



Serving to Win

By Victor Anfiloff

There is only one opportunity in the game of beach volleyball where you are legally allowed to hold the ball during the rally. It is the moment after the referee blows the whistle for you to commence your service that you are allowed to hold the ball for up to 5 seconds.

At this moment there is nobody else affecting your ability to play the ball. There is nobody giving you a crappy set and nobody smashing a spike at you. It is just you, the ball, and your willingness to back your ability. This is a moment in the game that you need to make the most of.

Location

The first opportunity to force a reception error from your opponents is to make them move whilst passing. I often hear players discussing before a match who they plan to serve at. That's ok, just make sure that if you are targeting one player in particular that you still attempt to serve to an uncomfortable passing position for that player. If there is a place on the court that you yourself find difficult to receive serve, there is a strong possibility that your opponents will struggle receiving the same serve. If you are not using a power serve then it is best to serve very deep, very short, between both players in the middle of the court or to the sidelines. Just by forcing a player to take 1 or 2 steps to receive serve can significantly affect the quality of their reception. When in doubt, serve deep middle.

Speed

The reason many top-level beach volleyball players use a power serve, also called a jump serve, is to minimise the reaction time for the receiving player. This is also true for an attacking shot. By minimising the time that the ball spends in the air on service, you are also minimising the time the receiver has to move to the ball resulting in an ace or reception error. The same applies in tennis. This is why we see successful players are becoming taller and stronger. Test your ability by trying to serve the ball harder and faster. It doesn't need to be a jump-serve. Make sure that any errors you make are out and NOT in the net. At least if you serve the ball past the baseline you can always make an adjustment by standing further back when you serve. AND the receiving team

still needs to make a decision whether the ball is in fact going out. This can cause a reception error. A ball served in the net is a free point for your opponents.

Variation

As the saying goes "if aint broken, dont fix it". In regards to serving that means if the serve you are using is working then there is no need to change it. However, if your opponents start to find rythm in receiving your deep middle or short serve, then change the location or speed or the serve. A change in pace of the serve (from slow to fast OR vice versa) can catch your opponents off guard. Also, if you had been focusing your serve in the direction of one particular player, and that player is handling it well, make a brief change to the other player in the hope to catch them snoozing.

If you are not already using these serving methods then I'm sure you will get some reults by trying them.

Just remember that no risk, no reward and that practicing your serve is key to executing it in the game.

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