



# Volleyball ACE™ Power Tips

Sponsored by Dimensional Software

Volume No. 19, Issue No. 25 ~ Dec. 31, 2008

Official Drill Bulletin of the American Volleyball Coaches Association

## Digging Technique

*By Joan Powell, former head girls' volleyball coach at Coronado High School (ret.), Colorado Springs, Colo.*

Defense is an attitude that begins with the coach. This is the transcending attitude throughout practice and into competition. Not all teams are blessed with or are guaranteed to have a big, domineering offensive team year after year. Coaches are continually reminded in clinics and books to showcase their strengths and hide their weaknesses.

Tenacity can be any team's strength, unless the team possesses an overriding lethargic attitude and is uninterested in a productive work ethic. The coaches' expectations, along with their levels of involvement and motivation, are key. A passion to perform is contagious and will spread among the players.

If a coach sets the bar and states that defense is an important ingredient for the team's success – and then follows up in practice – the team will begin to take on a defensive attitude. Then, if players agree collectively and buy into the process, a defensive attitude becomes second nature.

Practices must provide the venue in which players are continually being challenged, are willing to step out of their comfort zones, and are willing to push their teammates to become better. Coaches need to provide this well-balanced environment and cushion it with some fun.

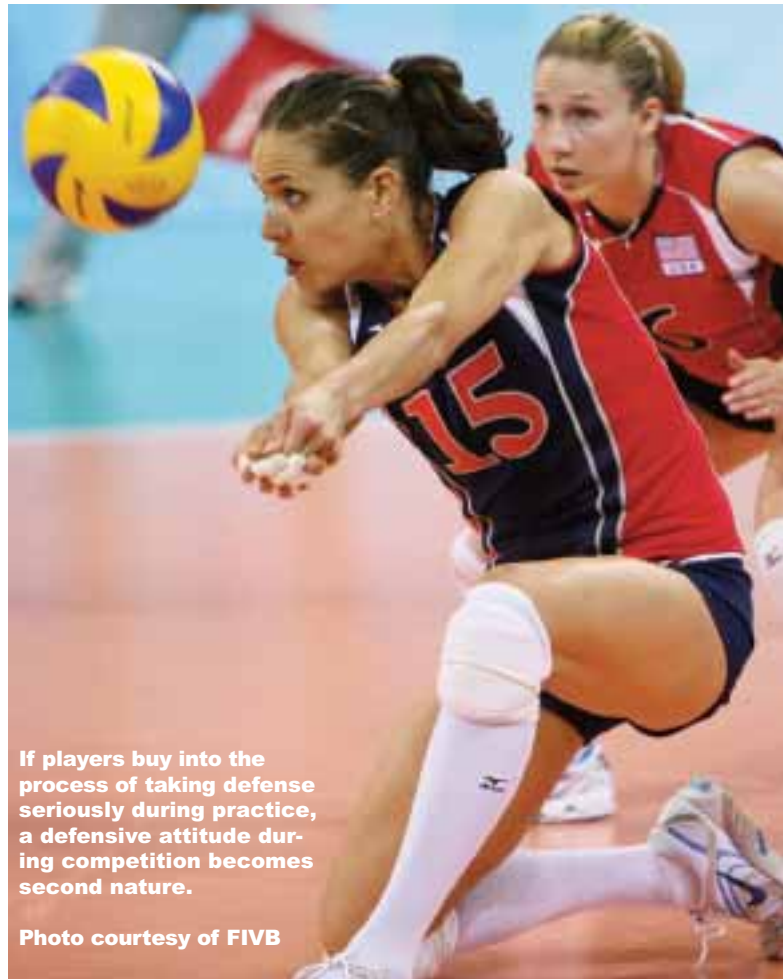
Players should look forward to and relish the time to practice defense. As players begin to reap the benefits of their labor at practice, the coach must reinforce those efforts during actual competition and again during the practices that follow.

### Digging Technique

Teams that “dig everything” frustrate their opponents by keeping the ball in play and by consistently defending what normally goes down for a point. Successful defenders not only dig, but also control the ball better than their opponents. The ball is controlled and returned at such a high rate that opponents often make errors caused by their own frustration.

These successful defensive teams don't panic when they play the game predominantly “out of system.” (Being “in system” means that the pass or dig is perfect and the setter has the maximum number of offensive options to pursue.) Although being “out of system” is never the desired norm, a great dig – although not necessarily to the setter – is still a fantastic play, which may be followed by scrambling or an offensive opportunity with a controlled attack.

Patience is the key here. Many times it is better to hit the ball smart than to hit the ball hard. In any case, the idea that the ball is kept alive is critical. If the dig is under control, the defense has just given the offense another chance to reload.



**If players buy into the process of taking defense seriously during practice, a defensive attitude during competition becomes second nature.**

Photo courtesy of FIVB

# CALENDAR

A great dig can also spark a change in momentum. Volleyball is truly a contest of momentum. More to the point, it's a simple rebound game in which the object is to keep the ball from hitting your side of the floor. For success in the game, players need to know how to protect their floor. With this in mind, coaches need to make the floor a friendly and safe place to land, fall, roll, sprawl, collapse or dive.

Coaches are responsible for teaching sound techniques, but also for allowing players to experiment freely. Although performing a defensive skill with correct technique is preferred, situations occur when time doesn't allow for the preferred technique – only reaction. Reactive skills can be unique and replicate odd form, but they should be welcomed if the result is safe and successful.

Indeed, there are reactive movements in self-defense or last-ditch efforts not taught in practice. Rather, they are learned in the “line of fire.” Such moves, when successful, should be applauded. These moves might not follow the textbook or look very pretty, but when a player makes a great move with relentless pursuit, the move can inspire further exciting efforts and bring the spectators back for more.

On today's volleyball court, the shorter players are no longer relinquished to the back row as a specialist or a libero. Today's defensive players are fearless hustlers, determined and feisty. They have a “nothing falls” attitude.

Although a coach might have assigned players to serve in a defensive role, all players must learn the fundamental techniques associated with digging and floor defense. Having all team members involved in defensive drills is important for team morale, and there is a practical side, as well.

Defense is not just played in the back-row positions. Front-row players are also engaged defensively and need to acquire the necessary tools to protect their territory. There are limitations to the substitution rule, and in a long game in which the

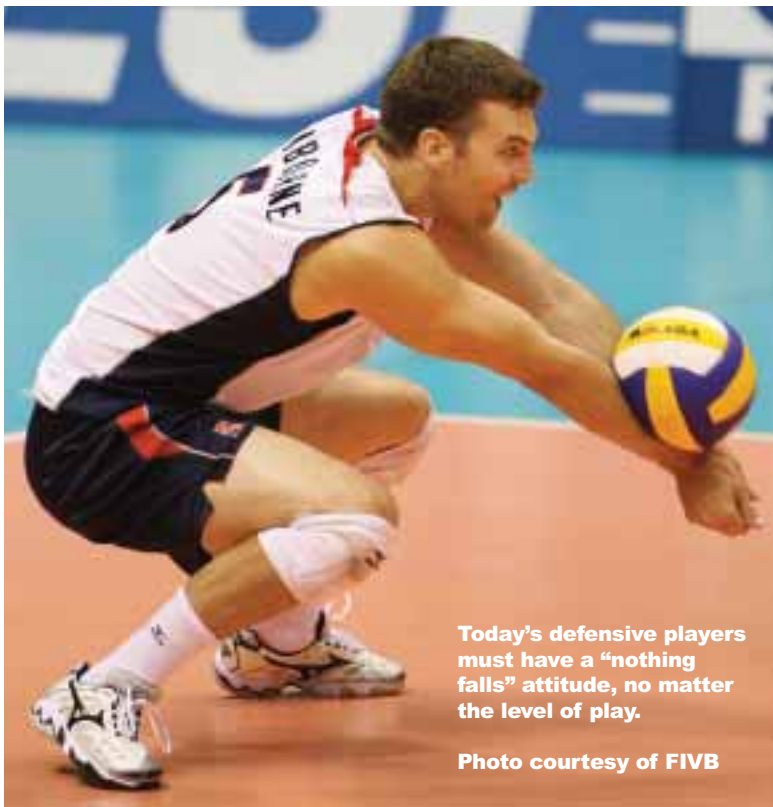
<b>Feb. 13-14</b>	<b>Volleyball Hall of Fame Morgan Classic</b> Springfield College, UC-San Diego, George Mason University, St. Francis University Blake Arena, Springfield College Springfield, Mass.
<b>April 17-18</b>	<b>2009 Molten Division III Men's Invitational Volleyball Championship</b> Ramapo College, Nahwah, N.J.
<b>May 7-9</b>	<b>40th Annual National Collegiate Men's Volleyball Championship</b> Smith Fieldhouse, Brigham Young University Provo, Utah
<b>May 23-30</b>	<b>USA Volleyball Adult Open Championships</b> Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, Minn.
<b>June 26-July 4</b>	<b>Eighth Annual Women's Pan American Cup</b> (U.S. Women's National Team) University of Miami and Florida International University
<b>June 26-July 5</b>	<b>USA Junior Olympic Girls' Volleyball Championships</b> Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami, Fla.
<b>July 1-8</b>	<b>USA Junior Olympic Boys' Volleyball Championships</b> Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, Ga.
<b>July 22-26</b>	<b>USA Volleyball High Performance Championships</b> Ft. Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center

coach has reached the maximum number of subs, the players who normally are replaced by the better defensive specialists must stay in the game and play defense. For players to attain the defensive skills necessary to become good or even great defenders, they must master some fundamental concepts.

## Ready-Position Posture

When the opposing team begins its offense, defenders are in “base” position. Base is the position assigned to each back-row player (right, left, or middle back) and constitutes a ready position in which a player is anticipating the opponent's attack. If the opponent's setter is in the front row or the opponents use a quick attack, the back-row players' base positions should be on or in front of the attack line. As an opposing attacker reaches the height of her jump, the digger might have to shuffle to a better spot after reading the attacker and her own blocker(s) to prepare to dig by lowering his or her body into a stable ready position.

To establish a base position, a player needs to be balanced with feet shoulder-width apart. Body weight is on the balls of the feet in a low, stable position. Arms should be bent at the elbows in front of the body, ready to dig overhead or underhand. The hands are relaxed and unclasped. Eyes



Today's defensive players must have a “nothing falls” attitude, no matter the level of play.

Photo courtesy of FIVB

are focused on the attacker.

Attackers sometimes telegraph their shots by their positioning or their technique. When a digger can recognize these hints, she is “reading the attack.” For instance, the attacker’s shoulders might assist the digger in determining the best positioning from which to dig the attack. The digger might be able to read the attacker and the type of shot to be hit and anticipate her move before contact or shortly after the shot is made. The defender must also be alert to her blockers’ positions as they front the attacker. Blocks that don’t close cause a hole in the front line of the defense, forcing the digger to cover that gap.

### Movement to the Ball

Depending on the type of attack, the digger must decide whether movement is necessary and what type of reception is needed to dig. The velocity of the ball dictates how much the digger needs to absorb the ball or provide impetus to the ball. The harder the attack, the more the digger needs to cushion the ball. If the attacked ball is a slow impact ball, the digger might need to add impetus by lifting the legs or raising the arms slightly to add to the desired flight. Ideally, a defender wants to take the ball low at the midline with contact made under the ball.

Players need to be trained to stay on their feet as long as they can before and during a dig. Running through the ball, bending the elbows to get the proper angle of deflection, and turning the thumbs in an upward motion (J stroke) to ensure the ball remains on the digger’s side of the net require considerable practice.



Depending on the type of attack, the digger must decide whether movement is necessary and what type of reception is needed to dig.

Photo courtesy of FIVB

### Information Needed Before Training Defense

There are many ways to defend the court and several techniques to use in myriad situations. It is imperative that coaches fill their players’ arsenals with as many options as possible to keep the ball from hitting the floor, provide repetitive opportunities to experiment and improve, teach the proper means to keep their players safe, and continue to make the game exciting for everyone. If a coach accepts this responsibility and embraces the philosophy that defense is an attitude, the program will foster a proud and rich tradition and a distinguished reputation that will help cultivate younger players to embrace the attitude.

*Reprinted from Volleyball Skills and Drills (2006). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. This and other books are available on the AVCA Web site by logging on to [www.avca.org](http://www.avca.org).*

# WHO SAYS HIGH-PERFORMANCE VOLLEYBALL GEAR HAS TO BE BORING?

**Introducing VB RAGS:**  
The top selling volleyball brand in the Caribbean is making its debut into the US market.

Since 1991, VB RAGS has been turning the volleyball world upside down with a high dose of creativity, and a genuine contempt for the status quo. We hail from the Caribbean, where vibrant colors are used to project the fun, high-energy, island-vibe, and passion with which we live ... and play volleyball. Our beach volleyball roots are also evident in our unique designs. VB RAGS offers a full line of volleyball products including high-performance volleyball shoes.

As we enter the US market in 2009, we seek to erase the ridiculous notion that high-performance volleyball gear needs to be boring. In a world where all volleyball brands look alike, we are happy to walk alone. Like the eagle, we don't flock, we fly solo.

**What about you?**

VB RAGS is a proud sponsor of the AVCA

[www.vbrags.com](http://www.vbrags.com)

NO/SO CAL 310.344.4466	CENTRAL CAL 559.960.8965	MID WEST 260.348.7239	MID ATLANTIC 757.613.6821	FLORIDA 407.928.6793	CARIBBEAN / INTL / OTHER 787.688.8243
---------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------	--

# VOLLEYBALL ACE™ DRILLS

## Acceleration

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

Number of Players: 9  
Number of Balls: Steady supply

### Objective:

This drill is excellent for teams that play a basic perimeter defense. Run-throughs and emergency skills will receive emphasis.

### Directions:

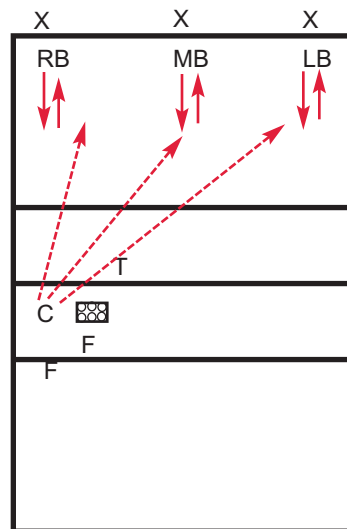
1. The coach (C) stands on one side of the court with a cart of volleyballs and a couple of feeders (F).
2. One right-back player (RB), one middle-back player (MB) and one left-back player (LB) stand on

the end line of the other side of the court with one "on deck" player (X) in each spot as well.

3. The coach tips the ball to force the RB to accelerate and dig the ball to target (T). The ball is then tipped to the MB and the LB. Once a player digs the ball, she immediately retreats to the end line in preparation for the next ball.
4. The coach goes through this procedure from a left-side attack, middle attack and right-side attack. The key points for the players are to stay low, accelerate to and through the ball and to go for every ball.

### Variations:

1. Players can go through the drill for a predetermined number of attempts, a predetermined number of perfect passes or a predetermined time.



## Partner Series

Joan Powell, Coronado High School (ret.), Colorado Springs, Colo.

Number of Players: 2-12  
Number of Balls: 1 for each pair

### Objective:

This drill is used primarily to encourage ball control in a variety of situations.

### Directions:

1. Players pair up on the court, each pair with a ball.
2. One partner is on the attack line, and the other is inside the endline. Balls always start with the player with her back to the net.

3. The ball is tossed, and the partners pass 25 each, followed by setting, followed by passing to self and setting to partner, then setting to self and setting to partner, and finally setting to self and hitting at partner.

4. Then add jump sets and back sets.
5. Have the players hit balls at their partners, who will dig. Then assign a number and switch.
6. Add the collapse – five attempts and switch, followed by four barrel rolls (two to the right and then two to the left).
7. Add the overhead pass and the beach dig (an open-handed reception where both hands and the fingers surround the ball).
8. Have the players challenge their partners by giving them a series of tough balls, such as

hard hits right and left, interspersing tips and off-speed shots.

9. There are no limits here. Whatever skills need additional practice and attention can be drilled.

10. For novice players, hitting may be disastrous at first. Partners can throw the ball at each other (using two-handed, overhead, and one-handed throws) until they gain control hitting.

## Serve and Dig Combinations

Cindy Book, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Number of Players: Groups of 3 players  
Number of Balls: Steady supply

### Objective:

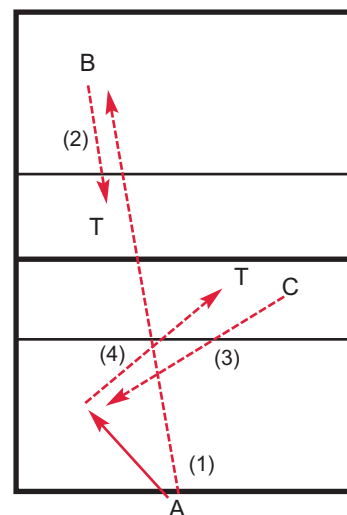
This drill works on a sequence of game-like skills (serve, run to base position, dig a ball). It also works on focus and mental toughness.

### Directions:

1. Player A serves a ball and runs to her base position (#1).
2. Player B passes the ball to target (T) on her side of the net and then retrieves the ball (#2).
3. As the pass from Player B arrives at the target,

Player C tosses a ball to herself and hits it at player A (#3). This mimics the timing of the pass, set and hit by the serve-receiving team.

4. Player A digs the ball to the target (#4).
5. Player A completes three serve-and-dig combinations and then the group switches jobs. Player C can stand in any of the hitting positions (outside, middle, or right) on the ground or up on a box.



## AVCA/Volleyball ACE™ Power Tips Directory

•Volleyball ACE: 877.223.8225

•AVCA Headquarters: 866.544.2822

•AVCA Grass Roots (Club) Rep., John Sample 817.545.4551

•AVCA Grass Roots (HS) Rep., Jodi Manore 734.850.6269

email: [coach@ace4vb.com](mailto:coach@ace4vb.com)

email: [members@avca.org](mailto:members@avca.org)

email: [jsample@dibimail.com](mailto:jsample@dibimail.com)

email: [manorej@bedford.k12.mi.us](mailto:manorej@bedford.k12.mi.us)

# INTENSITY

In the game and in practice!

Bring the same intensity you get in games to practice.

Use the best stat keeping tool, Volleyball ACE, for matches to determine what you need to work on in practice. Then use the TapRecorder during practice to perfect your game. The results will be amazing.



## TapRecorder

*Version 2*

- Now! Works on Pocket PC and Palm Handhelds
- Has Spreadsheet Interface with TapRecording Cells
- Includes Built-In Volleyball PracticeStats Reports
- Can Create Custom Handheld Applications
- Calculates Efficiency % and More

*Tap Tap Tap...*

*Instant Stat!*

*The Power of Two*

## Volleyball

Software for Coaches

*Version 6*

# ACE

- Fast, On-Court Stats
- Pass-Serve Ratings and Charting
- Box Scores, Points Per Rotation and More
- Runs on Palm (Zire, Tungsten) and Pocket PC (PDAQ, Axio)
- Uploads data for NAIA and NCAA stats reporting

Now available  
for Pocket PC  
and Palm handhelds!

We are  
passionate  
about  
Volleyball!

ORDER YOUR SOFTWARE TODAY!  
[www.ace4vb.com](http://www.ace4vb.com)

Call: Toll free: (877) 223-8225 Web: [www.ace4vb.com](http://www.ace4vb.com) FAX: (650) 948-2616