



Twelve Essential Drills: For the Parents

By Rich Drake - CAP II Accredited Coach - Raritan Valley Volleyball Club, Garden Empire Region

Writing articles about volleyball is easy when you enjoy the sport and have a passion to coach; however, it is difficult to select just one important topic. The article could be about skills and drills, or it could be motivating to players and coaches. But how do you determine which of these is the most important?

With all of the drill books and videotapes available about coaching, the easiest task for coaches is to create structured practices that are reasonably high in information and are fun for the players. Coaches also have access to training courses through volleyball or at work that provide motivational techniques; but I have never seen a guide or a course for the parents. I hope this article will help the parents help their child.

Drills for the Parents

“Those who hear not the music think the dancer is mad.” – Unknown.

Whether YOU get it or not, your child is enamored with sports, and it is likely they will commit a significant portion of their life to pursue their adventures. For those parents that reserve their highest aspirations for their children, here are a dozen drills that will enable you to help your child during the season.

Drill #1 – Enable Your Child To Pursue Their Dreams And Aspirations.

Do everything in your power for your child so they achieve their goals on the court, in the classroom, and in life. You are and will be the one constant influence throughout their life, make the most of it.

Drill #2 – Frequent and First-Class Communication with Your Child

Talk with your child everyday about homework, friends and activities. Since you cannot learn anything when you are talking... practice being an attentive listener.

Drill #3 – Candid Communication with Club Officials

There is a tendency nowadays to send e-mails and consider that communicating. Personally I believe e-mail is a waste of time when a real discussion is required. Candid communication can best be achieved in person or, when needed, by phone. Talk with the team coach and club officials, even when everything is fine. But please avoid discussions during practices or tournaments, so the players and coaches can concentrate on the task at hand.

Drill #4 – Get Involved

It is important for children and even adults to be involved with an organization that provides a sense of belonging. Team programs, such as volleyball, provide structure and meaning to life, build social skills, create lasting and memorable friendships, instill well-being, and help children become well-rounded citizens. Being involved with your club and sharing the experience is important to your child, and it demonstrates that you support their decisions.

Drill #5 – Fix the Problem

Some coaches believe that applying punishment, such as push-ups, for missing a play will improve the player's performance. But this only confuses the player, because they believe the coach is someone who is supposed to nurture and support them, and they are playing hard. This tactic eventually reinforces the player's belief that they will never be rewarded for a great effort and that they will only be punished for mistakes. Plus it does not address the issue of why the player made the mistake.

The same is true for life off the court. When your child drops a grade in school or does something out of the ordinary, there is a reason that needs to be addressed and repeated punishment rarely solves the problem. It is much wiser to discuss the situation with your child in their terms, understand their point of view, and then explain how to do things correctly to improve, and let them do it. If punishment is required to correct a behavior be predictable and consistent.

Drill #6 – Be a Fan

If you have time to watch football, baseball, tennis, golf, or other sporting events... you certainly then have time to attend your child's tournament; and it is safe to say you will be more excited and will have more pride watching your child compete than any professional.

Drill #7 – Reality Check – Get an Education

Realistically, each year about fifty national and international high school seniors will have the opportunity to make a top-ten college team. The chance of your child being one of these elite players is remote. It is better to personally assist your child to choose a college that will provide them with the best education in their chosen profession, on a campus they will enjoy. If they play volleyball, consider that a plus. Also, help them select a minor or even better a double major. Most colleges enable students to apply credits towards two degrees, so why not get two degrees.

Drill #8 – Dependability

Imagine shopping at a store and the cashier was not at the checkout line, or if you were going to meet someone for lunch and they canceled at the last minute. We rely upon people everyday, even complete strangers. Your child's teammates rely upon each other, so teach your child the importance of commitment and enable them to complete their homework and chores so they can get to every practice and event on time.

Drill #9 – Responsibility

Your child has chosen volleyball so they must be responsible for their actions and prepare for practices and events. This includes homework, chores, cleaning their practice gear and uniform, preparing food for events, and arranging or rearranging their schedules. Teach your child how to do the laundry, prepare the cooler for tournaments, and to explore options in their schedule to make things happen.

Drill #10 – Feed Me

Athletes have greater nutritional needs than non-athletes. They require more calories, protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, fat, and of course water; however, fast food and junk food are not the answer. During the season, with the exception of special occasions, athletes should avoid soda, French fries, and licorice. Giving up these three items is a simple way to stress the importance of proper nutrition. A simple rule to remember is if any item contains high fructose corn syrup, or is high in saturated fats, or has nitrates.....don't drink it or eat it. Before you automatically give your child vitamins or food supplements, check with your physician/nutritionist. Most children and adults on a proper diet receive plenty of nutrients and do not require any supplements.

Drill #11 – The Decision Maker

Excessive influence by parents or coaches to sway a player to choose volleyball or any sport or activity over another is inappropriate. It is better to discuss the situation and options with your child, provide them with your ground rules, ask them what they think, and let them make the decision. Some facts to consider when selecting an activity are the physical and mental aspects of the program, the social benefits, the staff organizing the activities, parent involvement, future opportunities such as college, the possibility of continuing as an adult player or coaching themselves, and how much fun your child is having with that activity. In the end your child will be happy and will enjoy their chosen pastime.

Drill #12 – Working the Sidelines

When you attend tournaments you represent your club, your team, and most importantly your child. Always conduct yourself in a highly courteous manner, be drug and alcohol free the night before and day(s) of the event, and do not smoke in front of the players.

You should also employ proper cheering techniques.

1. Do not boo or intimidate any player, official, or spectator.
2. Avoid "The Gasp" - players know when they make mistakes, your gasp only highlights their error. Instead yell something positive, like "Let's go, you can do it," and eventually they will.
3. No "coaching" from the sidelines. Coaches spend many hours teaching your child the game of volleyball and how to become a better player - let them continue this endeavor at tournaments. Otherwise you will have six players looking into the stands at parents hollering coaching advice and none of them will hear the coach.
4. It is fine to appreciate great performances - by either team! So when the opponents make a magnificent play, give them a cheer. If the play is just unbelievable, stand up and cheer. I have done this a few times myself even while I am coaching... of course, I then ask my players to play as great as their opponent has just demonstrated, and they usually respond to the challenge.

By following these essential supporting principles, your athletes, teams, and coaches will reap great rewards. Then, when you share them with other parents, everyone will benefit.

The above article was written as part of USA Volleyball's Coaching Accreditation Program (CAP) requirements for obtaining Level II Certification. Each course attendee writes an article on a topic in sport that is of interest/value to the author, knowing it may be shared with others as part of growing the game. If you are interested in learning more about USAV's educational programs, drop an email to cap@usav.org, browse the web at www.usavolleyball.org and click on education, or call 1-88USVOLLEY toll free and ask for the education department. You can also subscribe to the USAV educational email newsletter, by emailing listserv@usav.org with the words SUBSCRIBE EDUCATION in the message area, keeping the subject/title line blank. To subscribe to the free USA Volleyball all area e-newsletter "Rotations," go to www.usavolleyball.org/news/email.asp.