Understanding Positions & Alignments
Alignments – Why Do We Care?

• Alignment Premise
  – Players must be in proper positions at the moment of service contact.

• Why?
  – Teams want their players in a variety of positions for both defensive and offensive purposes:
    • Different hitters/blockers
    • Front row/back row
    • Different passers/serve receivers
Positions – Rule 6-4-1

• Basics:
  – Three front-row players: left front (LF), center front (CF) and right front (RF).
  – Three back-row players: left back (LB), center back (CB) and right back (RB).
Positions – Rule 6-4-1

Net

Attack Line

LF  CF  RF

LB  CB  RB
Positions – Rule 6-4-3

• At the moment of serve, all players, except for the server, shall be within the team’s playing area and may be in contact with the boundary lines or center line, but may not have any part of the body touching the floor outside those lines.
Positions – Rule 6-4-3

- LF: OK
- CF: OK
- RF: OK
- LB: NO
- CB: OK
- RB: OK WHEN SERVING
Positions – Rule 6-4-3

• At the moment of serve, all players shall be in correct serving order.
• A right-side player must be closer to right sideline than corresponding center player.
• A left-side player must be closer to left sideline than corresponding center player.
• A front-row player must be closer to center line than corresponding back-row player.
• Determined only by foot position.
Positions – Rule 6-4-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LF</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>CB</th>
<th>LB</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Positions – Rule 6-4-3

LF  CF

OK

RB  CB

NO
Positions – Rule 6-4-3

CF

CB

DON’T CARE

OK

LB

CB

RB

OK
Making The Call – Part I

• Whistle upon service contact.
• Server is not at risk.
• R1 judges serving team alignment.
• R2 judges receiving team alignment.
• Use discreet signals to help one another, if needed.
Making The Call – Part I

We don’t consider the server’s position when judging alignment.
Making The Call – Part II

• Illegal alignment often involves the receiving team.
• “Even” is technically illegal. It’s sometimes difficult to be 100% certain at service contact. Consider a warning in this case.
• Do not “patrol” the sidelines to determine if players overlap illegally; view alignments from normal R2 position.
• A warning when it’s close is acceptable. Make the call if a fault has occurred.
Making The Call – Part III

• Preventive officiating:
  – Player standing slightly out of bounds.
  – Close call with player leaving early.

• Do NOT make “gotcha” calls.

• Signal is a circular motion of the entire hand with the arm extended.
Right-back Alignment
Center-back Alignment

LF  CF  RF

LB  CB  RB
Right-back Setter #1

POTENTIAL RF/RB ALIGNMENT ISSUE
Right-back Setter #2

POTENTIAL LF/CF and RF/CF ALIGNMENT ISSUES

POTENTIAL RF/RB ALIGNMENT ISSUE
Right-back Setter #3

Potential RF/RB and CF/CB alignment issue.
Center-back Setter #1

POTENTIAL RB/CB ALIGNMENT ISSUE

POTENTIAL CF/CB and RF/RB ALIGNMENT ISSUE
Left-back Setter #1

- LF
- LB
- CF
- CB
- RF
- RB

Potential LB/CB Alignment Issue

Potential Front-to-Back Alignment Issue
Left-back Setter #2

POTENTIAL LEFT-TO-CENTER ALIGNMENT ISSUE

POTENTIAL FRONT-TO-BACK ALIGNMENT ISSUE
Left-front Setter #1

TWO POTENTIAL ALIGNMENT ISSUES

LF
CF
RF
LB
CB
RB
Center-front Setter #1

POTENTIAL FRONT-TO-BACK ALIGNMENT ISSUE
Right-front Setter #1

POTENTIAL RIGHT-TO-CENTER ALIGNMENT ISSUE

POTENTIAL FRONT-TO-BACK ALIGNMENT ISSUE
Transitioning from positions to players

• When we know the positions, we can apply the rules.

• Unfortunately, players don’t wear signs that identify their current positions.

• All we know are player numbers, unique characteristics, and perhaps the skill positions they play.

• How can we figure all of this out?
Tracking
Players/Positions

How can we figure this out?
Tracking Positions: Why?

• Libero Replacements:
  – Did the libero replace a back-row player?
  – What position is the libero in?
  – The libero is still governed by the same alignment rules. She can’t go where she wants in the back row until after serve contact.

• Back-row block.

• Back-row attack.
Tracking Players

• Formulate a personal method for tracking players.
• Very likely will change many times over your officiating career.
• Changing methods is really a kind of evolution, adapting your tracking method to what you can handle.
In The Beginning…

• There was the line-up card.
• Allows R2s to ease into player tracking.
• Lists the players in serving order or court positions.
• Required for NFHS (high school).
• Not used for college and USAV.
Lineup Cards

Starting lineup

Rotate one position
Lineup Cards

Starting lineup Team WWS #3 is first server

Team NN wins rally and rotates one position, #14 is next server

Team WWS wins rally and rotates again, #12 is next server
Lineup Card Pros and Cons

- Good way to quickly determine positions.
- Good backup for scorer with substitutions and time-outs.

- Takes a while to write down subs.
- Why duplicate scorer’s work?
- Can become a crutch for tracking.
- More focused on card than court.
Tracking – Step One

• Track the setter for each team:
  – Illegal alignments often involve the setter, directly or indirectly.
  – Back-row blocks and back-row attacks often occur when a back-row setter is playing the ball near the net.
Tracking – Step One

• During warm-ups, identify the players who are setting.
• Check the line-up sheets to note setter positions.
• Know 5-1 vs. 6-2 offenses:
  – 5-1 uses one setter, who sets in all rotations. The setter will be back-row half the time.
  – 6-2 has two setters who are opposite each other. The primary setter will always be back row.
Tracking – Step One

• At the start of the match, remind yourself, “Team A, setter is #9, back row; Team B, setter is #1, front row.”

• Before each rally, make a mental note of each setter’s position.
  – EX: “back/front” means Team A setter is back-row, Team B setter is front-row.
Tracking – Step Two

• Add a player or two to the mix, for example:
  – Know the player who is opposite of the setter.
  – Know the players on either side of the setter.
  – Pick other pairs of opposites.
Tracking – Step Two

• What works best FOR YOU?
  – Uniform numbers.
  – Unique characteristics.
  – A combination of the above.
Tracking – Step Three

- Changes to a starting line-up.
- Incorporate substitutes’ numbers into your methodology.
- Recognize substitution patterns.
- Libero replacements.
Summary and Tips

• Know the rules.
• Recognize where alignment issues most often occur.
• Find a tracking method that works for you.
• Don’t dwell on a line-up card.
• Practice!