

Championship Team Finishes Season 18-4 with help from Noah

It didn't take much for Noah Basketball founder and board member Alan Marty to convince Dianna Branning to come with him to visit Stanford women's volleyball Coach John Dunning. Not only is Dunning one of the greatest collegiate volleyball coaches of all-time with four national championships, but he is also an ardent supporter of the Noah system.

"Alan talked to me about how Stanford was using Noah with its setters and I thought, 'wow that is really great,'" said Branning, coach of Menlo Atherton's frosh/soph girl's volleyball team.

Branning had heard of her school's basketball success with Noah and found it fascinating that the system could be applied to volleyball. After their visit with Dunning, Branning was sold that she too could use it with her team.

She said she instantly thought of two ways Noah could help her and the team.

First being, it would improve consistency and give feedback on the set regardless of the success of the hit.

The other benefit she recognized right away was that Noah could essentially become an assistant coach. While Branning coached players on, say defense, her setters could work with Noah and with the feedback feature, they could be coached while they practiced.



"I don't have an assistant coach," Branning said. "I'm a coach that doesn't like to see players stand around, but sometimes it's hard to keep everyone active at once. Noah is almost like having an assistant coach."

Branning indeed integrated Noah into her practices and four girls used it exclusively. Branning set up the system behind the volleyball courts, kind of out of the way where players could participate in a session, which sometimes lasted 45 minutes.

The coach said she used Noah to improve the outside setting of her players. The team did not try to capture the quicker sets. Branning added that she determined a good outside hitting angle for her setters was between 54 and 57 degrees.

"Arielle McMahon, our sophomore starting setter, said she learned a lot and that Noah helped her improve her technique tremendously," Branning said. "Virginia Lane, a competitive athletic freshman, told me that after she used Noah, she wanted to become a setter." For those competitive by nature, Noah made setting a game they wanted to win.



Noah also helped the Bears complete a terrific season, winning the league championship and finishing with an 18-4 record.

"I think Noah is such a great tool for players," Branning said. "It gives them instant feedback, other than the words I already use. It is a new expression on how to do it. It is new feedback. I could have told one player 20 times to do it one way, but coming from Noah made it new and different. The players seemed to listen to that."

"Noah also freed me up to look at other aspect of the setter, to look at the body and the hands. It also was another source of encouragement. It was an affirmation of what they did right. And Noah gave me credibility with players, because I was ready to go out of my way to help them. She set up Noah. She must want me to become better."

The Menlo-Atherton varsity team also rolled out Noah during its practices. Coach Jen Wilson said she incorporated the system during individual time—30 minutes of focused practice for certain positions.

"When we had setters' individuals, we would bring out the Noah and the setters would take turns going through the rounds of 25 sets to improve and receive feedback on their sets," said Wilson whose team finished 22-9 and 12-2 in league play.

Wilson added that Noah improved her coaching by allowing her to visually show the players little things that she had been telling them.

"I was able to show them how they consistently set too high or too low, etc.," Wilson said. "They were able to adjust after each set and have immediate feedback on what they were doing which allowed them to improve."

Finally, Wilson said that her players loved Noah and wished they had used it more in practice.

"They loved the feedback, and Noah brought an outside element to practices which changed it up and kept things fresh," Wilson said. "Knowing that collegiate teams were also using the Noah system to improve their setting, really made the setters feel special and a part of something big. The competition it fostered also helped our setters and they had fun with that."

Branning said she hopes to use Noah more next season. "Noah is easy to operate and I think this is just the start to a really great teaching tool for the game of Volleyball!" Branning said.