



Kessel's Handy Guide to Ruining Volleyball Players

- John Kessel, USA Volleyball Director of Sport Development

The guidelines herein are possibly known by you as a committed coach, but are not properly enforced. These guidelines and suggestions will insure that you, your ego, and its desire to win will take precedence over any individual or team development situation.

PRACTICE

1. Design all drills to be controlled by the coach, never by the athletes.
2. The longer the warm up without handling volleyballs in game-like ways, the better.
3. Make sure to condition the players thoroughly before they begin skill training so they "learn to play tired."
4. Be committed to training until it hurts.
5. Never let any players think for themselves, always tell them what to do rather than waiting or helping them figure out the answer.
6. Make sure to always tell the player what he or she did wrong.
7. Never show what you want, if one thousand words will do. All explanations should be as wordy as possible to demonstrate your vast knowledge of the game.
8. The longer the line in a drill, the more they get a chance to stand around and watch and compare themselves to the others, thus learning who is good.
9. Keep your feedback as unspecific as possible: "That's it, Nice try, Good job," etc, so that they don't know what you are thinking.
10. If they fail to do what you want in a skill, physically punish them with pushups, sit ups, running, etc., so they will be certain to do the skill correctly the next time.
11. Be as judgmental as possible, as you know the difference between a mistake and the perfection you demand.
12. Punish personally and often, taking revenge so you'll feel better, but never provide an alternative to the undesired behavior.
13. Be as inconsistent as possible.
14. Teach volleyball the way it is supposed to be taught, on the chalkboard.
15. Never let the athletes influence you, as you must retain control.

16. What you say and what you do should not match. For example, do not permit your players to drink alcohol, but make sure you do often as you are of age.
17. Swear without using actual swear words, to emphasize your powerful command of the English language.
18. Be rigid, ensuring that practice is sacrosanct, rather than let players attend school functions for leadership acknowledgement or homecoming activities of any sort.
19. Fire up players by threatening to demote them to a non-starter role or down to the JV team if already on varsity, so they know your omnipotence.
20. Since they can't toss, a skill that took you hours to learn, ensure they never throw in any drill.

MATCH PLAY

1. During streaks of poor skill performance, point out the way the game is played. For example, if players are not passing well to the setter, call a time out and let them know that "we need a pass."
2. The officials, who must be perfect, need you to demonstrate in body language and/or vocalization when they have not called a contact by your personal standard of judgment.
3. Having ensured overtraining in practice, demand better game-level performance than that in practice.
4. Make sure to bawl players out about their mistakes, win or lose. It is better to do this in front of a whole gym full of spectators, rather than in the locker room, or worse, one on one in private.
5. If they lose badly, deny them the traditional post-match occasion so they will play better next time.
6. When you discover that a player who has been motivated enough to make every practice is actually not motivated, point out your plan to put someone in who "wants to play."
7. When a player misses a shot, makes other similar unforgivable errors, or exhibits other human-like traits, do the following:
 - A. Substitute them immediately.
 - B. Grab them physically and, at minimum, shake them up a little bit.
 - C. Sit them on the bench, as far away from you as possible, and ignore them - so they will learn.
8. When possible, leap off the bench, cross the court and berate the official from up close, rather than throwing your tantrum from far away on the bench. The more you can put yourself as coach in the limelight, and take away from the players playing, the better.
9. Rejoice in your being the locus of all control and answers, each time a player errs, when the mistake is followed by a wrenching head twist to the bench where you sit, so they can find a solution.
10. Keep on course to coach by fear, for these competitions are where players can show best their timidity

and concern of your wrath.

11. Enhance, encourage and allow infighting when the players are going through a down cycle in their play.
12. Motivate by threats, such as “If you lose, you run, “or “We will practice after midnight if you lose.”
13. In pre-match warm-ups, make sure you the coach set or toss all the balls for spiking, rather than the setter. You need the practice tossing and the setter is likely very nervous and will appreciate the chance to watch.
14. Tell your players every time where to serve, never let them learn to choose their own spots of weakness.

OFF-THE-COURT LIFE

This may take care of itself if you can commit to training four hours or more than the Olympic team does.

1. Class assignment - The time to study is a very low priority, after training, weights, chalk talks, team travel, etc. Athletes are to train, not also to be good students.
2. Penalize players for doing homework, studying or attending labs, instead of practicing.
3. Make sure to increase training time AND intensity, rather than reducing time and increasing intensity, during the hardest parts of the school semester.
4. Members of the opposite sex are the enemy, set an 8 p.m. curfew.
5. Keep them away from corruptive parents who might influence their own child.
6. Show your players only the gyms and transportation options of the world, never the culture, history and unique aspects of the area that you are visiting.
7. When possible, leave your players alone in new environments, so they can learn to "take care of themselves." This is especially true with younger players, where you should ensure that any chaperones, in addition to coaches, should disappear.
8. Only focus on volleyball, never do other things where players might be able to demonstrate competency, maybe even being better than you at something.

Remember, ruining an athlete, especially those motivated to play at this higher level of competition, requires diligence, miscommunication, and a total lack of understanding. Make sure not to go to any clinics, especially your National Governing Body's Coaching Courses, events, since you already know so much. For that matter, make sure not to help in any committees either... indeed, why are you even reading this coaching information article? Good luck, and be sure not to change, since it worked when you were a player, there is no reason to think things might have improved.