



Play Better Indoors...Through Outdoor Competition

- John Kessel, USA Volleyball Director of Membership Development and Disabled Programs

It is time to give the players a break from all of your coaching—while increasing the numbers of touches they get on the ball—by letting your summer program get all of your JOV athletes playing outdoors in two-, three- and four-person competitions. Let them play! Just have them fill out a tournament list while playing in the B or A divisions all summer long against adults. DO IT! Then send your best to Jr. Olympic Beach Volleyball Nationals

The first-ever USA Junior Olympic Beach Volleyball Championships, held with the help of the California Beach Volleyball Association (CBVA), and at the first Grass JOV Championships for two- and four-person teams, were held in 1994, with 70 teams participating. Currently, USAV works closely with the AVP and the RVAs both for our junior youth beach volleyball national team programs and its U.S. Junior Olympic Beach Volleyball Championships, which have over 200 teams playing in single age groups. Call USAV or check the website for more information. The championships will be held in Southern California in late July, as well as a national team camp either just before or after the Championships, with expansion planned to the east coast and Midwest.

•Important NCAA Ruling

Bylaw 12.2.3.2 Competition With Professionals. An individual shall not be eligible for intercollegiate athletics in a sport if the individual has ever participated on a team sport and knew (or had reason to know) that the team was a professional team (per 12.02.4) in that sport. However, an individual may compete on tennis, golf or two-person sand volleyball teams with persons who are competing for cash or a comparable prize, provided the individual does not receive payment of any kind for such participation (Revised 1/9/96 effective 8/1/96).

A Beach/Outdoors Volleyball “Test” of Five Parts

One inaccurate thing heard too often is, “My coach does not want me to play outdoors” because:

- a) The Olympic teams stop playing a year before they fight for medals because the games are different.
- b) He/she thinks I need a break from playing volleyball or I will burn out.
- c) The beach volleyball coaches are too laid back.
- d) I should become a more well-rounded person by playing more sports than just volleyball and the team needs me, too.
- e) All of the above.”

Now, here is the following answer key:

- A. Yes the game is different. So is the high school game from the collegiate and the international game from the “AA” level. The thing is, it is playing the game and we need to do more if that. A lot more. The NCAA lets schools identify sports as varsity, so why not have your local college start a varsity doubles program in the spring/summer? While you are at it, why not make the matches be first played by men and women, then coed, with all games counting to final victor? If track athletes can run in both indoor and outdoor track, giving them 44 weeks of training permitted, why not have your indoor six-person teams head outside and have six squads of Olympic development training players?

Those who have had the fortune to work with Dr. Carl McGown or read and understand Dr. Richard Schmidt’s motor learning and performance books, are aware that training in random ways helps players solve new situations better and helps them retain what they have learned better and longer. I can think of no better situation for random experiences in gamelike ways than outdoor doubles volleyball. You are playing with a different ball, covering half or more of the court yourself, with the sun, wind and uneven court surfaces and changing sides every four to five points scored. For that matter, for something different, play Wallyball! It is a great chance to put yourself into new situations using your volleyball skills and learn new things. Go to www.uswallyball.org for more.

B. Burn-out is translated as, “Someone has made this game not enough fun anymore.” Too often, it is the coach who makes the game not fun. Take this mini-test. Fill in the blank. “Coach, when do we get to _____?” The top two answers are always hit or play...scrimmage...compete... perform... . You have heard it countless times and you are not listening, for they are saying, “Coach, when do we get to stop these drills and start to put the ideas into effect where it matters—the match?” There is no burn-out, there is only practice that is not playful or play-like enough. We play games; we do not work games or train games!

Have you noted how they get better after a one-day event? Have you ever heard yourself driving back from a one-day USA Volleyball event saying, "Gosh we sure got better in this tourney today; I am so proud... pleased... happy ...with their play...we really learned a lot...they started to understand what we have been practicing...we almost made the playoffs. Have you ever stopped to count how many hours of gamelike training—under competitive situations— that added up to? A pool of five means four matches of two to 11 points or about four hours. Why don't you get that kind of productivity in two two-hour practices? Play more in instant winner triples, king/queen of the court doubles, wash-scored four-person to three points, etc.

- C. Those beach volleyball coaches are so laid back, you basically will not find them. According to recent SGMA surveys, 1,097,000 folks list beach volleyball as their favorite activity. Nine million, five-hundred and fifty thousand adults played at least one time at year. So who is coaching them...how can they play so well without coaches? Sure, USA Volleyball is working on a project with the AVCA, US Pro Beach VB Coaches, US Tennis, US Skiing and other NGBs to help create the position of "teaching pro." When you mention the concept of a "beach coach" you get names like Pat Zartman, Mary Jo Pepler (1960s Olympian and WPVA veteran) and even Sinjin Smith or Jon Stevenson as clinicians. But the fact is that the game of doubles is its own coach. It is fun and it teaches you to work on your weaknesses in gamelike, competitive situations.
- D. No matter where in the world you go, everyone is floored by the fact that Americans are limited to training in college. They consider it "un-American." Do we force a chemistry whiz to stop in the lab after three months of learning and become an English major, only to stop three months later and make them work on economics? Do cheerleaders only cheer for three months before they are banned from training with their coach until August of the next year? Do all of those in band, after three months of lessons, have to change from the tuba to the flute and then to some other musical instrument in another three months' time? Do we say that golfers can only play three months a year or swimmers can only swim with training for a certain period of time? No, we do not do this, for following one's passion and doing it year-round is a big part of what made the USA the power it is today in all areas, not just volleyball.

Multi-sport athletes in high school, who are paid for by the taxpayer, diminish the playing opportunities for more players. To wit, if 12 athletes play in the fall on the varsity team, then in the winter all take 12 of the 15 slots for hoops, then in spring take 12 of the 20 slots for softball or baseball. This leaves 11 slots for other taxpayers' kids to learn the leadership and other skills that high school sports is supposed to provide—that is why we spend money on sports, isn't it? If those 12 volleyball kids played just volleyball, there are now 35 slots for hoops and base/softballers – more than three times the impact for the same number of dollars. They still can play intramural, backyard or pick-up games of hoops, inline skating, street baseball and all of the other games the neighborhood kids always play.

- E. Players, parents and coaches, if you want to increase your skill level indoors, in order to win starting positions, championships or scholarships, then you would be wise to play outdoors—two-, three- or four-person, on sand or grass. How often? Until it stops being fun. The more you play, the better you get. I know of few clearer motivators than the phrase "Winners stay on." Simply put, JOV coaches, let your players play outside and do not worry about them not being "in your control." Play with them. Let them play and problem solve on their own – and take a break from being coached. That's right, don't coach them, just be an outdoor Socrates, and your players will be stronger.

Suggested Reading

Beach Volleyball

(c) 1999 by Karch Kiraly and Byron Shewman. Kiraly explains and demonstrates every technique—serving, passing, setting, spiking, blocking and digging. He also presents the 23 best practice drills to improve each of these important skills. This book can be purchased from the AVCA at (719) 576-7777 ext. 102, at www.avca.org or by calling Human Kinetics directly at 1-800-747-4457.

A Guide to Winning Doubles Volleyball

(c) 1997 by Dennis Hare and Daphne Sanderson. This book explores the history of beach volleyball and covers the fundamentals of the game. The offensive and defensive strategies of the game are outlined, along with the unique aspects of the women's game, coed and the grass game. To order, call one of the suggested suppliers on page 82 or call Volleyball International Publications at (714) 673-0700.