



Splinter Siblings

By Sue Dansie, South Australia VB Assoc. & John Kessel, USA Volleyball

Dear Coach,

I am becoming frustrated with my lack of court time during matches. My coach keeps telling me that I am improving, but I keep having to get tweezers on to my splinters after each game. I have thought about changing clubs but I would prefer to stay where I am, as I enjoy the atmosphere in this club.

Cushion.

Dear Cushion,

You must realize two things: Firstly, the coach has a responsibility to the team to get the best long term and short term results from the team. Secondly, coaches generally hate having to leave someone out of the play.

The coach has to weigh up the importance of the situation, and whether or not it is possible to give the bench a run. There are times when the coach feels that they have a good enough lead to enable the bench player to settle into the game without walking straight in to a minefield. Occasionally in this situation, the team loses all rhythm and may end up losing the match, despite a handy lead. Volleyball does not offer the security of a definite finishing time as basketball or football. There are other occasions when times are desperate on court, so the coach throws a sub in at the deep end and they turn the game around.

The latter case occurred during the Olympic Games. The Korean head coach was coaching a team that was losing unexpectedly. He looked down the bench and called a young player who had only just scraped into the national team, and threw her into the fray. She totally turned the game around, stayed on the court for the rest of the games and ended up with a medal.

Rules To Keep You On The Bench:

1. Don't take any interest in the game; rather, watch the athletes on the other court or in the crowd.
2. Criticize not only your coach, but your teammates as well, and throw in the occasional laugh at their mistakes.
3. Don't bother to listen at time-outs or bring drinks, etc., over.
4. Frown when your coach tells you to go to warm-up.

5. Ask the players on the court where you should be standing.
6. Serve the ball either onto the attack line or against the back wall when you go on to serve, particularly in a pressure situation-then laugh!
7. Make sure that the noise you make on the bench is totally unrelated to what's happening on the court.
8. Leave all of the team gear sprawled out all over the benches and the floor when you change ends.
9. Don't do your shoes up or have your kneepads on until you get onto the court - you should make sure you're going to use them!
10. Wander slowly up to the attack line when the sub is called, with your tracksuit top on but don't stand inside the attack zone.
11. Play "dig the ball away from the setter" when you first come on to receive serve - under the net or into the crowd if possible.
12. Don't worry about really moving into correct position, because the other players are warm, so they can cover you, no matter where you go.
13. Don't ask the coach how and where you can improve your game, and then make sure you get to trainings late, leave early. Miss regular team workouts or show up late without any reason. This tells all that you are a very important player.
14. Get angry with the players who got good court time, because it's their fault that they played well enough to keep you off the court.
15. Don't watch the game closely enough to give anyone any feedback on how the general team tactics were operating.
16. Whenever a referee makes, you think, a bad call, let him know vocally and visibly.
17. Never volunteer to call lines, score or umpire at tournaments. These jobs are only for lesser players.
18. When sitting on the bench during a match, gripe constantly. This lets the coach know that you want to play and are better than the players on the floor.
19. When you lose, always claim that your teammates have let you down. Blame the loss on their mistakes.
20. Don't try to be better than a court player. They are the coach's pet and will always play in front of you anyway.

21. Cry when the game is over so that everyone knows how disappointed you are at not making the court. If the coach doesn't gush with concern, then this just confirms hard-heartedness
22. Don't do any technical or physical training by yourself because it's a scientific fact that training that no-one sees you do, does not have an effect. - Allow yourself the luxury of getting out of shape.
23. Never give 100% in drills as they are boring and you want to save your strength for scrimmage and games.
24. Whenever openly possible, when the situation presents itself, question the coach. This lets him/her know that him/her isn't as smart as he/she thinks.
25. Never help set up or take down equipment, as this lowers your prestige as a player. Always wait until the coach asks you.
26. When you are talking after the game to friends who have come down to see you play, make up a good excuse for not getting court time. Limping after the game is a good one, but try to remember to always limp on the same leg.
27. Make sure that everyone know what a whakka your coach is for not identifying your talent and giving you star billing.
28. The motto "relentless pursuit" is that of medal winning USA teams, but they are too good and it clearly does not apply to you.

We are sure that if you follow these basic rules of the bench, you will be quite successful in achieving your aims.

Now if you turn these points above around, you can see how to stay on the court! All of these qualities and statements are things players need to consider to help improve their attitudes and abilities towards volleyball.

We Suggest:

1. Go watch better players.
2. Play your heart out each game, so you can look teammates in the eye and ask without saying it, I played full out, did you?
3. Learn from the past, the traditions of the sport; study the historical greats in the game.
4. Do the impossible do things you've never done before, be a drill instructor by example; no one should ever question your work ethic.
5. Easy going level-headedness, not cocky in your manner, just quiet confidence and a smile.
6. You have to "be" before you can "do," and "do" before you can "have."
7. Never back down, never fear anyone for the best help you play your best.
8. Talent is no accomplishment, accomplishment is when you take whatever you have- and make it more- to be excellent you must strive to improve- not coast on your talent. Most USA/AUS players are blessed with talent. It is luck they have the health and body to play.
9. Watch TV and Video and matches of teams better than you are often.
10. For life to be meaningful, you must have a challenge
11. You have courage when you most often choose generosity
12. Always do right - This will gratify some people and astonish the rest...

50% of the teams in the world today lost. ... It's not the winning; it's self-esteem, confidence, fun, teamwork, fun-fun-fun! Follow your passion as an athlete, make it positive and not mandatory. We have to keep the fun in the business of volleyball. Defense is an attitude, choose a battle you can win. Pleasure is an event – happiness is a process. The process -- coaching/helping/growing the sport -- needs to be focused on, over the moment -- matches/events.

Australia's Campbelltown Cheetahs SASI player, Matthew Grandison, fought hard for every bit of court time he received. The result was a very tough, fit and skillful competitor who has earned the respect of both players and coaches throughout the nation. It appears that Matthew's early coaches did him a favor by leaving him on the bench as a youngster. His determination to prove his worth on the court has pushed him past most of the players who were court players ahead of him in his youth. This story is repeated daily in every program, with players who choose to succeed. We suggest, "Cushion," that you ask your coach where you can improve your game. If the answer is technical or physical, it's up to you to work harder. If the answer is geographical, get on your bike!