



USA Volleyball Ball Handling Guidelines

Regional Referee Chairs and Representatives:

Below are the USA Volleyball ball handling guidelines presented to referees across the country at the USAV National Clinics for this season. In recent years, we have encouraged referees to apply consistent ball handling standards. The following guidelines, taken directly from the FIVB, should assist in that endeavor since consistency within a match, from match to match, and from referee to referee throughout the season is our goal. Again, these guidelines are being presented to referees across the country.

NOTE: These guidelines do NOT imply that "anything goes" or that "we aren't calling anything"! Referees should be cautioned about making such assumptions. Decisions must be made on all contacts, and even spectacular plays may need to be whistled if the contact is blatantly or flagrantly illegal. Likewise, these guidelines below are not changes to the ball handling-related rules; instead, they are philosophical guidelines for the consistent application of those rules.

It is important that you share this information with the referees, teams and coaches in your region. It is equally important that you remind coaches that they may not question judgment decisions, including ball handling calls, by the referees. Expressing contempt for a referee's decision, attempting to influence the referee's decisions, or otherwise exhibiting disruptive behaviors, are subject to sanction. Also review page 4 of the USAV rulebook (Domestic Competition Regulations) regarding the referees' role in a volleyball match.

FIVB Ball Handling Guidelines for Referees:

In accordance with the spirit of international (and USAV) competitions, and to encourage longer rallies and spectacular actions, only the most obvious violations will be whistled. Therefore, when a player is not in a very good position to play the ball, the first referee will be less severe in his/her judgment of ball handling faults. For example:

- The setter running to play the ball or forced to make a very quick action to reach the ball in order to set.
- The players are forced to run or make very quick actions to play a ball after it has rebounded from the block or from another player.
- The first team contact may be freely made except if the player catches or throws the ball.

Guidelines for overhand passing ("setting") actions:

- When the setter is in good position to play the ball, excellent contact is expected (with respect to the level of play).
- When the setter is running or jumping to get a better position to set the ball, the referee should be less severe in judging contact. (A jump-set does not equate to an automatic "no call" situation.)
- If the setter, or other player, is not in good position because he/she has not made an appropriate effort to do so, judgment should not be less severe.

Referees must also avoid making "automatic calls". For example:

- A ball recovered from the net -- the ball often rebounds slowly on these plays, but that does not automatically result in a caught/thrown ball.
- Plays made from strange body positions.
- Skills attempted by lesser-skilled players.

Referees and participants should recognize that there is no body position or technique that cannot result in a LEGAL contact of the ball.