Chapter VIII

MINI-VOLLEYBALL

Importance of Volleyball for Children

Today, volleyball is among the most popular sports in the world. However, for the future growth and success of volleyball, it is of primary importance that a large number of children in all countries are attracted to it. To make volleyball a number one sport in the world which is the FIVB’s goal, we must first make it a number one sport among children. Volleyball needs a healthy and broad foundation for its further development such as the following:

- Children familiar with and fond of volleyball. Dedication to a sport is usually formed in childhood and lasts for life.
- The number of active players increased as well as spectators.
- Form basic techniques and tactics of volleyball at an early age. Young athletes learn motor skills and playing abilities easier and faster than adults.
- Introduce volleyball to children between ages 10 and 12.
- Discover talent early enough for future high level performance.
- Overcome the rivalry of other sports. Volleyball will have to attract and gain children earlier than other sports.

Volleyball for children has already become a worldwide movement. However, we are not yet satisfied with the volume, the dynamics or the level. Many countries have not yet started to develop children’s volleyball.

From this point of view, the future popularity and development of volleyball among children is of primary concern and vital interest to national federations, clubs, coaches and adult players.
Characteristics of Mini-Volleyball and its Rules

Volleyball is not difficult but it is hard to teach to beginners. Special teaching methods are needed to introduce volleyball to children. Since mini-volleyball was invented in the early 1960s, several methods have been tried in teaching and playing children’s volleyball. National traditions and experiences have influenced this process. Up to now, there is no one method proven as the best.

However with the experience and results of more than 20 years, we can state as evident:

Children between 9 and 13 years of age can properly learn the basic skills and tactics of volleyball. They can enjoy and play a simplified form of volleyball at a good technical level.

Mini-volleyball (MV) is a methodically simplified volleyball adapted to the capacities and needs of children from ages 9 to 13. Mini-volleyball is a suitable teaching method and a proven approach to volleyball for children.

Children like to play. MV offers children the possibility of learning volleyball while playing. After a few weeks of physical preparation and ball exercises, children are able to play and enjoy mini-volleyball.

Rules of the Game

MV rules use the following modifications of volleyball rules:

- MV is played with less than six players per team, allowing more ball contact per player, easier cooperation, simpler tactics, and greater interest. Usually MV teams are formed of 2, 3 or 4 players depending on the age and level of play.

- MV is played on a small court (Fig. 8-1, 8-2, 8-3). A small court requires less power and movement, reduces the number of interruptions and promotes long rallies. Usually the court measurements are adapted to the number of players per team, their ages and level of play.

- MV is played with reduced net height. An adapted height of net enables children to play at the net in attack and defense according to their body height and jumping ability.

  High net: Easier defense on the back court, longer rallies.

  Low net: Easier attack play, difficult service reception and court defense, more interruptions of the game, shorter rallies.
MV is played with a lighter and smaller ball. Weight and circumference of the ball is adapted to the hands and power of children. However, a small ball flies faster whereas a big, light ball floats in the air. Usually a No. 4 ball is used. For beginners, a foam rubber ball is convenient.

MV is played with adapted rules interpretation. Judgment of ball handling is more liberal to promote acquisition of skills and the flow of the game. Rules for line-up, backcourt play, substitution are simplified. However, rotation order and restriction of attack and block for back players are recommended to prevent specialization. There is no difference in the rules for boys and girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>9 - 11</th>
<th>10 - 12</th>
<th>11 - 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>2 vs 2</td>
<td>3 vs 3</td>
<td>4 vs 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Court</td>
<td>3 x 9 m.</td>
<td>6 x 9 m.</td>
<td>8 x 12 m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.5 x 9 m.</td>
<td>6 x 12 m.</td>
<td>9 x 12 m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>210 + - 5 cm</td>
<td>210 + - 5 cm</td>
<td>220 + - 5 cm</td>
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</table>

At present many variations of MV rules are used in different countries according to national traditions, conditions and experiences, and according to the constitution and age of children. Some countries such as Japan, China, Korea or the Soviet Union play children’s volleyball 6 vs 6 on a smaller court and with a lower net. For the following reasons, the FIVB has not issued unified official rules for MV:

- MV should be, first, a methodically adapted approach to volleyball. It is not primarily a special and autonomous game for official championships.

- Children play MV mainly to learn and improve basic techniques and tactics of volleyball in accordance with their physical and mental capabilities.

- Children should enjoy the game itself and not just strive to defeat opponents or win honors and medals.

- A broad, mass movement of MV is more important for volleyball development than a few elite children's teams playing in national or even international championships.

**Methodical Ways to Learn Volleyball Step-by-Step (Table 8-1)**

The best way to introduce volleyball to children is to teach the game step-by-step. Using the following steps, volleyball elements can be taught through simple games similar to volleyball:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Physical Prep.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Step</td>
<td>8-10 years</td>
<td>Minor Games</td>
<td>Cooperation Anticipation</td>
<td>Catching</td>
<td>Posures Movement towards Ball</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ball over the Net</td>
<td>Movement Towards Ball</td>
<td>Throwing</td>
<td>Speed Agility Reaction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volley 1 vs 1</td>
<td>Basic Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Step</td>
<td>9-11 years</td>
<td>Minor Games</td>
<td>Cooperation watch opponents</td>
<td>Catching</td>
<td>Quick VB Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ball o. Net</td>
<td>Ball Anticipation</td>
<td>Throwing</td>
<td>Forward sideways backw.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mini Volley 2 vs 2</td>
<td>Basic Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agility Falling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Power Speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Step</td>
<td>10-12 years</td>
<td>Minor Games</td>
<td>Tactical Use of skills</td>
<td>Dig Pass</td>
<td>Speed Reaction</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Basic Team Tactic</td>
<td>Serve Recept.</td>
<td>Agility</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>MV Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td>Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th Step</td>
<td>12-14 years</td>
<td>Various Ball Games</td>
<td>Team Formation and Systems</td>
<td>Perfection of all Basic skills</td>
<td>Speed Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual tactics</td>
<td>New skill Variations</td>
<td>Agility</td>
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<td>Flexibility</td>
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1. Foundation of MV

First, familiarize children with the ball, court and net by teaching them basic postures and movements on the court: catching, throwing and rolling different balls (volley, basket, soccer, medical balls, etc.), playing different minor games and developing basic, physical abilities for volleyball such as speed, agility, power, reaction.

Then, introduce the volley pass by having players learn to volley the ball back and forth to a partner and over the net. The main training and competition game is “Ball over the Net,” (2 vs 2, or 3 vs 3) with rules similar to volleyball except the ball is played by catching and throwing. (Another method proved and used in Japan introduces the Dig Pass as a first skill.)

2. Preparation of MV

Improve the volley pass in attack and defense situations and after movement on the court. The Dig Pass and Underarm Serve are introduced. This allows playing a simple volleyball game: MV two-to-a-side. First tactical principles are taught as line-up, movement according game situations, cooperation with team mate, watching opponents, cover the court. Continue basic physical preparation: quick movement towards ball, rolling, jumping in many variations. Children play many minor games and participate in local or regional MV competitions 2 vs 2.

3. Introduction and Improvement of MV

This step can be done in two phases.

Phase A: Introduce the tennis serve and the spike to improve the offensive play. Improve the dig pass for service reception and spike defense to strengthen the defensive play. Introduce diving and jumping with run-up. Introduce and frequently play MV, three-to-a-side. Practice appropriate rules, basic systems and attack and defense tactics. Teams can now participate in local and regional 3 vs 3 MV competitions.

Phase B: Introduce the block and improve technical and tactical skills. Teach different variations of attack hits and improve set and defense skills i.e. rolling, diving. Continue physical preparation with skill perfection. Develop endurance. Team formation and basic systems of attack and defense are introduced with transition to MV, four-to-a-side. Teams can play in competitions and tournaments on the local, regional and maybe national levels.

4. Transition to Regular Volleyball

All of the basic elements of volleyball are available after the first three steps have been learned. Regular six-to-a-side volleyball can now be played.
Children, who have practiced frequently (more than 10 hours a week) under the guidance of experienced coaches, may pass the first three steps in less than three years. In this case, the fourth step can be done at age 12 or even younger. However, children on school teams with less than two volleyball lessons per week will take longer to pass the first three steps and may enter the fourth step later than age 12.

Competitions for Children

As children master the basic skills, they should play friendly matches and competitions. As soon as they are able to volley the ball, MV offers children the opportunity to take part in 2 vs 2 games. Matches are important to stir up the interest and enthusiasm of young players. If children are physically and technically well prepared, there is no danger in frequently playing in local or regional competitions. They may also participate in tournaments with several matches per day provided there is a break between matches of one hour, minimum. Usually MV matches are played best in two-out-of-three sets, but in tournaments with many teams the “time system” is also possible. Two MV courts can be placed on one normal court. Coaches, teachers and referees must make sure of fair play and keep the moral norms on a high level.

Organization of Mini-Volleyball

MV has two main organization aspects: MV in volleyball clubs and MV in schools.

1. Mini-Volleyball in Clubs

All volleyball clubs should have a special section for MV to prepare children for the youth and junior teams of the club and to discover talents for elite volleyball. Clubs usually have good conditions for MV teams:

- Children participate voluntarily in games and training. Often only selected talents are allowed.
- Children practice in small squads (less than 15 players) led by qualified coaches or former top players.
- Facilities and equipment are as good as for adult teams.
- Children may practice several times a week - sometimes up to six days.
- Children play regularly in friendly matches and participate in cup or other tournaments.

Volleyball clubs, where most of the talents are discovered and developed, are a main organizational basis of MV. They should do their best to build up MV teams.

2. Mini-Volleyball in Schools

MV in schools is important for the further growth and popularity of volleyball as a sport.
Therefore, national federations and volleyball clubs should cooperate with and encourage schools to include MV as a requirement in physical education. Unfortunately, in most countries, conditions for MV in schools are not favorable:

Number of volleyball lessons are limited, i.e. not enough time to learn and practice skills.

Teachers are not volleyball experts.

Lack of facilities and equipment.

Too many children in a squad, not all are interested in volleyball.

Not enough matches.

In spite of such difficulties in the teaching and playing of volleyball at school, MV can and should contribute towards familiarising children with volleyball. Many of them will continue to like and play volleyball in clubs or on recreational levels.

FIVB has pointed out in their working programs that MV is one of the most important FIVB activities: “Promote volleyball as an activity for the masses.”

Project: Volleyball in school

Through this project we must convince schools that volleyball is the ideal educational option because of mini volleyball - a system of physical education coordinating mind and body necessary for any child’s integral development. No expensive equipment is required. The child’s physical wellbeing will not be endangered. By such a project we hope to:

1. Encourage and motivate school participation and competitions on a national scale by recognizing them internationally.

2. Produce material such as cartoons and comic strips which may awaken children’s interest in volleyball.

Responsibility of National Federations

MV needs leadership, organization, publicity and methodical support by the national federations. National, regional and local committees or at least a responsible person, should be in charge of MV. Main tasks of these bodies could be:

1. Cooperation with mass media, school authorities, children’s organizations.
2. Cooperation with sponsors for support and fund raising.
3. Publication of posters, stickers, badges, booklets, comics etc. to interest children in MV.
4. Organization of MV competitions, courses and clinics, training camps, MV holidays.
5. Production of teaching materials for coaches and teachers.
6. Formation of young referees for MV.
7. Initiation of studies and research on MV.
MV competitions and training camps should be connected with:

1. Educational activities for children such as sightseeing tours, visits to cultural and historical places, discussions with top athletes, barbecues, disco dances, social activities.

2. Seminars, demonstrations, discussions for qualification of coaches, teachers and animators.

Each national federation is obliged to establish a national MV development program and each coach should directly or indirectly cooperate.

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Mini volley

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