

CHARTING THE GAME...



STATISTICS FOR SETTERS

by **Stephanie Schleuder** | Head Coach | Women's Volleyball | Macalester College

Stephanie Schleuder, head coach of the women's volleyball program at Macalester College, is the author of "Comprehensive Volleyball Statistics: A Guide for Coaches, Media and Fans," which is available on the AVCA Web site at www.avca.org/Products.asp.

An often-overlooked factor allowing the continued sophistication of offensive strategy is the improvement in the skill level of setters. It is difficult to run any type of potent offensive system without a setter who understands the nuances of the game. In order for the hitters to be successful, the setter must deliver a good set into an area where the hitter has a chance to be effective.

The statistic that has been used to track the effectiveness of the setters is assists. An assist is awarded to the setter when a ball is directed to the hitter who scores a kill. Obviously, the ability of the setter to gain an assist is directly related to the team's passing skills and the ability of the hitters to "put the ball away" or score a kill.

For this reason, assists have become more of a media statistic for setters rather than a true evaluation of the setter's ability. Still, there is a high correlation with the assists per game of the team's setter with the hitting efficiency of their team. The nation's leading setters usually come with higher assists averages and play for teams with a powerful offense.

Defining an Assist

The assist category is found on the official box score. Currently, most sports governing bodies (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA, etc.) tabulate setter assists as one of the tools in the evaluation process for recognizing outstanding setters. Some governing bodies also require schools to tabulate the number of setting attempts made by players so that an assist percentage/efficiency can be calculated. However, the official box score does not have a column for reporting assist attempts

There are three possible outcomes for a ball that is being set:

- An **assist (A)**, is awarded to any player who passes, sets or digs the ball to a teammate resulting in an attack for a kill. (The guidelines for awarding an assist in volleyball are much the same as those used in awarding an assist in basketball.)
- An **assist error (AE) or ball handling error (BHE)** is given to a player for any attempted set resulting in an illegal action called by the official. (i.e., double contact, lift)
- A **zero assist (o)** is given to any player who sets a ball that does not directly lead to a kill or a side-out. Documentation of a zero assist on the worksheet is only required if the statistician is calculating assist percentage.

Assists per Game and Assist Efficiency

These statistics give an average for the number of assists awarded to a player in each game and a statistic for assist (setting) efficiency. Assists are tallied on the AVCA or NCAA Worksheet or another appropriate form.

The assists per game may be calculated for any player, but its significance is most directly related to setters. There may be times when the coach is also interested in the assist per game for the right side player (alternate setter/opposite) in a 5-1 offense.

The assist efficiency gives the coach some indication of the quality and percentage of the sets that end in kills. Some coaches compute the efficiency without subtracting the setter errors.

Compute the assist statistics with the following formulas:

Computing assist average:

Total number of assists (A) / total games played (GP) = assists per game (A/G)

Computing assist efficiency:

Total number of assists – total errors (BHE & AE) / total number of setting attempts = assist efficiency

Set Selection Chart

It is important for coaches to be able to gather setting tendencies by rotation to truly evaluate the team offense. The Set Selection Chart (Fig. 2, next page) allows the coach to gather just this type of information. It also shows the opponents rotations so the coach knows which blockers are faced in each rotation.

The chart has an area to record the quality of the pass the setter received, the type of set they select, which player receives the set, how good the set was, and the result of the attack. Since the sets are kept in chronological order and by rotation, the coach can also note changes in tactics by the setter.

Before the game starts, the statistician should complete the rotation wheels with the rotation order for both teams. Each time the rotation changes, the statistician will move to the proper rotation to record the information about each set.

A detailed description of the types of set (terminology) used in the offense should be given to the statistician. The statistician must use their judgment about the execution of the set (how good was the set placement).

This chart can be kept on the bench by a substitute setter. In situations where it becomes necessary for the coach to insert a substitute setter into the middle of a game, this chart should arm the substitute with good information about specific rotations. It is much better than having a clueless, daydreaming setter go into a critical situation!

Fig. 1 to the right shows one set from the Set Selection Chart. The complete notation (1. 3 52/10+ K) is explained in the figure.

In the following figure (Fig. 2), the first set in rotation 1 comes after a pass which was rated a "3". Under the set selection area, the notation means that the set was a "52" (to area 5 and second tempo), the set was made to player #10, and it was judged to be a good set based on the location and height. The result of the first set is a kill for the hitter.

The fourth set comes after a pass rated a "1" and is delivered as a good (+), high backset (95) to player #10. The hitter scores a kill off the blockers hands (K/B).

The fifth set in this rotation comes from a "2" pass. It is a shoot set (31--quick set to area three), but is judged by the statistician to be a poor set, resulting in a blocked attack and a net error by the hitter.

The eighth setting attempt is a ball handling error (BHE) by the setter from a "2" pass.

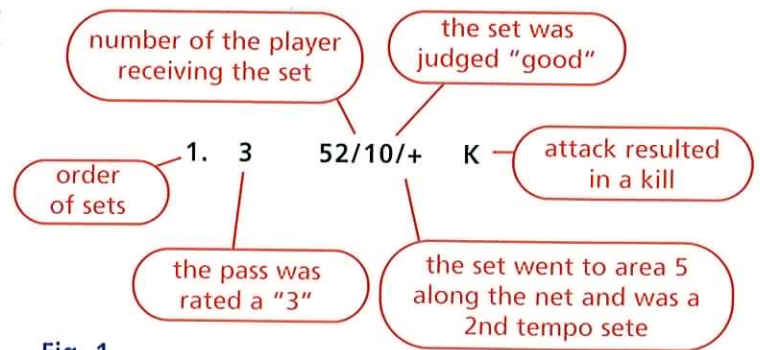


Fig. 1

Abbreviated Set Selection Chart

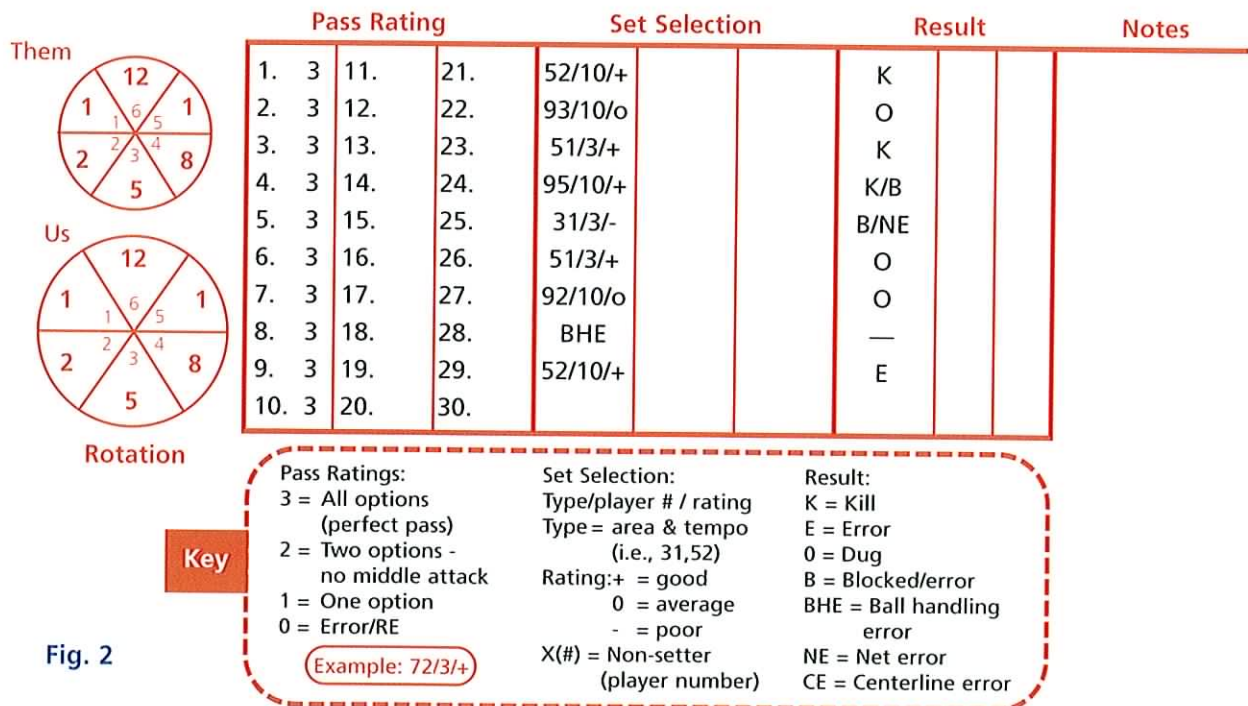


Fig. 2

There are other methods of charting set selection, but the important aspect is for both the coach and the player to have as much information as possible about the effectiveness of the setting strategy. This method gives specific information as the match progresses.