

Lesson Theme: Very Good Volleys

Objectives: Develop Technical and Tactical Skills to Volley Effectively

Skill Level: 3.0 / 3.5

Duration: 90 minutes

Equipment Needed: Balls. Pylons or other markers



Mins	Activity	Details	Teaching Points	Comments
5	Meet & Greet	Welcome, names, housekeeping		
7	Technical Warm Up	Select activities from the WARM-UP MENU.		Warm-up should include volleys, groundstrokes, serve and return.
10	Play & Observe	Real Game w/o restrictions		Circulate and encourage but no teaching yet.
3	Collect Balls & H2O			Make it quick!
2	Debrief / Observations	<p>Praise effort and focus.</p> <p>Explain that your particular interest was the net play demonstrated in the points.</p> <p>Today we are going to focus on the tactics of volleying when up near the net and develop some of the technical skills we need to implement them.</p>	So much of pickleball is played near the net, it is crucial that we are comfortable near the NVL and that we can hit the necessary shots consistently.	
3	Direct Instruction	<p>Why do we come to the net in the first place?</p> <p>What is the advantage we get from being up here?</p> <p>What can we do from this part of the court that we cannot do as effectively from the back?</p>	<p>1) Coming to the net allows us to steal time from opponents by reducing the distance the ball travels before we hit it.</p> <p>2) Increases the likelihood we get high balls we can hit downward into the court. Hitting down allows us to hit hard, again stealing time.</p>	Many players don't understand why moving forward is valuable, and explaining this clearly can improve buy-in.

2	Direct Instruction	<p>When volleying at the net with opponents back, there are two primary volleys you will play:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Deep volley to keep opponents far back. 2) Drop volley to make opponents run. 		<p>Many players will be familiar with the idea of keeping the opponent back. They may, however, be surprised by the idea of hitting a short volley to make the opponent run.</p> <p>The response: "do you want to keep them back or do you want to win the point?" is often effective at illustrating why a drop volley can be effective.</p>
7	Group Activity: Deep, Neutralizing Volleys off a Drive	<p>Working in pairs, down the line and on half court. A cone is set up at $\frac{3}{4}$ court for both players.</p> <p>Player A drops the ball, and after it bounces, hits the ball to their partner who is at the NVL. Player B volleys it back, trying to land the ball between the cone and the baseline. Player A catches the ball and repeats. After 6 attempts, switch roles.</p> <p>Progression: Instead of catching the ball after each volley, the baseline player hits it back, creating a continuous rally.</p>	<p>The depth of the volley is controlled by the height and speed of the ball (don't mention spin, although this is also a factor).</p> <p>Speed is controlled by speed of paddle at contact, as well as size of back swing.</p> <p>Height is controlled by swing path and paddle angle.</p> <p>A forward impact point will make it easier to control the volley.</p>	<p>Even though the focus is on sending the ball, players should work to receive the ball well (e.g. on balance, forward impact point).</p> <p>Difficulty can be adjusted depending on the challenge of the feed.</p>
5	Game	<p>One team starts behind the baseline, the other team starts at NVL. The baseline team drops and drives the ball to the net team. The net team must attempt to play a deep volley and then both teams play out the point.</p> <p>After one team has earned 7 points, switch roles of each team.</p>	Reinforce controlling ball speed and height to control depth.	<p>Bonus points can be used as extra incentive for hitting a deep volley.</p> <p>Cones/markers can be at $\frac{3}{4}$ court. If they are not flat, have them outside the playing area.</p>
2	Debrief & H2O			
2	Direct Instruction	Introduce the idea of hitting a drop volley when opponents are far back in the court.	<p>While deep volleys can be good neutralizing shots, it could be useful to hit a short volley to make opponents run.</p> <p>A good drop volley lands at least once (preferably twice) in the NVZ and has a low bounce.</p>	

2	Direct Instruction	How to hit a drop volley.	Drop volleys require an absorbing feeling to remove speed from the ball. This requires a soft grip of the paddle and not accelerating into the ball.	
7	Group Activity: Drop Volley off a Drive	<p>Working in pairs, down the line and on half court.</p> <p>Player A drops the ball, and after it bounces, hits the ball to their partner who is at the NVL. Player B volleys it, trying to land the ball at least once in the NVZ.</p> <p>Player A sends another drive and Player B again tries to remove speed to play a drop volley. Switch roles after 6 attempts.</p> <p>Progression: The feeds can be made easier or harder depending on the speed at which they are hit.</p>	<p>Even though the paddle is moving very little, players should still have a good athletic look.</p> <p>They should feel that they are absorbing or 'catching' the ball with their paddle.</p> <p>While there may be some arc on the volley, this should be minimal, as a bigger arc would give more time to opponents.</p>	
5	Game	<p>One team starts behind the baseline, the other team starts at NVL. The baseline team drops and drives the ball to the net team. The net team must attempt to play a drop volley and then both teams play out the point.</p> <p>After one team has earned 7 points, switch roles of each team.</p>	Reinforce using an absorbing sensation on the volleys and trying to get at least one bounce in the NVZ.	Ensure baseline players are not putting in a dangerous amount of effort to retrieve the drop volleys. These balls should be hard – at times impossible – to get to.
2	Debrief & H2O			
2	Direct Instruction	Drop or Drive: Making a Smart Decision	<p>Which type of volley we play (drop or drive) should take into consideration where our opponents are on the court. If they hit from inside the baseline, a deep volley landing near their feet makes sense.</p> <p>If they are hitting from on or behind the baseline, a drop volley can be effective.</p> <p>It is important to know where the hitter is when we play our volley.</p>	The speed/agility of the opponent is also a factor and can be mentioned.

9	Group Activity: Up or Back?	<p>Working in pairs down the line, Player A is around the baseline and Player B is at the NVL. Player A drives the ball and Player B must play a drop volley or deep volley.</p> <p>The decision should be based on where Player A is standing as the volley is struck.</p>	The volleying player must pay attention to the position of their opponent, as that will inform the decision about which type of volley to play.	The player near the baseline should use a variety of starting positions to try to trick the net player.
10	Play Real Points	Encourage players to use their volley skills and decision-making skills in a real game.	Reinforce controlling the height and speed of the volley, as well as paying attention to the opponents' positioning.	Encourage players to hit third shot drives so other participants can work on the volley skill.
5	Wrap Up	Summarize key points	<p>When at the net, it is important to be able to hit different kinds of volleys. A deep volley can neutralize an opponent, while a short drop volley can make them run.</p> <p>It is important to control the speed and height of the ball, and to consider where the opponent is when you are hitting your shot.</p>	Use this wrap up to identify improvement, encourage practice, and promote future lessons or events.

Instructor Notes: