

Team Defenses for Volleyball

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The first thing to understand about team defense is that it is rarely executed without some modifications as teams are expected to adjust to the offensive tendencies of their opponents. Therefore, the following are general guidelines to better understand the various options available to coaches.

6 – Up Defense

The six-up defense has clearly fallen out of favour in Canada over the past number of years. Still it has its uses. Best suited for younger teams it involves the athlete in position 6 staying up at the attack line to cover tips. The athlete in position 6 will generally be the setter in a 4-2 offense and can also be used in a 6-2 offense.

Advantages: The advantages of the 6-up offense involves having only one athlete assigned to tracking and defending against tips and deflections off the block. as a result this defender can be developed into an extremely aggressive defender who cannot only defend against the tips but can aggressively attack the tips and push them back to corners.

Disadvantages: The disadvantage of this system has to do with its vulnerability to tips executed to the sideline and setter attacks.

Rotation Defense

The first line of defense is the block and the blocking strategy determines the back-row defender's assignments.

Rotation Defense (Red Defense) calls for a cross-court block and everyone "rotating" to defend against the left-side attack. This would require the position 5 defender to defend the seam and the position 6 defender to slide and defend the line. The position four defender would generally slide in to help defend against tips and block deflections.

It is important to also note that the position 5 defender's "base position" be adjusted to reflect the fact they are defending seam and not around the block. This means they will start further back to see the attacker and track the seam.

Advantages: This is a commonly used defense with younger athletes who cannot hit the line shot as well. Since attackers are more commonly attacking cross-court it is only logical to block that way.

Disadvantages: This defensive system becomes vulnerable when setters become more skilled at pushing the ball out to the antennae which allows hitters to hit the line shot more often. As a result, most teams will move away from rotation defense at some point depending on the skill level in your area.

Perimeter Defense

Commonly referred to as "Read Defense" and "White Defense" this system of defense involves a line block when the ball is set close to the antennae and as the set comes inside the right-side blocker will switch to a cross-court block.

Base position for Position One is now deeper as they position themselves to pull back against a line shot and the Position Five defender stays closer to the attack line in anticipation of defending around the block. This system is best for the mature team and requires the Position Five defender to track the left-side attacker and the blocking decision of the right-side blocker who sets the block. If the blocker moves to a cross-court block for an inside set, the Position Five defender will now need to move to defend the seam.

Advantages: This defense allows for the best response to mature athletes who can move the ball around to vary their attack. With practice teams can become very skilled at recognizing the set and moving to defend against the hitting options available to the attacker.

Disadvantages: This defense requires an ability to read a set and move to close according to the read; that is, setting a line block as needed and cross-court block when required. This also assumes the defenders can read the adjustment being made to the block and move to their adjusted position correctly. only the best trained teams can execute this consistently.

Until next time,

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