



## Sandy's Tips and Drills: Blocking Skills

### 2005-2006 USAV Junior Season

The following are ideas and drills that I used with great success to improve my teams' blocking technique and ability to win tough competitions.

### Blocking "Thoughts"

The following information is designed to assist your team. Some of the concepts may be "over" the heads of your players but the best juniors in America are using many of these techniques and tactics.

#### 1. Terms and Definitions

Commit Block – zero tempo jump with the attacker or slightly before (\_\_\_\_\_).

Read Block – jump when the ball is set to quick attacker or use only quarter or half jump on commit.

Overload Left – the ball is going to zones to our left, (i.e. back quick (C), slides, and high back set for the opponents) (Signal – Lime Colored Card)

Overload Right – the ball is going to zones to our right, (i.e. X's, B's, 5's, and 1's) (Signal – Red – Colored card)

Switch Block – Moving our Setter's to block 2 (RF), 3 (CF), or 4 (LF)

#### 2. Predicting where to Block

##### a) Questions as a blocker you must answer:

- 1) can the setter get the ball to my quick hitter?
- 2) Is my hitter primary, secondary, or weak?
- 3) Is my hitter clearly a decoy or going to a decoy position?
- 4) Is my hitter going to another zone and a switch should occur on my side?
- 5) Can our defense easily dig this attacker in this situation?
- 6) Determine if your assigned hitter is not in the play or not going to be set and go
- 7) assist block or move to other defensive role.
- 8) **Read, be late, but never guess**

#### 3. Timing Your Block

- a) be in a loaded (coiled) position
- b) on net – joust
  - 1) Jump when the arm swing goes back
- c) 1-3 feet – jump when hitter swings forward; expect angle unless hitter faces line or cut back.
- d) 5-7 feet – move block – 1 step into cross-court.
- e) 7 feet or more – move in 2 steps towards cross-court. Delay one full count before jumping.

#### 4. Things to remember: ( In Random Order)

- a) Blocking is successful if the following happens:
  - 1) the ball is stuffed
  - 2) the ball is stuffed and opponents coverage has to deal with it (remember to read the play, and then get to base)
  - 3) the ball is touched in a positive way for our team to play it
    - a) free ball
    - b) slowed the ball down for digger's
    - c) allowed the digger to run through the ball
  - 4) the digger can read the "line" and dig the ball
- b) Trained blockers come down from the block and make the next play, i.e. play the ball out of the net, block the overpass, retract to their touch points
- c) Blocking wears on the opponent the most blocks you will likely receive is at the end of

- the game or match. (Especially if you have excellent volleyball fitness)
- d) Know your opponents best shots and remember their shot
  - e) After being blocked, attackers often hit out or tip next ball.

**More Blocking Thoughts:**

- 1) I emphasize forming a correct block even if we have a split in that block, as opposed to having a floating blocker.
- 2) *Advanced players should take a lead step and run to close the block.*
  - a) *Some of the leading Men's Teams are using a dynamic arm swing to get higher on the blocker. Research does not particularly support this current "fad" or "movement".*
- 3) **Move Loaded**
  - a) *Middle Blockers should move in a coiled position (relatively as low as they can move quickly from the starting point to form a double block.*
    - 1) *All blockers are quicker off the floor from a ready position Vs a coiled or loaded position*
    - 2) *blockers that are coiled can get up higher as much as 4" more than just a ready position*
    - 3) *the game of volleyball is played so fast at higher levels that if a blocker miss-reads or guesses which hitter the setter is going to set and is wrong, he/she will not have time to physically to close the block outside.*
  - b) *Outside blockers on a high outside set should coil and explode up to block the ball*
    - 1) *This coil will allow you to get higher on the block thus reach over the net further*
    - 2) *The blocker wants to move loaded as much as possible, attempting to avoid the "up and down" movement of the blocker.*
    - 3) *Starting loaded provides a quick block but you will give up "inches" (up to 4"), this is necessary to stop the quick tight slide i.e. C set.*
- 4) **Front the Hitter**
  - a) Do the basic rules of reading, watch the pass half way to the setter, then read the setter begin deliver of the ball, and then go faster than the set ball to the appropriate hitter.
  - b) Observe the hitter's angle of approach and speed
  - c) Position yourself in front of the hitter's shoulder
  - d) *Outside blockers – antenna hand take the line, the inside hand take the ball.*
  - e) *Middle blockers – antenna hand take the seam, other hand take the sharp angle shot*
- 5) **Ready Position - Blocking Technique And Arm/Hand Position**
  - a) Starting position is with the knees slightly bent, with hands in front of the shoulders
  - b) Jump **MAXIMALLY** every time as quick as possible, with:
    - 1) Wrists lightly extended, elbows locked
    - 2) Shoulders elevated, protracted (shoulders in ears), hands reaching over the net as far as possible.
    - 3) Pelvis rotated backward (with tight abdominal and glottal muscles).
    - 4) Legs fully extended - feet pointed, legs together
- 6) **Pounce Position -**
  - a) Focus on the attacker's arm swing
  - b) Each blocker and each attacker is different (even in the beginning of the match, then towards the end of the match)
  - c) If the set is typical (3' to 4') off the net the blocker jumps when the arm swing begins forward
  - d) If the set is tight (tight ball rule) than the blocker jumps when the arm swing goes backwards
  - e) If the set is off the net, then the blocker waits until after the ball is contacted
- 7) **PENETRATE NET-**
  - a) Another term is to reach across the net as soon as possible
  - b) Reach across the net as far as possible

▪ **Intro. To Block**

- Review hand position
- Body posture
- Footwork

- Include Blocking Push drill with blockers on their knees
- Include Block Rolls - to keep body tight
- Do 10 reps of jumping and grabbing the ball on the opponent's side of the net,
- Intro. To Joust Drills - 2 x 7
- Intro. To Blind Block Drill - 2 x 7
- One vs. one with the hitter facing the Tosser. Focus on the blocker using her visual keys

▪ **Intro. To Blocking Footwork**

**All positions learn the left side and right side blocking footwork**

- Hop-Stop (step close) – 2 x 10
- Shuffle hop-stop (slide, step close) – 2 x 10
- Start loaded to assist block the middle and left side blockers stop the quick slide hitters
- Review the following:
- Start in a ready position and coil (to get higher) when only blocking the high set on the sideline
- Attempt to move "loaded" or "coiled"

▪ **Blocker's Penetrate Hands Over the Net**

- Use coaching boxes or platforms and have the players hit at each other
  - Emphasize that the players toss the ball antenna high so the blocker must focus on the Arm swing
- Vertically challenged campers** - should use a lower net the first trail, second time through the Drill; use a soft block hand position
- Single blocker
  - 10 reps of each of the following
  - Start loaded and do a hop-stop
  - Start and move loaded – doing a shuffle hop-stop

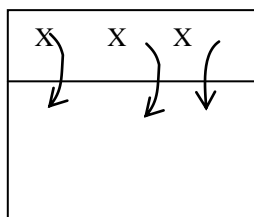
▪ **Attacking what the block will give you:**

- Attack corners – (deep cross-court – zone #5 or zone #1)
- Attack "line"
- Attack "high" seam (between the blockers)
- Attack "low seam" (between blockers)
- Attack "high line" (off the blockers hands)
  - Using groups of 5, attack a high middle set (5) – against two blockers, 2 x 5 reps
  - Attack "high" seam (between the blockers)
  - Attack "low seam" (between blockers)
  - Attack "high line" (off the blockers hands)

▪ **Intro. To "Setting the Block"**

- Nose to arm swing
- Antenna hand on the shoulder, etc.
- One hand blocking sequence

▪ **Transition Footwork**



- Groups at the net - work on Opening to the Right, Point your toe in the direction of Your touch point, and run, air hop, ready to approach - repeat at least 10 times. (Do not Practice opening to the left, only right side hitters need this skill and it can be covered later.)
  - Groups of 4 –
  - Attack 1's after Transition - 2 x 3 each player
  - Attack A's after Transition - 2 x 3 each player

▪ **Middle Blocking Footwork**

-Intro. To MB moving in the "loaded" position, do not allow "up, down" i.e. the player is to run across the net and then coil or dip to block, emphasize the blocker moves in a lower position

-Intro. To 3 Step (Lead – run, hop-stop or Lead-cross-over, hop-stop)

- 1 x 10 to the left (without the ball)
- 1 x 10 to the right (without the ball)

-Intro. To 4 Steps (Turn and run, hop-stop)

- 1 x 10 to the left (without the ball)
- 1 x 10 to the right (without the ball)

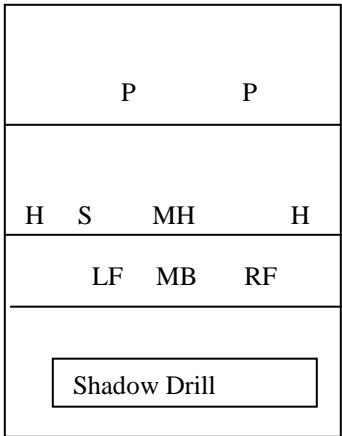
Coach stands on the opposite side of the court – to watch the blockers eyes

▪ **Intro. To Blocker's reading the setter**

- Double block everything
- Emphasis on reading not guessing
- Discuss reading the setter

**-Visual Keys:** - Eyes are the key: pass 1/2 way, setter, the set, front your the hitter, block the ball

- Complete a shadow drill for 30-45 seconds for each MB and slide's
- (Left handed players focus on hitting Lob B's or 33's)

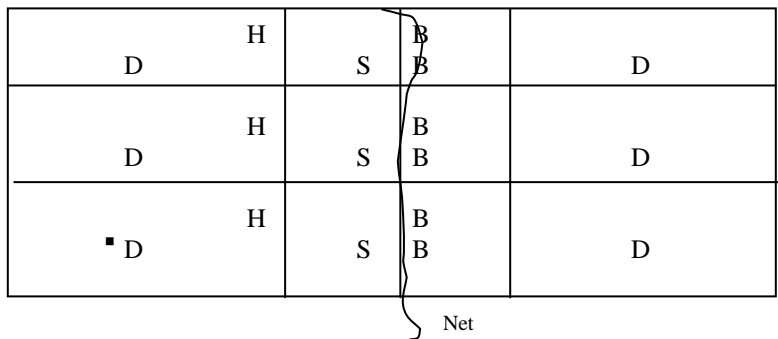


▪ **1/2 Court 4's – Two blockers up**

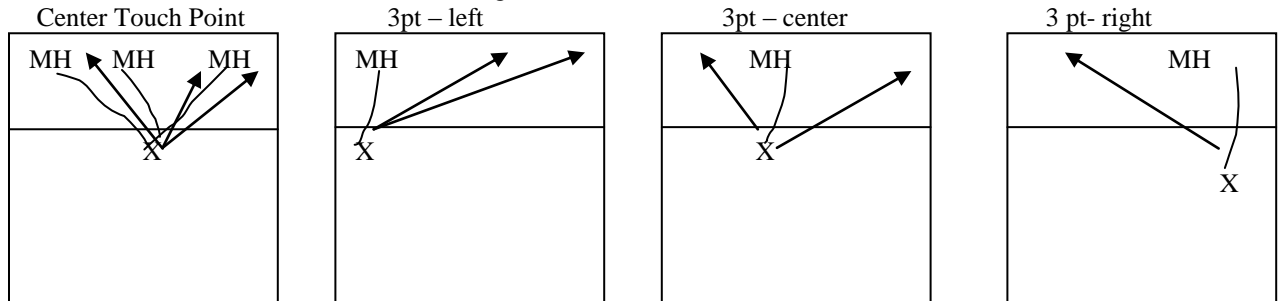
- Rally score
- Rally starts with campers serving or throwing the ball over the net.

▪ **Intro. 3 Vs. 3 Tip Drill**

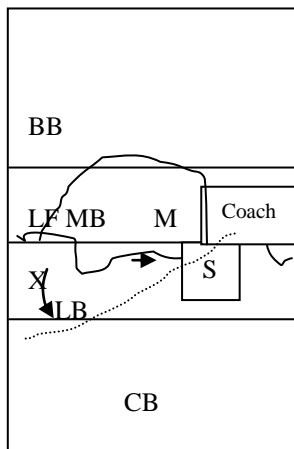
- Must have 2 blockers up and play to 3 points and rotate. (Emphasize that the digger can't allow the ball to fall in front of them and yet not allow the ball behind them, either. Also, blockers must work very hard to get their touch points.) Groups of 4 (one person out - tosses the ball to the team that won the rally)



- **MB Center Touch Point System**
- **Review MB's - Center Touch Point Vs 3 touch point system**
  - Center Touch Point - Attack from 1's, C's, slide's from a Center Touch Point – 5 each
  - Left Touch Point – Attack C's, Slide's from a Left Touch Point – 5 each
  - Right Touch Point – Attack Lob B's or B's – 5 each



- **Combination of the 4 to 4 Drill and MH drill**



- LF & MB Blocks, LF retracts to defensive touch point, MB runs and blocks the Coach as she attack attacks a easy ball to LF,
- LF digs and turns and run to touch pt, and attacks a 13. MH – retracts and attacks a 1 or C or B. Five successful and switch.

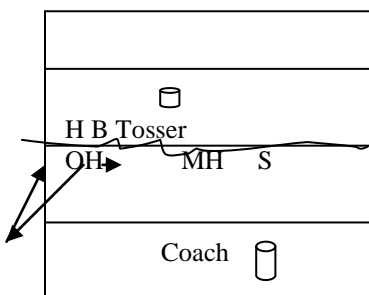
- **Hitter's vs. Blocker's**

- Hitter's vs. Blocker's (extra player's are volunteer MB's, and defensive players)
- Opposite Direction of MB's (your own MB)
- Begin to emphasize that the OH after passing the ball, gets to touch pt., and goes the opposite direction of her MB. (Do approximately 5 and switch)
- MB's at first keep very simple, B's and Slide's

- **Intro. To Blue Lip**

- MB Blocks 3, retracts, attacks a 1, blocks 2, attacks 1, block 4, retracts, attacks 1, and repeats.
- (Typically the player would get 3 blocks and 6 kills. Each player repeats the sequence 2 times.)

**Outside Blue**



**Middle Blue Lip**

