

FIVB™

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
DE VOLLEYBALL

Top Volley Manual



TECHNICAL BOOKLET

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE VOLLEYBALL
Edouard-Sandoz 2-4 CH-1006 Lausanne - SWITZERLAND
Tel : +41 (21) 345 3535 Fax : +41 (21) 345 3545
E-Mail : development@fivb.org Website : www.fivb.com

Technical Booklet

TOP VOLLEY

Part 1

THE TEAM

Among the numerous tasks that a top-level coach has to accomplish is that of having the skill to make up his team by selecting his players to exploit their individual qualities. He must also take into account the development of Volleyball throughout these years. In fact, he makes a projection into the future.

It is important for a coach to make up his team with players complementary to one another. The coach of Brazil, the World Champion, testifies to this statement. In his interview, Bernardo Rezende explains that the success of his team is due more to its collective value, rather than to that of its individuals.

For Brazil and other teams physically less powerful, speed, the changing of pace and aggressive services are of prime importance in order to achieve performance. Rezende's Argentine colleague, Carlos Getzelevich, reminds us that each team must make the best use of its players, "thus, three players such as Hugo Conte, Jorge Elgueta and Marcos Milinkovic share different tasks when at the net, changing positions at the centre and at the sides."

The players' concentration must be maintained from the very beginning until the end of the rally. All the interviewed coaches stress this as a single point that can make them win or lose a set and in some cases, a match. Mental capacities are a part of selection criteria.

"Speed is everywhere. Things must be prepared in advance or you don't master the match," Bernardo Rezende (BRA). Philippe Blain and Glenn Hoag, insist on the fundamental part played by the other members of the staff, either medical or logistic in preparing the players as well as the matches.

1.1 THE PLAYING TEAM, THE PLAYERS' ROLE

The notion of a homogenous group is characteristic of a top-level team and the creation of the libero player has increased this cohesiveness. The libero has become the seventh player and this to such an extent that every team except Czech Republic plays according to the same game system. It is one aspect of today's evolution, and only the future will tell us whether this is going to last.

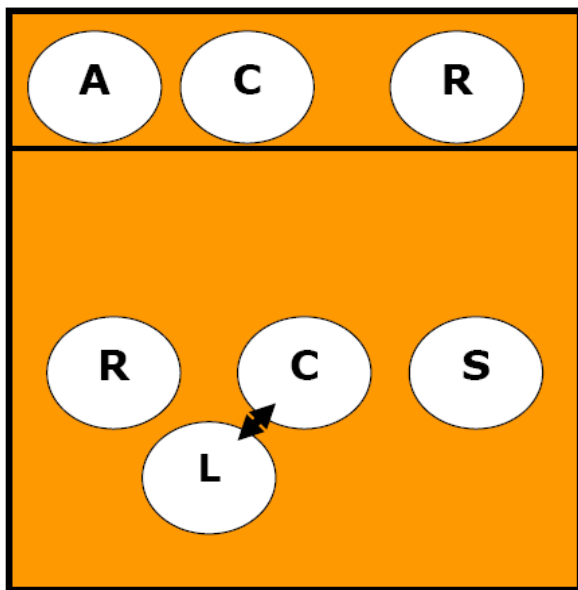


Diagram 1

The team consists of a setter, an opposite player, in opposition with the setter (also called ace spiker), of two middle blockers who are replaced by the libero when at the back and of two receivers-attackers also called outside players.

The starting line-up generally adopts the following rotating order: Setter (S); Receiver-attacker (R), Middle Player (MP), Opposite Player (OP), Attacker-Receiver and Middle Player.

The best players who have been rewarded by the FIVB often illustrate and comment the clips:

Best Server: Franck GRANVORKA (FRA), Best scorer: Marcos MILINKOVIC (ARG), Best Spiker: Andre NASCIMIENTO (BRA), Best Blocker: José JOAO (POR), Best Receiver: Pablo MEANA (ARG), Best Setter: Mauricio LIMA (BRA), Best Digger: Hubert HENNO (FRA).

SUPER SELECTION: Setter: Nikola GRBIC (YUG), Ace Spiker: Marcos MILINKOVIC (ARG), Receivers: Serguei TETIOUKINE (RUS), Stephane ANTIGA (FRA), Middle Blockers: Gustavo ENDRES (BRA), José JOAO (POR), Libero: Hubert HENNO (FRA).

It is quite interesting to note the differences in morphology at certain positions. This is due to the fact that speed and clear-sightedness can easily make up for a player's lack of height.

1.2 THE SETTER

The setter co-ordinates the attack and his most important qualities are those of an organiser, both clear-sighted and precise. Players measuring between 179cm and 196cm can be seen in this position. The players GRBIC (YUG) as well as MAURICIO (BRA) have pointed out that there is no universal rule or technique. The setter must learn how to set the ball in a way that suits each one of his attackers and to choose them according to the different situations of the game. Indeed, the basic techniques must be learnt, but only in order to break away from them and develop one's own physical and technical qualities.

Before the match, the setters have to study the defensive game plan of the opposing team and learn how to play by considering the opponent block and back court defence. During the match, they react and use all the opportunities, which are presenting in different situations by alternating quick attack (called also 1st time or 1st tempo) and attack by another player (called also 2nd time or 2nd tempo.)

1.3 THE OPPOSITE PLAYER (also called ace spiker)

His role has also changed. He has become the player attacking high balls and who is given the ball in the last resort. He has to be powerful and very reliable. Because of their physical morphological qualities, those players are generally excellent servers, as it has been established by the FIVB statistics. Marcos MILIKOVIC (ARG) illustrates the qualities that are necessary to hold this position. Their role may seem rather limited but it is fundamental in stabilizing the attack.

1.4 THE RECEIVER-ATTACKERS

They are the pivots of the team as they steady both the defence and the receiving. All of them have pointed out that the prime quality is concentration to be maintained throughout the rally as they are very much in demand. The concentration and the will to fight for every ball are matched with dexterity for the French player ANTIGA, the Russian TETIOUKINE, with vivacity for the Brazilian GIBA or with power with the Greek GKIOURDAS. They are very technical players with a great variety of attacks on speeding up, fast or mid-high balls in the front at position 4, at the back at positions 5 and/ or 6. Most teams integrated into

their pattern of game this type of attack from the back row (called pipes) which is quite different from those of the Opposite Player on position 1. Because of their very complex role, we can find players who have a predominant skill either at receiving and/ or digging or attacking.

1.5 THE MIDDLE PLAYERS

They secure the direction of the block and of the quick attack, which force the opponent player to come to block. Their role has followed the evolution of the game, which has become faster. Speed and reading the game can make up for height: the best blocker was Portuguese JOAO (who is only 194 cm tall) as speed and his precise actions counterbalance his relative shortness. In order to play his role effectively, it is essential to know the setter and the middle blocker of the opposing team well and to be able to forestall his actions at the block as well as the attack. He is substituted in the backcourt by the libero who performs defensive tasks.

1.6 THE LIBERO

Within a few years, he has become an essential element for the team. He co-ordinates the backcourt defence while the setter co-ordinates the front defence. Their co-operation makes the block-defence relationship more efficient. Some teams have not yet taken advantage of all the possibilities that the libero offers, keeping him in the role of Chief Receiver. The best illustration is given by the French player Hubert HENNO, who acts as the boss of the back players, covering the other receiver when the latter is attacking. To play this role, it is necessary to have the qualities of self-sacrifice, as the libero must refrain from an “explosive” action that will score a point. As Hubert HENNO says, “You have to find your pleasure when digging a ball and sharing the intense joy of the attacker who finishes this action by a victorious attack.”

Some teams have assimilated the new rules much better than others and, as Mikiyasu TANAKA, the coach of the Japanese team remarked, each country has adopted the changes their own way and many of them have not yet defined what a libero is in reality. Some think he is a second receiver, others an organiser of the defence.

1.7 SOME REMARKS

Obviously, the new rules have not altered the techniques, but they have deeply modified the behaviour and the role of the players.

The team has changed. With the old rules, the best teams aimed at winning the service and just waited for the opposing team to make a mistake in order to score a point. Nowadays you have to score points, either by serving, attacking or blocking. It is no longer worthwhile to keep waiting. The game has become much more dynamic and the battle to be well placed is fierce. Ten, or even up to twelve teams can fight for victory and no one can speculate who will win. Hierarchy is being altered among both the men's and women's teams. Behaviours have changed and owing to a greater pugnacity and concentration, some players have counterbalanced some of their weak points. The following parts will deal with the different periods of the game when both teams are opposed, that is to say, serving and receiving the serve, then attacking and defending and to finish with the counter attack.

Part 2

THE SERVICE

2.1 TACTICAL INTENTIONS

“The service, in modern Volleyball is the first offensive action, as powerful services give you the possibility of immediately scoring a point. It is also a part of the defensive system.”
Philippe BLAIN.

Aggressiveness at serving can be seen by the use of jump services, which have replaced the floating tennis services. Tennis services and jump tennis serves are mainly used to make a tactical service.

In terms of tactics and probability, the coach’s job is to define the risk each player is allowed to take.

The tactical intentions can be classified according to the risk taken:

- Maximal risk: it is possible to score a direct point with an ace.
- Controlled risk: serving on the less reliable player or on his weakest side, or between two receivers in order to prevent having a perfect reception and thus a quick attack.
- For a tactical service, one must choose a target and the service area that allows for it to be best reached.
 - o Put the receiver or the setter in difficulty by serving in the area where there are several players (for example, the area 5 with the setter in 5 or 4).
 - o Make a short service when the setter is in the front, create discomfort and doubt in a player by always serving on him.
 - o The player may also change the area of service or even the technique. It must be said however, that to be efficient, the tactical service must not be too easy.

- The service, first element of defence. With his tactical intention, the server tries to direct the opposing attack in the defensive system of his team by obliging the setter to have limited choices.

“If you are aggressive when serving, you have already won half of the point. It prevents the reception from being perfect and the team must play away from the net at the sides.”
ELGUETA (ARG).

Let us keep in mind that the very last point of the final BRA-RUS was scored by GIOVANE's service (BRA). Unless the percentage is sufficient, it is better to use tactical services.

2.2 TECHNIQUES

a) The powerful jump service illustrated by the best servers of the Championship: GRANVORKA (FRA), MILINKOVIC (ARG), CAPET (FRA).

- Approach with 3 or 4 steps.
- For a right-handed player, the weight of the body being on the right foot (left foot for a left handed player); the ball is thrown high and in front.
- Take off: R-L for a right handed and L-R for a left handed player.
- Take off with an important arm moving in the air.
- Hit the ball high and in front, clearly above the court.
- Landing and moving in to join his post in defence.

b) The players SARTORETTI (ITA), ABRAMOV (RUS) and YAMAMOTO (JPN) illustrate the powerful lifted services.

The technique remains identical however and the ball is struck more at the back of the frontal plane, which gives an important topspin effect. The rotation of the ball gives it a curved trajectory, (a parabola-like trajectory) with a brutal drop which obliges the receiver to move forward. Sometimes, the lift is accompanied by a sidespin. It is often used by left-handed players in position 5.

c) The jump service, either placed or floated, is the tactical service most often used. It will be beautifully demonstrated by CONTE (ARG) and ANITGA (FRA).

- The approach is often shorter and slower.
- The throwing of the ball takes place above the back line.
- The impulse is checked in order to control the hitting of the ball.

As to the float jump service, the ball is hit dryly in its centre in order to give it a straight trajectory without effect.

d) The float tennis serve, executed 6 or 7 metres away from the back line, has almost disappeared because of the new texture and pressure of the ball. However it is sometimes executed near the back line. It remains a tactical option and a safe way of serving.

Part 3

THE SERVICE RECEPTION

Receiving the service is the first step of the offence and the good quality of the pass presents the setter with all attack possibilities. So, when facing the threat of the service, the opposing team displays its players according to the opposing server. The line-up when receiving depends on this observation.

3.1 THE LINE-UPS

The team that receives the ball obeys a double imperative: that of receiving the service and that of building its own attack. There is some uniformity in the way players are positioned as the libero replaces the middle-blockers.

a) *Receiving the service.*

The coach displays 3 players: the libero and 2 receivers-attackers respecting the rotation order given by the starting line-up. The front row RA attacks twice in position 4 and once in 2.

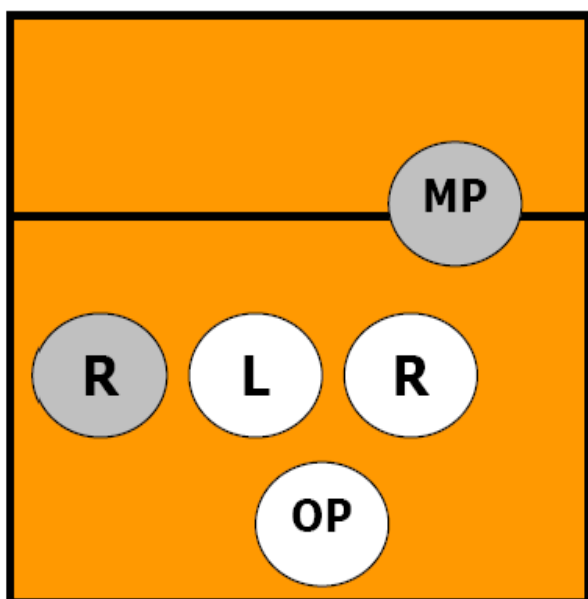


Diagram 2

3 receivers

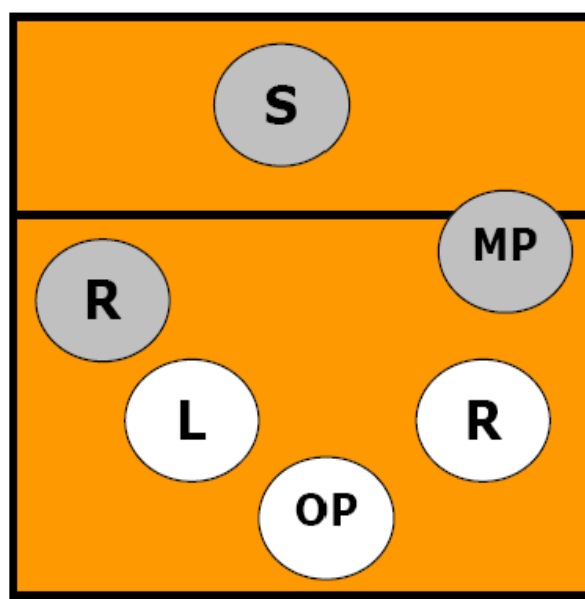


Diagram 3

2 receivers

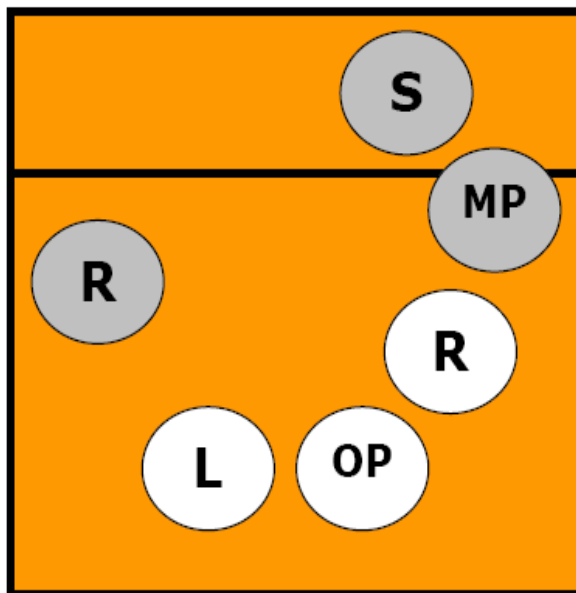


Diagram 4

4 receivers

When the service is considered easier, the front row receiver-attacker moves away from the reception line either before or while the service is carried out. When the service is particularly difficult, the coach may place a fourth player on the reception row.

b) *Organising the attack.*

Three players don't have to receive the ball: the setter, the middle blocker and the ace spiker. They are positioned according to the rotation order.

The middle player often has the task of receiving very short balls when the server serves behind the setter.

3.2 THE PLAYER'S ROLE AND THE INDIVIDUALISATION OF THE RECEPTION

As Philippe BLAIN points out: "For each player a system of intervention is set up according to the position of the server and the power of his service." There are always priority receivers to cover a partner, freeing him for attacking. The position on the court also depends on the skill of the receiver who often has a favourite side.

3.3 THE PASS, TECHNIQUES OF RECEPTION

A large number of clips clearly demonstrate that the player has to face a crisis of time. To be able to cope with services that can be compared to spikes, the receiver widens the area of his action moving backward, forward and sideways. But whatever his action is, the player respects the following principles:

- Poised ready with knees bent, he should start moving as soon as the service ball is hit, or even slightly beforehand, making a slight jump so as to anticipate the receiving,
- Cut the service trajectory in order to control the ball and direct it to the area 3/2; this explains why the players face the server,
- Set the contact surface, the platform towards the target,
- Assure the complete balance of the body by tightening his pelvis,
- If possible, give a curved trajectory “cutting” the top of the net
- Carry on with the following action.

As you can see, it is more a broadening of the techniques than the creation of new ones.

Part 4

THE ATTACK

To show how the attack is organised we start with the reception of services, which is the most favourable situation to achieve attack plans and combinations. The success depends on the setter's skills and the precision of the pass.

4.1 PRINCIPLES OF GAME

When the setter gets the ball into the area 3/2 and 3/4, he can make an ideal use of the attack possibilities, as it is shown in the various clips. The setter has at his disposal a fundamental alternative: either he sets the ball to the rapid attacker (1st time), or to another player (2nd time).

Above all, the setter fights a dual with the opposing middle blocker (Philippe BLAIN). It is a kind of game between the setter, his spikers and the opponent blockers, according to their mutual knowledge and the current game situation. He may have his middle player in front of him – with a short set or a shoot set – or behind – with a short back set.

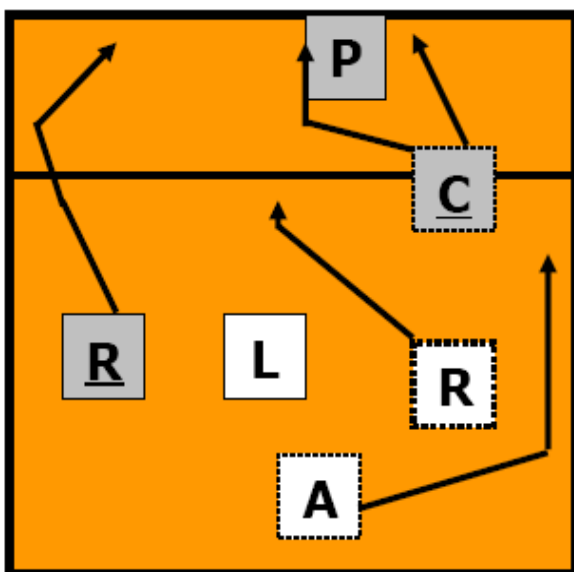


Diagram 5

Setter in position 3

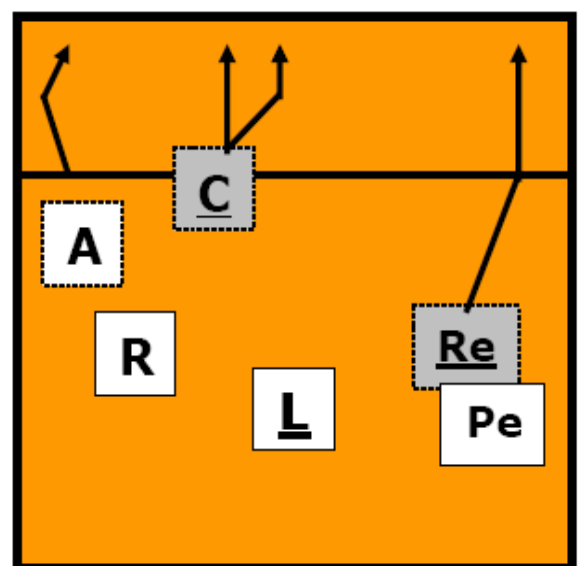


Diagram 6

Setter in position 1

The chosen quick attack allows him to use the intervals between the opposing blockers by soliciting the front or back row receiver-attacker or the opposite player.

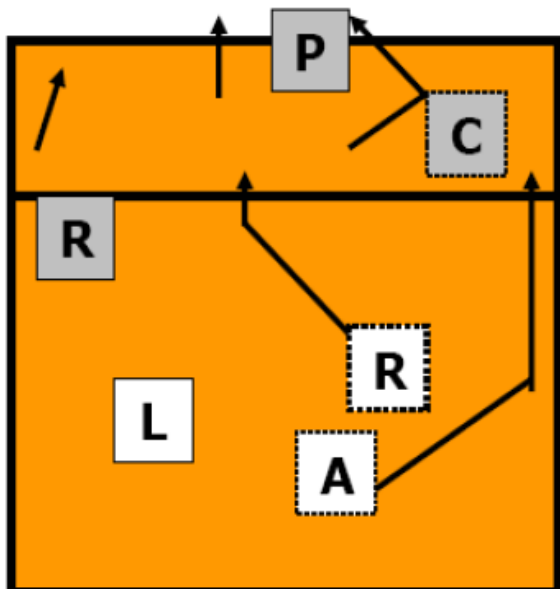


Diagram 7

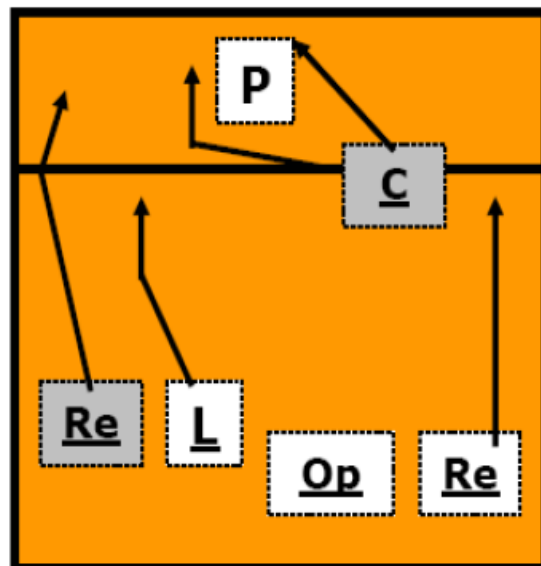


Diagram 8

The different types of sets have only an indicative value as it is every setter's job to know which type of set best suits each of his attackers at that precise moment of the game. Each team organises its attack according to these principles of game that co-ordinate the setter's and attacker's action in the space (zones and set trajectories) as well as in time (tempo and timing.) The tempo qualifies the set, the height and speed of the ball, the timing begins when the attacker starts his action.

Other combinations with 2 and 4 receivers, setter in position 3.

Attack zones

- 1st time: quick attack
- 2nd time: front row players
- back row players

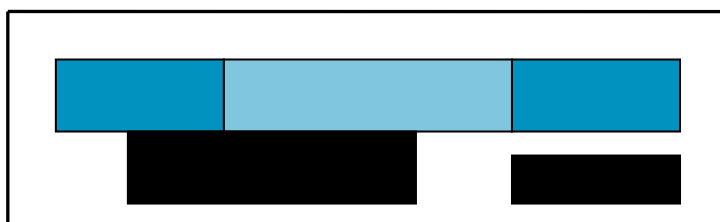


Diagram 9

The trajectories of the sets

Quick Attacks : short sets, shoot set.

Other Attacks : mid high, long shoot sets, high sets.

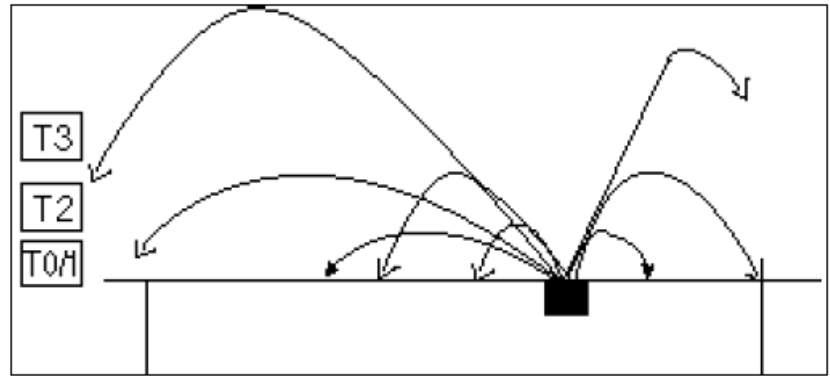


Diagram 10

The timing rules the setter's and the attacker's action in time.

Concerning quick or semi-quick attacks, the timing is linked to the setter's contact with the ball.

Tempo 0: When the setter touches the ball, the attacker is in the air. The set is short and 'tensed.'

Tempo 1: When the setter touches the ball, the attacker launches his take off. The setter is semi-short, semi-tensed or flat.

Tempo 2: When the setter touches the ball, the attacker is stamping the floor before the impulse. The set is semi-high or fast (shot set).

Concerning attacks on high balls

Tempo 3: The attacker starts his approach when or after the ball is touched.

4.2 THE SETTER

The success of the offensive organisation relies on the setter: in relation to a good reception of the serve:

- The setter endeavours to join the intersection of the areas 2 and 3 while facing his partners,
- He moves and jumps in order to touch the ball as high as possible,
- He adopts a neutral attitude so as to give as little information as possible,
- He very quickly touches the ball to play in deviation and to outrun the opposing blocker.

4.3 HIS TACTICAL INTENTIONS

In his dual with the opposing middle blocker, the setter uses or influences his approach and location. In order:

- To create and use intervals between the blockers for the attackers from the front and back rows.
- To use some spaces, in particular the outside net.

The Italian coach, Andrea ANASTASI, points out that “all the teams tend to have a very rapid game at the sides, with trajectories difficult to block, and to use back row players.

a) In the most favourable situations, the objective will be to have one’s attacker facing one blocker or two badly co-ordinated blockers.”

The quality of the first time attack permits the use of the best possible combinations in relation with each situation. You can therefore understand the importance of statistics and plan of game, which guide the setter in his choices. By combining first time attacks with second time attacks, the setter has the following alternatives at his disposal:

- a) Quick attack or attack at position 4
- b) Quick attack or attack in position 2
- c) Quick attack or attack in position 1
- d) Quick attack or attack in pipe by attacker receiver in 5 or 6

It should be noticed that the combinations with front row players (X cross or interval) are rarely used contrary to the changing of area that allows an attacker to play at his position (for example, the middle blocker moving from area 3 to area 2, in some service reception line-ups). We must keep in mind that the setter may take advantage of a high ball, near the net, to attack or fake directly on the reception set, using his left hand.

b) When conditions are less favourable, the setter may use the first time ball with a flat and less rapid set, which makes the attacker’s action more difficult – this can be observed in JOAO (POR) or EGORTCHEV (RUS). As soon as the ball leaves the setter’s hands, the opposing blockers know which attacker will be requested by the setter and will assist one another in case of an attack in the centre or on the sides.

c) Finally in extreme conditions, the setter gives a high set to the best attacker or at least to the one who is in the best position.

With this type of high set, the attacker will be opposed by two or three blockers, as well as by a well-organised back defence. He will try to reduce the risks by avoiding, or on the contrary, by using the opposing block.

4.4 THE SETTER'S TECHNICAL POSSIBILITIES

First and foremost, the setter is an active and very swift player, capable of moving or reacting rapidly, as the success of the attack depends on him. As underlined by Mauricio LIMA (BRA) or Nikola GRBIC (YUG), each setter creates his own style according to his personal qualities. His action, though, follows a certain number of principles: to choose the right attacker, to deceive or mislead the opponent with the set, to be fast and precise and above all to remain calm and in control.

Just as the receiver, the setter has to cope with a crisis of timing. Positioned, if possible, at the intersection of the areas 3 and 2, he faces his partners in order to judge the reception pass. He will cut the pass trajectory to take the ball quite high by jumping, even if he has to move away from the net in order to reduce the distance and the time between the two contacts of the set and of the attack hit. When he moves away from the net, the trajectory of the ball turns into a flat set. When touching the ball, he throws his hands towards the attack point, no matter how his shoulders are positioned, by rotating or not rotating, his body.

The contact with the ball is brief, often limited to an action of the wrists and fingers in order to give the least possible information to the opposing blockers. To mislead them, he will often play to the opposite of his action, for example setting at the back if he moves forward, or setting the ball away from the net if he comes near it. In summary, a good setter has to be swift, skilful, concentrated and capable of making quick decisions.

All sorts of sets can be observed whether they are made when the player is in contact with the floor or in the air, backward or forward; varied in height or length. When far from the net,

the setter must be able to 'serve' an attacker on the other side by a front, or a back set. If the ball is high and too close to the net, he should be able to set with one hand or to make a direct attack. If he is near the floor, he should be able to make an underhand set.

4.5 THE ATTACKERS' ROLE AND TECHNICAL VARIETY

The attacks vary according to the type of set and the position of the players. When the Ace-Spiker and the Receiver-Attacker attack on high sets they show what young players are taught – a 3 or 4 step approach, respecting the timing of the set, a take off, a suspension, hitting the ball and finally landing on the floor to carry on with another action.

Various alternatives can be observed:

- the approach may not be straight but curved,
- the take off may, or may not be made in the axis of the approach, starting a rotation,
- the hitting of the ball may be executed within the axis or not (right or left direction),
- it may be powerful or controlled.

The Receiver-Attacker has the greatest variety of attacks. He attacks on high, semi-high or shot sets. The timing and direction of the attack are both important factors for success.

The Middle Player is the start of the attack. He is the one who is most often confronted with timing crises. He must secure contact with the ball, respecting precise timing, which varies according to the position and the height at which the setter touches the ball. He must observe the setter and the type of set – short, tensed or flat – to adapt his approach and his take off, while remaining far enough from the net. The players EGORTCHEV (RUS) and JOAO (POR) mention how difficult balls coming from the back are obliging them to attack by diverting the ball.

All techniques aim at avoiding or using the opposing block.

The different approaches and kinds of impulses are the first means at the disposal of the young player, but for a high level, the best chance of being successful is rapid action and a variety of hits that also vary in power and direction.

In direction:

- the ball may be hit in the axis of the body by rotating inwardly or moving the arm towards the outside net to pass the block sideways.
- the ball can be hit by brushing the arm in front of the body, the position of the shoulders thus misleading the blockers.
- the ball may be swerved with a rotation of the wrist either inwards or outwards.

In power:

- the hitting may be controlled, thus increasing the swerve of the ball,
- the ball may be hit with a strong lift, such as a speed off,
- the ball may be tipped (the touch being made with the tips of the fingers).

By using the block:

- the attacker hits the ball toward the outside, thus producing a wipe off,
- the attacker hits the blocker's fingertips to make the ball swerve far away at the back.

Part 5

THE DEFENCE

To illustrate the organisation of the defence, we start from the situation of the team that serves and readies themselves to oppose the opponents' attack.

5.1 GENERAL ORGANISATION

“The general organisation of the defence is based on the information gathered by the coaching staff, which is followed by a game plan, block-defence. This plan starts with the service, that is to say one must serve tactically in order to annoy the opposing team and force them to play in our defensive game. In other words, to have a well-positioned block and to display a back defence in the spaces that can be defended.” Glenn HOAG (CAN).

In Top Level Volleyball, knowing the opponents is essential in order to avoid unpredictable situations. Each player must know what he must do and when to react in the adequate manner. Every time they rotate, one of the players reminds his partners of the coach's instructions with a gesture or with a word.

5.2 THE GENERAL SYSTEM

The general system of defence is made up by the blocking and backcourt defence rows and following the order of rotation. Then it is possible for switches to be made so that each player will defend a precise position as indicated in the following diagram.

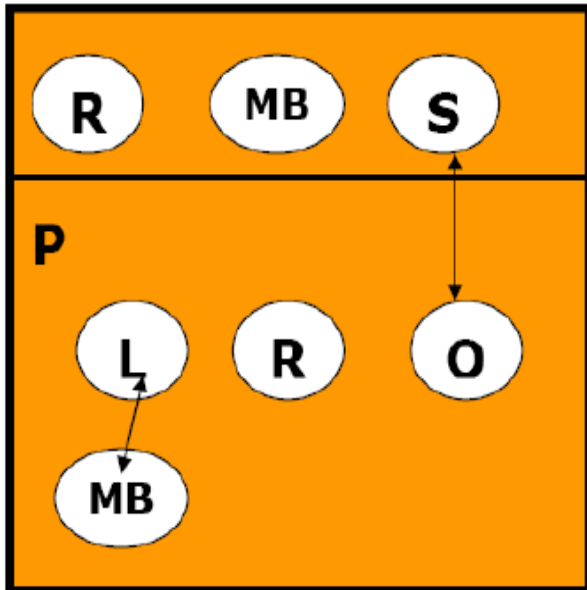


Diagram 11
Location of players in defence

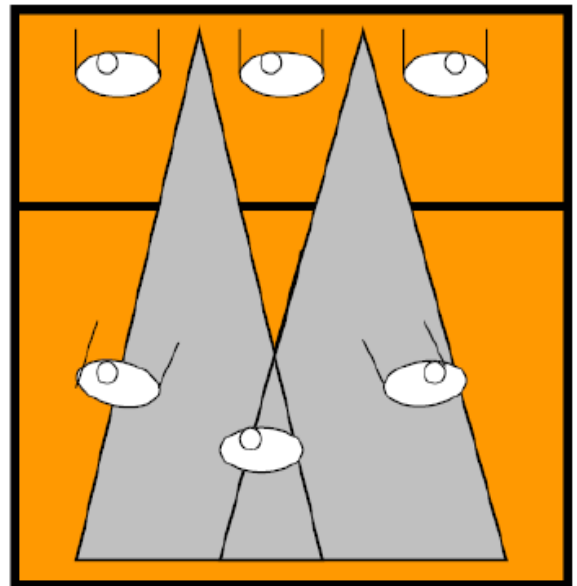


Diagram 12
Relation between front and back rows
Outside back court players (5 & 1) cover intervals between blockers

However, special switches can be decided in relation to the opposing attack, especially when the setter is small.

The team that serves, best illustrates the defensive organisation, and as we said it before, defence starts as soon as the service is hit.

The front row players are positioned so as to watch their direct opponents, while at the same time, being ready to help their nearest partner. Moreover, it is the middle-blocker's responsibility to act, or not to act, on the first opposing quick attack, by closely observing the approach of the setter and the middle-blocker.

Both back outside players stand 6-7 metres away from the net in the spaces left free by the blockers and player 6 stands between them to be ready to react in the case of a quick attack.

5.3 DEFENDING ON THE OPPONENT QUICK ATTACK

As soon as the service is hit, the team gets ready to oppose the quick attack. The middle blocker will decide to block or not. In case of block, he will attempt to slow down the opposing ball so as to help his back defence partners.

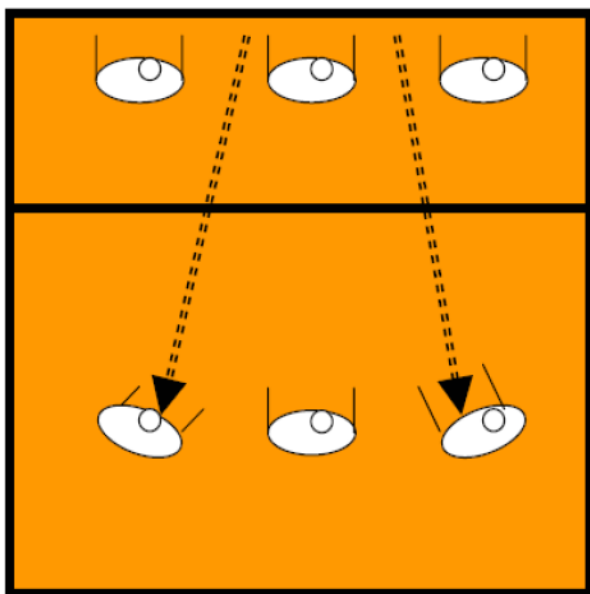


Diagram 13

His partners at the sides will cover the ground in the front.

The player in position 6 will move forward to defend, anticipating the absence of a block and will defend the balls swerved at the back by the block, while his two partners of the sides will defend the free spaces in the intervals left by the blockers.

DEFENCE ON ANOTHER ATTACK (2ND TIME) EITHER WITH A ONE-PLAYER BLOCK OR WITH A BADLY POSITIONED TWO-MAN BLOCK.

This is when the opponent setter involves another player in a scheme with a simulated quick attack leaving the defence insufficient time to take up their appropriate positions.

The middle blocker will try to help his partner but will be unable to form a homogenous block, while the other outside player will fall back in order to cover the front of the court.

The outside player who is responsible for the block will aim at slowing down the attack ball and avoid making it swerve out of the court. In that case, it will be difficult to defend.

As already mentioned, the back players defend by moving away from each other, if they have sufficient time.

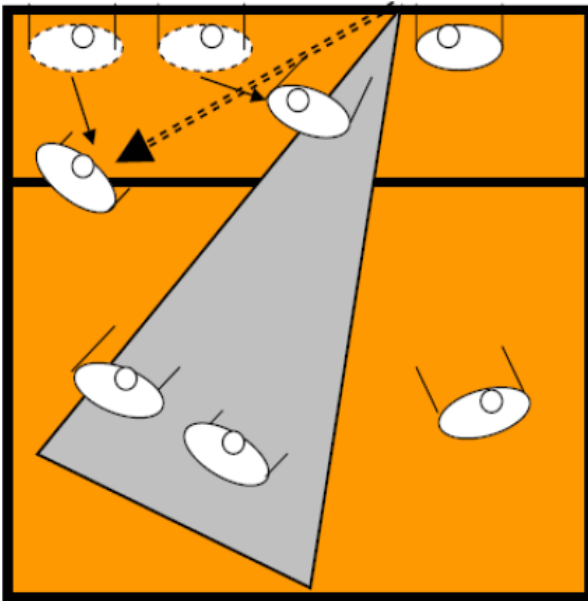


Diagram 14

DEFENCE WITH A TWO MAN-BLOCK

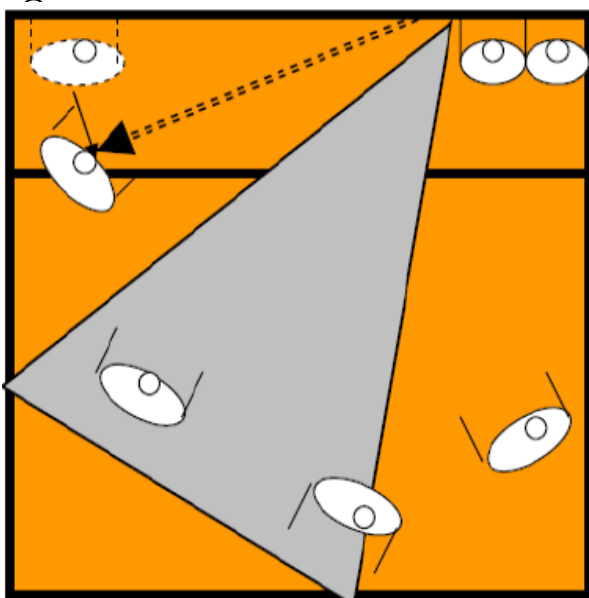


Diagram 15

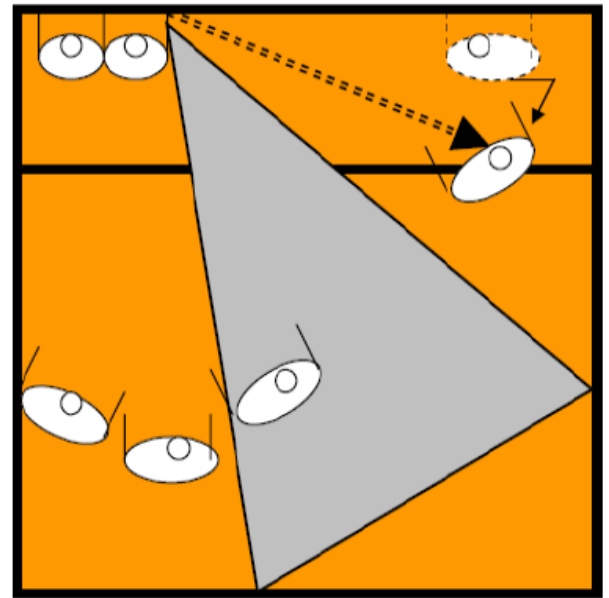


Diagram 16

The players are able to get into position again according to the coach's instructions.

Generally speaking, the blocker responsible for his direct opponent closes the outside and the middle blocker comes to help him, forming a more or less homogenous block according to the situation. The other front player will move backward to defend the narrow diagonal and to cover the ground behind the block. The player behind the block will either cover a space left free between the two blockers or will be positioned behind them to cover the side area.

The player will step backward to defend the area 6 and the ball that is swerved by the block, while the player on the opposite side will defend the wide diagonal.

5.4 DEFENCE WITH A THREE-MAN BLOCK

The players are able to get into position again according to the coach's instructions.

Generally speaking, the blocker responsible for his direct opponent closes the outside and the middle blocker comes to help him, forming a more or less homogenous block according to the situation. The other front player will move backward to defend the narrow diagonal and to cover the ground behind the block. The player behind the block will either cover a space left free between the two blockers or will be positioned behind them to cover the side area.

The player 6 will step backward to defend the area 6 and the ball that is swerved by the block, while the player on the opposite side will defend the wide diagonal.

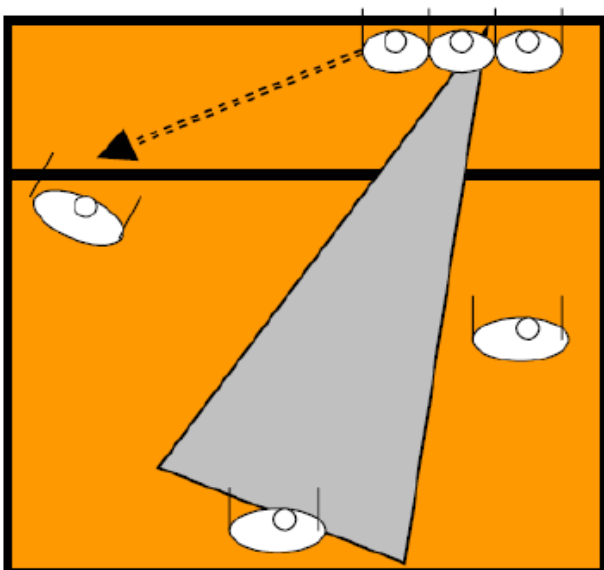


Diagram 17

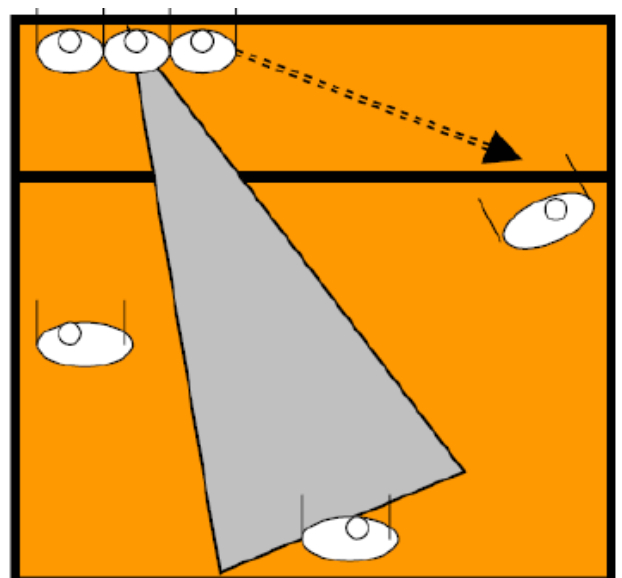


Diagram 18

5.5 DEFENCE WITH A THREE-MAN BLOCK

In this type of defence, the two back row players will step forward to cover the ground behind the block, while the player 6 will step back so as to capture the ball swerved by the block.

5.6 DEFENCE ON THE RECEIVER-ATTACKER'S ATTACK-PIPE

This defensive organisation takes place when the attack is made by the back receiver-attacker in position 5 or 6. This attack is particularly difficult to defend because the receiver-attacker springs behind the first time and strikes the ball with a semi-high set.

The middle blocker will often be outrun, he will not be able to react quickly enough and cannot jump or acts too late. The back players are positioned in the same way as for the attack of the first time.

THE BLOCK

5.7 THE BLOCK EVOLUTION

The game has become more rapid, which obliges players to be very concentrated during the formation of the opposing attack and to react swiftly.

a) We observe that the players have become much more responsible and their role has been better defined. Each player is responsible for dealing with his direct attacker and must help his partner placed on his side(s). The middle blocker's responsibility is even greater, as he assures the good co-ordination with the back defence by judging the qualities of the opposing quick attack. Thus, he defines the first options of defence by either committing to the quick attack, or by reading the setter and reacting.

“The middle blocker's main task is to secure the co-ordination of his action in defence, from the very beginning of the match to the end.” Valeri ALFEROV (RUS ASST. TRAINER).

The middle blocker aims at acting on the trajectory and at slowing down the opposing attack ball in order to make the back defence easier, and to prepare the counter attack. They try to form winning blocks only when the action of the ball is certain.

“In modern Volleyball, it is more important to slow down the ball than to build up an offensive block, and to help one's partners in forming a two-player block.” Andrei EGORTCHEV (RUS).

b) A greater mobility is linked to the reading of the setter and to the set trajectories that have now become very rapid. “In modern Volleyball, with the rapidity of the offensive game, the blockers have to be even more mobile. Technically speaking, it is necessary to now develop the sideways mobility of the middle-blocker and their ability to quickly read the game.” Glenn HOAG (CAN).

The evolution of the block has modified the players' behaviour and has made the qualities of concentration, anticipation and swiftness more important. This can explain the success of players such as JOAO (POR) or Jiri NOVAK (CZE).

5.8 ROLES AND TECHNIQUES

The various clips show the different actions of the players both at the centre and at the sides. The players are positioned near the net while closely observing the setter, the set trajectory and the actions of the middle player. They are crouching in anticipation, hands high above their shoulders and ready to react very quickly.

The middle blocker's technique is more complex and depends on his height and his physical characteristics. Some prefer to wait and first act by raising their hands to counter a quick attack before moving to the side in order to help his partner. For others, this is not possible. They must first make a choice and this makes helping one of their partners more difficult.

JOAO (POR) explains "it is a question of instinct, as I am rather small, I cannot really wait for the ball to spring out of the setter's hand, otherwise the attacker is already ready to hit the ball." As they are often outrun, they must run to help their partner, end this motion by using a breaking foot and by rotating the body inwards.

The outside blockers such as ELGUETA (ARG), GIBA (BRA) or ANTIGUA (GRA) insist on knowing their direct opponent well, especially his strength angles, avoiding deviating the ball toward the outside, and on the necessity of helping the middle blocker with a quick attack.

It is important to note the players' capacity to move their hands above the net to interfere with the ball's trajectory while transmitting false information to the opposition e.g. by placing their hands to the side or moving them away. The offensive block is used mainly when it can be homogenous.

BACK COURT DEFENCE

5.9 EVOLUTION

The new rules have made it easier to defend the ball. On the other hand, the multiple contacts allowed for the team's first hit have released the diggers from making errors and on the other hand, the libero, on in addition to his digger's personal qualities, has now evolved into his team's defensive leader.

As a consequence, and similarly to the blockers, the players have become more responsible.

5.10 ROLES AND TECHNIQUES

a) The various clips show the players in action according to their positions and the types of the opposing attacks. The responsibility of the defence greatly relies on the attacker receivers and on the libero, because they hold key positions in the team and because the majority of the attacks are performed in the centre and in position 4. Those 3 players, the outside player in position 4, the back row player in position 6 and the libero in position 5 have to bear the brunt of the responsibility of the attack by digging the powerfully-hit balls

or those deflected by the block. Positioned slightly behind, the libero covers his partners by bringing back balls badly defended by his partners.

The other two players, the setter and the opposite player positioned in 2 and 1 have the same tasks as the receiver-attackers but they often have a specified role in covering the block or facilitating the setter's counter attack.

b) But whatever the role, all players must be willing diggers and be prepared to pass the glory to others.

Defending can be thus analysed:

- Diving to the ground. In Volleyball, the player defends an area and must cut the ball trajectory. Acrobatic defence is part of the defence.
- Predicting the attack. This anticipation is made easier by a good knowledge of the attackers and of the respective position of his partners. He must sense their presence, rather than try to physically see them.
- Reacting quickly. A swift reaction is the setter's basic quality.
- Players should have at their disposal a well-mastered technical variety. Only hard work allows to interfere efficiently, with precision, and to have a good contact with the ball. As it is the case with Beach Volleyball, every possible contact area must be used as there is rarely enough time to be well positioned.

c) The various techniques are composed of specific skills.

Fundamentally, whatever movement is made to save the ball, the object is to prevent the ball from touching the floor by inserting a surface of contact to slow down the ball. This can be by using both hands high or low (overhead, underhand pass), one hand, elbows or forearms or, on some occasions, the player even brings the ball back into play by kicking it.

The best digger is the one who has the biggest variety of moves at his disposal:

- well balanced with both hands, or with only one
- after taking a step, to save with both hands or only one
- with a sideways fall, a forward slide, rolling or diving
- with a high reception on a fist or on the forearms (called tomahawk)
- with an acrobatic defence following a long movement: returning with an underhand pass even from outside the free zone.

5.11 THE ATTACKER'S COVER

This is the defence of a particular situation as a result of the duel between the attacker and the blocker. The attack cover is a particular defensive situation where the dig is more a reaction than a technical gesture.

5.12 THE COUNTER ATTACK

It is often called transition game, as it is the period following some digging or preceding another attack.

The success of the counter attack lies in the quality of the defence (digging). Four different situations can be seen, from the setter's optimum organisation of the attack to simply returning the ball to the opponents.

a) The first is that of an easy defence after the opponent was unable to attack (free ball situation), or that of a successful digging, which allows the setter to join area 2/3 and to organise the attack on the same basis as receiving.

b) The second, less favourable, is illustrated by a defence that obliges the setter to play in the back row, or to move the ball to the front area under difficult circumstances. His only possibility is to set the ball high to his chosen attacker, either his best attacker, or the one in the best position.

c) The third is when a player other than the setter makes the attacking set. In this case it is usually better to set the ball to the attacker on the opposite side and in front of him.

d) The final option is when an attack is no longer possible (free ball situation). The player has to send the ball back to the opposing team while either preventing them from developing an effective attack, or by delivering a particularly high ball in order to give his own team enough time to fall back into their own defensive positions.

Note: it is important to note that in the case of the libero, it is possible for him to make an overhead pass if he is out of the front area, but if he moves into the front area, he must use an underhand pass.