



# Episode 168

## Coaching During the Pandemic and Keeping Culture First with Carin Avery

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**Guest:** Carin Avery

- Head Volleyball Coach and Valpo
- Contact Mike Avery with Center Circle Influencers
  - [www.centercirclein.com](http://www.centercirclein.com)

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### Episode Notes

- **What makes Carin's culture special:**
  - She tells recruits that she may not be the best Xs and Os coach, but they have a really special culture
  - "Starting 6" - 6 Standards
    - We are a family first and foremost above everything else
    - Be relentless in the pursuit of everything you do
    - Be an energy giver
    - Trust
- **How they develop and invest in their culture:**
  - It's a very senior led program
    - Not just one or two seniors, but all of them own it
    - "It's your team"
    - They have meetings on their own



- She tells them she's there to be a leader not a dictator
- Connection is key
  - Texts, calls, individual, and team meetings
- **How to get seniors to actually run their player led meetings:**
  - Brought her husband, Mike Avery, in to do communication training with the seniors
  - Increased trust and communication within the team
  - Every player felt like they had a voice and would use it
- **How to handle difficult situations and still build trust:**
  - They talk about embracing your role from the beginning
  - If you can really build a family-first culture, they celebrate each other when things go well
  - She is really honest up front about why they are not playing
  - "Will our relationship be based on whether you play or not?"
    - "I will invest just as much into you as I do into the starting 6"
- **Not compromising during the recruiting process:**
  - One bad apple can truly throw everything off
  - There are a lot of fish in the sea, she's not going to take one that could be a detriment to their family
  - After watching a player twice, she knows whether a kid will be a fit
- **Carin's 2016 strategic change:**
  - She's always been a bit unconventional in her recruiting of personnel
  - Her team was plagued by injuries that season
  - The setting is like the PG or QB in volleyball
    - They lost both of their setters
  - Took their back row player, let them dig and everyone become a setter
    - The team bought into it and it worked!
  - The true mark of great coaches and programs is to be innovative
    - It's fun to think outside of the box



- **How Carin has approached COVID as a leader:**
  - She doesn't let the little things bother her
  - Focuses on what they can control and tries to emphasize finding fun in whatever they are doing
  - "Any challenge that comes our way, we are going to face it and have fun"
  - She brings a ton of energy and enthusiasm to her team
- **How Carin maintains her positive energy and enthusiasm:**
  - It comes from her love for the game
  - Learning!
    - Listening to podcast and webinars
    - Diving into mental health
      - Understanding where her players are at
- **What she is doing differently with her team now than a year ago:**
  - More intentional with her "Starting 6" values
  - Brought in more outside speakers for the girls to hear from
  - Communication workshops that have led to tons of growth
- **How her and her husband have balanced the schedules of coaches with the responsibilities of family:**
  - Raising kids around college kids has been a rich experience for their kids
  - Model to your athletes that you can do \_\_\_\_\_ and be a spouse, or mother and father
  - The community they live in has been incredibly supportive and willing to help out when needed