

Lloy's Corner: Dumbing Down the Sport

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Dumbing Down the Sport

Lloy James Ball (born February 17, 1972, in [Fort Wayne, Indiana](#))^[1] is an American [volleyball player](#), a member of [American national team](#) in 1993–2008, a participant of the [Olympic Games \(Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004\)](#) and gold medalist of [Olympics Beijing 2008](#),^[2] gold medalist of the [NORCECA Championship 2007](#) and [World League 2008](#), silver medalist of the [Pan American 1995](#), bronze medalist of the [World Championship 1994](#) and 2015 inductee to the International Hall of Game.

Why do we lack volleyball players with "feeling" on how to play the game? Why can't modern players "read" the game? Now, I know this isn't every volleyball player, but as years go by, **we are noticing a decline in those kids that have a "nose for the ball." Why?**

Here is my theory. Remember, it's MY theory. It doesn't make it gospel and you are allowed to disagree (kinda :)).

Games!!! Kids don't play games anymore. What happened to kickball & wiffleball with ghost runners???? Kids would have to use kicking motions, throwing motions, base running, **problem solving, and imagination to play outside and in an UNORGANIZED setting.** Awesome!

What happened to Dodge ball, floor hockey and, yes, the Presidents Physical Fitness test!!! These were awesome/horrifying (I couldn't do pull-ups) for kids growing up. **But it taught them competitiveness, toughness, and that if you didn't like being picked last, you better darn well do something about it.**

My point is this. We have not allowed kids to think and act for themselves. We haven't allowed them to fail for themselves and learn to win for themselves!.

We put X's on the floor so kids know where to go, then wonder why they never adjust when the set is bad, or the pass is bad, or the other player doesn't hit the ball there. **The kid looks at the coach after not getting the ball and says, "that's where you told me to go!"** There was zero percent chance for the ball to ever arrive to that spot!

We slap the ball so players know when to release on a free ball, or when to get to base. Never did I see an opponent slap the ball to let me know, "psssst, hey you in right back, I am going to send a free ball over now." **When the ball goes up in the air, the player should be watching the hitter's arm swing or bumping/setting motion to know that the ball coming over is either a down ball or a free ball.**

We tell our setters what options to set. 31-go set the red. Front 1-red set the pipe or go. We don't let them figure out not to run a pipe with the 6'10" middle in the front row.

We have become an "inside the box" sport with almost every player looking like every other player in that position. I know imitation is the best form of flattery, but here's what I would like to see, then I will shut up.

I want a player that listens to the coach but doesn't take it as gospel. **They aren't afraid to read the play make a choice then live with that result** (and that may include getting yelled at. So what?) Then, they can use that result as information for the next time they are in the same situation. **That is real learning. That is real growth.**

I want a hitter that sees the big right side blocker kicking out and calls for a X1.

I want a setter that says, "ok, big right side blocker. I see you pinching on our 31, so I am going to run this go right over it, and my OH is going to bounce line on you!!"

I want a passer that says, "forget pass right, pass left, I am passing NAILS today, so I will take both seams."

I don't want a server that goes back there and thinks, "keep it in, keep it safe, keep it in zone 6." Heck NOOOOOO. I want them to think, "the passer in zone one can't pass her way out of a wet paper bag, here it comes!" Or, "I am about to bomb this thing down the line and we are winning now!"

In the end, I want players that want to win, and I don't want sheep that I have to manipulate to get to do anything.

Be Great. Be Imaginative. Be more than an X on the floor.

LB out.