

This article by Ryan Millar fits the message we have been delivering through IMPACT on the same topic for 20 years. Hugh understood it long ago, and Ryan's version of the concept is well done...Kessel

Quality over Quantity

The game of volleyball has changed. That statement rings true louder than ever before nowadays. A volleyball match is won in an hour and a half. I remember playing volleyball matches in college that would last three hours plus. The game has changed. So how we train and practice must change. After going through exactly what it takes to win the ultimate prize in volleyball, quality over quantity is the new revolution of volleyball training. There was never a time during our Olympic conquest that we ever felt over-trained.

Our head coach on the US National Team Hugh McCutcheon is the pioneer of this revolution in my book. Hugh was incredibly good at knowing the exact time to finish practice. I think many coaches nowadays think that a good practice means, "Keep going. We are playing at a high level of course we should continue to practice longer." I say do the opposite. Let me explain. First, good coaches are practice planners. Know exactly what you want to do at practice before hand. Think about it the day or night before. Think about the things that your team needs to be better at. Bring the plan that you have worked on to practice and implement it. Warm up, stretch, ball control, good competitive arm swing warm up drill, maybe some blocking or defensive work, and then a well designed 6 on 6 drill. Be attentive. Watch what is happening. Feel the vibe of the practice. If you feel that you need to intervene in order to motivate the players to work harder, or pay special attention to a certain aspect, please do. If your 6 on 6 drill is taking too long to finish, stop practice and finish the drill the next day. DO NOT sacrifice quality over quantity. Your practices will benefit, your players will benefit, and your results will benefit.

I have a philosophy when I play volleyball. If I am going to be here, I might as well be here. What I mean by this is if I am going to be at a certain place to practice, I am going to give my all during the time I am there. If I commit to become the best volleyball player I can, I have to be able to put forth the best effort I can. There have been numerous times during a tough practice I have said to myself, "Man o man this is a really hard practice, oh well if I am going to be here, I might as well be here." Seems simple enough right? This philosophy if instilled properly into your players can work wonders.

If your players know that you will not over-train them, like Hugh, you will see an immediate increase in practice intensity. I can think of hundreds of practices on the National Team where you had 12 guys fighting for their lives. We would fight for the opportunity to be part of history. Every one of those players knew exactly what to expect every day at practice. If you show your players that you can develop great

practice plans and know exactly when to call it quits, you too will have a group willing to throw their hearts on the floor everyday at practice. They will be ready to make their own history.

Quality training also depends on who you are as a coach. Your players are a reflection of you as a coach. If you are a hard working coach, you will have hard working players. If you are a lazy coach, you will have lazy players. I have two great examples of each of these. I had a great high school volleyball coach. He was the hardest working coach I have ever had. He didn't work harder than other coaches at coaching aspects; he worked harder when it came to practice. Our coach would play with us every day. He hated to lose. No matter what drill we were playing he **HAD** to win. What this did to us as players is plant a seed of competitiveness that is still inside me today. When working with your team, what type of seed will you plant?

Playing professional volleyball you have very different coaches every season. One year I had an extremely terrible coach. He had no interest in what was happening in practice. When we would play bad in matches, he wouldn't understand why? We were a reflection of him. He would constantly talk on his phone during practice, converse with people in the gym that had nothing to do with practice. This would create a very difficult thing, it would make practice casual. Now don't get me wrong. I am all for having fun at practice. I will even talk about that very thing later in this article. In this case guys would mess around all they wanted, because if our coach doesn't care why should they? Your players are a reflection of their coach. What kind of reflection will you be?

Being a good coach involves being consistent. Consistency as a coach means that your players know exactly what to expect every day in the gym. This will give your players the opportunity to make up their minds when it comes to how they approach practice and matches. Be who you are. No one can change who you are. If you are an intense coach, be intense. If you are a quiet coach, be quiet. The important thing is to let your players know that you all are there to accomplish your team goals. They need to know that whatever you are trying to achieve albeit a league championship, a state title, a Junior Olympic Gold Medal, a National Title, or even an Olympic Gold Medal, the road to success first starts with effort in the gym. Be a consistent coach. You will develop consistent players.

I like to have fun when I play volleyball. I like to have fun when I coach volleyball. I personally think a lot of coaches underestimate the power of fun. To reach the highest levels of volleyball requires an extreme amount of seriousness, but it also requires a large amount of fun. Remember those practices I talked about earlier? Twelve guys fighting for their lives? Those practices were very serious, but they were also incredibly fun. Let your players talk a little bit during drills. Let your players joke a little bit during practice. You will see a willingness to compete harder, longer, and better. Let your players enjoy what they are doing. You will enjoy the results.