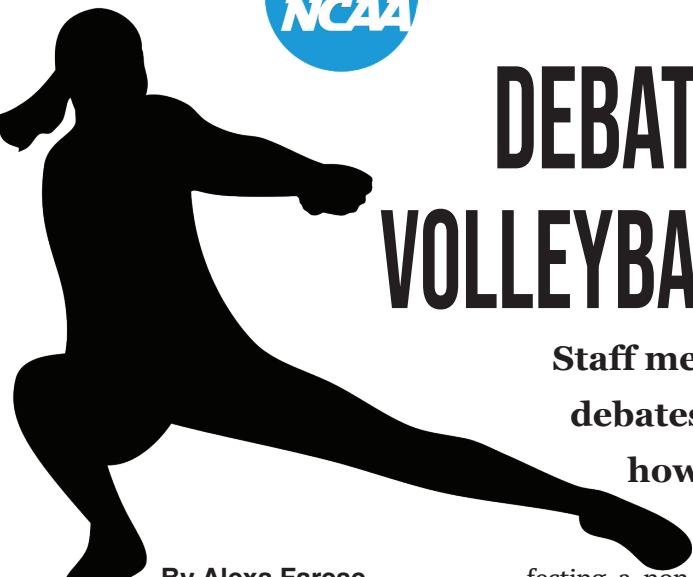


NCAA



DEBATE OVER NEW WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL DOUBLE CONTACT RULE

Staff member and volleyball player Alexa Farese debates the merits of the NCAA's new rule and how it will affect the future of volleyball

By Alexa Farese
staff writer

On Feb. 20, 2024 the NCAA made a few changes to the rules of volleyball. One of these changes is an extremely controversial decision to allow double contacts for setters which was proposed on Jan. 5, 2024 and then put into place along with a small number of minor changes.

These changes will only affect college level play, but could make a difference in many aspects of the game.

"The NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel approved allowing women's volleyball players to contact the ball more than once with any part of the body in a single attempt on a team's second contact when the ball is played to a teammate," states the official NCAA website.

This rule change is sparking debate in the volleyball community for a few reasons, one of them being that it gets rid of one of the main requirements that the setter position has to follow.

The setter's purpose is to set up the hitters on the team for the final contact and they must do this without having a double contact. Even the slightest spin on the ball from the setter can lead to a double being called since it signifies one hand touching the ball before the other in a set.

Eliminating the rule against it makes the hard work that setters have put into per-

fecting a non-spinning set irrelevant, allowing just about anyone to be a setter without learning a main technical aspect of the position.

"Out of all of the positions, I think setters spend the most time perfecting their craft in the gym," said Ashley Martin, head coach for the oxford high school volleyball team, "They spend hours and hours and hours practicing and training to get their technique down pat. There are many parts of setting that make the position unique and challenging and having the ability to make a clean set with no doubles is a key characteristic a setter needs to have."

While the change may be disheartening for setters, overall the rule change will make the game more constant with the variability of what referees qualify as a double.

For a referee, it is completely up to interpretation on whether or not a set would qualify as a double, and often one referee will call a double on something another referee would categorize as clean.

"I do think that with the unpredictabilities with referees through out the country from college, to high school, and even to 12 or 13 year olds playing club volleyball the elimination of doubles will make the game more consistent across the board," said Martin, "I take our team to different places all around so that we can see the officiating in each part of the state. Our setter can watch film, see the calls made by the referee

and what they did to have the call made, and fix it in the gym. By the time playoffs come we have seen what we need to do to avoid those calls."

Another good thing about the change, is that it will change the speed of the game. In the recent ten years the game of volleyball has gained a great deal of popularity. This surge of interest in the sport is accredited to the increasing speed of play, especially in college. Rallies are longer, faster, and more entertaining.

When doubles are called it stops the game and slows it down. Also, trying not to double slows down the sets in general because of the careful manner setters have to use to make sure they have a perfect, non-spinning set, so therefore without the worry of having a double called on them, the setter will be able to speed up their sets and the pace of the game.

"In 2023, women's college volleyball experienced a massive surge in ratings and attendance, and the faster play likely had a lot to do with it," said USA Today.

Overall, while there is a drawback to the rule change of removing the double contact rule, being that it may make the technique of setting slightly less tedious, the rule change will be a positive thing for the volleyball community.

It will help keep the inconsistency of officials down and keep the speed of the game up.

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