



Look before you shoot

By Julien Prosser

When beachvolleyball.com.au asked me to write a few words for the skills section of the site, I thought I would go for something a little different. A "skill" which we don't often cover, but which can make a huge difference to everybody's game.

It has nothing to do with how you position your feet while passing, hold your hands while setting or how loud you yell at the referee for calling you for a double hit for the 10th time in one game! (I bloody well hate 'em too). No folks, this skill is all about your eyesight.

How many times have you come in to hit the ball? You've given your partner a great pass, they have given you the perfect set (finally eh?), you're feeling loose, you jump hard, having swung both arms to get extra height (just like we taught you) and you crush the ball straight down ... into the arms of the defender sitting just inside the blocker.

You could have won the point if you had done one thing differently: just after you see that perfect set, or even that typical high and off- the-net set, you start your spike approach. Just before you jump, you take a quick look at the defence in front of you.

You have seen the blocker is taking your line, the defender is dug in on your angle. You jump hard, you're feeling loose and you swing hard at the last instant and you lob the ball over the block down the line for the point.

I know it doesn't feel as good to play "shots" around the defender as when you get up and crush a ball. But when you are a defender, nothing makes you feel worse than when your opposition comes in to hit the ball, they look straight at you (dammit, they're not even looking at the ball!) and they hit a shot either just out of your reach, if they are a tease, or way out of your reach if they intend to crush you.

This skill takes practice, as they all do. You may find it throws your timing off a little. You may miss-hit the ball a few times or miss the ball completely, but it will give you a great deal of confidence from the very first time you do it.

So try it out next time you are on the sand and eventually you might just find yourself doing it with out having to think about it.

Good look ... I mean luck.

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