



# Arizona Sidelines

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*“The access most coaches have to other coaches, (college coaches) far exceeds any other region. Yet few take advantage of the opportunities.”*

## Region Coaches Graded on Positional Training

The Region recently polled the collegiate coaches in Arizona on the training and level of coaching by position in the Region and the grade is a resounding **“Needs Improvement.”**

Coaches from the Division I and II Universities as well as the NAIA schools and the Community Colleges were asked to fill out this survey and grade on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) the effectiveness of Club Coaches in training middle blockers, setters, outside hitters, liberos and opposites. In order to gain honest answers we asked that the responses and feedback be completely anonymous. The survey also asked for feedback on the grades given and an overall assessment of the Region’s coaching. Below are the results of the survey given from the highest rated position to the lowest.

### The training of outside hitters: 2.5

Comments Included:

- This is probably the best coached position. It is also the easiest to coach. This position relies more on an athletic body and less on skill or knowledge.
- Still think the level of fundamental technique is not as high as it should be. They can pass and hit, but they don’t tend to be consistently good due to a break down in fundamental technique.
- More "shot" development and decision making on bad sets. More emphasis on ball control, and not just pounding the ball at the net.
- Probably the most skilled players on average. Need more understanding of how to score against bigger blockers (getting away with just hitting hard cross court a lot). Need better understanding of how to not get "taken out" of plays in reception both tactically and technically.
- What has happened to the 6 rotation, passing & swinging outside hitter? We need to go back to teaching OH's to pass first, use good footwork to get outside the court, & see what the block gives you for hitting options.
- Range - there are lots of ways to get kills.

### The training of setters: 2.4

Comments included:

- The training is about location NOT technique or the understanding of both sides of the net. Setters do not realize they are the coach on the floor.
- Think this is the area the coaches are doing the best job at.

- Depending on philosophy, teach setters how to "square up" and the importance of getting their feet stopped before setting. I would also work more with them on emergency skills; balls out of the net, punch saves etc.
- Setting skill (hand placement, body positioning, etc.) is adequate mostly, but ball feel, understanding of the game at a high level and setters defense usually not so good.
- Good hands do not make a good setter. The majority of setting has to do with intangibles; is she a good leader, can she look at the other side of the net & base her setting decisions on what that looks like, can she instill confidence in her teammates without sugar-coating everything, etc, etc. Physically, I would look at the feet next. Is she quick enough to get to the net from a man-back defense?? If it takes her 4 days, she shouldn't be a setter. Also physically, train them to take the ball away from their body/head & have a neutral body position when setting any set. And for the love of all things living.....teach them to jump set!!!!
- There is a significant amount of technical training of setters. To the point of trying to out do each other worrying about stuff that may not matter. An extension of this is the need to understand how to exploit an opponent. While spending time worried about mechanics, are we teaching a depth chart of decision making priorities before deciding on an offensive play?

### **The training of liberos: 2.3**

Comments included:

- The training of Liberos is below average because we do not force young players to move their feet. We don't force them to understand the dynamics of passing. We just give positive feedback for a pass to the setter.
- Not sure this is training. Most good libero play is done by kids who are very aggressive by nature and simply want the ball more than others.
- Generally good skills but need better understanding of how to control the energy of the ball and create tempo, especially in counter attack. Need to stop being trained to attack the back row ball (only a few) at any level. If you need that player to score, then don't put her in the libero position.
- While our setters get an enormous amount of technical training, the libero's (who are equally important) aren't getting enough.
- Most coaches train liberos poorly. Teach them how to pass AND play defense. Also, they should be the assistant captain on the floor but most are the kid who really loves volleyball and shouldn't be there. There is no way they are getting the reps they need to be successful.

### **The training of opposites: 2.2**

Comments included:

- Herein lies one of the problems. Opposites get treated differently than left sides. They need to be trained exactly the same. Opposites must hit the left side also, but they always seem to hate it.

- Opposites need better movement training, especially in relation to the counter attack. Most just stand in transition and hit a high ball. They need to learn to work with in relationship with the setters and middles in moving to open areas to attack. Blocking generally good positioning - again need better with eyes and hands.
- Teach them how to hit from the inside out, how to dump the 2nd ball, how to set a 1st tempo ball to a middle, how to hit back row, & how to rip a topspin jumper. If their opposites are not the best athletes & they are the 3rd or 4th outside, they then need to be taught how to do the trash work that nobody else can do.

### **The training of middle blockers: 1.8**

Comments included:

- The I.Q. of the position is never addressed.
- Within the top tier of club level training, middles are getting the important training they require as a foundation for transition to the college level. At the mid to lower tiers, training can be improved.
- Everyone can attack, no one can block. They also receive zero ball control training. Few can serve at a high level.
- Teach middles the importance of transition, how to get off the net efficiently, and to be available.  
Also, middles to not understand how to track or find their middle in S/R or in transition.
- Footwork is generally good, but eye focus and hand/arm placement/finishing moves are generally poor.
- Teach them how to read what's going on the other side of the net: where is their primary hitting option, is the setter arching her back or dropping her hands to set outside, etc, etc and what should the middle do to counteract those things.  
Also teach them that they are in "charge of the net & they are the leader in blocking". The mentality of middles coming from the HS/club level is that they are there to take up space, maybe get a set here & there, and if they play really well they may get to serve and play back row.
- There isn't the depth within in the region within this position to adequately judge the level of coaching. However, few Middles are in a defined system that provides them the skills to succeed. Eye work is a learned skill that isn't being taught.

### **Overall comments from the coaches regarding Region coaching in Arizona:**

- Get back to basics. Teach skills and get positive feedback for correct processes and not outcomes. The skill level is dropping in Az.
- I would prefer to see more players trained at multiple positions as what they play in club often is not what the project at the next level. The overall level of training is very low in my opinion. The greatest area of need is court IQ.
- Never stop learning; no one person has all the answers.

- In general there is very little training in our region. There is a lot of playing but very little teaching of the proper fundamentals of each skill. Therefore, the junior players in our region are poor fundamentally!
- Skill development and foundational training seems to have been lost in the philosophy of "game like" practices. Most of the recruits we get require a lot of skill development and training as they are not consistent and make lots of unforced errors. Those errors are in part, a result of bad form, and poor skill development. All skills need to be developed regardless of position, and age.
- More, more, more training. Many players know the game and know how to compete, which is great... but most are not technically proficient enough to continue improving at the college level without major effort from college coaches. Much easier to train these things when they are younger. Many are allowed to get by on pure athleticism, which again, will fail them when they get to the next level. While this review is critical, the efforts of the coaches are sincerely appreciated. Whatever criticisms I have described are 100 times worse for HS coaching (with a few exceptions, of course). The club coaches are my only chance to get quality athletes that have any level of technical training and an understanding of the game.
- Learn how to train basic skills/technique/footwork/ and lets get away from "the game teaches the game" overloading. Yes the "game teaches the game" but if the foundations of passing the ball with a solid platform or using the opposite side of your body when hitting or keeping your eyes off the ball when blocking or playing defense aren't learned beforehand, then the product of your "game teacher" will not be very good. Once the basic skills of where to put your hands, how to move your feet, how to use the opposite sides of your body to move in any direction are learned, they need to be re-taught each year. Obviously the time spent on basics will decrease with age, but it never hurts to re-instruct an 18 year old how to shuffle 2 steps to pass a ball in balance instead of lifting their back leg to pass a ball close to their body & hope it gets to the target.
- The AZ region is doing all it can to help the coaches within the region. The access most coaches have to other coaches (college coaches) far exceeds any other region. Yet few take advantage of the opportunities. Rather than survey the quality of coaching the athletes within the region receive, survey the attitude of those coaching them as to their knowledge of coaching these positions. Set up specific clinics to address any potential deficiencies. I'd be surprised if anyone turns up. This is not an AZ Region issue of not providing support to coaches. It's the myopic nature of the coaching community within the state.

## Education Weekend Comes to Valley Dec. 3-4

The Arizona Region's biennial Education Weekend is set for December 3-4 at Arizona State University in Tempe. CAP I and II will be offered.

Cadres include John Kessel (USAV Managing Director, Region Service Programs) Bill Hamiter (Women's National Sitting Team Head Coach/ Program Director), Todd Dagenais (Head Coach at University of Central Florida) and Diana Cole (Director of Coaching Education for USAV).

Arizona Coaches are eligible for a discount provided by the Arizona Region.

To register for this event, go to <http://usavolleyball.org/events/8282>

## Arizona Sidelines On The Court - WNBA's Phoenix Mercury Coach/G.M. Corey Gaines on Practices

With practice being such an integral part of any athlete's development, the Region is looking to find out what other successful coaches from other sports do at their practices, their philosophies and their reasons for what they do.

The Region recently interviewed the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury Head Coach Corey Gaines after his practice in September before their first round playoff matchup with the Seattle Storm. Questions are in the bold font.

**First Coach, thanks for letting us observe your practice. When the team came out of their film session, before anything else, you worked on a couple of offensive sets to counter what Seattle was doing defensively. Was this intentional that you did that before anything else to start practice?**

Yes, because if it's something new that they don't know it may take some time to explain. We do it before so they don't stand around and get cold while I'm explaining it. Players hate to get warmed up then stand around for 20 minutes and then try to go hard again. So we do the bulk of explaining before we ever warm up.



**I noticed you ran a bit before the stretching part. Why don't you stretch first and then start the running in practice?**

You always want to warm up the muscles a little bit before you start stretching. The old school way was to stretch and then warm up but new testing has shown it's best to do light running first to warm up the muscles and then stretch.

**You seemed to be okay with some players, Diana Turasi mostly, helping the younger players, asking questions. Many coaches don't want ANY feedback from players during a practice. Can you comment on this?**

I'm not into the old school way where I'm the only person talking at this time.

It's a new century. It's not the 1960s anymore. Plus, Diana is one of the top players in the world. I'm sure she has some positive things to say. It would be different if comments were being destructive to what we are trying to accomplish.

**I also saw that really no drill you did lasted longer than probably 5-7 minutes. Was that by design? If so why?**

It was the end of the season, they were a bit tired and we had players hurt or sore so we didn't want to be practicing for too long. It's the old Wilt Chamberlain line. He would say, "I'm coming to the gym one time today; either the game or shoot around. You pick."

**When planning a practice, what are your thoughts with respect to fundamentals, upcoming opponent strategy, continuing to work on team development (offense and defense)?**

You can't change too many things that you have been doing because it's too much. They won't take it all in and they'll start making mistakes. It will be overload. We change a couple things but keep it to a minimum. There has to be some consistency from day to day.

**Do your practices start with the same drill(s) every time?**

Most of the time but we change it up every now and then. Players get bored so you have to mix in something new on occasion.

**Finally Coach, what criteria do you use to distinguish between a good practice and a bad practice?**

How the flow went, how the players feel. It's more of a feel rather than a set criteria. It's like when you take your wife to dinner. There is no set thing. You can tell if it was a good dinner or not. If she's not talking or has her head down or has that look on her face, you know it wasn't a good dinner. It's the same thing.

**Coach Gaines, thank you very much for your time.**

## **Heads Up - Concussion Education is Here**

With the backing of the National Football League many states have enacted a "Concussion Law" aimed at educating the schools, coaches, players and parents to what concussions really are - A BRAIN INJURY. Senate Bill 1520 was signed into law last spring by Governor Jan Brewer. In effect what this law does is require that all student athletes and youth sports associations that use school facilities inform coaches, parents and players as to the signs and

symptoms of concussion and what to do if you think you might have one.

Since the Arizona Region uses school facilities as host sites for our volleyball tournaments we now have a requirement that each parent, player and coach be educated about concussions. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has put together Fact Sheets for Coaches, Players and Parents. We are now requiring a form from each player and their parent or legal guardian that acknowledges that they have read the form and understand what a concussion is. This form (which requires signatures of both the player and parent) will be turned into club who will copy it for the coach of the team and then turn it over to the Region office to be kept on file until the players are the age of majority plus 2 years - which is 20 years of age. **The coach of the team will be checked at each tournament to make sure they have a copy of this form along with the medical release form in order for the player to participate in the tournament.**

The coaches will be educated on the signs and symptoms of concussion in their IMPACT training as well as receive a copy of the Coaches Fact Sheet for their education. Anyone participating in high school volleyball has already had to view the 20 minute NFHS concussion education clinic online.

Please print off the [Athlete Fact Sheet](#), [Parent Fact Sheet](#) and the [Acknowledgement Form](#) from the Region's website, read the Fact Sheets, sign the form and turn into your club with the other club related paperwork following tryouts. Coaches taking IMPACT will receive concussion education. All other coaches should read the [Coach Fact Sheet](#) to make sure they are educated to the signs, symptoms and what to do if your player has a concussion.

If you have any questions about this form or procedures, please contact the Region office.

## **An Amazing and FREE Coaching Resource**

The Region is asked all the time from Coaches, both beginning and experienced, if there are any quality coaching resources available that don't cost an arm and a leg.

We have what you're looking for and it's none other than the USA Volleyball website!

While self admittedly not the easiest site to navigate, print this article out and come with us on a wealth of amazing coaching information at your finger tips!

[www.usavolleyball.org](http://www.usavolleyball.org) gets us started. Pull down the menu on the grassroots button just below the header. Let's start with Best Practices. Click here and you can see what other Regions and USAV personnel are doing to grow the sport and make it easier to coach, club direct and even tournament direct. There are special programs that many of you might not even know about like

the “Leave a Ball Behind” program that you may want to get involved with.

Let’s go back up to our Grassroots button and pull down the “I’m a New Coach” tab. First, there is a ton of information on this page. Lots of articles, manuals, coaching philosophies, etc. It’s a great first stop for the parent or maybe older player looking to coach. Let’s go back up to grassroots and pull down “Free Webinars.”

Here is one of the most amazing resources you will ever see for a volleyball coach. With over a dozen 1-2 hour coaching webinars on a variety of subjects and featuring such guest speakers as Carl McGown, Terry Petit and John Kessel, you would be hard pressed not to learn something from these coaching giants. These are of course free and just require a little of your time but are a tremendous tool for both new and experienced coaches alike!

Let’s pull down “Coaches Information” now and open this page up. How about a FREE 100 page book called Mini Volleyball that gives you a wealth of ideas on training younger athletes! How about a coloring book for your younger athletes and their siblings? How about articles about drills, motor learning theory, practices, scoring, and on and on and on. There isn’t a coach in the world that couldn’t stand to read some of these offerings to better themselves. One of the most important parts of the “Coaches Information” page is the ‘Grow the Game’ blog under Articles and Handouts. John Kessel’s blog is ripe with current information, ways to look at coaching through different eyes and different lenses and other ways to get your message heard on the court. It is the #2 blog in all of the USOC and for good reason. If you aren’t getting it now, sign up TODAY!

Let’s shoot up to grassroots again and pull down publications. How about a few scientific journals specifically designed for volleyball coaches. Pull down “Posters” for a list of the free skills, nutrition and other posters USAV has to offer. Pull down “Player Information” for articles and projects you can hand out to your athletes. How about “Parent Information” to help get new parents ready for the upcoming season and seasoned parents ready for the recruiting trials ahead perhaps.

Take a few minutes and look over the USAV site and odds are there is more than just something there for you.

### **USAV to Offer Free Webinars for 2011-12 Season**

For the fourth year in a row, USA Volleyball will host and record webinars on topics to help players, coaches and parents, including our USA Team Great player series – including Tara Cross-Battle, Tom Hoff, Gabe Gardner and more with topics like – injury prevention, sitting volleyball and sports parent tips.

Click the link below for Dr. Eric Fuch’s December 19th webinar on **Volleyball Injuries and Prevention** (also limited to 1,000 attendees)

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/177606686>

Click the link below for 2008 Olympic Gold Medalist Gabe Gardner's December 21 webinar on **Perseverance** (limited to 1,000 people)

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/495069110>

## USOC Launching SafeSport Website

Given the recent attention in the media to the Penn State situation, we thought this information would be of interest to you. Available on the Region website is a document recently released by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) concerning whether, when and how to report abuse under federal and/or state law. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services has outstanding information and links to state definitions, statutes and resources at [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov). In addition, I urge you to check out <http://www.childhelp.org/>.

Just as USA Volleyball has information on Concussion in Sports on its website, we are developing a webpage which will include resources in the area of child protection. In addition, Cecile Reynaud is chairing the USA Volleyball Participant Safety Commission II. In conjunction with the efforts of the USOC, this group is working toward implementation of the recommendations included in the Special Commission on Athlete Safeguards report issued last year. This report is attached for your reference.

The USOC, under the guidance of Malia Arrington, has launched the SafeSport initiative. This is a multi-faceted program to provide information, education, and guidelines - which will launch during the first quarter of 2012.

The **SafeSport Website** will be a centralized resource for our sport community – coaches, organizations, parents and athletes. It will house the **SafeSport Toolkit** which will include sample policies and procedures, reporting procedures, trends, case studies, tips from the field and audit practices. **The SafeSport Handbook** will be a set of guidelines and sample policies built around the risk factors for maltreatment. **The SafeSport Training and Certification** is viewed as the cornerstone of the SafeSport initiative. The 90 minute training will cover approximately twenty modules on several topics including definitions and signs of athlete maltreatment, risk factors, applicant screening and background checking, travel and reporting procedures. The introductory video created with Athlete Safety Alliance (ASA) may be viewed at <http://staging.safesport.org/sample-video/sample1.htm>.

Thank you for your attention to this very important and sobering topic. Please feel free to contact Cecile or me if you have any questions or suggestions.

- Margie Mara  
Senior Director

## Region Hosting Coaching Clinic January 13

The Arizona Region will be hosting its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Coaching clinic to coincide with the Fiesta Classic on January 13<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-10:00 p.m. at the Court One Facility in Tempe.

While the line up is still being finalized, Concordia University Head Coach Dan Fisher whose club recently won \_\_\_ will present, "10 Things You Should Do More of With Your Team."

Also presenting is current South Carolina Head Coach Scott Swanson who will present, "Attention Focus Drills That Help Players Maintain Athletic Posture,"

As the rest of the field is announced it will be posted on the Region website under the Coaches Corner link.

To reserve a spot for this clinic, mail or email the Registration Form before Jan 6, 2012 to the AZ Region Office - mail to Arizona Region, 9100 S. McKemy St, Tempe, AZ 85284, or email the information to [office@azregionvolleyball.org](mailto:office@azregionvolleyball.org) The cost is \$60 per person if registered before Jan 6th. \$75 per person after Jan 6th and for walk ups.

If you have anything you would like to see in Arizona Sidelines, let us know. Contact the Region at [outreach@azregionvolleyball.org](mailto:outreach@azregionvolleyball.org).



### The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

9100 S. McKemy Street

Tempe, Arizona 85284

480-626-6740 ph 480-626-6743 fx

[www.azregionvolleyball.org](http://www.azregionvolleyball.org)