

# TECHNIQUES OF THE WORLD'S BEST

## PART 4: DEFENSE WITH WATSON

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### The basis stance



The most important stance in volleyball is the basic stance (picture 1). I call it the "platform" because it's the starting point of all defense movements.

Let us start with the feet: the balls of the feet should bear the weight of the body; the feet should be about a shoulder's width apart. Tip: point the feet inwards slightly to increase flexibility.

The knees should also point a little towards the inside. This creates a platform that permits rapid movements. The entire action is performed from a crouching position. The upper body is stretched forwards along with the arms. The arms must be fully extended and the palms of the hand must face

upwards. These instructions should be followed precisely because the apparent simplicity of the basic stance often leads to mistakes.

### Errors

**The wrong way of holding the arms** is the greatest malady in volleyball. Whether in district or national leagues, bent arms are apparent everywhere (picture 2).

The disadvantage of this posture is that it reduces the acceptance surface area and the ball is more difficult to anticipate. The player may even hit the ball into his own face. That's why the arms should always be fully extended.

**And now to the body:** The feet and body are pointing in opposite directions (picture 3). This creates problems when rapid movement is called for. The feet want to go in one direction, while the body wants to go in the other. And if the arms are also pointing in yet another direction, things really start to get complicated.



Too many maneuvers would be necessary and prevent lightning-fast reactions. The reason for such a twisted posture is usually laziness. It's easier to stretch the hands towards the ball than to react with the whole body. The punishment follows with hard balls: The lack of movement in the resting position, suddenly has to be compensated for in fractions of a second. Something that even the best volleyball player can't do.



We can see several typical errors if we look [at the feet and legs](#). Frequently, the weight of the body is placed only on one leg. Instead of spreading the weight on the balls of the feet, the body's weight presses down on the outer edges of the shoes.

This prescribes the direction of movement. Quick maneuvers are not possible in response to deflected balls (for example, by a block). The players are wrong-footed and take themselves out of action.

Again a typical error: [The knee on the floor](#) (picture 4). It is supposed to give stability to the defense action. Actually it only restricts the radius of movement: the arms can only be moved pendulum-fashion. Defending at shoulder or face height becomes almost impossible because the player would risk falling over backwards.

The posture shown in picture 5 is described as the "squat". The player's behind is stretched towards the rear, the upper body is far above the knees, the arms are dangling in front. It's not sufficient for the trainer to shout "backside down!" at the defense. The body's center of gravity is too high.



And anyway, the ducking position is not a panacea for accepting serves. All parts of the body have to be coordinated with each other.

## Digression

### Upper defense



The basic stance of the 'crocodile dig' is also assumed in defending balls at head height (picture 6). However, the arms should not be fully extended. The hands are slightly folded at around chest height. In defense the ball is then pressed upwards from below, i.e. it makes a steep curving movement. If the hands create a generally level surface, the ball can be played cleanly. That's important, particularly with exacting umpires.

### Diving defense

The diving defense would require a whole chapter to itself and would extend beyond the bounds of this brief description. I am assuming that the player has somehow landed on the floor. I clearly favor active defense here. I don't think that just sliding the flat hand under the ball – as frequently occurs – is very useful. First the chances of playing the ball purposefully are hardly great because if the ball lands on a knuckle or the outstretched thumb, the whole thing becomes entirely random. Secondly, disputes with the umpire appear unavoidable. Did the ball touch the player's hand or the ground? If doubtful, this question is often decided against the player. That is why one should always make a fist and hit the ball from below when defending on the ground (see picture 7). This allows the ball to be controlled and misunderstandings to be avoided.

