



Birmingham Met **Volleyball Club** **Players' Manual**

Welcome to Birmingham Met Volleyball Club! If you're reading this, chances are that you've just started playing volleyball with our club. As you'll have already seen, volleyball is an excellent social and recreational sport. However, if you want to progress to playing in a more competitive environment – or if just want to better understand what the more experienced players are doing around you – then the next few pages should help you to do that.

There were several reasons for putting this manual together, namely;

- To give you an understanding of the positions we take up on court and the basic club system (think of this like a football formation) and tactics which we employ;
- To give you a basic understanding of some of the terminology and jargon which you'll hear during training sessions and on court;
- To give you an insight into some of the rules of the game.

What it is **not** intended to do is;

- Teach you how to play the game in terms of ball-playing techniques (how to serve, how to hit etc.). It is the job of the individual team coaches to improve you as a volleyball player.
- Provide the full and exhaustive list of rules and regulations (although links will be provided to show you several web-sites where you can find all this information out).
- Provide full details of all the tactical variations employed by the different teams within the club.

The volleyball court

So where do we start? Well, firstly we need to tell you how we divide up the volleyball court so that you know which position you should be playing in.

As you'll see from the diagram below, the court is split into six playing zones, numbered 1 to 6.

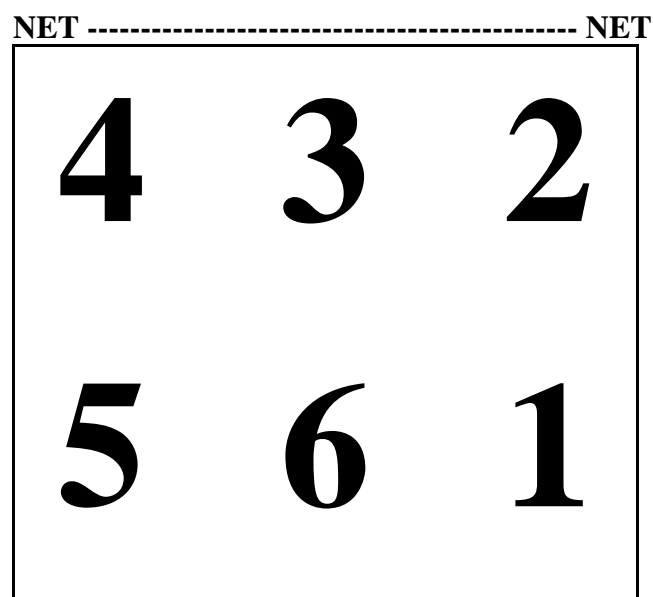


Diagram 1: the volleyball court

Positions 2, 3 and 4 are collectively known as the “front court” and are positioned between the net and the three metre line which you will see on the court.

Positions 1, 5 and 6 are collectively known as the “back court” and are positioned between the three metre line and the baseline which marks the back of the court.

During a match, players will rotate clockwise every time you win the serve back from your opponents. Therefore, the player in position 3 will move to position 2, while the player in position 2 will move to position 1 – and so on. The player who moves to position 1 becomes the server.

The game

In its simplest form, the game of volleyball is based on the three touches of the ball which your team can have every time that the ball enters your side of the court – a dig, followed by a set, followed by a spike. The dig is played by any of the six players and is how you get the ball to your setter. The setter acts as the team’s playmaker, taking the ball from the dig and setting it out to one of the team’s hitters. Those hitters then look to apply the finishing touch, hitting the ball onto the floor on the opposition’s side of the net, thereby winning the point.

Your role in the team

As in any team sport, different players bring different playing attributes to their team. Accordingly, once you start playing competitively, your coach will assign you to one of the three basic positions within the team. You’ll either be a setter (S), middle hitter (M) or outside hitter (O). We’ll cover the attributes needed for these positions later.

Just like any other team sport, the intention is always to get these players into the position on court from which they can best use their particular skills. In the front court, this means getting our setter to position two, our middle hitter to position three and our outside hitter to position four. The following section outlines how we do this.

The first time that you walk on to court for a match, this is how we line up – see Diagram 2. The setters are in positions 2 and 5, the outside hitters are at 3 and 6 while the middle hitters are at 1 and 4.

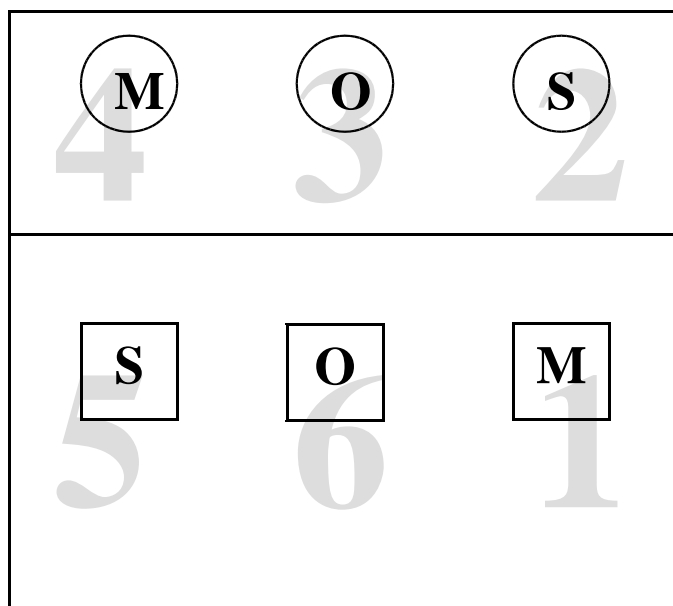


Diagram 2: starting positions

Once the ball is in play, we aim to move to the following positions – known collectively as our “base 1” – see Diagram 3:

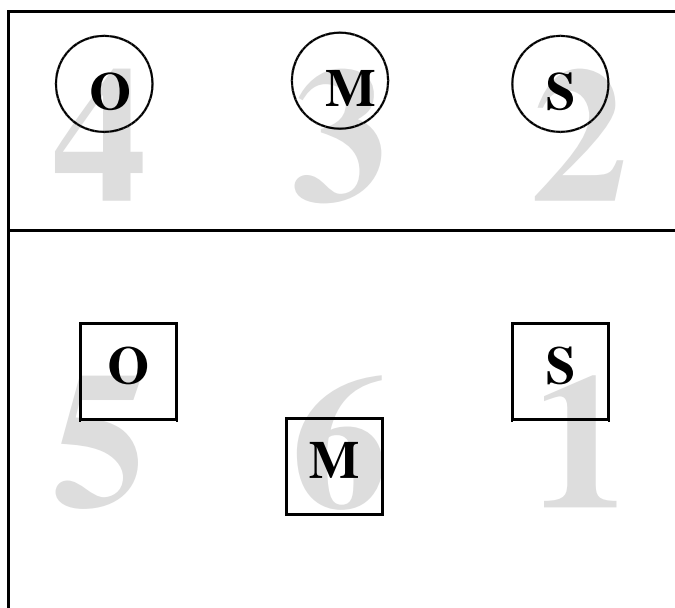


Diagram 3: “base 1” positions

As you’ll see, in the front court, the middle hitter has swapped to his usual position at three while the outside hitter has moved out to four – so all three front court players are now where we want them to be.

The back court players move too. The setter has moved to position one – where he will defend behind the other setter. The back court outside hitter has moved to position five where he will also defend right behind his fellow outside hitter. Finally, the back court middle hitter moves to position 6.

In this basic club system, it’s very easy to remember where you should be going on court, depending on which playing position you have been assigned.

If you are a setter, you are always aiming to move to the right hand side of the court (positions 1 and 2).

If you are a middle hitter, you will attack through the middle when you are front court (position 3) and you will defend in position 6.

If you are an outside hitter, you will attack from the left hand side of the court when you are front court (position 4) and you will defend in position 5.

Over time we may change to employ slight variations on this basic set-up, depending on personnel and the coach’s preference. However, what we have outlined here is the basic set-up.

Moving to your correct position is easy when we are serving. You simply wait for your teammate to serve the ball into play and then move to the appropriate position.

Receiving serve

When we are receiving serve though, the process is more complicated – but, essentially, it boils down to this:

We receive serve from the positions we find ourselves in, our front court players play their first attack from where they stand and then we all switch to our usual positions, **once the ball has gone into the opposition's court.**

Looking at how this works in practice, let's start with the easiest position – the one we start the match in (Diagram 2). This is easy because our front court setter is already where we want them to be at position 2.

In this instance, we line up to receive serve as shown in Diagram 4. As you'll see, the middle hitter who is starting in position 4 has dropped back slightly to help the three back court players to receive serve. The important thing to notice here is how those four players are lined up in a shape which roughly resembles a tick (this is done to best cover all areas of the court when receiving serve).

Players are responsible to pass more than what is served right at them. Good passers are always in big demand in any club or squad.

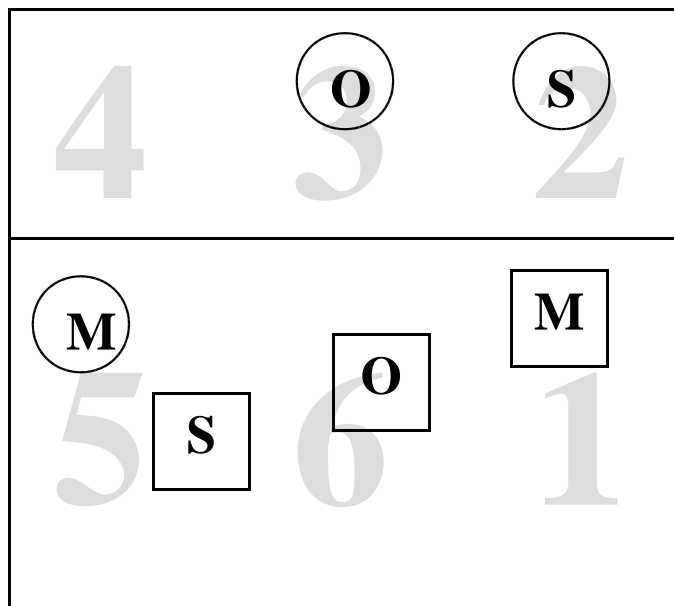


Diagram 4: Receiving serve when the setters are at positions two and five.

Any one of those four players in the “tick” aims to dig the ball to the setter. The setter then has two front court options to aim for.

Whatever happens, all the players will switch to their “base 1” positions (Diagram 3) once the ball is safely delivered into the opposition's court.

Assuming we win the point, the next time we find ourselves receiving serve, our setters will now be at positions 1 and 4. In this instance, we aim to get the setter from position 1 up to the net in order to set the ball for the first attack. We do this by lining up as shown in Diagram 5.

Note that the tick formation is again in shape as the front court players in positions 2 and 4 have dropped back slightly to help their back court team-mates. Most importantly, the setter

in position 1 is “hiding” behind the player just in front of him. This is to prevent him from having to receive the ball. Instead, one of the four players in the tick receives the ball while the setter runs to his usual setting position at the net.

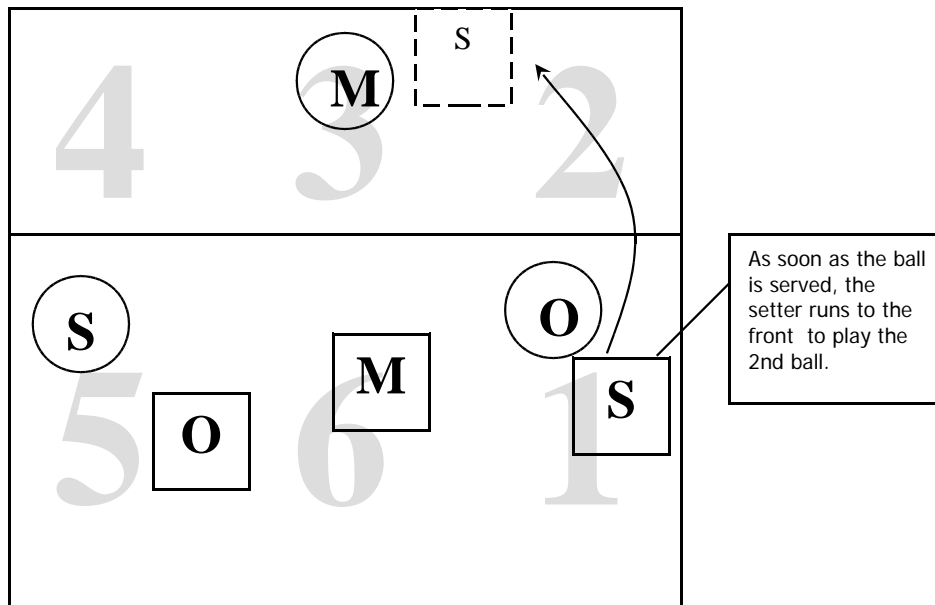


Diagram 5: Receiving serve when the setters are at positions one and four

Unlike the previous serve receive set-up, the setter now has three front court options.

Whatever happens, all the players will switch to their “Base 1” positions once the ball is safely delivered into the opposition’s court, meaning that the setter who has just set the ball will now return to his back court position 1.

The final serve receive position finds us with our setters at positions 3 and 6. In this instance, the setter at position 6 moves up to the front court to stand just behind the other setter (see Diagram 6).

Note that the tick formation is once again in place for the remaining four players as the players in positions 2 and 4 have again dropped back slightly to help their back court teammates. They are now aiming to pass the ball to the back court setter who will once more have three attacking options.

Whatever happens, all the players will switch to their “Base 1” positions once the ball is safely delivered into the opposition’s court, meaning that the setter who has just set the ball will now return to his back court position.

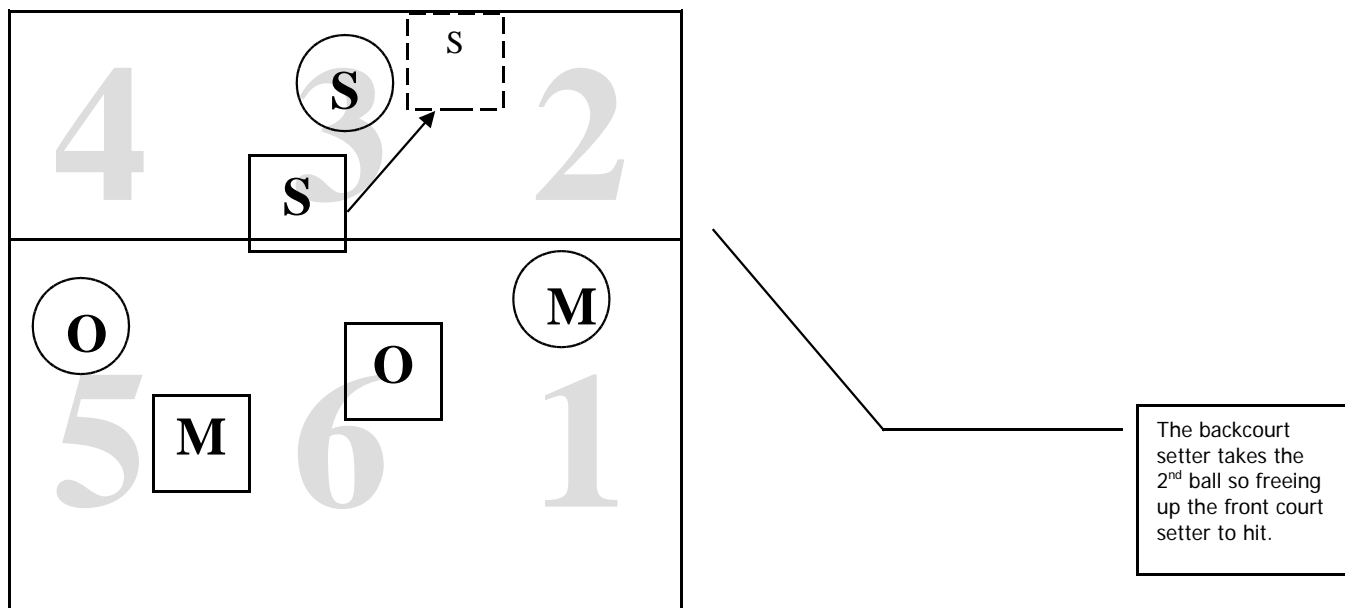


Diagram 6: Receiving serve when the setters are at positions three and six.

Our defensive set-up

As with all sports, being able to defend your opponent's attacks is a crucial part of the game. We do this by adopting defensive positions which allow us to cover as much of the court as possible. Our starting basis for this is our "Base 1" position (Diagram 3). We then move our players around, depending on where on the court our opponent's attack is coming from.

Our defensive play is comprised of two elements:

- Blocking – usually this involves two of our front court players attempting to stop the ball before it even crosses the net;
- Back court defence – the other four players aiming to cover the rest of the court and looking to set up our next attack by digging the ball back to our setter.

The most common attack in volleyball is played using the outside hitter – so this is also our most common defensive position (see Diagram 7).

In this instance, the opposition outside hitter is hitting at us from their position 4. Our block is provided by our front court setter in position 2 and by our middle hitter in position 3 coming along the net to help out the setter.

We have two players on both the left and right side of the blockers, digging the ball hit into our court.

The gap down the middle of the court is left open on purpose as the block should be preventing the ball from coming into this area.

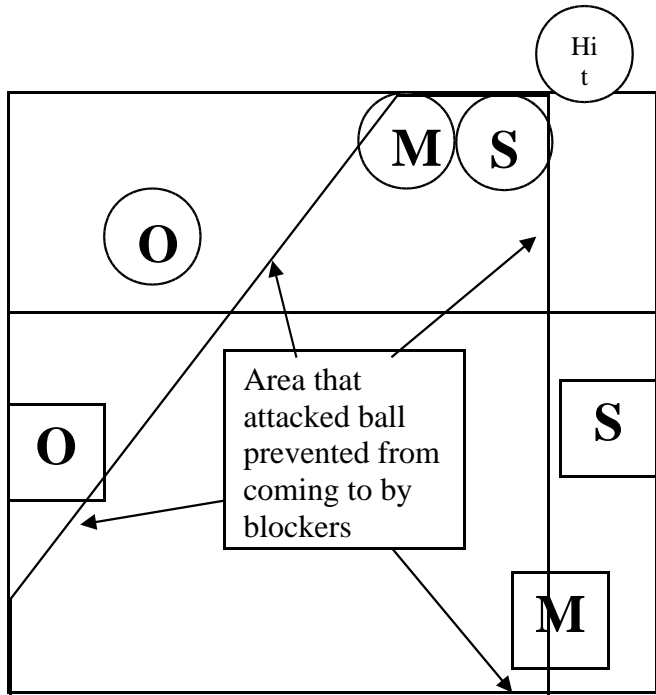


Diagram 7: Defensive positions when the opposition attack from position 4

When the attack is from the other side of the court, i.e. the opposition is hitting from their position 2, we simply reverse this position (see Diagram 8). In this instance, it is the outside hitter who links up with the middle hitter to provide the block.

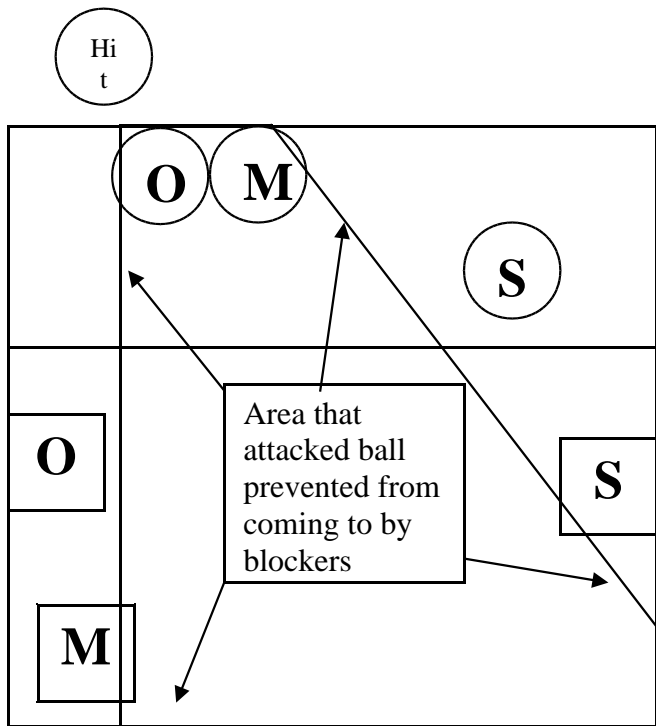


Diagram 8: Defensive positions when the opposition attack from position 2.

The final attack which we can end up facing is when the opposition attack through the middle from position 3. This is usually a fast attack so we have very little time to move. Accordingly, our defensive positions are actually very close to the Base 1 position with the middle hitter being left to block on his own – see Diagram 9.

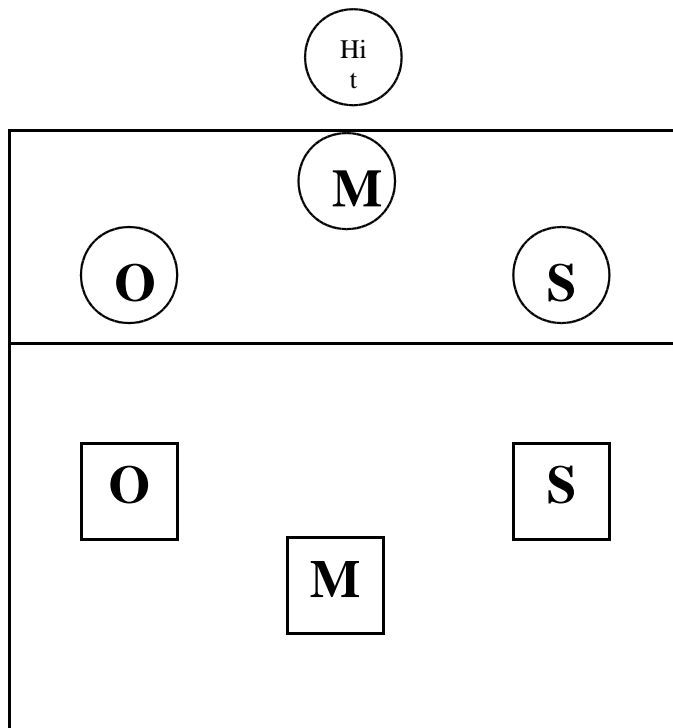


Diagram 9: Defensive positions when the opposition attack from position 3.

Players and positions

By the time you start playing competitively, your coach will have already determined whether you will be a setter, a middle hitter or an outside setter. But what are the attributes needed for each of these positions?

The setter is arguably the most important position on court. You can have the best attacking players in the world but without a decent setter, they will never get the supply of good quality ball to really hurt the opposition.

If all goes well, the setter should be touching the ball every time it comes into your side of the court, setting the ball up for one of the hitters to win the point. A setter therefore needs to be mobile, able to read the game well, have a consistently accurate set and to be able to help block out the opposition's power hitter. If the setter is an effective hitter in his own right, that's a real bonus.

The middle hitter is inevitably the big man in the team. Blocking is a key skill for the middle hitter who also needs to be mobile enough to get across the net to snuff out the opposition attacks, wherever they may come from. His hitting is important too though. Ideally, the setter is looking to set the ball slightly lower to the middle hitter to reduce the amount of time the opposition blockers have to line up their block. Done correctly – and at speed – a short ball set to the middle hitter is virtually undefendable.

The outside hitter is primarily in the team for his ability to put in the big hit and win the point there and then. From position four on court, this player has the whole court to aim at and is

invariably the most used attacking option. Although he won't be called upon to block as much as the middle hitter, he still needs to be able to block. He also needs to be mobile enough to do his defensive duties and then quickly get back into position, ready for another hitting opportunity.

Jargon and terminology

All sportsmen love using their jargon. This can prove confusing to someone new to the sport so here's a short selection of a few terms you're likely to hear – and what they actually mean:

- **Outside hitter** – The player whose role in the team is to provide a hitting option from position 4. Also known as a **wing hitter**, **4 hitter** or **playing through 4**.
- **Middle hitter** – The player whose role is to provide a hitting option from position 3 and to block the opposition's big hitters. Also known as a **middle blocker**, **centre blocker** or **playing through 3**.
- **Wing cover** – In our standard 'Base 1' position, the back court setter and another back row player are referred to as providing wing cover when we are defending – i.e. because they are defending the outside edges of the court
- **Deep 6** – The defensive position which the middle back court player takes up in our 'Base 1' position.
- **Spike** – The term used to describe the attacking hit when we play the ball over the net, looking to win the point. Also known as a **smash**, **hit** or **attack**.
- **Back court hit** – The term used to describe an attacking hit when it is played by one of the three back court players.
- **Dig** – The most basic volleyballing technique and the action which is used to get the ball to the setters when receiving serve or defending in open play. Also known as a **forearm pass**.
- **Set** – Traditionally the second of the three touches which a team will employ (a dig followed by a set, followed by a spike). The action with which a setter will look to get the ball out to his hitters. Also known as a **volley**.
- **Carry** – An illegal way of playing the ball. Contact with the ball must always be via a single, clean contact. Any action which sees the hand remain in contact with the ball for any longer than this will be called as a carry. This automatically loses the point for the team which is penalised. Also known as a **lift**.
- **Three metre line** – Fairly self-explanatory, this line is three metres from the net. Its purpose is to stop back court players from hitting in the front court. Back court players may only jump and hit the ball from behind this line. Also known as **the attack line**.
- **Penetrating setter** – A tactic used in more advanced volleyball which sees the back court setter taking the majority of the setting duties, freeing up the front court setter to be a third front court hitting option.

The rules

As was said at the start, the aim of this manual is not to give you the exhaustive list of rules of the game. However, if you are interested in seeing the full rules, you may want to check out the following site – <http://www.fivb.org/EN/Volleyball/Rules/Rules.htm>

Having said that, a few of the more quirky rules always catch beginners out so a selection of them is listed here:

- Volleyball is a game of three touches. However, you are permitted to block the opposition's attack without this counting as one of your touches. Therefore, if the ball

comes up 'off the block', your team may still use three further touches to return the ball to the opposition court.

- As the block does not count as one of your team's three touches, even the person who has just blocked it may take the next touch. It is a common mistake to see new players block an attack, only to watch the ball hit the ground, thinking that they were not allowed to touch the ball again until someone else had touched it first.
- When serving, you have eight seconds to play the ball from the time the referee blows his whistle. You cannot fake your serve by throwing the ball up and not serving. Once you throw the ball in the air, you must follow through with your serve.
- Although the player in position 1 is the server, that player does not have to serve from position one. In fact, they can serve from anywhere they want to along the base line.
- When your team is serving, you must be in your correct rotational position when the ball is served. Once the ball is played, you may then switch positions.
- When your team is receiving, you must be in the correct rotational position when the ball is served. Failure to do this will result in the opposition being awarded the point.
- Back court players may not jump from in front of the three metre line to hit the ball into the opposition court. They can however jump from behind the three metre line and then land inside it. They may also hit the ball from within the three metre line so long as they do not jump above the height of the net (which typically means that they have to keep their feet on the floor).
- After a rule change in the late nineties, volleyball's scoring system changed to a rally point scoring system, meaning that you can score a point irrespective of which team has served. Each set is played up to 25 points although you must be two points clear to win the set.
- The final set of a match will only be played to 15 points but again you must be two points clear to win the set.
- Both men's and women's matches are played over the best of five sets; but local leagues sometimes play three sets, all to 25 points.