



USA Volleyball
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Arizona Sidelines

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To Stretch or Not to Stretch?

It is common to look around and see a sport team sitting in a circle stretching prior to their practice or game, but is this needed and how does it impact their performance? Stretching or flexibility training can be divided into several types: static, dynamic, ballistic and proprioceptor neuromuscular facilitation (PNF), which is partner stretching usually done by physical therapists and trainers. Ballistic stretching typically involves a bouncing movement and is no longer advised because of the increased risk of injury associated with it (Nelson and Bandy, 2005). For the purposes of this article static and dynamic will primarily be discussed.

Static stretching is what most people associate with stretching and is described as lengthening a muscle, usually beyond its normal range of motion, and then holding that position for several seconds, whereas dynamic stretching is accomplished by elongating the muscle in a slow and controlled manner through a natural range of motion (Nelson and Bandy, 2005). In other words, dynamic stretching involves moving through the stretches rather than holding a stretch. Research has found that static stretching can actually decrease an individual's power output, especially their vertical jump performance which is critical to the volleyball athlete (Holt and Lambourne, 2008; Swanson, 2006). It is unclear why this decrease in power occurs but it is most likely a combination of factors. Static stretching does not sufficiently increase the body's core temperature nor does it increase the athlete's heart rate and thus, does not adequately prepare the body for high intensity activity. Therefore, most sport performance coaches now recommend dynamic stretching, or what is also referred to as a dynamic warm-up, prior to practice and competition and utilize static stretching following activity.

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An Olympian's Opinion

USA Olympic Silver Medal libero Nicole Davis recently joined the Arizona Region's General Assembly for a Q and A with the Club Directors and coaches in attendance. There were several inquiries about some of what she talked about, and here is some more of her observations as a player at our sport's highest levels.

Being Burned Out

The concept of being "burned out" is complex, because there are several variables that either independently or collectively contribute to an athlete becoming "burned out". I have always been self-motivated, and have never had trouble training hard, or playing well, but have had trouble maintaining a passion for the game.

A couple of years ago on the national team, there were three liberos training and traveling. My position or role on the team was not solidified. I did not feel like I was getting better. I was not engaged in the training, and I was not buying into the program. In fact, I was complaining a lot, and I would wake up angry every morning hating that I had to go play volleyball. I was told I was the starting libero up until the week before the team was set to leave for World Championships. The coaches from my perspective, abruptly changed their mind, decided to go with another libero, but wanted to take me as a defensive specialist. I lost what love I had left for the sport. I was disappointed. I felt like I was playing well, but the end result was out of my control. The team finished 8th at World Championships and ending a bad summer for me very appropriately.

I had the fortunate experience of going to Turkey late in the professional season that year and playing for one of the biggest sports clubs in the country. I was even more fortunate to have a veteran Turkish national team player of 16 years on my team. Cico (pronounced Chi-cho) is a middle blocker that played all the way around and passed the entire court with me. I grew to respect her ability very quickly, and then she began teaching me about myself. Basically, I would listen to her tell stories about her experiences with the national team that mirrored my own. Right before I left Turkey, she sat me down and told me I had two decisions to make. One which she had chosen, and regretted, and the other, which was sort of a pill to swallow, but the best thing to do. I went back to the national team with a new set of goals, none of them related specifically to how I wanted to perform, but more or less, how I wanted to get along with my teammates and my coaching staff. Having no expectations, as well a new love for the game and the passion to play it everyday, everything else fell right into place. .

Now, going back to this concept of being "burned out" and what exactly that means. I think it is a loss passion and enthusiasm to play.

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So why do athletes need to stretch? The muscles, ligaments and tendons are better able to handle the stress they experience during activity when they are warm and have been stretched (Mann and Jones, 1999). In other words, stretching reduces the potential for injury, and since dynamic stretching properly warms the body it may be the most appropriate means of stretching prior to high intensity activity.

Dynamic stretching programs are designed based on analyzing the movements of the sport and then developing exercises that will enhance flexibility and balance for the specific sport (Mann and Jones, 1999). The early portion of the warm-up involves general stretches and then the movements become more and more sport specific. Similarly, the movements move from simple and easy to more complex and difficult.

For the volleyball athlete, it is important to warm-up the entire body because this athlete uses the muscles of the lower body to jump repeatedly and perform quick movements in all directions. The torso or core is used to transfer power from the lower limbs to the upper body for spiking, and the upper body is used for blocking, setting and spiking. Therefore, the dynamic stretching program should incorporate all these movements and the muscles groups associated with these movements. A thorough dynamic warm-up should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

To begin the athlete should perform what is referred to as the “lying low-back series”, which is designed to begin to warm-up the core, especially the muscles of the low back. The athlete lies on their back with knees bent and feet flat on the ground and moves the knees side to side in a slow and controlled manner while keeping both shoulders on the ground. Once 3-4 repetitions of this has been done, the athlete takes the feet off the ground and moves knees side to side while still maintaining bent knees and the shoulders in contact with the ground. From there, the legs are straightened and the athlete alternates taking the right leg over to the left and the left leg over to the right. The last portion of the lying low back is to have the athlete roll on to their stomach and perform “scorpions”, their arms are flat out to each side (like a T) and the movement involves aiming to take the right foot over to touch the left arm (knee is bent) and vice-versa. Now, the foot may not actually touch the hand but that is the direction the foot should be moving towards.

All of these should be performed 3-4 times each direction.

From there, the athlete stands up and performs “sumo squats” which begin to warm-up the muscles of the legs. The athlete stands with feet slightly wider than hip-distance apart and squats down as low as he/she can, ideally their butt drops below the knees. While squatting down the athlete uses their elbows to push their thighs out, then the athlete places their fingers under the front of their shoes and tries to straighten their legs, which provides a good hamstring stretch (initially the athlete may not be able to straighten all the way so just have them extend as much as they can). Once the athlete has straightened their legs they move right back into the squat position and then back to the straight leg position. They continually move through this motion (5-6 reps). The most important thing to look for in this exercise is that their heels stay in contact with the ground during the squat portion, if their heels come off the ground they are not getting the benefits of the stretch and they are putting undue stress on their knees.

From sumo squats, there are some other leg stretches that can be done. One is the backward lunge with twist, which will use the quadriceps and hip flexor muscles, as well as require some balance. So they lunge backwards while making sure they are taking a big enough step backwards so that the front heel stays in contact with the ground and that knee is not going over their toes. While lunging backwards they twist for a 5 second count over the front leg, and repeat on other leg (3-4 reps each leg). Another good stretch, which will warm-up the hamstrings, as well as some of the upper body muscles, is the hand walk. Instruct the athlete to bend down with as straight of legs as possible and reach for their toes. Then walk their hands out until their body is straight or in a push-up position (if the athlete is advanced enough have them perform a push-up while down there) and then the athlete will walk their feet back to their hands as far as they can. Have them perform several repetitions as they move across the floor.

Once these stretches have been performed, begin incorporating more sport specific warm-up exercises. For the volleyball athlete, arm circles forward and backward should be performed in a very slow and controlled manner so as not to risk damage to the shoulder joint. Many times these shoulder circles can be done while the athlete jogs a short distance. Since there is lateral movement in volleyball, have the athlete perform lateral slides with lateral stretches every couple of slides and repeat in the opposite direction. The next progression of the warm-up would involve a jog with 2 hops every few steps, then easy skips to power skips. Then use movements associated with the sport, such as have them exaggerate in slow motion a spike and have them do it with both their dominant and non-dominant hand to ensure equal flexibility.

Above, some of the basic and most valuable basic dynamic stretches have been explained but see Table 1 for other dynamic exercises to incorporate into a flexibility/warm-up program. Gradually implement the stretches and oversee the session to ensure the athlete is using proper form. Since dynamic stretching requires balance and might stretch muscles in ways they have never been stretched, it is common for individuals to experience some soreness following the first few sessions but this should diminish after continued use.

Meredith Hale-Griffin, (M.S., C.S.C.S) has a Master's of Science, Exercise and Wellness from Arizona State University in 2007. She is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach and a member of the National Strength and Conditioning Association since 2006. She is the Sport Performance Coach for the Chandler-Gilbert Community College Women's Volleyball team the past two seasons where they were The ACCAC Region 1 Division 2 Champions and NJCCA National Runner-Ups in 2006 and the current Sport Performance Coach for Chandler-Gilbert Community College Women's Basketball team where they were the ACCAC Region 1 Division 2 Champions in 2006 and 2007. She is also a member of the Adjunct Faculty with the AT Still University Human Movement Program.

For a list of stretches discussed above, go to www.azregionvolleyball.org to the Coaches link.

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AZ. COACHING RECERTIFICATION

Each of these upcoming Coaching events can be used as a recertification of your IMPACT accreditation with the proper paperwork filled out, signed and submitted to the Arizona Region Office.

COACHING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

USA VOLLEYBALL CAP CLINIC (SEE BELOW)

COLORADO SPRINGS, Co.

NOVEMBER 14-16

[HTTP://VOLLEYBALL.TEAMUSA.ORG/EVENT?TAG_ID=3197](http://volleyball.teamusa.org/event?tag_id=3197)

IOWA VOLLEYBALL COACHES CLINIC

MARCH 6-7, 2009

[WWW.CHAMPIONSHIPPRODUCTIONS.COM](http://www.championshipproductions.com)

GOLD MEDAL SQUARED CLINIC

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

NOVEMBER 7-9

[WWW.GOLDMEDALSQUARED.COM](http://www.goldmedalsquared.com)

USAV IMPACT WEBINARS

THROUGHOUT THE FALL AND WINTER

[HTTP://VOLLEYBALL.TEAMUSA.ORG/EVENT?TAG_ID=3198](http://volleyball.teamusa.org/event?tag_id=3198)

Special CAP Clinic Offered in Co. Spr.

A CAP level I and II is being offered November 14-16th at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Co.

The special 3 day format includes USAV Cadre Penny Lucas White coaching her Air Force Academy Falcons vs. the TCU Horned Frogs.

While watching how video analysis is captured, coaches will keep statistics and interpret the match management. After the match coaches will sit down with the Falcon staff and breakdown the match. This is inclusive along with CAP I & II classroom and on-court sessions.

The **CAP Level I** Course is open to ALL Coaches. The **CAP Level II** class is open to all previously accredited Level I coaches for initial Level II accreditation or to previously accredited Level II coaches who wish to re-accredit.

For more information, go to the USAV website.

I would define enthusiasm in John Wooden's terms, as a love for what you do. "Without enthusiasm you cannot work up to your fullest ability and potential; you're just going to go through the motions."

As coaches, you can start by trying to teach your kids about more than just volleyball. If you walk into a gym with twelve girls and just start tossing the ball around, they might try really hard for the first couple of weeks. The game will lose its meaning though after time if the girls don't have an attachment to the meaning of why they are there. Volleyball is just a game, games become boring after too long, and so if you help bring greater meaning to the game, give the girls a sense of why there in the gym, that's it is bigger than just themselves, their enthusiasm might actually grow.

Martial Arts and Volleyball

I studied martial arts before I started playing volleyball. I started around the age of 10 or 11 and earned my black belt by the age of 16. I had competed nationally and won several championships. I competed in forms, weapons, and sparring. One of the obvious benefits for a kid to be involved in karate is the discipline you learn at an early age. To be a good athlete, you have to be disciplined, especially the more competitive a level you reach. Also, I believe that I learned hand-eye/foot coordination early and had a very good grasp for my body mechanics.

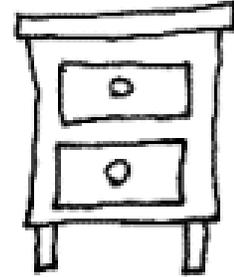
In terms of volleyball, I think I had a higher learning curve that most of my peers because of my martial arts background. I learned skills quickly; I had great control of my body, and was very dynamic. I don't think that means that every volleyball player should study Karate, but I think cross training is important. In Europe, all of my professional teams played a full game of soccer once a week. Hand-foot coordination is much more difficult than hand-eye. I've also played dodge ball, and basketball. I think young kids should be encouraged to do different types of sports.

Jenn Joines, one of our 6'3" middles blockers did ballot for many years growing up. I think that's one of the reasons the Brazilians are so good at sports-they have a passion for sports, and any time there is a ball, and a space to play with it, they find a game to play and just play. When girls make the transition from collegiate to international level volleyball, you can really tell the difference between the good volleyball players and the good volleyball players that are also great athletes. The good athletes pick skills up much quickly and can apply them.



On the Night Stand

In this feature, we will highlight articles, books and resources that may help you on your journey toward coaching excellence.



Secrets of success in 8 words, 3 minutes

Richard St. John

If you haven't tapped into the TED site yet, you are missing out. This talk by St. John is a 3 minute list of the 8 key words to succeed. Check out this site as there are amazing presentations for coaches AND athletes.

http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/richard_st_john_s_8_secrets_of_success.html

Talent is NEVER Enough

By John C. Maxwell

Given the axiom that everyone has a talent, Maxwell helps to identify how to get the most of that talent and then, how to improve it. Translates to coaches very well.

A Champion's Mind

By Pete Sampras

Sampras takes us through his legendary tennis career, the ups and downs, doubts and successes that define him as one of the great athletes of our time. Several non tennis specific nuggets can be exhumed from this read.



Younger athletes getting sidelined by adult injuries

By Luran Neergaard, Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Neergaard examines how today's youth athletes are being hampered by adult kinds of overuse injuries. Early specialization and the lack of off seasons make this a growing problem.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/jul/08/younger-athletes-getting-sidelined-by-adult-injuri>

FREE COACHING RESOURCES

YOUVOLLEY

A NEW SITE THAT IS PROMISING TO BE THE NEW MYSPACE OR FACEBOOK FOR THE VOLLEYBALL COMMUNITY. SEVERAL ARTICLES,

[HTTP://WWW.YOUVOLLEY.COM](http://www.youvolley.com)

PATRICK WARD'S BLOGSPOT

PHYSICAL THERAPIST PATRICK WARD SHARED HIS KNOWLEDGE WITH COACHES AT THE SUMMER COACHING CLINIC, AND HIS INSIGHTS INTO VOLLEYBALL ARE BASED ON THE NEWEST STUDIES AND INFORMATION. CONTACT HIM AND CHECK OUT HIS BLOG HERE.

[HTTP://WWW.PWTRAINING.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://www.pwtraining.blogspot.com)

DR. JEZ HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE NUTRITION

CHECK OUT THE DR. JEZ WEBSITE, A PRESENTER AT USAV EVENTS, HAS SET UP A WEBSITE WITH EASY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT NUTRITION FOR THE YOUTH ATHLETE.

[HTTP://WWW.DRJEZ.COM](http://www.drjez.com)

KUDDA

THE VIDEO LIBRARY ON THIS NEW SITE FEATURES SOME ELEMNTARY VOLLEYBALL DRILLS AND SKILLS FOR THE BEGINNING COACH AND PLAYER FROM THE COACHES AND STAFF OF THE PALMETTO REGION OF USAV.

[HTTP://WWW.KUDDA.COM](http://www.kudda.com)

Coaches Feedback- What NOT to Say!

Coaches from all levels and areas around the country were asked this question:

What words, sentence or phrase should NEVER come out of a coach's mouth when on the court with their team?

"This is a very hard question, as there are, maybe, no words, sentences, or phrases that should NEVER be said. What a coach says depends upon the context, the relationship the coach has with the players, and the manner in which it is said." **Carl McGown, USA Men's National Team Assistant Coach**

"From personal experience, the worst words I've heard a coach say that should never been said were, 'If you are gonna give up, I'm gonna give up!' Here are others I've heard though the years: 'I should never have recruited you,' and 'Looks like I need to out recruit you next year.'" **John Napier, Assistant Coach, NAU**

"I don't think there's one general thing you shouldn't say. Rather, feedback should be directed at what we are going to do better, rather than series of DON'T's." **Jason Watson, Head Coach, Arizona State University**

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The one thing I remember from my outstanding education at Arizona State University was from a sports psych. class. The Professor said to never tell your team or athlete 'You guys, just relax!' For some reason this phrase, according to studies, has just the opposite affect on most athletes in tight or pressure filled situations. It is also usually better to start a time-out talking about something your team is doing well first and then talk about what to fix in a very calm and matter of fact sort of manner and presentation. If the coach seems freaked out what will the players' response be? **Scott Swanson, Assistant Coach, University of Minnesota**

Well THAT is a set up....the word is NEVER. There are too many variables in developing leadership and life skills in kids, which is why we do sport right? to resort to using the word never. It has relatives in the words "Always," "Can't," "Try" and "Don't" and even "BUT" certainly. It is just that some words and techniques, while they should rarely used, exist in our language and experiences for a reason which varies with the situation. So use these with caution and know their antonyms well and use those often! I do know that no matter what is being said, we need as a profession to be far more specific...I hear coaches saying "That's it!," "Way to go!," "Nice try!," "Focus!" and so many other phrases or words that simply are not helpful in feedforward or feedback - that key role of a teacher or coach. BE SPECIFIC more when you are teaching. Tell them what the IT is which you are all excited about. Teach your kids to question back when they do not hear you teaching - "Coach, this IT you are talking about, care to be a bit more specific?." You both will be better for it...hee hee.

That said, there is one troubling phrase that must be used with EXTREME caution, given a coaches position of power and influence in a child's life - and that is "You need to lose weight." Far too often I have seen seemingly innocuous statements, often said teasingly, or in frustration, sarcastically, referencing an athlete's weight, begin a long slide into unhealthy habits, bulimia, and anorexia. We play a sport where getting off the ground high as possible to hit a ball unsupported in the air as hard as possible, is a goal. Being lighter might help that, but every player is unique in their reasons to play our sport, and in body build and mental strengths. It is not the job of a coach to be a weight loss counselor. Let the game guide the players to what is best for them and what they can do to be Citius, Altius, Fortius - swifter, higher, and stronger, the core words of the Olympics. They are words we can use that all Olympic and Jr. Olympic Volleyball players, coaches and parents should know and follow individually for themselves. It is the ER, not the EST - for only a handful of people on the planet are the gold medalists. Everyone however can push for the ER in themselves, every day in every way, that is a big part of what Olympism is about. **John Kessel, USA Volleyball**

I will never tell anyone or a team they "CAN'T" execute a specific skill or defensive/offensive play. Coaching is all about reminders, at any level. Preparation and learning from your mistakes so when situations arise, and sometimes it's instantaneous, you're ready. Positive reinforcement is very important. Example - "you just can't do it" **Dane Selznick, Olympic Beach Coach**

"You will never be able to..." There is no way anyone can possibly know, for certain, what another person is capable of. It saddens me to think even one young athlete stopped trying because of these words. **Amanda Burbridge, Phoenix College**

I would never tell a player..."I have lost faith in you." I also believe that sometimes as coaches we tend to get extremely intense and angry at moments and give a little tough love. I also believe that with this. compassion should always follow. Bash a player enough and they will stop believing in themselves. **Kristina Hernandez, Hofstra University**

Coaches should never say anything that would be demeaning or a personal attack. **David Rubio, Head Coach, University of Arizona**

Never say, "You hit like a girl." That is supposed to be an insult and hitting like a girl can be extremely hard depending on what girl. Only talk about strategy during a game, not physical changes to be made. Worrying about arm swing or passing platform is going to take away from concentration on the bigger picture. **Shaun Kupferberg, Head Coach, Jacksonville University**

I think that a coach should NEVER curse at their team. It sends the wrong message to the players as well as anyone else in the gym. We are professionals and should act that way. **Melissa Wolter, Head Coach, University of Western Florida**

