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Visual Training in Volleyball Players

Ikene soumaya [1]
Institute of Physical and Sports Education, University of Algiers 3, soumayaikene@gmail.com

Sahnoun m'hammed
Institute of Physical and Sports Education, University of Algiers 3, sahnoun.ieps@yahoo.fr

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Abstract :
Visual training has become an important aspect of athletic preparation in many sports. Vision plays a major role in sport performance, allowing athletes to track the movement of the ball, gauge distance, and determine opponents' positions to make quick and correct decisions on the court.
In our research, we addressed visual training for athletes in general, then focused specifically on visual training for all positions in volleyball, including the setter, outside hitter, opposite hitter, middle blocker, and libero.
We concluded that visual training greatly helps athletes, but it cannot replace physical and technical training.

Keywords: Volleyball, Visual Training Method, Uses of Visual Training in Athletes.

Article info

[1] *Soumaya ikene*

1. Introduction

Vision training is an essential element of preparation for volleyball players. The ability to quickly spot the ball's trajectory, anticipate an opponent's movements, and make fast decisions are all key skills needed to excel in this sport.

Volleyball players use their vision to analyze an opponent's position and evaluate the ball's trajectory. To improve their ability to read the game, players can use visual exercises such as practicing tracking a ball with their eyes, recognizing shapes on a board, or mentally visualizing game movements.

Coaches can also help players improve their vision by using tools like glasses or contact lenses that enhance visual accuracy. Additionally, players can work on their hand-eye coordination by performing exercises that involve hitting balls with a racket or a ball.

In summary, vision training is a key element for volleyball players looking to improve their game. By using visual exercises and tools like glasses or contact lenses, players can enhance their ability to quickly spot the ball's trajectory, anticipate an opponent's movements, and make quick decisions on the court.

2. Volleyball

Volleyball is a popular team sport typically played on a rectangular court divided into two halves. Each team has six players on the court, and the goal is to get the ball over the net and have it land on the opposing team's side, while preventing the other team from doing the same.

The game begins with a serve, where a player hits the ball over the net to put it in play. The receiving team must then successfully return the ball using a maximum of three touches, usually one to receive the serve and two to return it. Players can use any part of their body to touch the ball, except for consecutive touches with their arms.

Volleyball is a fast-paced, dynamic sport with quick rallies and athletic actions. Teams must communicate and collaborate to organize their movements, anticipate the opponent's actions, and execute strategic attacks to score points.

Volleyball is regulated by the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) and is played at various levels, from recreational to professional. It has also been an Olympic sport since 1964 and is enjoyed worldwide.

2.1 Game Rules

In addition to the basic rules mentioned above, volleyball has other important rules. For example, a point is scored whenever the ball hits the floor on the opposing side, when the opposing team commits a foul, or when they fail to return the ball within the court boundaries. The game is played in sets, usually best of three, where the team that is the first to reach a certain number of points (usually 25) with a two-point difference wins the set.

2.2 Player Positions

In a volleyball team, each player occupies a specific position on the court. The traditional positions are as follows:

- **Setter:** The setter is responsible for setting up attacks by distributing the ball to the hitters.
- **Opposite Hitter:** Also known as the "opposite attacker," this player is positioned to the right of the setter and is usually the team's primary attacker.
- **Outside Hitter:** These players are located on the outside of the front row and are responsible for receiving serves and hitting the ball.
- **Middle Blocker:** Middle players are positioned in the middle of the net and are involved in both attacks and blocks.
- **Libero:** The libero is a specialized player for defense and reception. They have specific rules that allow them to replace any back-row player without counting as a substitution.

3. Definition of Vision Training

Vision training, also called visual therapy, is a form of treatment to improve a person's visual ability. It can include a variety of exercises and techniques to strengthen eye muscles, improve eye coordination, and/or enhance visual perception. Vision training is often used to treat vision disorders such as amblyopia (lazy eye), diplopia (double vision), eye strain, and difficulty focusing on specific objects. It can be done through therapy sessions with a vision professional or through online programs.

The goal of vision training is to improve visual ability and reduce symptoms associated with various visual disorders, such as myopia, hyperopia, astigmatism, presbyopia, amblyopia, eye strain, and blurred vision. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of vision training is debated, and some studies have shown mixed results. It is therefore recommended to consult a vision care professional before starting any vision training program.

4. Vision Training in Athletes

Vision training is also used in athletes to improve their visual performance on the field. Vision training programs for athletes can include exercises to enhance visual acuity, eye coordination, depth perception, form recognition, and visual processing speed.

By improving visual perception, athletes can better track the ball, assess the distance and speed of moving objects, and make faster and more accurate decisions on the field. This can help players in all sports, whether they are ball sports, racket sports, combat sports, or others.

Many professional and collegiate sports teams use vision training to improve their players' performance. Vision training programs for athletes can be tailored to the specific needs of each athlete based on the visual demands of their sport and their position on the field.

In addition to improving visual performance, vision training can also help prevent injuries in athletes. By improving eye coordination and depth perception, athletes can better assess the distances and movements of objects, which can reduce the risk of collisions and injuries.

Vision training programs for athletes can be performed using various tools, such as special glasses, eye-tracking exercises, and computer games. The programs can also be adapted to different skill levels and ages, from youth to professional athletes.

It's important to note that vision training cannot guarantee immediate improvement in athletic performance. However, with regular practice and professional supervision, athletes can see significant improvements in their visual abilities and performance on the field.

5. Statistics on the Use of Vision Training in Athletes

There are few statistics on the use of vision training in sports because it is generally considered a relatively new and innovative technique. However, some reports have shown an increase in the use of vision training in various sports.

A 2013 study examined the effect of vision training on ice hockey players. The results showed that players who followed a vision training program improved their ability to track the puck and anticipate the movements of other players.

Another 2014 study examined the effect of vision training on professional baseball players. The results showed that players who followed a vision training program improved their on-field performance, particularly their batting average, hitting speed, and reaction time.

Similarly, a 2016 study examined the effect of vision training on American football players. The results showed that vision training improved their ability to track the movement of the ball and anticipate the movements of other players on the field.

Additionally, a 2018 article published in the scientific journal PLOS ONE studied the use of vision training in North American professional sports. Researchers analyzed the websites of National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), and Major League Baseball (MLB) teams, as well as the social media accounts of players and teams.

The results showed that 29% of NFL teams, 23% of NBA teams, and 3% of MLB teams posted information about the use of vision training. In addition, 5% of NFL players and 8% of NBA players mentioned vision training on social media.

These results suggest that vision training is becoming increasingly popular in North American professional sports. However, it is important to note that these figures do not reflect the use of vision training in other sports or levels of competition, so it is possible that the use of this technique is more widespread than these figures suggest.

6. Vision Training in Volleyball Players

Vision training can be particularly beneficial for volleyball players, as volleyball is a sport that requires great visual precision and fast decision-making. Players must be able to track the ball in motion, judge the height and distance of the net, monitor the movements of other players, and react quickly to changing situations.

Vision training programs for volleyball players can include exercises to improve eye coordination, form recognition, visual processing speed, and depth perception. Players can also work on synchronizing their eyes and hands to improve their hitting accuracy.

Additionally, vision training can help volleyball players reduce reaction time and make faster, more accurate decisions on the court, which can help them gain a competitive advantage.

It's important to emphasize that vision training should not be considered a substitute for physical and technical training. However, by combining vision training with a comprehensive volleyball training program, players can improve their overall performance and competitiveness on the court.

For volleyball players, vision training can also help prevent injuries. Players can learn to monitor the position of other players on the court and react quickly to avoid collisions. Furthermore, vision training can help reduce eye strain during long matches, which can help players stay focused and alert.

Vision training exercises for volleyball players can include exercises to improve hand-eye coordination, peripheral vision, color and motion recognition, and the ability to quickly change focus. Players can also use special glasses to improve their peripheral vision and depth perception.

Finally, it is important to note that vision training should be integrated into a comprehensive volleyball training program that also includes physical and technical training. Players should also work closely with vision professionals to design a vision training program tailored to their specific needs and skill level.

Vision training programs for volleyball players can be designed to meet different objectives. For example, for beginner players, training can focus on improving eye coordination and depth perception, while for advanced players, training can focus on improving visual processing speed and fast decision-making.

Vision training exercises can be performed during regular training sessions, or they can be done independently using tools such as computer applications or special glasses.

Professional volleyball players can also work closely with vision professionals to assess their visual skills and design personalized vision training programs. Vision tests can include measurements of visual acuity, peripheral vision, and the ability to track moving objects.

In short, vision training is a useful tool for improving the performance of volleyball players in competition. By working on eye coordination, form recognition, visual processing speed, and depth perception, players can improve their accuracy and reactivity on the court, while reducing the risk of injury and eye strain.

7. A Few Vision Training Methods for Volleyball Players

7.1 Setter Vision Training

Setter vision training in volleyball is important because it allows the setter to better anticipate their teammates' actions and make the right decisions to send the ball where it needs to go. Here are a few exercises that can help improve a setter's vision:

1. **Signal Recognition Exercise:** Ask players to divide into two teams and sit facing each other. One player from each team stands in front of their team and the coach makes a signal (like a wink or a hand movement) to one of the players, who must then stand up and run to the opposite side, touching the back line before returning. The setter must follow the action and predict where the player will hit the ball.
2. **Position Observation Exercise:** Ask players to stand in a line, back to back, passing a ball to each other using only their backs and hands. The setter must observe their teammates' positions to determine where the ball is and how they need to play it.
3. **Movement Exercise:** Ask players to spread out on the court and move randomly. The setter must follow their teammates' movements and anticipate where they will go, while keeping an eye on the ball to know where to direct it.
4. **Game Reading Exercise:** Ask players to play a normal match, but with modified rules. For example, each team can only use two touches, or the ball can only be played in a specific area of the court. The setter must read the game to determine where to send the ball under these particular conditions.

It is important for setters to work with a vision professional to assess their visual health and determine the areas in which they need to focus on vision training. Ultimately, vision training can help setters improve their performance on the court by allowing them to better see the ball, spot the movements of opposing players, and make faster and more accurate decisions.

In general, to improve a setter's vision in volleyball, it is important to work on visual perception, observation, anticipation, and quick decision-making. By using exercises that emphasize these skills, setters can improve their ability to direct the ball accurately and efficiently.

7.2 Hitter Vision Training

Vision training is an important aspect for a volleyball hitter, as it allows them to better anticipate the opponent's movements and make decisions faster. Here are a few tips to improve a hitter's vision:

1. **Work on Depth Perception:** Depth perception training can help the hitter better evaluate the opponent's position and the distance of the ball. Exercises like throwing or hitting a ball can help develop this skill.
2. **Practice Seeing the Whole Game:** It is important for the hitter to see the whole game, monitoring both the ball and the movements of other players on the court. To improve this skill, it can be useful to focus on peripheral vision by performing exercises that stimulate peripheral vision, such as reading words or images around the central field of vision.
3. **Practice Reading Opponent's Movements:** The hitter must be able to read the opponent's movements to anticipate the defender's movements and make decisions faster. Exercises like reading the opponent's body signals can help develop this skill.
4. **Practice Reacting Quickly:** Visual reaction training can help the hitter make decisions faster and react more quickly to changes on the court. Exercises like working with bouncing balls or practicing visual reactivity can help develop this skill.

5. **Work on Concentration:** Concentration is essential for a hitter. Meditation or breathing exercises can help develop concentration and improve the hitter's vision.

6. **Reaction Speed Exercises:** The hitter can practice visual reactivity by performing quick reaction exercises. For example, they can stand in front of a wall with a ball, then throw the ball against the wall and react quickly to catch it.

By working on these skills, the hitter can improve their vision and effectiveness on the court.

7.3 Middle Blocker Vision Training

For middle blockers in volleyball, vision training can help improve their ability to read the ball's trajectories and block opposing attacks with precision and efficiency. Here are a few examples of vision training exercises that can be useful for middle blockers:

1. **Ball Trajectory Recognition:** Middle blockers can perform exercises to improve their recognition of ball trajectories, focusing on the movements of opposing hitters to anticipate the ball's path.
2. **Hand-Eye Coordination Exercises:** Middle blockers can perform exercises to improve their hand-eye coordination, working on exercises that involve blocking balls at different heights and angles.
3. **Decision-Making Exercises:** Middle blockers can perform exercises to improve their decision-making in game situations, by quickly identifying available blocking options and choosing the best option for the situation.
4. **Reaction Exercises:** Middle blockers can perform exercises to improve their reaction time, using simulated game situations that require quick reactions.
5. **Visual Tracking of Hitters:** Middle blockers can perform exercises to improve their visual tracking of opposing hitters, focusing on the hitters' movements to better anticipate the ball's trajectory.

7.4 Libero Vision Training

For the libero, vision training can help improve their ability to read the movements of opposing players and anticipate the ball's trajectories. Here are a few examples of vision training exercises that can be useful for liberos:

1. **Visual Tracking of Opposing Players:** Liberos can perform visual tracking exercises by focusing on the movements of opposing players to better anticipate their movements and make quick decisions.
2. **Attack Recognition:** Liberos can perform exercises to improve their recognition of opposing attacks, focusing on the movements of opposing players and anticipating the ball's trajectories.
3. **Decision-Making Exercises:** Liberos can perform exercises to improve their decision-making in game situations, by quickly identifying available defensive options and choosing the best option for the situation.
4. **Reaction Exercises:** Liberos can perform exercises to improve their reaction time, using simulated game situations that require quick reactions.
5. **Hand-Eye Coordination Exercises:** Liberos can perform exercises to improve their hand-eye coordination, working on exercises that involve catching balls with precision.

It is important for liberos to work with a vision professional to assess their visual health and determine the areas in which they need to focus on vision training. Ultimately, vision training can help liberos improve their performance on the court by allowing them to better read the movements of opposing players, anticipate the ball's trajectories, and make faster and more accurate decisions in defensive situations.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, vision training is an important method for improving the performance of volleyball players, particularly in areas such as ball trajectory recognition, hand-eye coordination, decision-making, reaction time, and visual tracking of opponents. Players of all positions, including setters, liberos, hitters, and middle blockers, can benefit from vision training to improve their game and reach their maximum potential. By working with vision professionals, players can assess their visual health and determine the areas in which they need to focus on vision training. With regular and targeted vision training exercises, volleyball players can improve their performance on the court and become more complete and effective athletes.

It is important to note that vision training for volleyball players must be complemented by other aspects of training, such as technique, physical condition, and coordination. A balanced combination of these different elements will contribute to improving the overall performance of volleyball players.

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