Attack management (Part I)

From the analysis of the opponent blocking until individual technique setter

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With this article I want to explain how we developed, with the staff of Spanish senior women's volleyball team, the different strategies that allow us to deal with greater guarantees of success, the build of the attack system of our team in Side Out.

In a volleyball game there are individuals fighting (player vs. player) of which depend the success or failure in the final result. Under our perspective, one of the most important "mini-matches" is between the setter and the middle blocker (MB) of the opposing team, when the setter decides the attacking system. Setter success will depend on the occurrence of situations of advantage to their spikers against the blockers of the opposing team.

We focus on the study of the opposing middle-blocker, to provide valuable information to our setter for help him to choose the best way in each game situation along the match, paying special attention to three elements:

1. Start position in the net: Defined by the area occupied by the opposite MB before the ball gets into the hands of the setter, differentiating if the player start in the center of the net (In front of a first tempo (1T) attack ahead), lightly to the left (in front of a 1T attack behind) or lightly to the right (against a possible 1T attack far from the setter). So we establish three possible areas of start position: Neutral (**N**), Close (**C**) or Far (**L**).

2. <u>Priorities</u>: Trying to "guess" strategy game that is following the MB, for each of the rotations and game situations (vs. 3 attacks or vs. 2 attacks), and are classified depending on whether you expect the ball out of the hands of the setter to go to block the attack zone, called Read (**L**) if the MB doesn´t move before the set, reads the ball and reacts with the Set or if the MB has one priority for a spiker, 4, 3 or 2, which names for us translates as Block 4 (**I-II**), Fire (**F**) and Block 2 (**II-I**).

3. <u>Unconscious movements</u>: Discovering movements of the MB done it before the sets as an automatism, choosing between movements to the Right (**D**) movements to the Left (**I**) or, if he/she doesn't move (**X**).

With this categorization of the MB´s skills, we make a scouting, rotation by rotation, using the letters of each situation. For example, we can check:

- **N I-II D** (start position Neutral, priority in position 4, previous movement to the Right).
- **L F D** (start position Far, Block with priority with the 1T, previous movement to the Right).

To further advance the knowledge of the block structures we must follow a similar process with the players that are located on outside of the net, position 2 and 4. In this case, we make observation of their behavior to get information for our setter. There are two fundamental aspects:

1. <u>Start position in net</u>: We establish three zones according to their proximity or distance in relation to the net antenna, differentiating, from outside to the center:

➢ Zone called **B** when the player is close to the antenna;
➢ Zone called **A** when the player blocking in position 2 is in front the 1T attack far ("7" or 31), and the that is blocking in position 4 is in front of the 1T attack back (A1 or 71);
➢ Zone **Super A** (**SA**) when the outside blocker has the responsibility to block the 1T attack.

2. <u>The commitment with the first tempo attacks</u> (HELP): We differentiate the degree of commitment that takes the player helping to block 1T attacks:

➢ "no-helping" (**-**)
➢ "helping" (**+**)
➢ or "commit" (**#**).

Furthermore, we include in the register the <u>intentionality of outside blockers</u> in front the spiker, differentiating:

➢ "line closed" (**1**)
➢ "line opened" (**2**)

This information is more important for our spikers, and less relevant for the setter.

Then, for each rotation and for each start position of blockers during the game, we use a symbol system in each category. That's our block strategy system of the other team.

Here you have some <u>examples</u>. The digits in left side are for blockers in position 4 (usually outside hitter), the digits in the center are for blockers in position 3 (MB) and digits in right side are for blockers in position 2 (opposite or setter):

- **A2+ // N F // A2+:** This situation indicates strong help in outside blockers and the MB is in commit with 1T attack;
- **SA2# // C I-II D // B1-:** More usual in women teams when setter is in front side (rotations 4,3 and 2). The blocker in position 4 is in commit with first tempo attack. The MB prioritizes to position 4 and the blocker in position 2 don´t help.
- **B1- // N II-I I // Ay2:** More usual in men teams with a strong opposite player and a MB with strong hit far from the setter ("seven" or 31).
- Other examples:
  o **(B1- // N L // B1-),**
  o **(SA2# // N I-II D // Ay1+),**
  o **(Ay2+ // N I-II D // B1-)**

After analyzing block strategy (tactical system team) and the skills for each blocker (individual tactical system) to decrease the opposite attack, we will fix our attention in our setter, with a encoding system attack, the first key to organize the <u>combinations attacks</u> (relations between spikers and attack times), using as attack tempo the 1T and the 2T and excluding the third.

In summary, the following elements should be in the game for build combinations are:

1. <u>All setting options</u>. Through good pass or a good defense that puts the ball in the "optimal set zone" to enable the setter to distribute the attack choosing between 1T and 2T Attacks.
2. <u>All players with possible attack</u> acceded to their attack´s areas without any problem.

3. MB incorporates at 1T in <u>advance and threatening</u>. Essentially when setter is touching the ball the MB must be in the air or near setter taking off the feet of floor, enabled to spike. The threat is essential to present a risk of attack to the opposing team by the ability shown in previous competitions or use that is given during the game.

(will be continue in Part II)

Attack zone SAD Vs. SDC

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