



# FUN FOR VOLLEY BALL

**THE RESEARCH ON SPORT PROGRAMS (AGES 6-9)  
THAT ENCOMPASS VOLLEYBALL FUNDAMENTALS**

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## **1.** INTRODUCTION

## **2.** RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

## **3.** SPORT PROGRAMS THAT ENCOMPASS VOLLEYBALL FUNDAMENTALS (AGES 6-9)

## **4.** THE ANALYSIS OF SPORT PROGRAMS THAT ENCOMPASS VOLLEYBALL FUNDAMENTALS

## **5.** RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUNBALL PROGRAM

## **6.** REFERENCES

# THE RESEARCH ON SPORT PROGRAMS (FOR AGE 6-9) THAT ENCOMPASS VOLLEYBALL FUNDAMENTALS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The long-term athletic development of volleyball players implies their long-term participation in planned and programmed activities of a general and specific character. According to different studies, an athlete needs 10,000 hours of formal and informal (fitness) training to attain the level of an “expert athlete” in a specific activity – sport (volleyball included).<sup>4</sup> A large base of participants, a proper plan and program, good coaches and good working conditions (infrastructure and time available for training) constitute the factors facilitating the development of athletes – top level volleyball players.

Today it is common to engage in different individual sports such as gymnastics, swimming or tennis at a young age because the top performance of such athletes is achieved at a younger age than in team sports.<sup>2</sup> It was considered that the perfect introductory training age for team sports, considered as late specialization sports,<sup>2</sup> was the age of 10 years. However, due to highly competitive sports, the availability of sporting content in the media and activities adapted to suit children’s ages, team sports have lowered their age limit for beginners and thus children aged 6 or 7 have begun to

play volleyball. This phenomenon is not in itself so challenging provided it entails a proper practice program. A good plan and program will ensure retention of children who begin to play volleyball. Why? The characteristics of the volleyball game and learning of volleyball fundamentals are “challenging” for children aged, for example, between 6 and 9. More specifically, volleyball fundamentals include passing the ball (overhand and forearm (bump)), jumps and hitting the ball (smash (spike) and serving) practically without any natural forms of moving (running, catching and throwing). Another significantly aggravating circumstance is the net height preventing children to perform the fundamentals specific for the volleyball game (smash (spike) and block). Having all the above-mentioned in mind certainly does not facilitate the designing of a program that will enable children to proactively participate in the game and continue playing volleyball in the long-term, while at the same time meet all the requirements for successful psychomotor development adequate for the participants’ age.<sup>1</sup> The design of such a program for the most sensitive children’s ages of 6-7 and 8-9 respectively, will be the main objective of

this project. The majority of “volleyball” programs for children of the above-mentioned age are primarily focused on the development of volleyball skills and volleyball game models adapted to the age of the participants. Actually, all such programs lack non-volleyball specific content.

In fact, the basic multisport content will be integrated into the program and, together with the volleyball-specific content, will foster better “physical literacy” and enable participation in subsequent phases of long-term athletic development,<sup>1</sup> but also positively impact the psychosocial benefits of children participating in sport.<sup>3,7</sup> The selected program contents in this phase of long-term athletic development<sup>1</sup> should develop key biomotor abilities – agility, balance, coordination and speed. The learning and mastering of volleyball content should be conducted through playing, given that feeling comfortable during training is crucial at such age<sup>5,6</sup>. Competition through playing should not be orientated towards victory because it can lead to early dropping-out of the activity.<sup>5,6</sup>

## 2 THE FOLLOWING ARE THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- to identify examples of good practices related to the introduction of the youngest players to volleyball and to recommend what to incorporate into the FUNBALL program (if possible)
- to exchange knowledge and experiences between partners

**The following are the supporting objectives:**

- to provide information necessary for the development of this research paper
- to encourage and strengthen cooperation and communication between project partners



### 3. SPORT PROGRAMS THAT ENCOMPASS VOLLEYBALL FUNDAMENTALS (AGE 6-9)

This research paper includes an overview and analysis of successful programs of similar content implemented within many national confederations, associations and clubs.

Nowadays virtually every national confederation or association, particularly those most numerous and successful

ones, pay special attention to programs for their youngest players. Moreover, such programs are very carefully analysed and considered with the aim of identifying the most successful examples of the principles that could be applied while designing programs within the framework of this project. Listed below are only a few programs that are presently

regarded as examples of best practices in training young categories of players:

- Viva Vôlei 
- Cool Moves Volley (CMV) 
- Smashball 
- Pequevoley 
- Primo Volley, MINIVOLLEY 1 and 2 
- S3 

#### VIVA VÔLEI - BRAZIL



Viva Vôlei is an independent unit within the CBV (Brazilian Volleyball Confederation). The program is designed for ages 7-14 (volleyball beginners preparing to participate in a regular competition 6:6). There are 4 different age groups: 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14. The groups are mixed with a maximum of 24 participants, and coaching practices are held two to three times a week for 60 minutes.

#### SMASHBALL - THE NETHERLANDS



Smashball is a challenging volleyball game that focuses on the most attractive volleyball technique: the smash. The motto of Smashball is "Smashball more smashes, more challenges, more boys in volleyball!" This project was launched with the aim of creating volleyball game models in which children from their youngest age can use smash as the most attractive volleyball element, especially focused on encouraging boys to play volleyball. Smashball comprises 4 levels, with each rally ending with a smash.

#### PRIMO VOLLEY + MINI VOLLEY (1 AND 2) - ITALY



This program has now been replaced with the S3 program, which is promoted by Federazione Italiana Pallavolo. The program consists of 3 stages, 3 ways to compete from catch and throw in primo volleyball to 4:4 and underhand serve in Mini Volleyball 2.

#### COOL MOVES VOLLEY (CMV) - THE NETHERLANDS



Cool Moves Volley (CMV) is a Dutch program for children aged 6-12. It is focused on didactic and progressive learning of the volleyball game including typical catch and throw drills, as well as the well-known official game of mini volleyball. Playing on the volleyball court is facilitated before mini volleyball with the aim of retaining children in volleyball in the long-term by allowing them to compete – they play from the first coaching session. The program is comprised of 6 separate phases appropriate for age specificities (Level 1 – age 6-7, Level 2 – age 7-8 up to Level 6 – age 11-12). It is particularly focused on the transition between Levels 2 and 3 during which typical simple moves become volleyball-specific moves.

#### PEQUE VOLLEY - SPAIN



The educational program of the RFEVB (national level), whose aim is to introduce volleyball at the age of 11 and 12: at school, during PE, under the guidance of a PE teacher. It consists of 8 practice units that include learning volleyball techniques and different playing models.

#### S3 - ITALY






The S3 project was designed with the aim of introducing volleyball to beginners in a different way by using three basic concepts: **PLAYING** (different models), and non-specific drills that become the basic content of the activity, **SIMPLIFIED RULES** – modification of some key volleyball rules (the ball can be caught and can bounce off the floor) and **FLEXIBILITY** where the number of players in a team depends on the number of players and the number of balls available during practice. The suggested program is used at the national level, in volleyball clubs but also in elementary schools.




## 4. THE ANALYSIS OF SPORT PROGRAMS THAT ENCOMPASS VOLLEYBALL FUNDAMENTALS



Information about the analysed sport programs is provided in the table below for a better overview. The programs are specified according to their name, national confederation/association

responsible for them, age category they are designed for, good practices and disadvantages resulting from the program implementation and program specificities.

PROGRAM NAME	GOOD PRACTICE	DISADVANTAGES	PROGRAM SPECIFICITIES
<p><b>VIVA VÔLEI</b></p> <p>NATIONAL CONFEDERATION/ ASSOCIATION  <b>BRASIL</b></p> <p>AGE GROUP <b>7-14</b></p>	<p>The program was adopted and is run by the volleyball confederation.</p> <p>It has been proven in practice – there are 200,000 children involved in the project.</p>	<p>The emphasis is on the number of participants.</p> <p>It is not designed at the level of basic training.</p> <p>It lacks a documented set of exercises for the achievement of specified goals.</p> <p>Non-volleyball specific parts indicated only as bullet points without operational guidelines for each coaching session.</p> <p>It provides only global program goals for each age (year) category.</p>	<p>Very socially progressive with a powerful sociological effect.</p>
<p><b>COOL MOVES VOLLEY (CMV)</b></p> <p>NATIONAL CONFEDERATION/ ASSOCIATION  <b>THE NETHERLANDS</b></p> <p>AGE GROUP <b>6-12</b></p>	<p>Goals are specified in detail.</p> <p>It emphasizes the vital link in the transition from general to specific.</p> <p>An excellent program for progressive learning of specific volleyball skills.</p> <p>It has been proven in practice – in terms of number of clubs using it and quality.</p>	<p>It is not designed at the level of basic training.</p> <p>It lacks a documented set of exercises for the achievement of specified goals.</p> <p>It is focused only on outcomes of the volleyball game – neglects multi-sport development because it fails to offer other sports needed for proper development of children at such age.</p>	<p>A significantly increased number of volleyball beginners aged 6 to 12 years.</p>
<p><b>SMASHBALL</b></p> <p>NATIONAL CONFEDERATION/ ASSOCIATION  <b>THE NETHERLANDS</b></p> <p>AGE GROUP <b>6-14</b></p>	<p>It applies designed volleyball game models allowing children to use smash (spike) from the youngest age as the most attractive volleyball element.</p>	<p>The program comprises only proposals for different game models.</p> <p>It is focused only on outcomes of the volleyball game – neglects multi-sport development because it fails to offer other sports needed for proper development of children at such age.</p>	<p>The program was primarily designed to encourage boys to play volleyball.</p>

PROGRAM NAME	GOOD PRACTICE	DISADVANTAGES	PROGRAM SPECIFICITIES
<b>PEQUEVOLEY</b>  NATIONAL CONFEDERATION/ ASSOCIATION  <b>SPAIN</b>  AGE GROUP <b>11-12</b>	<p>The program is designed at the operational (unit) level.</p> <p>Each individual unit includes a detailed practice session with learning outcomes.</p>	<p>It is aimed at older school population (11 and 12 year old children – too late age compared with our program).</p>	<p>Program for elementary schools</p>
<b>PRIMO VOLLEY, MINI VOLLEY 1 AND 2</b>  NATIONAL CONFEDERATION/ ASSOCIATION  <b>ITALY</b>  AGE GROUP <b>6-14</b>	<p>Good, simple and ambitious example of competition systems.</p> <p>It starts with 6-year old children.</p>	<p>It is not designed at the level of basic training.</p> <p>It is focused only on outcomes of the volleyball game – neglects multi-sport development because it fails to offer other sports needed for proper development of children at such age.</p>	<p>The system has been in use for many years and has had excellent results.</p>
<b>S3</b>  NATIONAL CONFEDERATION/ ASSOCIATION  <b>ITALY</b>  AGE GROUP <b>6-14</b>	<p>Promotion of volleyball through playing by simplifying rules and playing conditions.</p> <p>Smash (spike) as a game element that can be used from the youngest age.</p>	<p>It is not designed at the level of basic training.</p> <p>It lacks a documented set of exercises for the achievement of specified goals.</p> <p>It is focused only on outcomes of the volleyball game – neglects multi-sport development because it fails to offer other sports needed for proper development of children at such age.</p>	<p>The program is designed for the needs of the national association, but also for volleyball promotion in schools.</p>

In conclusion, it can be said that each of the above-analysed programs has its strengths and weaknesses. In general, all programs are focused on the development of volleyball skills and the progressive promotion of game models adapted for children aged 6-12. All the aforementioned programs have three main disadvantages.

The first disadvantage is that the

programs are (overly) volleyball-specific, and lack non-volleyball-specific (multi-sport) content which means they include specific coaching sessions inadequate for multi-sport development of children participating in such programs.

The second disadvantage is that none of the above-mentioned programs identifies daily preparation for each and every specific coaching practice with

the aim of learning new skills and game models. They largely identify only one outcome as the goal, but lack step by step methodology leading to the achievement of such goal.

The third disadvantage is a lack of methodological procedures (exercises) that are best suited for the acquisition of specific volleyball skills.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION FOR THE FUNBALL PROGRAM

The FUNBALL Program should be designed as follows:

1. Define the coaching program goals for each age category separately

2. In addition to volleyball-specific content also integrate other content that will have a positive impact on the multi-sport development of children (multi-sport activities – other sports, different elementary games, training ground ...)

3. When learning new volleyball skills suggest methodological exercises that are optimum for learning such skills, taking into account methodological principles of learning (from easier to more difficult, from closer to further, from more familiar to less familiar)

4. When learning and acquiring different volleyball game models, define:

- Game rules
- Number of players
- Court size
- Net height
- Type of the ball for the game

5. Design daily preparation for each specific coaching session – as a basic unit for the achievement of goals.

Given the fact that the annual coaching cycle for children aged between 6-7 and 8-9 takes about 35 weeks, and children have coaching practice twice a week within the framework of this project, 70 coaching sessions should be designed for each age group. Since it is not

advisable to change volleyball-specific content every coaching session (a larger number of repetitions is needed to develop motor patterns), it is preferable to repeat the main (volleyball-specific) part of coaching sessions during two consecutive coaching sessions.

The coaching practice should take 60 minutes for each age category. It is suggested that 70 coaching sessions should be divided into 7 units (10 coaching practices per unit) with specified outcomes. The last (tenth) coaching session of each specific unit should end with a competition for children according to the specific game model.

### THE FOLLOWING TRAINING STRUCTURE IS SUGGESTED FOR AGE CATEGORY 6-7:

DURATION: 60 MIN. 

STRUCTURE:

**INTRODUCTION:**

18 min – “warm up” (elementary games + “non volleyball” content)

**MAIN “A” PART OF THE TRAINING:**

15 min – Multisport activities

**MAIN “B” PART OF THE TRAINING:**

12 min - Volleyball content

**GAME:**

10 min - volleyball form of play (specific for each phase)

**ENDING PART:**

5 min – game

### THE FOLLOWING TRAINING STRUCTURE IS SUGGESTED FOR AGE CATEGORY 8-9:

DURATION: 60 MIN. 

STRUCTURE:

**INTRODUCTION:**

18 min – “warm up” (elementary games + “non volleyball” content)

**MAIN “A” PART OF THE TRAINING:**

12 min – Multisport activities

**MAIN “B” PART OF THE TRAINING:**

15 min - Volleyball content

**GAME:**

10 min - volleyball form of play (specific for each phase)

**ENDING PART:**

5 min – game



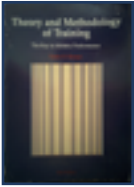
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