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Making Adjustments Within a Match

“The fight is won or lost far away from the witnesses, behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road; long before I dance under those lights.” -Muhammad Ali

Watch film: This is practice for the coach. We must teach ourselves. This is where we plan our adjustments in advance before the match begins.

- Make a list of situations your team needs to work on (*see a portion of my list attached*).
- What was the terminating error on each play? How many were unforced? Unforced errors should be 40% or less of the opponent’s points.
- What is your point scoring percentage in each rotation? Are you using the best server for the situation? Are you starting in the correct rotation? Point scoring percentage should be about 40%.
- What is your sideout percentage in each rotation? Could you change your serve receive formation? Is your setter making the right choices at the right times? Could we do something more creative with our offense in that rotation? Sideout percentage should be about 60%.

Stats on the bench:

- They should not be a record of why we lost. They should help us win tonight! Do you really use the stats that you are currently taking or are you making decisions based on emotion?
- Suggestions for stats on the bench:
 - 1) Our players’ hitting percentage (Kills-Errors/Total Attempts)
 - 2) Serving & Passing (*sample attached*)
 - 3) Opposing team shot chart and serve receive rotations (*sample attached*)
 - 4) Sideout percentage in each rotation & scoring percentage in each rotation
- Look at the big picture more often (i.e. We are scoring points in rotation 1 even though our setter is serving easy vs. our setter had a great match because she had 2 aces)
- Head Coach Reminder Sheet (what are you writing down?) (*My checklist is attached.*)

Communication:

- Pre-match meeting with the team (this should guide your decision making during the match)
 - Have a theme or key word (i.e. outwork, poise, aggressive, outlast, battle, patience, consistency)
 - Capture their attention at the beginning, review the game plan, and end it once
- During the match
 - Avoid mixed messages (i.e. “serve aggressive” then after 3 errors you say “just keep the ball in play”)
 - Know when to pull a player aside from the huddle, if ever.
 - Is your reaction to errors and great plays the same in practice as in matches? Consistency is key.
 - Have a purpose/theme with your timeout (stopping a certain hitter, scoring from the middle, etc). Don’t react only to the last play.
 - Timeouts: You know your team...call the timeout before you sense you are going to lose the next point. Don’t go just based on a score.
*Timeout facts for the National Team: If they had a 2 point lead at 8 – 72% chance of winning; 2 point lead at 16 – 84% chance of winning
Call a timeout earlier against a stronger opponent; don’t let them get too far ahead; Call timeouts vs a weaker opponent to continue teaching the game.

Goal of a timeout is not to list mistakes, it is to regain composure, purpose and energy

- Post-match meeting
 - Keep the length consistent whether you won or lost
 - Have an objective after a loss, give them motivation to come back and be better
 - Accept responsibility for your own mistakes

Making Defense Adjustments:

- Prepare against all types of hitters and setters (i.e. single blocking weak hitters, taking away cross court on a lefty RS)
- Prepare against all types of sets and tempos (i.e. are we better digging the seam or commit blocking a shoot set?)
- Prepare to run a variety of defenses: Rotation, Perimeter, Stack Cross/Line, Man-up (*diagrams attached*)
 - Use your shot chart on the bench to determine what shots are scoring on you
 - Determine if you want to put your block or your back row in front of the hitter
 - Don't be afraid to switch defenses multiple times in a match (I believe it forces your players to stay more alert and be aware of their position.)
- Prepare to be in a different defensive posture. You need to be low and "dug in" for hard driven hitters. You need to be a little higher and light on your feet for hitters that tip a lot or hit deep corners.

Making Offense Adjustments:

- Prepare in practice against all defenses
 - You must *teach* the shot to hit. The athlete needs to see it demonstrated and then feel it in practice to go for it in a match.
- Prepare against all sizes of blockers
 - Don't assume your players know how to hit against a short blocker. The key is not to hit over them straight on. Tool a short blocker. Hit angles that the blockers hands are not taking away.
- Prepare against all types of servers
 - Try to have at least one server of each type on your team: jump topspin, jump float, accurate short server, deep float (server is 15' behind end line)
- Prepare to run a variety of set locations and tempos to attack the opponent's weakness
- Switch your serve receive pattern
 - Try 2, 3 or 4 passers
 - Have one passer "shift" out of the rotation when the server contacts the ball
 - Push your passers really deep (25') or really short (15') to force the server to adjust (illusion)
- Script the play for your setter and hitter, take the decision-making away from the player

Plan practice in detail:

- Teach decision making for setters, hitters, and defenders (give 2 choices, explain why it was the right or wrong decision). Decision-making is a lot less about vision and more about recognizing patterns.
- Teach mental toughness and composure (create drills that are tough to overcome and then only give feedback on their communication, reactions, body language, effort, etc).
- Each practice could contain 4 components: physical, mental, technical, and tactical
- Rehearse each situation

Example situations:

- Hitting over a small blocker
- Hitting a seam when the middle doesn't close
- Stopping a priority hitter
- Sending free/down balls
- Decision making on when to tip
- Non-setters taking the 2nd ball
- Tooling a blocker
- Cover yourself
- Throwing to line corner zone
- Accelerating to inside set to roll to deep line corner or cut sharp
- Adjusting to set outside antenna to cut sharp or hit deep CC corner
- OH's hitting balls from 10' off the net
- Dig to hit and SR to hit
- Overhead defense on the line
- FR off-blockers defending quick attack tip (C, 9 & A)
- Defending the backrow attack
- Commit blocking
- High deep serve to FR OH
- Low sideline serve to FR OH
- Serving at the setter's path
- Accepting free balls – tempo, hands, responsibilities
- Sending free balls – tempo, hands
- FR & BR non-setters ready to set 2nd ball on scramble play
- Overpasses – accepting and receiving
- Pursuing shanked 1st contact, high middle of the ct or to pipe/pin
- Coverage
- FB set plays
- MB's & FR hitters passing short serve receive
- Serve Receiving line to line or cross court