

# 5 QUICK TIPS

## TEACHING YOUR PLAYERS TO CONTROL THE PACE OF THE GAME

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**H**ave you ever been involved in a volleyball match where the pace seemed so fast that everything just seemed to be beyond you or your team's control? A match in which the opponents seem to control your team because of the pace they have set?

Well, the reality of that type situation is that there are several things you can have your team do to take control of the rhythm of the match. Here are a few suggestions...

### Play the Volleyball Low

Tell your players to concentrate on playing the ball perfectly, especially on a free ball or down ball. They can practice this by playing the ball in a low, balanced position. Don't let them stand up to pass the ball by taking it up high when it's at shoulder level. Have them use the few more inches it takes for the ball to descend to get themselves in a good low position to deliver a perfect ball to the target.

Those extra few seconds they allow for the ball to descend to a lower point before passing it not only gives them time to gain more control of the pass, but it also buys time for your hitters to get back in transition. This move also allows your team to control the speed of the next play, thus affecting the tempo of the volleyball match.

### Speed Up or Slow Down Your Pass

At team practices, you probably dedicate hours on serve-receive in which you prepare them to automatically pass the ball with a medium arc about four-to-six feet above the height of the net, right to the setter's hands.

With that in mind, your players can learn to control the speed of the team's attack by raising the pass or serve-receive so that the ball travels at a much higher arc. For example, by having them pass 8-to-10 feet above the height of the net, they can slow down the pace of the game.

A time to do this during a match is when the opposing team is running a faster offense and it feels like your team is spinning its wheels and unable to establish its own rhythm. When this happens, just have them slow everything down with a higher pass. This gives your setter time to think, the hitters time to see the volleyball court and the rest of the team time to think about concentrating on the basics in order to get back into the game.

On the other hand, you can have your team increase the pace of the game by purposefully passing a ball that is right at, or one to two feet above, the height of the net with some pace on it.

You should practice all of this during your team-attack and transition drills. Also, practice this during free-ball drills – have them purposefully speed up a free-ball or even down-ball passes. The key is to make sure they do this without losing precision or any control of their passes at the expense of trying to run a faster-paced attack.

You can have them make this a set play that can be called by the setter when she sees an easy, high, free- or down-ball coming over the net. She can call the play so the receivers know she will be in position to set, and the middle blockers will be ready to speed up their approach for this fast-attack play.

### Walk Back To Serve

This suggestion may seem a little simple, or crafty, but after a long rally you may consider having your player just take her time getting back to the server's position. Whenever a player runs back to serve, it speeds up the play of the game. Sometimes it might be necessary to give your front row hitters a breather or give your middles a chance to catch their breath.

Another thing you can have a player do to slow things down and avoid risking a yellow card or delay of game warning is have her simply "tie her shoe" just before, or as her teammate is heading back, to serve. The referee will have to wait for her to finish.

### Use All Eight Seconds Before Serving

Another thing that your team can do to control the pace of the game is have your server use the entire time available to her before serving the ball.

When the referee blows the whistle to begin play, a server has eight seconds before she has to serve the ball. By using up the entire time available to them, the pace of the game is slowed down, and your players get a little extra time to scout where players on the other team are located and prepare for the next play.

In addition, those few seconds might make the receiving team become a little tired or anxious as they stand in the low, crouched, serve-receive position waiting for the ball to be served.

### Non-Setters Should Set High

If your team was to play in a perfect volleyball world, the setter would touch every second ball. But seriously, when does that ever happen? More often than not, your right-side hitter or an off-side hitter will have to step in to set several times during a match.

In order to maintain control of the pace of the game, make sure your players get their knees, hips, shoulders and forehead lined up underneath the ball to ensure they get into a low position to set a nice high ball to either outside hitter.

Only increase the pace of the game by having your setter shoot a fast set to the outside; and only after the setter, and the hitter she is setting, have practiced that play and become proficient at it. Establish your own team's rhythm and maintain control by setting high to the outside and letting your hitters do the rest.

Now go out and have your team practice their individual skills. Remember that the ball, and thus the pace of the game, is in your team's hands!