







Club Volleyball Tryout Considerations

"The spiel used by many club directors and coaches during player recruitment would make a used car salesman blush."

"Pick the coach, not the club"

-PrepVolleyball.com Message Board

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Jeff Cole's References

2010 NorCal 14-1 Black

References	Phone	Email Address	High School	Daughter
Jeanne Wisniewski	925-820-2401	4jw@comcast.net	Carondelet	Defensive Specialist
Laura & John Cox	925-989-4135	ljsrcox@aol.com	Acalanes	Tall Frosh JV Hitter
Mark Quindoy	510-378-0472	markq@ci.union-city.ca.us	Dougherty Vly	Played up an age
Jim Petricka	650-207-5163	jpetricka@sbcglobal.net	Granada	5'2" Frosh Varsity
Elaine Barden	925- 595-8558	elaine_barden@cable.comcast.com	San Ramon Vly	Frosh Outside Hitter
Marci Kearney	925- 980-1389	mkearney21@comcast.net	Granada	Sophomore Varsity
Laura Laird	925- 765-3107	Laura3ms@comcast.net	San Ramon Vly	Frosh JV Hitter
Cynthia Kralj	925-640-5914	ckralj@att.net	Castro Valley	Frosh V Hitter
Julie Alameda	925- 785-4143	julzalameda2002@aol.com	Monte Vista	Setter
Debra Bernhardt	510-295-7283	debromi707@yahoo.com	Albany	DS/ Setter

Jeff Cole's References (Continued)

2009 NorCal 13-1 Black

<i>References</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Daughter</i>
Jeanne Wisniewski	925-820-2401	4jw@comcast.net	Carondelet	Defensive Specialist
Kelley Letteney	650-444-1698	kellyletteney@yahoo.com	Bishop O'Dowd	Frosh OH on Varsity
Jim Petricka	650-207-5163	jpetricka@sbcglobal.net	Granada	5'2" Frosh Varsity
Ruth Corbin	925-548-2721	ruth.corbin@sbcglobal.net	Foothill	Sophomore Varsity
Nancy Sanders	925-451-3311	sanders504@comcast.net	Acalanes	DS and Hitter
Paula Orrell	925-785-0331	klondike39@comcast.net	Granada	Defensive Specialist
Laura & John Cox	925-989-4135	ljsrcox@aol.com	Acalanes	Tall Frosh JV Hitter

2008 NorCal 13-1 Black

<i>References</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Daughter</i>
Christine Reder	925-525-7411	reder@sbcglobal.net	San Ramon Vly	Star, new to sport
Emily Reder	925-234-5700	reder@sbcglobal.net	San Ramon Vly	Player
Sarah Byron	925-417-1616	sijbyron@aol.com	Foothill	Multi Sport athlete
Jen Bugaj	650-799-8046	JenBugaj@SouthernWine.com	Dougherty Vly	Shorter player
Kevin Clayton	925-837-8273	ktssclayton@comcast.net	California	Frosh 2nd All EBAL
Leda Lim	925-838-9614	ledalim@hotmail.com	Monte Vista	Tennis player too
Mark Quindoy	510-378-0472	markq@ci.union-city.ca.us	Dougherty Vly	Played up an age
Glenn Mueller	925-370-8991	glennmueller@sbcglobal.net	Campolindo	Gymnastics also
Sharon Mueller	925-370-8991	Sharon_mueller@sbcglobal.net	Campolindo	Gymnastics also
Karren Yun	510-632-5965	yunfamily@earthlink.net	Bishop O'Dowd	Mom played VB

2007 NorCal 14-1 Black

<i>References</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Daughter</i>
Jack Acosta	925-736-6866	jackacosta46@msn.com	San Ramon	hard worker
Susan Acosta	925-736-6866	susanacosta@msn.com	San Ramon	hard worker
Katie Washom	925-838-7197	e5era@aol.com	San Ramon	Changed clubs
Byron Washom	925-964-0075	spencermgt@aol.com	San Ramon	Changed clubs
Mike Moore	925-631-9023	mike@sqpeg.com	Campolindo	Very Tall Player
David Atchley	925-443-2394	Ema349@comcast.net	Granada	Great jumper
Bob Holt	925-376-8321	Bob.holt@att.net	Campolindo	Very positive
Barbara Condie	925-284-1424	bfcondie@comcast.net	Campolindo	Libero Phenom
Linda Van Fossen	925-552-7144	lindavanfossen@msn.com	San Ramon	Determined
Tami Noland	925-323-5849	tamin@ampprinting.com	Campolindo	Multiple positions
Lili Kopas	925-283-3624	lilikopas@sbcglobal.net	Campolindo	Strong, new to sport

Jeff Cole's References (Continued)

Division 1 College Coaches

<i>References</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>College</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Rob Browning	925-878-1835	rbrownin@stmarys-ca.edu	Saint Mary's	Head Coach
Keegan Cook	925-631-8134	rcook@stmarys-ca.edu	Saint Mary's	Assistant Coach

High School, Private Lessons, SMC Camp and Various Clinics

<i>References</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Daughter</i>
Brenda Crawford	925-485-1111	crawfordb@sbcglobal.net	Foothill	Doubles Lessons
David Atchley	925-443-2394	Daa7490@comcast.net	Granada	Doubles Lessons
Lisa Atchley	925-443-2394	ema349@comcast.net	Granada	Doubles Lessons
Tim Zuffi	925-788-9644	zuffis@pacbell.net	Las Lomas	Tall, prior club issues
Carmelita Perez	925-376-7378	CarmAPerez@aol.com	Campolindo	Smart and Athletic
Laura Canfield	925-858-0619	lmcanfield@comcast.net	California	Move from MB to S
Suzanne Ganser	925-989-6219	SGanser@ccarey.com	Foothill	Private Lessons
Carla Roberts	925-283-7572	carlaroberts@comcast.net	Acalanes	Private Lessons
Bruce Roberts	925-283-7572	broberts@wideorbit.com	Acalanes	Private Lessons
Cecily Summers	925-784-5309	cecily.summers@comcast.net	Granada	Top Court at Camp
Charlie Board	925-743-8266	chazbo98@sbcglobal.net	San Ramon Vly	Doubles, Privates
Debbie Cooney	925-685-2588	cundog@sbcglobal.net	Carondelet	Now at Dartmouth
Grace DeMiguel	510-909-8781	gracedemiguel@yahoo.com	Castro Valley	Varsity Star
Janine Moffitt	707-718-4513	JJJJJFamily@comcast.net		Restart after yr off
Sue Conneely	925-820-0320	smconneely@sbcglobal.net	San Ramon Vly	Jeff Freshman team
Stephanie King	925-984-5071	TKINGSKING@aol.com	San Ramon Vly	JV Team & Fall Ball
Jennifer Berrigan	925-485-0162	jwberrigan@sbcglobal.net	Athenian	Tall Middle and RS
Paul Harrison	510-733-6083	pk2hot2handle@sbcglobal.net	Castro Valley	Two vb daughters
Karen Harrison	510-733-6083	karihari19@yahoo.com	Castro Valley	Two vb daughters
Nikita Gordon	925-287-8444	NikitaMik@astound.net	Las Lomas	Defensive Specialist
Rusty Bailey	925-487-8660	rbailey@cencalins.com	Monte Vista	Left Handed Player
Molly Braunschweig	925-838-2187	mollybraunschweig@yahoo.com	San Ramon	Beginner

Videos

www.youtube.com/user/NorcalJefe
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Riq0a3w0o1I&NR=1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mUWkL_MMSA

Jefe's YouTube Home
NorCal 13-1 Black Team
Technical Analysis

2008 NorCal VBC 13s Team



Allie and Annie Blend



What Position will I play? It depends on your skills relative to your team mates. Are you better than (+), equal to (=), or less talented than (-) your team mates at these 6 volleyball skills?

	Setting	Blocking	Serving	Hitting	Passing	Digging
Setter	+	=	=	-	-	=
Opposite	+	+	=	+	-	=
Middle Hitter	-	+	=	+	-	-
Outside Hitter	=	+	+	+	+	+
Libero, DS	=	-	=	-	+	+

Recent Coaching Experience

2010 NorCal 14-1 Black Junior Nationals (Upper half finish).
2009 NorCal 13-1 Black Junior Olympics (7wins, 3 Losses). All 8th graders played Varsity 6 weeks later.
2008 NorCal 13-1 Black 1 of only 9 teams (1 of 2 13s teams) out of 105 that moved up 2 Divisions or more. 2nd out of 105 teams (1st of 29 13s) in overall improvement in final rank 4 spots away from final JO bid.)
2007 NorCal 14-1 Black Junior Olympics, Most of team makes Varsity as Freshmen 6 weeks later
2006 NorCal 15-1 Black Junior Olympics
2005 NorCal 14-1 Black Nearly all players make their HS Varsity team as freshmen 6 weeks later
2004 NorCal 13-1 Black 8th Place Reno Festival

Additional Considerations

NUMBER OF PLAYERS ON THE TEAM: Ideally 10, likely 12. Players 10-12 will be notified of their “initial” status prior to committing financially to the club. Last year’s initial player #12 became player #1 by mid-season.

WHEN WILL WE START TRAINING: mid November (when insurance coverage starts).

WHAT DAYS/TIMES WILL WE PRACTICE: We optimize team schedules to find times that work for everyone.

CONDITIONING: Administered by parent volunteer on the team.

VIDEO ANALYSIS: A parent will film matches. Coach reviews for stats and to assess focus areas. Post to www.YouTube.com to share with team. We use TiVo for continuous, delayed video feedback on the court

EXTRA PRACTICES: Last season included a third, non-mandatory practice every week. (function of gym time).

COURT TIME: “play to win” at tournaments that “count” towards goal of earning bid to Junior Nationals, equitable play time (not equal) at other tournaments. No guarantee of ANY playing time.

FREE PRIVATE LESSONS: Available when the wife allows me to take the time. Three days last year.

MULTISPORT ATHLETES: Playing time is determined by ability to help team win, regardless of outside conflicts.

PARENT /COACH RELATIONSHIP: I prefer to have open communication, so long as it remains dignified, as outlined in the attached article “How to Cultivate and Excellent Parent-Coach Relationship.”

COST: To be posted by NorCal Volleyball Club

TRAVEL...Cost includes certain tournaments. Team decides collectively whether to do more and pay more. I will go to any, and all of them, day-job schedule permitting. My salary does not increase with more tournaments. It is possible that we will miss days of school due to traveling to out of town tournaments.

Coach

“... Laura had an **outstanding experience with you as her coach. Your dedication and commitment was beyond anything we have ever seen in a coach, which says a lot considering we have had five kids play multiple sports from grade school through high school. Your new team will be lucky to have you.** Thank you so much for all that you have done to help Laura improve as a player, and to **boost her confidence** and love of the game.

-Sarah Byron

“Jeff, Thank you for all the **great advise and all the genuine praise and special attention** you have shown Stephanie. It's **people like you at NorCal** that makes me see that it **is a class act.** Steph and I both want all to work out so she can play for NorCal. Anyone can see that **the organization cares about the whole person: the character, mind, and body of the athlete.**

- Michelle Fitch

“...I am **totally impressed with both your style of coaching and the things you emphasize** to the girls about the game as well as **how you communicate [with] them.** As you might remember, both my wife and I were long time doubles players and we loved the game. [Olivia] ... seems to have lost some of the fire/motivation... **We can see that fire returning when she plays doubles at NorCal** and we can see that **she really respects and responds to you.** My wife and I both think that **you are the kind of coach she really needs and we really appreciate what you have done for her.**”

-Tim Zuffi

Jefe, ...I have decided you are **my favorite coach** because:

1. You say you talk too much..., but **I like the talking** and I think it is helpful.
2. You are so supportive and ... **you get excited when I do something right** ...that... makes me feel good.
3. You are **so positive and encouraging** at every practice and **private lesson**, which makes me want to play volleyball every single day.
4. In the **private lesson** tonight (30th), even though I was at NorCal for four+ hours, I could have stayed longer because I was having such a great time and **I loved how you were making me more confident by just telling me things that I had improved on.** Thank you again for **taking so much of your time** into making me a better player. I made **the BEST DECISION of my life to play for NorCal**”

-Emily Reder

“...It was with his **exemplary guidance, devotion, BELIEF in my daughter and her teammates,** and his ability to **continually critique the technical aspects of the game,** which she fell in LOVE with this sport.

Jeff spends **countless hours reviewing video tapes** and then provides **feedback to the players.** His best friends may just be the **TiVo machine and the video camera.** Following each tournament Jeff has the **game results posted** as well as **acknowledges each player for her accomplishments.**

His **communication is superior** ... His world outside his first family and work is **devoted entirely to improving the skills and characteristics of his second family, the 13-1 Black team.** Jeff kept an **open door of communication** and both my daughter and I felt that not only was he a coach and **mentor,** but a good friend...

Jeff ...constantly implemented ideas along the way so **both he and his team grew physically and mentally.**

Jeff has not only shared his volleyball passion but also **provided life lessons** for his team. He is a **one-of-a-kind coach** that **deserves to be considered as Coach of the Year.**”

-Christine Reder

Training

"Jefe,... You were an **invaluable contributor [at our Summer Camps]** ... in every way. I appreciate your **initiative** and **coaching abilities and attention to detail**. You certainly helped make the camp great. I want you to work our camps next year--as many as you can. Thanks again,"

-Rob Browning
Head Women's Volleyball Coach
Saint Mary's College of California

"Jefe... You are doing an **absolutely fantastic job.... Never have I seen a coach ... dedicate more time or energy to a group of players.** ...you are coaching with **great enthusiasm and attention to details.** ...**your hard work** has not gone unnoticed. I am impressed and thankful that you are one of the people **coaching the future of this club.** Sincerely,"

-R. Keegan Cook
Women's Volleyball Assistant Coach
Saint Mary's College of California

"... yesterday Aria had a lesson with Keegan [SMC Coach] and he said, "**Her platform was perfect** and she had **really solid fundamentals with no glaring bad habits.**" Then he said, "**whose been working with her,** so I told him 'you' mostly and Jay some..." and he said, "wow, that's not surprising. Two of **the best technical coaches around.** **No wonder she looks so amazing.**"

-Brenda Crawford

"... You got her excited again by making **practices competitive and challenging.** Thanks so much again for everything. I will always be grateful to you!"

-Brenda Crawford

"Jeff – You are an **incredibly gifted technical instructor!**"

-Kim Figone

"Hats off to you for all your help during her **private lessons.** ...you have **helped her immensely.** Thanks!"

-Laura Canfield

"I just wanted to let you know ... I made [Castro Valley] Varsity!!!! Thank you for **all your help** this summer, **I had a ton of fun and learned a lot.** I will see you in the gym. Thank you,

-Brooke DeMiguel

"... Sophia made [Campolindo] varsity! She is absolutely thrilled. Many thanks for the **great coaching** this summer. We know it was a **big part of her successful results!**

-Carmelita Perez

"Hey Jefe, It was **really nice to see you** yesterday... the **doubles camp** I attended during the summer has **helped me with my high school season.** I have even gotten a few free-ball **kills against some amazing teams just by placing the ball in the right spot!** I just wanted to say thanks for doing the doubles camp because I really enjoyed it. See you soon,"

- Courtney Atchley

Communication

"Dear Jeff, It was very **thoughtful of you to copy me on this**, and all I can say is Wow. You stopped me dead in my tracks. I literally had to step away and find some Kleenex. I am so **touched by your kind words for my daughter. Your feelings and expression really leapt off the page and tugged at my heart. ...your words really moved me** and I just wanted to convey my appreciation. With my warmest regards,"

-Nikita Gordon

"Dear Jefe, Thank you so much for **working with Laura yesterday afternoon**. She left feeling **so excited about what she had learned** in that short time with you, and it was **great for her to be able to work with you one-on-one**. I also really appreciated you **sitting down and talking** with her about her playing ability. I think that she felt that [her] playing time was...reflective of her lesser ability. She was truly surprised when **you told her just how good a player you thought she was**. Thank you so much for explaining the situation to Laura, and for **encouraging her to believe in herself**. Knowing Laura like I do, she will work hard to earn more playing time."

-Sarah Byron

"Jeff, ... now we are **really impressed!** This is **exactly what we needed to understand** in order to better support her. ...**we have been communicating this same message** with an emphasis on the **"be MUCH more verbal, and MUCH more ready to touch the ball"** as well as the **leadership qualities** you discuss. ... This is why we put her in this program. **Thank you so much for caring** and for **taking the time to write this email**.

-Parent of NorCal Fall Ball player

"You are **so sweet to follow-up with all those girls!!!** No wonder **we all like you soooo much :-)**

-Susan Acosta

"Jefe, The word **magnanimous** comes to mind... I've kept 92 emails in the volleyball folder - mostly from you, your **advice, guidance, comments, vb threads, referrals, you tubes, etc. etc...**"

-Christine Reder

"Stephanie has **learned many skills** working with you over the past several years and **always looks forward to lessons with you**. I appreciate your **honest evaluations** you provide; you are **routinely right on the mark**. I just wish she could have actually played for a Jeff Cole coached team! Good luck this season. All the best..."

- Rusty Bailey

"Jeff, Thank you so much for getting back to Lauren with the **evaluation**. Lauren could tell that **you put thought into your comments**. **You were specific with what she does well and what she can work on**. ...I knew... that this was one of those **"life lessons"** and that this experience could actually make her stronger. I read the article on **self-efficacy**... **You have given Lauren a priceless gift**. Thank you so much.

-Linda Van Fossen

"...She comes home daily from school..."any emails from Jefe?", she asks. It has really helped that not only have you been **positive (harsh at times in a good way --- these motivate her) but also very communicative**. She works very well with **positive reinforcement and praise**. We value **all the time you have put into this season and the Club**. **You have set the bar really high for her next coach**. **I know whatever she does next season, twice a week in the gym for practices would probably not be enough for her**. ... You have been an **excellent mentor** for her. **THANK YOU A MILLION for all you have done to encourage and fuel her passion**.

-Christine Reder

Extras

"We will all get a kick out of these [YouTube **Highlight Video Clips** and DVDs]. I hope you know how much you have **touched every family on your team**. The girls and families had a great time. ...**This is the best thing I have of Jalene!** Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

- Jen Bugaj

"Hi Jefe. Thank you again for putting together that **video for the girls**. That was truly a **labor of love**, and we will all enjoy watching it for years to come. We also wanted to thank you again for your **excellent coaching** this year. Laura has **learned a ton**, and has left this season with more of a **love for the game** than she started - a true testimony to the **positive impact of your coaching**."

-Sarah Byron

"Seems like Aria is really **enjoying working with you**. That's not a surprise! The 14's also think you're an **awesome coach!** I think you would be a great fit for the 15's and I think more of their team would participate with your **non-mandatory practices**. ...just thoughts.

-Christine Reder

Team

"Wow, Jeff! This is an **amazing summary** of **what this team has accomplished**. ...This is really incredible, and you are right, **the girls should be really proud of themselves**.....and so should you! I can't wait to show these **statistics** to Laura -- they are awesome!

-Sarah Byron

".....Em says, **"Isn't he the greatest coach!"** Alex says, **"I agree!"** :) With much good conversation and dialog on the way home, **the girls leave filling satisfied with their level of play and their teammates**. It is appropriate to say...."**A good day was had by all**...so good for her confidence!!!! Thanks again for your **commitment!!!!** It means a lot to her!

-Christine Reder

"Jeff: First off, I want to thank you for an excellent year of volleyball. **Every one of our players has improved** and equally as important, has developed a true love for the game. Thanks also for your **inspiration on and off the court**. Thanks again for your continued passion for this game and for **your commitment to our players/daughters**. Best regards,"

-Andy Byron

Thanks, Jefe. It was so great to see **the girls win the tournament** last weekend! And it was especially great that **everyone was able to contribute** to the team wins! As a previous coach, Andy knows what a challenge it can be to try to **keep all of the players and parents happy**. We appreciate **your conscientious efforts** to do so. We were so pleased that the girls **experienced this success together**, and know that it is a **reflection of your hard work as a coach**. It's hard to believe that this season is almost over. We will definitely be missing volleyball in the off-season, and this great group of girls.

-Sarah Byron

How to Cultivate an Excellent Parent-Coach Relationship



Written by Anonymous on Monday, October 02, 2006

If an article such as this is to be even remotely effective, it must begin with this very true (and likely unpopular) statement: parents are subjective and coaches are self-righteous, and each side holds it against the other.

You see, parents cannot help being subjective. *Subjective* is the opposite of *objective*, and to be objective means you are not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice, that you base your opinions on fact, and that you are unbiased. It is not possible for parents to remain objective where their child is concerned, and no one should expect or want a parent to be.

On the other hand, coaches cannot help being self-righteous. In fact, in many ways and to certain degrees, coaches *have* to be. Any coach worth his or her salt will know that to maintain order on a team, to maintain structure and balance and to earn the respect of your players, you must be confident regarding the decisions you make. Confidence and a sense of pride in your coaching abilities are key ingredients carried without exception by great coaches and also great players, and many times, the two will rub off on each other.

Parents are subjective and coaches are self-righteous, and no good things ever come from the pitting of such disparate characteristics, if said characteristics are left unacknowledged.

Which is why they must be precisely that: *acknowledged*.

Act One: Understanding the Long-Storied Struggle

Humor me for a moment, parents, if you will, and consider the following scenario: you own a car. It is a car you love and cherish, more precious than the world. One day your car decides it wants to improve itself; it wants to become a racecar. Sadly, you do not know anything about racecars beyond what you see on television, so you hire a mechanic to improve your car's performance. The mechanic begins to work on the car, at which point you proceed to tell all of your friends what you think the mechanic should do, or better yet, you tell the mechanic *himself* what you think he should do, because you love your car and you know it would make a fabulous racing vehicle, if only the mechanic would listen to you. Which is silly, because, honestly, what do you know about racecars?

Coaches, your turn: you are a mechanic and a person brings you his beloved car, which he wants upgraded. You are not familiar with the intricacies of this particular brand of car, but you know much of what there is to know about racecars, so you accept the job. But because you are proud and knowledgeable, instead of sitting down with the person to talk about this particular car first to get an idea of what you have on your hands, you start fiddling around under the hood, and use a hammer when all you needed was some performance oil. Which is silly, because the hammer will only dent the car and make it worse.

If you read both of these scenarios without bias and without pride, putting aside any history you might have with an obstinate coach or parent, you will see that both sides, mechanic and car owner, look equally ridiculous. Which is usually what ends up happening when coaches and parents butt heads and neither side is willing to dialogue openly. For further proof of this, read any one of what must be *thousands* of posts on the Prepvolleyball message board debating, chronicling, exaggerating, and vilifying the conduct of parents and coaches.

In the battle between coaches and parents, and there have been some epic battles recorded down through the long years of competitive junior sports, the sad fact of the matter is that the player herself often gets lost in the struggle. It becomes an adult tug-of-war over who is right, who is wrong, who is stubborn, who is irrational, who is unreasonable, who is uncaring, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, and may the best mudslinger win. And while there are bad coaches out there, and in equal measure bad parents, it is my belief that much of the conflict can and should be avoided.

My point is this: communication, dignified moderation, and acknowledgement of the difficult job and difficult choices facing the other are the only things strong enough to overcome what are the naturally conflicting

positions of coach and parent.

Act Two: The Willingness to Work in Tandem

The funny thing is that parents and coaches (hopefully) have the same ultimate goals: coaches want their players (all their players, from the top of the talent heap to the bottom) to succeed and do well and help the team win; parents want the same, just with a particularly potent focus upon their own child.

Which is why it baffles me that there is not a more widespread willingness on the part of parents and coaches to work together to achieve such goals, and why so many times parents and coaches enter a season with apprehensive and cautious (almost suspicious) regard for the other.

As with any relationship (husband-wife, mother-daughter, father-son, what have you), communication is vitally important; the lines of communication must be open and unfettered between parents and coaches, and each must be generous with their time. Good communication cannot be halfhearted, nor can it be hurried.

My recommendation for keeping communication significantly emphasized and constant is for the coach to set aside time for three official individual player-parent conferences for every team member over the course of the season. At these conferences the following happens, in order: the coach speaks separately with the parents, the coach speaks separately with the player, and, lastly, the coach and player and parents all speak together.

Coaches, begin by giving the parents an honest and *constructive* assessment of the player's skills, as well as particular key strengths and weaknesses. Regarding the weaknesses, explain what is being done or will be done to correct them. Next comes a discussion regarding what you view the player's role on the team to be, which is very, very important, because every parent must know what his or her child's role is, as well as know that, whatever the role, it is valuable in some way. And, finally, the last step is to open the floor up for the parents to speak or ask questions, openly and candidly, about whatever they want. No topic is off limits; the wife may speak about how much she dislikes her husband's snoring, if she chooses. It should be clear that what is said is *completely confidential* and not to be shared by parent or coach to anyone.

You repeat this process next with the player herself, paying very specific attention again to the discussion of her role and its value on the team. It is also important to note that teenage girls are less apt to keep conversations confidential, so be honest but choose your words wisely. Once you have met with the parents and the player separately, you bring all three of them in to discuss anything they wish to discuss as a whole. This is usually the shortest segment of the conference.

For club volleyball coaches, the first conference comes in early January (during the preseason, but after several practice sessions), the second in early April (midseason), and the third and final in late June (either just before or during whatever year-end tournament you attend). For high school coaches, the first conference should come in August, the second in October, and the third in December.

The first and second conferences will deal somewhat more with how the season itself is going and will work to resolve any issues with respect to that, while the third conference should cover in depth the player's volleyball future, both high school and club (or college, if necessary), as well as advanced areas to improve upon not progressed to during the season, if any.

This kind of communication is not easy, nor is it swift, but it is vital to ensuring every parent and player is on the same page. And yet, it is not enough: moderation is the second thing necessary to cultivate an excellent parent-coach relationship.

These conferences and, indeed, any discussion engaged in by parent and coach over the course of a season, can only be successful if both parties involved are respectful and dignified. Coaches, you must be honest and constructive with your assessments and your comments, and realize that you are speaking about the pride and joy of the persons before you. Parents, you must be reasonable and rational of manner, and realize that the person before you does have what he or she believes is in the best interest of your child. Most importantly, each party, parent and coach, must actually *listen* to what the other has to say, must attempt to *understand* what the other has to say, and must be *responsive* to what is said, and not just sit there with a blank expression while thinking of what next to say yourself. The essence of dignity is to respect another enough to listen (and hear) what they have to say.

The decision to listen and hear what the parent or coach before you is saying is the most important step towards acknowledging the difficult job that person has. Coaches have ten to twelve girls they want to support, mold, guide, and grow, as well as a team they want to see succeed. Parents have one child, their child, whose emotional well-being is above any other priority in their lives. These are not simple things; in fact, they are as difficult as they are different. The decisions of a coach have many shades of gray, many influencing factors, the majority of which tend not to be considered by parents. The mood of a parent is very black-and-white: if my child is unhappy, something is wrong.

Shades of gray versus black-and-white: once parents and coaches understand this fundamental difference and acknowledge it, their ability to communicate with each other in a dignified, respectful, and effective manner increases exponentially.

Act Three: The Higher Road

Let me begin the third act with a disclaimer: not all discussions between parents and coaches have agreeable outcomes. In competitive sports, as in life, not everyone goes home happy; sometimes there is just no common ground. A further unfortunate truth is that parents are the ones more likely as not to go home unhappy and confused, without having heard what they wanted to hear. Coaches, on the other hand, are more likely to go home angry or depressed, and certainly self-doubting.

Coaches must set the ground rules at the beginning of the season to ensure such occurrences are rare. This is important and many coaches do this; the problem is many coaches do it poorly. I have heard all manner of rules for parent interaction levied by coaches, including: do not speak to the coach about playing time, do not speak to the coach about his decisions, do not speak to the coach about your feelings, do not speak to the coach at practice, do not speak to the coach at tournaments, and (the ultimate) do not *ever* speak to the coach.

The reason for such rules is that the history of parental discussions is littered with angry and irrational moms and dads spewing fire and baseless claims, and now coaches try to chop parents off at the knees before they can get started. Which is silly, because most parents are simply looking to be kept involved.

Coaches should not have a problem talking with parents, provided the parent is respectful and dignified, the setting is private and no other people can hear, the parent does not discuss volleyball strategy, and the parent does not criticize other players on the team. If you are secure with your decision-making, you should be able to articulate it and explain it.

And no, just because you are the coach does not mean you should not have to explain yourself, as long as whatever question is asked by the parent is asked in a respectful and dignified manner. Many coaches seem to think that because they are the coach, they are above explaining their decisions. Well, they are not.

My favorite is when parents bring up the subject of playing time. Many coaches will not allow playing time to be discussed. Others even act surprised when the subject is broached, as if it had never occurred to them that parents might be unhappy about the fact that their child rarely plays. You do not see playing time on the list of off-limit topics, because in junior sports it is a legitimate issue. These are teenagers and teenager parents, not collegiate athletes; their parents are their guardians and have a right to be communicated with.

(The audience of parents is likely grinning with glee right now. Go right ahead, parents, but your turn is coming. Also understand, parents, that the second you become confrontational, the second you raise your voice, the second you act anything less than dignified is the second everything goes out the window and the coach has free reign to end the conversation.)

Notice I say *be communicated with*, not *have their views taken into account*. This is because playing time is the decision of the coach. As parents, you have no say; this is the way sports work. Many factors influence playing-time decisions, far more than parents think to consider. You cannot control playing time, and you might as well understand that. And if you are controlling playing time, most of the time you are hurting the team and negatively impacting your child, whether you realize it or not.

So what does it mean to take the higher road?

Parents, if an issue arises and you must speak with the coach, your goals must be two-fold: first, to diligently

explain your position in a respectful manner, and second, to listen and strive to understand the exact reasoning of the coach. Should you do this, regardless of the rest of the season, you can always look back and say that you handled yourself with dignity and did everything you could do for the sake of your child.

Coaches, if an issue arises and a parent comes to speak with you, your goals are also simple: to understand their issue, to honestly explain to the best of your ability the decisions you have made, and to work as hard as possible to help the parents understand that their daughter has value. Coaches do not realize that their best ally in competitive sports is a well-informed and well-treated parent; parents can comfort and support their children at depths impossible for coaches to reach.

To take the high road does not mean to give in or give up on your particular point of view. It means to go about discussing opinions and facts amiably and gracefully. To take the high road means you are not like many of the ridiculous coaches out there who rant and rave and puff themselves up, who do not care one iota what parents think or feel, and who care only for themselves and the success of the team they run. To take the high road also means you will not be one of those negative parents we all see in the stands, harping and complaining about things when they have little knowledge of the facts or experience in the teaching of the game itself, screaming at other players, arguing with the coach, etcetera.

To take the high road as both coaches and parents is to be understanding but inquiring, and will help to lay the foundation for an excellent parent-coach relationship.

Epilogue: A Peaceful and Productive Co-Existence

Yes, parents and coaches can coexist happily. As with anything, there may be disagreements between them regarding decisions made by the coach, which most assuredly will not please everyone.

But as long as there is mutual admiration and respect, as long as there are open lines of communication, as long as parents and coaches are willing to work together to ensure everyone understands the reasoning of the coach and the feelings of the parent, discussions and disagreements can remain respectful and dignified, and perhaps even work to better the player and the team.

Which is, of course, the most important thing of all.