



Volleyball ACE™ Power Tips

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Your Way? My Way? Why is There Only One Way?

By Kristina Hernandez, head women's volleyball coach, Hofstra University

For the past two years, I have heard coaches from almost every corner of the country criticize each other and constantly debate the proper way to train teams. I had the opportunity to work simultaneously with two very highly debated training philosophies in my first six months of professional coaching. At one end, I was working with a highly successful college program that was a firm believer in the known “Carl McGown” (former head men’s volleyball coach, BYU) way of training. On the other end, I was coaching for a highly successful club team in Northern California with a coach who was a firm believer in the “Toshi Yoshida” (former U.S. Women’s National Team head coach) method of training.

The biggest difference between these two? One was dedicated to technical training (Yoshida), while the other conducted more game-like practices (McGown).

If you are reading this article to find some insight into a training philosophy that is more superb than the other, or if you are

looking for that secret way of training that is going to give your team the edge, then you should probably stop reading now. There are benefits to each training method and the key is to determine which one is best for your team.

The Realization

Five years ago, I got my foot in the door to coach collegiate volleyball. At that time, I had just graduated from college and had no real idea which kind of training was right or wrong – or which way was better. For that matter, I had no concept of what kind of coach I was or what kind of philosophy I believed in.

At 21 years of age, my brain was nearly overloaded by the attempt to keep all of the fine details of each style intact. On top of that, the minute I walked into another gym, all I would hear is how this was the way to train, and how the other style wasn’t. At times, I was hesitant to give my suggestions on anything training related for fear that I would intermix the two...which was a big “no no.”



Technical drilling or game-like training? Coaches at all levels struggle with this dilemma on a daily basis. As a coach at Loyola College, Hernandez found the proper balance between the two. (Photo courtesy of Loyola Athletics)

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I had used both training methods and quite frankly, neither really worked better than the other for my team. As a matter of fact, I was basically fed up with being told how to train my team. Why are there only two “right” ways to train? Who made this a law? Who says you are right? And why do you feel the need to tell everyone else that your way is right, and theirs is wrong?

The Journey

Six months later, at the ripe age of 22, I landed my first head coaching job at Loyola College in Maryland. I was nervous about whether I knew how to train this team properly and was nervous about whether I actually knew what kind of head coach I was.

The first two years at the college were a huge learning experience for me. At first I chose the “Toshi” method for training. My team would engage in hours of technical training. I caught myself having to write down all of the details and specifics because I could not keep them straight. There were particular words to use on the way to performing a correct arm swing, with the proper biomechanical...blah, blah, blah. (At least that is what I felt like when I read this stuff, and I knew my team probably felt the same way.) I could still teach them the correct techniques, but I had to find my own words.

Since I was now in my own gym, I knew that there was no one listening to every word I said and dictating my actions. The following year, I started to add a few more game-like scenario drills, but they were usually at the end of practice and it was probably for about just a 30-minute chunk. And so passed a seven-win season.

Two years later, I had eight freshmen coming in and four



When Hernandez took the head coaching position at Loyola, she was unsure as to exactly how she would train her players. Now she has no questions. (Photo courtesy of Loyola Athletics)

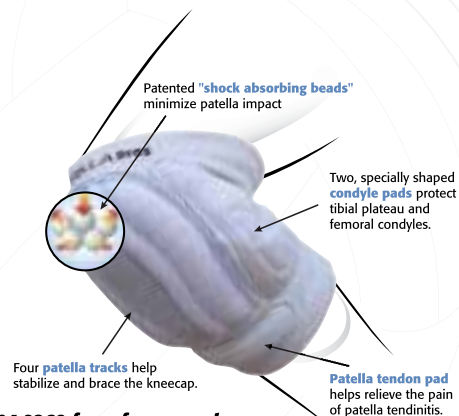
CALENDAR

	<p>2008 AVP Cross Tour Stops May 30-June 1, Atlanta, Ga. June 6-8, Hermosa Beach, Calif. June 20-22, Belmar, N.J.</p>
June 20-21	<p>FIVB World League Intercontinental Round USA vs. Bulgaria, Sears Centre Arena, Hoffman Estates, Ill.</p>
June 27-28	<p>FIVB World League Intercontinental Round USA vs. Finland, Resch Center, Green Bay, Wis.</p>
	<p>2008 AVP Cross Tour Stops July 4-6, Boulder, Colo. July 11-13, Chicago, Ill.</p>
July 11-12	<p>FIVB World League Intercontinental Round USA vs. Spain, U.S. Cellular Coliseum, Bloomington, Ill.</p>
July 23-27	<p>2008 FIVB World League Final Round Rio de Janeiro, Brazil</p>
Aug. 8-24	<p>Olympic Games Beijing, China</p>
Dec. 17-21	<p>AVCA Annual Convention Omaha, Neb.</p>

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The best coaches and leaders are unique and use creativity to achieve their success. (Photo courtesy of Loyola Athletics)

sophomores on my roster, and I had an epiphany: it was time to revamp my way of training! So, I got in the gym and decided to rethink my methodology and create a vision derived from my own strengths and experiences. The best coaches and leaders are unique and use creativity to achieve their success. I had to take responsibility for my own development. I had to create a philosophy that I could communicate to my team.

I took bits and pieces of things I liked from almost everything I had ever been taught or seen in the game of volleyball. I took things that stuck with me in college – things from Toshi’s style of technical precision, things from McGown’s game-like training, and then I added “me.”

The Big Question

Now for the big question. How do I train my team? I teach them techniques for perfect situations, as well as the not-so-perfect. When we train and break down defense, they have options regarding what kinds of defensive moves they are going to make instead of me telling them to do “down-ups” every time they pick up a tip.

We also are always doing everything in some type of game-like fashion. I have 14 girls on my team, so why not go six-on-six, or anything versus six as much as possible? I isolate our focus, then

let the rest happen. We keep score during some parts of practice, but not all the time.

I also move our practices along at the speed of light. I do not like to spend training time listening to myself talk and I do not like my players standing around instead of working. I give feedback with options so they can try to determine the best solutions for them, instead of me telling them how I think they are doing this particular skill incorrectly. I am still giving them the answers that derive from the way we train, but I am not telling them it is either this way or no way. The result: a 22-win season, the best ever in Loyola history.

So now when people ask which way I train my team, I say, “I like both and I use both.” I am not an advocate for either and I will not protest if you choose one over the other. I am not telling you which method to choose. In fact, I am just telling you that you have to find out what works for you and who you are. Create your own way of training. Break the mold.

I will tell you that I know what kind of coach I am now, at 26, and I will tell you that if you walk into my gym you will see a fluent masterpiece of a group of girls who believe and know what our philosophy and training methods are. We had 22 wins this season, so something has to be right.

VOLLEYBALL ACE™ DRILLS

Rotation Boogie

From *101 Winning Volleyball Drills From the AVCA* (2000)

Number of Players: 12

Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective:

This is a very challenging six-on-six drill in which every point counts and the primary focus is on both side-out and free-ball offense, as well as serving and transition in defense.

Directions:

1. Set up two teams of six players on opposite sides of the court. Team A sets up to receive a serve, and Team B sets up to serve and play defense.

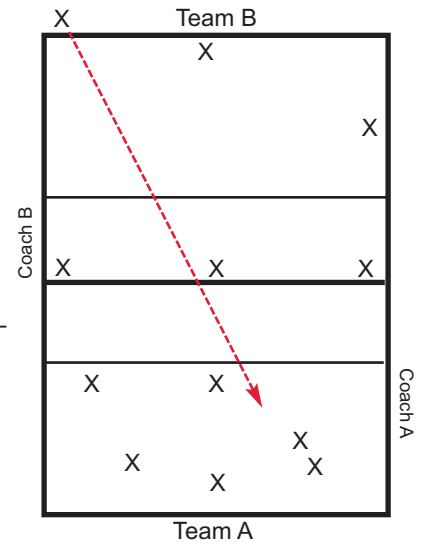
2. If Team A sides out, it receives four free balls from Coach B. If Team B wins the rally, it sets up to receive serve from Side A and attempts to side out in order also to receive four free balls from Coach A. After a team receives four free balls, it then serves to the other team.

Scoring:

1. Free-ball points are tallied on a visible scoreboard. When one team earns five free-ball points, it then receives a “boogie point” and both teams rotate. After six rotations, the team with the most “boogie points” is the winner.

Variation:

1. Change the number of balls necessary to earn a “boogie point.”



Quick Recognition of Offense

Don Hardin, University of Illinois

Number of Players: 8

Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective:

To enable front-court players to recognize and react immediately to offensive patterns of the opponent.

Directions:

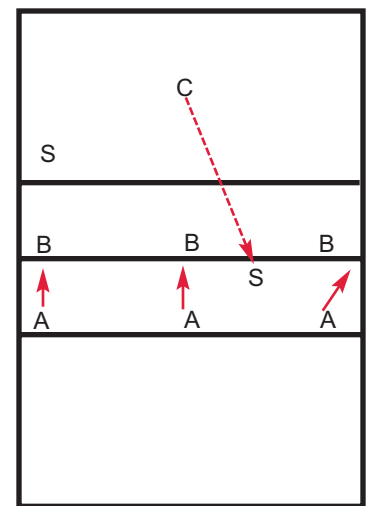
1. Assign a blocking team with a setter (S) for transition attack. On the opposite side of the net, line up a team of hitters (A) and a setter (S) who are secretly assigned a sequence of offensive plays.
2. Begin with three to four offensive plays and work up to six. Some of the plays may be repeti-

tive, but the idea is to force a mix of situations for the opposing blockers.

3. Toss the first ball for the offensive sequence. If the ball goes by the block, blockers will pull off of the net for transition attack.

4. A coach on that side tosses a ball to the setter for the attack.

5. The offensive team on the other side lets the ball go and another ball is immediately tossed to their setter for the next offensive sequence. This continues for the entire set of three to six attempts.



Setting Corner to Corner

By Sean Byron, Ohio State University

Number of Players: 4

Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective:

To give setters practice in setting corners while getting the entire team involved.

Directions:

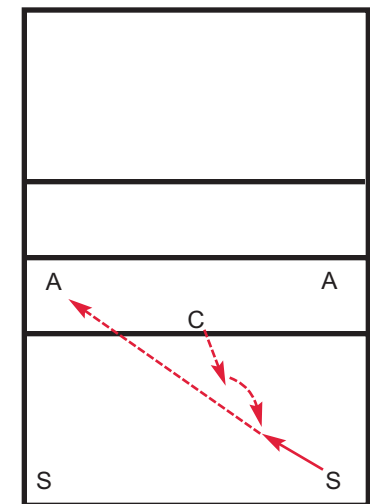
1. Setters (S) form two lines in the corners of the court on the endline.
2. The coach (C) stands on the attack line and bounces a ball for one player to run in and set across the court to a would-be attacker near the antenna.

2. The setter follows the path of the ball and becomes the next attacker in that line.

3. To keep the number of practice repetitions high, the would-be attacker catches the ball and returns it to the coach and then proceeds to the opposite setting line.

4. Once the setter clears the middle of the court, the coach bounces another ball to the first person in the other line, who sets the ball across the court.

5. Be sure to bounce the ball high enough for players to get under and set, but low enough to challenge them to move quickly and stop before setting.



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