

Eastern Virginia Officials Association

Volleyball Referee Reference Handbook



Official Standards

As an official, you must take exceptional pride in your work. You should present yourself at each game not only well trained mechanically, but also with sound judgement to make decisions to bring to the great game of volleyball an attitude and manner that assures the competing teams and fans that the conduct of the game is in good hands.

You have been entrusted with great authority and in most areas there is no appeal to your decision. At times, your decisions will be questioned or protested by the teams and fans. This is to be expected. In response to objections and protests, you must restrain your emotions and conduct yourself in a manner that will win respect.

Respect is earned. It results from an increasing effort to do the job right. Respect comes from applying sound judgement. This means making the proper call in each situation requiring a decision from you. Most plays and resulting decisions are routine, whereas the troublesome and therefore difficult ones are knotty and complicated.

You develop sound judgement by knowing the rules thoroughly through study, recognizing the situation facts. Weighing the evidence that surrounds a play, relying on the instruction you have been given, and properly applying the rules. Experience and reasonableness are essential parts of the common sense you will use in applying judgement.

Attitude and demeanor are extremely important. The right attitude and proper demeanor make your job much easier. Compare a relaxed attitude to a threatening attitude in a discussion and you can see the difference. There will always be confrontations in the game. While there is no way to avoid them, you as an official must try.

While skillful mechanics are of primary importance, proper conduct is also essential. Your attitude, the respect earned from those playing and observing the game, plus your demeanor and its effect on your ability to handle the game will all be used by others to judge your ability as an official. You should always reflect on the characteristics and mannerisms you display in doing your job and diligently strive for improvement.

Never compromise your integrity. Once lost, it can never be regained. It is not like water that can be shut off and turned back on. It reflects your honor and your courage to make the tough decision.

Always be honest. Accept when you make a mistake and never try to alibi for or excuse away something you have done or failed to do by making something up. It will generally be totally transparent, show you lack the moral courage to be an effective official, and not an ingredient to help you earn respect.

National Federation / USAV Rules

Officiating Volleyball

This is a general summary of the rules of volleyball according to the National Federation and USAV

THE GAME

- * Matches are either best of 3 games, or best of 5 games. *Collegiate matches and above are played best of 5.*
- * Games are played to fifteen points with the stipulation that the winner must lead by two points or more. (NF)
 - Non deciding games are played to twenty-five points using a rally point scoring method, with the stipulation that the winner must lead by two points with no point cap. (USAV)
- * After completion of a game, teams switch sides and first service.
- * In the deciding game (game 3 of best of three game format or game 5 of best five game format), teams will have a coin flip for side and service/receive.
 - When one team reaches eight points, teams will switch sides of the court and finish the game. No point cap will be used in a deciding game. (USAV)

SCORING

- * In a non-deciding game, each serve begins a rally in which a point and side-out will be awarded.
 - Point -* Point is awarded to the serving team if it wins the rally. (NF)
 - Point is awarded to the team winning the rally (USAV)
 - Side-out -* A side-out (the switching of the right to serve) is awarded to the receiving team if it wins the rally.
 - Rotation -* The team that wins the side-out must rotate their line-up in a clockwise manner before the term of service.

TEAMS

- * Teams are made up of 6 players on the court.
- * Teams may not play with less than 6 players at any time.
- * One player on the court is designated captain. Only that player and the coach may speak with the officials.
- * Coach/Captain conversations are limited to questions on application of the rules or requests for time-out, substitution, or line-up check.

EQUIPMENT/UNIFORMS

- * Ball Pressure - 4.3psi – 4.5psi
- * Net Height - Men: 7' 11 5/8" Women: 7'4 1/4" Co-ed: 7' 11 5/8"
- * Poles & Referee Stand must be padded.
- * Uniforms can be numbered 1-99 (USAV) 0-99 (NF)
- * Jewelry is not permitted.
- * Hard casts and other hard supports or medical devices must be covered or will not be permitted.

THE COURT

- * Each side of the court is 30 feet x 30 feet.
- * A three meter attack line is marked on both sides of the court.
- * Boundary Antenna - Red and white poles attached to the net that mark the sideline boundaries.
- * Hash marks should be marked at the ends of the sidelines indicating the area behind the end-line for the service area.

PLAYABLE AREA

- * Players may play on or off the court to a predetermined boundary set using guidelines in the rules.
- * Balls may be played off the ceiling as long as contacts are available. If the ball travels to the other side of the net after hitting the ceiling or hits an overhead object over the opponent's side of the net then the ball is considered out of bounds.
- * The ball may only cross the net within the area demarcated by the antenna.
- * A ball striking an object that is hanging over a playable area and is below fifteen feet in height will be blown dead. A judgment will be made on whether a player could make a play on the ball and if there were any contacts available.
- * Players may not enter another court that is in use.

GENERAL RULES

- * A ball that lands on or within the boundary line is "in".
- * A ball is "out" if it:
 - 1) Lands outside the boundary lines.
 - 2) Touches the boundary antenna.
 - 3) Goes over or outside the antenna or touches the net or pole outside the antenna.
 - 4) Touches any outside object not in play (i.e. benches, referees, etc.)
- * The team that touches an "out" ball last loses the rally.
- * Except if it is a serve, the ball may contact the net and still be played.
- * A ball may be played by the defensive team as soon as any part of it breaks the plane of the net.

SERVICE

- * The player in right back position must serve the ball.
- * After the beckon for service, the player has 5 seconds to contact the ball (NF), 8 seconds (USAV)
- * The player must strike the ball with his hand or arm and the ball must be clear of the tossing arm as it is contacted.
- * Server must be outside of the court and within the service hash marks during contact of the ball. The server may serve from anywhere along the end line.
- * Stepping onto the court before or during contact of the ball for service results in a foot fault violation.
- * Served ball must go over the net and stay in bounds without touching a teammate or boundary antenna. A served ball touching the net is illegal.
- * The server is granted one attempt to serve. If the player tosses the ball for service and lets the ball drop to the floor or catches it, a side-out is awarded to the other team. (USAV)
 - The server may catch or allow the ball to drop and a re-serve may be granted one time during his/her term of service. (NF)
- * Serving out of turn results in an immediate side-out. Any points scored as a result of the improper server are canceled unless the mistake is discovered after the opposing team has served.
- * The receiving team may not attack or block the serve.

PLAYING THE BALL

- * The team has three contacts to get the ball over the net.
- * A block (an attempt by the defense to reject an attack at the net) is not considered a part of the three contacts.
- * A player cannot make consecutive contacts with the ball.

Exception #1 - a player may contact the ball twice in succession if the first contact is a block.

Exception #2- on the first play of the ball over the net, a player may have consecutive contacts of the ball if he/she makes one attempt to play the ball (i.e. a spiked ball may rebound from arm to chest in one motion). In this case, this is considered one play of the ball.
- * Ball can contact any part of the body. (USAV)
 - Ball may contact any part of the body from the waist up. (NF)
- * A lift is called if the ball comes to rest on the player's body. It is also called if the player catches or throws the ball.

General Criteria for Ball Handling Judgment

If the player contacts the ball cleanly (no multiple contacts), and the ball stays in contact with the body for only an instant and there is no change of direction while the player is contacting the ball, then it is a legal play of the ball.

NET PLAY

- * Players may not touch the net EXCEPT:
 - 1) if the ball pushes the net into them
 - 2) if contact is with hair
 - 3) if they make incidental contact with the net and they are not making a play on the ball (USAV)
- * Players may not interfere with the opponent's play of the ball EXCEPT:
 - 1) if the ball enters the plane of the net
 - 2) if the ball is attacked towards their side of the net...in this case the ball may be blocked before it has entered the plane of the net
 - 3) if the opponent has used its three contacts
- * Players are not allowed to attack the ball when the ball is completely on the other side of the net.
- * A player may follow through into the opponent's side of the net on an attack if the contact is initiated on their side of the net.
- * Players may legally step on or place a hand on but not completely over the centerline. Any other part of the body (i.e. knee, etc.) that partially crosses the centerline is a violation.

BACKROW ATTACK/BLOCK

- * A back row player may not attack the ball over the net if he/she is in the front zone.
- * Requirements for an illegal back row attack: 1) back row player crosses the 3 meter line; 2) player then contacts the ball completely over the height of the net; 3) the ball either goes completely over the net to the opponent's side or is legally blocked by the opponent.
- * A back row player may not block the ball.
Definition of a blocked ball:
 - The blocker is near the net AND
 - The blocker has some part of his/her body over the net at sometime during the action AND
 - The blocker attempts to block the ball. (NF)
 - He/she contacts the attacked ball or he/she is part of a group of players that contact the ball. (USAV)
- * A back row player may not interfere with a front row player's play on the ball when the ball is in the plane of the net. If a back row and front row player simultaneously contact the ball when it is in the plane, the back row player will be called for a back row block.

TIMEOUTS/TIME

- * Each team gets two time-outs per game. USAV
 - If the score becomes tied at 14-14 each team get 1 additional time-out. (NF)
- * Time-outs last 30 seconds. (USAV) 1 minute (NF)
- * During the time-out, players must go to the bench area. (USAV)
- * In between games, there will be a three-minute intermission.
- * During the intermission, players may warm-up or ball handle on the court.
- * Coaches must submit their line-up 1 min prior to the end of the intermission.

SUBSTITUTIONS

- * A player must enter at the same position as the player he/she replaced.
- * Upon returning to the game, the player must go back to his original rotational position.
- * Teams have a total of 12 team substitutions per game. (USAV) 18 for NF

PLAYOVERS

- * The first referee may issue a "playover" under the following circumstances: 1) another ball or person entering the court; 2) a decision could not be made after a dead ball; 3) A procedural situation in which the referees need to attend to takes place; 4) inadvertent whistle by either referee.

IMPROPER REQUESTS/DELAYS

- * Improper Requests are any requests that can not be granted legally and do not delay the game. EXAMPLES: Request for a third time-out; Request for more than 12 team substitutions or 3 individual substitutions; A request after the whistle for service has been made. Improper Requests are recorded on the official score sheet. Additional improper requests in the same game will result in a team warning for delay of game and then a team penalty.
- * Team Delay occurs whenever there is a delay to the game caused by a player or coach. EXAMPLES: Stoppage of game for removal of jewelry, delay in substitution, etc.
 - Team delays will result in a team warning for the first instance in a game and then a team penalty for each subsequent delay. (USAV)
 - Team delays will result in a time-out for the offending team. (NF)

INDIVIDUAL SANCTIONS

Verbal

- A warning to an individual for minor unsportsmanlike behavior. (USAV)

Yellow Card

- A warning to an individual for minor unsportsmanlike behavior. Sanction is issued for entire match. (NF)
- Penalty is issued for rude remarks to the officials, strong unsportsmanlike behavior or second individual warning offense. On issuance of individual yellow card, a point or side-out is awarded to other team. Sanction is issued for one game only. (USAV)

Red Card

- Penalty is issued for rude remarks to the officials, strong unsportsmanlike behavior or second individual warning offense. On issuance of individual red player is expelled for the game. Sanction is issued for one game only. (USAV)
- Penalty is issued for rude remarks to the officials, strong unsportsmanlike behavior or second individual warning offense. On issuance of individual red card, a point or side-out is awarded to other team. Sanction is issued for entire match. (NF)

Red & Yellow Cards

- Player is expelled for the match for major unsportsmanlike behavior or for a sanction received after issuance of red card.

OFFICIALS

The officiating crew is made up of a first referee, second referee, two line judges and a scorekeeper.

First Referee

The First Referee makes all final judgments on calls. He/she awards points and side-outs. His/her position is on the stand at the net. His/her word is final on all matters. The first official is the only official who may issue a sanction.

Second Referee

The second referee is positioned opposite the first referee down on the floor near the net. His/her primary function is to watch net play (net touches and centerline violations). The second referee will whistle for illegal back row attacks and back row blocks and assist the first official in all manner of calls. On service, the second referee will watch the team that is receiving serve and watch for positional faults. He/she also is responsible for handling time-outs and substitutions and controlling the bench area. In the deciding game, the second referee may/shall administer the coin flip.

Scorekeeper

The scorekeeper records all events that take place during the match. The scorekeeper must keep an accurate record of points, side-outs, time-outs, substitutions and various penalties and sanctions that may occur. The Scorekeeper will keep the official score on her forms.

Line Judges (2)

Line judges are responsible for determining whether the ball lands within the court boundaries or not. They also will indicate if the ball violates the antenna boundary. They also must determine if the ball is touched before landing out. Their position is at the intersection of two of the boundary lines.

Guidelines for First Referee

PRE-MATCH PREPARATION

Prepare Mentally

1. Study and review the rules of the game (away from the playing arena).
2. Be knowledgeable of the latest playing techniques and game tactics.
3. Review your officiating areas needing self-improvement.

Prepare Physically

1. Be in a well-rested and alert condition.
2. Be punctual to the match, at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the match. If possible, enter the playing arena with the second referee. Authority begins upon arrival at courtside.
3. Wear the proper uniform. (Wear civilian clothing for non-officiating activities).
 - a. Dark navy blue all-polyester (not cotton) slacks
 - b. Black or dark navy blue leather belt (if slacks have belt loops)
 - c. White volleyball official's shirt
 - d. All white socks
 - e. All white shoes
 - f. Volleyball referee patch
4. Have basic equipment, preferably in a referee gear bag.
 - a. Plastic whistle on lanyard
 - b. Red and yellow cards
 - c. Coin (size of quarter or larger)
 - d. Wrist watch
 - e. Rule book
 - f. Measuring chain
5. Have optional equipment.
 - a. Discrete device to track serving team, e.g., rubber bands
 - b. Ball needle
 - c. Ball pump
 - d. Pressure gauge

PRE-MATCH DUTIES

Initial Checks

1. Identify the tournament director and the playing site manager (could be same person).
2. Identify the head referee.
3. Inspect the playing facility.
 - a. Determine playable condition.
 - b. Obtain or define the ground rules.
 - c. Inspect the court markings, especially the centerline, attack line, and service area.
 - d. Verify 2 meters clearance from the sides and ends of court.
 - e. Examine overhead objects for 15' clearance.
 - f. Determine non-playable areas.
 - Team benches and scorekeeper's table
 - Bleachers
 - Adjacent courts
 - Dividing nets
 - g. Examine the basketball baskets and backboards for possible replay.
 - h. Look for unusual obstructions and determine replay ruling.
4. Check the court equipment.
 - a. Net height
 - Tolerance: $\frac{3}{4}$ " higher at ends of net
 - b. Referee stand (located opposite scorekeeper's table)
 - c. Padding on net stanchions, support cables, and referee stand
 - d. Towels
5. Identify the officiating team.
6. Identify the protest committee.
7. Introduce yourself and the second referee to the visiting team coaches then the home team coaches without socializing or fraternizing.

Captains' Meeting

1. Introductions
2. Format of match
3. Points per game
4. Court markings
5. Ground rules
 - a. Overhead objects
 - b. Non-playable areas
 - c. Basketball baskets and backboards
 - d. Dividing nets
 - e. Bleachers
 - f. Space between the benches and scorekeeper's table
 - g. Unusual obstructions
 - h. Adjacent courts
6. Warm-up procedures
7. Input from second referee
8. Questions from the captains
9. Coin toss
 - a. Select caller (either visiting or "away" team).
 - b. Identify "heads" and "tails" of coin.
 - c. Toss, catch, and cover coin. Do not turn the coin over.
 - d. Verify call.
 - e. Winner's choice: serve, receive, court.
 - f. Helpful hint: place coin in pocket on side of serving team.

Brief the Officiating Team

1. Brief the scorekeeper.
 - a. Identify the serving team and their side of court.
 - b. Furnish the names of the first and second referees.
 - c. State the desired action from the scorekeeper should scoring problems occur during the match.
2. Brief the second referee.
 - a. Recap the second referee's duties for:
 - Receiving team overlaps
 - Net violations
 - Center line violations
 - Ball out at the antenna on second referee's side
 - Positioning during blocking activities
 - b. Discuss and agree on the whistle actions and communication signals for:
 - Illegal back row attacker
 - Illegal back row blocker
 - Ball handling errors
 - Two/four hits
 - Good/downed pancake
 - Issuance of individual red card
 - Issuance of individual yellow card
 - Issuance of team red card
 - Issuance of team yellow card
3. Brief the line judges.
 - a. Review the ground rules.
 - b. Instruct them on the proper court position, prompt signaling, eye contact with you at end of each play, and preferred signals for:
 - Ball in
 - Ball out (including antenna)
 - Ball hit floor on attempted pancake save
 - Touch
 - Service foot fault
 - Ball hit overhead object or dividing net
 - Player off court before serve
 - Did not see play

Check the Playing Equipment

1. Ball pressure: 4.3 - 4.5 p.s.i.
2. Placement of antennas and vertical tapes on net

Check the Teams

1. Rosters
 - a. Check uniform numbers and total number of players (together with second referee).
 - b. Ensure captain is designated.
2. Uniforms (jersey and shorts)
 - a. Jerseys must be similar and have same color. Same for shorts.
 - b. Numbers on jerseys. Colors for number and jersey must contrast.
 - c. Exposed garments under the uniform must match for all teammates who choose to wear them.
3. Allowable jewelry
 - a. Religious or medical medallion (taped to body or sewn under uniform)
 - b. Flat ring (USAV)
4. Allowable injury protection gear
 - a. Soft bandage
 - b. "Air-filled" cast (covered)
 - c. Knee brace (covered)
 - d. Plastic leg cast (covered)
5. Allowable head gear
 - a. Sweat band
 - b. Folded bandanna
 - c. Barrette
6. Disallow bare feet due to possible liability.

HAND SIGNALS

Pointers

1. Display one signal at a time. Hold each signal at least two seconds and high enough for everyone to see. Be metronomic.
2. Present each signal with a crisp, smooth motion. Avoid theatrical, hurried, or grandiose motions.
3. The first signal at the end of a play identifies the action which caused the play to end. Display supplementary signals only if clarification is needed. The last signal is the scoring decision: point, side out, or replay. (NF)
 - Reverse signals for USAV.
4. Place your elbow(s) at least shoulder height for any signal displayed above head level.
5. Use the hand on the side of the team being cited or making request.
6. Practice in front of a mirror.

Signals (Motion guidelines and applicable situations)

1. Serve. Start with arm horizontal toward the end line. Bend elbow and sweep forearm toward head with palm ending face down directly over head.
2. Side out. Extend arm horizontal toward the end line, palm slightly tilted back from vertical.
3. Point. Forearm and index finger straight up.
4. Ball in. Arm and entire hand in a straight line pointed downward 45° and 45° from net and sideline, fingers and thumb together, palm perpendicular to floor.
5. Service foot fault. Same as "ball in" signal, except pointed at and moved along the service line.
6. Player off court. Same as "ball in" signal, except pointed at and moved along the line where the player at fault is off the court.
7. Ball goes under net into opponent's court. Same as "ball in" signal, except pointed at the middle of the center line.
8. Out. Elbows shoulder width and at least shoulder height, forearms and hands in a vertical straight line, palms facing toward you.
 - a. Ball lands out of bounds on second or third contact, or passes outside the pole.
 - b. Spike hits the net or blocker's hands, and lands out of bounds on the attacking team's side.
 - c. Player enters a non-playable area.
9. Touch. Hold forearm and hand of arm closest to action vertical and to the side of the forehead with palm above eye level and facing toward you. Then brush palm and fingers of vertical hand with the palm-side of the fingers of the other hand.
 - a. Ball lands out of bounds (but does not pass outside pole) on first contact.
 - b. Spike contacts the blocker's hands and lands out of bounds on the blocking team's side.

Signals (Motion guidelines and applicable situations)

10. Four hits. "Four," thumb facing court, forearm vertical, elbow at least shoulder height.
 - a. Fourth team hit, regardless of which player made the third team hit or what part of body ball contacts.
11. Player crossed the center line. Same as "ball under," indicate the player at fault.
 - a. Entire foot or hand, or another part of a player's body makes contact with the sideline or inside of the opponent's court.
 - b. Player contacts the ball in the vertical plane under the net and interferes with the opponent's opportunity to play the ball.
 - c. Player contacts the ball completely on the opponent's side of the net under the net.
12. Lifted or held ball. Raise forearm up with palm parallel to the floor, facing upward, and ending at chest level.
13. Double hit. Raised index and middle fingers, thumb facing the court, forearm vertical, elbow at least shoulder height.
14. End of the game or match. Forearms crossed in front of the chest with open palms.
15. Time-out. Hold one forearm and hand vertical, form a "T" above eye level with the other hand.
 - a. Regular. Follow up by pointing with the entire hand to the team making the request.
 - b. Referee. Follow up by tapping chest with fingertips of both hands.
16. Substitution. Rotate hands around each other above eye level.
17. Illegal serve. Same as "lifted ball" signal except with arm extended.
18. Delay of serve. "Five," palm facing court, forearm vertical, elbow at least shoulder height.
 - a. No contact of the ball for service within 5 seconds after beckoning whistle. (NF) 8 seconds (USAV)
19. Net. Touch the net (or side of the net cable if the net is too far) with palm of hand.
 - a. Service hits a player or object before entering the opponent's court.
 - b. Player (not hair) touches any part of the net (not supports). Disregard incidental contact not part of attack/blocking action. Indicate with entire hand the player at fault.
20. Replay or re-serve: raised thumbs in front and at shoulder height.
 - a. Foreign player or object enters the court.
 - b. Net is torn by the ball other than during service.
 - c. Illegal back row attacker and illegal back row blocker (double fault).
 - d. Ball lodges in overhead object > 15'.
21. Screen or illegal block. Palms facing the court above head level, forearms vertical, elbows out; indicate player(s) at fault.
 - a. Screen. Receiving player's view of server and flight of ball was obstructed.
 - b. Blocker: criteria
 - Close proximity of the net.
 - Hand and arm movement towards the ball.
 - Some part of the body above the net before contacting the ball.
 - c. Back row player taking part in a block which made contact with the ball.
 - d. Serve is blocked.
22. Overlap. Circular motion with arm and index finger pointed to the floor; indicate player(s) at fault.
 - a. Ignore trivial overlaps where no advantage was gained. Call an overlap when players are definitely out of rotation.
23. Over the net. Horizontal forearm over net cable and across body, palm face down; indicate player at fault.
24. Illegal back row attacker. Elbow bent, forearm starting vertically, downward motion with forearm and palm at 45 degrees angle across body; indicate the player at fault.
 - a. Attack: definition
 - Intentional effort by a player to direct the ball into the opponent's court.
 - Unintentional effort resulting in the entire ball crossing the vertical plane of the net onto the opponent's court.
 - Or, third team hit.
 - b. Attack is blocked by the opponent or completely crosses the vertical plane of the net after:
 - A back row player attacks the ball completely above the height of the net with last floor contact on or in front of the attack line.
 - A serve is attacked completely above the height of the net from anywhere on the court.
25. Ball hits an overhead object. Same as "ball in" signal, except pointed at the overhead object.
 - a. Ball hits an overhead object > 15' and enters the opponent's court (or vice versa). Point to a generic central overhead spot above the court of the team at fault.
 - b. Ball hits an overhead object over a non-playable area.

Signals (Motion guidelines and applicable situations)

26. Illegal contact (coed). Palms together directly over head.
 - a. Attack made after more than one team hit without contact by a female player (or male player if reverse coed).
27. Improper request. Palm held above eye level on outside of the wrist of the other hand.
28. Team delay (warning), a.k.a. team yellow card. Yellow card held on the bottom end above eye level on outside of the other wrist.
29. Team delay (penalty), a.k.a. team red card. Red card held on the bottom end above eye level on outside of the other wrist.
30. Yellow or red card. Yellow or red card held on the bottom end above head level, forearm vertical; indicate the team member being cited.
31. Expulsion. Red and yellow cards held on the bottom ends in one hand above head level, forearm vertical; indicate the team member being cited.
32. Disqualification. Red and yellow cards held on the bottom ends in separate hands above head level, forearms vertical; indicate the team member being cited.
33. Change of courts. Right arm across front of body, left arm across back.

34. Advance techniques not in the referee's handbook
 - a. Ball in vertical plane of net contacted legally. Elbow bent, entire hand pointed to the far end of the net, move hand down about 6" then back up.
 - b. "Legal" play.
 - Legal back row attack behind the attack line. Push with palm from in front of chest toward the attack line.
 - Legal back row hit in front of the attack line. Elbow bent, forearm and hand horizontal, palm face down, move forearm down about 6" and up twice.
 - Set by back row setter directed to teammate is blocked in vertical plane of net. Baseball "safe" sign.
 - c. "Game point" confirmation. Raised forefinger on the opposite shoulder.
 - d. "Ball." Both hands holding sides of an imaginary ball at chest height.
 - e. Floor needs to be wiped. Circular polishing motion, palm down.
 - f. Player numbers. Hands toward the side, slightly higher than the shoulder.
 - 10: closed right fist.
 - 11 - 15: closed right fist along with 1 - 5 on the left hand.
 - 16 - 19: closed right fist followed by 6 - 9.
 - 20 and above: two separate numbers, closed fist for zero.
 - g. Overtime ("my call"). Fingertips of both hands held on chest.

WHISTLE

Pointers

1. Blow your whistle when an infraction occurs or the instant the ball hits the floor to legally end the play. Do not wait for the line judges to make a call.
2. Keep the whistle in your mouth throughout the game. Remove only to speak or for relief.
3. Blow sharply and attain a deafening volume. Do not prolong the sound. Maintain a uniform duration and volume throughout match to start and end each play.
4. Vary from a single "toot" technique for:
 - a. Time-out
 - b. Substitution
 - c. Foreign object or player on the court
 - d. Injured player
 - e. Whistle warning to a team member
 - f. End of the game or match
 - g. Request denied
 - h. Stopping play if a previous whistle to stop play was not heard.

Unnecessary Whistles by the First Referee

1. Second referee blows whistle during the playing action.
2. Ending time-outs, warm-ups, or intervals between games (unless second referee fails to do so).

Situations

1. If first and second referees blow whistles about the same time, promptly decide whose whistle takes precedence. Do not call a replay.
2. For an inadvertent whistle, play stands if the outcome is not affected, else call a replay.
3. For a back row blocker or illegal back row attacker, blow the whistle when play becomes illegal. A delayed whistle is permitted if unsure.

BALL HANDLING

Judgment Criteria

1. Ball must be received cleanly.
2. Ball cannot come to a stop, nor be held or thrown.
3. Ball must be released cleanly and in one direction.

Pointers

1. Set a correct and CONSISTENT standard at which you are comfortable making ball handling calls. Do not waver too far from your standard. Being extremely restrictive will likely create greater difficulty in being consistent.
2. If the teams differ in skills, call to the level of the better team.
3. Call only the violations you (and the second referee) actually see; no phantom calls.
4. Observe only the body surfaces making actual contact with the ball. Body positioning is irrelevant.
5. Watch the player's entire attempt to contact the ball. Do not look ahead of that action.
6. Wait to blow your whistle for a violation until after a quick mental review of the contacting action.
7. Do not make automatic ball handling calls based on sound, spin, technique, a player's irregular body position, or goofy, ugly, or surprising results.
8. At game point, overlook borderline infractions but call obvious ones.
9. Nobody is perfect. Should you err, teams will be more upset over a call made on a legally handled ball as opposed to a missed violation.

Situations

1. Soft/power dink or setter dump. Watch for extended contact, change in direction during release, or contact with palm.
2. Pancake. Expect the ball to rebound cleanly at an angle similar to its descent; get visual help from the second referee and line judges.
3. Stuff block. Watch for extended contact or change in direction during release.
4. One-hand set. Judge like a two-hand set.
5. Player in an awkward or airborne position while setting a bad pass. Focus on the hands contacting the ball, ignore body position.
6. "Deep dish" set. Watch for extended contact. Hands must be constantly moving and stay beneath the ball.
7. Open hand scoop. Hand must be constantly moving and the ball is not held.
8. Overhead or underhand beach dig. Ball must rebound cleanly, ignore sound.
9. Hand set of first ball. Watch for the ball coming to rest. Anything else is legal.
10. Fast, flat pass to setter. Setter's hands must make contact beneath the ball.
11. Simultaneous contact by teammates. Consider as one hit if two hits not distinct.
12. Simultaneous contact by opponents, i.e., joust. Survival of the fittest. No replay.
13. Multiple contacts on the first attempt to play the ball. Allow only one continuous effort by the player.
14. Save of ball at net after being blocked or going into net. Player will likely be reacting quickly in an awkward position. Focus on the part of body contacting the ball, nothing else. Ball rolling fast on player's body is not a violation. Get visual help from second referee.

MATCH CALLING TECHNIQUES

Pre-Game

1. Let the second referee terminate warm-ups or interval between the games.
2. Allow time for player preparation and a short team huddle.
3. Whistle and direct teams to the end lines if needed.
 - a. Failure to report to the end line: team delay. After 15 seconds: team red card; another 15 seconds: default game.
 - b. Insufficient players to start the match: forfeit (no time-outs allowed).
 - Declare forfeit at the match start time, 10 minutes later for the second game, 10 minutes later for the third game.
4. Wait for the second referee to get the lineups from the scorekeeper.
 - a. Lineup not submitted on time: team delay. After 15 seconds: team red card; another 15 seconds: default game.
5. Whistle and beckon the teams onto court.
6. Have the second referee verify the lineups.
 - a. Player on court different from lineup: team has option to put in the listed player or do a substitution.
7. Inspect the player gear.
 - a. Removal of prohibited items: team delay.
8. Obtain the playing captains' identities from the second referee.
9. Line judges ready?
10. Scorekeeper ready?
11. Second referee ready?

S...C...A...N the Entire Court Before Each Serve

1. Receiving team
 - a. Be aware of possible substitution or time-out request by the captain.
 - b. Players ready?
 - c. Note whether the setter is front or back row.
 - d. Let the second referee call overlaps on the receiving team.
2. Line judge on the side of the receiving team in position?
3. Check the receiving team bench. Expect a substitution or time-out request after string of points by the opponent or at game point.
4. Scorekeeper ready? (Especially after substitution).
5. Second referee ready?
6. Check the serving team bench for a possible substitution (or time-out) request.
7. Serving team
 - a. Players ready?
 - b. Check for possible screen.
 - c. Check for possible overlaps.
 - d. Note whether the setter is front or back row.
8. Line judge on the side of the serving team in position?
9. Server ready?
 - Expect and fulfill a request for lineup check or the identity of the proper server.

Sequence for Each Rally

1. Place the hand away from server on the net cable. (Remove from cable after the serve completely crosses the net).
2. Blow the whistle then follow with beckon for serve.
 - a. For any request made after the whistle for serve: blow whistle, replay, improper request.
 - b. Allow a switch to the proper server during the time allotted for serve.
 - c. Watch for an illegal serve, foot fault, or delay of service.
 - d. Permit the service toss to drop without contact.
 - First time: re-serve, disallow any requests.
 - Second straight time: illegal serve, side out.
3. Look, anticipate, focus, review, and wait to whistle on each play of the ball.
 - a. Look ahead during the flight of the ball. Stay alert during possible trouble situations, relax on a routine flight.
 - b. Anticipate the next player(s) to possibly contact the ball. Be aware of a possible illegal back row attacker or blocker.
 - c. Focus with "tunnel vision" on the surfaces of the player's body contacting the ball.
 - Position yourself to get the best possible view of the ball contact.
 - Do not look ahead. Watch the entire contact of the ball.
 - d. Wait to blow your whistle after quickly reviewing in your mind if a violation occurred.
 - e. Signal "safe" for any legal back row attack which may be questioned.
 - f. Widen your view of the court after contact with the ball is completed.
 - For close plays at the net, quickly check for any signal from the second referee.
 - For a ball passing close to the antenna, quickly check for any signal from the line judges.
 - Direct your immediate attention to the next ball contact; do not stay focused on a possible violation in process at the net. Expect a rapid ensuing action.
4. End each play with a whistle first, signal(s) for the action, then the scoring result.
 - a. Blow the whistle the instant the play ends, especially when the ball lands on the floor.
 - b. For plays not ending in ball handling errors, check for any signals from the line judge closest to play, and the other line judge.
 - c. Glance at the second referee for a possible signal.
 - d. Display the signal that caused the play to end. Display supplemental signals only if clarification is needed.
 - e. Signal a point, side out, or replay. Verify the point is recorded on the scoreboard.
 - f. Discretely keep track of the serving team.
 - g. Check the benches and captain of both teams for time-out request after a string of points or substitution request upon side out.

Plays at the Net

1. Pointers
 - a. Focus on the action at the top and above net and the players involved. Let the second referee watch the lower net and center line.
 - b. Keep your primary view on the offensive players, but do not neglect the defensive players actively involved.
 - c. Be aware of the position of the ball relative to the vertical plane of the net and to the height of the net.
2. Legal plays (assume a back row setter is in the vicinity of the net)
 - a. Opponent blocks the ball on the attacking team's side of the net and the attacking team has no legal chance to play the ball.
 - b. Ball (especially overpass) completely above the height of the net is directed by a back row setter to a front row teammate, then is blocked in the vertical plane of the net by the opponent.
 - c. Ball (especially overpass) not completely above the height of the net is attacked by a back row setter, then is blocked by the opponent or enters the opponent's court.
 - d. Ball in the vertical plane of the net is played by any front row player of either team.
 - e. Overpass in the plane or on opponent's side of the net is contacted by the opponent, then is contacted below the height of the net by a back row setter: first team hit.
3. Violations (assume a back row setter is in the vicinity of the net)
 - a. Opponent attacks the ball on the attacking team's side of the net.
 - b. Opponent blocks the ball (especially the set of an overpass) on the attacking team's side of the net while the attacking team still has a legal chance to play the ball.
 - c. Ball (especially overpass) completely above the height of the net is attacked by a back row setter, then is blocked by the opponent or enters the opponent's court: illegal back row attack.
 - d. Ball in the plane is contacted simultaneously by a back row setter and a front row opponent: illegal back row blocker.
 - e. Overpass in the plane or on the opponent's side of the net is contacted by an opponent, then is blocked by a back row setter: illegal block.
4. Other distinct possibilities
 - a. Attack hits the top side of net and may have been contacted by the blocker's: judgment call.
 - b. Front row opponents joust for a ball in the plane: play continues.
 - c. Attacked ball is blocked into the attacker: first team hit.
 - d. Ball is pinned against the side of the net by a blocker: held ball.
 - e. Spiker swings and misses the third team hit and an opponent blocks the ball on the attacking team's side of the net: play continues.

End of Game or Match

1. After signaling game point, confirm game point with the second referee.
2. After signaling the winning point, whistle and signal the end of the game.
3. Direct the teams to the end lines.
4. If next game is deciding game, i.e., last game of match with odd-numbered games:
 - a. Blow whistle and excuse teams from end lines without switching courts.
 - b. Have the second referee conduct the coin toss.
5. If another game in the match:
 - a. Blow whistle and direct the teams to switch courts. If delay in switching: team delay.
 - b. Supervise the players on the court warming up.
6. If the end of the match:
 - a. Blow whistle and bring the teams together for hand shake.
 - b. Thank your support officials.
 - a. Promptly leave the playing arena accompanied by the second referee.

Deciding Game of the Match (USAV)

1. Rally point scoring.
 - a. Only done for the final game of a "best of" match.
 - b. Signal side out.
2. Switch courts at mid-game (including one-game playoff).
 - a. Whistle and direct the teams to the end lines.
 - b. Whistle, signal teams to switch courts and proceed directly onto the opposite court.

MATCH CONDUCT

Do's

1. Goal: No one recalls any plays or incidents involving the officials.
2. Look professional.
 - a. Wear the proper official's uniform.
 - b. Be well-groomed.
 - c. Have sound mechanics for hand signals, whistle, and match calling techniques.
3. Act professional.
 - a. Be all business but pleasant on and off the stand while in an official's capacity.
 - b. Take charge without being a dictator. Be a facilitator.
 - c. Work as a team with your support officials. Be a manager.
 - Let them do their respective jobs. Prompt them only as necessary.
 - Maintain communication with continual eye contact. Visually solicit and obtain their complete signaled input before making your decision on a play. Only confer with them for clarification purposes.
 - Support their decisions, overrule only as needed. Make the final decision if there are disagreeing views.
 - Protect them. Minimize harassment by teams.
 - d. Be self-assured and exude confidence in your decisions.
4. Judge professionally.
 - a. Know the rules. Apply them correctly with common sense.
 - b. Maintain a correct and consistent level for calling ball handling violations.
 - c. Be impartial in your decisions.

Don'ts

1. Call the match according to pre-match observations or expected match results.
2. Unnecessary delays and conferences.
3. Replays for situations not covered by the rules.
4. Mind changes on ball handling judgment calls.
5. "Make up" for mistakes.
6. Let an error you make ruin your concentration.
7. Let the teams' or crowd's reactions influence your judgment. (Do use selective hearing).
8. Arguments or confrontations during and after the match.
9. Personal grudges.

Misconduct and Sanctions

1. Pointers

- a. Stay calm.
- b. Talk to the captains only.
- c. Do not invite trouble with unnecessary talk during a match.

2. Issue sanctions judiciously.

- a. A misconduct does not warrant an automatic sanction. Determine its intent and severity first, then take appropriate action. Avoid exacerbating the situation.
- b. Take preventive measures. Use a cautionary whistle, "settle down" motion, or verbal warning for any inconsequential remarks, incidental misconduct, spontaneous reaction not directed at you, your support officials, or the opponents and not delaying the game, or "trash talking" across the net. Issue a sanction if forewarned action is repeated.
- c. Be approachable and let captains have their say on a decision. Briefly explain the ruling for your decision if needed. If a complaint continues, issue a sanction.
- d. If you miss calling a violation, a displeased captain may often be placated by admitting you missed it. However, never admit a mistake for making a ball handling call; it will invite second guessing.

3. Issue an individual sanction for the following.

- a. The second referee requests a sanction be issued.
- b. Any demonstrative, abusive, or unsportsmanlike conduct.
- c. You feel you are about to lose control of your temper or the match because of a misconduct.

4. Sanctions are cumulative and progressive for a game (USAV), and for the match in Federation. (NF).

- a. For a succeeding team sanction issue the next higher order sanction.
- b. For a succeeding individual sanction issue any higher order sanction. Administer the serving team first to offset simultaneous sanctions.
- c. Individual sanctions may be issued after the pre-match coin toss and between games.

5. Team sanctions in ascending priority order and result.

USAV

- a. Improper request: warning for invalid verbal request. Deny request, no penalty.
- b. Team delay (warning) AKA team yellow card: warning for delaying physical action by a team. Deny any request, no penalty.
- c. Team delay (penalty) AKA team red card: side out or point penalty for any team sanction after the first team delay.

NF

Team delay results in time-out. If team has no time-outs left penalty is Red Card (point or side-out).

6. Individual sanctions in ascending priority order and result.

Verbal warning: minor misconduct, no penalty. (USAV & NF)

Yellow card:

- warning for minor misconduct, no penalty. (NF)
- side out or point penalty for unsportsmanlike or abusive conduct or language (USAV)

Red card:

- side out or point penalty for unsportsmanlike or abusive conduct or language (NF)
- Expulsion: one game ejection for excessive misconduct, no other penalty.
- Individual must leave the court and team area. After 1 minute, warn the captain of a possible default. Another 15 seconds, default game. (USAV)

Disqualification: one match ejection for extreme misconduct, no other penalty.

- Individual must leave the playing arena.
- Ejection for more than one match is done by the tournament director.
- If no legal team and player substitution, default game.

Default: default of game for insufficient players due to injury or ejection.

Procedural Interruptions

1. Foreign player or object on court. Stop play immediately if a safety hazard is created or the play action is affected: replay.
2. Overlap. Avoid calling an overlap on two consecutive serves by ensuring the team at fault is placed into proper rotation and alignment.
3. Time-out.
 - a. May be consecutive.
 - b. Lasts 30 seconds, regardless. Players must leave the court (USAV), 60 seconds (NF).
 - c. Request not by the playing captain or head coach: improper request.
 - d. Third time-out request (USAV), unless teams granted additional from 14-14 tie (NF).
 - Improper request unless deliberate, then team delay.
 - Granted inadvertently: team delay.
 - e. Liquids near sideline: team delay (USAV).
 - f. Failure to return to court: team delay.
4. Substitution.
 - a. Change in a team's request is allowed if the referee makes mind change.
 - b. Improper request
 - Request not by the playing captain or bench coach(es).
 - Second request in the same "dead ball" period.
 - Request will result in excessive team or player substitutions.
 - Number of substitutions not indicated: grant only one substitution.
 - Requested number changed verbally.
 - More substitutes than the number requested: allow the number requested, deny the extra substitutes.
 - c. Team delay
 - Less substitutes than the number requested.
 - Refusal to complete the substitution.
 - Substitute not ready.
 - Incoming substitute is an illegal player.
5. Illegal player in the game, wrong position entry, or wrong server.
 - a. Assure the team at fault has the proper players placed in the right order.
 - b. Ensure the score is corrected for the error.
 - If discovered before the opponent's serve, cancel the points made during the term of service by the team at fault. Opponent serves.
 - If discovered after the opponent's serve, the team at fault retains points. Award the opponent one point unless the opponent scored a point during its term of service. Opponent continues to serve.
 - c. Confirm the scorekeeper has corrected the score sheet for the player and team substitutions.
6. Protest.
 - a. Allowed on rules, not judgment or sanctions.
 - b. Made by the captains only.
 - c. Procedure
 - Get off the stand (only exception to staying on stand at all times).
 - Scorekeeper records the pertinent facts.
 - Score sheet signed by both captains, first referee, and scorekeeper.
 - Protest committee makes decision.
 - Decision recorded on the back of the score sheet.

Procedural Interruptions

7. Injured player.

- a. Stop play immediately. Rally is replayed. Injury situation must be resolved before any regular substitution action occurs.
- b. If injured player is unable to continue playing within 30 seconds, the team must make a legal (or abnormal if needed) substitution for the injured player, or call a time-out. If the injured player is replaced, give the team as much time as needed to safely remove player from playing area and no time-out is charged.
- c. Abnormal substitution priority.
 - Player played the position previously and has an allowable entry; or player never in the game.
 - Any player with an allowable entry.
 - Player played the position previously.
 - Any player.
 - If only six players:
 - Grant special 3-minutes referee time-out for recovery.
 - Grant regular remaining time-outs. If injured player does not recover, default match.
 - If second time for the same player during the match: default match.

8. Bleeding player. Handle in same manner as injured player.

EVALUATION and IMPROVEMENT

Evaluation Criteria

1. Match preparation
 - a. Proper uniform
 - b. Official's equipment
 - c. Ground rules
 - d. Court and playing equipment inspection
 - e. Uniform and player inspection
 - f. Captains' meeting
2. Mechanics
 - a. Hand signals
 - b. Whistle
 - c. Match calling techniques
3. Ball handling
 - a. Error judgment
 - b. Consistency
4. Control of match
 - a. Management and supervision, taking charge
 - b. Teamwork with second referee and line judges
 - c. Application of rules
 - d. Handling misconduct; use of sanctions
 - e. Administering procedural interruptions
 - f. Match tempo
5. Overall presence
 - a. Professional and confident appearance
 - b. Poise and composure
 - c. Court vision and alertness
 - d. Decisiveness
 - e. Attitude and conduct
 - Facilitator or dictator?
 - Firm but courteous
 - Open to criticism; listens
 - Strives for improvement

Personal Improvement

1. Study and review the rules of the game.
2. Keep up with the advancements in the game.
3. Review your mistakes, prevent recurrence.
4. Solicit advice from higher ranking officials. Criticism is seldom proffered unless requested.
5. Seek assignments beyond your comfort level, but within your ability.
6. Watch the officials working higher level competition.
7. Observe and emulate better skilled officials. Find a role model.
8. **Just do it!** Nothing beats EXPERIENCE.

A Second Referee Is Important

A second referee (R2) is as important as a first referee (R1). While the R1 orchestrates the match, the R2 does the grunt work. Serving as an R2 requires your attention to other key functions besides the basics of overlaps and net/centerline violations.

Pre-match procedures.

Assist the R1 in checking the match equipment, team rosters, and player uniforms. Ensure distribution and completion of lineup sheets. Monitor the warm-ups. Confer with the R1 to discuss potential game violation situations and actions preferred from you.

Communication with scorekeeper.

Before the match, discuss with the scorekeeper the information you desire on scorekeeping problems or delays, time outs taken, and individual and team substitutions taken. Confirm when it is game point so it may be signaled to the R1.

Positioning.

Before each serve be on the receiving team's side to detect its overlaps. Both team benches should be within your peripheral vision. Throughout a rally, continually switch courts to be on the blocking team's side and stationary before the second ball contact by the attacking team. Stay on the attacking team's side if you might miss a net play during a switch. At the end of the rally, side step away from the net to establish clear communication lines with the R1. Mimic the R1's signals.

Team requests.

Scan the team benches before and after each rally. Anticipate requests. Fulfill them without delay. For substitution requests, be positioned at the attack/side lines intersection before the subs; face the scorekeeper, call the player numbers, and release the players right away; return straight to your pre-serve station; and signal to the R1 when ready. For time out requests, signal to the R1 the number of time outs taken; monitor the teams and elapsed time; whistle when five seconds remain and when time expires; and prompt the teams to return to the court if needed.

Assisting on potential violations.

Be on the constant alert for back row attacks from the attack line, attacks and blocks by a back row setter at the net, opponents reaching over the net, ball handling violations screened away from the R1, unsuccessful pancake digs, and other potential violations discussed in your pre-match conference with the R1. Perform the pre-agreed actions, e.g., whistle, side step and signal, etc., if a potential violation arises.

Bench control.

Address and settle any bench misconduct right away. Use tact and verbal/motion/whistle commands. Request the R1 to issue a sanction if needed. Always reinforce the R1's decisions if they are questioned or criticized. Remember, you're a team.

The duties of a second referee are not to be taken lightly. The actions and decisions of a second referee directly influence the administration and outcome of the match. The position is as important as a first referee and should be given the proper regard it requires.

More Second Referee Techniques

Officials tend to be trained more rigorously as first referees than as second referees early in their careers. Many referees begin their careers in the junior ranks where second referees are usually a coaches rather than paid officials. Other referees begin in the adult leagues where the positions importance is not emphasized. The second referee is an integral member of the officiating team and must work hard in order help a match move along efficiently. Foremost, the second referee is not along for the ride. Good second referees are active throughout the match. Many problems can be eliminated when quality second referee techniques are implemented. Position is a key component. Be at the right place at the right time to help eliminate delays, calm coaches and extinguish unsporting acts.

PROXIMITY TO THE COURT.

The free zone should be clear of obstructions within 2 meters of the court. The second referee should be 2 meters away from the court as much as possible. This enables the official get out of the way of play. Secondly, the official will be closer to the benches, which will enable the official to communicate more efficiently with bench coaches and the scorekeeper. The second referee will also have a broader perspective of the court to be able to help the first referee call back row violations.

PROXIMITY TO NET /POLE.

The second referee should be on meter away (left or right) from the pole. Current guidelines state that the second referee should be a step away from the pole, make it a large step. When the serve takes place the second referee stands on the receivers side of the net ready to call overlaps or help the first referee with faults blocked from their view . Many times served balls land out of bounds near the line, the second referee can help with the call. During rallies the second referee should move to a position one meter away from the pole on the blocking teams side (lateral movement). This position gives the first referee a clear unobstructed view of the second referee when help is needed. Second referees that are closer to the net will be obstructed from view of the first official by either the pole or the blocker's. The second referee should be in a position to be able to narrow their focus on blocks and then widen their view as play moves away from the net.

TIMING.

During rallies the lateral movement should take place after the blocker's have landed, turned and released from the net. This enables the second referee to call center line violations. When play at the net is quick, it is difficult to move to the blocker's side. Relax, stay in your position. Move to the blocker's side at the first available opportunity.

BETWEEN PLAYS.

Starting with the serving teams bench, check both teams for substitutions. Get to know substitution patterns. Usually teams substitute as certain players enter the back or front row (positions 1 or 4). Be ready for the request. A second referee that anticipates the request gives a real professional appearance. If one team has scored many points, look for the opponent to request a time out or substitution. Once the benches are checked, the referee should position themselves as above with shoulders square or parallel to the court. The referee can easily glance over either shoulder in the event a coach makes a last second request. Referees should not turn their back from either team. Give a ready signal to the first referee once in position.

PROBLEMS.

Look for trash talk. It is a good idea to glance at the net area between plays to check if the teams engage in trash talk. Quickly remind the players act appropriately. Move the match along. Walk towards the huddle of tardy teams to encourage them to return to the court between games and at the conclusion of time outs. Unnecessary delay sanctions can be avoided with this technique. Coaches who stand and walk towards the officials or court to questions calls should be dealt with quickly. Talk to them in an efficient manners as you walk them toward the bench.

CONCLUSION.

The second referee has many duties. As stated in an earlier article, the second referee is a work horse. To lighten the load, the second referee must be aware of their positioning and how they can move the match along efficiently. Be at the right place on time. Move players into the match as quickly as possible. Deal with coaches courteously and efficiently. Treat participants better than they would expect to be treated.

Ball Handling Calls

A major factor in improving as an official is mastering the subjectivity of judging ball handling. Every referee is expected to call all blatant ball handling violations. The art of judging borderline ball handling plays is harder to learn.

Judgment criteria

When judging ball handling, don't be influenced by any action before the ball is contacted or after the ball is released. Funny, awkward, ugly, unexpected, and like actions are not rule book violations, so ignore them. Just concentrate with tunnel vision on what happens during the contact itself. On the first contact, the ball cannot come to a physical stop or be held. On the second or third contact, the ball cannot be double contacted, come to a stop, or be held. An anticipated ball handling violation probably will result in not being one, or being borderline at worst, because of the advanced playing skills and techniques. A violation must be seen by the first or second referee to be called, no guessing on screened plays.

Philosophy

Borderline ball handling violations called by the rule book would be technically correct. But the match then becomes more of a rules forum rather than a playing competition. Application of the spirit of the rule is more conducive for the context and flow of the game. Let the teams decide the outcome of each play without whistle disruptions for petty calls of marginal violations. Other sports officials also practice this philosophy, i.e., advantage/disadvantage or no harm/no foul. The common theme is letting the players play and not calling a borderline infraction if no playing advantage is gained or lost by either team. Players have gotten accustomed to and accept this philosophy.

Consistency

Even an accomplished referee could miss one, maybe two, "less than borderline" ball handling calls during a match. No sweat, it's a gray area anyway. The players won't whine about these missed calls provided a referee is consistent in not calling borderline violations. A referee loses credibility by whistling incidental violations (or even legal plays) then missing blatant violations, thus upsetting the teams with this inconsistency. The key to being consistent is to call all blatant mishandles and let play continue on everything else, including when in doubt on a call.

Application

Some adjustment may be needed to implement this philosophy. Learn to swallow your whistle on borderline ball handling plays. If the players don't complain, it's legal. If questioned, project confidence in your decision. Find a personal comfort level for making correct, consistent ball handling calls while pushing the legality limit. Achieving this will make officiating easier. The spectrum for ball handling decisions will be reduced. You will be more relaxed mentally but still be focused for all blatant violations. Understanding and mastering this philosophy will make you a better official.

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