

## **GAME STRATEGIES – DEFENSE**

### **Defense**

- In general, the big key for defense is to look ahead of the ball. Use the ball, setter, ball, hitter technique in which the key is, after contact or pass, to look at the setter. If the setter is going to dump the ball, she will usually give it away. Right after the set leaves the setter's hands and you know where it is going, look at the hitter. Watch the hitter's approach and shoulders and how tight or far back the ball is from the net. This is very important for a read defense.

### **Blockers**

- You should own the net and patrol it like guard dogs.
- You should watch where the set goes (not further than the peak) and not drawn into going with the hitter unless the ball goes there. You should concentrate on where the setter sets the ball.
- Tight over-sets that are right on top of the net should be blocked away from your opponents who are usually gathered close to where the ball came over the net.
- You should watch the hitter's approach, shoulders, and arm swing.
- If there are any tight set you should expect a tip but play for a spike.
- You must be aware of where the opponent's setter is and what offense she is running (5-1, 6-2, 4-2, etc.). When the setter is in the front row, you can concentrate on blocking two hitters, but realize the setter can attack. Many times the setter has the best attack percentage because the defense is not expecting the attack. When the setter is coming from the back row, you need not worry about her attacking and can concentrate on the hitters (DO NOT JUMP WHEN THE SETTER JUMP SETS!!). Many times a blocker will jump with the setter and be late getting to the set outside because of it. Paying attention to where the setter is coming from can eliminate that.
- Middle blockers should keep hands high for quicks.
- Outside blockers should turn their hands in to position 6 with your outside foot perpendicular to the centerline.
- You should seldom block hits off the net. The timing will be off and the blocker will hinder the vision of the back row from digging. Hitters are more apt to use blockers to deflect hits. Only the middle blocker should ever go up with a hit off the net. They can get the soft balls that dribble over or even a direct hit.
- Do NOT automatically block everything. Be there to read the approach and where the set goes.
- If the set is beyond the antennae the only hit the attacker can make is a sharp angle. The blockers and the defense should pull over to cover angle and leave the downline open.
- You should know the opposing hitter's tendencies. If some only hit angle, give the line (move in and block angle) and vice versa.



### Back-Row Defense

- The back-row defense must go, go ,go. You'll never know unless you go!
- You should dig balls to the 10 foot line. If you're going to err, it is better to err away from the net than over it.
- On quick returns, dig higher to allow time for the setter to get to the ball and the hitters to transition. If it is a free ball, which is already slow and everyone has time to transition, it should be passed quick to speed up the attack.
- You should watch the ball the whole time it is on your team's side, even during transition from the defense to offense or to hitter coverage.
- You should go home to defensive spots quickly as soon as the ball goes over the net, but keep an eye on the ball.
- As soon as the ball is released from the opposing setter's hands you should get to your defensive spot quickly, with arms out, and stop before the player hits it so you can move in the direction of the hit. If you are moving, say, back when the attacker tips the ball, it is extremely hard to shift momentum and go forward. If you can stop and read a tip, you can be on the move to get to the spot though.
- You must read the hitter coming in, the speed of the approach, the height of the jump, the speed of the swing and the angle of the shoulders. A lot depends on the set – tight = move in, off the net = move back. You must know the attacker's hitting tendencies.
- Communication is imperative on defense because of the need to call for the ball quickly. There are six people playing intensely in a small space. If people don't talk, there will be a lot of dropped balls or interference. The sooner you call the ball, the quicker the decision will be made so other players can back off and let you take the ball. If the ball goes between two players, they need to scissor (one goes short and one goes deep) or both go.
- Players closest to the side and endlines should call the ball in or out. The player going for the ball often has lost court sense and can't tell if it is in or out so it is crucial that a teammate help out.