

Name of Drill "Stuck in the Middle"

Describe drill

I did not invent this drill. I have not seen it written down but I'm sure other coaches use it in a slightly different form. This drill works on the skills and footwork patterns used by middle blocker/middle hitters. The middles are asked to block, transition to their hitting positions then hit a set from the setter. When we first used this drill the outside hitters or the right side players would mess up. The pom pom squad was practicing in the balcony and they were using the song "Stuck in the Middle," written by Keith Urban. The refrain of the song goes like this; "Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right, here I am, stuck in the middle with you!" The middles immediately adopted this as their theme song and suggested we call the drill by the refrain.

How or why did you develop this drill?

I was looking for a way to speed up the middle blocker/middle hitter transition from defense to offense

Number of Players: Entire team Number of Balls: 10-12 for each tosser

What are the inherent advantages of this drill?

It was dull and boring for the middles to merely go through their footwork patterns. I also noticed that traditional hitting lines involve two players (a setter and a hitter) working and the rest of the players stand around. This drill incorporates hitting practice for the outside hitters, blocking and footwork practice for the middle hitters, and a reason to encourage faster transitions by then having the middles hit a variety of sets. We also work on improving the setter transition from defense to offense by bringing the setter from right back to set the middle hitters. We can continue to add on to this drill as the team's skills improve. We can put a defensive specialist on each side to work on digging and offense from a dig. A coach can rotate players through this drill after the middle hits or the coach can keep the middles and rights in the drill until they achieve a certain number of kills or blocks.

Explanation of the Drill

Diagram One: The drill begins with a player (M1) tossing to the setter (S1). The setter sets a high outside set to the left front hitter (H1). After the set player M1 goes to the net and is ready for spike coverage. On the other side of the net player M2 moves to block H1's spike.

Diagram Two: Players M1 and R (Right Front) pull off the net and move to their hitting positions. The setter on that side S2 moves from right back to the net and waits for the ball that is being tossed by M3. The setter sets either hitter.

Stuck in the Middle

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Number of Players: 12

Number of Balls: 10-12 for each tosser

Objective:

This drill develops the skills and footwork patterns used by middle blockers/middle hitters, speeding up the transition from defense to offense.

Directions:

1. The drill begins with a player (M1) tossing to the setter (S1).
2. The setter sets a high, outside set to the left-front hitter (H1)

3. The set player M1 goes to the net and is ready for spike coverage.

4. On the other side of the net, M2 moves to block H1's spike.

5. M2 and R (right front) pull off the net and move to their hitting positions.

6. The setter on that side (S2) moves from right back to the net and waits for the ball that is being tossed by M3. The setter sets either hitter.

7. M4 takes M1's place; M3 takes M2's place; M2 takes M4's place. The setters stay on their sides. There is a new outside hitter every time.

