



Volleyball ACE™ Power Tips

Sponsored by Dimensional Software



Volume No. 20, Issue No. 1 ~ Jan. 14, 2009

Official Drill Bulletin of the American Volleyball Coaches Association

Ten Easy Steps to Training Your Team Mentally

By Wick Colchagoff, Findlay University, Findlay, Ohio

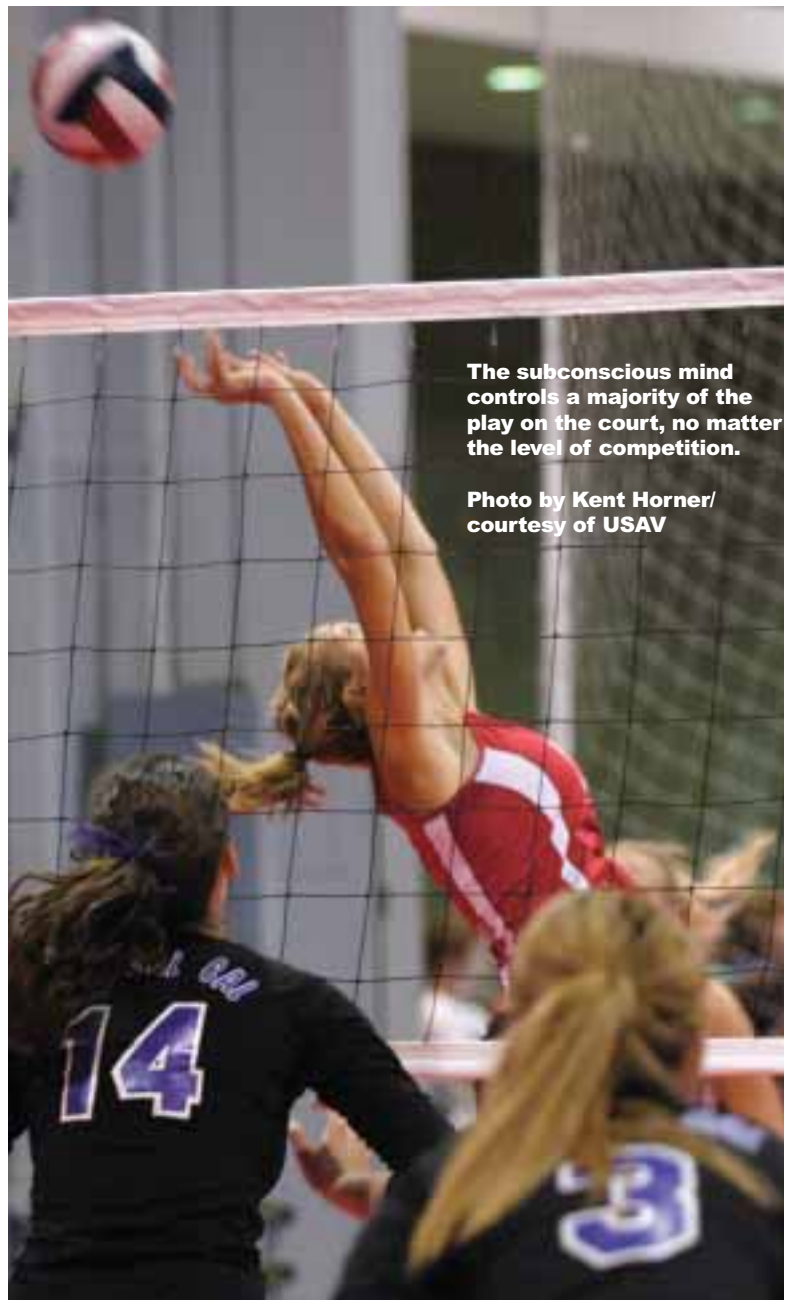
The importance of the mental aspect of sport is undeniable. In an interview before one of his Wimbledon finals, Boris Becker predicted the outcome of the match would have nothing much to do with tennis. Techniques, physical fitness and tactics are often what coaches focus on exclusively while training their teams. Some coaches falsely assume mental preparation and toughness are innate qualities in their athletes, but in reality, these qualities are as trainable as the forearm passing technique or the attack approach. The following 10 steps can be extremely useful in helping you become a mental coach.

Step 1: Understand the Power of the Subconscious

“All of the information that our minds draw from to form action is in our subconscious. The conscious mind does not act without influence from the subconscious mind.” - Dr. Dennis Waitley

It is important that athletes and coaches understand the power of the subconscious mind, which controls a majority of the play on the court. The subconscious mind functions much like a computer. Its output – or the athlete's performance – is dictated by what has been previously programmed (input) through the senses, particularly visual, auditory and kinesthetic awareness. These inputs can be from previous personal (internal) experiences, either real, imagined or from copying a role model (external). Understanding the subconscious has implications regarding how coaches organize and conduct their practices.

The mental coach carefully trains (programs) her team. This coach knows that behaviors that are encouraged or tolerated in practice will manifest themselves in the match. Athletes need to realize they can program their subconscious both on and off the court. Mental practice can be a vital part of athletes' overall success.



The subconscious mind controls a majority of the play on the court, no matter the level of competition.

**Photo by Kent Horner/
courtesy of USAV**

CALENDAR

Sometimes coaches can have a negative influence on their athletes' subconscious minds, albeit unintentionally. The athletes' personal belief systems impact subconscious images during interaction with the coach. Because an athlete's personal belief system is a product of individual experiences and environment, the mental coach must take special care that communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is understood as intended.

Step 2: Develop Athletes Who Take Risks

"Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to the error that counts." - Nikki Giovannic

At younger levels in volleyball, athletes are often rewarded by coaches and fans for safe play and reprimanded for taking risk. According to Mike Gibson, head women's volleyball coach at the University of Michigan at Dearborn, who has interviewed more than 1,000 high school athletes, the No. 1 fear of high school female volleyball athletes is being embarrassed.

In a sport where every point ends in a mistake by someone on the court, this fear of embarrassment can be a strong motivating factor for the athlete to play it safe. This is especially evident during the end of a close game. Yet, to play volleyball at the highest levels, aggressive play is necessary to be successful. The mental coach encourages aggressive play and embraces mistakes as part of the game. The level of risk that is acceptable within a specific area of the game will vary among coaches, teams and game situations, but the concept of taking risks to gain a competitive advantage over the opponent is paramount for success.

Step 3: Teach Relaxation to Your Athletes

"At first glance, exertion and relaxation may seem to be a contradiction in terms. However, most peak performances occur when athletes feel loose and relaxed in the process of extending themselves." - Terry Orlick, Ph.D

Relaxation is important to clear the mind for a quality performance, open the subconscious before visualization and affirmations, speed recovery and recuperate between events. There are many different techniques for relaxation and each athlete might have a favorite one. The mental coach exposes her athletes to a variety of methods.

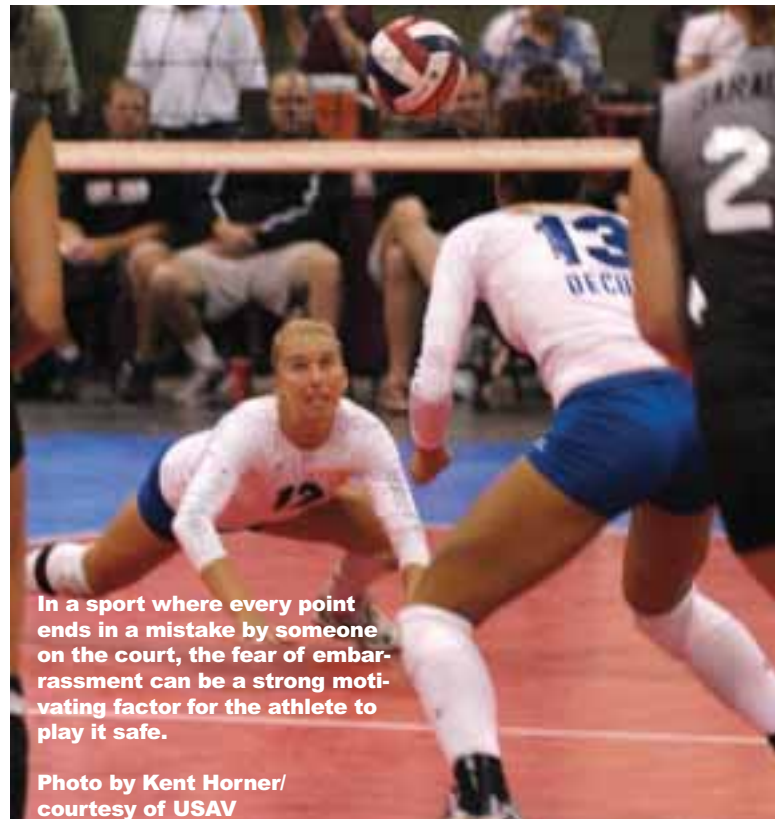
Step 4: Encourage Your Athletes to Visualize

"The subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between a real and a vividly imagined experience."
- Volleyball Cybernetics

Many successful world-class athletes visualize before and during competition. While all athletes know how to visualize (after all, visualization is just directed daydreaming), visualization skills greatly increase with practice.

Visualization works because it programs the subconscious mind for success. Additionally, visualizations make use of the actual neuromuscular pathways utilized during athletic movement (Teich and Dodeles, 1987). Therefore, there is a tangible physical effect to mental technique. Finally,

- Feb. 13-14** **Volleyball Hall of Fame Morgan Classic**
Springfield College, UC-San Diego,
George Mason University, St. Francis University
Blake Arena, Springfield College
Springfield, Mass.
- April 17-18** **2009 Molten Division III Men's Invitational Volleyball Championship**
Ramapo College, Nahwah, N.J.
- May 7-9** **40th Annual National Collegiate Men's Volleyball Championship**
Smith Fieldhouse, Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah
- May 23-30** **USA Volleyball Adult Open Championships**
Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, Minn.
- June 26-July 4** **Eighth Annual Women's Pan American Cup**
(U.S. Women's National Team)
University of Miami and Florida International
University
- June 26-July 5** **USA Junior Olympic Girls' Volleyball Championships**
Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami, Fla.
- July 1-8** **USA Junior Olympic Boys' Volleyball Championships**
Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, Ga.
- July 22-26** **USA Volleyball High Performance Championships**
Ft. Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center



In a sport where every point ends in a mistake by someone on the court, the fear of embarrassment can be a strong motivating factor for the athlete to play it safe.

**Photo by Kent Horner/
courtesy of USAV**

visualization can help regulate the athletes' mental and emotional states during competition.

It is important that the athletes actually see, feel and experience the event when visualizing. The mental coach understands the more vivid the experience, the more successful the athlete will have programmed the subconscious mind.

The athlete should use the entire event from beginning to end. If an athlete is learning a skill, she should model the performance after a successful athlete and visualize it in slow motion. Once the skill has been learned, the visualization should be at game speed. The skill should always be viewed as a first-person experience, as if the athlete were actually performing the skill. Visualization can be used to practice physical skills, mental states and attitudes.

Step 5: Stress Positive Internal Dialogue

"If your players talked to their friends the way they talked to themselves, would they have any?"

- Mike Gibson, University of Michigan at Dearborn

Often times, athletes and their coaches fill the subconscious mind with nonproductive and negative input. Athletes often engage in negative self-talk. Coaches can reinforce this negative image in the athletes' subconscious minds. The problem with these behaviors is the subconscious mind has no sense of humor. Statements that the athletes may intend to fire themselves up, like, "Come on lazy, you should have gotten that ball," only serve to convince the athlete's subconscious of its ineptness.

Athletes can incorporate positive affirmations by discovering their own self-talk. By recognizing how athletes talk to

themselves, the mental coach helps them convert negative statements into positive ones. Instead of saying, "Why can't I pass?" the question should be phrased, "What do I need to do to become a better passer?" Stress symptoms should be interpreted in a positive light. Athletes should not feel afraid or weak, but excited and up to the challenge. Finally, by utilizing the connection between physiology and mental state, the mental coach teaches athletes to change their moods from depressed and frustrated to happy and excited by changing their body posture.

Step 6: Have Your Athletes Utilize Affirmations

"In order to be a great champion, you believe that you are the best. And if you are not – pretend that you are."

- Muhammad Ali

Affirmations are strong, positive statements. Athletes should use conscious, preplanned thoughts to direct their actions and emotions on the court. Some examples are: "I am an awesome hitter, no team can stop me" or "I am always confident and in control." Affirmations should be done on a daily basis. The mental coach knows that affirmations are very effective when combined with visualization.

Step 7: Teach Your Athletes to Use Anchors

"A mind troubled by doubt cannot focus on the course to victory." - Arthur Golden

Anchors are any stimulus (internal - image or feeling; external - touch or sound) that trigger or elicit a specific response. While the word anchor may be unfamiliar to



WHO SAYS HIGH-PERFORMANCE VOLLEYBALL GEAR HAS TO BE BORING?

Introducing VB RAGS:
The top selling volleyball brand in the Caribbean is making its debut into the US market.

Since 1991, VB RAGS has been turning the volleyball world upside down with a high dose of creativity, and a genuine contempt for the status quo. We hail from the Caribbean, where vibrant colors are used to project the fun, high-energy, island-vibe, and passion with which we live ... and play volleyball. Our beach volleyball roots are also evident in our unique designs. VB RAGS offers a full line of volleyball products including high-performance volleyball shoes.

As we enter the US market in 2009, we seek to erase the ridiculous notion that high-performance volleyball gear needs to be boring. In a world where all volleyball brands look alike, we are happy to walk alone. Like the eagle, we don't flock, we fly solo.

What about you?

VB RAGS is a proud sponsor of the AVCA

NO/SO CAL 310.344.4466
CENTRAL CAL 559.960.8965
MID WEST 260.348.7239
MID ATLANTIC 757.613.6821
FLORIDA 407.928.6793
CARIBBEAN / INTL / OTHER 787.688.8243



coaches, the concept is well understood. An example of anchors include: Pavlov's dogs and the bell, TV commercials that link products to feelings, and key words used by coaches.

The mental coach teaches athletes to use anchors for creating mental states for clearing mistakes, relaxing themselves in critical situations during the match, increasing focus and poise, and staying aggressive. Anchors may be verbal, physical or both. Guidelines for programming anchors are to get into a relaxed state, visualize an experience that creates the desired mental state, and repeat the anchor at the peak of experience.

Step 8: Personalize Your Athletes' Goal Setting

"If the why is big enough, the how-to will come."

- Anthony Robbins

The mental coach knows that the goals must be important to the athletes. If the athletes truly care about the goals, then they will strive longer and harder than if the goal were imposed on them by a coach. The mental coach guides athletes to goals that are tough yet attainable, measurable and meaningful to the athletes.

Step 9: Develop Team Synergy

"The main ingredient of stardom is the rest of the team."

- John Wooden

Synergy is defined as the action of two or more substances, organs, or organisms to achieve an effect of which each is individually incapable. It is a concept upon which the mental coach thrives. Volleyball is full of emotional peaks and valleys during a contest between equally-matched teams. The emotional energy of the entire squad – both starters and reserves – can elevate a team. Strategies to develop team synergy during the preseason might include synergy demonstrations and discussions, adventure games and ropes courses that teach relational and operational skills by doing, exploring problem solving, enhancing open communication, promoting self-esteem, and encouraging risk taking.

Often times, tension between players on the court can cause synergy problems during the season. The mental coach teaches players how to resolve conflicts among themselves by talking with their teammates, avoiding put-downs, deciding they will get along, taking responsibility for themselves to improve the situation, accepting individual differences and including everyone.

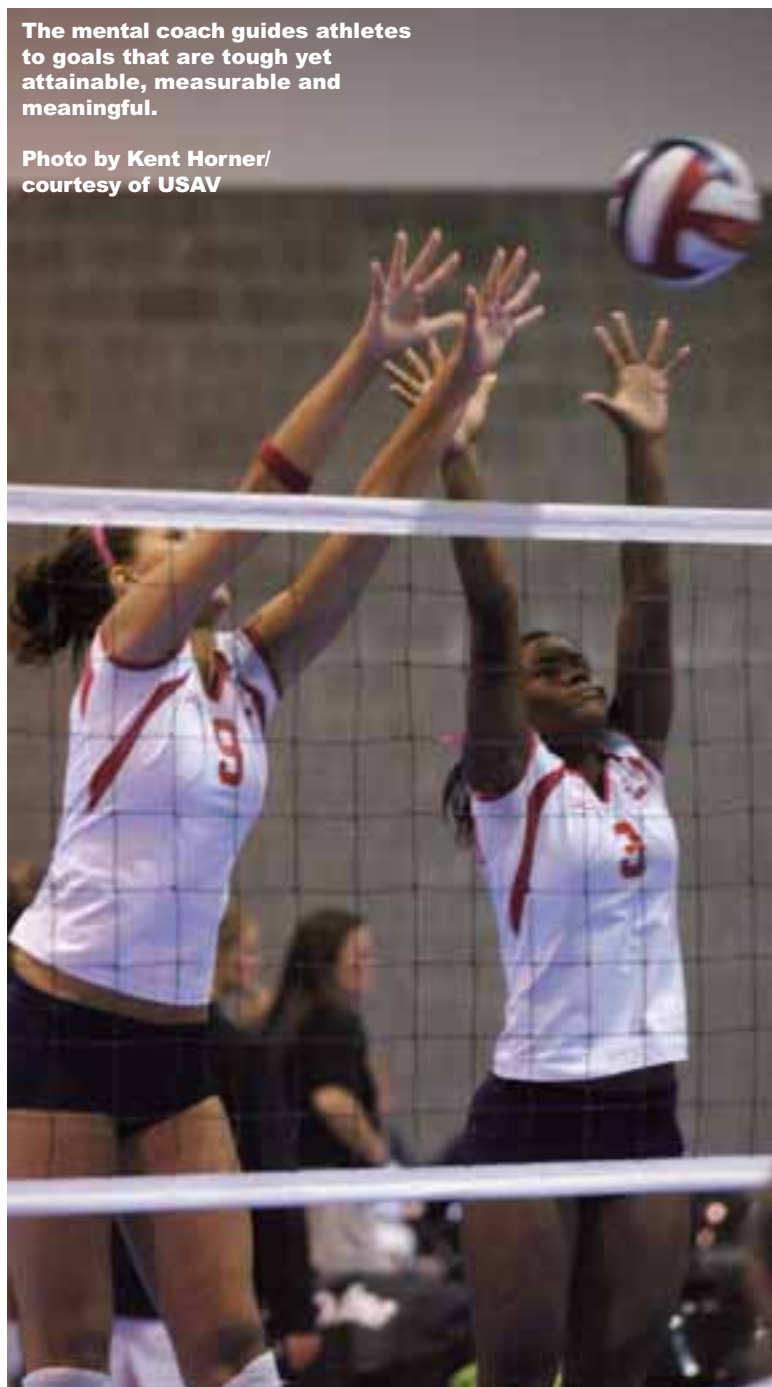
Step 10: Train Your Team Mentally in Practice Each and Every Day

"It's never an upset if the so-called underdog has all along considered itself the better team." - Woody Hayes

The mental coach knows that the actions taken daily in practice can greatly affect the team. Each practice is an opportunity to program the subconscious mind for greatness – or to let it be filled with nonproductive images and thoughts.

The mental coach guides athletes to goals that are tough yet attainable, measurable and meaningful.

Photo by Kent Horner/
courtesy of USAV



By understanding, careful planning and execution of the 10 steps, the mental coach can lead her team to a successful and fulfilling season.

References

- Dalloway, Marie. (1994) *Reflections On The Mental Side Of Sports*. Phoenix, AZ: Optimal Performance Institute.
- Ferguson, Howard E. (1991). *The Edge*. Cleveland, Ohio: Getting the Edge Company.
- Kellner, Stan and Cross, Dave. (1997). *Volleyball Cybernetics*. Long Island, NY: Yes I Can! Publications.
- Teich, Mark and Dodeles, Giselle. "Mind Control: How to Get It, How to Use It, How to Keep It." *Omni*. Vol. 10, No. 1. October 1987.

Reprinted from Coaching Volleyball: Beyond the X's and O's (2004), pp. 82-87. Monterey, CA: Coaches Choice. To order your copy, log on to www.avca.org.

VOLLEYBALL ACE™ DRILLS

Attacking the Corners

From *101 Winning Volleyball Drills From the AVCA* (2000)

Number of Players: 8-12
Number of Balls: 20 or more

Objective:

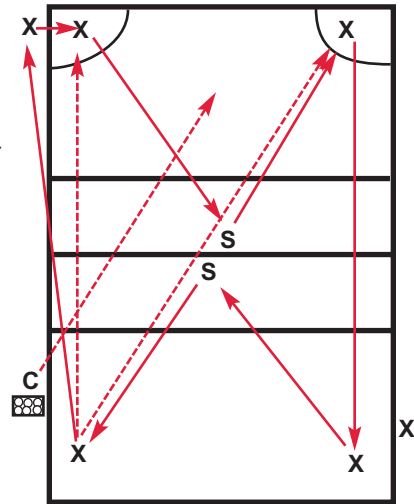
To encourage players to place back-court attacks to the corners of the opponent's court. It works both offense/attacking the corners and defense/defending the corners.

Directions:

1. The coach (C) tosses the ball to put it into play on either side of the net.
2. Two back-court defensive players (X) and a set-

ter (S) at the net are positioned as shown in the diagram. Two additional players are waiting off the court. Every player will play every position.

3. The ball is directed to the setter (S), who sets a back-court attack to the left-back defensive player, who must attack the right-back corner of the opponent's court. The ball is received and passed to S, who repeats the action on the other side.
4. After playing the ball, each player moves one position in a clockwise manner, with the extra player moving onto the court.
5. After a period of time, switch the direction of the ball movement to counterclockwise (i.e., the setter sets to a right-back defensive player, who directs the ball to the left-back area of the opponent's court).
6. Time the drill for 3 to 5 minutes in each direction.



Under the Net Passing Sequence

Jim Dietz, Lincoln Land Community College

Number of Players: Up to 8 pairs of players
Number of Balls: 1 for each pair

Objective:

The goal of this drill is to maximize passing contacts for players while working on form. In five minutes, each player in the drill should be able to contact anywhere from 50-100 balls with minimal coach supervision.

Directions:

Part One:

1. The Tosser is 5 feet from the net. The Passer has her head just under the net.
2. The Tosser shovel-passes the ball to her

partner, who passes the ball back to the tosser's head using a small step and maintaining a good passing posture.

3. As soon as the tosser has the ball, she tosses the ball again without hesitation. The Passer immediately passes the ball again.
4. This is repeated for a set number of repetitions determined by the coach or for a set length of time. Repeat the drill but switch the roles of passers and tossers.

Part Two:

1. The Tosser is 5 feet from the net. The Passer has her head just under the bottom of the net.
2. The Tosser shovel-passes to her partner, who passes the ball and then shuffles backwards one step with both feet before shuffling forward and passing the next ball.
3. The emphasis for the passer is on remaining

in a good passing posture and remaining low while moving.

4. This is repeated for a set number of repetitions or a certain amount of time set by the coach. Repeat the drill switching the passing and tossing roles.

Part Three:

1. The Tosser remains 5 feet from the net. The Passer begins in a blocking posture.
2. The Passer will do a single-block and then execute a crossover back to the 3-meter line. At that point, the Passer shuffles forward to the net and the tosser shovel-passes the ball to the passer.
3. Once the ball is passed, the Passer repeats the block-crossover-shuffle sequence until the specified repetitions or time limit has been reached.

"Call for the Ball" Attack

From *101 Winning Volleyball Drills From the AVCA* (2000)

Number of Players: 12
Number of Balls: 6

Objective:

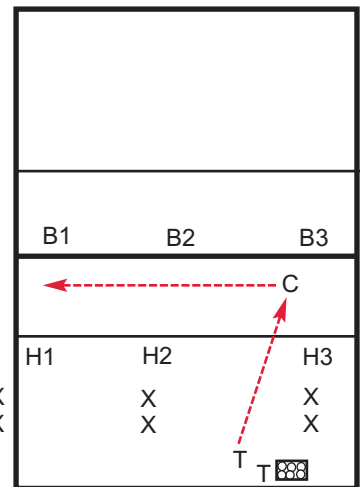
To promote communication within the team, while concentrating on a strong offense and effective transition.

Directions:

1. Set up three lines of hitters (H) vs. three blockers (B).
2. The coach (C) receives the balls from the toss line. Whichever hitter (H) communicates will re-

ceive a tossed ball. Other offensive players (X) cover while blockers block.

3. The offense makes a quick transition and again communicates to the coach. The hitter retrieves the ball and goes to the end of the tosser line.



AVCA/Volleyball ACE™ Power Tips Directory

•Volleyball ACE: 877.223.8225

•AVCA Headquarters: 866.544.2822

•AVCA Grass Roots (Club) Rep., John Sample 817.545.4551

•AVCA Grass Roots (HS) Rep., Jodi Manore 734.850.6269

email: coach@ace4vb.com

email: members@avca.org

email: jsample@dibimail.com

email: manorej@bedford.k12.mi.us

INTENSITY

In the game and in practice!

Bring the same intensity you get in games to practice.

Use the best stat keeping tool, Volleyball ACE, for matches to determine what you need to work on in practice. Then use the TapRecorder during practice to perfect your game. The results will be amazing.



TapRecorder

Version 2

- Now! Works on Pocket PC and Palm Handhelds
- Has Spreadsheet Interface with TapRecording Cells
- Includes Built-In Volleyball PracticeStats Reports
- Can Create Custom Handheld Applications
- Calculates Efficiency % and More

*Tap Tap Tap...
Instant Stat!*

*The
Power
of
Two*

Volleyball

Software for Coaches

Version 6

ACE

- Fast, On-Court Stats
- Pass-Serve Ratings and Charting
- Box Scores, Points Per Rotation and More
- Runs on Palm (Zire, Tungsten) and Pocket PC (iPAQ, Axio)
- Uploads data for NAIA and NCAA stats reporting

Now available
for Pocket PC
and Palm handhelds!

We are
passionate
about
Volleyball!

ORDER YOUR SOFTWARE TODAY!
www.ace4vb.com

Call: Toll free: (877) 223-8225 Web: www.ace4vb.com FAX: (650) 948-2616