

PRE-SEASON GUIDE – 2010

PART ONE

The attached information may be helpful in setting the framework for the upcoming high school boys' volleyball season. It covers the following topics:

1. Ball Handling: Get the Calls Right – Ball handling remains the most difficult training subject and the most controversial call in volleyball. Marsha Goodwin spends the equivalent of two pages on this topic because it is considered the most controversial in volleyball, urging officials to step up their “game,” use practical application of the rules that address ball handling and strive for consistency. The documents entitled “Establishing Standards for Calling Hands” and “Committee Report for 2010: Ball Handling” are intended for the OHSBVA audience and amplify what Marsha was addressing. Reading Marsha’s guidance in conjunction with this important article can really help referees become better at calling ball handling.

Proper R1 Techniques and Approaches to Calling Hands

Every contact with the ball requires the application of judgment, and, for OHSBVA, we are emphasizing the importance of getting your eyes ahead of the ball to observe the body part that will next contact or be contacted by the ball. This is even more important with the transition to legal full body contact. The rule change allows contact by any body part, with the ball still not being allowed to come to rest or involve prolonged contact. The key is to be consistent and reasonable in determining how long is prolonged. Referees MUST allow the same amount of time for contact on ANY contact, regardless of technique used to play the ball. Passive contact is not automatically prolonged contact, and there is no player position that should lead a referee to automatically assume that an illegal hit will occur before actually viewing the contact. The key is to identify a range of legal handles that you can live with, the teams can live with and still have the match be about them and not about the referee, and that you can call from the first contact of the match through the last. The example mentioned was a difference in how long setters have their hands on the ball, noting that some setters have a quick/tight release while others have a softer/longer touch that is still legal. Of course, this is not a license for setters to deep dish the ball in their regular setting motions or when back-setting. Referees are encouraged to observe pre-match warm-ups to get to know the techniques of each of the setters.

See the Contact

The key cited in judging illegal hits is vision and vision only. It’s play on if the R1 doesn’t see a clear fault – then, there wasn’t one. To properly gauge the legality of ball contact, it’s critical to look ahead of the ball. The R1 has to get his/her eyes ahead of the ball and steady as the ball is contacted. Following the ball doesn’t work. If referees get their eyes set on the body part that will next contact the ball, they will be less likely to make a call on something other than vision – player body position, ball spin and comments from coaches, players and fans should not come into play. If the R1 and R2 have held a good pre-match, the R1 should be able to rely upon the R2’s help (informal signals in the chest area for a fault on a contact where the R1 doesn’t have a good look or is screened, a head nod for legal contact, play on) in circumstances where help is needed and offered by the R2, stepping out to show help.

Legal and Illegal for Various Types of Ball Contacts

The article reviews the various types of ball contacts (“hits”) including a spike, tip, dump, overhand pass and forearm pass, noting that an attack covers any ball that is returned to the opponent’s court and that a third hit is ALWAYS considered an attack, regardless of the method used to return the ball. When contacting the ball, contact must be instantaneous without changing the direction of the ball or contacting the ball in one plane of the body and releasing it in another plane. This is especially important in judging a ball that is contacted at chest level or below the chin and then released with long hands or a setter dump that is clearly played behind the setter’s body and then released on the other side. But, to make an appropriate call on such a play, a referee would have to look ahead and see where the actual contact occurred.

Prolonged Contact

The rules include as part of prolonged contact throwing, lifting, carrying or rolling along the body. To judge prolonged contact, the OHSBVA advises referees NOT TO try to bisect the body of the player contacting the ball into quadrants, one with a divider at the nose backwards and the other at the ears. This technique has been discussed nationally, and we hear that it will go away for next season. It has the referee focusing too long and trying to figure out if a ball passed from one quadrant to another which, given angles, could be hard to do. The “quadrants” approach from the NFHS is not consistent with what ANY other level of volleyball is teaching referees about ball handling. Thinking about “plane (quadrant) of the body” adds another element to the judgment process for ball handling. The end result is that referees will be staying with the contact TOO LONG, trying to determine whether the ball crossed a plane/quadrant, and consequently, they’ll be behind the next point of contact instead of looking ahead to it.

While we appreciate NFHS’s attempt to establish some guidelines that can be applied across the country, this one could have quite negative results -- either far too many calls or too many missed calls because referees are spending too long watching the contact and the player's body position. And consequently, this concept also encourages referees to note a player's body position, which is contradictory to what is being taught for all rule sets including NFHS, that is, the player's body position should NOT be used as a basis for determining ball-handling legality.

Think instead about seeing the exact point of contact between player and ball, the length of time in contact with the ball and whether the ball is contacted on one side of the body (forget quadrants!) and released on the other side. This does require the R1 to get his/her eyes set on the body part that will be contacting the ball before the ball arrives. Remember that a player may also not change the direction of the ball twice, such as receiving it backward, pushing it forward, angling it across the body, etc. The motion for a tip or dump must be forward regardless of whether the skill is executed with an open or closed hand or fist. All of these can result in legal contacts. An illegal contact on a tip would include contacting the ball, bringing it back toward the court, changing the direction and then throwing the ball forward. The tip typically has to be contacted in front of the body, meaning net-side, and released quickly in one motion with no change of direction.

Attacking the Ball

Attacking the ball is addressed in terms of hitters being allowed to follow-through over the plane of the net but not to complete an attack when the ball is completely over the opponent’s court (over-the-net fault). The attack may contact the ball as soon as the ball breaks the plane above the net. The key is determining where is the front edge of the ball in relationship to the plane above the net in determining legality.

Overhead Pass

A section is dedicated to properly calling the overhead pass, which is often used to receive the first hit from an opponent such as a serve or an attacked ball including a deflection off a block. Multiple contacts in one effort to play the ball are legal while successive contacts are not. On the other hand, setters are expected to complete a clean, single contact when making an overhead pass to a teammate on the second hit. In addition, the third hit, often an offensive move, can’t involve slopping/chucking the ball over the net; it must involve a clean, single contact when sending the ball toward the opponent’s court. The NFHS points out that more complaints result from calls and no-calls on sets or overhead passes than on other contacts.

Various Types of Sets

There are one-hand sets, jump-setting, back-setting including short sets in running a slide, quick sets to a middle hitter and shoot-setting to an outside hitter, all of which are to be judged by the same standard: was there prolonged contact (illegal on any contact) or were there multiple contacts (illegal on second and third hits)? One hand sets are no more illegal than are two-hand sets. Both are judged in terms of prolonged contact which is going to be the more likely fault call on a one-hand set rather than calling a one-hand set for a double hit (which, while it CAN occur, is more difficult to sell). Watch back-sets for point of initial contact and point of release to see if the prolonged contact occurs, typically in terms of “deep dishing” which means taking the ball from waist level through a position below the eyes and releasing the ball when it is behind the head.

Forearm Passes

Forearm passes are also addressed in the article. The ball can't be allowed to roll up the arms or be "slung" by the passer not initiating the contact and then reacting to flip the ball into the air. Contact that is too high on the arms (forearm/elbow area) can result in illegal contact. Remember to see it before you call it.

Pancakes

Pancake saves are mentioned. Referees should expect partner help (cover this in pre-match discussion) on an attempted pancake with the R2 who is sure that part of the ball touched the floor not being shy in stepping out to create movement and visibility and signaling ball lands inbounds.

Blocking

Blocking is also a focus of the article, noting that blocks are defensive plays close to the net, reaching higher than the net, that deflect the ball coming from the opponent's side. Blocking may involve wrist action. There are directional blocks or stuff blocks where the ball is put down hard and these may include changing the direction of the ball but a player may not "capture" the ball and then turn with the ball and stuff it down in a different direction. However, blockers will often set their hands early in the direction they're going to stuff the ball on an attack that isn't hard-driven to be legal; this type of blocking action may take the ball in an angled direction from where the blocker is facing but the hands are the only judgment point. There can be only one direction on a block, but that makes it even more critical for the R1 to look ahead and observe the actual contact. Of course, only clear faults should be called. One critical element is that if a player is not reaching above the height of the net at the point of contact, it's the first team hit if the player contacted the ball or was contacted by the ball. The team would then have two remaining hits but may not know that the R1 didn't consider the play at the net a block! If the team then runs a pass, set, spike, this would produce a 4-hits fault that would need to be called.

Blocking is permitted when the ball is completely over the opponent's court in two specific situations: if the opponent has completed the third hit, the ball may be blocked on the opponent's side as soon as the third hit is completed but not simultaneous with the third hit (this would be an over-the-net fault). Second, if after a first or second hit, the ball is near the net but no one is making an attempt to play it or is in the vicinity; then, the ball can be blocked (but never attacked) when it's totally over the opponent's court. This is the R1's call and is not subject to challenge by the coaches or players. One key is whether the first or second hit would, in the R1's judgment, cross the net to the other side. This ball is considered an attack. Therefore, the criteria to apply on a play like this would involve whether an offensive player is in a position to contact the ball near the top of the net (typically jumping to get there) in which case a block on a ball that is totally above the opponent's court would take the play away and be illegal (over-the-net fault). If the ball would not cross the net, again in the R1's judgment, be looking for whether a player is moving in to play the ball out of the net or close to the floor in determining whether a block over the opponent's court took the play away from the opponents.

Composite Blocks: Back-Row Players and the Libero

Composite blocks are described as ones involving several (two or three) players standing close together and attempting to deflect the ball coming from the opponents. If at least one of these players makes contact with the ball reaching higher than the top of the net, all players who are reaching higher than the net are considered to have blocked the ball. This means that if a back-row player was part of the composite block, reaching above net height, this is a back-row blocking fault, regardless of which blocker touched the ball. If the block didn't touch the ball, it's simply a block attempt and there is no back-row block unless one of the players was the libero who can't attempt to block. If the libero was not reaching higher than the net, she is not considered part of the block, however.

In the Plane or Not: Protecting the Setter

Marsha mentions another violation that happens when the setter is setting laterally to a hitter and the blocker reaches over to block the set or touches the setter's hands. If the ball never entered the plane of the net (in some cases the ball WAS in the plane of the net but, after it was set, the ball is now totally on the setter's side of the net), this is a blocking fault. Remember, too, that you can never have simultaneous contact with the opponents UNLESS the ball is in the plane above the net. The setter's team has to have the opportunity to complete the attack. Of course, if the ball is blocked in the plane above the net, assuming it's a front-row blocker ☺, the block is legal and if the opponent's setter was back row AND contacted the ball when it was totally above net height, we'd have a back-row attack fault. When in doubt, protect the setter. And, in the rare instance where the blocker sets the block in the setter's face without actually touching the setter and without deliberate interference, the proper call is an over-the-net fault if the setter commits a ball-handling error with the blocker's hands in her face.

Illegal Blocks

Marsha notes that blocks can be illegal in several ways, although they're rarely called as such. When a blocker poorly times her jump and/or contacts the ball when it gets behind their head, then throws it forward, this is clearly prolonged contact and should be called. This includes situations where the ball is thrown across the blocker's body from the opposite side of the contact. Multiple contacts are legal during blocking as long as there is one attempt to play the ball. Of course, as soon as there is a second effort to play the ball in something other than blocking action, it's first contact and should be judged as such. Multiple contacts on the second effort would be legal within one attempt to play the ball while prolonged contact is never legal. The R1 can look for R2 help if the blocker then attempts to fist or punch the ball up since the low to high play on this ball may be hard for the R1 to see the actual point of contact and the R2 can give a head nod to play on or use the informal signal in the chest area for prolonged contact. Prolonged contact shouldn't be assumed; the referees have to actually view the fault to call it.

Block Not a Part of Team's Three Hits

Teams may have no more than three hits to return the ball except that a block doesn't count as one of these hits. It merely keeps the ball alive and allows either team the right to three more hits. Remember that once the blocker is no longer reaching above net height, the player ceases to be a blocker.

Simultaneous Contact: Teammates

When two players contact the ball at exactly the same time, it counts as one contact and either player may play the ball next. A player may also block the ball and then play the ball on the next hit (first contact), as in a block and dig or block and attack.

Blocking and Then...

Marsha notes that there are a variety of circumstances where it's possible to confuse a blocking attempt (it looks like a block...) with an attacking attempt. Another situation involves a ball coming from the opponents, and a legal blocker goes up but – instead of using typical two-hand blocking action – blocks with one hand. Since blocks often involve hands/arms penetrating into the opponent's court, they are often out in front of the body. Was it a block or an attack? On a one-hand block that occurs on the opponent's side of the net, look for the typical wrist action to discern a block. If it ends up being a one-armed swing, it may be an (illegal) over-the-net attack. If a player blocks the ball and then makes the next contact with blocking-type action, this isn't considered a block but, rather, as first contact and when the player is taking the ball over the net, it's considered an attack. Remember, you can't ever block a ball originating from your team's side even if you play the ball with action traditionally considered blocking in nature. Two hands or one hand, it's still considered an attack.

Joust

A joust involves two front-row players (one from either team) contacting the ball at the same instant in the plane above the net and the ball visibly comes to rest. Play continues and prolonged contact (on both teams) is basically ignored on such a play. If the ball is NOT in the plane above the net, then the player reaching across to the opponent's side to contact the ball has committed an over-the-net fault. It's only a joust if the ball is over the plane of the net.

On a joust, if the ball then rolls along the top of the net or is pushed out of bounds, the team on whose side the ball lands out wins the rally because it is assumed that the ball was out off the opponent's effort. This is different than a non-joust contact in the plane above the net (where contact is not simultaneous and the ball doesn't come to rest) where the ball is "rubbed" off the hand of the other team's blocker. In this situation, the ball is considered "touched out." To make the correct call, referees need to watch the hands, not the ball. If, after a joust, the ball rolls along the net and contacts the antenna, it's a double fault and a replay.

Multiple Contacts

Multiple contacts are more than one contact by one player in one attempt to play the ball. This is legal on the first ball only. Typical plays involving legal multiple contacts are when it's bang-bang or bang-bang-bang contacts on a serve receive where the ball quickly rebounds from one body part to another (wrists to chin, outstretched hands to chest to chin, etc.), a free ball, a hard-hit spike/attack or a rebound off a block.

Successive Contacts

Successive contacts involve two or more separate attempts by one player to play the ball. They are illegal, except for simultaneous contact with two teammates where either player may make the next contact or a joust where either opponent may make the next contact, which is the first of the team's three available hits. Examples of an illegal successive contact is where a player digs the ball and then sets it; a player who attacks an overpass and the attack hits the net without also being blocked and is hit again or hits the attacker; a ball that loops up into the air and hits the player after some time has transpired would be considered a second contact and not legal, regardless of whether the second contact is active or passive (there a time and space element to a multiple contact that, in this case, crosses over to successive contacts, and this would be considered an illegal successive contact). Picture a ball that pops up in the air off a successful pancake. No one steps in to follow the initial save, and the ball comes down and bounces off the head of the player who made the pancake. This would be considered successive contacts and a double-hit (2-hit) fault should be whistled.

Conclusion

Marsha concludes her outstanding article by urging referees to use good judgment in determining illegal hits and mishandled balls. She notes that referees should see the violation (not assuming it from player body position or pre-determining a fault based on a player of perceived "lesser skills" playing the ball), then blow the whistle and signal the illegal hit. Using partner help when the R1 is screened or otherwise doesn't have a good look is a strength, but this doesn't typically happen without coming to an understanding during the pre-match discussion that the R1 agrees to scan for help and the R2 agrees to step out and become visible and provide the help under circumstances like these.

Marsha again stresses that spin on the ball, the sound of ball against body part, speed (it was hit so hard, it had to be prolonged contact), body position, technique and the very "helpful" feedback provided instantaneously by opponents/coaches/fans are NOT criteria for determining illegal hits. She urges referees to not let others influence them. Marsha supports using the officiating crew, especially the R2, to assist in determining illegal hits that the R1 cannot see or is blocked from seeing. Referees must learn to curb the tendency toward making premature and/or automatic calls based on non-vision unless using partner help. Marsha notes that it is better to make a late call than to award a replay for an inadvertent whistle. Get it right, and get it right the first time! See documents entitled "Establishing Standards for Calling Hands" and "Committee Report for 2010: Ball Handling" for excellent parallel learning tools to Marsha Goodwin's exceptional reflective commentary on ball handling.

Pre-Season Guide – Part Two

The attached information may be helpful in setting the framework for the upcoming high school boys' volleyball season. It covers the following topics:

1. “Game” becomes “set” – This change in terminology is reflected in the new Rules Book as well as the Case Book. All OHSBVA documents are being updated to reflect this change.

2. “Game ball” becomes “competition volleyball – Every time the word “game” appears in OHSBVA documents doesn't mean the word is to be replaced by the word “set.” One such example is where we referred to the “game ball.” Call it the “set ball” made no sense! Other references to the “game of volleyball” remain unchanged.

3. Libero allowed to serve, making libero tracker training a critical issue – The change to NFHS rules, adopted by the OHSAA, which permits the libero to serve in one position in the rotation each game has now been accepted by the OBSVCA and removed as an OHSBVA rules exception. We will be challenged in 2010 because support crews for OHSBVA matches are less likely to be adequately trained than for OHSAA, if trained at all, thus putting a greater burden on the R2. The implications are that training for both scorers and libero trackers needs to be amended to include the role of these support staff associated with the libero serving.

4. Libero exchanges must be visible to the officiating crew – Especially with the libero being able to serve for OHSBVA matches, we can expect problems whenever a libero exchange is not visible to the officiating crew including the scorer and libero tracker. The key is stepped-up training on the part of schools for both the scorer and the libero tracker, pre-match verification of competencies and comfort on the part of the referees with the SK and LT and effective partnering during the match between the SK and LT including in recording of substitutions which should be easier this year with one-sub-at-a-time in the sub zone. The R2 will have to be very vigilant to ensure libero replacements are properly recorded. Teams need to try to make their libero exchanges far away from the sub zone when a libero exchange is being made in conjunction with a substitution. Situations where the exchange occurred close to the sub zone with the played substituting into the match simply entering the court just inside the sub zone and immediately exiting and the libero entering just outside the sub zone created on-going problems at the 2009 State Tournament.

5. Libero replacement timing – When the R1 puts an arm out in preparation for service authorization, this indicates that no requests for set interruption AND no libero replacements are permitted. The R1 and R2 are both expected to use effective scanning in support of consistent pacing and set/match flow to allow coaches and players to know how much time there will be to request a substitution, time-out, line-up check, score check, etc. as well as to permit teams to a reasonable amount of time to complete libero replacements. If the R1 reaches the point where he/she is ready to put an arm out to start the service authorization process, no libero exchanges should be permitted. Last-minute replacements and disruption to the timing set by the R1 should be addressed. The R2 can help by being alert to ensure replacements are timely with a warning option (early in a match and early in the season) and subsequent late replacements addressed with a UD/time-out or loss of rally. Only if service is actually authorized with a late replacement occurring should the penalty be illegal alignment/loss of rally. There is no reason to authorize service if the R1 is properly scanning and sees the late libero replacement.

6. Lineup submission flexibility – At this time there is no exception to the NFHS rule requiring that lineups be submitted in serve order. If a head coach submits a lineup that is in player floor positions, the referees are expected to facilitate conversion to serve order. Regardless, coaches are still required to list a libero to use one in each set, and referees (R2 in particular) are expected to check with a coach when no libero has been listed for a set.

7. Review by referees of signals, mechanics and OHSBVA techniques that differ from OHSAA –

Since signals and mechanics are NOT 100% the same as OHSAA and also do not match USAV or PAVO, referees must study these variances to effectively communicate their decisions, violations and the results of plays. Referees are expected to study official signals and mechanics pre-season, check in a mirror how clean and comfortable these signals are, work on timing to avoid rushing and especially focus on proper technique and hand placement. Don't make the "out-of-bounds" signal look like signaling a touchdown! Don't make the "ball-lands-inbounds" signal look like a net-fault signal; move the hand out from middle of the court toward the confluence of the attack line and the sideline to avoid this confusion. You don't want to call a ball "in" and have the coach asking the R2 who was in the net. The signal with spread fingers on the hand on the side of the team that contacted the net while showing a net fault is fine as long as the hand is relaxed. And, a non-served ball passing under the net to the opponent's side is signaled as a line fault (signal 2, index finger pointing at the center line), not as "ball-lands-inbounds" (OHSAA/NFHS).

8. Restrictions on the libero completing an attack on a ball that is totally above net height –

The R1 faces challenges in determining whether a libero attack occurring far from the net resulted in contact with the ball when the ball was totally above the height of the net. Where there is doubt, the R1 is encouraged to use informal help from the R2 in judging ball height. If the R1 is unsure, the R2 often has a good view and can offer a head nod if the R2 has part of the ball below net height or show the informal signal for illegal attack to assist the R1. This information is more likely to be offered and used IF the R1 is scanning for information and if the referees address this in their pre-match discussion and the R2 agrees to offer help on this type of play. For libero attacks like this, even if the ball is totally above net height, an illegal attack does not occur until the attack is completed (legally contacted by opponents or crosses untouched completely to the opponent's side).

9. Get line judges to clearly signal antenna faults –

While the OHSAA instructs line judges to signal a ball hitting the antenna (including the portion of the antenna in the body of the net) or hitting the net or any court fixture outside the antenna or a ball passing totally outside or over the antenna to the opponent's side as "out of bounds," OHSBVA encourages requesting the LJ to point the index finger at the antenna in question and wave the flag to signal the antenna fault. It is also appropriate to ask (whether you will get it or not ☺) for the LJ to signal with arm (with or without flag) down the sideline to indicate the fault came from the team on the far court or right arm (with or without flag) down the end line to signal that the fault was on the team occupying the court where the line judge is positioned.

10. Creating a Safe Environment –

A key aspect of risk management and risk minimization in the high school arena is being aware that hard floors and flying volleyballs create possible hazards for everyone at all times. Warm-ups are a critical time for teams in which players are getting prepared to play a match. During such warm-ups there are a variety of individuals on the court, either participating in the warm-up or assisting with it. Coaches, game managers and athletic directors are urged to be aware of and to limit non-participants (non-rostered individuals for a given match) who are on the court during the warm-up.

Referees are responsible for the coaches, players and team managers, and they have control by rule over players' dress and behavior, especially where jewelry and illegal equipment are concerned. Referees can have the coach intervene to ensure removal of jewelry or illegal equipment during the warm-up, with possible penalties for not addressing the problem. However, the individual school is responsible for any non-playing individuals who are on the floor during warm-ups, and they bear the liability for anything that occurs, not the referees. So, if the head coach allows non-players on the court in unsafe footwear such as bare feet, socks or flip-flops or who are on crutches or wearing casts or who are wearing electronic devices, and these individuals are actively participating in the warm-up, this exposes these individuals to unnecessary risk. While the motivation of these "helpers" is certainly positive, the head coach can reduce the risk by asking them to put on proper footwear and remove electronics.

11. Rules Review: Warming Up...or Standing? – A problem occurs periodically where players are not sitting on the bench and there are available seats. Frequently, this involves the libero but may also involve other players who are standing behind the bench in a non-playable area because they don't want to sit on the bench/chairs. In some situations, teams may have more players, coaches, statisticians, etc. than the number of chairs. In these cases, there should be no unfilled seats and then, and only then, players are permitted to stand outside the chair, no closer to the court than if they were sitting. Other than at specified times, players are expected to be seated on the team bench. Non-playing team members are permitted to warm up in a non-playable area without volleyballs prior to entry into the game as a substitute.

12. Libero Uniform in Contrasting Color – NFHS rules are very specific in terms of the libero wearing a jersey that is in sharp contrast (clearly contrasting from every angle) to the jerseys worn by teammates in order to allow match officials to properly apply the special rules associated with libero playing actions. The OHSAA has published terrific guidance regarding the standard to follow to avoid problems with individual match officials which is the home and away jersey standard used for basketball. If a team's school colors are primary colors, white is typically a proper contrasting color. Clear contrast means that the color of the libero's jersey may not be in the same color shade range as the uniform jersey of the other players on the floor. It is preferred that the, if the other players are in dark jersey, the libero wear either a white or light jersey in the same manner as basketball. OHSBVA affirms this guidance.

13. Ball-handling – OHSBVA referees are expected to call their matches reasonably (for the level of the match such as reasonable distinctions between Freshman vs. JV vs. Varsity matches), the strength of the programs and the skills of the teams involved within the range of skill execution that should be considered legal but without allowing a lesser-skilled team to obtain an advantage); consistently (within a framework that doesn't take the match away from the players, meaning that if it's a fault early in the match, the same/similar contact is a fault later in a set and with the set or match on the line); with every clear fault called; and with the R1 using partner help and the R2 offering partner help to get calls right when the R1 doesn't have a good view of the play (screened, play very close to the R1, etc.).

Officials need to understand what coaches are teaching, technique-wise, and what constitutes acceptable execution of techniques to determine which playing actions are legal and which should be called as faults. One of the key areas of challenge involves the proper technique for an overhead pass. When officials look ahead of the ball to see the body part of the player who will next contact the ball, they can determine how the ball is being contacted and can make a better decision on whether the ball was handled legally. However, regardless of the form used by the player in preparing to execute the skill, the only thing the R1 should judge the play by is viewing the actual contact with the ball. Referees have to know what a successfully executed skill consists of. They have to know whether a double-hit (multiple contacts) occurred on a second or third hit to call a 2-hit fault or whether the ball is lowered too far resulting in a deep-dish set which constitutes prolonged contact.

First-ball contacts and setting action on a second or third contact are the challenges. When a player receives the first ball "low," and pushes through the ball which carries the ball from chest area and below to a high release, there is a good chance that prolonged contact has occurred when the ball is handled cleanly; on the flip side, when the ball is clearly doubled out of the hands on a low contact, it is more likely that we have multiple contacts on the first ball which would be play on. And, if the ball is quickly "snapped away" from a low position this contact is less likely to be a fault (even on a second contact). Officials are sometimes calling prolonged contact on clear multiple contacts on balls handled at chin level and higher while allowing long hands to go uncalled. These same officials may allow what they called as prolonged contact on the first ball (where there were multiple contacts) to go uncalled as a double-hit fault on the second and third ball where the contact was not only illegal but actually worse than the first ball contact that was called a prolonged-contact fault. These types of calls go against what the top-level coaches are teaching their players skill-wise.

14. Getting a handle on substitutions – In addition to effectively managing the changes that limit one sub in the sub zone at a time, referees need to be cognizant that the two ways in which substitutions can be requested are a sub enters the sub zone or a coach uses a recognizable signal to request one or more subs. In general, however, the R2 should NOT recognize a sub entering the sub zone with a whistle until the sub actually crosses the attack line, entering the sub zone. It is interesting to note that most referees would acknowledge a coach verbalizing a substitution request without the signal but would probably advise the coach that the rules specify that the coach is to use the acceptable signal. In any case, the R2 is supposed to recognize a sub request with both a whistle (a double whistle, tweet-tweet) and a signal. When the R1's scan picks up a coach in the act of requesting a sub or player movement that looks like the sub is being requested, the R1 should see if the R2 is picking this up and pause to allow the R2 to handle the impending request. The R1 gives the R2 a chance to whistle and may show the sub with a signal and no whistle to allow the R2 to whistle it. The whistle alerts the official scorer and libero tracker that there is information that needs to be recorded. Since teams may also make a libero exchange during this dead ball, all match officials have to be alert to not only nail the substitutions that may take place on both sides of the net but also to not miss the libero moving into the service position (scorer AND libero tracker) or a libero replacement (libero tracker only). The change for this season involves one sub at a time in the sub zone while additional subs wait just outside the attack line near the court to step into the sub zone once the previous player/sub are released by the R2 by signal and also possibly verbally.

The R2 must ensure that the scorer AND libero tracker have sufficient time to get all numbers properly recorded. This is especially critical given the libero serving rule change for OHSBVA. In all cases, the incoming sub should not enter the court without the R2 giving the visible enter signal to release players to complete the substitution. The R2 is also responsible for identifying whether the entering player moves into the correct court position.

15. Overruling a line judge – Wise R1s discuss a possible overrule with line judges when doing initial LJ instructions because it is important to get line judges to focus on doing their jobs and not be distracted as well as to not have an overrule negatively affect the line judge's performance. This is especially true when line judges have not received proper training from their schools. When you have to overrule a line judge, you need to do so in a positive manner that shows sensitivity and continued confidence in the person's ability to do the job. Show your cooperation and partnering while still taking responsibility for correcting clear errors on the part of the officiating crew. A correction of a call is typically handled by a tweet-tweet of the whistle to call attention to the R1, followed by a head shake to indicate that the R1 has a different call than the official who made the call, tapping the chest area if necessary to show the R1 is taking the responsibility (and the heat!) for the overrule and then showing the signal that reflects the R1's decision followed by the signal to award the point or show a replay. At a later time, take time to explain what you saw and why you overruled. If you addressed a possible overrule in your pre-match, you also should have explained that you would only overrule if you were sure from your angle and that you would be taking the heat (responsibility) for the overrule..

16. Libero setting – The libero was never intended to be a team's setter. An active libero may hand set the ball (finger-tip setting action) near the attack zone. When this occurs, the referees have to partner to determine whether the libero was on or in front of the attack line extended to be prepared to properly rule in case there is a completed attack on the next contact. The rules state that, for the team to be able to complete an attack on the next contact from totally above net height, the libero must have set the ball outside the attack line extended. The libero may use other playing action to pass the ball in the attack zone including a forearm pass, punching the ball up, a crisp beach dig, etc. The R1 should be prepared to partner with the R2 to identify situations where the libero setting the ball was just outside the attack zone or where the ball is directed toward the opponent's on the next contact resulting in a completed attack but the ball is not entirely above the height of the net when contact is made. Effective partnering and use of informal signals can help signal what the referees saw on the play. Per the pre-match discussion, the R1 typically "takes the hands" while the R2 "takes the feet." In most cases, the R1 has both in view!

17. Going to/through coaches to address jewelry/illegal equipment issues – The best way to handle the discovery of jewelry or illegal equipment on a player during warm-ups is through communicating with the coach to resolve the issue. Where possible, officials are to allow the head coach the opportunity to get the jewelry or illegal equipment removed without the officials having to take action to remove the player from the warm-up. The coach is seen as the best way to get the items removed with minimal disruption. The coach either takes action to resolve the problem or a yellow card warning will be issued and the player will be removed from the warm-up until the jewelry or equipment is removed. A card for unsporting conduct does not result in a coach losing the right to stand and coach for the match.

18. Plan for an injury to be effective if one occurs – Injury management is very important since our first responsibility is for the safety of the student-athletes. As such match officials have to be prepared to react quickly in support of getting appropriate treatment onto the court as quickly as possible. “Injury management actually starts when the referees arrive and ask who will be the home school administrator. This gives the opportunity to learn where “host management” will be before, during and right after the match and also to learn the preference for how serious injuries should be handled (ones that might require a 9-1-1 call). Who should make the call? Is there a trainer available? Who will be responsible for clean-up, and is a blood clean-up kit available? When an injury occurs, if the referees observe that a player is hurt before the conclusion of a rally, either referee may whistle to stop the play. The key is to avoid further injury. Either referee may authorize bench personnel to attend to the player to determine extent of injury and whether a call for medical assistance should be placed immediately. This authorization should occur immediately. The clock to determine whether the injury is resolvable within 30 seconds (i.e., to leave a coach the choice of whether or not to substitute) does not begin until assistance reaches the player. The R1 or R2 may control the clock in such a situation but the primary focus is NOT on the technical aspect (identify whether player is ready to play in 30 seconds or not) but on the well-being of the player.

If the player is ready to play within about 30 seconds from the time the assistance reaches the player, the player may stay in the game unless it was determined that the player was apparently unconscious in which case medical personnel make the call on whether/when the player may return to action. In serious injuries, the substitution issue is obvious. The team will be substituting. Now, all the time that is needed is provided for the care of the player and, eventually, to have the player moved in a safe manner. The referees should show concern (R1 comes down off the stand) but not add to the confusion by joining the group close to the player. In most instances, except when the injury was not identified prior to the conclusion of the rally, play will resume with a replay. For an injury that will require substitution, the referees ensure that they understand who is available as a substitute, whether the libero is on/off the court for that team and whether an exceptional substitution may be in order and the rules that determine who may become the exceptional substitute.

19. Blood rules – More complex/serious injuries are logically treated with much more care than a minor cut and/or a light blood situation. Both are taken care of expeditiously and any necessary blood clean-up is addressed by host management, but a serious injury including excessive blood is not only typically treated in the locker room (to allow the student-athlete the appropriate privacy) but also involves the need to determine application of the injury rule in terms of when the head coach is required to make a decision on substitution. Handling the sub issue has to be done sensitively by the referees. The decision to sub or not sub is in no way more important than the referees’ concern for the well-being of the student-athlete. Blood issues may have to be addressed when it’s just a surface scratch/cut. In such a case, the referees authorize the coaching staff/trainer to enter the court to attend to the player; they then have handle the sub issue while the other official ensures that checking for spattered blood occurs. While player blood issue is being taken care, other players, the court itself and the competition volleyball need to be checked. While this is occurring, if the player can be cleaned up and any jersey issue addressed, it may not be necessary to charge a substitution for going beyond 30 seconds from the time assistance reaches the player. It also might not require the team to have to take a time-out to try to keep the player in the game. Common sense should prevail here.

20. Photographer policy provides guidelines and common sense does the rest – Photographer and videographer guidelines have been developed in the interest of player safety, to avoid interference with a match and to engender consistency. However, the policy is no replacement for the application of common sense reflecting the spirit of the guidelines. We expect coaches to be aware of parents and those assigned (“official photographers” designated by the school/coach) to photograph or video pre-match and match activities and to communicate with match officials regarding these individuals. This allows establishment of reasonable “boundaries” where video/photographs can be taken without endangering players or interfering with play. Non-mobile equipment should not be placed in a playable area, one where there is reasonable likelihood of a player contacting the equipment. During team warm-ups, parents should be encouraged to take player shots from far enough back from the court as to protect players from possible injury. Nevertheless, boys’ volleyball needs positive attention and media interest, and every effort should be made to accommodate reasonable efforts to comply with the intent of the guidelines. Referees should try to facilitate, not be unduly technical and promote the sport while maintain as first obligation protecting the safety of the student-athletes.

21. Using Categories of Fan Conduct to Determine Proper Action – Referees need to distinguish between four categories of behavior that are considered “sporting” (setting a great example to everyone, cheering for your own team and acknowledging great plays by the opponents), “not actionable” (marginal behavior that probably should not be occurring but isn’t something to be addressed during the match), “host-management actionable” (situations that require the intervention by the home-school representative and which may require a match to be stop for the behavior to be addressed) and “referee actionable” (use of the warning/penalty system constitutes the appropriate response mechanism). Understanding the importance of maintaining decorum that matches the high school sports setting and experience helps officials determine when to intervene. When coaches set an appropriate example by not arguing judgment calls with officials, this helps address fan behavior that begins to cross the line by not exacerbating the situation. The head coach of the home team will often be the representative from host management when the assigned athletic department representative is fulfilling other duties. If this same coach has contributed to the negative fan behavior, referees may find their options are more limited. The special spirit of high school sports can be undercut when things go south. At special issue are 1) extreme yelling at the opposing team server who is in the act of serving for the obvious purpose of distraction; 2) personalizing comments to a specific player by player number or physical characteristics or attributes; 3) screaming obscenities at the opposing team or officials; and 4) the home team head coach inciting the crowd by standing to yell at the R1. Actions that are demeaning, including those aimed by a coach against his/her own players, have no place in high school sports, and no one benefits if appropriate action is not taken. There are times when the match has to be halted to obtain an intervention from event management. Rule 12 provides clear guidelines for appropriate coach, player and bench behavior. A pre-match meeting with the home school representative is important to know how to find this person at any time during the event.

22. Fan Behavior and Respect for the Game – To show the importance of proper fan behavior, we need to emphasize that any type of cheering, yelling or other actions that is done in a manner to disconcert, be derogatory or taunting toward the opposing team or a specific player or interfere with the normal course of play is considered inappropriate. If inappropriate behavior is not dealt with, there is a logical loss of respect for both the game and the players that can result. The focus on “cheering for your own team” sets the “bar” for sporting conduct. There is no argument possible about whether something is in conflict with “cheer for your team” – nothing yelled at the other team typically falls within “cheer for your team.” Standing and screaming behind the opponent’s bench so the team cannot hear during a time-out or to attempt to intimidate the other team and following the opponents to stand behind them for the same purpose when teams change side are clear examples of unacceptable behavior. This occurred at the State Tournament and had to be dealt with by the Tournament Director, the Executive Director of the OHSBVA and the Head Referee because of the extreme nature of the behavior. This even went beyond the foul language being used. Derisive comments on the part of coaching staff, players or fans about the opponents, the officials or officiating do not fall within “cheer for your team.” It’s not okay to ridicule anyone. Only sporting behavior has any place in education-based athletics.