3 capable blockers to simply block all attacks in her/his zone of the net as a single blocker.

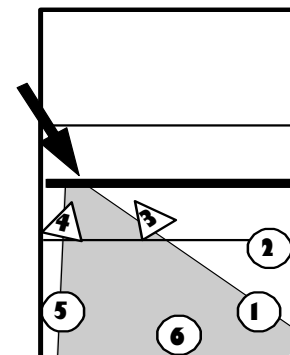
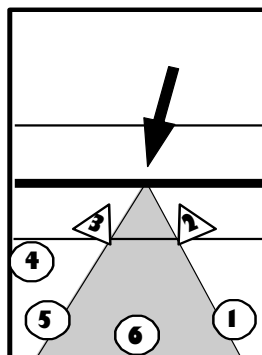
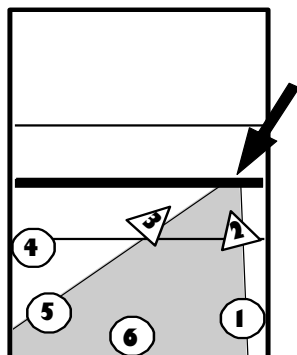
ZERO BLOCKER DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS

0 — 2 — 4 System

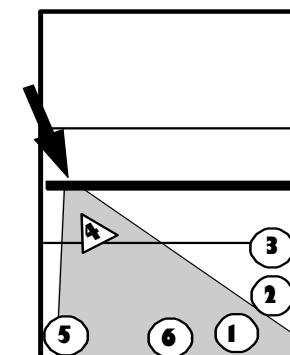
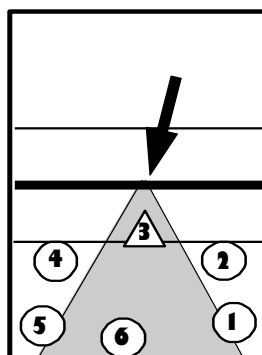
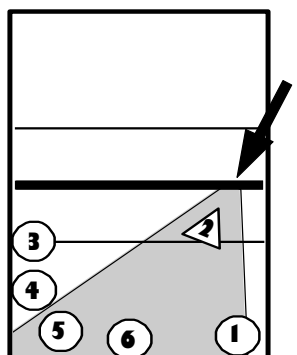
- = Blocker
- △ = Tip Cover
- = Digger



= No one who can block
OR
 = Choice is to have no one block



0 — 1 — 5 System



ADVANTAGES OF THE ZERO BLOCKER/PLAYER UP DEFENSES:

- The primary advantage is that no one on the team can truly block, yet there is a system in place for defense/transition/offense.
- One or two players are up behind the block (typically one is a setter) for tips or “garbage” shots falling into the middle of the court.
- There are more diggers to fill up the court and the block will not have a chance to be “used” by the hitter.
- It is also a good down ball defensive position.
- Since the player playing up behind the block is often the setter in a back row offensive system, it allows the setter to be closer to the setter’s target at the net to run the transition offense.
- The weakest back row defender can often be “hidden” in a player-up spot behind the block.
- It’s simple to learn.

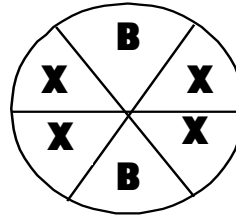
DISADVANTAGES:

- The disadvantage is that if an opponent can hit, the first line of defense is not there. As a result, the diggers must possess good reading and anticipation skills.

ONE BLOCKER DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS

1 — 2 — 3 System

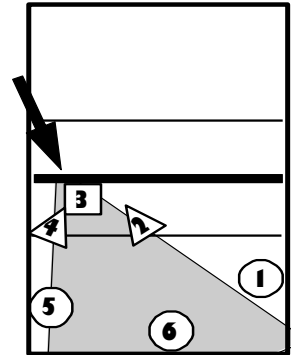
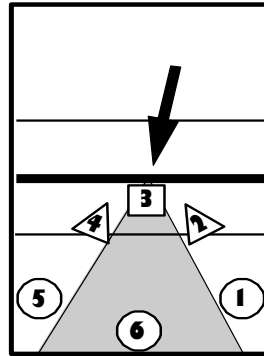
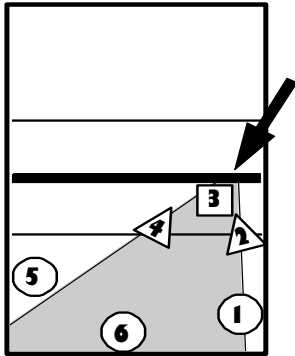
- = Blocker
- △ = Tip Cover
- = Digger



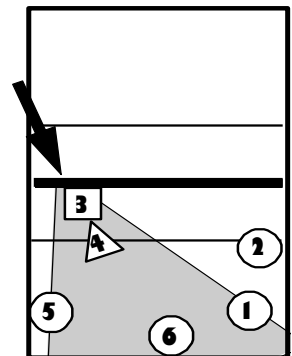
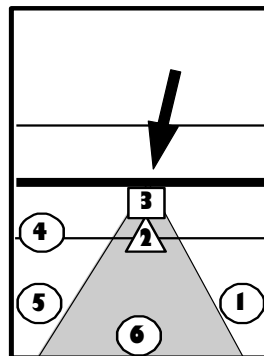
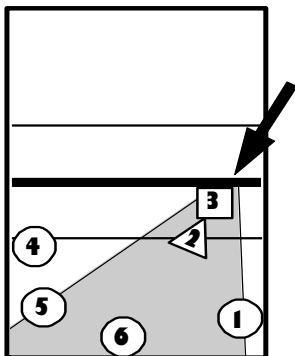
= Only one player who can block or whom you CHOOSE to have block all zones across the net

OR

= Single blockers who will only block in their zone of the net



1 — 1 — 4 System



ADVANTAGES OF THE ONE BLOCKER/PLAYER UP DEFENSES:

- ✓ The primary advantage is that since not all players can block effectively, only those that can are assigned to.
- ✓ One or two players are up behind the block (typically one is a setter) for tips or “garbage” shots falling into the middle of the court.
- ✓ There are more diggers to fill up the court.
- ✓ Since the player playing up behind the block is often the setter in a back row offensive system, it allows the setter to be closer to the setter’s target at the net to run the transition offense.
- ✓ The weakest back row defender can often be “hidden” in a player-up spot behind the block.
- ✓ It’s simple to learn—the one blocker knows all attacks in all zones are his/hers OR the single blocker in that zone knows he/she is responsible for attacks only into that zone.

DISADVANTAGES:

- ✗ The disadvantage is that one blocker might block all zones across the net for all attacks, which may lead to fatigue.

TWO BLOCKER DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS

TWO BLOCKER Systems include the **2 - 1 - 3** and the **2 - 0 - 4**.

These systems assume that you have 3 players or more on your team who are capable of blocking and at least 2 of them are in the front row together with the goal of putting up a double block on each attacker. This might mean that all 3 front row players share double blocking duties in their zones or if only 2 blockers are in the front row, they travel across the net into any zone as a tandem. Any combination of the one and two blocker systems may be used for different rotations.

2 — 1 — 3 System

□ = Blocker

△ = Tip Cover

○ = Digger



= Both block all zones of the net together when in the front row, single block all zones when by self, and play a no-block defense when both blockers are in the back row at the same time.



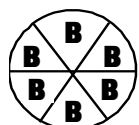
= Each blocker blocks all zones of the net, double blocking when the second blocker is front row and single blocking all zones when by self.



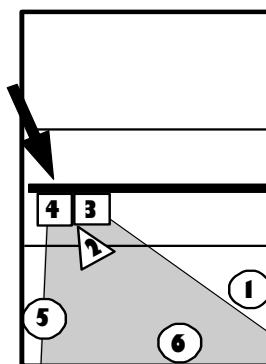
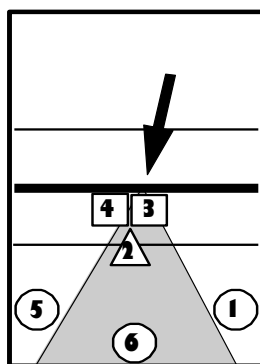
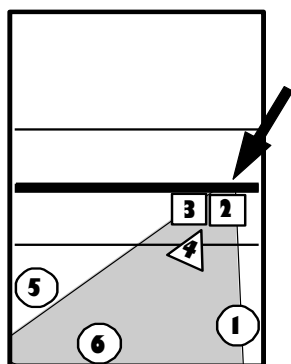
= Two Blockers will block all zones across the net in tandem in all rotations.



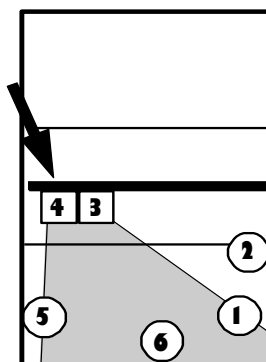
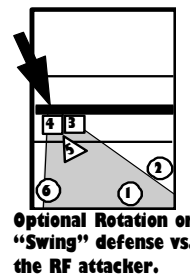
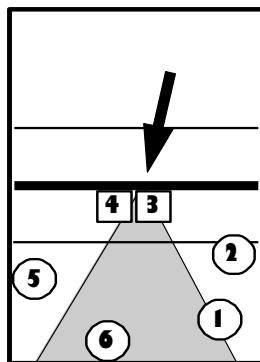
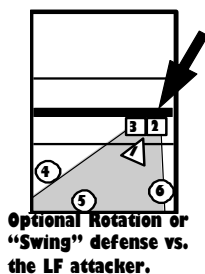
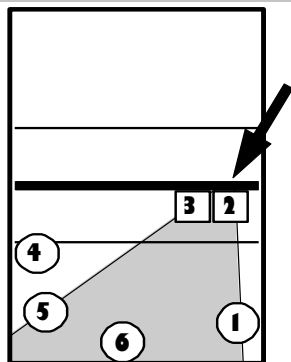
= Each blocker blocks zones in their area of the net when 3 blockers are in the front row, forming a double block against all attacks. When only two blockers are up, they block all zones across the net in tandem.



= Each blocker blocks zones in their area of the net when in the front row, forming a double block against all attacks.



2 — 0 — 4 System



ADVANTAGES OF THE 2 BLOCKER DEFENSES:

- ✓ The primary advantage of the 2 Blocker systems is that there is a greater chance of stopping the attack at the net.
- ✓ Perimeter defenses ensure that the lines & corners are well covered against hard/deep hits. Since the CB player stays deep on the endline corridor, he/she can line up in the seam of the block, reading & facing the hitter's angle. Thus, the CB in this defense must be your quickest, most agile, best reading player.
- ✓ If using a back row setter offensive system, the setter can be switched to always play the RB defensive spot, to be closer to the setter's target for transition offense. Most young players do not hit line shots from Left Front well or often, which may save the setter in RB from having to play many first balls.
- ✓ In 2 Blocker Player Up defenses ("Red", "Blue" or "Rotation") the middle of the court is covered, but you usually "give up" the sharper cross court angle shots.
- ✓ If the "Off Blocker" is assigned tip coverage, this can put them into good position to run a "Swing Offense" out of the middle of the court.

DISADVANTAGES:

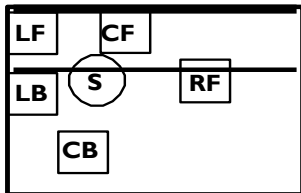
- ✗ The main disadvantage is that the middle of the court is open for short/soft shots in most Perimeter defenses, and no one is assigned automatic tip responsibilities.
- ✗ When using a "Rotation" defense vs. the Right Side attacker, the RB, who is often the Setter in a back row offense, will have to rotate deep to the CB position or deep cross court corner, often having to take the first contact and, if not digging the first ball, creating a much more difficult transition to the net to set.

GET THE "OFFENSIVE REBOUND"!

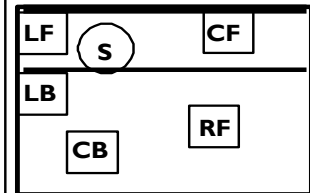
HITTER COVERAGE SYSTEMS

There are 3 basic Hitter Coverage Systems you can adapt for your team, rotation by rotation if necessary. The 3-2 Cup is the most common, with the 2-3 Cup close behind. You can even have a 1-4 Cup to cover your Middle Hitters. In the 3-2 Coverage, the 3 closest players to the Hitter form the Inner Cup, while the 2 players furthest from the Hitter form the second or Outer Cup. In the 2-3 Coverage, the 2 closest players form the first Cup. It is common for the Setter to always be one of the players covering in the inner cup formation—since he/she should know before anyone else where the ball is going, the setter should always be the first player in Coverage formation. In the 1-4 Coverage, the closest player to the MH will cover behind the hitter—usually this is the Setter.

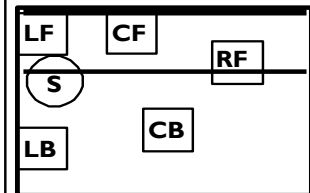
3-2 Hitter Coverage



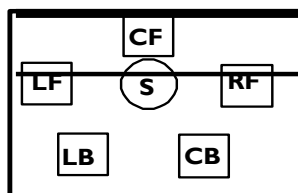
2-3 Hitter Coverage



OR



1-4 Hitter Coverage



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.

- [IMPACT Plus Basic Statistics & Charting](#)

NOTES:

