

COACHING Volleyball

Spring Issue 2017

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Hit the Beach

Getting Started

FAQ on p. 9

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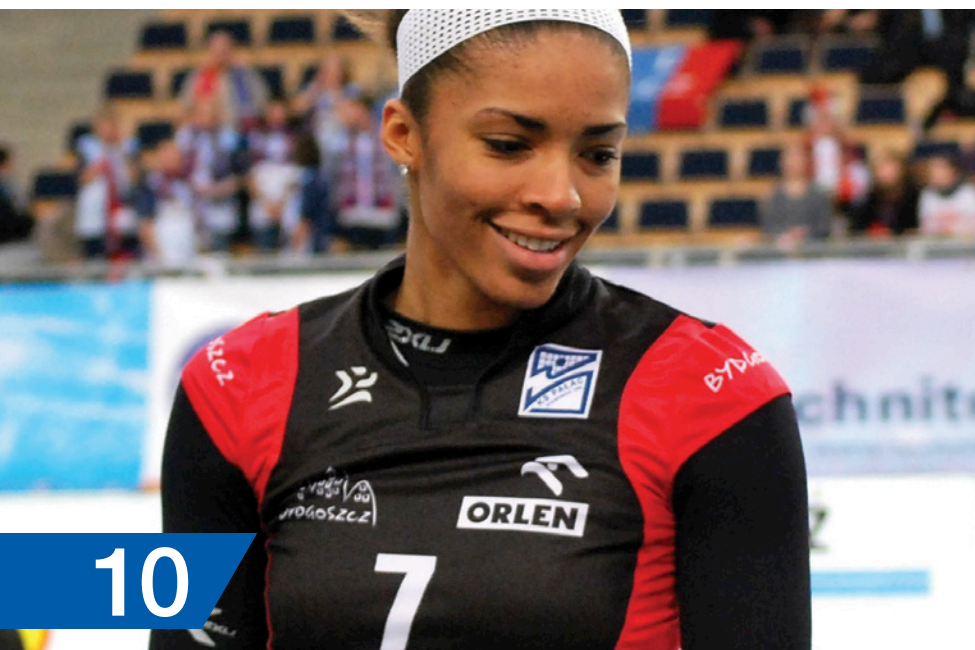


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The collegiate beach season is upon us, and if you've been paying attention you are already familiar with the rapid growth of the sport. Here, a coach from an emerging program tackles some basic questions that coaches have when considering the addition of a beach program.

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For many athletes, playing in college represents the crowning achievement and subsequent end of their competitive athletic careers. For a few, though, their talents can allow them to extend their careers by looking for professional opportunities abroad. Check out this article, where we offer tips and tricks for helping your players find these opportunities and connect with foreign teams and leagues.

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Recruiting has been a hotly discussed topic not just in volleyball, but in all of collegiate athletics. It is the driving force when developing a high-level program and is of the utmost importance for sustaining success. How can the process be made simpler and easier for coaches, players and families? Here are some thoughts on how we can start moving in a better direction.

22 Conversation with John Dunning

Regular contributor and respected coach in his own right, our own Terry Pettit has a chat with the latest coach to win an NCAA Championship – John Dunning. After a remarkable year, Coach Dunning is going out on his own terms, and he opens up about his success in this special interview.



On the Cover

No sport has ever grown more quickly than collegiate beach volleyball, and we're excited to note that the 2017 season kicked off with more teams than ever. As programs from around the country battle it out for an appearance at the second NCAA Championship in Gulf Shores, AL, check out some common questions about starting a program of your very own.

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Assistant Coaches Committee

Associations International, LLC
Chief Finance Officer, Ben Polk

Coaching Volleyball Staff
Editor, Jackson Silvanik
jackson.silvanik@avca.org
Editorial Assistant, Cecile Reynaud

Advertising Information
Senior Sales Director, Toby Bishop
866-544-2822 ext. 3560
toby.bishop@avca.org

For information about advertising in *Coaching Volleyball*, as well as advertising and sponsorship information with the AVCA, email toby.bishop@avca.org or call 866-544-2822 x3560 or 859-219-3560.

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Becky Schmidt – Hope College

AVCA Staff Directory
Kathy DeBoer
Executive Director
kathy.deboer@avca.org

Jason Jones
Assistant Executive Director
jason.jones@avca.org

Kennedy Wells
Director of Membership, Research
& Board Relations
kennedy.wells@avca.org

Toby Bishop
Senior Sales Director
toby.bishop@avca.org

David Portney
Director of Marketing & Communications
david.portney@avca.org

Jackson Silvanik
Manager of Communications
& Editor of Publications
jackson.silvanik@avca.org

Brad Wilson
Manager of Awards, Membership
& Event Support
bradley.wilson@avca.org

Tamar Sanders
Sales Coordinator
tamar.sanders@avca.org

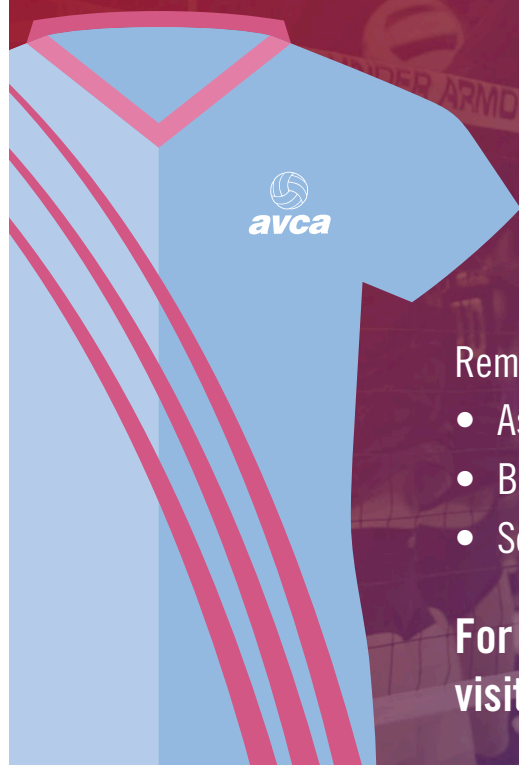
Betsey McCamish
Awards, Events & Membership Specialist
ashley.edmond@avca.org

Kellianne Layton
Events & Communications Specialist
kellianne.layton@avca.org

Allison VanderHorst
Education & Events Specialist
allison.vanderhorst@avca.org

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

From the Desk of ...

Christy Johnson-Lynch, Iowa State University Head Coach

FOR ABOUT THE FIRST 10 years of my coaching career, as both an assistant and then as a head coach, I was a negative recruiter. Along with telling recruits why they should attend our school, I would also inform them of reasons they should not attend a competing university. In those days, I felt a certain amount of desperation to land great players. I felt it was my duty to let recruits know exactly why we were better. And then one day, I recalled a recruit that visited a few years back when I was an assistant at Wisconsin. She was a highly sought-after player and the week prior had visited the University of Minnesota with then-head coach Mike Hebert. Coach Hebert had told this player how great Madison, Wisconsin, was, and even recommended a few restaurants. I could not believe he was so positive and actually helped sell the competition! As I reminisced about this memory, I was forced to question my recruiting tactics. Since then I have tried to follow in Coach Hebert's footsteps and stop negative recruiting practices. I focus on why an athlete should choose my school, and even on occasion throw out a compliment to other coaches and programs! It was a bit of an epiphany for me to know I could make a different choice in how I approached recruiting.

All of us – college, club and high school coaches – feel pressure to win. It may come from your boss or an athletic director, but most often it's the pressure we put on ourselves that is the most effecting. And this pressure to win, the desire to land a recruit or win a championship, can put our ethics to the test. As I enter my third decade of coaching, I see the importance in knowing what I will and will not stand for. I've found that tough ethical decisions become a little easier if, over time, you've reflected on your values and the type of person and coach you want to be.

The challenge to keep club, high school and college volleyball ethical is going to

get tougher. Volleyball is growing in both numbers and status. There are more clubs competing for the same players. There are better coaches competing for jobs. College coaching salaries continue to rise, and with that comes increased scrutiny and higher expectations. There is pressure at every level.

Most of us coach because we love to compete, we love to win and hate to lose. So how do we balance our ethics with our quest to be the best? Is it possible to be both ethical and successful? The answer, of course, is yes. There are great examples in all walks of life. I can think of championship coaches at every level that I admire and respect because of their combination of coaching talent and personal integrity. But this is not just happenstance. These coaches deal with the same problems and obstacles as the rest of us. But they have learned, regardless of circumstances, that they have a choice. And their choice has been to do the right thing.

One of the best things about our sport is our camaraderie. Volleyball coaches tend to be a pretty friendly and giving bunch. I for one would hate to lose that. We only have to talk to our peers in basketball or football to know what's at stake. Of course the influx of money has played a big part in how these sports have evolved, but still we need to be diligent. Our AD at Iowa State, who is a tremendous leader, reminds us in every staff meeting to never stop doing the things that got us here in the first place. What does that mean for volleyball coaches? I think that means continuing to share ideas, abiding by the rules, and ultimately acting in the best interest of our student athletes and the sport of volleyball. Let's keep these values as we grow. They got us this far and they will continue to serve us well.



IOWA STATE ATHLETICS (FACEBOOK)

How do we balance our ethics with our quest to be the best? Is it possible to be both ethical and successful?



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Our Game

Kathy DeBoer

"IF VOLLEYBALL has a problem, do something." This refrain drives our activity at the AVCA. I'd love the more positive spin: "If volleyball has a problem, fix it!" While more optimistic, that version makes us both smarter and richer than we are; smarter in that we frequently don't know exactly what will fix the problem, and, richer in that, even when we know, we can't afford the comprehensive solution. This leaves us with the choice of "do nothing" because the problem is too complex and the fix is too expensive, or our default mode: "do something."

Here are several examples:

Volleyball Problem: No agreed-upon way to compare the athleticism of high school prospects with college players.

The Something: AVCA started testing the Under Armour All-Americans, then the women who tried out for the National Team, then college players in every other division to create a dataset of college-player metrics. Combining the individual tests produces a volleyball performance index (VPI). Now we test prospect-age players on the same metrics and put their results in a database, www.avcaPhenom.com. The prospect, her parents, and club and high school coach, along with college recruiters, can easily see how she compares to those at her position on college teams.

Volleyball Problem: Our sport is not compelling on TV and we have a shortage of female media talent.

The Something: In the summer of 2015, AVCA gathered 10 producers and directors

It may not be noticed, you may not succeed, and you may be criticized. I encourage you to adopt this strategy anyway.

for a broadcast summit and spent two days discussing all aspects of a volleyball production. The result was a "best practices" Volleyball Broadcast Guidelines e-manual. In the summer of 2016, we gathered 17 aspiring female broadcasters for an announcers summit. Two of the newcomers got assignments at the Pac-12 network, and the audio recordings of the presenters are available to other aspiring announcers.

Volleyball Problem: No new team in NCAA Men's DI Volleyball in the last 15 years.

The Something: AVCA partnered with USA Volleyball and several corporate partners and regions to fund a feasibility study on DI college growth. Conducted during and immediately after the 2016 Olympics, researcher Wade Garard, a professional fundraiser, uncovered helpful and encouraging administrators, eager and optimistic donors, committed and connected college coaches. His findings prompted the formation of a nonprofit, MOTORMVB, to pursue the possibilities.

As you read these examples you may be thinking: I had no idea AVCA was doing these things. Or, these things won't make any difference! Or, why isn't AVCA working on [fill-in-your-issue] instead?

Fair warning for those considering a "do something" strategy: it may not be noticed, you may not succeed, and you may be criticized. I encourage you to adopt this strategy anyway.

Evaluate your team, players and program. What problems do you see? Were



SPRINGFIELD MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

you ranked 10th of 12 in service aces, or near the bottom of your league in hitting percentage, or passing below a 2.0? Are your salaries well below the conference average, or your facilities laughable, or your administration missing in action? Is your attendance terrible? Is your website subpar? Do you need a beach program to compete?

None of these problems have ready-made solutions, so just “fix it” is not an option. We are left with a choice between feckless inaction, the hallucination of hope without a plan, or taking the risks to “do something.”

I remember John Speraw telling the story of his decision to make his team great at running the “Bic” (a fast-tempo set to a backrow hitter). He was a young coach with an undersized squad. He had some talented pin hitters and a good setter, but they were not going to “out-physical” teams in the MPSF. He needed an advantage and he decided the Bic was it.

The remarkable part of the story was that his team spent an entire season failing at scoring with the Bic. They had a terrible year, made lots of mistakes and lost match after match. John knew what he was teaching was hard so they kept practicing. The next season his team wins the National Championship.

Since John’s “do something” gamble ended gloriously, we all know his name and line up to listen to his advice. If his Bic experiment had resulted in a series of failed seasons, he is now speaking at insurance conferences.

Utah coach Beth Launiere was one of the early campaigners for college beach volleyball, yet only recently became a beneficiary of her own work. While AVCA President in 2008, she advocated to get the sport on the NCAA emerging sports list; then in 2010 she convinced her AD and president to provide one of the crucial 12 votes needed to keep beach volleyball on the list; for the next five years, she watched eight of her Pac-12 competitors, several of whom had tried to kill the sport, add a team.

Her “do something” was to methodically and patiently build institutional and community support for a varsity beach team. In January, Utah dedicated two indoor sand

courts, the first ones built specifically for a college program, and held their first beach volleyball practices. 2008 to 2017, TEN YEARS from advocacy to actuality!

“Do something” takes time, patience and persistence.

Daily we thank our Board for the empowering directive that no problem is so

big that AVCA can’t make a difference in the solution. We thank you for modeling your own “do something” strategies that keep us inspired!



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Improving Mental Toughness

by Morgan Thomas, Assistant Coach – Texas Tech

THERE IS NO QUESTION about the importance of developing our athletes' mental game. In a sport where points are won or lost on errors, recovering from mistakes and learning to move on to the next play, it is a pivotal component to teams' success. One way we develop the mental toughness game in our team is by a Ladder Drill. This drill can take as quick as 20 minutes or as long as it takes to finish. The focus is on recovery by way of "mind over matter."

In the Ladder Drill, the entire team has to consecutively execute each step in order to move on to the next step. If they fail a step, they must start back with the first step.

Step 1: Pass a free ball to target: From coach's initiation, players fill in from zone 6 and pass a free ball to target (we use a Catch-It in our gym).

Step 2: Single line hitting: Coach tosses a 2 ball; players may not hit to zone 6 or tape the net.

Step 3: 21 touch Columbus: Coach initiates free ball to 5-on-5 Columbus (the team who places the ball over the net rotates). This is supposed to be cooperative, but still aggressive. If a free ball is sent over, or if they extend a broken play, those touches are "washes" and not included in the 21-touch goal. We want to only count the pass, set, attack.

Step 4: Everyone zone serve: Set up cones or boxes in a zone and everyone must hit zones.

You can adjust the ladder based on skill level, or add components if you want to make it more challenging. These steps may seem easy on their own, but executing them consecutively is a challenge. These types of drills really expose weaknesses among your group, but more importantly, you will see who your leaders, clutch players and gamblers are. As much as we train technical skill and system concepts, developing the mental game in our athletes is just as important.



TEXAS TECH ATHLETICS

Three-ball Drill: Building Continuity Within Your Rotations

by Matt Huskey, Associate Head Coach – University of Central Arkansas

AT THE BEGINNING of the season, coaches have a “To-Do” list that is a mile long. From individual technique training to team systems to figuring out your best lineup, the goal is to chip away at these items so that the team continues to improve throughout the season.

With that being said, the Three-ball Drill that I am about to introduce will work the best once you have some of those items checked off that list. Certainly, the drill could be used in the learning process of team systems, but we find that it works best for us after we have mastered some of the basic team concepts. The drill flows much more smoothly when your team understands how you want them to handle certain situations (free balls, defending OH, RS, middle, etc.). One of the great things that this Three-ball Drill is doing for us at this particular point in the season is that it is helping us build continuity and rhythm within all six of our rotations.

The final thing that I will say about this drill is that it is incredibly versatile. You can shape this drill in a number of different ways to help strengthen your team’s weaknesses.

Now on to the drill.

Setup: The coach will choose three specific scenarios for the team to execute in Rotation 1. Here are some examples:

1. Serve 2. Free Ball 3. Down Ball	1. Serve 2. Setter Dig 3. Defend Middle
1. Serve 2. Defend OH 3. Serve Receive	1. Serve 2. Defend Slide Attack 3. Serve Receive
1. Serve 2. Free Ball 3. Serve Receive	1. Serve 2. Defend Tip 3. Serve Receive
1. Serve Receive 2. Defend RS 3. Serve	1. Defend OH 2. Pursuit Ball 3. Defend Middle



CENTRAL ARKANSAS ATHLETICS

As you can see, the combinations are endless. Also, you can tell that we like to start/finish with a serve or serve-receive situation. Those skills/situations are not only the most game-like but also extremely important for us in building continuity within our rotations. But, I would encourage coaches to pick situations that make the most sense for what their team needs to improve on the most.

Every practice gym has its limitations (number of players, number of coaches, etc.). If you do not have enough players to play out the rallies, mark off areas of the court that you would like players to attack/serve to in order to award points.

The scoreboard: We set the scoreboard at one of the following scores: 19-19 (closing out a tight set and creating separation), 22-19 (closing out a set with a late lead), 19-22 (coming from behind late in a set).

How to score: Three balls are entered in the order that the coach lays out at the beginning of the drill. A team that wins two out of three balls = 1 point on the scoreboard; three out of three balls = two points on the scoreboard.

Objective: The starting team remains in Rotation 1 until the scoreboard shows 25 for one of the teams. If the starting side wins, they rotate to Rotation 2. If they lose, the starting side remains in Rotation 1 and the scoreboard returns to its initial starting point. The goal is to get through all six rotations.

Off-Season Training: Bottoms-up Kettlebell Press for Shoulder Stability and Strength

By Lindsey Smith – Moxie Strength & Nutrition

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DRILL is to train outside the standard, straight path overhead press with the kettlebell to increase muscle recruitment, shoulder stability and athleticism.

Shoulder strengthening exercises are crucial to any athlete's training program; however, the conventional overhead pressing movements are not always safe for athletes – especially if the athlete's back arches when their arms move overhead, which signifies limited external rotation capabilities.

Think of the shoulder as a spiral, diagonal rotational joint – in other words, it likes to move in rotation and not necessarily fixed into a straight path like a barbell is going to force it to do. This is why I like to introduce the kettlebell for overhead pressing. The kettlebell press, specifically the bottoms-up kettlebell press, is unlike a normal barbell or dumbbell press because of the offset nature of the kettlebell.

Here are two variations of the kettlebell shoulder press that are safe for all athletes – the Bottoms-up Kettlebell Press and the Standard (external rotation) Kettlebell Press.

Bottoms Up Kettlebell Shoulder Press

1. Assume athletic position, grasp kettlebell by the handle with the round part of the weight pointing upward, or in an inverted position (upside down). Holding the kettlebell in an upside-down position forces stabilization of the core musculature to prevent the kettlebell from flopping or changing position.



2. Hold the handle with a strong grip to prevent the kettlebell from falling to the side. Gripping recruits the rotator cuff and fires up all the shoulder's small stabilizing muscles.

3. Slowly and controlled, press the kettlebell up until your arm is fully extended.

4. Slowly return to the starting position – that is one rep. Athletes can perform the bottoms-up kettlebell press single or double arm, as well as standing or taking a split stance on one knee. If you want to take this even further you can make it a functional exercise by adding a reverse lung to press.

Think of this as a two-for-one bonus exercise because the athlete is getting a great shoulder stability workout and the rotator cuff has to work overtime to counteract the force of the kettlebell.

Standard (External Rotation) Kettlebell Shoulder Press

1. Assume athletic position, grasp kettlebell by the handle with the round part of the weight resting on the forearm.

2. Hold the handle with a strong grip to prevent the kettlebell from changing positions.

3. Slowly and controlled, press the kettlebell up until your arm is fully extended, allowing external rotation (or for the palm to face away from the body).

4. Slowly return to the starting position – that is one rep.

Similar to the bottoms-up press, but here you are going to see more of that spiral, diagonal rotation towards the top of the movement. The additional weight of the bell helps produce an external rotation force, which has to be countered by internal rotation force – in other words, the subscapular firing up to keep the humeral head down in the socket where it belongs, which is great for injury prevention.

Perform exercise for desired number of reps and sets that align with goals; I recommend 10 reps per arm x 3 sets.

Keeping It Simple

What You Need to Know When Adding a Beach Program

By Kyrsten Becker, Associate Head Coach - Morehead State University

AS WE BEGIN the 2017 beach volleyball season, it is exciting to note that 14 new four-year institutions have added beach volleyball as a varsity sport. While some schools have a beach program that is independent from indoor, many new programs are using indoor staff and players to get their beach program off the ground. That's what we are doing at Morehead State, which has created a need-to-know how beach and indoor can work together with a similar staff. Here are the basics of what you need to know when adding a beach volleyball program.

Who can coach?

Two coaches, plus one coach designated by the institution as a volunteer. A coach cannot be paid as an indoor coach while volunteering as a beach coach. It is possible to have a director of operations or graduate assistant for the indoor team be a beach assistant.

How do beach scholarships work?

A fully funded beach team has six scholarships. While indoor volleyball is a headcount sport, beach is an equivalence sport, meaning the six scholarships may be divided up between players as partial scholarships. A school can have up to 14 athletes on beach money.

How do indoor and beach scholarships work with each other?

If an athlete is on an indoor scholarship, they may play beach. If the athlete is on a beach scholarship, she may not play indoor. This is to prevent schools from adding beach solely to gain more scholarship money in indoor.

What if an athlete wants to switch from a beach scholarship to an indoor scholarship?

After two years of being on beach money, an athlete can switch to an indoor scholarship and play both sports.

Does redshirting in indoor mean you have to redshirt in beach?

No. They are different sports, so an athlete can redshirt their freshman year for indoor, but compete in beach that spring.

How does adding beach change recruiting?

When adding a beach program, the school receives 20 beach recruiting days in addition to their 80 indoor days.

What determines if it is an indoor or beach recruiting day?

- The rules state that a beach recruiting day may only be used at a beach competition.
- If a beach coach watches an indoor practice, it counts as an indoor day.
- If an indoor coach watches a beach competition, it counts as an indoor day.
- If a beach coach goes to beach practice, it's also an indoor day because it is not a competition.
- If a beach coach watches a beach competition, it counts as a beach day.

For further information about the current state of beach volleyball and to learn more about getting started, visit www.avca.org/groups/beach-volleyball. ☾





THINK GLOBAL

Helping Volleyball Players Connect with International Opportunities After College

By Kinda S. Lenberg



Rachel Adams

In 2016, more than 480,000 young people competed as NCAA athletes, yet only a small percentage (1-2 percent) moved on to play professionally or as a member of an Olympic team.

Of course, a number of factors play into that shockingly low number. Yet, many student-athletes still believe that a professional career in their sport is a possibility.

“Explaining to athletes that their passion—and years of hard work—is not likely to lead to a career is an uncomfortable but necessary conversation to have,” NCAA President Mark Emmert said during his address at the NCAA’s annual meeting [in January 2015]. ‘How can we help them understand the realities of what that looks like? What can we change to give them a more realistic sense of it?’” (New, 2015).

For collegiate volleyball athletes, there is only a limited number who go on to play professionally, especially since there is currently no “traditional” professional indoor volleyball league for men or women in the United States. (Of course, there are several opportunities to play professional beach volleyball, and the Association of Volleyball Professionals [AVP] has been around since 1983.) However, since volleyball is truly a lifetime sport, there are opportunities for volleyball athletes to continue their playing careers long after college is over – you just have to know where to find them.

Right now, both male and female volleyball athletes can either play in the Premier Volleyball League (PVL) in the United States or play professionally overseas in the ever-increasing number of leagues all over the world.

But there are some important things players looking at this possible future need to know before jumping in head first. According to Tim Kelly, owner and founder of Bring It Promotions (since 1996),

FVB



“There seems to be a culture in our country that college volleyball coaches don’t want to talk to their players about playing overseas until they are done because it is a distraction. Look at other sports—if you are a 12-year-old kid playing football, you know what the NFL players make and you know how to get there.”

It is time for a paradigm shift.

As a result, collegiate players must familiarize themselves with the professional volleyball markets that exist, and college coaches should make it a priority to introduce them to the concept.

Of course, the most logical place to begin the discussion is the professional league in the United States.

The PVL, which has been in existence since 2012, is comprised of teams from the 40 Regional Volleyball Associations of USA Volleyball (USAV). It is a grassroots professional volleyball league that is sanctioned by USAV, but operates on a day-to-day basis under a typical professional sports model. Annually, there is \$10,000 in championship prize money for each gender (\$20,000 each overall for first-third place) and the PVL Championships are contested each year in conjunction with the USA Volleyball Open National Championships. Post-collegiate players who are interested in playing in the PVL should go through their region’s RVA. (More information on the 40 Regions of USA Volleyball can be found on the website at www.usavolleyball.org.)

Although the PVL is beginning to gain a foothold here in the U.S., the majority of athletes who go on to play professional volleyball after their collegiate careers have ended do so overseas, in one of the myriad professional leagues all across Europe, Asia, South America, the Caribbean and Australia. According to USAV, as of March 1, 2016, there were a total of 371 U.S. athletes (264 females/107 males) competing in foreign professional volleyball leagues, which was a new record.

And, according to Doug Beal, who just retired as the CEO of USAV Jan. 2, 2017, after nearly 12 years at the helm, the numbers will continue to increase.

“Only a few years ago, there were about 220 athletes living overseas playing professionally,” Beal told the audience members at the session titled “Helping Seniors

Connect with International Opportunities” at the 2015 AVCA Convention in Omaha, Neb. “It was about 50/50 between men and women and in the last three or four years, it has skewed more toward women, who are finding professional opportunities around the world.

“The most interesting statistic is that while the number of individual athletes continues to go up, the number of countries that U.S. athletes are playing in has also increased dramatically. Also, the vast majority of American players who play overseas are not national team players. I think the assumption is that only the top 20 men and women who are national team athletes are playing overseas. That is definitely not the case.”

To be sure, the international experience is not an easy one for any of the athletes, with problems ranging from not getting paid on time – or at all – and not having electricity or internet for an extended period of time, to horrible coaching and less-than-stellar training support.

As a result, there are several things an athlete who is thinking about playing professionally overseas must take a long, hard look at:

1. The stability of the country’s economy.
2. Both the strength and the professionalism of the club itself, as well as the league.
3. The opportunity for exposure.
4. Living conditions.
5. Participation in European tournaments.
6. Benefits like accommodations, transportation and food (“Athletes Find Opportunities...”, 2017).

According to Karch Kiraly, three-time Olympic gold medalist and current U.S. Women’s National Team head coach, “One of the things that is a priority for us and potential U.S. players is that we are trying to get them into reasonably good situations because it can run the gamut from really difficult – maybe even in rare cases extremely unproductive – situations with poor coaching and people not getting paid, etc. Our big priority (at USAV) is to keep those at a minimum and try to get them into good situations where they are getting

at least reasonable coaching, where the team will try to take care of them physically and not train the heck out of them.”

Undeniably, the FIVB’s formal process involving an International Transfer Certificate (ITC) has gone a long way in ensuring all athletes are treated fairly and they are safe overseas in their pursuit of professional volleyball. In fact, the ITC is a mandatory requirement of the FIVB. An athlete who transfers from one National Federation to another (country to country) to play in a professional league must adhere to the strict guidelines of this procedure to play internationally.

“An ITC is required, which mandates everybody going online and entering data from your federation of origin, which is your transferring federation to the federation you are going to be playing in,” Beal explains. “There is a fee that is required to be paid to the International Federation, as well as a pretty minor fee to USAV in most cases. [USAV] has to be involved in that process because we are a cosigner on every athlete who is abroad.



Carli Lloyd



Courtney Thompson

FIVB

“In the last couple of years, the FIVB has stepped up in a very significant and positive way to be the adjudicating body for that conflict between the athlete and the club. The next step the FIVB is moving toward involves two things: registered agents and a standardized contract/agreement that would have certain basic clauses that would protect the athlete and define the responsibilities of the club you are playing in.”

Perhaps the easiest and best way an athlete can enter the international arena and ensure proper representation and ultimately protection from mishandling by clubs is via an agent. According to Kiraly, “Good representation plays a major part in that, which is a huge part of that equation.”

There are a number of agencies all over the world that will help aspiring professional volleyball athletes make the most out of their overseas careers. A quick Google® search of “volleyball agents list” will open up a world of available representation.

Now that both coaches and players are aware of the research and due diligence

necessary to ensure a positive overseas professional experience, following are a few of the most pertinent questions answered that may help in the decision-making process.

Questions Answered

Q: What countries do American athletes currently play in?

A: As of the 2015-16 club season, there are 43 countries in which both U.S. men and women compete. For the women, the countries are: Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Malta, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and United Arab Emirates. For the men, the countries include: Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Puerto

Rico, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and United Arab Emirates.

Q: When is the international professional season?

A: According to the FIVB, the official National League (professional) season is Oct. 16–May 15. The official National Team period is May 16–Oct. 15. And, according to the FIVB, all clubs must release players under the FIVB ITC to play with their individual national teams during the National Team period.

Q: When does the international transfer period begin?

A: A transfer procedure may only be initiated on the ITC system as of Sept. 15. No transfer can be authorized prior to Oct. 16.

Q: Is there a cost to the athlete for processing the ITC?

A: No. The individual clubs pay for all processing fees for the athletes.

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Q: How much money can a player expect to earn playing professional volleyball internationally?

A: According to Kelly, [in 2015] there were “198 women playing in 22 countries and the majority of them were athletes earning \$200 to \$1,000–1,500 per month, which is standard for a lot of athletes. It is more about the experience than being the next step in volleyball.” However, for the top players, there is a very comfortable living to be earned with salaries in the six- and seven-figure range. Salaries are usually entirely take-home pay, which translates into room and board, transportation, medical care (sometimes scant) and everything else a player needs taken care of by the club.

According to Don Patterson, in his article “Spiking For Dollars” (2013), there are four “tiers” of pay in the international game: 1. Just Happy to be There (approximately \$7,500–20,000 per season); 2. A Real Job (approximately \$15,000–60,000 per season); 3. Good Money (approximately \$200,000–400,000); and 4. Top Dogs (negotiations start in the \$250,000 range and can rise up to \$1,000,000). These are the Olympic starters who have won a medal and are playing one of the highly coveted positions.

Q: What are the most sought-after positions in international professional volleyball, especially for American athletes?

A: According to Andy Inveiss, founder of SportsNet International, the coveted positions, in order, are as follows: outside hitter with power (who can also pass and terminate); opposite who can terminate; outside hitter with power (who is also simply an average passer); middle blocker; setter (not much demand, unless you are one of the best in the world); libero (the most difficult position to place, unless you are an Olympic-caliber libero) (Patterson, 2013).

And, according to Beal, international teams are definitely on the lookout for promising American talent.

“I think it is a fair statement the interest in volleyball in the U.S. around the world is significant. It generally surprises me when I travel how much people outside of the United States know about volleyball in the U.S., including specific colleges, conferences, national teams, etc. We are a significant player in the world volleyball community,

which leads to another more specific point: American players are in many cases really attractive to clubs.”

Q: What are clubs looking for from athletes in terms of a volleyball resume and video?

A: According to Kelly, “Having a good video is really the only way to go, especially if you are not going [to a particular country on an exposure tour].” Use the most current video and send an entire set or two, not just highlight videos. The more you have the better.

Q: What are some things clubs are doing around the world to alleviate current security concerns?

A: In light of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, Nice and Berlin, are athletes safe living in these areas, especially as foreigners? “I think it is just a part of life that we’re having to deal with right now,” Kelly explains in a recent vbmag.com article (Feinswog, 2017). Having just finished a trip through Turkey, southern France, Italy, China and Korea, he says, “I just try to remember that bad things can happen anywhere, and you just have to keep living your life and enjoying what you do.” Players playing internationally say they simply have changed their lifestyle, avoiding places where there are large crowds, sporting events or known tourist areas.

Q: What are some resources to help players sort through the madness and decide if playing professionally overseas is for them?

A: There are a number of resources out there to help manage the confusion and questions, from blogs and websites to documentaries and podcasts.

1. www.playabroad101.com (tons of resources, from agencies, athlete blogs/websites, books, to career transition information, contract advice, and travel/relocation advice)
2. www.athletesabroad.wordpress.com
3. Court & Spark: A Volleyball Documentary following setter Courtney Thompson while she lives and plays with her club team Budowlani Lodz in Poland. Available on Amazon® and iTunes®. A fascinating look into the everyday life of a professional athlete overseas.

4. Blog by Natalie Hagglund: “To Play or Not to Play: Deciding if Overseas Volleyball is Right for You” (<http://www.nataliehagglund.com/single-post/2017/01/18/To-Play-Or-Not-To-Play-Deciding-if-overseas-volleyball-is-right-for-you>)
5. Exposure Tours via Bring It Promotions (<http://bringitusa.com/exposure-tours/>)

Indeed, the choice to live and work – especially when your work is playing the sport you love – overseas is exciting, a little daunting and definitely one an athlete needs to put a considerable amount of thought into. For most professional players, it is the greatest challenge – with the biggest reward – of their lives.

“I always tell people you have to be ready for an adventure and not to have too many expectations,” Courtney Thompson, a 2012 London silver medalist setter, told wintergames.ap.org. “It’s a lot different than a lot of people think, because we have nothing like it in the United States. They train differently, they play differently, the lifestyle is obviously different – which can be really cool, but it can also make it difficult.

“The first year I remember that every time they would give me a check – which wasn’t much every month – I would say, ‘Thank you, thank you so much.’ And finally my boss was like, ‘Courtney, you can stop thanking me. This is your job.’”

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stats database

2

Share, view, and learn
from tagged video, key
metrics, and rankings

3

Showcase your skills in
full and choose the best
fit for you

And Much More...

2017 SCHEDULE

February
Triple Crown
Utah

March
Tour of Texas Finals
Texas

April
Lone Star Classic
Texas

June
USAV Girls'
Junior Nationals
Minnesota

July
HP Championships
Florida

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Revisiting the Recruiting Calendar

DAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

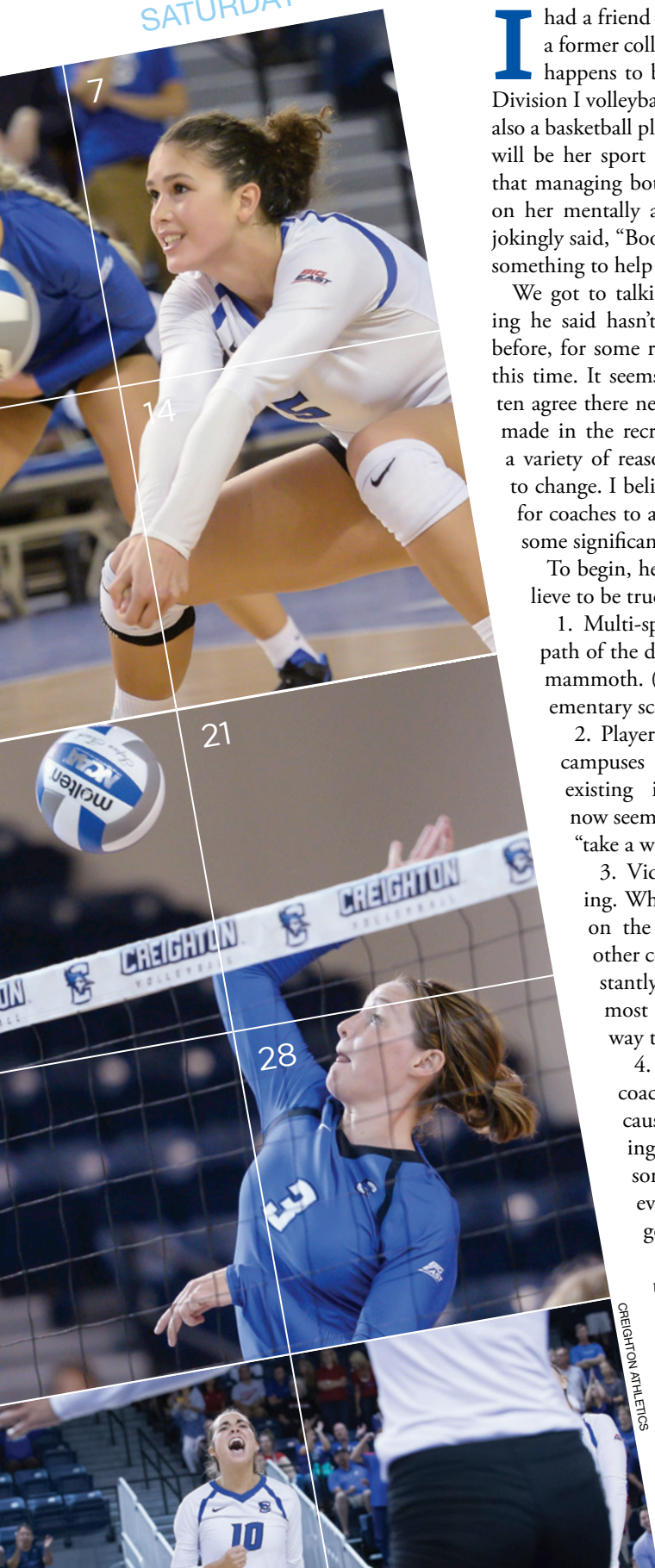
THURSDAY

FRIDAY



By Kirsten Bernthal Booth
Head Volleyball Coach – Creighton University

SATURDAY



I had a friend call me this week who is a former college basketball coach and happens to be the father of a future Division I volleyball player. His daughter is also a basketball player (although volleyball will be her sport in college), and he said that managing both sports is taking a toll on her mentally and physically. He half-jokingly said, “Booth, can’t you coaches do something to help us out?”

We got to talking and, although nothing he said hasn’t been said to all of us before, for some reason it resonated more this time. It seems that we as coaches often agree there needs to be improvements made in the recruiting process,* but for a variety of reasons, nothing ever seems to change. I believe that now is the time for coaches to act collectively and make some significant positive changes.

To begin, here are some things I believe to be true:

1. Multi-sport athletes are on the path of the dodo bird and the woolly mammoth. (If you missed this in elementary school – they are extinct.)
2. Players are arriving to college campuses with many more pre-existing injuries because “rest” now seems to be defined as simply “take a weekend off.”
3. Video is changing recruiting. While we can pat ourselves on the back for “outworking” other coaches when we are constantly on the road, is this the most efficient and effective way to recruit?
4. We are losing great coaches within our ranks because, between our recruiting calendar and our seasons, we are working nearly every weekend. (Thank goodness for May!)

While these may seem to be different topics and different problems, I would argue that at their root, they are all interconnected and can each be improved

through a better approach to the recruiting process.

My friend’s main point was that perhaps we can get the kids some needed rest by adjusting our recruiting calendar. He knows that basketball’s recruiting calendar is more limited than volleyball’s, and he sees AAU basketball generally work around that calendar. He also asked the simple question, “Can’t you just *not* recruit in January and February?”

His theory is if Division I volleyball is in a “quiet period” in January and February this would delay the start of club practice, particularly for high schoolers. Clubs wouldn’t have to be preparing to be at their best by MLK weekend when the hordes of DI coaches arrive to watch. Consider club practice *starting* after MLK weekend, rather than it being the target weekend to be ready for coaches to see them in action. This allows rest and the opportunity to participate in another sport without having to finish their high school practice and then rush to the car to make it to club volleyball practice. The research is pretty darn definitive that it is best for our youth to be playing multiple sports. In a nutshell, playing different sports *prevents* overuse injuries by working different muscle groups, and it is also important in preventing athlete burnout.

Although our passions are with volleyball, we all want to support our athletes playing basketball, soccer, etc., and we want to encourage participation in other extracurriculars like show choir, debate and academic clubs. I know that in our gym, pre-existing injuries are completely changing how we train. We are finding that our freshmen are arriving with overuse injuries that have to be managed their entire careers. We need them to have extended time without volleyball (like a three- to four-week break, multiple times per year). Through involvement in multiple activities, the athletes are going to be more well-rounded, more mature and in better physical condition when they arrive at college. Additionally, I believe they will be better club and high school players now.

Understand, I love club volleyball. I have two daughters who play right now. Club

volleyball and its coaches are a major factor in the increased level of play of our sport at all levels. I'm fortunate to call many club coaches my friends, and when we talk about these issues regarding their athletes, many share the same concerns. However, these conversations usually end in resignation that, "if the other clubs are starting practices in November and December, we have to too." I also recognize that club volleyball does not revolve solely around the Division I recruiting calendar. Nevertheless, I do think the recruiting calendar is an important driver in setting the club volleyball schedule. Further, I believe that the college recruiting calendar can be a powerful tool in making a variety of positive improvements.

While I don't envision any restriction on individual training if an athlete chooses, pushing back the team practice start dates seems quite feasible. Waiting to start our recruiting until President's Day weekend would then provide clubs the chance to give players significant rest after high school season, and to participate in a winter sport without nearly as much conflict and overlap.

Another benefit of revisiting the recruiting calendar relates to the ongoing discussions among coaching groups that we are losing great coaches, particularly women, because the expectation to work nearly every weekend in the fall and spring just isn't worth the loss of family time. We need more women coaching women, and it can be done in a balanced way that shows our

athletes *they* can be a successful professional AND a great mom/wife/partner. These things are not mutually exclusive – yet in a lot of volleyball programs I'm concerned that they are.

Without question, there is pressure to have your program out recruiting all 80 days to "keep up with the Joneses." But is this really necessary with video of nearly every player at our fingertips? When we are told about the "diamond in the rough" four hours away in a small town, it used to mean an automatic road trip for an assistant coach. Now, the first thing we want to see is video, which can quickly tell us (probably about 95% of the time), that the player is probably more of a cubic zirconia in the rough. But if she does sparkle on video, then the four-hour trip will be made. Effective and efficient use of increasingly available video can have a tremendous effect on a program's resources, both in time and cost.

Overall, by limiting our recruiting calendar, we can improve our coaches' quality of life, we can potentially impact the health and well-being of young athletes, we can further the opportunities for multiple sports and multiple activities for our youth, and we can keep more great coaches mentoring our young women.

So here it is ... my proposal for the volleyball recruiting calendar. Specifically how it would work in 2017-2018, although I recognize because of the legislative process it couldn't go into effect this quickly.

Aug: Quiet
Sept: Contact/Eval
Oct: Contact/Eval
Nov: Contact/Eval
 (with Dead Signing Period)
Dec: As is
Jan: Quiet
Feb: Quiet until Saturday of President's Weekend, then Contact/Eval rest of month
March: Contact/Eval
April: Contact/Eval
 (with Dead Signing Period)
May: Quiet
June: Quiet until the Friday before third weekend, then Contact/Eval rest of month
July: Contact/Eval through July 7th
 70 Evaluation Days

For a reference point, women's basketball has had a reduced recruiting calendar for quite some time. For the 2016-2017 academic year, they have 167 evaluation day opportunities, while volleyball has 291. My proposed calendar would have 186 recruiting opportunities for volleyball in 2017-2018.

Legislative change has to start with the conferences. Only conferences can propose legislative change—not one person, not the NCAA and not the AVCA. The time is now ...

*Early recruiting is a discussion for another day. ☺

■ Proposed Quiet Period ■ Proposed Contact/Eval Period ■ Proposed Dead Signing Period

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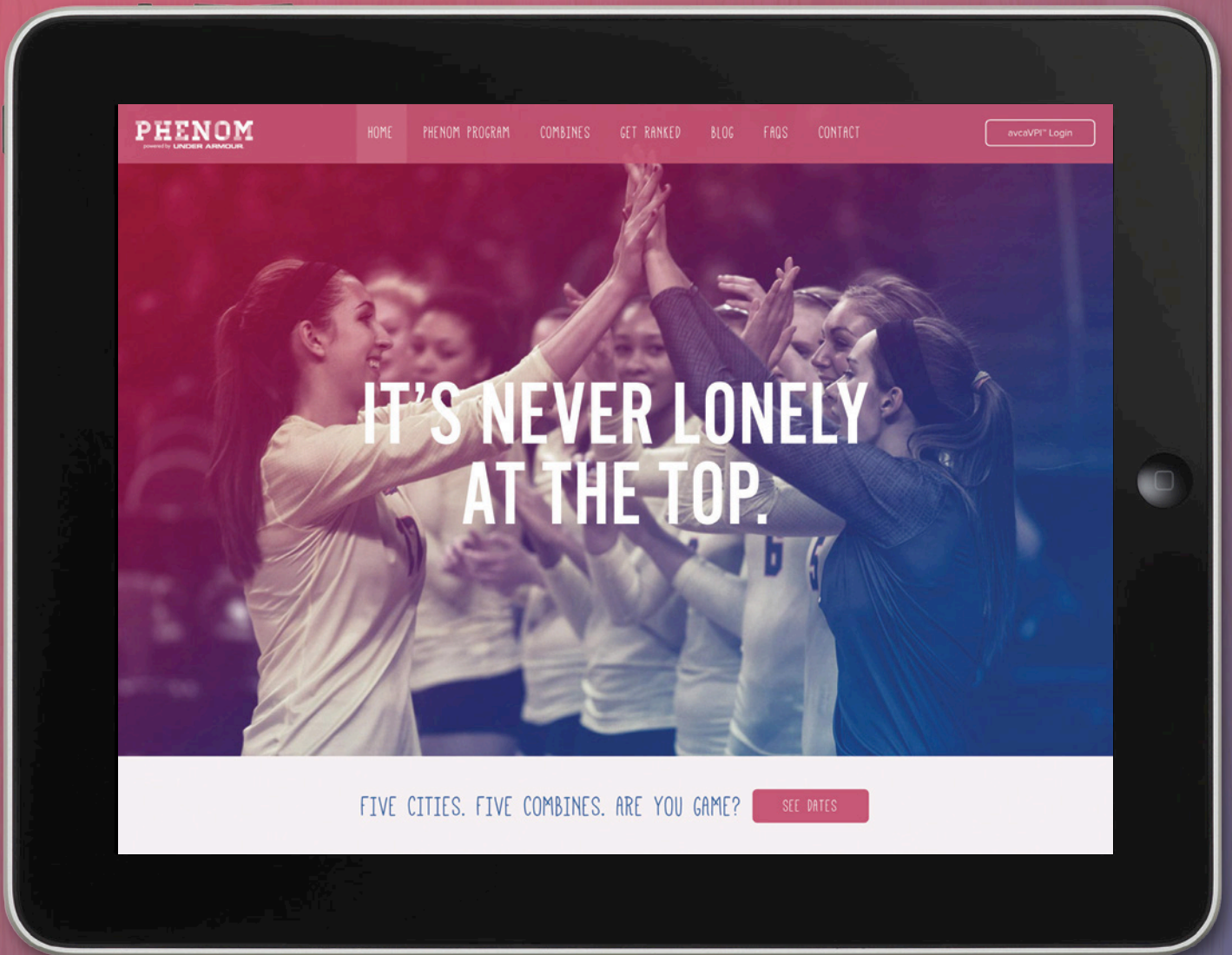
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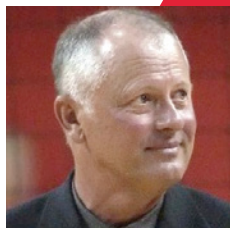
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WRITER'S DESK

A Conversation on Coaching with John Dunning

Terry Pettit

WHEN THE UNIVERSITY of the Pacific won the NCAA Division I women's volleyball championship in 1985, John Dunning became the only Division I volleyball coach to win an NCAA championship in his first year of coaching. When the Stanford women won the National Championship in Columbus, Ohio, last December by defeating Texas 3-1, Dunning became the only Division I women's volleyball coach to win an NCAA championship in his last year of coaching.

When I pointed out this achievement to John, he responded by saying, "There are some similarities between the 1985 Pacific team and the 2016 Stanford team. Both teams were young with high energy and began the season unsure if they should have national championship expectations. With the Pacific team, I was too inexperienced to interfere with what happened, and this past season I was experienced enough to know I shouldn't interfere with what was happening."

The humility expressed in that response sums up who John Dunning has been for a career spanning 32 years and five national championships at two universities. I had the opportunity to talk with John in February about his career and coaching philosophy.

What is your talent? What can you do at an extraordinary level regardless of your occupation?

I love to teach whether it's skills, strategy or things that transfer to real life. I like having a plan and following through on the plan. I learned discipline from my high school basketball coach Phil Kelly. He taught me to develop a plan on what I wanted to accomplish and then to do it as well as I could.

Who are your mentors?

Terry Liskevych helped me learn the game of volleyball when I was a high school coach and attended his clinics. Without him I would never have had the opportunity to



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become the head coach at the University of the Pacific. I talked with Dr. Glen Albaugh, who was a sports psychologist at UOP, throughout my career. But my wife Julie is at the top of the list. She knows me, and in the most difficult times brings me back to being me. It's easy to get duped and distracted; it's easy to stop learning or to think I've figured it out. Whenever I'm getting off track from being me, she gets me back to being who I really am."

Talk about that first year with Pacific.

When Terry Liskevych left to coach the National Team at the end of the season, five seniors (three of them All-Americans) graduated from the team. We returned two All-American seniors, outside hitters Therese Boyle and Julie Maginot, and several strong upperclassmen, but the program I inherited was much bigger than the

individuals. Things got even better when we were lucky to get a commitment from Elaina Oden, who was the top recruit in the country. Elaina impacted the decision of other strong freshmen and we had several good upperclassmen as well.

I believe Elaina may have been the best collegiate player my teams ever played against.

Elaina was an A in everything she did. She was a great middle blocker, a great attacker, a great defensive player and a great server. She became a great leader. We won the national championship in 1985 but only hit .220 for the year. Elaina hit .350, which tells you that the rest of the team averaged near .200. She was always thinking about how to win the next point. When her teammates would make a great play, she would put her hand behind her back when she was at the net so they could come up and give

her five. It was her way of connecting with her teammates.

Pacific won the championship again the following year and remained a top-tier program for the next decade, but then things changed.

Things began to change when UOP dropped football. It's a weird thing waiting by a phone or a computer for a kid to change your life. We were still in the mix but we weren't consistently in the top five or six teams. At UOP it got harder. I could see it in people's faces and in how they walked and talked.

If Stanford hadn't called in 2001 do you think you would have left coaching?

No, because I wasn't qualified to do anything else without a significant reduction in salary. I needed to provide for my family. When I was a teacher prior to becoming a college coach I had been laid off four years in a row because of declining enrollment. If I hadn't gone to Stanford I would have worked hard to make the situation at Pacific better.

All of us have to work with players who can be difficult to coach. I always thought that this one of your strengths.

People who can compete at the highest level have idiosyncrasies about them, and they are great because of these differences. They can be ultra-competitive; they can lack confidence; they can be driven to succeed for themselves but struggle with striving for the team; and they are doing all this in the public eye. When I was inducted into the Hall of Fame a few years ago I gave a speech where I apologized to the players I didn't connect with. I was not the right coach for them in that moment. Sometimes I would get angry because of how they were perceiving me or because they weren't mature ... but they were still kids. It was my job to try to do better.

I thought that sometimes you took longer than other coaches to settle on your eventual lineup. Is that a fair observation?

I don't think so. My staff and I would work hard on developing a plan of who we thought would end up on the court. If that didn't work initially, we were patient and tried to let those players work through it. If you start making changes right away it can be even more difficult to get where you need to be at the end of the season. Having said that, some of our best teams did get off track quite a bit before we got to where we needed to be.

In 2012 you dealt with one of the hardest things that a coach should have to encounter when a player attempted suicide and died several days later.

It was an incredibly painful event. I knew that I didn't have any qualifications or expertise in

dealing with this. I still get calls from other coaches who may be working with a player who is having problems, but I don't want to present myself as having any insight into it. Kids are under so much pressure today at an earlier age. The world doesn't want to talk about suicide. When people call me, I know I am not qualified to help them but I listen and hope they know I care. I care a lot. The only saving grace in terms of getting through the next day is going to counselors who are trained in this area.

At the Final Four in 2013 you and I had a conversation about a better way to interact with players. You talked about not having an agenda when you met with them off the court.

Throughout much of my career when players came to me I assumed that they needed help with something. I assumed that they



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came to me for counsel and therefore it was my job to provide an answer. I wasn't a good listener because I wanted to help. I ruined so many conversations because I was thinking about what I was going to say next. So, I made a decision not to make any assumptions about what a player might want to talk about. I decided to be more patient and focus on listening to what they had to say. I think my communication with players improved after making this commitment.

You once told me that one of the things you learned in doing the "Art of Volleyball" clinics was gaining insight into what made Penn State's head volleyball coach Russ Rose so successful. What did you learn?

I wanted to learn more about Penn State's competitive mindset. Why was Penn State so strong in big moments? One of the things that I learned is that Penn State works at and believes they are stronger than the opponent in the startup skills of serving and passing. They not only work hard at it; they talk about how it will lead to their success. They talk about the things that can distract you from performing these skills. As the season progresses they believe they will do these things better than the opponent. Coach Rose sees mental toughness as a skill,

something that can be taught. Great serving and passing provides a platform for that toughness. You deserve to be successful because of how hard you have worked at this.

How did you apply this to your own team?

I think there are different ways to get this done in different years. We decided to make a pyramid similar to the one that John Wooden developed when he was winning national championships in men's basketball at UCLA. We changed some of the words to fit today's culture. At the top of the pyramid was the word TEAM. Everything we were doing was working toward that concept.

A lot of team drills end up having the starters versus the B side. We called the B side the machine team. Assistant coach and former player Cassidy Lichtman played on the machine team every day. Eventually the machine team came to believe that they would be critical to the overall team's success. It was not just true, but we talked about it being true. The machine team believed that their selflessness would make the difference. (The machine team was a nickname created by Lichtman.)

When did you first believe that Stanford could win the 2016 National Championship?



STANFORD DAILY

We hadn't made it a focus during the season, but when we walked off the court having come from behind 0-2 to beat a great Wisconsin team on their home court in the regional final, there was a different feeling. It was like we were rising instead of falling. We all felt it. It was the first big match we had won. We had defeated several great teams during the season but that is different than winning a match you have to win against a great opponent if you want to continue to play. Inky (Inky Ajanaku) had been telling the team for the last few weeks of the season that they were good enough to get the job done. That was when our team saw we could do this.

Postscript:

When #9 seed Stanford defeated Minnesota 3-1 in the NCAA semifinals and then went on to defeat Texas 3-1 in the championship match, the 2016 Cardinal became the second highest seed to win an NCAA women's volleyball championship. The highest seed was when Stanford was a #11 seed and won the championship in 2004, also a Dunning coached team. Both are great achievements. But how sweet and rare is it to win championships in your first season and your final season as a collegiate coach? Bookends!

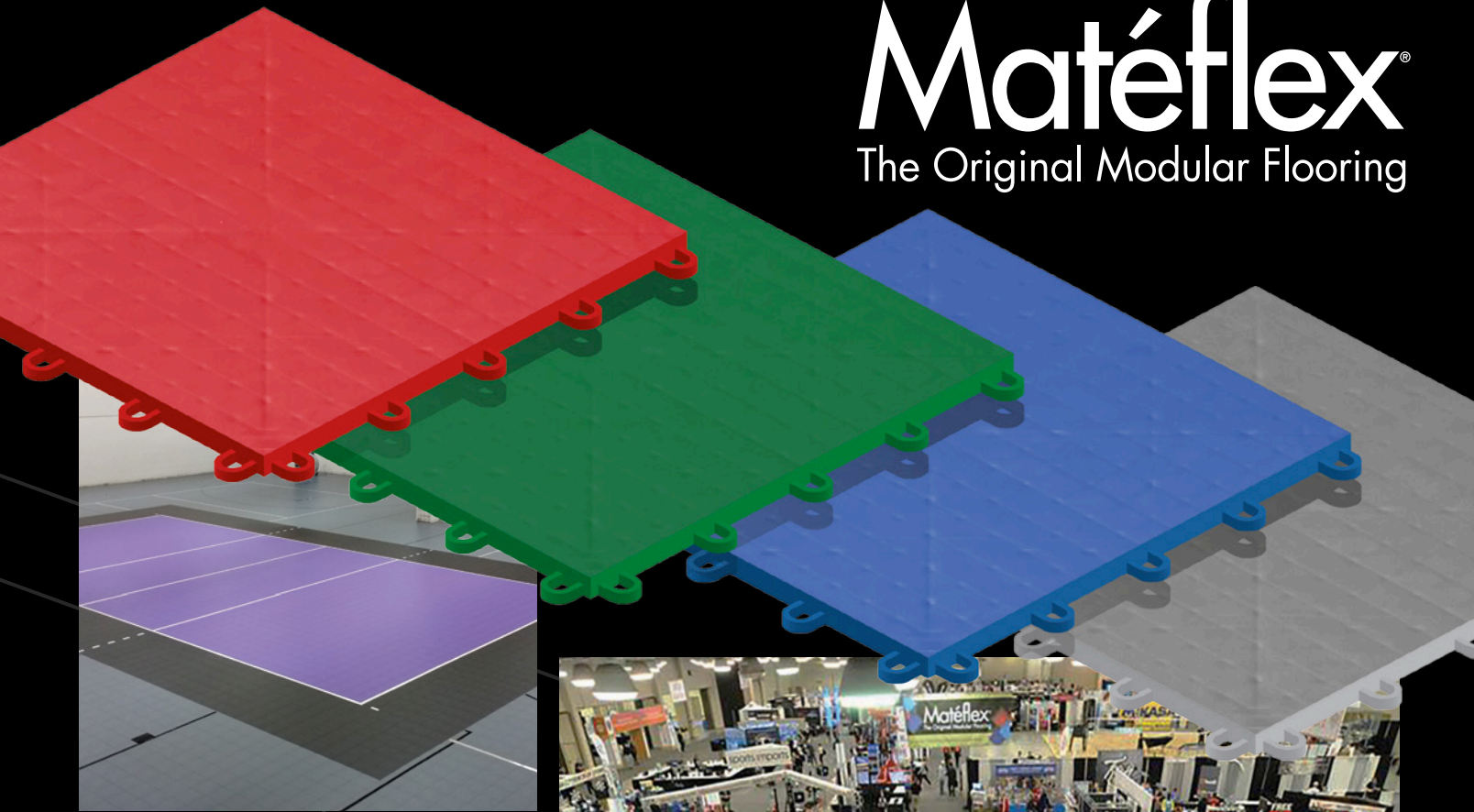
Terry Pettit's audio book "Trust and the River and Other Selected Poems" will be available at www.terrypettit.com on June 1, 2017



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Coaching is Teaching: Involving the Media

David Portney

“HEY, PORTNEY!” I heard right behind me, as I walked to my car after completing another day at Ridgewood High School in Ridgewood, NJ. I was a junior in the fall of 2004, and the previous night my first football broadcast as a color analyst for local public access TV hit the airwaves. I recognized that voice immediately – it was our head football coach, Chuck Johnson. I took a deep breath and turned around, assuming he hadn’t run out of his office in the weight room to the parking lot to heap praise in my direction.

“You said on the broadcast we were running the same formation every play,” Coach Johnson said as his face lit up, probably sensing that I was absolutely terrified. “It’s the Wing-T offense. It might look similar, but each play is unique.” We stood in the parking lot for probably another 20 minutes discussing the system that has made him one of the most prolific high school football coaches in state history. In fact, later that year and the next, we went on to win the state championship. I also want to fulfill my duty as an RHS alum to mention our Ridgewood Maroons took home the state title again this past season.

At first I was angry that he called me out like that. I was just some kid trying his best, and in my very first appearance on TV I had to hear it from the coach. “Give me a break,” I thought to myself. However, the more I thought about it the more I realized he was right. I had no idea how intricate the system was, and to be truthful I didn’t bother to find out until he took it upon himself to talk to me about it. You can bet

your bottom dollar I shared the wisdom from that day forward on every broadcast.

The reason I tell this story is not to brag about our football team, but to show how a coach can positively impact the media reporting on their program. Now that we have a lot more media coverage of our sport across many platforms, it’s time we in the volleyball community take a more active role in assisting those that cover us.



Paul Sunderland,
sportscaster

Coaches don’t have to track them down in the parking lot, but simply introducing yourself and inviting them to lunch will go a long way to developing that relationship. If you know the individual(s) that will be directly covering you, great! Since it often changes season-to-season, it might make more sense to reach out to the sports editor/director, and they can point you in the right direction.

Depending on the size of your athletics department, some of the more followed sports like football or basketball might already be doing this. Talk to their head

coaches to get their two cents on what, if anything, they’re doing to have a continued dialogue with the media. If they don’t do anything, I smell an opportunity! Link up with a few coaches and organize a single event where the media can meet all of you. You might find it’s the same person responsible for covering multiple sports.

If your media coverage is mostly handled by your school, then that’ll make your lives a little easier. Once you know who the journalists/talent/producers/directors are you need to be a somewhat regular presence. I’ve heard of coaches having these kinds of meetings and conversations only in the preseason. While that’s great, it’s not enough. Has your team ever changed or evolved over the course of a season? You might have switched to a 6-2 for a single match, but does the average media member understand the difference? If I’m a local writer coming into a gym after covering three different events earlier in the day, a little heads up about those kinds of things goes a long way.

If you’re a girls’/women’s coach, there’s no better time than right now to start reaching out to your local media. With the spring season right around the corner, that might be a good time to get them introduced to the sport if they are new. If you coach the boys/men, better late than never! No matter what you do, being proactive in your own media coverage will make everyone’s lives easier and the coverage better ... even if the meetings happen in a high school parking lot.



GETTING FIT

The 7 Speeds of Volleyball – A New Way of Developing Your Players

Ken Kontor

SOME TIME AGO I showed John Kessel at USAV a book we published, “The 7-Speeds of Soccer.” He liked it and wrote an article that applied the concept to the sport of volleyball which we subsequently published in *Performance Conditioning Volleyball*. I would like to present the 7 speeds he devised and offer you, the coach, a means of rating each speed based on each exercise or drill you do. This will allow you a means of creating a priority system of speed development for your players.

Here’s how it works:

- We present each speed with a short definition.
- Look at the exercises/drills you do in practice, and assign a “speed value” to each of the 7 speeds for particular exercises/drills. This “speed value” should be on a scale of 0 to 5 for each.
- Calculate the total value for each speed for each exercise/drill. The higher the number, the more emphasis you have put on that speed.
- Determine which speeds your team needs to work on, and design your program accordingly by prioritizing the exercises that have the highest “speed value” to fit your needs.

The 7 Speeds of Volleyball

These are the 7 speeds of volleyball that should address beginner-level problems as well as situations for the more advanced player.

#1 Kinesthetic Awareness Speed

Kinesthetic awareness speed relates to an athlete’s ability to determine where their body is in relation to space, and to be aware of their position on the court to quickly relate this information to the game.

The game of volleyball is played at varying degrees of ball and player heights, all in a relatively small space (a player may be towering over the net or the kill, and a second later their opponent may be flat on the

ground for a pancake dig). The challenge of knowing where you are in relation to the court and the net at game speed takes an incredible amount of practice under game situations.

#2 Reading Speed

Reading speed is the ability to predict what will happen before it happens, a skill acquired through previous experiences. Reading speed has to be gained through experience with one major qualification – that experience must be game-like.



#3 Decision Making Speed

This speed is the ability to make fast decisions from a variety of options in the shortest amount of time. Like the two speeds preceding it, this speed only develops through game-like training. Great players make good decisions by getting into a neutral position. That comes from the two prior speeds.

#4 Reaction Speed

This speed is the ability to react to a previous action from the ball, an opponent or a teammate. Thus far the speeds we have discussed and their development have had a lot to do with playing experience. We have looked at the where we are on the court, kinesthetic speed, the second before the ball is touched, reading speed and finally as the ball is touched with decision-making speed. Now we are talking about speed after the ball has been touched.

#5 Movement Speed without the Ball

This speed is defined as the ability to move at maximum speed without the ball utilizing cyclic (patterned) and acyclic (random) movements.

When you watch a match, you see that one person is touching the ball. The other 11 players are going to be doing something else, getting ready to react. They are all moving to adjust to where the ball goes.

#6–#7 Action Speed with the Ball and Game Action Speed

I consider these two final speeds of volleyball together. Action speed with the ball is defined as the ability to perform a task with the ball at a maximum speed. This speed and game action speed (the ability to make fast, effective decisions during a game in relation to technical, tactical or conditional possibilities) are a result of everything that we have leading up to them.

The next step is to put the “speed values” into our 7-T Fit-to-a-T System of Program Design. Unfortunately space doesn’t allow for these details. We’ll provide more information in future articles in *Performance Conditioning Volleyball*.

My personal thanks to John Kessel for developing the 7 Speeds of Volleyball

Q&A with Brett Ledbetter

By Eric Hammond



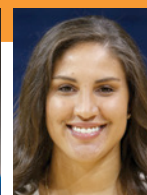
Kris Berzins
Loyola



Eric Hammond
Towson



Brad Keller
UCLA



Krista Rice
Central Michigan



Marie Zidek
U. of San Diego

ACHIEVING BETTER on-court performance is obviously of the highest priority. How do we accomplish this while developing our student-athletes as people first? How do we establish and improve team culture? We talked with character building expert Brett Ledbetter to discover best practices for elite results.

Coaching Volleyball: Why is it more beneficial to focus on a team maximizing its ability as opposed to focusing on wins?

Brett Ledbetter: I think you have to figure out what drives what. If you maximize your ability, that gives you the best chance to get the result you're chasing. So why split your energy getting distracted by the result when that's not what's driving the result?

CV: What do you mean by the difference between human-related obstacles vs. sport-related obstacles?

BL: A great exercise for coaches is if you ask your team, "What are the top three things that could get in the way of the team maximizing its ability?" the answers you are going to get are human-related. I think that when you can solve those, that's going to drive whatever process, which is just a set of systems that you have in place.

CV: How can we enforce team culture and manage behaviors?

BL: I was working with a sports psychologist and I asked him, "Why do I prefer the word *environment* to *culture*?" He said when you think about it, you're interrupting a behavior. Behavior is right now. If you think about environment vs. culture, culture is over time. Environment is right now, and your environment drives the behavior. So if you have behaviors, as a coach, that are what you would consider below the line, I would try and find ways to environmentalize routines that would help people get above the line.



Brett Ledbetter

CV: How can we best evaluate character during the recruiting process?

BL: I think what you're examining is behavior, and behavior is just how you act. Your character is who you are. We've all been in scenarios where our behavior, how we act, doesn't necessarily line up with who we are. And so I think the best way to get to know someone, is to get to know someone. I think where coaches can go down a wrong path is when they start labeling character as good and bad, because that's rooted in judgment. Dr. Jim Loehr, who's been a great influence on me, looks at each of the character skills as muscles. Those muscles are either developed or underdeveloped. Then it's trying to find ways to develop those "muscles" in the underdeveloped areas.

CV: How can we become better leaders and motivators?

BL: I think you have to coach to your own identity. Then try and find a way to align the environment with that. Remember that you are the physical manifestation of your standards, and when you send mixed signals, that's where things can be an issue. That requires self-auditing and being very honest with yourself to view, "What signals am I sending as a coach?" I think maybe the most important thing that I would look at is how to get a person that's in your program to buy in to personal growth.

My background is in basketball. I mention this in the book that a coach asked, "Would you rather play in the NBA or have great character?" A large majority of the athletes answer "play in the NBA," which shows that they value what they do over who they are and who they're becoming. The way we get our players to buy in to their own development is we just ask them, showing them the Character Checklist, "Do you think that you can improve these skills if you intentionally work on developing them?" They say yes. We ask them to pick from the Character Checklist things that they want to develop. Then we ask them, "Do you think if you got better at these performance skills that would make you a better player?" They say yes. "Do you think if you got better at these moral skills that would make you a better teammate and a better friend?" They respond yes. "Well if you became a better player and a better teammate, do you see how that would lead to better results?" I think that's the best way that I've found to start that conversation and then start to identify what's getting in the way of those things.

We can learn from Tim Corbin (head baseball coach at Vanderbilt University). If you commit to that, the reason those players come back (to train even when they are professionals) is because of all the things that they've learned beyond just what would affect them inside the uniform. "Where do I find the time?" Yes it takes a lot of time to prepare a character development system, but that's how they know that you care. I think that's what Tim is an example of, is that he goes above and beyond to affect these people that he leads as people first and as athletes second. As a result he's enabled himself to tie his purpose to his job in a way that will produce the results, which is essentially what he's evaluated on.

For more info on his book and free video resources, visit WhatDrivesWinning.com.

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