

Be A Better Blocker



KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

Two cardinal sins of blocking are dropping your head and closing your eyes. Unfortunately, these habits are hard to break, no matter how much you practice. One way to overcome these bad habits is to keep your eye on the ball as if you are going to attack it. If you can see the hitter contact the ball, it's almost a sure bet you can break this habit. Another advantage to keeping your eyes on the ball is being able to react to an opponent's weak dink as Michigan State's Dana Cooke (No. 5) does here. She saw the tip coming and extended her arm to swat the ball down.



STAY SQUARE IF YOU'RE NOT THERE

No other player has to react as quickly or jump as much as a middle blocker. That's why a middle is inevitably going to misread a play and end up late on an outside set. Fortunately, there's a rule of thumb you can use to help make up for the occasional late block.

When you're late to the outside, it's okay to reach a bit, but remember to stay square to the net. Staying square means keeping your hips, shoulders, arms and hands parallel to the plane of the net. Never turn any part of your body toward the hitter. Turning your body causes two problems. One is if you do touch the ball, it'll likely deflect out of bounds. The other is you'll open holes in your block. So do as Hawai'i's Cecelia Goods is doing in the photo at left. By reaching out with the proper form, she is still putting up an effective wall.