JVA Training Curriculum
16U

Overview

This is the Fervid Phase, also nicknamed the "*Dedication Stage*". The overall goals for this age are to strengthen the foundation of an athletes' volleyball skills, both mental and physical. During this phase, the development of individual skills and execution, and individual, group, and team tactics are important.

This is a critical time in the player's development. This is generally the largest group involved in club volleyball. Many players believe the only way to solidify and elevate their position on their high school team is to participate in a club program. Players at this age still tend to lack mental toughness and self-confidence. They tend to be self-critical and struggle with their desire to be competitive or the need to be more competitive. There is a need for attention and security. A great focus on team spirit, gym culture, leadership and discipline should be fostered within the team.

Coach Description, Requirements and Role

An ideal 16U Coach is a teacher; charismatic; experienced; knowledgeable; articulate; disciplinarian; managerial know how; thoughtful persuader. Understands the ebb and flow of a match, when to call a timeout and when to make substitutions to slow the game down if needed. A coach for this age should have the ability to show the athletes that it's OK to be aggressive and express emotion. It is critical for the coach to be able to develop the mental part of the game.

A 16U Coach at an elite level should understand what it takes to play at the collegiate level, as well as the college programs in your part of the country that compete in each division (D1, DII, DIII, NAIA, Junior College). The coach needs to understand the importance of connecting the athlete with interested college programs, answering calls or texts from college coaches and helping the athlete through the recruiting process when needed.

Skill Development

Serving

Players should perfect all standing and jump serves. Players should develop a pace or place serve. Players should be able to effectively serve all 6 zones of the court. Players will be able to understand and engage serving philosophy/strategy.

- Technique:
    - Introduce a “drop serve” (Z serve, bottom out, etc.)
    - Introduce clip net serving and driving the ball low across the net at a fast pace
- Mentality
    - Make the serve after the timeout and when coming off of the bench at a critical time in the set (score is 23-23, etc)
    - Understand risk vs reward and which errors to make when
    - Know when the front row attacker is a primary serve receive passer
- Result
    - Players should be able to serve all 6 zones effectively (75%)
    - Focus on the player's ability to execute a game plan. Ex: serving the OH or a specific player. Let the players think and choose their zone. Constantly evaluate the plan throughout the match and have an open dialogue. This gives players ownership of the serve and pass game.
    - Great than 1:1 ace to error ratio
    - 55% or better point scoring
    - Location and speed can be equally emphasized

Serve Receive/Passing

Players should have perfected proper ready position, movement patterns, platform adjustment and overall passing technique. Players should be able to demonstrate the ability to routinely run through errant passes and short serves, move to (lateral, oblique, etc) and adjust their platform (on-line & off-line) efficiently on serve receive and free/down balls.

When it comes to overhand passing, players should have perfect proper posture, movement, hand position and follow through. Players should be comfortable passing overhand regardless if it is free ball, down ball, serve receive or hard driven.

- Technique
    - Overhand Passing: Players should be able to demonstrate the ability to pass from serve receive ready position. Players should receive all free balls overhand.
- Mentality
    - Teach players to problem solve against servers. This may include adjusting the serve receive pattern without being told to do so.
- Result
    - Forearm Passing: Players should be able to consistently pass free balls to target (85-90%), serve receive to target (75-80%).
    - Overhand Passing: Players should be able to consistently hand pass serve receptions to target (70-75%) and free balls (90%).
    - 2.2 or better passer rating
    - 40% or better Perfect Pass Percentage
    - 10% or less Reception Error Percentage

Setting

Setters should perfect proper body position, hand position and hand motion from ready position to follow through. Setters should demonstrate proper movement patterns to and along the net, quickness, court awareness, leadership abilities and attack skills. Setters should perfect all 3 tempo sets from a standing and jumping vantage point. Setter must be able to read defenses and manipulate offensive options, run a game plan, and learn hitters preferences and strengths.

- Technique
    - Early on in the season it is important to get a lot of setting reps before or after practice. Setting reps off of a live pass is valuable
    - Understand how to consistently execute a fast or slow tempo set to the outside, middle or right side
    - Train a neutral position with hands above head and balanced stance when setting a good pass, same position when setting outside or back set
    - Introduce and train how to hold a middle blocker to get a one on one blocking match-up for the outside attacker. This is most important during serve receive and free balls when the defense has time to set up

    - Have the strength to push a ball from across the court to the outside hitter on an out of system pass
- Mentality/Decision Making
    - Training should heavily focus on decision making and the mental part of the game in the first 2 months
    - Understand their hitters strengths and weaknesses. Be adept at reading emotions of hitters in the moment. Whether it be at the end of a long rally or match point for the other team
    - Execute plays to allow for 1 on 1 for top attackers.
    - Is able to navigate relationships with all players as someone involved with all aspects of the game then need to be equipped to communicate effectively with all players and coach
- Result
    - Should be able to set all 3rd tempo (4/9), all 2nd tempo (2/Rip) and 1st tempo (a/b/c/d) from a stand or jump. Should be proficient at running all 3 back row slots.
    - Should be able to understand the line-up and serve receive formations at each rotation and the offensive plays to run at each rotation
    - Should be able to connect with the quick attacker from 5' - 10' off the net.

Attacking

By this stage, all players should be able to hit 1st, 2nd and 3rd tempo sets as well as back row attacks . Outsides should know and perform 3 and 4 step approaches, and middles should all be able to attack off of one foot and behind the setter. All hitters should be developing and refining the "tools" to score (tips, rolls, dumps and tools/wipes off the block).

Introduce identity as an attacker at this age. There are a lot of different types of attackers that are successful. Starting to take ownership of their identity is important for athletes at this age. Creative attackers vs. powerful attackers. Physical attackers vs. pass first/defend first attackers. Let players create an identity and embrace it.

- Technique
    - Transition – Ability to use 4,3 and 2 step approaches to transition. Middles need to be able to "hop on- hop off" transition and understand that they are the key to stressing the re-set of the opponents' defense. They will also know how to transition into back row attack from serve

receive and defensive transition. Middles will also be able to go from block to quick attack transition.
    - Begin to see the block and is developing the ability to use numerous tools (i.e tip, roll shot, throw down the line, high hands, etc.)
    - Understand pass to attack and no pass to attack footwork in serve receive.

- Mentality
    - Starts to have an understanding of defenses on other teams and what shots will work well against certain defensive systems; recognizing this on their own by taking an active role in scouting while line judging or score keeping
    - Understand when to hit the ball hard to 6 if there is a split
    - Identify if there is a split in the block or hear a teammate yell split

- Result
    - Outsides: Ability to consistently attack 2nd and 3rd tempo attacks down line and to cross corner.
    - Ability to terminate the ball against one attacker on a good set at least 30% of the time
    - Middles: Ability to consistently attack 1st tempo and slides. Make yourself available to attack in defensive transition

Defense

Players should be able to demonstrate the ability to effectively control hard driven attacks, tips and off speed attacks. Players should be able to run multiple defenses. Players should be proficient at base-read-adjust-react theory, digging technique and all floor maneuvers.

- Technique
    - Practice and expand the tools available to athletes in order to make more plays. These are best learned off an attacked ball if possible. Individual defense has the greatest variability in the game, so it's best established early in the development.
- Ample opportunities in practice for the following defensive moves:
    - Forearm Dig
    - Overhead Dig
    - Lunge (Left and Right)
    - Collapse

    - Forward Sprawl
    - Run-through or forward dive
    - Pancakes
    - Flipper
    - Tomahawk/Fister

- Out of System Setting
    - Libero should be proficient at consistently taking the second ball when the setter plays the first contact so your best ball control player can deliver a hittable ball to your attacker

- Mentality
    - Libero is consistently calling a shot (deep line, sharp cross, deep cross, etc) for the attacker on offense and covering the attacker on every offensive opportunity.
    - Ability to take heat off of front row hitters pulling back to pass by communicating (and actually) taking any balls close so hitter can efficiently get out to attacking area.

- Result
    - Players should be able to consistently dig balls to a target position just inside the 10 foot line (60%), and consistently keep the ball in play using emergency floor techniques.
    - 80% overall dig percentage
    - Introduce creation percentage (dig to attack) and conversion percentage (dig to kill). Help athletes understand that there is a difference between a good dig and a bad dig.

Blocking

Players should have all body posture, movement patterns and hand action mastered. Players should be able to effectively front attacker, give and take line, block back row attacks and put up multiple player blocks. Players should be able to identify (and communicate) front row attackers and the locale of the setter. Players should start to learn to read blocks and understand the difference between read and commit blocking. Middles should be well versed on their shelve hand.

- Technique
    - Begin to understand and be able to adjust the time when blocking

        - Being able to adjust and jump faster/hands get over the net faster if team is running a fast ball or swinging fast
        - On the same token but other way, being able to slow down or wait for an attacker that jumps high or hits on way down.

- Mentality
    - Have an understanding that you will only block a small % of balls that cross the net, your main job is to channel balls to correct defensive person(s) and not make errors at net.
    - Pin blockers need to be able to determine if a middle blocker will be able to make it or not to double block. If the middle blocker cannot get there in time, the pin blockers need to understand to fill the hole and drop their inside hand to take that shot away.
    - Outside/left side blocker should know when the setter is front row and to pinch in to block the setter so the middle can focus on blocking the middle attack. The left side blocker should double block the middle 1st tempo attack on a 1 ball or behind the setter.
- Result
    - Players should be able to consistently set solid blocks with the goal to always double block the attackers on a 2nd or 3rd tempo set.

Team Systems Development

Clearly defined team tactics, team play within the system is essential. You must still focus a great deal of time on individual skill development using correct techniques. However, team tactics become a priority at this age. Strive to use all of your attackers, with different tempo sets. Set team goals for hitting percentage, service aces, digs, and attacks out of transition. Encourage aggressive play. Team results become even more important, but need to be balanced with individual and team development.

- Recommended System -
    - Serve Receive – 2 or 3 Person Serve Receive
    - Offense – 5-1/ 6-2
    - Defense – Perimeter and Rotation (focus on holding the base position and reading the pass/set)

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Mental Development

Important Characteristic to focus on:

- Increased concentration
- Leadership/player responsibility
- Discipline
- Respect for the game
- Goal setting
- Accountability; understanding how to hold oneself and others accountable
- Vary Program- Satisfy player's urge for competition
- Establish pre-practice and pre-game routine (as individuals and team)
- Encourage players/teams to watch college and national team volleyball on TV

Strength and Agility Development

Strength

In this program, athletes will work off of 6 movement patterns:

-Squats

-Hinges

-Vertical Push

-Vertical Pull

-Horizontal Push

-Horizontal pull

Each movement has a progression system that allows athletes to advance based on their individual training experience and ability. While there will be age-based recommendations for where athletes should ideally begin, determining the appropriate starting point for each athlete is essential, as training backgrounds can vary significantly.

For example, a 17s athlete may have no weight room experience, while a 14s athlete may have already completed two years of structured strength training. This system allows athletes to enter at the appropriate level for their experience and progress at a pace that supports their individual development.

Level 1

This level is where all athletes ages 12 and under will start. However, any athlete who is new to the weight room, regardless of age, should master these movements before progressing to the next level.

Level 1 focuses on learning the fundamentals of each movement pattern. Because athletes at this level are either younger or new to the weight room, technique takes priority above all else. Adding weight should only be considered once an athlete demonstrates proficiency in proper technique.

For bodyweight movements, athletes may use tools to assist with the movement or perform modified variations that reduce complexity. These progressions allow athletes to build confidence while developing proper movement technique before advancing to more challenging variations.

Goals for Level 1 Athletes

- Learn each fundamental movement pattern in the system.
- Understand why these movements are important and how improving them over time can help athletes develop as volleyball players and overall athletes.
- Master proper technique in each movement pattern to build a strong foundation for success at higher levels.

Coaches can move athletes to the next level once they demonstrate a strong grasp of these goals and consistently perform the movement patterns with proper technique.

Level 2

This level is for athletes who have progressed through the Level 1 movements and goals and is ideally suited for athletes ages 13–15. Athletes at this level demonstrate proficient technique in fundamental movement patterns and begin to add weight and complexity as they progress. Level 2 introduces the barbell to most movement patterns, giving athletes a tool to progressively increase load. Bodyweight movements also advance to less-assisted variations and move closer to full-bodyweight versions.

Goals for Level 2 Athletes

- Demonstrate proficient technique with the barbell and other new tools introduced in each movement pattern.
- Develop greater strength within movement patterns over time.
- Improve control and coordination in bodyweight movements.

Level 3

This level is for athletes who have gone through level one and 2 by learning the movements within each pattern and have gained a good level of relative strength through training. This is the level you would want athletes 16-18 to be. This level doesn't add many more movements or complexity to the movements already learned, but looks to add more load to weighted movements while keeping proficient technique and fully unassisted variations of the bodyweight movements.

Goals for Level 3 athletes

- Build higher levels of relative strength in the weighted movements overtime
- Complete higher number of reps of the bodyweight movements unassisted

****It is highly debated in the strength and conditioning community what levels of strength athletes should meet (double body back squat vs 1.5 times bodyweight back squat for example) so athletes of this level should have a professional consult them on their strength levels and their proficiencies to further push their weight room capabilities appropriately.*

	Level 1: Beginner WATCH VIDEO	Level 2: Intermediate WATCH VIDEO	Level 3: Proficient WATCH VIDEO
Squat	Bodyweight/ lightly weighted goblet squat	Medium weighted/Lighter Barbell Back Squat	Heavier loaded barbell Back squat
Hinge	Bodyweight hinge/ lightly loaded Romanian Deadlift	Medium weighted romanian Deadlift/Lighter loaded barbell romanian deadlift	Heavier Loaded Barbell romanian deadlift/ Hex Bar Deadlift
Vertical Push	Knee on box handstand push ups/ Lightly weighted overhead press	Wall full handstand hold/ Medium weighted overhead press/ light barbell overhead press	Handstand Shoulder taps/ Heavier Barbell overhead press/ Barbell push press
Vertical Pull	Pull downs (banded or machine)/ Banded Chin Ups and Chin up holds	Eccentric Chin-ups/ less resistance banded chin up	Free chin ups

Horizontal Push	Eccentric push ups/ Lighter Dumbell Bench Press	Full Push ups (at least 5 full depth) / Heavier Dumbbell Bench press/ Lighter Barbell Bench press	Full range push ups (10+), heavier Barbell Bench Press
Horizontal Pull	Bodyweight Rows/ Lighter Dumbell Bent over rows	Heavier DB Bent Over Rows/ Lighter Barbell Rows	Heavier Barbell Rows

Plyometrics

Volleyball naturally involves a high volume of plyometric actions.

Athletes repeatedly jump, land, and jump again during rallies. Setters plant and redirect force to move quickly to the ball. Defenders react and change direction rapidly while pursuing digs. Nearly every movement on the court requires an athlete to absorb and produce force efficiently.

Training should prepare athletes for the demands of competition. Because plyometrics closely mirror the physical requirements of volleyball, they can be a valuable component of a comprehensive training program. Read more on plyometric vertical training for junior volleyball athletes.

Begin with this Plyometric Rudiment Series.

Athletes can complete the series once during a warm-up for approximately 10-20 yards per movement, or complete multiple rounds as a standalone training session.

As athletes improve, these same movements continue to build lower-body resilience. Increased athleticism naturally leads to greater speed, intensity, and force production over time.

Once athletes demonstrate proficiency with these foundational movements, coaches can begin introducing more advanced plyometric progressions like these Plyometric Intensive Exercises.

How to Apply the Above Concepts into your Gym

Assignment and Evaluation of Coaches