Comparing to an Elite Performer

**The positions on court**

**5.**

**4.**

**6.**

**3.**

**2.**

**1.**

**Attacking Skills- Skill 1 Spiking**

I believe that Lynne Beattie is one of the best outside hitters who plays for the women’s GB team. One of her great strengths is helping her team gain an advantage, by an attacking hit.

Preparation phase

**B2**

The spike is an attacking skill, so is primarily used to win points. When the ball is played from position two (the setter) to position four, Lynne takes great care in her preparation. When the ball is being played over from position two, the first part of her preparation is her positioning on court, she quickly moves to the attack line so she has enough room to get a decent run up to add more height to her jump. When Lynne stands at the attack line she is not just facing the net straight but she has angled her body to be facing the net and the setter. This helps her to have a better understanding of where the ball is going to be played, so she gives herself a better opportunity to achieve a successful spike. When Lynne is waiting at the attack line she will be in the ready position as the ball will not always be played to her, this shows she is weary of any decision the setter could make. It could be played to position three instead and therefore Lynne would have to cover the spike in case of it being blocked straight back over. However, when Lynne sees the ball leaving the setter’s hands and has made the judgement it is being played to her, she will make sure she is ready to play a spike. She will hold her run up until the ball peaks. The reason she holds her run up is to assist the timing when making contact with the ball, the cleaner the contact the stronger the hit. She then carries out the footwork: left, right, left, together. On the second foot she brings her arms back and on the third step when she brings her feet together she bends her knees. This enables her to gain power through her legs along with swinging her arms. This power helps generate more height on her jump. Just before she jumps she shifts her weight from heel to toe and swings her arms forward. This helps her to jump up high into the air. The reason she needs a lot of height on her jump is to allow her to hit the ball at a steep angle making it harder for the opposition to defend. When in the air she brings her elbow up and back and opens up the angle of her shoulders, she also spreads her hand out to create a large surface area. This aids her to generate more power in which she can use to hit the ball.

**B1**

I carry out the same procedure as Lynne in the preparation phase; however I am not at the same level as her. In my preparation phase my footwork and run up is the same as hers, as this is the standard footwork that you are taught when learning this skill. However, where I differ to the elite performer on the footwork is the amount of power and strength in my leg muscles. Lynne has much stronger leg muscles due to the amount of training she does per week, the intensity of the sessions and the different facilities she has access to. This allows her to have much more height on the jump compared to mine, helping her generate more power. Also the amount I bend my knees on the third step and swing my arms back has a major impact on my spike. This prevents me from gaining extra height on my jump, which therefore decreases the angle of my spike causing the opposition to have an easier chance at defending the ball. Another issue dependant on the height of the jump and whether or not my arms are back is the power of the ball when hit. The higher the jump the easier it is to get over the ball. This enables the performer to have a stronger hit; therefore because Lynne has a lot more height on her jump the power in which she hits the ball is much greater. Also her timing of movements, coordination of footwork and contact of the ball is more consistent than mine this makes her a stronger performer as she is more reliable. She also has a greater awareness of knowing when to start her run up. Due to greater experience obtained through regular games with her teammate’s means her movements are never rushed and uncontrolled.

Execution phase

**B2**

In the execution phase Lynne Beattie is already up high with her arms back. This shows she is ready to make contact with the ball. Lynne is right handed however she will still have both arms up in the air together. She does this because swinging through with both arms generates more power, creating a stronger hit. The speed in which she swings her arms will determine the power of the ball. Having a decent height on the jump will decrease the angle of the spike making it harder to defend. When making contact with the ball she will quickly whip her shoulder forward. Lynne will also snap her wrist as she makes contact with the top of the ball in the centre which enables her to generate top spin on the ball making it harder for the opposing team to defend. Her body position when making contact with the ball is facing the way she wants the ball to go, so normally she is facing straight on. If her body isn’t square to the ball this makes her job harder in positioning where she wants the ball to go on court. When choosing a position to aim for she has a split second to make a final decision. She will often aim to a space on court in-between the players. There is normally a gap top left of the court, just behind position 1 (this shot is known as hitting down the line) so she will often aim there. However, if she has noticed any weaker defenders on the opposing team she will spike the ball to them as this puts pressure on them often causing them to make mistakes and giving Lynne’s team an advantage.

**B1**

In the execution phase the power in which I make contact with the ball is a lot weaker than Lynne’s. Already I have set myself at a disadvantage in gaining power on the ball as I have a smaller jump, but in this phase another factor which will influence the speed and power of the ball is how quickly I swing my arms through. Lynne swings her arms through much quicker than me and has much more strength through her muscles in her upper body; therefore her hit is much harder and more difficult to defend. She also snaps her wrist enabling topspin on the ball whereas I don’t which reduces the power I can generate. Lynne is much taller than me giving her a height advantage which helps her get over the ball more forcing the ball down and making it harder to defend. When I make a decision on where to place the ball on court I am much slower than Lynne, this often results in a rushed performance of the shot therefore having a weaker hit. I normally try and aim straight through position 4 or across court; however I am not as consistent as Lynne making my performance at a weaker level. The reason I am less consistent is because when I spike the ball I concentrate on getting power in the hit whereas for Lynne that is now automatic and therefore she concentrates on her target, making her spike more reliable and consistent than mine. However, my main weakness in the game is the onset of fatigue in my performance. It becomes much more apparent than it does in hers as she will have undergone much more training at a higher level than me and as a result can prolong fatigue. The reason I become fatigue is due to a weaker anaerobic system than hers. My anaerobic system involves all of my short explosive actions such as the spike, so as this begins to run out the onset of fatigue becomes apparent. Due to fatigue my performance standard quickly drops. This will reduce the height of my jump, reduce the power in my arms and slow down my preparation of the skill making me unreliable and less consistent. Also Lynne can handle the pressure of the opposition more than me because in her training she will have undergone many more situations forcing pressure and will have participated in many more matches than me so therefore the situations I may find myself under pressure in Lynne doesn’t. When the pressure gets to me, my performance can dramatically decrease making me an unreliable team player and sometimes forcing me to become subbed off.

Recovery phase

**B2**

The recovery phase takes place when Lynne has made contact with the ball and swings her arm past her head and ends by her hips. It also takes place when she lands. When she lands to keep control of her whole body and balance she will often bend her legs, similar to a squatting action. The muscle contractions in the quadriceps will be eccentric. These movements help her to keep control and also make sure she is in the ready position to maybe defend the ball being played straight back over or for her to carry out another spike. When Lynne sees what is happening on the opposing team she will be able to make a clear judgement on what position she will need to get into. If the opposing team are hitting through position two or position three she will need to make sure she is ready for a block. However, if they are hitting through position four she will need to be ready to cover her teammates blocking in case they unsuccessfully block or the opposing team tip the ball. This shows how important it is to successfully recover from her initial spike and quickly get into the ready position as she can’t afford to take her eye of the ball. If she takes her eye of the ball this could then make her reaction slower therefore making her next skill unsuccessful and maybe putting her team at a disadvantage.

**B1**

Compared with Lynne when she makes contact with the ball she will swing her arm right through ending by her hip whereas when I have made contact with the ball I have got into the habit of automatically stopping therefore decreasing the power of my hit. My landing is less controlled when comparing it to Lynne’s as she often bends her legs whereas I don’t. This makes it harder to keep control of my whole body making my next skill harder to move into. Lynne is always ready and on her toes when she has landed from the spike whereas I often lose concentration for a moment causing there to be a space on court because I haven’t drop back to defend the next skill. Therefore, sometimes we can lose the point as it makes my job harder to get to the ball. Another disadvantage of me not recovery quickly from spiking the ball and losing concentration is the speed in which I make the correct judgement on where I need to move on court, if I need to cover a tip or defend a cross court spike.

**Skill 2 – Setting to position four for a spike**

I believe that Lucy Wicks is one of the best setters our GB team has ever had. Her technique and accuracy is perfect 99.9% of the time.

Preparation phase

**B2**

Lucy Wick has a hard challenge of being the team’s link. The idea of the setter is that the second ball played on her side of the court is always hers no matter where it is, unless she calls for help. She normally would play the ball to position four or position three (outside or middle hitters) so her teammate can spike it, enabling them to have a strong attack. When setting, her physical attributes of speed and strength will help her to quickly move to the ball. This will give her plenty of time to carry out the set enabling the set to be more accurate and reliable. When at the ball she will make sure she has one foot slightly in front of the other and her knees slightly bent. This helps her to have a steady platform with strong balance which she can gain power through her legs from. She will also be facing the way she wants to play the ball. The ball at this stage is coming towards her head and she will receive the ball just in front of her face. She will also raise her hands above her head and create the correct hand position which is second nature to her. She always makes sure that she creates a diamond shape with her thumbs and fingers and spreads her hands and fingers wide ready to receive the ball. The reason for this is because it creates a larger surface area which helps keep control of the ball.

**B1**

My main weakness when comparing myself to Lucy Wick is speed in which I determine where the ball is being played to and where I need to be on court is somewhat slower than hers as I have weaker reactions. This means that I don’t always manage to get my whole body to face the way I want the ball to go, therefore I have to work harder in getting the ball to go in the specific direction I want. Not being able to always get into the correct starting position results in a huge lack of consistency in my performance of the skill compared to Lucy. For Lucy it is almost second nature and I am still learning as this isn’t my strongest skill because I am an outside hitter and setting isn’t one of my priorities. When I have got to the ball I often forget to have one foot in front of the other unlike Lucy making my platform not as strong as hers. This causes me to sometimes lose balance which can affect the accuracy of my set, because if I don’t receive the ball in front of me I would be leaning back and therefore the power would be lost as I would be concentrating on something else. When preparing my arms and hands I get them into position quickly, however sometimes the surface area of my hands isn’t big enough causing the ball to slip down my hands making my set weaker and affecting the direction and dependability of my set. Also when moving across the court Lucy has a lot more speed as she has stronger leg muscles; which helps her have more time when deciding on where to place the ball on the opposing side and getting into the correct balanced position to help her do so.

Execution phase

**B2**

In the execution stage of the skill the power comes predominantly from Lucy’s legs. As she receives the ball in her hands she brings the ball into her chest and bends her legs. The power of the ball comes from the extension of the legs. The power is then transferred from the legs to the arms. When returning to standing she pushes her arms up and out and releases the ball, this helps the power to be transferred enabling her to push the ball to the back of the opposing team’s court. This part of the skill is done very quickly; she will never catch the ball and hold it as this would be a foul; giving the opposing team the advantage. As soon as she has the ball she plays it straight on. She has the ball for a maximum of a second. The umpire in a set will be looking to see if it is a clean touch. This means it can’t slip down your hands forcing the ball to become a two touch; the opposing team will be awarded the point straight away. More often than not the set will be played to a teammate either at position three or four or sometimes or a back court hit, compared to her pushing the ball straight to the opposing team. This helps her to set the ball up in an attacking situation. She is much more dependable when playing a shot to a teammate and therefore much more accurate, as she will be facing across court and then can easily pass it to either position three of four. This is a natural reaction unlike passing straight over the net. The only time this shot is often played is when she can see a major gap on the opposing court or a weakness and can nearly be guaranteed the point.

**B1**

When comparing myself to Lucy’s performance I often set with only my arms as I don’t bend my knee’s enough. This creates a large disadvantage to the accuracy and height of my set. The reason why we need plenty of height on the ball in the set is because it helps to slow the pace down for your team. This creates more time, so they have longer to make their final decisions on the positioning of the ball. When passing the ball straight over the set needs to be flat and fast as this will cause confusion to the opposition as normally they will expect the set to be played to one of Lucy’s teammates and if it’s fast and flat this creates less time making it harder for the opposition to react to. Compared to Lucy my sets are often short and loopy making it easier for the opposition to defend, especially if I am playing the ball straight back over. The reason they are shorter is that I have weaker leg muscles and this is where the power predominantly comes from which would normally force the ball higher and further. As I sometimes have problems in the preparatory phase I struggle with the execution phase especially as I am slow at getting to the ball. This can lead to an awkward body position leaving me unbalanced and struggling to gain power. This then leads to an inaccurate set whereas 99.9% of the time Lucy gets to the ball and has a strong preparatory phase causing her sets to be a lot more accurate and consistent when comparing them to mine.

Recovery phase

**B2**

In the recovery phase of this movement she will often bring her arms down to shoulders and turn to the net ready for a block. This will assist her if she needs to jump and block. So she will have her feet shoulder width apart and one foot slightly in front of the other enabling her to have a stable base. She will also be on her toes allowing herself to be ready for her next move. In the recovery of a set it is essential that she is now ready to receive any unexpected shots that may be played straight over. Another reason for why Lucy needs to recover quickly is because she needs to make sure she helps her teammates out by shouting hints to what is going to happen next such as ‘tip’, ‘free ball’ or ‘spike’. Lucy will only ever play back court if her teammates are struggling with the 1st pass and are playing a two setter system. If she does not have to play back court she will never be in the first pass, therefore she can’t afford to take her eye of the ball as she is the ‘eyes’ of her team, helping her teammates out and being a valued team member.

**B1**

Lucy’s transition from bringing her arms down to block is much quicker than mine. She instantly brings her arms down and automatically turns to face the net, whereas I bring my arms down and watch the rest of the play of the ball on my court instead of turning to block straight away. This causes my block to be out of time and maybe delayed. Also Lucy always keeps on her toes ready for the next move whereas I often relax onto my feet because I sometimes think that my job is over. This makes my reaction slower, and creates a disadvantage to me in carrying out the next skill. I also don’t very often shout what I think might be happening such as ‘tip’, ‘free ball’ or ‘spike’ as I am scared of being wrong. This puts more pressure on my team as they are trying to make a judgement on what’s happening and get into the correct position.

**Defending Skill – Skill 1 - Digging a powerful serve**

I believe that Rachel Newton is one of the best defensive back court players the women’s GB team has ever had. One of her great strengths is defending a powerful serve, keeping the ball on court and also placing it in an appropriate position for the setter to receive the ball.

Preparation phase

**B2**

When Rachel Newton is on court before the ball is even in play she keeps her weight balanced and is always on her toes so she can quickly move to the ball. She is a middle, which means she defends back court position six and hits when front court through position three. When she is defending she is at position six. This means she is covering all the balls which are played deep, therefore she needs to be a strong and confident player so she can take control of the back court. As soon as the ball is played over from a service she is ready to play a defensive shot. Automatically she bends her knees and remains in a low stance (the ready position). This position is easier for her to move quickly in getting behind the ball to receive it. When defending a serve she is much lower than normal as this enables her to create a steady platform as the ball will be driven with great force towards her. Rachel has quick reactions and the ability to read the opponents movements to establish where the ball is going. So when she knows the ball is heading towards her she bends at the waist to put her shoulders over her knees and keeps her arms out to the side just wider than her knees. This gives her chance to determine if the ball is being played to the side of her and she doesn’t have time to get to it or if the ball is being played in front of her. Her goal is to dig the ball with both arms, so once she has seen where the ball is heading; she brings her arms together and connects her hands which creates a flat platform. The platform she has formed is waist height, this helps her to play the ball high and forward with good control. When creating her platform she makes a fist with her left hand and puts the knuckles into the right. Now Rachel is ready to make contact with the ball, her knees are bent, her feet our wide apart and she has a strong platform with her arms. Another action Rachel undertakes when she knows where the ball is going to be played is making sure she gets behind the ball as the ball won’t be coming directly towards her every time. If she is behind the ball she will have much more control opposed to if she was taking it out to the side of her.

**B1**

Rachel is always one step ahead of me as she is always in the ready position therefore this automatically makes her job easier and more efficient as she is able to quickly move to the ball whereas I am quite flat footed on court. This makes my reaction that bit slower than hers. As soon as I see the ball being served, I bend my knees however unlike Rachel I am still quite upright making it harder to get behind the ball and play it up as my platform and body position doesn’t always support it; as it is not waist high. I also have slower reactions because I find it hard to always ’read’ the opponent, determine where the ball is heading and make sure I get my body behind the ball. This leads to a slower speed of movement making my skill rushed often causing it to be an inaccurate dig. However, my main weakness within this is my self-efficacy. I often find myself when it comes to digging feeling the pressure especially when it’s the first ball off the point. Unlike Rachel, I don’t have the same training advantages as her and I often find myself hiding away at training as if I feel unconfident when digging. This will have a major effect on my game. Rachel at training would often be forced to take part in situations where should would feel uncomfortable to help her overcome it. As a result at being unconfident and having low self-efficacy towards this skill means I often shy into getting myself behind the ball, this often leads me to carry out an unsuccessful dig.

Execution phase

**B2**

By this stage Rachel has already made the judgment on her positioning on court and is now ready to receive the ball. When she is receiving a hard flat serve all she does is bend her knees and keep her platform flat, she won’t need to straighten her knees out and swing her arms up because the ball has enough power from the serve to be played straight up. She will receive the ball on her lower arms as this will give her more control as she will be able to get her whole body behind it. Whereas if she receives it on her upper arms it puts her body in an awkward position making it harder to play the ball upwards accurately. She is aiming for the ball to be high and loopy so her teammates have plenty of time to get into position. When the ball is coming this hard all she does is make sure she is behind it so it can’t go off in any direction which would make it hard for her teammates to use the ball.

**B1**

The execution phase relies heavily on the preparation phase. If I manage to get behind the ball I can deliverer an accurate shot similarly to Rachel. However, if I have made the wrong judgement of the opposition, this means I will be now in the incorrect position on court. This means I will have to raise my arms to receive the ball or swing my arms out to the side because I would not have time to get my body behind the ball, forcing the ball to go off in any given direction.

When comparing myself to Rachel when she is receiving a hard flat serve, she is low to the ground and lets it hit off the platform she has created with her hands whereas I move up and into the ball. This can force the ball to go off in an unanticipated direction making it harder for my team because when I swing my arms it doesn’t guarantee that I make contact with the ball in the correct place. I could clip it on the side and that forces it to go in an unsuspected direction, putting my team at a disadvantage if my team couldn’t help recover the point.

Recovery phase

**B2**

In the recovery stage of the dig all Rachel will do is break her platform with her arms but she will keep them out to the side of her and stay on her toes so she can quickly move into any position on court. Rachel is a middle and will be playing back court at this time, so it is vital that she makes sure she keeps in the ready position and stays on her toes because just after she has played a successful dig to the setter. The setter could play it straight back for a back court hit. This means she needs to be aware constantly of what is going on around her in her team. The setter could even play it to position three so it is essential that she is ready to cover that spike in case it gets blocked and is played straight back over. Rachel jobs just after she has digged it will be looking for any gaps to cover as long as the setter hasn’t shouted ‘back court’ and she is clear of a back court spike.

**B1**

In the recovery phase of the dig I often automatically come upright unlike Rachel as she stays in the ready position and keeps low, this makes my next reaction slower for whatever skill or movement I have to carry out next. I often automatically wait for a back court hit even if the setter hasn’t shouted ‘back court’ therefore if I have to cover a spike through position three I am not always there. This creates a gap and then when I realise what has happened I have to dive for the ball, sometimes only just getting the ball up therefore forcing my team to work harder.

**Defending skills- Skill 2 Blocking through position 4**

I believe that Rachel Newton is one of the best front court middle blocker players the women’s GB team has ever had. One of her great strengths is her absolute precision in her timing in her jump to create a powerful and strong block which her opposing team find difficult to pick up.

Preparation phase

**B2**

When Rachel is preparing to block a ball being spiked through position 4 one of the main aspects of her preparation is the footwork. As she is a middle she will be starting at position three but if she sees the ball being spiked through position four this means she has to use the correct footwork to get out to the correct position (four) and make a good judgement on her timing. If she sees the setter on the opposing team play a reverse set, she knows that the ball will be spiked through position four. This means she will start her footwork. The footwork is used closely along the net making it easy for her to jump straight up instead of forward, as otherwise that would make her lose precious time. When moving to position four the footwork is a large step with her left foot, then crosses the right foot over, then another large step with her left foot before quickly bringing her right foot together as she bends her knees and swings her arms back. This enables her to jump up high and block the ball. The lower she bends her knees the higher the jump will be. This creates a larger surface area and is more intimidating as she has her arms and upper body able to block the ball, this encourages the block to be perceived as bigger, stronger and harder to defend. She will also jump straight up rather than forward to avoid touching the net and giving the opposing team a chance to gain an advantage.

**B1**

In the preparation phase of the block I struggle to always get to the correct position on court when the hit is coming through the outside as my stride is shorter than Rachel’s, she can get outside in three large steps whereas I can’t. Another disadvantage that I have is that I am slower at anticipating a reverse set. This can sometimes slightly put my timing out when carrying out the block. As I don’t always get completely all the way to the outside with the steps often on the jump I have to jump sideways. This takes some of the height off my jump making it even harder to block as my surface area is decreased. I also don’t bend my legs and swing my arms back as much as Rachel and this is where most of her power comes from to assist her jump.

Execution phase

**B2**

In the execution phase Rachel is closely watching the opposing hitter. When she sees her jump up and brings her arm back to hit the ball, she knows she must now jump to block so that she has perfect timing. As she jumps up she throws her arms straight up into the air; which creates a large surface area. When in the air with her arms straight, she also spreads her hands wide and holds them rigid because if the ball is hit hard into the block her fingers could bend back or it could send the ball off in any direction. Ideally she wants the ball to hit her hands so she can angle the direction of the block. Rachel always gets plenty of height on her jump this means when she jumps to block she can angle her hands downwards to push the ball straight onto the opposing teams defending players making it extremely hard for them to defend.

**B1**

In execution phase just like Rachel as soon as I jump I throw my arms straight up into the air, which helps create a bigger surface area. However, where I differ from Rachel is I don’t spread my fingers as wide and don’t keep them as rigid. This reduces my surface area and because they are not always rigid the ball can knock them apart and go through them. Another reason why the ball may slip through my hands and make it an unsuccessful block is the fact that when I jump I don’t always have my arms close together. This reduces the surface area giving the ball a gap to go through and forcing the block not to work. Another disadvantage to my block is the timing, because I have a smaller jump compared to Rachel, I am up in the air for a much shorter time causing me to sometimes miss the block. Whereas because Rachel has a higher jump this gives her more of an advantage as she has got a larger chance of blocking the ball. One of the main reasons why my block starts to deteriorate as the games starts to go on is because the onset of fatigue starts to become apparent and the power in my jump becomes less.

Recovery phase

**B2**

In the recovery phase Rachel will bend her knee’s to soften her landing and bring her arms down. When landed she will stay on her toes and keep her arms up ready for opponents defending her block, if they don’t play the ball straight back over she will then immediately turn into her half of the court to see where the ball is in play. She will wait until she sees the ball going into the setter before she makes a judgement on her next position on court. Often she will move to the attack line and then attack the ball through position three.

**B1**

In the recovery phase just like Rachel I will bend my knee’s to soften my landing and bring my arms down to my side. Unlike Rachel as soon as she has landed she will stay on her toes and will immediately turn to see where the ball is on her side of the court. As the game progresses the onset of fatigue starts to appear and my legs begin to tire, therefore when I land, I land flat footed this delays my reaction and then can sometimes put me at a disadvantage.

**Strategy/Tactics – Skill 1 – Serving a Powerful Deep Ball**

I believe that Rachel Newton is one of the best defensive back court players the women’s GB team has ever had. She also is one of the team’s strongest servers. One of her great strengths is her preparation and decision making on where to place her serve along with the power of her serve.

Preparation Phase

**B2**

Even before Rachel has got onto court she will almost certainly be watching games and studying videos with her coach to gain a better knowledge of what tactics she can use. She will be figuring out who are their best passers and those that struggle to pass and when she identifies their weaknesses she will often try to exploit them so her team can take an advantage. She will also look for gaps on court where she can place the ball making the opposition have to work for it.

When starting her serve she will be about four large steps behind the line so she has room for her footwork; this will generate power which can be transferred into the ball. She will start with her left foot and hip slightly ahead of her right. She will point her front foot forward and her back foot slightly pointing to the right to help her keep balance. She places the ball in the palm of her left hand and places her right hand on top of the ball, this helps her to feel more confident as she won’t feel like she is about to drop the ball making her feel like she is in control. She then holds her arms out towards the court with a slight bend in her elbows for comfort. She does this so when she throws the ball straight up it will be about a meter in front of her so that when she does her footwork the ball is in the right place to make contact with it. She also has her left shoulder slightly in front of her right, just like her feet. The reason for this is to help aid the follow through of her arms when making contact with the ball; this creates extra power when carrying out the serve. She then draws her right elbow straight. This is done to open up the angle of her shoulders, which will help assist the power of the ball. She tosses the ball in the air by lowering her left hand slightly and pushing the ball up into the air about six feet above her head. The ball comes off the palm of her hand with no spin as she has pushed it up rather than thrown it. She doesn’t want the ball to spin because it makes it easier to keep control. When the ball is tossed up she will take her steps this will help her to generate power in the hit as she bends her knees and moves through the steps quickly.

**B1**

Just like Rachel right from the start of the game I will be watching the opposition trying to find the weaknesses of their team and often what we as a team fail to identify our coach will be sure to tell us. However, we don’t have the same resources, time and money as Rachel so I don’t have time to watch previous games and study videos in great detail. This means I can only start to make judgement as the game progresses but sometimes it can be too late. When serving; I take four large steps similar to Rachel; these steps help build-up power to make contact with the ball. What puts me at a disadvantage to Rachel is the ball toss. When you throw the ball up it should be just in front of you and if you let it land on the floor it should land just next to your front foot. When I throw the ball up, I normally throw it too far in front of me forcing me to stretch for the ball. This affects my technique and reduces my power and speed of how quickly I can whip my arm through and make contact with the ball. Another weakness with the toss of the ball is depending on how high I throw it sometimes I don’t throw it high enough forcing me to rush the steps and in the end producing a weaker serve. My main weakness which is apparent throughout all of the stages of this skill is my levels of anxiety. I often find it hard to control my anxiety and the more nervous I become the weaker the preparation stage is. If I mess this stage of the skill up it will create a downhill spiral on the rest of the skill, forcing the power to be weaker and contact with the ball to be off target.

Execution phase

**B2**

When she has tossed the ball into the air and carried out her footwork she is now ready to make contact with the ball. She will make sure she is facing the net directly, so she has a clean view of where she wants to place the ball. She will keep her eye on the ball and strike it just above and in front of her head with the palm of her hand. Serving with the palm of your hand gives you more control over the ball. She has control on where she wants the ball to go so she can choose top spin, float, and to serve short or deep. Rachel is going to make contact with the ball in the centre and whipping her arm through so she can achieve a deep serve. When making contact her fingers are close together so she doesn’t lose power, she keeps her hand and wrist stiff and then strikes the middle of the ball solidly, she does this to deliver a powerful and accurate serve. The difference between when she is spiking the ball is that she doesn’t need to contact the ball at the top of her reach and swing down. She needs the ball to travel 30 feet forward just to get to the net and then to hit the back line, it needs to travel about 60 feet, so therefore when she contacts the ball she needs to put enough power behind it to get it up an over the net but inside the lines.

**B1**

In the execution phase I have already carried out my footwork and I am now ready to make contact with the ball. The difference with my technique compared to Rachel is that I don’t whip my arm through fast enough and this reduces the power that my ball has, sometimes forcing my ball to only just make it over the net or sometimes just short of the net, therefore, unlike Rachel, my consistency is lacking. I also stop swinging my arm through and consequently this makes my swing slower, making my ball have less speed. If my preparation isn’t good, for example the ball is thrown up incorrectly i.e. not enough height on the ball, this will force my serve to be rushed often leading to an unsuccessful serve. Another factor which I may need to consider if the preparation hasn’t been carried out effectively and I have thrown the ball too far in front of me forcing me to reach for the ball, is the amount of power I will be able to deliver in the serve. If I am reaching for the ball I am not going to be able to bring my arm through as fast as usual because I am stretching out and only just clipping the ball making my serve only just make the net or not at all.

Another factor that I may need to consider is where I make contact with the ball, if I don’t manage to make contact with the ball in the centre and I make contact with the ball just to the left of the ball or to the right; it may go off in an unexpected direction and therefore could go out, making my team lose the point. If my anxiety levels have affected my preparation phase the likelihood is it will have an effect on this stage too as I struggle to control my levels of anxiety and I find it hard to calm myself down. This means the overall execution of this skill will be weaker and less consistent as I won’t be able to meet the demands of the skill.

Recovery phase

**B2**

In the recovery phase when she has made contact with the ball, she will keep swinging her arm through past her hip for greater power and then she will immediately run to her back court position ready to defend. She will automatically get into the ready position, so she can dig the ball if it is coming below her head or set the ball if it is played above her. She will be on her toes, knees bent and arms out wide so that she is ready to defend the ball that may be played straight back over or after the opposing team have played their three touches.

**B1**

In the recovery phase where my performance differs from Rachel is when I have made contact with the ball I often stop bringing my arm through. This automatically reduces the power at which the ball will travel and will reduce the accuracy of the shot. As soon as I have made contact with the ball I will immediately run to my back court position ready to defend just like Rachel.

**Strategy/Tactics – Skill 2 – Tipping the ball over the net**

I believe that Lynne Beattie is one of the best outside hitters who plays for the women’s GB team. One of her great strengths is helping her team gain an advantage, with a carefully placed attacking hit.

Preparation phase

**B2**

As soon as the ball has been played over into Lynne’s half of the court she will already be looking at the opposing team and looking for weaknesses and gaps. As the ball has been passed into the setter, Lynne makes her way to the attack line ready to carry out the tip. A tip is the exact same procedure as a spike. It has the same run up and the replica arm action to disguise what you are doing but at the last minute you change the way you make contact with the ball in order to trick your opposition. The ball will hopefully just drop over the net and with any luck gain an advantage. Lynne makes the decision on whether or not to play a tip as soon as the ball leaves position two (setter). She will watch what the opposing team’s defence formation is and if she sees no one is covering their blocker she will just tip it over them. When Lynne sees the ball leave the setters hands, she waits for it to peak before she carries out the footwork, left, right, left together. On the final step she bends her knees and swings her aims back both of these help create more power enabling her to get more height on her jump. When in the air she brings her elbow up and back and opens up the angle of her shoulders, she also spreads her hand out which creates a large surface area, all these things are to make the opposition think she is going to spike the ball like a normal procedure.

**B1**

My main weakness for this skill is my decision making skills as there are so many possibilities and stimuli’s I need to take into account. When carry out this skill my main decision is whether or not I am going to spike the ball or tip the ball. I am never 100% which one is the best to do until it is too late. One of the reasons for this is because I don’t have much to compare it too and I am not 100% what I am looking for when I am going to tip. Therefore because of this delay, this can have major effect on the skill as a whole.

In the preparation phase just like Lynne I am making a decision on whether or not to tip the ball over the net when the ball is being played into the setter. I automatically make my way to the attack line ready for what looks to be an aggressive spike. I carry the same footwork out as Lynne but where I differ is the power and strength I get from my legs. This puts me at a disadvantage as it makes the height of my jump smaller therefore increasing the angle of the tip. It forces it to become loopy which makes it easier to defend as they can see that to tip it I push it up rather than down. Lynne’s quicker preparation phase will give her more time to make a decision about whether to spike or tip. I also differ from Lynne as after I have made the decision that I will be tipping the ball, I make it really obvious making it easier for the opposition to read my body language and identify that I am about to play a tip. The reason for this is because when I am in the air I don’t bring my arm up until the last minute and just catch it with my fingers, this would make it look like either a lazy or unsuccessful spike, helping them to readjust their formation enabling them to be able to cover the ball. This would help them to move forward and play an aggressive shot.

Execution phase

**B2**

In the execution phaseLynne Beattie is already up high with her arms back so she is ready to make contact with the ball, just like what she would do for a spike. Lynne has already made the decision to tip the ball. When making contact with the ball at the last second of swinging her arm through, she will cup her hand and just with her finger tips, tip the ball over the blocker so it lands about half a meter behind them where no one is covering. The reason she leaves this quite late in the delivery of the skill is because if she changes the speed of her run up and then the speed at which she brings her arm through too early, it will become really obvious what she is about to do. The opposing team will be able to quickly adjust and try and pick up the ball.

**B1**

In the execution phase just like Lynne I am already up in the air with my arms back ready to make contact with the ball and I have already made a decision to change my spike to a tip. Where I differ from Lynne is how late I leave it to change my hand position for the tip. Often I change it too early, this can make it quite predictable over time encouraging the opposition to know where my ball is going and helping them defend my ball successfully. Another aspect of the tip where I differ to Lynne is how I make contact with the ball; I cup my hand just like Lynne but instead of just playing over the blocker I make it much more loopy as I believe it to be safer, as I think if it is too short it will go straight into the blocker making us lose the point. This makes it easier to see that it’s a tip and gives them more time to receive the ball especially if they haven’t already identified what it was going to be.

Recovery phase

**B2**

The recovery phase takes place when Lynne lands. When she lands to keep control of her whole body and balance she will often bend her legs. These movements help her to keep control and also make sure she is in the ready position to maybe defend the ball being played straight back over or for her to carry out a spike. When she has landed and she can see that the ball is still in play. Therefore, she has to make sure she is ready to defend a hit through position four or cover through position three this means she needs to be in the ready position and can’t afford to take her eye of the ball.

**B1**

In the recovery phase unlike Lynne when I land I don’t always bend my knees as much therefore this means I don’t always keep control of my body so when I move to my next position it is often can be uncontrolled and can mean I am not always ready to receive the ball or take the next shot. Another fault which I have is that sometimes I take my eye off the ball and therefore I don’t see what is going on. This will force me to be in the wrong place and creates a large gap where I was meant to be often causing either my teammates to work harder and if they don’t manage to get there we can lose the point.