



Sandy's Tips and Drills: How is your team's defense? How is your energy in teaching it?

2005-06 Junior's Season

Food for Thought:

Teaching individual defensive skills is more than just going through the drills! The other day I was chatting with Sylvia Ortiz, Head Volleyball Coach at Keller High School and she mentioned something that *"hit me like a brick"*.

"It takes a tremendous amount of energy to teach volleyball everyday, but especially defense. As a coach, my team will reflect my attitude of the day and especially in their defense play."

I did not say a word. I wanted to say "duh", but it occurred to me that the teams that I had in the past that were great defensive teams, it was because I made it a priority. My attitude, my energy was high every single practice. If my players did not go for a ball, what was my reaction? What was the consequence?

So back to the question of the day, **how is your energy in teaching defense?** If your players are not willing to go for the ball, what can you do (think in a positive way first) to assist their effort?

Some things that have helped my teams in the past:

1) Technique

- a. Teach the player "how to dig" the ball
- b. Teach the player "how to run through" the ball
- c. Teach the player "how to roll, sprawl, etc.
- d. Teach the player "to go", not to make a decision
 1. Do not allow the player to say the following in her head,
 - a. Should I go for this ball? Is this ball mine? I am not going for this ball, I can't get it anyway? I hate defense? I am not any good at defense? I am going to get hurt? I am scared!
 2. It is essential that we take all those negative thoughts out of the players "self talk".
 3. We must attempt to replace those negative thoughts with energy, excitement, and don't be afraid to get a little crazy about anything positive in the players effort.

2) Tactics

- a. If you are playing Left Back (or any of the other back court positions)
 1. Where is your starting point, *"I call this a touch point"*
 2. Do I dig first? Run down the tips first? What should I do first?
 3. When do I look at my blocker?
 4. When do I look at the opposing hitter?
 5. Do I really take my eyes off the ball? What is peripheral vision?
 6. What does the coach mean when she/he says "get stopped before the hitter swings" at the ball?
 7. What does my coach mean when he/she says "to stay low and balanced"?
 8. What does it mean to "read" the hitter?
 9. How can I "read" and move at the same time?
- b. Do the players really ask these questions? If not, why not? If your players are asking these questions then you are doing your job as a coach, now how can you get your players to understand the answers **in the middle of the rally?**
- c. When do you answer these questions? Is necessary to answer the question verbally or should the player learn the answers in the drills, activities, and games we play?

3) Attitude

- a. Defense is really is "an attitude".



- b. It is imperative that the players understand and appreciate the effort it takes physically and emotionally to make great defensive plays.
 - 1. Give extra points for players that make an attempt to go for a ball
 - 2. Play “cooperative” games where the players must work together and go for every ball because there are no boundaries or rules
- c. Get your players to cheer great efforts – during the rally
 - 1. Teach the player to scream or yell, “Ball is up”, if it is up or not!
- d. Get your players to go after each and every ball
 - 1. Team mates must learn to follow the defensive crazed player to send the ball over the net
 - a. Praise in public the player that follows the play
 - b. Praise the hustle back to base after the ball goes over the net
 - 1. How many times have you seen a player “give up” on a play only to have their team mate get the ball up! Talk to this player immediately about giving up on the play but worst yet, their team mates.
- e. As a coach – notice, cheer and give praise for defensive effort
- f. As a coach – you must have positive energy each and every day, and your team will reflect you on the court. Don't believe it. Try it.

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