

2008 Volleyball Major Rules-Changes

The following rules-change proposals have been approved by the NCAA Women's Volleyball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. The rule and page references are from the 2008 Women's Volleyball Rules Book.

Major Rules Changes

Playing Area. (Rule 1.1, page 13)—All playable areas must be visible to team members and officials. **Rationale:** Playing areas that are non-symmetrical or non-rectangular can result in areas that are not visible to all match participants, giving a possible unfair advantage to one team.

Non-Player Interference. (Rule 4.2.4, page 25)—In addition to the current language pertaining to media, spectators, or officials, interference by speed wipers or ball crew personnel will result in a replay. **Rationale:** At times, speed wipers and the ball crew are in the playable area as they perform their tasks. If their presence prevents a legitimate effort to make a play on the ball, the team should not be penalized.

Coach Position During Play. (Rule 5.2.4.1, page 27)—During play, coaches will be required to stay at least 1.75 meters from the court, and completely out of the substitution zone. An imaginary line perpendicular to the outside edge of the extended attack line indicates this distance. **Rationale:** During play, coaches who are too near the court create a potential safety hazard and may interfere with the officials' duties. The previous rule language stated that the coaches must be "near" their bench during play, which was ambiguous and not standardized. NOTE: When the ball is out of play, coaches may still approach (but not cross) the sideline out of the substitution zone to instruct their players.

Coach Position During Play (Rule 5.2.4.1, page 27)—Failure to comply with the designated coaching position during play will result in a team delay. **Rationale:** The sanction for this action was not clearly designated in the rule previously. A team delay is less punitive than an individual sanction in most cases.

Communication with Officials. (Rule 5.2.4.3, page 28)—The result of multiple coaches addressing the referees at one time will be an individual sanction. At the referee's discretion, the sanction may be given to the head coach (who is responsible for the behavior of the team members), or to the second coach who addresses the referees (for failing to comply with the rule). **Rationale:** The sanction for this action was not previously designated in the rule. Depending on the situation, the head coach may be the appropriate team member to sanction because s/he has fails to control other coaches after being requested to do so. However, the referee may determine that it is more appropriate to sanction the second coach.

Terminology. (Rule 8.2, page 44 and throughout)—The term "game" will be changed to "set". **Rationale:** Volleyball throughout the world refers to "sets" rather than "games". Coaching instruction and referee training will be more consistent and compatible with this change.

Points Required to Win a Set. (Rule 8.2.1, page 44)—The number of points required to win sets one through four is now 25. **Rationale:** There seems to be a reduction in the intensity of many contests in the middle of a set that is played to 30 points. The intention of this rule change

is to increase fan and player focus and fan excitement. Additionally, the Division I Championship committee recommended this change. Note: The number of points required to win the deciding set remains at 15.

Substitutions (Rule 11.2.2, page 56)—The maximum number of substitutions for each team is 12 per set. **Rationale:** When sets were played to 30 points, a maximum of 15 substitutions allowed for a ratio of two points to each substitution. With the change to 25-point sets, a reduction to 12 substitutions per set approximately maintains that ratio.

Inadvertent Whistle or Horn (Rule 16.1.2, page 79)—Only inadvertent whistles or horns that affect play will result in a replay. **Rationale:** There are situations where an inadvertent whistle or horn has no effect on the result of the play. For example, if the ball is clearly traveling into a non-playable area but has not yet contacted an object, an inadvertent horn would not affect play and the rally should not be replayed.

Protest Facts to be Recorded (Rule 17.2.4.6, page 82)—When a protest is lodged, the coaches will now be required to sign the protest documentation rather than the captains. **Rationale:** In recent years, the rules were modified to allow coaches as well as captains to lodge a protest. In the collegiate environment, it is logical to ask the coach to be the team representative to authorize the protest documentation. If the coach is unavailable, the captain may sign the documentation.

Significant Editorial Changes

Requests for Interruptions. (Rule 5.2.4.4, page 28)— A clarification will note that an improper request is the result when a coach requests a substitution, timeout or line-up check from an area away from the substitution zone (request denied).

Uniform Numbers-Trim (Rule 7.1.2.4, page 39) —If the shadow trim surrounding a number (rather than the number itself) is providing the necessary contrast to the jersey color, the trim must completely surround the number. Uniforms must comply by the 2011 season.

Logos and Insignia (Rule 7.1.3.2, page 40)—The requirement for identical team uniforms extends to commemorative or any special patch, logo, or insignia worn by team members.

Media Timeouts (Rule 11.1.3.1, page 56)—Media timeouts may be allowed at the host institution's discretion for broadcast matches with paid advertising (e.g. television, radio, or Internet audio or visual).

Second Referee Duties (Rule 18.3.6.1.1, page 88) —The second referee's will now notify a coach when a team has used the 9th through 12th team substitutions.

Second Referee Duties (Rule 18.3.11.4.1, page 90)—The second referee's duties will now indicate the responsibility to work with the scorekeeper to ensure the legality of libero replacements.

Scorekeeper Duties (Rule 18.4.4.5, page 91) —The scorekeeper will now notify the second referee when a team has used the 9th through 12th team substitutions.

Ball Handling Directive

Based on extensive discussion at the 2008 annual meeting, the NCAA Women's Volleyball Rules Committee has developed a new directive regarding ball handling judgment, primarily regarding second team contacts. This is not a rule change, but a new approach to ball handling judgments that is intended to increase intensity and focus for the players and coaches, and improve fan understanding and involvement.

Current Culture of Women's Collegiate Volleyball

- Recent rule changes emphasize continuation of play and fewer stoppages (for example, rules for the libero, rally scoring, and continuation of play after some net contacts).
- Collegiate women players demonstrate more athleticism than ever before, and that athleticism should be highlighted.
- Players have better skills due to increased quantity of play through the year, training started at an early age, and better coaching.
- There is a demand by all match participants for consistency in ball handling judgment.
- Volleyball is enjoying an increased fan base and significant growth.

The committee recognized that ball handling judgment was, at times, inconsistent both within a match and from contest to contest. Not only were those inconsistencies frustrating for players and coaches, whistles for subtle infractions discernable only by the referees are confusing to fans. With increased television exposure, it is important to develop ball handling guidelines that are understandable by typical sports fans, not just the volleyball community. The basic tenet is that the excitement of the sport of volleyball can be increased with fewer whistles for minor ball handling infractions and increased leniency on particularly athletic plays that may not result in a perfectly executed set by traditional standards, but provides a continuation of play.

Directives

The points below have been emphasized in ball handling judgment discussions for several years, and are still vitally important when considering faults:

- Referees should only call faults that are actually **seen**.
- Only the contact point should be considered when judging legality.
- Outside influences such as player technique, spin, crowd reaction, or coaches' expectations should not be regarded.

The following points are new emphases by the rules committee, and should decrease the number of whistles that stop play:

- Only the most obvious violations should be called.
- Referees should be less severe when judging an athletic play by a player in less than ideal position. In other words, there should be increased leniency when a player's best effort to continue play is made with unorthodox technique. However, clumsiness or lack of skill must not be confused with athleticism. A player who has the opportunity to set the ball from good position will be expected to execute without multiple contacts.
- Referees should avoid being overly mechanical or technical in their judgments, and work within the current culture of the sport and the spirit of the competition.

Principles

There are two basic tenets associated with this directive that the committee feels will improve the public's overall image of our game without damaging the integrity of the sport:

- Less severe ball handling judgment will result in more consistency within a match and from event to event.
- Coaches will continue to teach good technique and to play the best players because the best result is derived from well-executed skills.

Other Points of Emphasis

Fan Behavior

Referee training will include a review of the fan behavior and crowd control rules (Rule 18.2.5), and referees will be reminded to establish a cooperative relationship with event management in that effort. Inappropriate behaviors as discussed by the rules committee will be reviewed during referee training to prevent both over-sensitivity and laxness. Crowd control is primarily an event management responsibility. Referees will report inappropriate fan behavior to event management with the expectation that the problem will be resolved, and will only become more involved if event management does not respond appropriately.

Substitutes in Warm-up Area

The rules regarding the legal location of substitutes are clear. Substitutes in the warm-up area must be at least 2 meters from the extended sideline, which reduces the chances of them interfering with play, or with the opponent's or referees' view of the actual players on the court (including the server). During the pre-match period, referees will be instructed to identify a visible mark that can be used to define the imaginary limit of the warm-up area, and communicate that to the teams. Failure to comply after appropriate warning(s) will result in team delay sanctions.

Pursuit Under the Net

In women's collegiate play, it is not legal to take a path under the net or net cable when pursuing a ball into the opponent's free zone. However, a fault is not committed unless the ball is contacted or the pursuing player commits a center line fault. Team representatives will be reminded of this rule in the pre-match meeting.

Facilities and Event Management

The Event Management section of the rule book has been clarified to define the best possible practices regarding facility setup and playing area.

Publication Schedule

The NCAA has recently made a change to provide for a two-year rules cycle for all NCAA sports. Rule changes will only be enacted and rule books published every other year. For volleyball, the rules committee will request an implementation date of 2010 for the first two-year rule book, primarily based on the cycle of rule changes implemented by the Federation of International Volleyball (FIVB). A new FIVB rule book will be published in 2009, based on rule changes that are considered following the 2008 Olympic Games.