Team Motivational Activities

by Teri Clemens

Dedicated to my great friend, Coach Jenny McDowell
Emory University Volleyball Team Camp
I learn a ton from Jenny every time I am with her....
...unless, of course, we are coaching a match against each other.

“Whatever.”
To: Court Coaches for Teams

.........a few tips for you when leading these activities or spending the 800 plus other hours with the team you’re assigned this week........Some notes are “givens.” Others are not, so please quickly read through these BEFORE August.

¬ All activities in this book are to accomplish the same objective: to develop a stronger, more cohesive team. Some of the areas addressed include motivation, attitude, discipline, language, encouragement, support and spirit.
¬ Please do not run the activities in this book without a POSITIVE attitude.
¬ Read and understand the activity BEFORE it’s time to lead the actual activity. Most are self-explanatory and easy. But everyone will be more “into” the activity if the coach is prepared and “into” leading it.
¬ Enjoy! Those of you who know me and/or have heard me speak know that I would be smiling, laughing, encouraging.....and, ok, a bit of smart-mouthing......but never at the expense of a camper. I love them too much to hurt them. Anyone who loves our sport is worth developing!
¬ Quickly review with your team at the end of each session....there IS a motive to team-building in each session. Some activities have obvious lessons to be learned; others require searching for the benefit of the activity! You can decide if it’s obvious.
¬ Some campers will not like to be “put on the spot.” The activities should not be uncomfortable in terms of personal space. Please be sensitive to this. It’s not always necessary for each camper to play the same role in the activity.
“WHATEVER”

(REQUIRED DAY 1)

Divide the team into 2 groups who sit in a line across from each other, facing the other group.

Group 1 -       A  A  A  A  A  A
Group 2-       B  B  B  B  B  B

Assign one group (Group A) the task of being in the “authoritative position” such as:

Player 1 is a parent.
Player 2 is a principal.
Player 3 is a policeman.
Player 4 is a coach.

(Ask players to pick other positions of authority if there are more in that group.)

Group B players sit across from Group A as seen above.

Coach explains that Group A, in the position of authority should make a statement, one at a time, to the girl across from her in Group B that one might hear from a person with that title. (It’s ok to make one up or use a “cliche” such as a parent saying “Get right back in there and clean your room.”) Player B responds with only one word after the statement. “WHATEVER”

Next....the next person, the principal makes a statement to the next Group B member. B responds with “Whatever.” Group B members can “act” but may only use the one word “WHATEVER.” No other words may be used by B members.

Continue for a few rounds....you’ll know when enough is enough, Coach. Then after the entire activity, ask some A members to share how they felt or reacted to the “Whatever” statement.......You may hear that it is pretty hurtful or oftentimes is a “brush-off” to the person directing them. Not just this word but other “under the breath” comments or hurtful comments can be disrespectful, cause others to judge, lower your standing in the group, disrupt a practice, and more.......Discuss.

Discuss and encourage positive characteristics each team member should show during practice—and what to do when one agrees or disagrees with a coaching decision or direction.......and how this might affect the team.
Winners and Whiners Activity

Coach: Please share the following first.

Anyone who has ever been to one of my presentations knows that I constantly refer to our natures as “winners” or “whiners.”

I sincerely believe that each of us WANTS to be a winner. I sincerely believe that not one of us WANTS to be a loser.

There are specific characteristics, that I have learned over the years, which define whether someone is truly a winner. A team with numerous “winners” on it (and this is not defined by the person who is ahead on the scoreboard alone) has a strong chance of being highly successful together.

Team Activity:
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¬ For teams who have heard Coach Clemens speak on Winners and Whiners( even if you have a few new faces now) : review the Winners and Whiners list on the following page and discuss how you or your team learned from it. What changed in you? What changed in your team? What did you do to change? Does it work? How can you improve?
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¬ For teams who have NOT heard Coach Clemens speak on Winners and Whiners:
Camp Coach please share some facts from the following list and allow players to discuss how this is seen/shown in the gym at practices/games......

Example: Whiners ask for a patontheback; Winners give a patontheback. How about the player who makes a big passing error and then mopes her head so other teammates will come over and console her while another player makes the same error and keeps her head up for the “team” so the next play begins on a positive note.
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REVIEW

Hopefully, campers will incorporate this right now into their teams while at camp. Discuss some ways your team this week will make more effort to have “winning characteristics” show.
Coaches: Please give patonthebacks for the winning styles you note!
I AM COMPETITIVE

Sit in a tight circle.

**Camp Coach: Ask a player to read the following to the team:**

A player with a loud personality can be competitive.
A player with a quiet, soft personality can be competitive.
A tall player can be competitive.
A short player can be competitive.
A player who loves physics can be competitive.
A person who plays Beethoven on the piano can be competitive.
A person who is terminally ill can be competitive.
A person with no tan can be competitive.
A person who doesn’t clean their room can be competitive.
A person with no legs or hands can be competitive.
A person who can’t swim can be competitive.

So what makes one competitive?????????????????? Are we born competitive????

Coach: Ask players to contribute thoughts on this with each other.....no right or wrong answers.

Then, each player who wants to....make this statement and complete it.....(again, there are no right or wrong answers.)

“I am competitive because______________”
or
“I need to________________________to be more competitive.”

**Wrap it up with a review of thoughts and these notes.**

1. People CAN learn to be more competitive.
   A) Watch and study competitive people. Learn.
   B) Repetitions!! You can never do too many passes, too many serves, etc......make it come naturally so you can focus on more than just the skill.
   C) Play a ton of triples! You get more opportunities to touch the ball! This gives you more opportunities to compete!
   D) Keep score more.....with yourself (such as how many sets can I make to myself in a row or how fast can I run 1 mile) and with others.....Competing makes you compete better!
   E) Remember the feeling every time you win...at anything....it’s the FEELING that you want to repeat....it’s not really the score......you want to keep getting that FEELING again!
TEAM SONG

(1st or 2nd day activity)

Camp Coach: After giving instructions, name a team leader (creativity helps). Feel free to ask for a “creative leader.”

¬ Team should develop their own “Camp song” to the tune of any childhood tune.
  (Examples: Yankee Doodle, Oh When the Saints Go Marching In, etc.)

¬ Make up your own special words for your song....however; there is a THEME! It’s teamwork!

¬ You must use the following words in your song.

SPIRIT  TEAM  FRIEND  WINNER  WHINER  DING

Good luck....You’ll either annoy the heck out of the other teams, crack them up every time they hear it, or drive them crazy with your spirit!!!!!!! You choose!
BE POSITIVE!!!!

(Player led activity..name a player to read this!)

Sometimes, RECEIVING POSITIVE PATONTHEBACKS from others is more difficult than GIVING the praise! Let’s put your camp coach on the spot and see how he/she does!!!!

Camp Coach should stand in front of the team who are seated.

(1 player must take responsibility for counting...you need to make 50! positive statements about your camp coach!)

You don’t have to make complete sentences...just sit in a semi-circle around your standing coach....and, one at a time, say something positive that you have noticed thus far!

Afterward, review how she/he took it. Is it easier to give praise or receive praise? Is it necessary? If so, why? How does praise affect a team performance???
ATTENTION TO DETAIL

It has been proven over and over again that winning coaches and winning programs pay significant attention to detail. Few details are left unnoticed. Winners are organized in most aspects of every practice and game. Even the way you pack your bag should be routine and organized each day!

Examples of details that one may see:

Very specific, planned, and practiced WARM-UP time prior to the game.
Organized entrance to the gym.
Carrying bags on same shoulder.
Wearing matching practice shirts and/or shorts.
    Socks matching.
Team meals and possibly team rules at the meal.
    Introduction of team presentation.

    Bags lined up the same way at practice and at matches
    Sweatjackets zipped up to the exact same place on each player.
    Chairs lined up perfectly and team bench ALWAYS clean.

The way a team stands in the huddle. (My team put left hands in and rt. hands on the shoulder of the person in front of you....so we all faced the same way in the circle. Try it.)

Team Activity:
Now, your turn! What do you do that is attentive to detail at practice or in games? Name 8 things for your team that could be addressed? This list is only for starters...Be creative.
CHAIN STORY

You are to create a story about a high school volleyball team who started the season with no success off the court or on the court. Then, suddenly, it changes!!!!! How? Where? Why? That’s all the info you get on this team. The rest is for you to create.

YOU and your camp coach make up the story.....one sentence at a time. Have FUN with this!!!!! See what you come up with that turns this team around!!! Be creative but think it out wisely, also.

Players and Camp Coach sit in a circle. Going clockwise around the circle, starting with the coach, each person says one sentence only.....about the team. Name the team first so it’s easier to refer to them by name. Remember, this is purely fictional. No one knows the characters.....yet.

START THE STORY! The tale gets bigger and bigger........

(I sure wish I could be there to hear this one!!!!)
AT EMORY

(Clap, clap)

08

(Clap, clap)

Camp Coach: NEED SOME SPIRIT ON THIS ONE!!!!!

Team sits in a circle. This game is similar to the old game called “Concentration” if you know that.

You need lots of spirit to even begin!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Everyone together say:

At Emory, clap clap
In 08, clap, clap

(Of course the “clap, clap” means you clap...you do not SAY it.)

The assigned person starts...by saying something she learned this week......hopefully with some rhythm....

Then, ALL say again:

At Emory, clap clap
In 08, clap, clap
Then, continue around the circle.....can you keep rhythm and go quickly....or NOT????

CELEBRITY DOUBLE TROUBLE

(Quick thinking fun game)

Sports takes quick thinking and quick response. Have fun with this game.....lots of laughs.

Divide into 2 groups. Each group just sits next to the other group in a little circle.

The object in the game is to think of 1 celebrity name whose 1st initial starts with the last initial of the name the other group just gave. If the group yells a name with a repeat initial in both the 1st and 2nd name such as “Barry Bonds,” then the other group must come up with a “double name also that starts with the same letter. (Such as Bob Barker). This continues until a team is stumped.

You can use any celebrity name...sports, music, acting, politician....not your friend’s name...)

(Example of what might be said:

Group A: Starts with Chipper Jones  (They could start with anyone famous)
Group B: John Smoltz (They must use the “J” from Jones for the 1st name.
Group A: Sam Snead (This is a double! Other team must say an “S-S” name or they lose the round.) Winner start again with any celebrity name. Fun game. Can go on a long time!

YOU WANT, THEY WANT IT

(I wrote this poem for my seniors one year when we had a very young team. I wanted my seniors to understand their influence over the younger players. It was an amazing year!)

You dream, they dream.
You’re passionate, they’re passionate.
    You care, they care.
You sweat, they sweat.
You laugh, they laugh.
    You cry, they cry.
You cheer, they cheer.
    You love, they love.
You give, they give.
You give up, they give up.
You whine, they whine.
    You win, they win.
YOU GOT GAME?

(I wrote this poem for my young players that year that we had a lot of seniors.) I wanted them to realize how much they could get from the older players.) It was the same amazing year!

Earn their respect
Watch them
Learn from them
Honor their play
Honor their soul
Stand by them
Cheer for them
Praise them
Play with them
Laugh with them
Cry with them
Love them
And take their positions as soon as you can grab it!

PLEDGE

Team Activity

This activity involves the group making a pledge of choice. The team can choose.

The team can write a pledge to their coach, stating what their intents are for this season

or

The team can split into older and younger players and write a pledge to each other.
Take the activity seriously.
→ Write only statements that you intend to achieve.
→ Be realistic.
→ Challenge yourselves for the next season.

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RISK CITY

(This activity encourages athletes to step out of their box a bit more, taking risks, yet assessing whether a risk is a smart risk. All risks are not wise but a Championship almost always demands we take risks!?)

Ask your team to think of people (celebrity, professional or not) who took a big risk to succeed. It could be an individual, team, or group...They might be athletes, they might not be.) You might give them a day’s notice to think of some examples.

Team Activity:

Ask the group to share with the team examples of risk-takers. Discuss each. Was the risk safe? Worth taking? Was there time to think about it? Did the risk directly affect the outcome?

Afterward, discuss the following.

→ Was it a risk to play volleyball for you?
→ Is learning a new skill sometimes a risk?
→ Is practicing/conditioning all summer a possible risk? If so, how?
→ Is taking a test without studying a risk?
Is playing in a game without being prepared a risk?
Is serving for an ace a risk when you could easily get a serve in if you are careful?
Is it a risk to hit down the line when you KNOW you are stronger cross-court?
Is it a risk to just “go for it” against a great team that your school has never beaten?
How do we know a good risk? A bad risk?

Rename your side of the net for one match today or tomorrow. Name it “RISK CITY.”
Talk about what your team will risk. It should be different from your last match!

TEAM CHALLENGE

Team too slow? Draggy?
Low on spirit today?
Not hitting the ball? Wimpy arms?
Crabby? Argumentative?

And, worst of all....are they WHINING????????

It’s time to challenge yourselves as a team!!!!

Name 3 issues that your team needs to change.....and fast!!!!
It can be on or off court. Be honest with yourselves. We all can improve!!!!

Decide with your coach changes that could take place immediately to make a difference! Nip it in the bud now!
Don’t let it get worse. When a problem starts or when a skill is failing, CHANGE is needed.

CHALLENGE YOURSELVES to change it immediately!!!!
Then assess after the next practice or match and honestly, talk about whether you changed as a team! Did everyone participate? Did it work? If not, change something again! Find a way to make it work and demand of yourselves that you will get it done!

**HAMMER**

“He that is good with a hammer tends to think everything is a nail.”  
Anonymous

Think about this statement. When someone in the sport of volleyball hits the ball HARD, we often refer to the person as a “HAMMER.” When that Hammer gets better and better, she/he wants the ball, wants to hit and will hit ANY ball. She/hit doesn’t care if the set is a bit off, doesn’t care if the lights are dim, doesn’t find fault with others. The Hammer just wants the ball set to her so that she can swing hard at the ball. It’s like the quote. The Hammer just tends to want to hit everything set! The ball is a nail! Hit it hard!!!!

We have to think like this in Volleyball----good players WANT to be the Hammer. They want the ball. They want the ball when the game is on the line.

Do you have a hammer on your team? A Hammer doesn’t have to really be a hitter. A setter can WANT the ball more than anyone else. A passer can want it more. A libero can want to dig more than a hitter wants to hit.

Your team NEEDS players who WANT the ball! Do you?

This is why repetitions are so important. The more you set, the better you set. The better you set, the more you are challenged with tougher sets. This means MORE repetitions. Nothing in volleyball is more important than repetitions......getting to repeat and repeat and repeat. The more you repeat, the more comfortable you are with the skill. Then, in games, you are relaxed. You may fall into the ZONE—the place where you seem to play flawlessly....it’s where you want to be! You can’t get there without skills seeming natural
to you.....it has to LOOK easy—even when it is hard.

What do you do to relax prior to practice or game? What do you do the 2nd before you serve? Pass? Set? Hit? Dig? Could you improve?

THE BULLETIN BOARD

- Teams need a board, a wall, a place where they can post team things and read about team information.
- Post schedules, practice times, holiday break info.
- Names and #’s of players
- Names of New volleyball books, articles to read
- Pictures of Team members! Maybe baby pics.
- Coaches pics! Maybe baby pics.

TEAM ACTIVITY:

Now, you come up with ideas and decide who will be responsible for each project. It’s too easy to have good intentions but not have the time right at the beginning of school and the season. Get it done now! You can even draw out the bulletin board on a paper or poster right now and decide sections.....FUN stuff. Don’t forget to
I WAS WONDERING

THINKING “IN-SEASON ISSUES” WHILE “OUTTA-SEASON” NOW

(Why is Jenny always on time? Why is Mary always so together with her practice clothes? Why does Bobby Sue never seem to forget anything in her bag? How does Courtney find time to lift weights everyday? Where does Sara get her shoes? What do they wear under their V. shorts? )

Need answers.....share with your team.....HELP each other out. Ask questions. Trust each other. Even if other students diss each other or you, know that you can depend on your V. team to support you. Don’t dog each other!!)

There ARE ways to be more organized. How do you pack your workout bag?? What do you really need in it? Do you always have deodorant, lotion, hair stuff, shoes, socks, kneepads....in the same place in the bag? What kind of kneepads and shoes are best?

Time to ......discuss when and how you get your “stuff” ready. When do you get it ready? What do you eat for breakfast? Lunch? How much water do you drink? When do you study? How much?

How do you balance it all during season?
Do you socialize during season outside of volleyball? Anyone have few friends and not much to do?
Anyone need a tutor?
Anyone need a ride? Car pool?

ASK those questions....think IN SEASON but do it OUTTA SEASON!!!

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You wanna know why we win?

Winning coaches get lots of questions but the most asked for me is always “WHY DID YOU WIN?

The following is a general outline for coaches. I’ve always thought it is not only an ok thing to let players understand all that we do as coaches....it is necessary. Sharing with players all that goes into our planning as coaches gives them a new perspective....one which allows them to see through OUR window....so they can see themselves through!

This is a general outline which includes many responsibilities of a Volleyball Program. All are different but it’s a good start.

Go for it!

Share.
They may think that the Coach really understands them more than they thought!

Discuss their thoughts anywhere during the outline!