Figure 4

times over the season and we generated these views for all of them. After having these views, we then played with sample rotations, using a sheet of paper and drawing rotations for an entire match, using those that had the largest Mean, the smallest Standard Deviation and upward trends. During the process, we were able to develop three of our strongest possible lineups and then prioritize these as number one, number two and number three.

We discovered that in our number-one lineup (our best), we had one rotation that ended up not being the top choice for the combination of players on the court. However, it was just one weak choice in an otherwise optimum lineup. Using simple Mean, Standard Deviation and trending views, we discovered that this "preferred" lineup had a rotation that was statistically weaker than another choice we could make. Hence, our "gut" was correct for about 80 percent of the rotations (5/6), but we were wrong for the remaining 20 percent.

Since we run a 6-2 setter arrangement, these views also helped us to identify those setter and middle hitter combinations that were working statistically better than others. This also demonstrated another scenario where some on the coaching staff were biased toward another choice. The numbers just simply did not match what some (as humans) felt was happening.

This allowed us to ensure that for our 6-2 offense, our optimal Setter-Middle combination was used for two rotations. We were lucky; we discovered that with only slight adjustments, we had four rotations that executed our best Setter and Middle Hitter combinations.

Using this information, we were able to make a few adjustments, train in these rotations and get a little more advantage than we would had we not known this information. Some of the coaching staff were biased toward another choice and this information helped us to see that our feelings were not quite correct.

Another good outcome from this activity was that only small, minor adjustments were needed. In fact, even though our run at the state tournament was shorter than we wanted it to be, the rotations we identified in this exercise generated net points that were consistent with our findings. The tournament results reflected this new knowledge of our lineups; we could see why this rotation change was actually the best one

for the team, once we slowed down long enough to study it.

So what to do? If you recognize that you have a rotation that is statistically weaker than the others, train in that rotation; train to get out of it quickly, score early, know which rotation it is, work your setter to use more deceit, etc. Whatever you do, the important action is to develop a plan and train on it.

Finally, as coaches, our "gut feel" is often right, but is often surprisingly wrong. It is our job as coaches to recognize and minimize this condition. When it comes to winning, it is our job to fill the court with the team having the greatest chance at success. Use simple, descriptive statistics as a tool to help accomplish this task.

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