



CORNY'S CORNER

Dance To The Music

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Among the mechanics and skills a second referee (R2) must perfect to be any good, dancing is near the top of the list. Yes, dancing. Transitioning continually back and forth from one side of the net to the other in each and every rally of an entire match is the most constant fundamental for an R2. A choreographed movement when done smoothly and effortlessly, it's dancing in disguise.

A transition is basic yet intricate. To begin, here's your stance before a serve. On the receiving team's side of the net, outside of the sideline one to two feet from the centerline extended and three to four feet back away from the post/padding, stand with feet apart about shoulder width. Square up your shoulders parallel to the sideline, keeping them open to both team benches in case either team requests a last-second substitution or time out. Turn only your head and not your shoulders to analyze the receiving team for any possible overlaps. Walking down the sideline isn't necessary. An overlap should be plain to see. Don't go looking for one.

As the serve is contacted to start the music, shake a leg. Boogie right away to the blocking team's side of the net. Waiting around for a date will make you late. In the ensuing rally, do the same whenever the ball crosses the net from one team to another. The common footwork practice is a three-step cha-cha. The first step is by the foot farthest from the net crossing either in front or back of the other foot that then steps sideways toward the blockers' side. Choose whichever crossover step suits you best. The third step, by the trailing foot, brings both feet together, angling you slightly toward the attackers' side of the net. While transitioning, observe the court action, never taking your eyes off of it. Else, you'll miss something significant.

Although your dance floor space may be restricted by water barrels, bulky equipment and a scorer table, end up on the blockers' side in a location giving you a full view of the entire three-meter attack line of the team on offense. Per a USAV and NCAA/PAVO standard in effect for years, you must be in place at a standstill before the second ball contact is made by the attacking team. Usually, you can waltz on over. Sometimes, you may have to do the hustle, depending on how jazzed up the action is. If the ball is misplayed on its first contact of an attack and arrives quickly at the net, stay put. Else, the net pole could block your view of a possible fault as you transition. All other times, you can't be lazy. Rock and roll! Be set in position on the blockers' side just prior to the setter's contact, *i.e.*, second ball contact, and no later.

Once you're parked on the blockers' side, gluing your eyes on the net with tunnel vision looking nowhere else is a dead giveaway you're raw as sushi as an R2. Overseeing net and centerline faults are not your sole functions. You're not merely a second referee. You're really a second "first referee," an R1 on the floor. Two pairs of eyes should be keeping track of all the action, the R1's and yours. Expand the range of your view, going beyond the attack line to observe what's happening with the ball and how the attack is progressing. Look directly at the action. Relying on your peripheral vision to monitor the playing away from the net will leave you oblivious to what actually went on.

Be not only aware but also on top of everything taking place. Pretend you're the only referee and you're officiating the match from the floor. Watch if a back-row attacker's foot takes off from on or in front of the attack line. Watch for a ball handling error that may be screened from the R1. Watch if the ball hits the floor on a pancake attempt. Watch if the libero plays the

ball with finger action in front of the attack line followed by an attack. Watch if a back-row setter in front of the attack line directs a ball to the opponents' side, usually a set, completely above the net height on contact. Watch if a back-row setter attacks or blocks a ball at the net on an overpass. Watch if a blocker reaches over the net for an overpass. You may be looking but are you seeing? Other than ball handling errors out in the open, be on the alert for the numerous faults the R1 needs assistance on. Should any come up, signal discreetly from a visible spot to the R1. The two of you are partners. Although the R1 has the lead, keep in step, dancing as one.

As the play develops, your focus is wide, encompassing the entire side of the attacking team, especially its attack line. When the action comes to the net, narrow your focus and shift it to the net. If at this point you don't have a clear view of the entire net, do a secondary transition with a small, lateral slide to be closer to the centerline extended for a better angle of seeing the ball being contested. Holding your head steady, sync your eyes to the ascending attackers and blockers, the entire aerial activity at the net and finally, the landing of all players. Your sight should go up to the top of the net to detect if any hand touches the net or attacked ball, then down to the floor to see if a foot completely crosses the centerline, interfering with an opponent or becoming a safety factor. If you whistle a fault, move to the side of the offending team, stop, and then signal the reason before mimicking the R1's "winner of rally" signal.

Do a secondary transition also when a set forces a hitter far outside the court for a spike, bringing the antenna into play. Move in toward the net to be directly below the antenna. Ascertain that the ball travels inside the antenna to the opponents' court. Else, it's a fault.

While a ball is crossing the net, keep your eyes centered on the net. Never ever turn your head to follow the ball. Many net and centerline faults occur at this critical moment. You have to be sure the players at the net are clear of committing a fault. Once done, resume dancing anew. Hoof it to the blockers' side, widening your vision all over again to the playing of the ball.

When the rally ends, where to position depends on the rule set. In USAV, move to the side of the team losing the rally. In NCAA, if play dictates you don't have time, stay on the side of the net you're already on. On the other hand, if you're a master in getting to the fault side, you may do so provided your rhythm doesn't slow down the R1's signal tempo. In any case, be stationary before you follow and mirror the R1's signals. Aim to be wide enough of the net plane extended so no part of your arm when signaling is cut off from the R1's view. During this pause in music, scan both benches for time out or substitution requests because you may have more moves to make.

You're in charge of the floor. Keeping an eye on the playing action at all times enables you to identify potential problem calls and be informed of the exact vitals of what transpired. At the end of a rally, anticipate a coach having a question or issue with one of these officiating decisions. This is no time to be a timid, twinkle-toes wallflower or else the coach will bypass you and not dance with you. Take the lead and swing into action. Trot on over like a fox instead of a bug with jitters, being prepared to tango, not tangle. First, listen. The tune determines your dance. If the coach is venting, lending an understanding ear may be all that's needed. If necessary, accurately explain the officiating team's perspective of the play in rulebook terms and not mambo-jumbo or empty words. Prevent the coach from talking trash across the court to the R1 or dancing the flamenco. Slow dancing, swaying to the music, is your objective.

In transitioning, you don't have to cut a rug. Even with two left feet, all you need to do is dance with purpose. Listen to the music, glide to the right place at the right time in step with the beat, and keep your eyes peeled for playing faults everywhere. Put your mind to it and before long you'll be a smooth operator headed for the big dance. Break a leg!