

Tuesday, July 24 2:35-3:25 PM

Drills and feedback to round out your coaching eye and focus

I see a lot of practice time by coaches spent either participating or chilling. And even the best intentioned coaches get caught so often watching the ball and giving feedback on what the ball does versus what their bodies do. If I had a nickel for every time I heard a coach say “you have to pass the ball”. Duh. We need to spend our time watching and giving feedback on how to better achieve reproducible body results to give them their best chances to pass the ball well. There are so many opportunities within practices and matches to identify strengths and weaknesses of your team (and other teams). But often times, it takes many years of experience to start picking up on these. Hopefully some of these suggestions help you modify your coaching eye and see more to lead your team to success.

- practice start -> warm-ups
 - short-and-deep
 - down balls to arms; down balls to hands
 - shuffles 10 feet; shuffles 30 feet
 - 10 feet hands
 - swing to shuffle catch
 - set to back set
 - swing to pass to self
 - kneepads LR; kneepads short
 - watching movement, work ethic, communications, hand-to-ball contact
- mid-practice -> 4-pack
 - partner shuffle arm passing down-and-back
 - 3-on-3 back row, no setter, x10 control
 - partner shuffle hand passing down-and-back
 - short serves x 5 in a row
 - watching competitiveness, fair-play, communications, teamwork
- mid-practice -> challenge drill
 - I make up lots of these; for example:
 - popcorn serving: first person serves and sits in that spot; next person serves and target must pass ball and that person must sit to catch, and so on
 - team work, figuring out strategy from feedback
 - ball down-and-back: team must contact ball in order all the way down and back; then I add lots of different variations (one hand, blindfolded, pepper, etc)
 - response potentially impossible task, teamwork, communication
- mid-practice -> position work
 - setters → see the MB (number); freeze the MB (call out sets); body for RH sets
 - MB → toss-to-tip (1/3/4); overpasses
 - OH → toss-to-tip (1/2/3/4); pass with hands; chase 2nd/3rd contacts
 - DS → pass with hands; chase 2nd/3rd contacts
 - evaluate work ethic and success when given set of individual expectations
- late practice -> 6-on-6 work
 - control and tips/roll-shot drills -> I do two primary things with these:
 - (1) I'm watching one side intently to see where they are on defense based on if the other side is hitting from the OH, RH, etc. to give feedback

on tightening up the team defense

(2) I'm getting the teams together (individually) and asking the middles (for example) to only push to zone 1 in this control drill because I think our setter is cheating too much and I want the slow, deliberate drill to evaluate and then focus on this point; I can say it until I'm blue in the face but for them to see/feel it not only helps them fix it, it helps other teammates to see the issue and give lots of feedback to their teammates

- pre-game -> their partner drills

- who to serve (watch their movement front-to-back and side-to-side) and pick out the 2-3 strongest athletes and move fluidly and the 2-3 that struggle for consideration of picking on for offense/defense (i.e. I always pay attention to the setter as to whether she bends over or just stops, etc so if they run perimeter defense, I know we're going to tip a lot to zone 2)

- pre-game -> their serving and serve-receive

- stat their serve-receive (either literally or in your head) and note which type of serves they struggle with from their coach or teammates; list the 2-3 kids that struggle on serve-receive; list the 2-3 kids that are strongest on serve-receive; let some of this knowledge dictate your choices in zones for your servers or to whom to focus on

- pre-game -> their setting

- when I ask coaches about other teams' weaknesses or their team strategy, I rarely hear anything about the setter; watching a team's setter can give you a lot of information to assist with your team's blocking or defensive strategy. In warm-ups, she's typically getting the best passes of her life so whatever she does in a game will be ~30% worse and ~30% more exaggerated. If she sets tight to the OH and off to the RH, it will get magnified in a game. If the OH's have to tip a lot in pre-game because they are so tight, then discuss that with the defense as it will happen even more in a game, etc.

- pre-game -> coach & player interactions (or player-to-player interactions)

- even if coaches don't mean to have their favorites or kids they pin all their frustrations on, many young coaches do; I'll watch this interaction and try to identify who to go after that will rattle a coach or teammates vs those that don't