



Catch Ball: A definition and interpretation for the sport of volleyball

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The following information is provided as an attempt to clarify the operational difficulties that have been identified in applying Rule 10.2.2. In January 2000 the rules of volleyball were amended and the term “Held” was replaced with the new terminology “Caught and / or Thrown”.

Whilst there has now been three national junior events and at least two versions of the Australian Volleyball League (AVL) there remains a high degree of confusion regarding this simple change to the rules.

To address this issue I will provide the rules relating to a catch ball; the referee guidelines provided on “playing the ball”; the referee instructions relating to the rule; and finally extracts of instructions issued to me personally whilst attending the Men’s World Championships in 2002.

Any questions or issues arising out of this paper should be addressed to me via email (deturner@ozemail.com.au) or through the Australian Volleyball Federation.

The Rules:

10.2 Characteristics of the Hit

10.2.2 The ball must be hit, not caught and/or thrown. It can rebound in any direction.

Exceptions

10.2.3.2 At the first hit of the team, the ball may contact various parts of the body consecutively provided that the contacts occur during one action.

10.3 Faults in Playing the Ball

10.3.3 CATCH: a player does not hit the ball, and the ball is caught and/or thrown.

24.3.2.3 First Referee Responsibilities, to decide upon: b) the faults in playing the ball.

The Guidelines:

Rule 10 - Playing the Ball

1) It is emphasised that only the faults that are seen are to be called. The first referee

must only look at the part of the body that makes the ball contact. In his/her judgment he/she should not be influenced by the position of the player's body posture before and/or after playing the ball. The FIVB Refereeing Commission insists that referees permit overhand finger contact or any other contact that is legal according to the Rules.

2) Unfortunately many referees do not understand Rule 10.2.3.2 and incorrectly put it into practice. They do not understand concretely in which cases we can speak of "at the first hit of a team". In four different cases the team has a first hit (which counts as the first of the three touches of a team):

- i) Service reception hit;
- ii) Attack reception hit (not only spike, all attacks, see Rule 10.1.1 (also 14.1.1));
- iii) The hit of the ball coming from an opponent's block;
- iv) The hit of the ball coming from the team's own block.

3) The Refereeing Commission insists that the referee in his/her verbal explanations of concrete faults in playing the ball, if the game captain asks for such, uses the official terminology of Rule 10.3 and other Rules.

4) Attention must be paid to the fact that during an attack hit, tipping is permitted if the contact is not caught or thrown. Tipping means attack of the ball (completely/over the net) with one hand/fingers.

The first referee must watch the tips closely the attack hits executed with one hand (gently). If the ball after this tip does not instantly rebound, but is accompanied by the hand, it is therefore thrown, it is a fault, and must be penalised.

5) Attention should be drawn to the fact that a player's blocking action will not be legal if he/she does not simply intercept the ball coming from the opponent, but holds it (or lifts, pushes, carries, throws, accompanies it). In such cases the referee must punish the action as "caught ball" (this should not be exaggerated - blocking is an action).

6) Rule 10.2.1: The ball may touch any part of the body.

- a) The purpose of these rule changes was to assist the defense, not to strengthen the offense.
- b) It is irrelevant whether or not the contacting part of the body is soft or hard. Only if there is no rebound and the ball comes to STAY in contact with the body, a fault is committed.

7) To better understand the text of Rule 10.2.2 (The ball must be hit, not caught or thrown. It can rebound in any direction).

What is meant by the word "hit"? A hit is simply where the ball rebounds off from the contact point, while a thrown ball involves two playing actions, first catching and then throwing the ball. It is irrelevant whether or not the contacting part of the body is soft or hard. Only if there is no rebound and the ball comes to stay in contact with the body (i.e. Caught or thrown) is a fault committed.

The Instructions:

1) Rule 10.2.2 reads that “The ball must be hit, not caught and/or thrown, it can rebound in any direction”. The referee must ensure that this is clearly seen in one single action in which the ball rebounds off the contact point, while a thrown ball involves two action phases. Firstly, the player touching the ball and secondly, throwing it.

The first and/or second referee will whistle the end of the rally, provided that they are positive that a fault has been committed and that they have identified its nature.

2) The referee must pay attention to the steadiness of the touch, particularly in today’s Volleyball where feint attacks (“tips”) occur, changing the direction in the placing of the ball.

Thus during an attack hit, tipping is permitted if the ball is not caught or thrown by the hand.

3) We would draw the teams’ and referees’ attention to the fact that the player’s blocking action will be irregular if he/she does not only intercept the ball coming from the opponent with his/her action, but catches and/or throws it (Rule 10.2.2). In this case, the referee must penalise this action.

4) In accordance with the spirit of FIVB world competitions and to encourage longer rallies and spectacular actions, only the most obvious violations will be penalised. However, when a player is not in a very good position to play the ball, the first referee will be less severe in his/her judgment of ball handling faults. For example:

- i) The setter running to play the ball or obliged to make a very quick action to reach the ball in order to set;
- ii) The players obliged to run or make very quick actions to play a ball after it has rebounded from the block or from another player;
- iii) The first team contact may be freely made except if the player catches or throws the ball.

What does it all Mean?

Essentially the message that is being spelt out by the above information is that the referee must help the player and the game. They must do so by remaining in the background and not putting themselves forward as the technical expert.

The rule changes have been introduced to allow the first touch to be a double contact and thereby allowing the game to continue. All referees must remember that when play is at the net they should be concentrating here, even to the extent where they may miss the first contact of the team receiving the ball. Studies have proven that 99.9% of first contacts under these new rules will be legal, therefore at most the referee may miss an error that occurs 0.1% of the time!

All referees must be aware of the four types of first contact and ensure they understand the difference between a double contact and a catch ball. Remember that at all times the referee’s duty is to the game and they are there to assist the players to play, allow the spectators to enjoy the physical spectacle and NOT TO POLICE every minor technicality.