Defense – Ball Pursuit and Retrieval

Pre-contact phase

Defense is a reaction skill and the players often need to chase a ball that was deflected by another player or that was played in an area of the court that wasn’t covered by anyone.

1. The defender needs to be in a ready position that will allow them to play both the high hit (B) and the low hit (A). The knees have to be bent in a comfortable position and the weight is on the front of the feet. It is that position that will allow the player to quickly start chasing the ball.
2. The defender is looking at the hitter and reads the play.
3. The defender identifies the trajectory of the ball and initiates movement with first step in the direction of the ball. If the ball is deflected behind them, they open their body by taking a first step backwards with the foot closest to the ball.
4. The defender chases the ball by taking quick steps towards it. While moving, the center of gravity either lowers (D) or raises (C) depending on the trajectory of the ball that has to be dug.

Contact phase

6. The most important factor in retrieving the ball is the angle of the platform. Just before contact, the defender must position their body in a way that will allow them to orient their platform towards the middle of the court. That might mean jump (B), dive with one hand (D) or fall to the floor (E).
7. The eyes are on the ball and arms are oriented towards the middle of the court. The shoulder further away from the court is slightly lifted and wraps around the ball at contact. (B, C)

Post-contact phase

7. The follow through is oriented towards the middle of the court as much as possible.
8. The player either rolls or dives to avoid injuries during the fall and to be back on their feet quickly for the next action.

Source: Volleyball Canada