PRESEASON GUIDE

VOLLEYBALL 2014

DALE GARVEY

Line judge Tom Ulibarri, Whittier, Calif., signals an out-of-bounds violation. Under a new NFHS rule, line judges can stand in an optional position, if directed by the first referee for serves in the left-third of the service area. See pg. 3 for more.

RULE CHANGE

Added Duties for R2, LJ

Three of the four rule changes that the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee approved for the 2014 season are mechanics-related for referees and line judges, and one allows schools a space on the solid-colored jersey for its school name or mascot reference. The recommended rules changes have been approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The committee also made editorial changes with informal signals and identified three points of emphasis in its *2014-15 NFHS Volleyball Rules Book.*

The rules committee clarified the responsibility of the second referee to whistle and signal out of bounds for an antenna fault on his or her side of the net (Rule 5-5-3b). In the past, the only assistance a second referee could provide help for an antenna fault was through an informal signal.

"This change provides clarification that if the ball is going out of bounds over the antenna on the side of the second referee, he or she is in a better position to look up and make that call than the first referee," said Becky Oakes, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the volleyball rules committee.

The majority of coaches, officials and state association members who responded to a 2013 NFHS questionnaire asking if the second referee should be allowed to signal a ball out of bounds for an antenna fault were in favor of the change. If the first referee is blocked from the play, the second referee can whistle and out-of-bounds/antenna fault signal.

Play 1: The second referee whistles and signals out. The first referee signals the result of the play (point) and then makes a signal for the fault when the third hit by Team B (a) passes outside the antenna on the second referee's side of the net; or (b) the ball contacts the net outside the antenna on the second referee's side. **Ruling 1:** Correct procedure in (a) and (b). Second referees are allowed to whistle and signal with these difficult calls.

Play 2: During play, A3 hits the ball outside the antenna on the first referee's side of the net. The second referee whistles and signals out. **Ruling 2:** Incorrect procedure. The second referee only has responsibility to whistle and signal out of bounds for an antenna fault on his or her side of the net. The first referee and line judge should observe and signal the out of bounds. □

POINT OF EMPHASIS

Hand Signals for Player Numbers

It is important for the referees to discuss the ways in which they will communicate with each other through informal, non-verbal signals. One very important area to discuss in the referees' prematch conference is the signaling of players' numbers.

SEE "SIGNALS" P. 2

Signals CONT. FROM P. 1

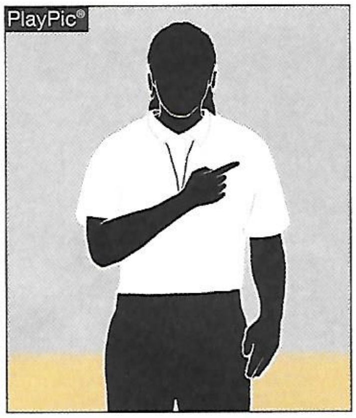
• **Set/match point.** Place the index finger flat against the shoulder closest to the team that has set point.

• **Four hits.** Discreetly give four-hit signal in front of the chest.

• **Identifying possible back-row player fault.** Discreetly show back-row attacker signal or back-row blocker signal in middle of chest.

• **Position of setter prior to serve.** Second referee uses discreet signal with his or her hand on each leg, midsection or chest to identify position (front row or back row) of each team's setter. Use of and type of signal may be decided in prematch discussion between the referees. Examples include: two fingers (back-row setter); one finger (front-row setter); little finger (back-row setter); thumb (front-row setter). Those are not used on every rally, only when needed for improved communication.

When a player is in the net, the referees will communicate the number of the player at fault. Clear signaling also communicates the player at fault to the coaches, players and fans. Many times in high school volleyball the officials may have never or infrequently worked with one another, so consistency in the use of the hand signals for communication is very important. Thus, the standard signals and procedures should be reviewed each year and followed by referees. □



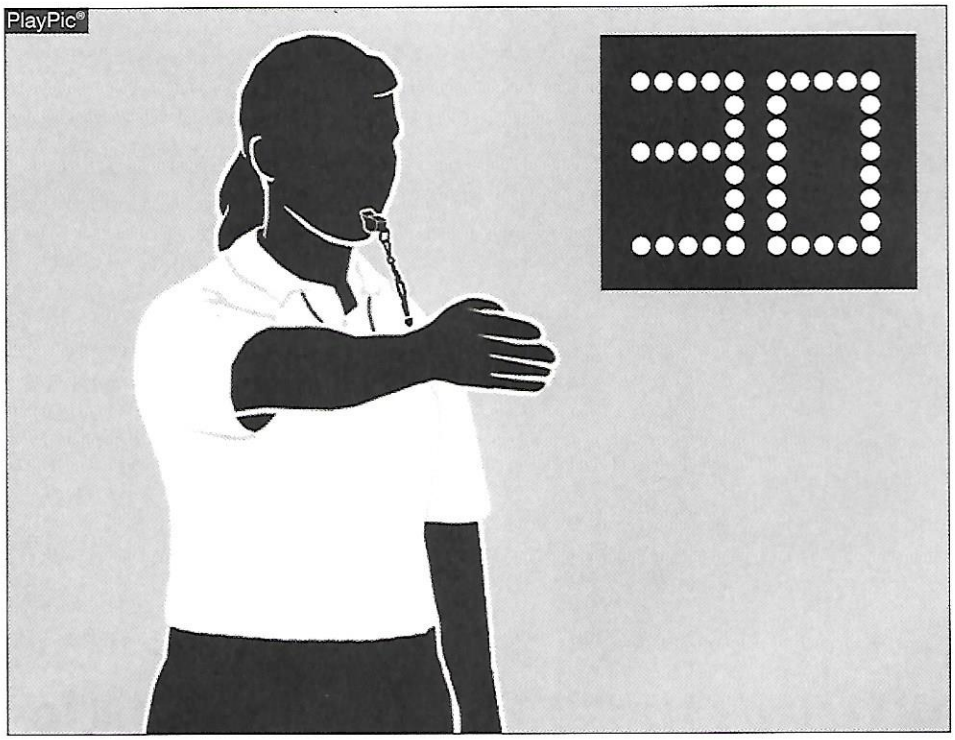
RULE CHANGE

Shortened Time-outs

The NFHS volleyball rules committee approved the second referee ends a time-out with a whistle only if the audio signal has not sounded and both teams are ready to play prior to the end of the 60-second timeout (Rule 5-5-3b-12).

The change addresses proper mechanics for ending a time-out and use of the whistle by the second referee.

The majority of respondents to the 2013 NFHS questionnaire were in favor of the change. □



The second referee whistles to end a time-out only if both teams are ready to play prior to 60 seconds expiring and no audio signal has sounded.

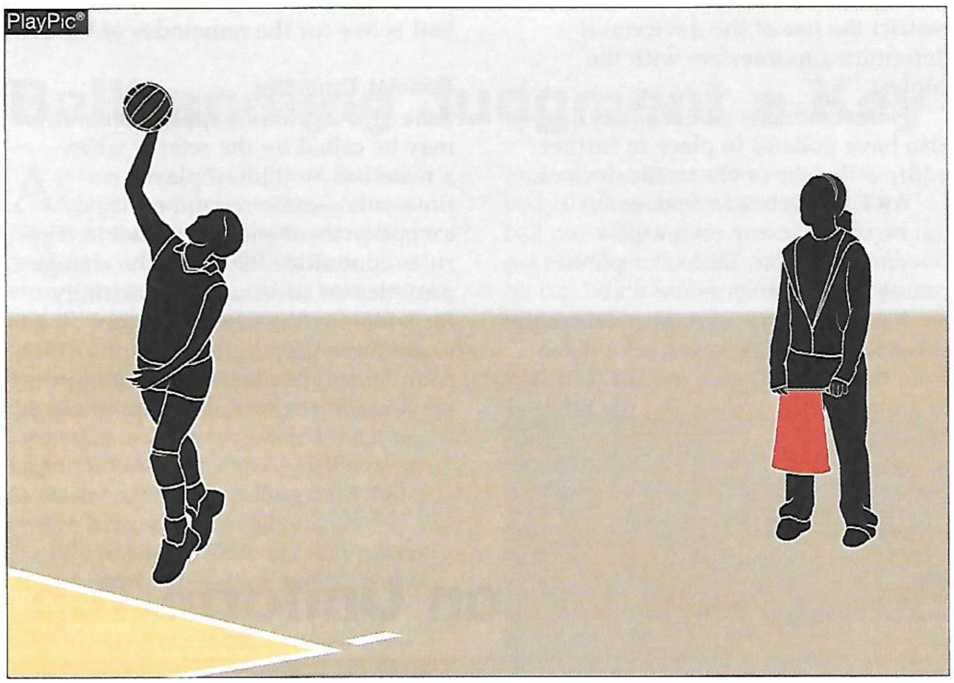
RULE CHANGE

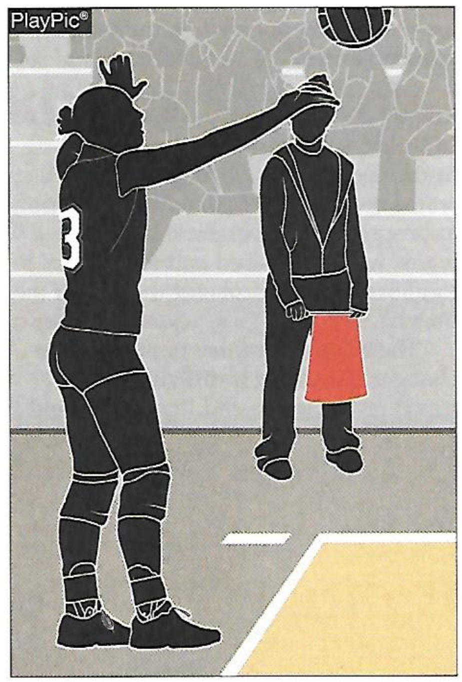
Line Judge Can Move to Optional Position

If the server is within the left third of the service area, the line judge on the serving team's side shall move directly back and in line with the extension of the sideline or, if directed by the first referee, to the side and in line with the extension of the end line until the ball is contacted for serve (Rule 5-9-2a Note). Then the line judge quickly moves back into position at the intersection of the end line and left sideline.

The default position on the sideline extended may not allow the line judge to provide assistance on foot faults, but does keep the line judge in a good position to assist with in/out decisions on the sideline, even on a very hard serve. □

If directed by the first referee, the line judge can move behind the server (a) or to the side of server and in line with end line extension (b).





Review of 2013's Rules Changes

The NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee approved a change to Rule 5-2-1 that provides the fault-calling first referee to indicate the result of a play-point or replay – followed by the nature of the fault.

The change allows the scorer to immediately record the score and prepare for other responsibilities such as substitutions and recording time-outs. The committee said play is more consistent since there is no delay in knowing which team will have the next serve. Changing the signal sequence allows the scorer to perform his/her duties of recording the score, then moving on to substitutions, in a much more timely fashion.

Signaling is essential in communicating decisions to players, coaches and spectators. Precisely executed, established signals indicate that the referee is competent and in complete control of the match.

New Protocol for R2

Rule 5-4-4d clarifies the protocol and whistle sequence for the second referee (R2) to follow when conducting the coin toss for the deciding set, and Rule 5-4-4e states that the second referee shall initial the scoresheet for the final verification of match results.

Prior to a deciding set, the first referee whistles, signals the end of the set and directs the teams to their benches. The second referee double whistles and raises a coin in the air to signal the captains to go near the officials' table for the deciding set coin toss with the home team calling the toss.

Upon completion of the deciding set coin toss, the second referee communicates the results of the toss to the first referee by extending an outstretched arm on the side of the team to serve first and giving the appropriate signal indicating if teams will remain on their own sides or change courts.

The first referee whistles and gives

SEE "2013 RULES" P. 4

2013 Rules CONT. FROM P. 3

the appropriate signal indicating whether the teams will remain on their current sides or will change courts.

The match becomes official when the scoresheet is initialed by the R2. The NFHS rules committee believes it is more efficient for the second referee, when verifying the set score, to also verify the match results at the same time. It is not necessary to have the second referee wait for the first referee to verify match results, which are technically done when the second referee verifies the score for the final set.

End-of-Set, End-of-Match

In Rule 5-4-4b, instead of reporting to the end lines at the end of a set, teams now will be directed to their appropriate team benches. In 5-4-4e, teams will be released and follow any local or state protocols for the end of the match.

The rules committee in making the changes felt that it is difficult to have teams report to the end lines at the end of the set and unnecessarily creates management issues, thus it is no longer required.

Electronic Devices

With the adoption of Rules 9-2-1 and 11-3-2, many new electronic tools will be available and legal for the high school coach.

ART 1: A team may use electronic devices during the match:

The location and use of the device(s) shall not be in a restricted area as determined by host management. The first referee may restrict the use of the device(s) if determined to interfere with the contest.

Note: State associations may also have policies in place to further address the use of electronic devices.

ART 2: Electronic devices shall not be used for any review of a referee's decision. Tablets or phones can be on the bench to use stat-tracking programs, virtual courts with simulated plays and even take video from the bench to give instant feedback to a player, perhaps during the interval between sets.

Tucked Towel

Rule 4-1-4 indicates it is no longer an automatic violation for a towel to be tucked in a player's uniform waistband. The NFHS Rules Committee believes that there are many safety concerns and a towel, when tucked into the uniform, is not one of them.

Still, all decisions must be judged by the individual referee on site. If the towel continuously falls onto the playing surface, the referee can prohibit the use of the towel while the ball is live for the remainder of the set.

Special Time-Out

Rule 11-4-2 grants a special time-out may be called by the referee when a team has an injured player, no time-outs remaining and no legal/exceptional substitutes available. The rules committee feels that the change provides an additional opportunity for a team with only six players to continue playing with a full complement of players, providing the player is fit for further competition. □

RULE CHANGE

School, Mascot Reference OK on Uniform Top

With a mind toward school spirit, the committee approved the addition of a school or mascot reference to be placed on the sleeve(s) of solid-colored jerseys, as in PlayPic, providing it appears in either 4-by-4 inch or 3-by-5 inch space (Rule 4-2-2 Note new e). The solid-colored jersey, as specified in the Note of the rule, is required in 2016, but is currently permitted.

"Schools are wanting to put a mascot or (the high school's abbreviation) on the sleeves of the solid-colored jerseys," said Becky Oakes, director of sports and liaison to the Volleyball Rules Committee. "The committee thought, 'How do we allow them to promote school spirit and team unity, but yet preserve the integrity of the solid color and not make a change that becomes more restrictive?' Now, (it is allowable) to have a 4x4 or 3x5 (logo) on the sleeve." □

Solid-Colored Uniform Top

2014-15 Major Editorial Changes

The NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee made the following editorial changes for the 2014-15 season:

5-2-1b: When a fault is whistled by the second referee, the first referee will indicate only the result of play followed by the player at fault, if necessary. The committee feels it is not necessary for the first referee to duplicate the second referee's indication of the nature of the fault.

9-2-3c: When directed by the first referee after the coin toss for a deciding set, the teams shall remain at their respective team benches or shall change courts immediately, as signaled by the first referee. The addition specifically outlines the procedure to follow after the deciding set coin toss for teams to assume appropriate court assignments.

10-2-5a: The language has been clarified from, "substitutes from the same team must report" to "substitutes from the same team must be reported at the same time." Previously, it could be interpreted that the substitutes themselves must report, but the first sentence indicates that someone else reports the substitution. The substitutes do not inform the referees during the time-out. □

Ballhandling Judgment a Key Skill to Master

A primary responsibility of the first referee is to determine whether a player makes legal contact each time he or she plays the ball. The referee must ensure the ball has not been held, caught and thrown, had prolonged contact or "over-controlled." That means referees are making hundreds of judgment decisions in a single match. Ballhandling judgment is often considered the most important skill for a volleyball referee to master, similar to calling balls and strikes in baseball or softball.

Who decides? Only the first referee can whistle ballhandling faults. When the second referee believes the first referee may have been screened from seeing a contact, he or she may indicate that opinion to the first referee using a discreet, informal signal; however, the second referee cannot whistle to stop play and make that call that rests with the first referee.

The spin of the ball is not considered when determining the legality of the contact, nor should the referee consider the player's body position, the technique used, or the sound of the contact.

To determine the legality of each contact, the first referee should lead the ball with his or her eyes, rather than follow the ball in the air. The referee should focus on the actual contact of the ball on the body part, then pick up the next play/player with his or her eyes.

When is a ball considered having prolonged contact, "held" or caught/thrown? NFHS Rule 9-4-5 states, "Legal contact is a touch of the ball by any part of a player's body which does not allow the ball to visibly come to rest or involve prolonged contact with a player's body." A held or "caught and thrown" ball normally occurs when the player over-controls the ball. Any first team hit can be a multiple or double contact, but a double contact on a team's second or third team hit is illegal. A caught/thrown or held ball is always illegal, whether it's a block or the first, second or third team hit.

There are numerous playing actions

SEE "BALLHANDLING" P. 6

Ballhandling

CONT. FROM P. 5

that may result in prolonged contact with the ball or the ball being caught/thrown or held:

Forearm pass. That is a common technique where players hold their arms together, forearms facing upward, to form a platform to pass the ball. It is often used during serve reception and when making other first team contacts. The ball is played legally when it rebounds quickly from the platform. When the player isn't able to control the ball with a forearm pass, the ball may contact the player multiple times (i.e., rebounding from forearms then to the shoulder), or may roll up the player's arms. In most situations, that play should not be considered a held ball if it occurs on the first contact where multiple contacts with the ball are allowed. However, it is a fault on a second or third contact where multiple contacts are illegal.

A ball can be overcontrolled by a player using a forearm pass. When the player catches or stops the ball between his or her arms, a held ball has likely occurred.

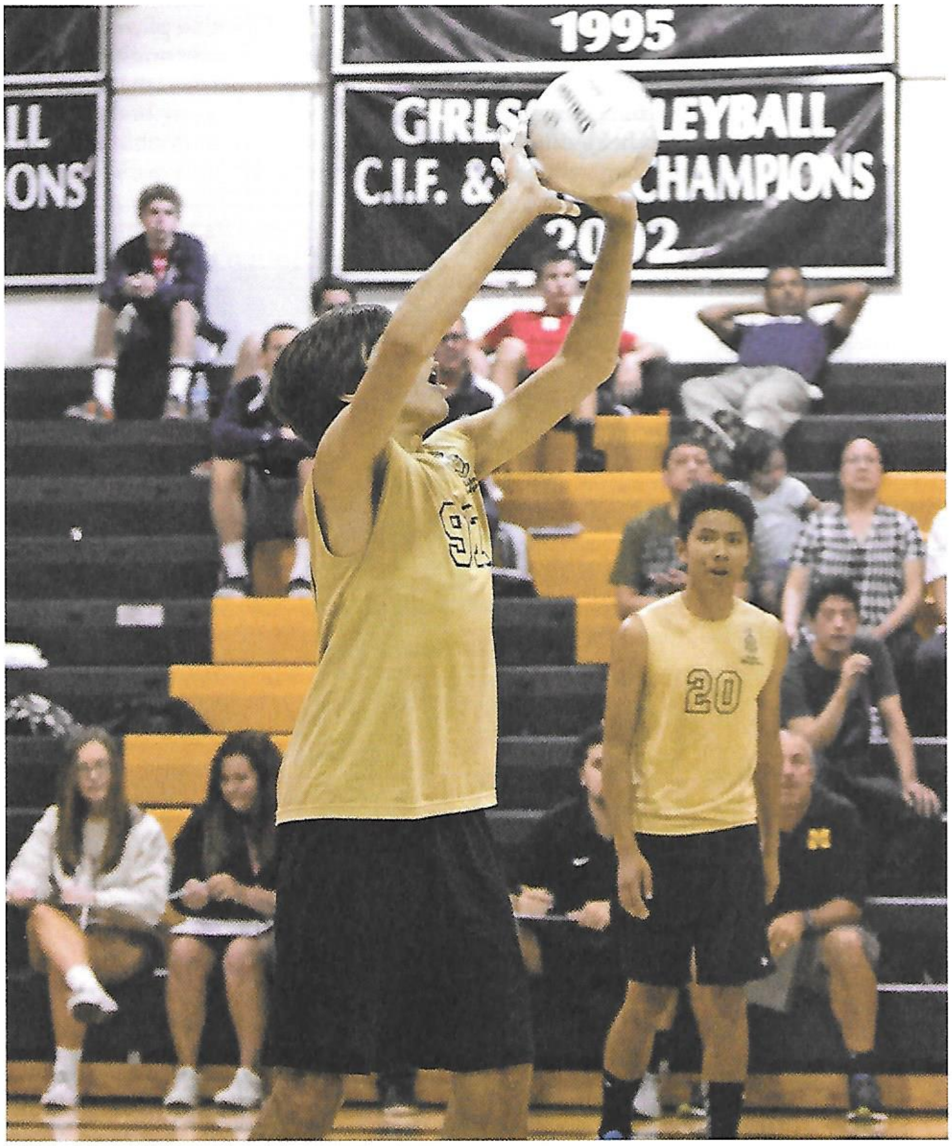
Setting action. A held ball may result when the ball is played using "setting action" (an overhand finger pass), and the player catches or holds the ball before releasing it. For example, when the setter's intended hitter is late getting into position for the attack, the setter may be slow in releasing the ball, and a catch/throw or held ball may result.

Attacking the ball. A held ball can occur if the player catches and throws the ball when attacking or "tipping" the ball across the net. It is legal for a player to use his or her fingertips to attack the ball, but the ball must be played without being caught, thrown or held.

Ball falling near the floor. A held ball could result when a player is trying to play a ball that is very close to the floor by getting underneath the ball to prevent it from hitting the playing surface. A player may use a single, open hand in an attempt to keep the ball in play, and may catch the ball to prevent it from touching the floor. A ball is generally not caught/thrown or held if a player makes contact underneath the ball with an open hand provided the ball rebounds off the open hand.

Ball played out of the net. That is a play that often results in referees automatically making a call when the ball was actually played legally. As long as the ball rebounds off the player, the referee should allow play to continue and not make a call based on the player's body position or technique. A ball falling down the front of the net often rebounds slowly from a player's arm(s) or hand(s) because it isn't carrying much momentum. A slow rebound shouldn't be confused with an illegal catch/throw.

Determining ballhandling legality is a skill all referees must learn. Regardless of a referee's experience, it is an area that everyone can improve upon with practice. Strive for consistency, stay current with playing trends and techniques, and seek feedback from partners and fellow referees to help identify areas you can improve. □



BOB MESSINA

A caught/thrown or held ball is always illegal, whether it's a block or the first, second or third team hit.

QUICK TIP

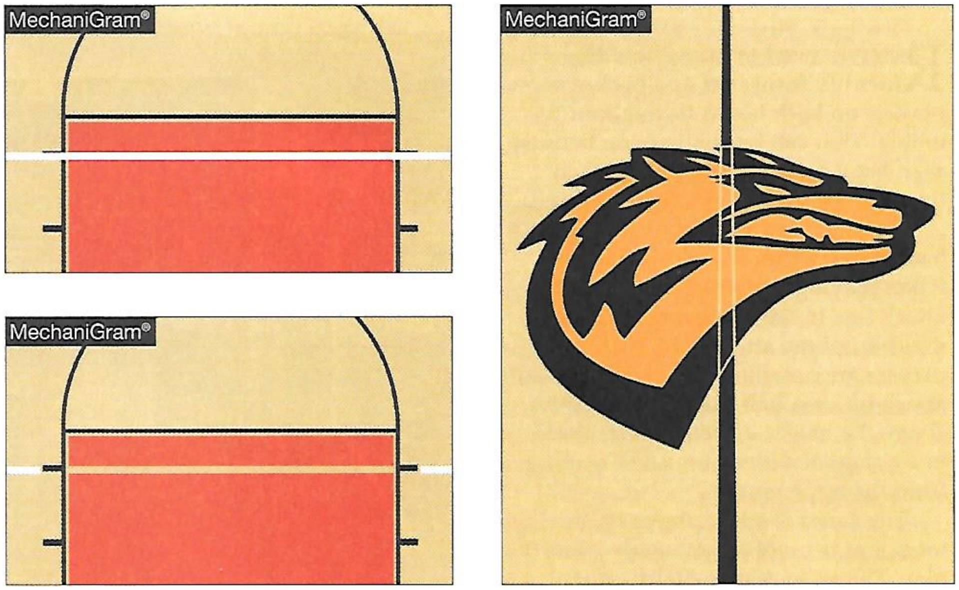
Young referees often get overlooked because others perceive they lack experience or composure. Continuous contact with the younger official is key. **Offer a smile or a few words of encouragement, especially after a tough call or an errant decision.** If you can create confidence in a young official, that official will do a better job.

POINT OF EMPHASIS

Marking of Court Boundary Lines

Rule 2-1-2 recommends that all boundary lines be of one clearly visible color contrasting to the color of the floor and other lines on the floor. Except as provided for by rule for the center line, schools are expected to meet this standard for volleyball court boundary line markings.

For fair competition for both teams, it is extremely important that the lines be one clearly visible color. The only time the color should differ is if going across a painted area such as the lane in basketball, where the original color would not be in contrast. With players generally looking up to play the ball, it is important that the lines are clearly visible to allow a player to determine his or her position on the court and whether the ball might be in bounds or out of bounds. Schools that try to circumvent that standard are negatively impacting the game. □



It is OK for the color to differ if a boundary line is going across a painted area, such as the lane in basketball. The boundary lines of the court are strongly recommended to be one clearly visible color contrasting to the color of the floor. The center line may also be shadow-bordered.

POINT OF EMPHASIS

Second Referee to First Referee Informal Signals

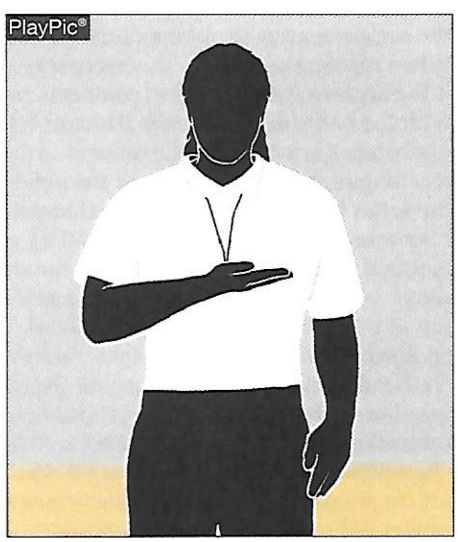
There may be occasions when, due to the location of the play and angle of the players, there is play that is the responsibility of the first referee but is clearly out of the view of the first referee. In such a situation, the second referee shall assist the first referee by determining if a fault occurred and using a visual, informal signal.

During the referees' prematch conference, the use of those signals that will be conveyed should be discussed. When the first referee is blocked from viewing a play, it is important that the first referee make good eye contact with the second referee and know how they will communicate in advance. The second referee should hold the informal signal long enough for the first referee to see, if needed. That's why centering is important between both referees.

Both referees must pay attention to one another when situations arise where the assistance of the second referee is quickly needed to get the call right.

The following signals are used when needed for improved communication.

Illegal hit. The second referee assists the first referee in calling illegal hits by use of discreet signals in front of the chest. The second referee shall assist with ball-handling violations, which are out of the first referee's view as shown in PlayPic. The second referee does not whistle, but will use the discreet signal to the first referee. If the first referee passes on the signal, the second referee drops the signal.



Ready to play. The second referee indicates to the first referee readiness to resume play with an extended arm and open hand (outside arm/hand preferred) while positioned on the receiving team's side, facing the first referee while making eye contact.

Net fault player identification. The second referee signals to the first referee with right hand as the base hand. Numbers 0-9: right or right/left combination; number 10: right hand closed fist; numbers 11-19: right fist then digits successively; numbers 20 or more: first digit with right hand and second digit with right or both hands, if necessary. Both second referee, then first referee signal offender's number. □

Key On One or Two Players When Following Setter

Referees need to know how to identify front-row and back-row players on both teams throughout the match. That can be challenging because each team rotates one position each time the team gains the right to serve.

Rules place limitations on what back-row players are allowed to do when playing the ball in front of the attack line in the front zone. When in the front of the attack line, back-row players are not allowed to complete an attack hit on a ball that is completely above the height of net or participate in a completed block on a ball coming from the opponent.

The setter is a key player on the team and is involved in nearly every play. The main responsibility of the setter is to set the second ball to the hitter, which means the setter will often be playing the ball in the front zone and often very close to the net. Since the setter may be either a back-row or front-row player, it is critical the referees know the setter's location for each team before each rally begins.

Knowing where the setter is on the floor will help referees determine any illegal blocks or attacks by that player. Debbie Drake, Simi Valley, Calif.

BOB MESSINA

Illegal attacks. When a back-row setter plays a ball that is completely above the height of the net while on or in front of the attack line (in the front zone), a teammate must play the ball before it completely crosses the net or is legally touched by the opponent. As an example of that situation, when a back-row setter, on or in front of the attack line, sets a ball above the height of the net, and the ball enters into the plane of the net. If the ball is then legally touched by an opponent before it is played by the setter's teammate, an illegal attack fault has been committed by the back-row setter. Another example includes the back-row setter, on or in front of the attack line, who tips, dumps or hits the ball across the net to the opponent while the ball is completely above the height of the net. All of these situations result in an illegal attack.

Illegal blocks. A back-row player is also not allowed to complete a block or participate in a completed block. A common situation where a back-row setter could be at risk of committing an illegal block is when the ball is over-passed by a teammate. In that situation, the ball is passed very close to the top of the net and enters the plane of the net. When attempting to save the overpass, if the back-row setter makes contact with the ball simultaneously with an opposing blocker while she or he is reaching higher than the top of the net, the setter has committed an illegal block. Likewise, if the opponent contacts the ball first, and the ball then touches the setter, who is reaching higher than the top of the net, the setter has committed an illegal block.

How do the referees determine the location of the setter? Referees should understand common offenses and alignments used by teams. Most teams utilize an offense with either one or two setters. When a team uses one setter, the setter sets the ball from all positions in the rotation. At the beginning of each rally, the referees need to be able to quickly identify the setter, and then determine from the player alignment on the court whether the setter is in the front or back row.

When a team uses two setters, most of the time the starting position of the primary setter is in the back row. Teams may have both setters on the court at the same time. Teams may also substitute one or both setters out of the set when the setter's position rotates from the back row to the front row. When a team uses two setters, referees need to know which player is the current setter. Often in a two-setter offense (called a 6-2), one or both of the setters either become hitters when they rotate into the front row, or one or both of the setters are substituted out of the set when their ▶

positions rotate to the front row. It is important that the referees become familiar with those substitution patterns and rotation strategies in order to quickly identify the setter positions.

How does the referee track the setter? Watch warmups and observe the players who are setting. As first referee, when you review the lineup before going on the stand at the beginning of the match, note the starting position for each setter, then track each setter's position before each rally. Learn common alignments so you know the starting position of the setter each time a team rotates. The second referee might also assist the first referee by providing information about the location of the setter when requested to do so.

Know each team's setter(s) and his/her position(s) at the beginning of the match and before each rally. That will put you in the best position to track the setters throughout the match. □

Did You Hear What I Didn't Say?

As most volleyball officials would agree, non-verbal communication encompasses approximately 80-90 percent of our communication with coaches, players, partners and fans. There are so many facets to officiating and the use of the verbal language plays a minor role in communicating our myriad decisions.

Non-verbal communication is the transmitting of information relevant to the sport without using spoken words. Our professional character is closely scrutinized from the time we appear at the assignment site until we depart, and our decisions and how we relay them during the course of the match are frequently judged on our non-verbal communication skills.

Consider our methods of communication prematch, during the match and post-match. As officials, we are not infallible, but we are often expected to call the perfect match even when the play is not perfect. Officials must project the image of a well-trained, confident and reticent professional. Referees must become masters of the unspoken signals in the rules book.

When we arrive at a site, our appearance is critical to our presentation. It is imperative that we arrive dressed professionally, neatly and conservatively. It is also important that when we enter the court in uniform, we look the part of a professional with the slacks and shirt clean and pressed, hair worn in a non-distracting manner, limited makeup for women, facial hair neatly trimmed for men and limited jewelry. Officials should also limit strong fragrances found in perfume, cologne, aftershave or lotions.

Posture is vital in transmitting confidence and knowledge. Making eye contact with those directly involved with the match shows respect. When we do communicate verbally with coaches or players, we should always strive to face them, look them in the eye and speak with a quiet authority and transmit a self-assurance that we are knowledgeable and comfortable in our roles.

Paying attention to detail is important during our assignments. Our interaction with our working partners and support crew of officials such as line judges, scorer, libero tracker and timer, as well as media and host management personnel is closely scrutinized by others.

Referees should present a cohesive front while executing their duties. Whistle tone needs to be crisp, sharp and loud. A weak, late or barely audible whistle tone indicates a lack of decisiveness or knowledge. Additionally, we do not want to blow the whistle so quickly that we must award multiple replays.

Our focus must remain sharp, especially during warmups and non-action times such as time-outs and between sets. We must anticipate substitutions, replacements and time-out requests from coaches. At times, we are expected to "read the minds" of coaches and players, and how we present ourselves can assist us in alleviating unforeseen problems. Staying engaged in the match is vital to being perceived as qualified.

Always support your working partner, even if there are items that need to be discussed post-match. When working with less-experienced officials, our body language often communicates our support or disdain for the assigned working partner. There is nothing wrong with an occasional quick thumbs up or smile.

We must be approachable as officials without being manipulated or allowing coaches or players to cause distractions or delays. We must enforce all of the rules fairly and consistently, including those concerning conduct.

Proximity can also be an issue when discussing items with those associated with the match. Where we stand, how we stand and what we do with our arms transmit a welcoming or a "do not approach" signal, like standing with arms folded across the chest. Failure to make eye contact can indicate being less than truthful or a lack of interest in the conversation.

Use of a "stop sign" hand up to ward off problems can be offensive to coaches and players, and the same goes with pointing fingers at players or coaches. Thus, the use of an open hand or indicating a player's numbers to communicate a fault is a better method.

Communication with coaches, players, your partner and support officials is a big part of every match. How we are perceived as officials is definitely judged, more often than not, by not only what we say, but how we officiate and communicate non-verbally. □

QUICK TIP

Get fit and stay fit. Put some extra time into staying in shape. Players will recognize and appreciate your fitness as an "athlete." They will appreciate the fact that you are working as hard as they do. Your presence near play might prevent a few fouls and you will be able to offer a few words of private conversation to curb borderline behavior.

Netting the Action

A ball in or near the plane of the net often results in a fast, bang-bang play with players from both teams touching the ball during the action. The referees must be ready for that, as it requires sharp focus, quick reactions and split-second decisions. Anytime the ball is passed tight to the net or into the vertical plane of the net, it should be a cue for the referees to pay special attention to the ensuing action. In the photo, high school referee K. Wendell Adams, Sammamish, Wash., has to determine if the ball has broken the vertical plane of the net, as well as who touched it first/last. Are back-row players from either team involved? Has a blocker reached beyond the net and touched the ball while an opponent is trying to play it?

Scenario. The ball has been passed toward the vertical plane of the net by the team wearing dark green jerseys. The blocker on the left (red jersey) is touching it. Adams' focus is where it should be — centered, straight down the net. From that position, he can make crucial decisions.

Has the ball entered the plane of the net? If it has, it can be legally blocked.

If the ball hasn't reached the plane of the net, the first referee must quickly make other decisions: Has the attacking team (dark green jerseys) completed its allowable three hits? If so, the block is legal, and play continues. Is that an attack hit directed toward the opponent (red team)? If so, the block is legal, and play continues.

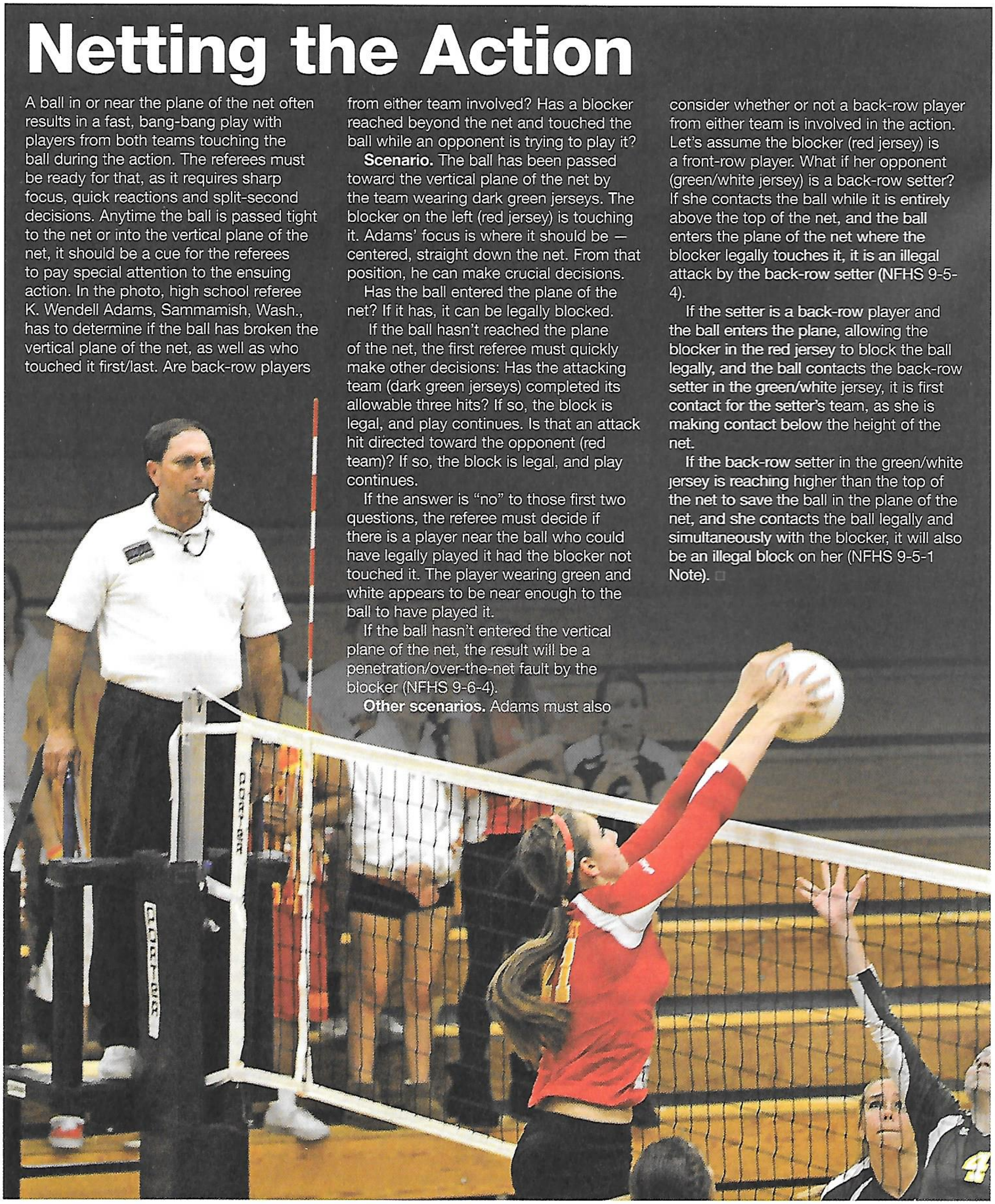
If the answer is "no" to those first two questions, the referee must decide if there is a player near the ball who could have legally played it had the blocker not touched it. The player wearing green and white appears to be near enough to the ball to have played it.

If the ball hasn't entered the vertical plane of the net, the result will be a penetration/over-the-net fault by the blocker (NFHS 9-6-4).

Other scenarios. Adams must also consider whether or not a back-row player from either team is involved in the action. Let's assume the blocker (red jersey) is a front-row player. What if her opponent (green/white jersey) is a back-row setter? If she contacts the ball while it is entirely above the top of the net, and the ball enters the plane of the net where the blocker legally touches it, it is an illegal attack by the back-row setter (NFHS 9-5-4).

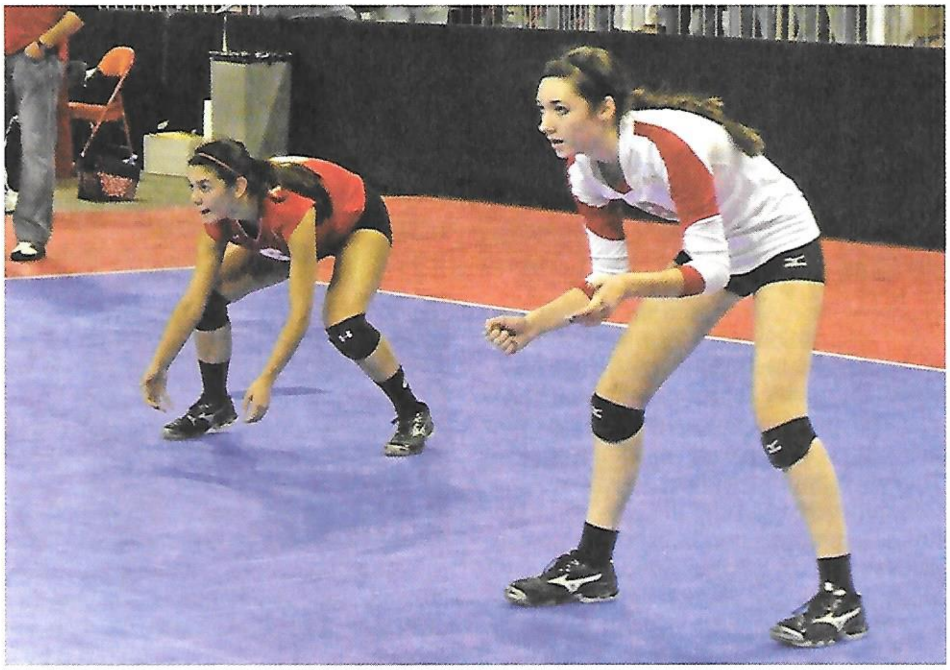
If the setter is a back-row player and the ball enters the plane, allowing the blocker in the red jersey to block the ball legally, and the ball contacts the back-row setter in the green/white jersey, it is first contact for the setter's team, as she is making contact below the height of the net.

If the back-row setter in the green/white jersey is reaching higher than the top of the net to save the ball in the plane of the net, and she contacts the ball legally and simultaneously with the blocker, it will also be an illegal block on her (NFHS 9-5-1 Note). □



DALE GARVEY

Libero Dos and Don'ts



A team's libero (left) is often a ball-control specialist and key player to initiate a team's attack by receiving serve or digging an opponent's attack.

A libero in indoor volleyball is a back-row defensive specialist. Since the libero only plays back row, those players are often shorter than the front-row blockers and hitters but have impeccable ball-control skills. The libero was created to promote ball-control. When the libero is on the floor, he or she is involved in every serve-receive pattern and is among the primary passers. Liberos are usually quick, agile defenders. When the libero enters the court, he or she replaces a back-row teammate. The term "replacement" is used rather than "substitute" because their exchange does not reflect in a team's substitution count.

The world first saw the libero in the 1998 FIVB World Championships, and use of that player has now been incorporated into USAV, NCAA and NFHS rules. The three governing bodies have similar, but not identical libero rules.

The use of a libero increases the length of rallies because he or she is an outstanding passer, which provides the setter a greater number of accurate, successful passes to run the offense. The libero is not allowed to complete an attack-hit from anywhere on the court or free zone (on or in front of attack line) if the ball is completely above the top of the net at the moment of contact. The libero may not block or attempt to block.

In one rotation in the service order, the libero may replace the player in the serving position to serve. The coach must indicate the libero player's number on the lineup sheet. If no libero is listed on the starting lineup, no libero may be used in that set. The coach may change the libero in subsequent sets. The libero may be designated as the floor captain.

In order to be immediately recognizable on the court, the libero wears a different jersey from the rest of the team. The libero's jersey must be contrasting in color with the other team members' jerseys and must have a visible legal number on the front and back.

Libero replacements occur across the sideline between the imaginary extensions of the attack line and end line ("libero replacement zone"). They are authorized at the start of each set by the second referee after he or she has checked each team's lineup. Additional replacements must occur when the ball is out of play and before service authorization. Libero replacements are unlimited and do not count as substitutions. There must be at least one rally between replacements involving the libero, except when the libero on the court will be the next server. In that case, the libero on the court may move directly to the service position without exiting the court for a rally. The original server and the player who was replaced by the libero will exchange in the libero replacement zone in that case.

The only player who can replace the libero is the one whom the libero replaced. Once there has been a replacement, a substitution may take place immediately before the next service beckon. Replacements may not occur during time-outs, but may occur after a time-out has ended.

The libero tracker/assistant scorer records libero replacements and substitutions. The scorer records the libero number on the scoresheet; draws a triangle around the Roman numeral indicating the position in the service order where the libero serves; triangles the point or loss of rally in the individual scoring section; and triangles the corresponding point in the running score if the libero's service results in a point.

When the libero, who is on or in front of the attack line (in the "front zone"), uses overhand finger action to set the ball, a teammate may not complete an attack hit on that ball if the ball is entirely higher than the top of the net. The fault is signaled as an illegal attack, followed by indicating the libero (point toward the libero with an open hand).

If the libero is injured and cannot continue play, a new libero may be redesignated by the coach at any time. Any substitute may be redesignated as the new libero and the former libero may not play in the remainder of the set. In subsequent sets, if a new libero is listed on the lineup, the former libero may change jerseys and play as a regular player. The roster must include the same uniform number for the player as the libero and regular player number does not have to be the same. The libero

SEE "LIBERO" P. 12

Libero CONT. FROM P. 11

may not be used as a substitute for expelled or disqualified teammates.

The libero may be used as an exceptional substitution for an injured player if no other substitutes exist; he or she must change into a regular uniform and the team continues with no libero. If the libero is disqualified, he or she must be replaced by the player whom he or she replaced; play continues with no libero.

With the introduction of the libero, defensive control has increased, fostering longer rallies. With the contrasting jersey that sets him or her apart from the other teammates, fans often closely follow this ball-control specialist in spectacular dives, digs and extraordinary passes in getting the ball to the target. As the game evolves, so does the speed of the game, due in great part, to the addition of the libero. □

Volleyball Has One of Lowest Injury Rates

As high school sports participation continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries will also likely increase unless effective injury prevention programs are implemented. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees uses information from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO ™) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO™ is currently collecting the 9th year of sports exposure and injury data.

High School RIO™ data shows that volleyball has one of the lowest injury rates of the 20 sports under surveillance. Additionally, volleyball injury rates both overall and in practice have dropped significantly over the past eight years. In 2012-13, ankle sprains/strains (38 percent of all volleyball injuries) were the most common injury in volleyball followed by concussions (20 percent). Middle blocker and outside hitter positions sustained the most ankle injuries (78 percent of all ankle injuries), while concussions were more evenly spread across positions (26 percent outside hitter, 19 percent libero, 17 percent setter, 15 percent middle blocker, 11 percent opposite/diagonal player, and 13 percent other). Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool in the efforts to keep volleyball players as safe as possible.

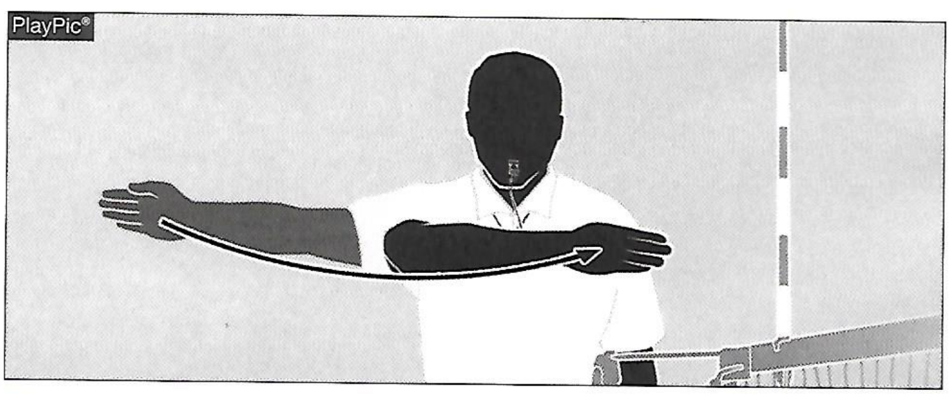
If you are interested in more information on the High School RIO ™ Study or a certified athletic trainer who is interested in becoming a reporter for volleyball, please visit http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/ResearchProjects/piper/projects/RIO/Pages/Study-Reports.aspx for summary reports. □

Scan Court Before Authorizing Serve

The signal used to authorize the serve consists of extending your arm on the serving team's side of the net, shoulder height, with the palm perpendicular to the floor and facing forward as shown in the PlayPic. After whistling, sweep your extended arm across your chest to the opposite shoulder. But the start of each rally is more than just that "beckon for serve."

Prior to beckoning, thoroughly scan the teams, benches, officiating crew and the court to ensure everything is ready for play. While the scanning pattern may vary from referee to referee, incorporate that habit and include all of those items.

After a rally ends, the point has been awarded and the fault signaled, begin your scanning. A team may have a time-out or substitution request, and although the second referee generally whistles those requests, be aware of them and be prepared to whistle if the second referee doesn't recognize them. After acknowledging any team requests, scan the receiving team to ensure it is in position and prepared for the next serve. At that point, take a quick glance ▶



at the line judge on that side of the court as well to make sure he or she is ready. As your eyes move across the court toward the serving team, take a quick glance at the second referee to ensure his or her readiness. Now move to the serving team. Notice its positioning and any potential for screening situations. Quickly look to the line judge on that side of the court to make sure he or she is focused and ready for the pending serve. Finally, look to the server and ensure he or she is in possession of the ball and ready to serve. If all things are in order, it's time to play. □

Toot Whistle, Then Scoot As Planned

It's a good idea for the referees to establish a postmatch exit plan, otherwise known as the "toot-n-scoot." That is the route by which the referees and line judges depart the playing area for the locker room immediately after the match. The scorer's table crew has postmatch responsibilities with the scoresheet, so it doesn't depart immediately with the rest of the crew, but it should know the location of the postmatch debrief so that it can join if needed.

There are some general guidelines for an exit plan. First, establish it during your prematch discussion. Share your exit plan with the line judges during the prematch conference since they should depart with you, unless needed by the coach.

For your departure, the line judge on the first referee's side of the court will either meet the first referee at the stand, or the first referee will go to that line judge's position and they will wait for the second referee and the other line judge. The line judge on the second referee's side of the court may either join the second referee and depart with him or her, or may walk around the outside of the court to the first referee's stand at the end of the match to join the other line judge as the three wait for the second referee to join them.

If the line judges have used flags provided by the host institution, the flags can either be left on the first referee's stand, or they can be taken back to the locker room and returned to an on-site manager after the debrief. If ball retrievers are used during the match, ensure that the ball crew returns all game balls to the scorer's table or to an on-site manager. In the absence of a ball crew, the line judges may help retrieve any game balls and then leave them on the referee's stand with the flags, or may be requested to quickly return them to the score table.

The second referee should grab his or her officiating bag or any other personal belongings, as well as the first referee's personal items, when he/she leaves the scorer's table. Prior to departing, be sure to thank the scoring crew since they may or may not join the referees and line judges for the postmatch debrief.

Discuss with host management your exit plan in advance so that they can meet you at a prearranged location at the end of the match in order to escort the crew to the locker room. That is also a good time to let them know how your crew plans to handle the line judge flags and game balls at the end of the match.

An exit plan is an important end to a professionally officiated match. A crew departing the court together sends a message to teams and spectators alike that there was a third team on the court. It also ensures that no crewmember is left behind and, thus, at risk for unnecessary comments from a disgruntled coach or spectator. In the heat of the moment when a match has just ended, there are few comments from the teams that will be beneficial to the crew. The officials should never seek to congratulate a team, try to explain a previous call, or seek a "thank you" at the end of the match. It is best to exit quickly and professionally, and then discuss match situations amongst yourselves in the locker room. So remember, after the last whistle toots, it's time to scoot! □

Overlap, Alignment Challenges

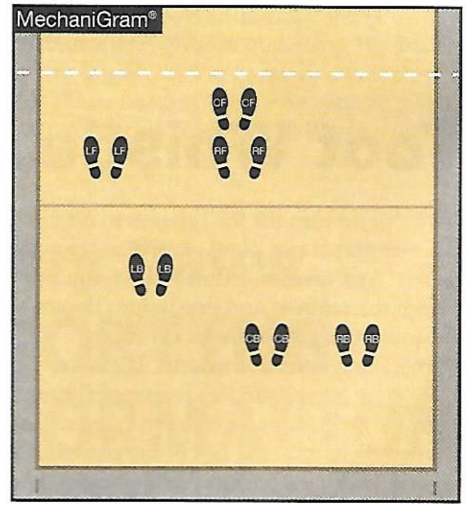
Recognizing overlaps and alignments tends to be one of the biggest challenges for second referees. Receiving teams use myriad serve reception patterns to put the best passers in position to receive the serve, to get the setter closer to the target position (usually near right front) to run the offense or to move their best hitters into position for a quick attack.

NFHS rules allow the second referee to use a lineup card as a tool for tracking player positions. But even with a lineup card, it can be a challenge, constantly requiring the second referee to look at the card, track servers, identify the front- and back-row players, and to determine if everyone is in legal alignment.

Whatever method the second referee uses for tracking player alignments, it ultimately boils down to one thing: the position of the player's foot/feet at the moment the ball is contacted for service. In the MechaniGram, the back-row players — left back (LB), center back (CB) and right back (RB) — are in good position. Left front is also set. But center front (CF) and right front (RF) are in a position that causes second referees concern and confusion. The culprit: the left foot of the RF player.

From the second referee's position, it may appear that the RF player's left foot is even with the CF player's left foot. Even if that is the case, that is not a concern for the second referee. In fact, the RF player's left foot can be closer to the left sideline than the CF player. The only issue is that the RF player has at least one part of one foot closer to the right sideline than the corresponding front-row player (CF). That requirement has been met, and no fault has been committed (NFHS Rule 6-4-3b).

Front-row players must have a portion of at least one foot closer to the center line than their corresponding back-row teammate (LF-LB, CF-CB, RF-RB). Right-side players must have at least one part of one foot closer to the right



sideline than their adjacent teammate (RF-CF, RB-CB), and left-side players must meet the same requirement with respect to the left sideline (LF-CF, LB-CB). The rules don't require that the back-row players be closer to the endline than the corresponding front-row player. □

Red Flag for Line Judges

Starting this season, flags shall be used by line judges unless the state association determines that hand signals should be used (Rule 5-9-4). NCAA and USAV matches commonly use flags, which have proven to be valuable officiating equipment for conducting a match. In fact, many referees and line judges often carry a set with them to their matches. Hand signals are used if flags are not available.

The use of flags is beneficial for NFHS line judges and referees alike. They can help line judges stay engaged with play and enable them to communicate more clearly with the referees. The flags are also easier for the referees, teams and spectators to see. Line judges who have experience with the use of flags and the associated mechanics find the flags helpful in "selling" a tight call. A quick snap when the ball lands in or out shows confidence with the call.

To use flags successfully, a set of mechanics have been established. In the PlayPics (from left to right):

1. Ball in. The flag is held at approximately a 45-degree angle, away from the body, pointing toward the middle of the court.

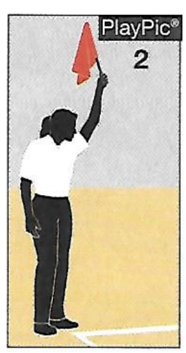
2. Ball out. Raise the flag above the head, arm extended.

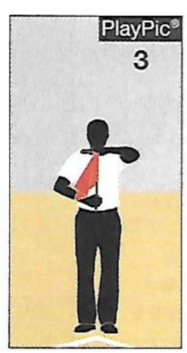
3. Ball touched. Raise the flag slightly away from the body with the tip approximately chin-level and place the opposite hand, palm flat, on the tip of the flag.

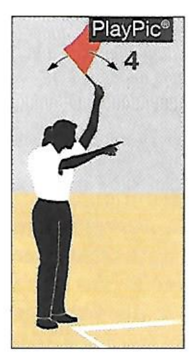
4. Antenna or service line fault. Raise the flag above the head and wave the flag while simultaneously pointing to the antenna (or line) with the index finger of the opposite hand.

5. Blocked from view. Cross the arms in front of the chest while holding the flag in one hand to indicate the view of the play was blocked and therefore, the line judge does not have information to offer the referees.

When flags are properly and consistently used by line judges, it enhances the work of the officiating team and also increases communication with the match participants and spectators. □







Get in Habit of Attending to Details Before, After Match

Attention to detail shows that we understand how a match is conducted, and what our role is in the match. The details, those little things that highlight the professionals that we are, are about our habits, both good and bad.

For some, no detail is too small, meaning that referees are thoroughly aware of their surroundings, duties and responsibilities. For others, "no detail is too small" means that they are overly officious or technical. There's a fine line between the two, and officials need to develop the best habits, walk that fine line and establish routines that help them excel on and off the court.

Hopefully most of us have the same basic routine when it comes to each match: 1) contacting our partner a few days in advance to share travel plans, arrival times and cell numbers; 2) seeking the host administrator upon our arrival to let them know we've arrived, to gain access to the locker room, and to find out about any special match details; and 3) having prematch and post-match briefings with our partner and officials crew. And most of us have the primary prematch duties covered fairly well – checking the net and equipment, monitoring warm-ups, etc. But each of those basic routines has some finer points that will help us facilitate the match and excel in our role as officials.

Do we enter and depart the court together? The teams do it, and so should we as officials whenever possible. It sends a good message and sets the tone for a professionally run match.

During our prematch duties, most of us know about checking the net, aligning the antennas and measuring the game ball pressure. The finer details might include, among others:

- Checking overhead obstructions to determine whether they are above a playing or non-playing area.
- Identifying objects around the court that may present a concern for risk minimization.
- Ensuring an extra towel or two are available to wipe the floor when needed.
- Having a couple of blank lineup sheets just in case a team forgets theirs.
- Briefing the timer/scoreboard operator about the use of the audio device (when and when not to use it), as well as ensuring they know what the "point" signal looks like.
- Talking to the match announcer to determine the prematch program.

All of that usually takes place before the prematch coin toss. After the coin toss, we need to observe the players for jewelry, as well as visually scan the team uniforms and equipment to ensure everything is legal. That is also the time to check team rosters. Everything we're doing at that point is preventive in nature. We are helping the teams prepare for the match. Yes, there are rules and penalties for uniform and equipment violations, but why start the match that way when we can prevent an issue before the match begins?

That is also a key time to identify each team's setters and hitters so that we're familiar with their skills by the time the match starts. Lineups are due, and we need to ensure that we "protect" those so that the opponent doesn't have access to them once they're submitted.

As we prepare to start the match, each referee or line judge should re-check his/her respective antenna to make sure it hasn't moved or come loose during warm-ups. As the teams take the court and the second referee checks lineups, the scorer should check the players' positions as well. That gives us a second set of eyes — or third if we ask the libero tracker to check as well — to ensure the correct players start the match (and each set) in the right positions.

There are plenty of details during the match that help us stay focused and look sharp as well. It starts with centering — making direct eye contact with your partner at the end of each rally. That gives us an opportunity for quick non-verbal communication.

In addition, when the second referee whistles a substitution or time-out, the first referee's *first* look should be at the server. Many times the server hears the whistle and thinks it's the service authorization. We should keep that player from serving since a receiving team player could get blindsided by the ball. After ensuring the server isn't going to serve, the first referee should quickly scan the opposing bench to see if a substitution request might be coming from them. That lets the first referee help control the sub procedure when the second referee is busy with the scorer or other team.

If a time-out ends early, the second referee should quickly turn to the timer to ensure the clock is stopped. That can save us from an interruption to the next rally a few seconds later. And we should *never* start a rally without our partner. When we do, it may appear that we aren't paying attention or aren't focused on the match.

And of course, we need to have a post-match debrief to discuss things we did well, and things that could have been better. That immediate feedback is the best way for us to learn, and we need to be honest but not critical with one another. A productive post-match debrief needs to be a part of our normal routine.

As we can see, our attention to detail starts well before the match when we contact our partner and reach out to host management. It continues with a thorough prematch briefing. And once we're on the court, "the details" help us establish a professional match atmosphere that we should strive to maintain throughout the contest. Developing good habits and a consistent routine reflects well on our cadre and will help us excel on the court. □

QUICK TIP

Before the season begins, take the time to get your uniforms out of the closet and make sure they are in good shape for the year. You don't want to begin the season with stained shirts or pants that have seen better days. If you need new shirts or pants, check out equipment and uniform distributors or local department stores.

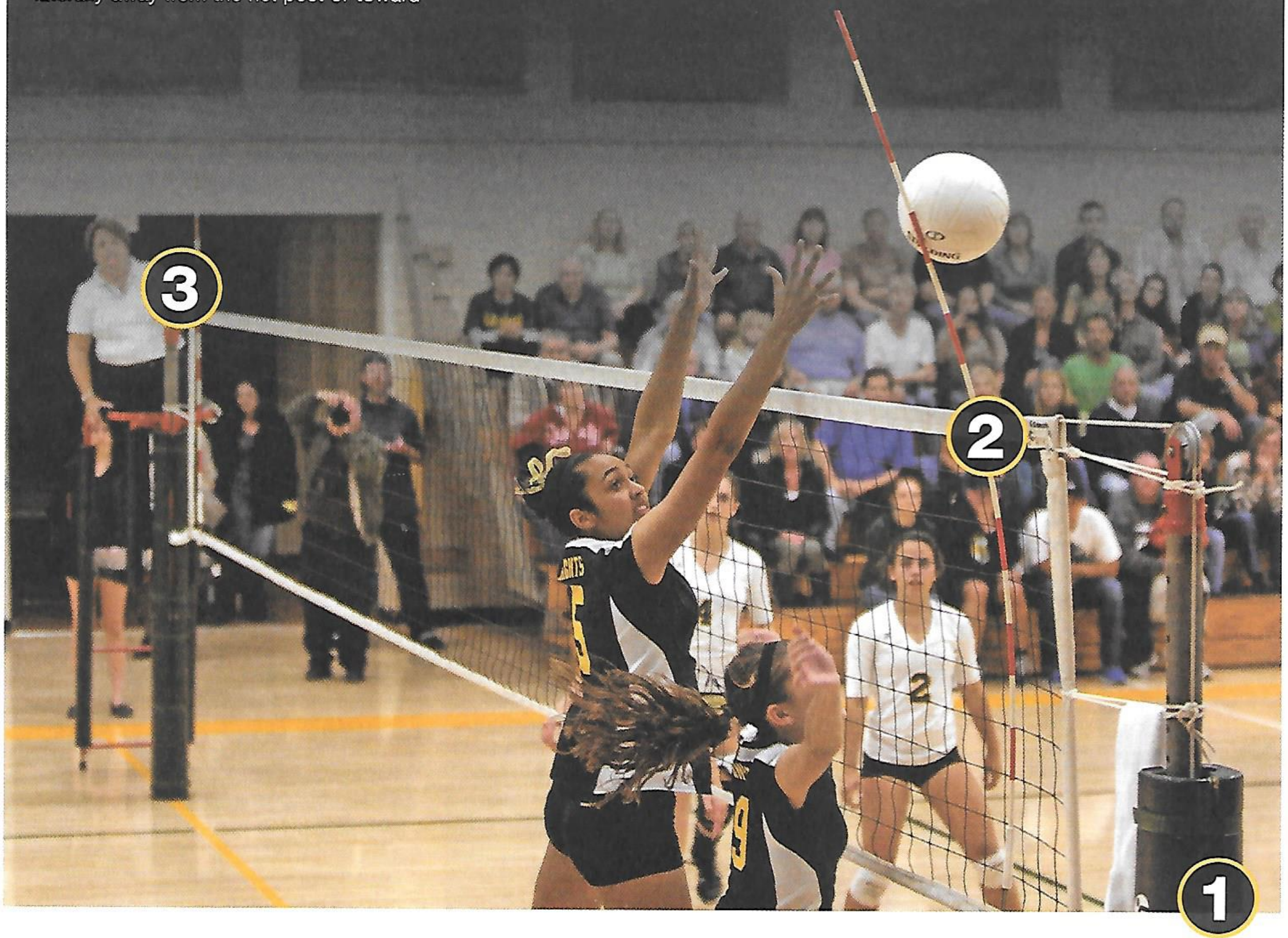
Keep Your Antennas Up

A ball is out of bounds and it becomes dead when it touches the net antenna above or within the net, or does not pass over the net entirely between the net antennas. Either referee can whistle an antenna fault. Debbie Drake, Simi Valley, Calif., can seek help from either line judge as well during the high school match.

1 The ball is being attacked by the team wearing white jerseys. The second referee should already be positioned on the left side of the net post, focusing on the blocking team wearing black jerseys.

2 A good second referee will anticipate that the antenna may be an issue. In this case, it may be necessary for the second referee to step laterally away from the net post or toward the pole, or even backward, to have a good view of the ball as it crosses the net. As soon as the ball hits the antenna, the second referee will whistle to stop play, and then step to the side of the court of the team at fault. Once on the offending team's side, the second referee will signal "out" and, if necessary for clarification, indicate the team at fault with an open hand toward that team's court.

3 The first referee will award the loss of rally/point, and the second referee will then mirror the signal. The first referee will then signal "out," which is not mirrored by the second referee. It is important for second referees to always step to the offending team's side of the net whenever they whistle a fault. In the case of an antenna fault, the referees do not point toward the antenna after signaling "out."



BOB MESSINA