

Interview Write-Up  
**Men's Volleyball**  
HRM 301

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I. Team description

- A. Describe the team, the number of players, and the number of coaches. How many players are freshman, sophomores, juniors, seniors?

The NJIT men's volleyball players show strong support for each other, making the team very cohesive. They are very dedicated and exhibit a high level of communication, both within the team and with the coaches. The team has developed its skills in such a profound way that, without a doubt, their proficiencies are reflected in their performance and statistics. Sadly to say, their performance decreased along the years. However, records show that starting in 2005 they have improved drastically. Currently the men's volleyball team consists of 13 players, along with a head and an assistant coach. Of these 13 players there are two freshmen, five sophomores, four juniors, and two seniors, with a number of them being international.

- B. Briefly describe the history of the team at NJIT: How long has it been an official team sport, what division is it in, what was the most recent record.

NJIT's volleyball team has been in existence for almost 40 years. Statistics demonstrate that the best time span for the team was from 1985-1988, with 74 wins and 33 losses, as compared to their worst year, with 22 losses and 1 win in 2002. In between those two time periods, the team constantly struggled to achieve their goals. Little by little their overall records dropped until finally plummeting to a mere .043 average in winning games. The team's record for the 2007 season is 17 wins and 9 losses. In the conference games, they have 9 wins and 2 losses. The team appears to be doing very well in the NCAA Division I. Even though this is their first year in Division I, they have proven themselves to be a strong team capable of handling changes and new competition. This team is very flexible because it is still able to get a good record regardless of all the transformations.

- C. Describe the players you interviewed and the coach. Do not identify players or the coach by name in the paper.

In order for a team to be successful, it needs the proper guidance and role model. The team is a reflection of the coach, and this shows perfectly, since "both NJIT volleyball squads have made huge improvements during the coach's first season on staff." He appears to be very energetic and shows enormous passion in what he does. His cheerful and humorous personality may be one of the factors that the team has shown such significant improvement since he took over. There is enough pressure as it is as a college athlete, and having someone like him around lightens the mood. Having coached for 15 years and assisting in the coaching of a national championship team, he has brought first hand experience to the NJIT volleyball team. He seems to have a clear understanding of what is needed to bring his team to a national championship.

There is no doubt that when a person loves something, they will do everything in their power to be the best at it. The players that we interviewed show passion and commitment

toward their sport both on and off the court. Each player has a varied amount of experience, with two starting in high school, while the other started as young as 9 years old. Each player seems to have his own exceptional talents. For example, one player is considered a “hard hitter with exceptional leaping ability and hang time.” Another proved to be a “talented setter”, and finally the last interviewee shows “national level stats in hitting.” All of the players that we interviewed undoubtedly feel very privileged to be part of the NJIT men’s volleyball team and are focused to continue to do their best and reach for even higher goals. These players are very devoted to their craft and they always go the extra mile.

## **II. Team analysis**

**A. Goal setting: from the interviews summarize how clear the team seems to be about setting goals and whether members are doing what is needed to achieve goals. Look at this from team members’ perspective and from the coach’s perspective. Use examples.**

From a player’s perspective, the players are clear of what goals they need to reach as a group and individually. At the beginning of the season the team sits down as a group and has group meetings discussing what the overall goal of the team is. From the coach’s perspective, he feels that it’s his duty to set clear goals for each player and for the team as a whole. In this team most of the members are doing what is required of them to achieve the team goals. The coach states that players would go on their own time to the gym and to practice to develop any skills that need refinement. Players also invite each other to go work out and practice individual skills. Some players even go beyond to reach their goals. An example is when one of the players mentioned a time where several players decided to use their personal time to practice and prepare for an important upcoming match. A player said that they always try to set goals that are harder to reach in order to push themselves more.

**B. Involvement and Commitment: From the interviews, how strong does the involvement and commitment seem to be? Is there agreement among team members? Use examples**

The coach pointed out that like in any team some players are more committed and involved than others. There is one team player that the team as a whole looks up to because of an injury that he suffered from, and still found ways to improve and practice regardless of his injury. Most team members take their responsibilities very seriously for example; one player is so committed to the team that he keeps a log of each practice in order to analyze his faults and improvements. Because some of the players are international students, they feel that they have to be more committed due to fact that they were admitted to NJIT on the basis of playing volleyball. Team members are also involved outside of the court; for example they have fundraisers to raise money for traveling.

These players are very involved in the sense that they show up to practice on time, practice individually, and attend group meetings. Also the players still show up to every practice, even if they are not playing in the game. They are there because they are committed to the team. As one player stated “Everyone adds something to the team and improves their skills as much as possible.” Additionally, team members are so involved that they alternate bringing in inspirational quotes to practices based on the number they are assigned. From the coach’s perspective “You are only as strong as your weakest link”. This means that everyone has to help each other mentally and physically which requires a lot of involvement and committed.

### **C. Team performance:**

**1. Does the team have the members with necessary skills? If not what is lacking? Is there agreement? Look at this from team members' perspective and from the coach's perspective. Use examples**

The team and the coach both agreed that the team has the physical skills, but are slightly lacking the winning mindset. One player stated, "We have a lot of talent and one of the best teams in the conference, physically, but the problem is the winning mindset which needs to be stronger". The members have the necessary talents, but they need to focus their skills in a way that helps the team. The coach stated that the majority of the team members have the abilities, but some are about 2 years away from fully reaching the needed skills.

**2. Is there sufficient cooperation among team members? Look at this from team members' perspective and from the coach's perspective. Use examples**

Both the players and the coach agree that there is a strong sense of teamwork among the players. Everyone helps each other in practices and games, for example they try to point out what team players are doing wrong, and try to help each other improve upon it. For example, there are several players that need more improvement on ball control so players invite each other to practice on their own, and speak to each other in their dorms. The coach said that they are a very close team. Team members realize that no matter what your status is on the team you need to contribute equally.

**3. Feedback: What sources of feedback is the team using? How frequently do they get feedback and evaluate themselves? Do they seem to know what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong? Look at this from team members' perspective and from the coach's perspective. Use examples**

The sources of feedback are group meetings, and individual meetings between players and the coaches. Another form of feedback is inspirational speeches before a game, and cheering during the game. Although this is not a main focus, individual and team statistics are posted online. All players also receive feedback by watching videos of their performances to evaluate themselves and team performance. After watching these videos they share suggestions and the coach reminds everyone of the techniques that work, and those that don't, before a game. At the beginning of the season the amount of feedback is limited, but as the season progresses the team talks and evaluates itself more frequently and critically. These feedback sessions normally take place after practice and they discuss what the team is doing right and wrong. During the playing of the videos the coach would ask each player what they think they did right or wrong. Also after each game someone takes stats of each player and this allows the player to analyze their own performance, allowing them to have a more clear understanding of what they need to improve on. The coaches have a joke: they tell the players, "Every time you do something wrong, you look at us and ask us what you did wrong, and every time you do something right, you look at us and smile." This shows that the players know when they make mistakes and when they are being successful, so it is not difficult to figure out. However, according to the coach, there are several occasions when the players think they are doing something right, and other players have to provide feedback to each other in order to improve themselves. One of the players mentioned that it takes time to change a team member's attitude and make him realize his mistake.

**4. Recognition: Do team members encourage and recognize each other performance? Look at this from team members' perspective and from the coach's perspective. Use examples**

Team members do encourage and recognize each other. Team players are recognized for a number of things. For example, there are honors such as player of the week, and players are recognized at a banquet among their peers. Athletes are also recognized for academic performance. Players receive scholarships and awards based on performance. Additionally, players are constantly encouraged and cheered on by the coaches and other players, boosting morale. Team members always encourage each other, and if someone makes a mistake, they encourage that player to do better. They realize that no one is perfect. One player said that team members recognize and reward each other at every single practice, and always play out of emotion. The team structure is to play together, and the biggest asset of the team is that everyone bonds together and works very well as a team.

**5. Are there barriers to goal achievement? Look at this from team members' perspective and from the coach's perspective. Use examples**

There does not seem to be many barriers to goal achievement. As a result of many group meetings and open communications, the team is very streamlined. As agreed upon by the players and coaches, members do not avoid discussing problems. In order to identify problems that lead to poor performance, most of the players directly question what they are doing wrong and expect genuine, honest answers. In most situations, the coach usually points out what the player is doing to contribute to the problem. One of the players pointed out that they try to solve problems before the next game, so that discrepancies do not get in the way of the main goal to win.

**D. Leading and coaching the team: If there is a captain of the team, is the captain helpful dealing with any performance problems players are having? If there is no formal captain, do more experienced players assist less experienced ones? Are coaches approachable? Do they clarify team and individual expectations? Use examples**

The captains are not necessarily team leaders, since they are elected informally on the basis of general acceptance. Even so, the captains feel responsible for the team's performance, and try to help the players resolve any issues that may arise. For example, the coach mentioned that players approach the captains for assistance to any problems, but if the issues are beyond the captains' reach, the member reports to the coach. Also, during game time situations, when the team is losing, the captain tries to encourage the players with motivational speeches, trying to bring the players together and focusing on winning. Everyone, not just the captain, points out what each player is doing wrong and how to fix it.

Coaches are very approachable; every time that the players do not understand something, the coaches are happy to explain further. For instance, if a player is frustrated because he sees that another player is not performing at his best, the player will come in and let the coach know. They will address the problem to the coach and ask him to talk to the players. The coach may advise them to be patient, because some players don't learn at the same pace. The coach has an open door policy for everyone in the team so that they can always come in and talk about their issues. It is very easy to talk to the coach; for example, when the team went to Chicago some time ago, and left NJIT at 5AM, they arrived fatigued after a five-hour flight. They lost the

game, and the next day, the coach encouraged the team to convey their exhaustion by drawing how they felt that day.

As mentioned before, the coaches clarify their expectations in both individual and group meetings. In individual meetings, the coach tells the players what he expects from them during the season, and what they should work on, and even advises individual practice.

**III. Summary: From the interviews, summarize how well you think the team is functioning by noting the area of strength and areas that seem to need improvement.**

The team appears to be functioning very well; after interviewing some of the players as well as the coach, we have come to the conclusion that the team's cohesion and communication are its major assets. Also, the way that the team is encouraged by the coach, and the fact that the players constantly encourage each other, are proving extremely effective. The coach is obviously very approachable and helpful, and players seem to be solving any problems that they face as a group. The team does have the physical ability to succeed, and one of the major strengths of the team lies in the diversity. For example, ethnic diversity allows players to bring in new techniques and styles of playing, and the diversity in years of experience let players learn from each other.

There is only one area that seems to require improvement. The team needs to mentally gear itself toward winning, and realize that it is extremely possible to achieve its goals. The players need to be more optimistic. We feel that the team has already been working on improving itself in this area by bringing inspirational quotes to meetings and encouraging each other; however, there is more that needs to be done and there is certainly room for improvement.