

# Brunswick Lacrosse Program Coaching Guide



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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this guide is to provide Brunswick Lacrosse Club Coaches a set of resources and guidelines to help each coach be successful and to help our players be successful. It is by no means a hard and fast set of rules nor is it meant to limit the creativity of our coaching staff. In my experience, part of the joy and reward of coaching, is creating drills and practice plans that are “in the moment” (meaning they teach what I need my kids to do or work on, today, based on my assessment as a coach). While we want you to be as free and creative as possible, we also have to remember that part of our obligation to the Brunswick Lacrosse community is to develop athletes capable of being successful in our High School Program. As such we will be getting a lot of input and guidance from Coach Patton, BHS Lacrosse Coach. We also will be using our HS lacrosse vocabulary, running our HS offense & defense, and trying to use as many of the HS lacrosse drills and practice strategies as are appropriate for the various age groups we coach.

While this manual is full of drills, example practice plans, guidelines, etc I would encourage you to use all of this information as tools and building blocks for your season and practices; keep track of what you do; keep track of what works and does not; and leave this guide better than you found it.

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## **Program Focus**

### *Youth (Grades 1-5):*

The purpose for lacrosse at this level is to introduce the sport to children and allow them the chance to get used to this great game. The play should be developed around one principle: FUN! Children at this age group are interested in having fun with sports, and the teaching of competition will only lead to negative results. This is the first chance we have at getting kids hooked on something that should become a positive in their lives.

- Developing interest in the sport and allowing as many players to be involved as possible
- Teaching and basic instruction of the proper fundamentals and techniques of stick skills
- Play should be on a small field to promote running, fitness, and stick skills
- Rotation of players through all areas of play: everyone should play all positions
- Promote fun, teamwork, and athletic development

### *Middle School (Grades 6-8):*

The purpose for lacrosse at this level is to develop lacrosse knowledge, skills, and athletic ability. Some promotion of the sport needs to be done, but most development will come from word of mouth. The foundation of the Middle School program should be on learning stick skills, the positions, the rules, and overall knowledge of the sport. Competition will develop as players naturally increase their skill level.

- Teach the skills, positions, and rules of the game
- Play can move to large fields, as athletes get better
- Instruction should be centered on fun; however, competition will naturally arise
- Players should have the ability to play all positions as bodies mature and develop
- Inter-scholastic competition provides for a release from practice and allows players to show their skills

### *Junior Varsity:*

The purpose for lacrosse at this level is to develop the knowledge of the game, develop players by position, teach the skills needed to be successful at the next level, and get players ready to play for the varsity team. Competition is an every day occurrence as players are fighting it out in practice for time in the games. Every attempt is given to let players feel success, but hard work is stressed as the only way to get better.

- Skills, positions, and knowledge of the game are taught and reinforced
- Drills are designed to give players the most solid foundation at their particular position
- Competition is a part of every drill
- Teaching points are directed at specific players as a way to correct bad habits or errors

*Varsity:*

The purpose at this level is to WIN! Players are told the goals and objectives for the season on day one! All the skill work and position play is designed to develop a player into a total lacrosse player. The goal of our program is to allow players the opportunity to play lacrosse at the collegiate level. This is where we are headed.

- Overall knowledge of the game
- Specific knowledge for each position
- Competition is all around
- Working towards achieving individual and team goals

## **Player Development**

### *Conditioning:*

Everyone knows lacrosse players have to be in shape, but it is becoming a bigger part of our program. We have changed our focus from development of just lacrosse players to development of athletes. Part of this focus is conditioning. We have made a bigger emphasis this year on running, footwork and strength. This will help us in two ways. First, by having better conditioned and more athletic players, we will be able to play our style of game for a longer time during the game. Second, we will limit injuries later in the season and in games when players start to wear down and get tired. Our conditioning program entails sprint workouts, distance running, footwork, and stretching.

### *Speed & Agility*

Speed and agility are trainable, just like strength. Beginning in 6th grade speed and agility work should be part of every practice. It is important to teach proper form and mechanics so the youth players do not develop bad habits that must be unlearned at the high school level. Speed and agility work should be 20 to 45 minutes (age group dependent) and be held at the beginning of each practice. This both sets the tone for the balance of practice and helps the kids learn to play and practice when tired (a key skill given the number or multi-game festivals we play in).

### *Ball and Stick Handling*

Once a good bio-mechanical foundation is built, stick and ball handling should be incorporated into all speed & agility drills. This is easy to do as you simply need to have the kids carry a ball in their stick while executing the speed and agility drills. Short stick players should be taught that all ball carrying/cradling is done with one hand, a vertical stick, and to switch hands as they change direction. Long stick players, while needing to cradle with two hands, should also be taught to handle the ball through all drills and switch hands as they change direction.

## *Teaching points for stick skills*

### **Holding the stick:**

Firm but loose grip in the hands

Top hand is the control hand; bottom hand is the pivot hand

Tape should be about 12-15 inches up the bottom of shaft for top hand location

### **Cradling:**

Motion to keep ball in stick not to prevent checks

Key to cradling is to keep the ball soft in the pocket

### **Passing:**

Pass to where teammate is going and not to where he is at!

Must be quick, sharp, and crisp

Hands should reach out, up, and back

Step with opposite foot & rotate trunk backwards

Forward motion brings arms to a top hand punch

Snap wrists at the end of the motion and follow through

### **Catching:**

Soft hands and protect stick with body

Give a good target by getting stick head up

Don't reach or grab for the ball, but catch the ball back by the head

Watch the ball all the way into the stick

Choke up on the shaft if necessary

### **Ground balls:**

Wide hands and leg base

Bend at the knees and back to get low to absorb hits and checks

Scoop of stick should be 1-2 inches in front/behind ball

Accelerate through the ball, protect stick, and look to pass immediately

### **Shooting:**

A shot is a hard pass with farther reach & stronger trunk rotation

Pick head up and shoot for a spot in the net (aim small, miss small!)

Overhand shots are most accurate

Shoot behind the goalie (shoot for where he was)

Ball crosses middle of the field, catch and shoot

Ball same side of field, catch, fake & shoot

Shoot high to low at off-hips of goalie (never at the goalie's feet)

Bounce shots should be placed just inside the crease line

## **Position Requirements –Needs & Expectations**

### *Goalie*

The goalie is the most visible player on the field. He is the player who everyone looks at to save the day or break the team. Therefore, the goalie must possess the specific qualities below in order to compete and be successful at his position.

#### **Player personality:**

A goalie must be physically and mentally tough. He is being shot at 30-40 times per game, he is being checked during clears, he is leading his team when it is up and then when it is down, and he must be able to ride the roller coaster of emotions in every game. He must demonstrate leadership to his teammates and coaches. He must show he can handle the pressure it takes from being the only position on the field that can determine success or failure in a close game. He must be enthusiastic and display a positive demeanor at all times. His teammates will feed off his behavior and attitude. They will either stand up in front of him and be a wall of steel or lay down and crumble like a cracker. The final and most important attribute the goalie can possess is confidence. He must understand the game and that giving up goals is part of it. He has to have the swagger necessary to show his teammates he will get the job done and they will win.

#### **Athletic skills:**

A goalie must be in physical shape. He must be able to take the beating of being shot at and being personally hit. He must be able to play the full game and possibly overtime in order to get the job done. Due to the mental stress of playing the position, being in shape will help keep the “knife sharp”. He should possess good footwork, balance, and quickness in reactions to save the ball. Of all the positions on the field, he alone must spend the most time off the field preparing himself to play and be ready each second of the game.

#### **Lacrosse skills:**

A goalie should know the game inside and out. He must know the defense and communicate it to his teammates. He should be telling them what slide package the team is in and where the ball is at all times. Speaking directly to his defenders in front of him is the first line of communication a team needs to be successful defensively. When the defense comes up with the ball, he is in charge of the clear. He must direct players to open areas, make good outlet passes, and initiate the offense up-field. The offense starts with him, because he is the ultimate quarterback in lacrosse.

## *DEFENSE*

The defenseman is the hardest worker on the lacrosse field. He is not seeking the glory of scoring goals, but he is seeking the satisfaction of taking that opportunity away from the opponent. Therefore, the defenseman must possess the specific qualities below in order to compete and be successful at his position.

### **Player personality:**

The defenseman must be aggressive, but in control at all times. He must be able to put his personality on display everywhere on the field. His physical presence (regardless of his size) must intimidate the opposing attackman into thinking twice about what is happening. He must be physically and mentally tough. He must dish out and accept physical punishment. He must be mentally smart and be able to communicate with his teammates. The defenseman's confidence is put on show every time he is covering the player with the ball. He must possess confidence in his ability to "defend his turf".

### **Athletic skills:**

The defenseman must possess three important physical qualities. First, he must be strong. He has to have the ability to dish out hits and take the ball away. This comes from his time spent in the weight-room and working out during the off-season. Second, the defenseman must be agile. He must change directions, go in and out, and be able to cover a quicker player without giving up ground or getting beat. Finally, he must be fast on his feet and with his hands. He has to have the ability to run sidelines to sidelines, drop-step, and have reaction times faster with his long-stick to defeat the smaller and faster attackmen.

### **Lacrosse skills:**

The defenseman must rely on his athleticism beyond anything else. You play defense with your feet and mouth first. The ability to communicate with one another in order to help slide, know where the ball is, and be able to create turnovers is critical to the defensive group's development. The defenseman should also possess good stick skills to throw and catch the ball, but also be able to bring the ball up the field to create offense. Since they are covering offensive players, they must be able to take the ball away from them using a variety of stick and body checks. They must be smart, controlled, but aggressive in how they use their sticks. They should think of themselves as surgeons and not butchers.

## *ATTACK*

The attackman is the fighter pilot of the lacrosse team. He is the glory boy who is there to create offense and score goals. Therefore, the attackman must possess the specific qualities below in order to compete and be successful at his position.

### **Player personality:**

The attackman must have confidence among all other qualities. He must be able to create with the ball and want the ball in crucial situations. He must be physically and mentally tough. He has to understand when he is going to be hit and be willing to get hit in order to get the ball in the back of the net. The attackman must be smart. He has to understand the decisions he makes might result in a goal or a costly turnover that can give the other team opportunities to win. His decision-making skills when carrying the ball must be worked on and practiced daily. He cannot hide on the field.

### **Athletic skills:**

An attackmen must possess three key athletic skills. First, he must be quick with or without the ball. Speed is not necessarily what he needs to have, but he must be able to create small spaces of separation to free his hands. He must also use this quickness to cover ground and ride defensemen to get the ball back. Second, he must be ambidextrous. He must possess the ability to play on both the right and left side of the field. The final part of being a good attackman is his ability to change direction. His ability to go one way, then change to attack the other way is a facet of the game that is necessary to defeat aggressive defensemen.

### **Lacrosse skills:**

The attack position requires the player to have the best stick skills on the field. Since he is the player who is required to put the ball in the back of the net, he must be a master of his stick-work. He should be able to shoot well on the run, inside on the crease, or outside from the perimeter. He should be able to feed the cutting teammate or find the open teammate on the backside of the defense. Without the ball in his stick, the attackman should be constantly moving to either cut to an open space to receive a feed, or get to an open space to help a teammate in trouble. He also must be absolutely relentless in his riding. Creating defensive turnovers and getting the ball back in the offense's hands is an attribute all attackmen should possess.

## *MIDFIELD*

The midfielder is the best athlete on the lacrosse field. He must be able to play offense one minute and then within one pass or ground ball, get back and play defense. Therefore, the midfielder must possess the specific qualities below in order to compete and be successful at his position.

### **Player personality:**

The midfielder must be tough. He is the workhorse on the lacrosse field. He is responsible for getting ground balls, getting back into the defensive zone, creating offense, and doing all the dirty work needed to help his team win. The midfielder must have the confidence to score goals and play one on one defense. His presence on the field displays how good of an athlete he is. Midfielders must be smart. They have the responsibility of understanding the offensive and defensive concepts of the team.

### **Athletic skills:**

The midfielder must possess three important physical qualities. First, he must be in shape. Physically, he must be able to run up and down the field. He also must be able to play sideline to sideline. His personal endurance must be able to go on fast breaks, get back on defense, and then go back on fast breaks. Second, he must be fast. His ability to create offense from the defensive end of the field relies on this. Separating from an opposing player creates opportunities for him to show his athleticism. Finally, a midfielder must demonstrate good coordination and body control. They are constantly running up-field with their heads turned around, changing directions in traffic, and putting themselves into situations where they will get hit.

### **Lacrosse skills:**

The midfielder must use his athletic ability to demonstrate good stick skills. They must be able to earn the ground ball and create offense. They should be able to not only attack short sticks, but be able to go against a long-stick as well. On the offensive side of the field, they should be able to shoot on the run with both the right and left hands. They should be able to cut to the cage from the outside and receive a pass and shoot on the inside. They must also have the ability to see an open teammate and feed them for a better scoring opportunity. Defensively, they must know the slide package and communicate their position to teammates. In defensive situations, they are at a disadvantage because of their stick, but they can play tremendous one on one defense with their feet. The most important part of midfield defense is the ability to take away the middle of the field and be able to help the long-sticks in coverage when the ball is behind the cage.

## *Face-Off Specialist*

The face-off specialist has the best one on one chances on the field. He alone can determine outcomes of games.

### **Player personality:**

The face-off specialist must possess the “refuse to lose” personality. He is in control of the tempo of the game. He can control whether his team keeps possession and continues scoring goals, or give the other team the opportunity to catch up. He is in a personal battle every time he steps on the field. He must be confident in his abilities and in his teammates ability to get the ground ball. Every time there is a face-off, he is out there fighting for the “last bullet”. He must be relentless and demonstrate tireless pursuit.

### **Athletic skills:**

The face-off specialist needs to be tough physically and mentally. He must be able to take as many as 20 one on one’s in a game. He should be working hard on his quickness every day. He must be fast with his hands and reaction times to the whistle. The face-off specialist must possess great balance. He is being hit from all directions. He must be able to stay on his feet in order to win the ball.

### **Lacrosse skills:**

The face-off specialist must win the ground ball. Therefore, his ability to scoop in traffic makes him extremely special. He must possess the desire to get the ball in his stick and get it to the offense as fast as possible. Once possession is gained, he must have the ability to take the ball himself to create fast breaks or scoring opportunities. He must communicate with his wingmen where he is going to direct the ball. He has to demonstrate the confidence to his teammates that he will win. In the event he loses possession, he must react to the situation and sub off the field, or get back into the defensive end and help out to prevent the opponent from scoring. His ability to stop fast breaks is sometimes more important in his ability to create them.

### *Long-Stick Midfield Specialist*

The long-stick midfielder is one of the flashiest players on the lacrosse field. He is the player that can take the ball away from the opponent's offense and then bring it up to create scoring opportunities for his own team. Therefore, the long-stick midfielder must possess the specific qualities below in order to compete and be successful at his position.

#### **Player personality:**

The long-stick midfielder must be confident in his abilities. He must be the type of player who loves challenging situations and wants to win. He must be able to take the ball away one second, and then shoot on the goal the next. He must be aggressive between the lines. He should want to cover the opponent's best and be able to shut them down. He must be enthusiastic. The team will feed off the long-stick midfielder's success. His energy can bring a team back from a deficit and the opponent's ability to create at the midfield.

#### **Athletic skills:**

The long-stick midfielder must be fast and be able to cover a lot of ground quickly. His speed between the lines is critical to closing ground and taking the ball away. The position also requires the player to be physically strong. He must be able to come up with punishing hits and checks.

#### **Lacrosse skills:**

The long-stick midfielder should be the most offensive minded defenseman on the team. He should constantly be looking to gamble and take the ball away. He knows the offense and defense well enough to know how to get back and cover for mistakes. He should possess excellent stick skills in order to bring the ball up and shoot on cage or take an outlet pass from a defenseman or goalie. The long-stick midfielder should also be one of the best ground ball players on the team. By working with the face-off specialist, these two positions can win games alone.

## **Team Offense**

We love to run and gun on the offensive side of the field. This fast paced style is fun to play, fun to watch, but a nightmare to coach. You really have to rely on your players to make good decisions and make plays. This starts with our goalie & defensemen. They must be able to get the ground balls up field quickly and initiate several fast breaks. Midfielders must have the stamina to make several trips up and down the field, because with as many offensive breaks you may have, you will give up the same number of defensive breaks. Middies must have good stick skills, especially in being able to pass on the run. Attackmen are critical to this offense. They must be able to score goals via the fast and slow break. We require attackmen to read the defense, analyze the situations on the field, and then make the best decision in order to create an opportunity or slow it down and get fresh legs on the field.

Our offense shoots and passes on the run. This is a real skill. Too many players stop to plant their feet and then throw. Try to point this out when they do it. Stop play and let the player know he stopped.

Our offense knows how to fast break or go to X. Too many youth middies run the ball to the goal every time. Our players must know that with a fast break we go to the goal (by passing). A fast break is when we have four players to their three. In all other situations we want the ball to go to X (behind the goal) to set up. We want this for two reasons, if we lose the ball we want the other team to have to clear from as far down the field as possible. Second, moving the ball to X forces the defensive team to turn around and face their goal. That makes it harder for them to watch players in position to score. Players must learn to feel the difference, and know when to push a fast break and when to settle.

Our offensive players carry their sticks up and down, and protect them. Too many youth players carry their sticks parallel to the ground. Players who have played for two years still carry their stick in front of them like a serving tray. They cannot throw, dodge or avoid checks. Our players must know how to carry their stick protected and perpendicular to the ground.

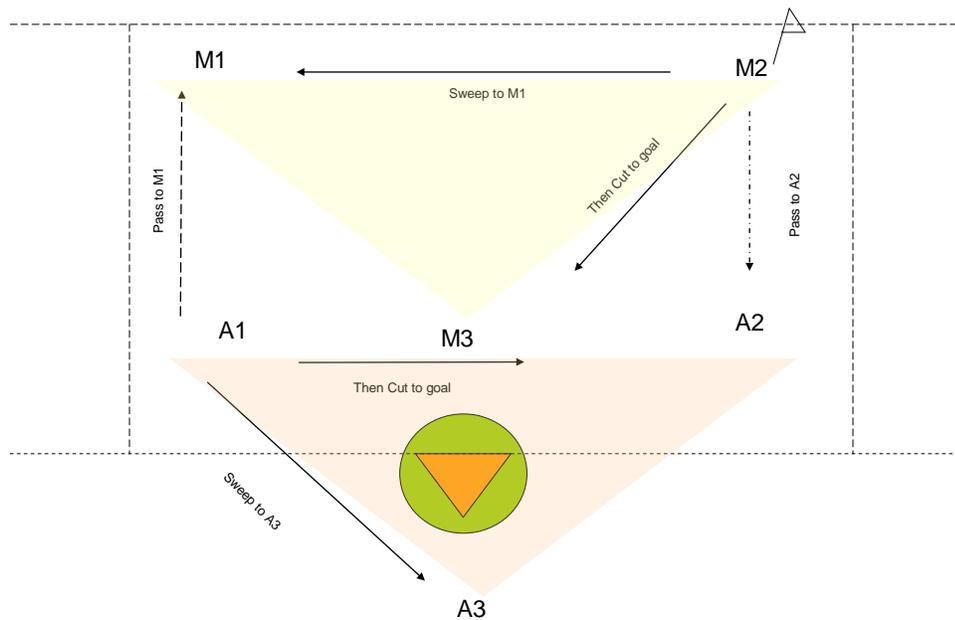
### *Key Components:*

- Speed
- Stick Skills
- Mastery of the transition game
- Own the ground balls
- Team over individual (make the extra pass)
- 3-D: drive, draw, distribute

## 2-3-1 (23) ALL Grades

This is our base offense. We use a triangle rotation system with attack at the wings and X and midfielders on the crease and top right and top left. The basis of the offense is to create motion, open dodging areas, and clearings for cutters.

Offensive Triangles. All teams must be taught the concept of the 2-3-1 triangle offense. The attack triangle has a player at X and two wing attackers. The midfield triangle has a crease midfielder and two middies up top. When a wing attackman cuts across the crease he sets in motion a rotation of the triangle (a). When a middle cuts to the crease he sets another rotation in motion, with the crease middle cutting out to the top, the top middle sliding across to replace the cutter, and the cutter stopping and taking the crease position (b). This is the easiest motion offense to teach. It never leaves middies crowding the crease, and takes the long pole out of the crease area.



Our offense knows the four steps of a dodge. Speed, change direction, step away, close. Too many kids start their dodge not with speed, but with stand still, and things go bad from there. Speed is their first tool, if that doesn't work, a change of direction, like a split dodge is tried, if that doesn't get rid of the defender, they can simply step away to free their hands, and if the defender pounces on them then, they can use their last trick, a close dodge like a roll dodge.

*1-4-1 (14) 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Only*

We use this offense when we feel we can dodge heavily to the goal. We keep 4 players on the outside and 2 players on the crease. The outside box rotates when dodging to clear out space for shooting. The crease works together to pick and screen in order to get open for close range shots. This can be a zone offense as well.

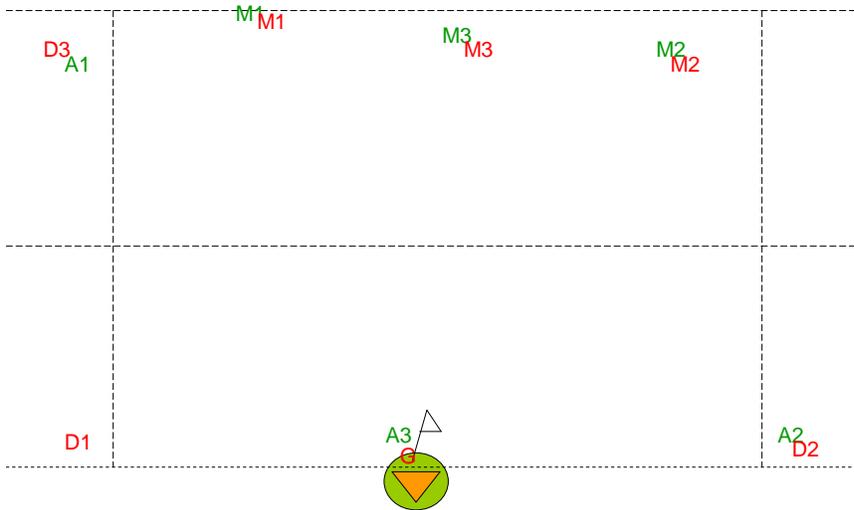
## Rides

We run two different kinds of rides depending on the ability of the team we play. For teams with weaker defensemen we run a weak stick ride, WIMPY. For teams that are fast and good at transition offense we run a zone ride, BLANKET.

### WIMPY RIDE

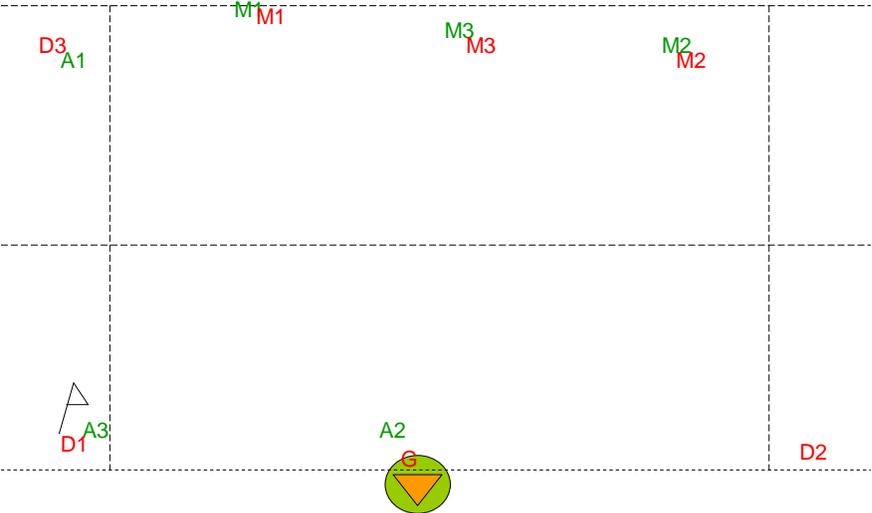
WIMPY (US = GREEN) is a weak stick ride. What this means is that you pick out the weakest player, usually a long pole who struggles to pass and catch and force the ball to him. All other players should be locked off (face guarded, they do not touch the ball) and the goalie should be pressured. As soon as the weak stick has the ball (if he catches it) or drops the pass he should be jumped by the nearest player, all other players quickly fill in leaving the farthest defensemen from the ball open.

Here D1 is the weak stick, leave him open, force the goalie to make a bad pass to D1



Once the ball is out to the weak stick (if they come up with it) A2 bumps to the goalie leaving D2 (farthest defenseman) open.

IT IS CRITICAL THAT MIDDIES LOCK OFF THEIR MAN



## BLANKET RIDE

BLANKET is a ZONE ride designed to slow down the other teams clear or transition game.

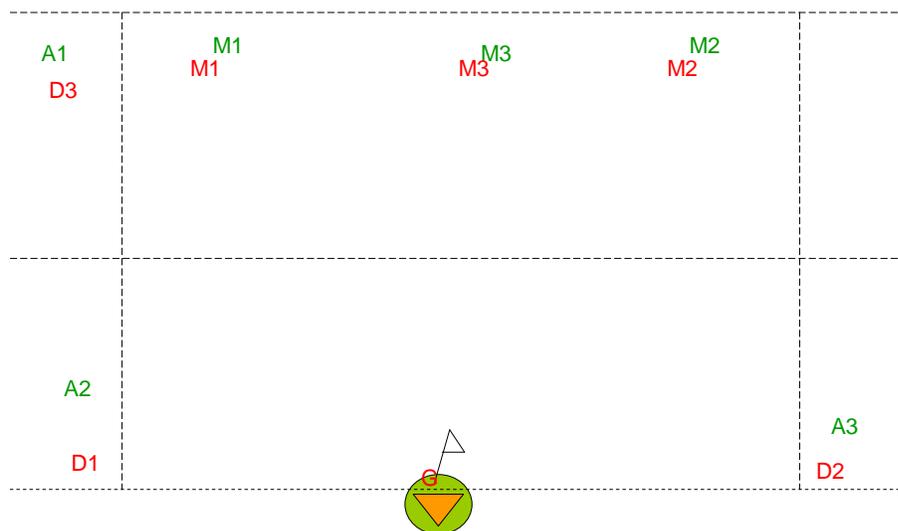
MIDDIES drop back to our side of the midfield line – DO NOT LET AN OPPOSING MIDDIE BEHIND YOU

ATTACK: same thing, leave the goalie alone and drop back so that no defenseman is behind you  
Let the goalie walk the ball out

Once the goalies is past the restraining line the nearest Attack jumps him, leaving his defensemen open and either forcing a bad pass or having the defensemen turn, run, bring the ball across the mid-field line and hopefully being off sides.

The whole point is to SLLLLLOOOOWWWW the other team down so they do not get quick clears and fast breaks.

We will play this against teams that are faster than us.



### *Offensive Rules*

- Be fast, quick, elusive, and deceptive
- Be a constant threat with the ball in your stick
- Always be looking to feed (keep your head and stick up)
- Sharp perimeter passing is the key to success (success=shots; shots=goals)
- Get the ball through X (turn the defense)
- Attack the backside
- Back-cut under the ball (when the dodger comes to your area)
- Set off-ball picks and screens
- Spread the crease to create cutting space (stay opposite the ball)
- Keep your defender occupied (take away or lengthen the slide)

### *Offensive Terminology*

“X”	10 yards behind GLE; move ball through X from 1 side to the other
THE BANK (5 & 5)	all attack drives need to get to 5 yards high and 5 yards wide from near goal post
POINT	5 yards above the restraining box; move ball through point from 1 side to the other
PICKS	offensive move to physically block a defender; no movement
SCREENS	obstruct movement of defensive player by using body position
DOUBLE	when defensive team doubles the ball carrier; teammates should call out “double”
DUMMY DODGE	fake dodge used to set up defense into thinking one way, but going the other
ONE MORE	extra pass for increased scoring opportunity
SQUARING UP	catch the ball facing the defender directly; ability to attack to either side
SKIP PASS	skip the closest teammate to you in order to pass to someone farther away
POP OUT (V cut)	cut to create space between defender and yourself
BACK CUT	cut behind defender when he is not looking at you
JUMP CUT	cut between defender and the ball
CLEAR OUT	offensive player without the ball cuts to crease to clear dodging area for ball carrier
Z DODGE	zig-zag dodge to gain space in order to free hands
BALL SIDE	side of field with the most players
WEAK SIDE	opposite side of field ideal for attacking the cage
“L” BREAK	standard fast break setup with point man, point low, off low
GREEN	go to the cage if the opportunity presents itself
YELLOW	slow down offense; determine situation & numbers; can go into green quickly
OHIO	work the ball around; settle the field; substitute players

## *Offensive Position Requirements*

### **Attack:**

Catch and throw accurate passes with both hands  
Shoot accurately to the correct spot with both hands  
Understand offensive balance (off-ball movement, right place at the right time)  
Recognize unsettled situations (fast break, slow break, all-even)  
Offensive sets (1-4-1 power game, 2-3-1 cutting game)  
Carry the ball quickly and accelerate from dodges  
Identify defensive slide patterns and find the seams  
Be able to create scoring opportunities by feeding to open or cutting teammates  
Ride defensemen constantly to create turnovers in offensive end of field

### **Midfield:**

Catch and throw accurate passes with both hands  
Shoot on the run with both hands to the correct spot  
Scooping in and out of traffic, pass and run upfield  
Cut through and balance the offensive end of the field  
Cut to open areas to receive passes (play picks correctly)  
Offensive sets (1-4-1 power game, 2-3-1 cutting game)  
Learn how to face-off and play wings  
Accelerate and explode into dodges to gain upperhand against defenders

## *Key Ingredients for Success*

### **Awareness:**

Players must be aware of what offense we are in, and under what circumstances each offense is run. Players should know all game situations, know when the ball is settled and when it is in transition. Players should know where the ball is on the field. Players should be aware of who is covering them (ie. Shortstick defense versus attackman).

### **Anticipation:**

Players must anticipate not only what the defense will do, but what their teammates will do with or without the ball. A successful offense cannot be built around one player. Become a goal scorer! Players should maintain a comfortable distance from the ball, be ready to back cut at all times, and be a constant threat to score at all times.

### **Accountability:**

We win or lose as an offense. If one player is being shut down, then it is up to the other five to put the ball in the net. We cannot rely solely on one player. We must work as a cohesive unit in order to achieve success.

## **Team Defense**

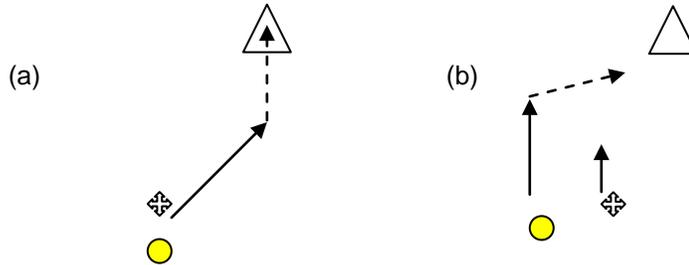
We like to play a high-pressure defense. This requires our players to occupy their man, and use speed, agility, and quickness to put pressure on the ball. Being aggressive may lead to mistakes, but we feel we have good enough athletes to make the play. Communication is important as well. When breakdowns occur, we must be able to help and recover. This style of defense fits well with our offense, because it creates turnovers and forces the opponent's offense into making bad decisions. We try to limit our opponents to below 30 shots per game. If we can do this, most times we will win.

### *Fundamentals of Defense*

We cannot play an aggressive, high pressure defense, until we first master the basics. Defensive fundamentals must be taught at all grade levels and also be taught to Middies. We get more aggressive as the abilities and athleticism of our defenders improve. To do this we must first teach that the first purpose of our defense is to prevent shots, collect ground balls and clear. Not strip ball.

The first function of the defense is to limit the opposing team's good shots by keeping the ball out of the box. Too many youth players think their first task is to strip the ball, and against any good team this means a successful dodge and creates odd man goals. The defense's second function is to win ground balls. Its third function is to clear. Too many youth programs teach defense to take the ball away before the defense has learned the basics. They rush at players with the single aim of getting the ball. This can work against bad players. They develop a habit, and against good players and good teams get beaten, and can't figure out what they are doing wrong. We must not emphasize take-aways until the players have mastered the basics, but rather forcing low percentage shots and getting resulting ground balls and clears. This also should stress defending the box as shown in the diagram.

Too many youth players defend as in (a), they forget that by being ‘in front of their man’ they are leaving the path to the goal open. They should learn to defend almost beside their man, closing the door to the front of the goal, and forcing the player to a worse and worse angle on the goal, as in (b).

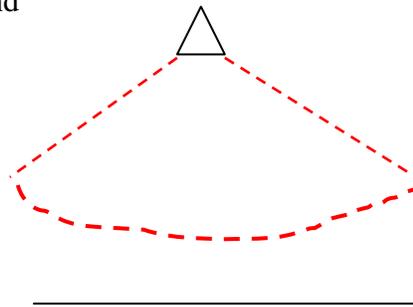


Defend the body not the stick. To many youth players watch the ball and try to swat at it. What they need to do is watch the belly, and stay between the belly and the goal. When they do that they are in a position to check the player ready to shoot.

*Defend the hole not the man*

Offensive players can’t score from midfield. They have to be in or near what is called the box. (What it sounds like, a box around the front of the goal). Teaching defenders that the box is the main point helps them avoid chasing players all over the field. Better to run in a straight line back to the box and wait for the offense than chase the ball all over the field.

Teach players what “back to the hole” means. Call out in scrimmages to see which players get it, correct ones that fail to respond



## Goalies

Our goalies must run defense and clears, and also stop balls.

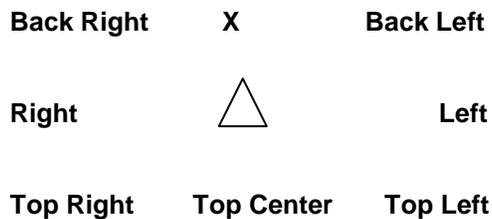
Many youth goalies spend their days as targets. Stopping shots is 20 percent of their job. They also need to know how to prevent shots, tell the defense what is happening behind their back, throw great passes, dodge, be fast with the ball, and run the clears.

Let goalies throw with defenders.

Let goalies dodge with middies.

Count clears attempted in games (every time your defense gets the ball) and clears made (every time your defense gets past midline). Make a big deal about success. Point out that when we have the ball the other team can't score. A good clear percentage is 85 percent. (Have a parent volunteer do this from the first game to show the defense you care about this number).

Goalies must say where ball is and call out hold.



Teach goalies to talk. The goalie needs to tell defenders where the ball is. Otherwise they have to turn to find it, and when they turn, a good player will cut, and sometimes score. If the goalie tells them where the ball is they never have to turn. In this drill, during any half-field situation, the goalie shouts out where the ball is, and every once in awhile shouts out a number. The defense, in unison, must shout the number back. This way the goalie gets comfortable calling out, has to call loud, and the defense has to listen. Goal is credited to the offense if they fail to shout back. When this becomes automatic it's a big breakthrough. Goalies need mouthguards they can talk through.

Defenders with their back to the goal need to know when to stop a player with the ball from getting closer. The goalie calls "Hold" to tell the defender his player is close enough. Too many times goals are scored and the defender had no idea his player was on so close because the goalie never spoke up.

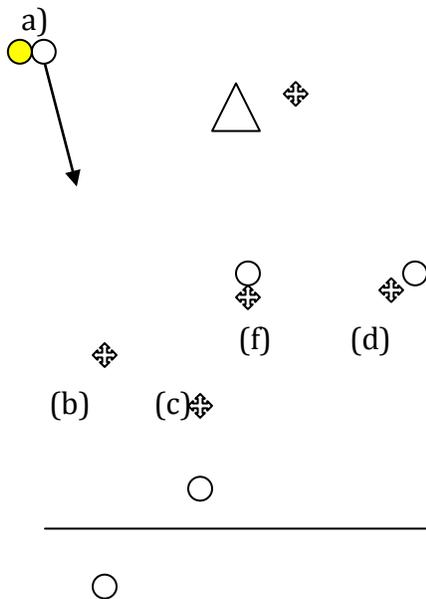
## Slides

Our defense has multiple slides depending on where the ball is and how we get beat. Our defense must talk, “hot” and “two”. Our Middies PLAY DEFENSE!

Offense succeeds when it ‘breaks’ the defense. The defense has to recover by sliding. Defenders need to plan slides, and know what they are going to do if the defense is broken. We do what is called an ‘adjacent’ slide in most games. If you get good at this, you can add the cross crease slide, but this should do. Adjacent slide sounds like what it is. The adjacent player slides to defend, and that continues down the line.

### Adjacent Slide, D gets beat topside Example

Player (a) has the ball and is driving to the front of the goal. Defender (b) shouts “I’m Hot”. That means if (a) beats his man, (b) will take over. (c) shouts “I’m two” meaning he will take (b)’s job. (d), who is far from the ball can expect to do (c)’s job. The first player to get beaten (a) runs to the opposite side of the action from where he was first beaten, and void, lands up doing (d’s) job, and everyone is covered, hopefully faster than the other team can pass to the uncovered player. The crease defender, is out of this. He is told to never leave his man, as that would be an easy goal. The key here is to get the “I’m Hot” player to shout, and do it in every half-field situation. (We also use a Coma and Crease slide. Coach Carlson can show you these. The crease slide is easiest, and might be useful for B teams).

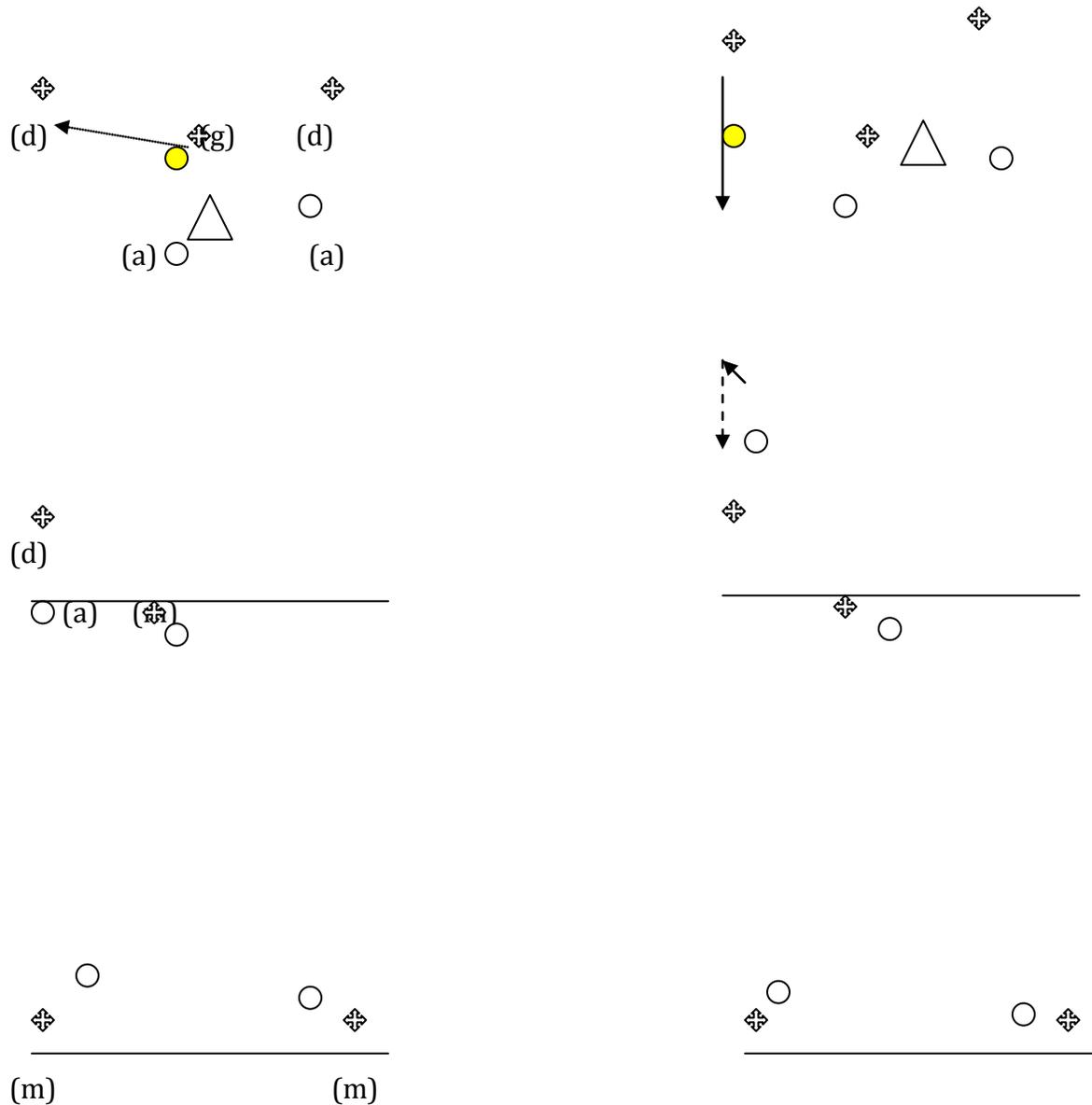


Goalie asks Who’s Hot!, Who’s Two, and defenders answer.

Defenders have to be able to throw and catch long passes with confidence It’s hard to remember that throwing 40-yard passes is a skill. Catching them too. Let defending players practice this. And do it on the run.

## Clears

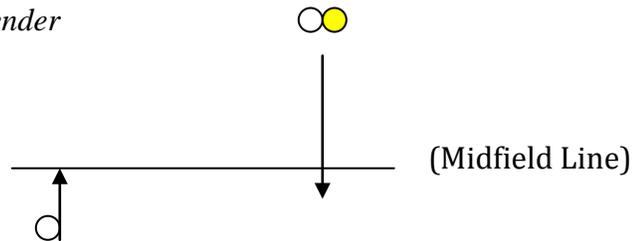
Our defense clears with a fast break first and then uses an L Clear. The goalie's first hope should be to get the ball to the other end fast. He should look up to find a breaking midfielder and we turn a clear into a fast break goal. If that is not possible, or we are bringing in a 'dead ball' from on out of bounds, we set up a short passing clear. The L takes one attack rider (a) out of the play, and lets us run short 2 vs 1 up the field either between the goalie and the back defense, or most usually between the back defense and the defense or middle on the restraining line. As diagrammed.



*Offside on a clear is the opposite ball midfielder's fault.*

We want our defense players to keep going if they have a clear route to carry the ball upfield. When they are not sure about being offside they tend to stop at the midfield to check, and lose the ball. In scrimmages stress that the midfielder on the opposite side of the field needs to watch, and run back over if he sees the defender heading up, call "middie back" and hold his stick high. Remember that if the middie on the same side as the defender stays back it creates a jam of players around the defender crossing the line.

*This middie stays or runs back when the opposite defender is running upfield with ball.*



**Key Components:**

- Talk & communicate
- Speed & Footwork
- Help & Recover
- Own the ground balls
- The offense starts with you

**Defensive Rules:**

- Prevent opposition from scoring
- Prevent easy "lay-up" shots
- Dominate the crease area
- Disrupt the opponents offensive sets and plays
- Act as one cohesive unit and hustle everywhere on the field! NO SURRENDER!

*Defensive Packages*

EAGLE	slide adjacent vs. single crease
HAWK	slide from crease vs. double crease
RED	slough in and help out
GREEN	press out on adjacents
BLACK	shut off on particular player
LIGHTENING	shut off on everyone
WHITE	double the ball carrier
BRONCO	early slide from adjacent or crease
COBRA	deny X
PANTHER	zone defense with long-sticks are up; short-sticks are down
TIGER	zone defense with long-sticks are down; short-sticks are up

*Defensive Terminology*

TAKE TOPSIDE	never let the offensive player get ahead of you
“I’M HOT”	player who has first slide
“I’VE GOT BALL”	defensive player covering the ball
“I’M POINT”	first defender covering on the fast break
“GOT TWO”	third defender covering or splitting 2 offensive players on fast break
“GLOVES”	goalie call to defender to put a check on offensive player’s gloves
“BOX IT UP”	goalie call to defenders to get back into the hole and number up from inside out
“CHECK STICKS”	goalie call when ball is in the air; check offensive players’ sticks
“STICKS UP”	all defenders need to get sticks in the air to deflect, pick off, or disrupt passes
“BALL DOWN”	goalie call when ball is on the ground
“HOLE”	5 yards above GLE on the crease where all defense needs to start
“SHUTOFF/LOCKON”	taking one offensive player out of the game; deny him the ball
CREASE SLIDE	1st slide will come from crease when offense is in a multiple crease pattern
ADJACENT SLIDE	1 <sup>st</sup> slide will come from adjacent player to the ball when offense is in single crease
COMA SLIDE	when a defender has to slide across the crease against an inside roll
PICKS/SCREENS	always play under first; play through second; DO NOT CHASE AROUND!
SWITCH	communication between defensive players to switch assignments
BANANA BREAK	defensive break out on a curve to create more passing space
PRESS	closing the gate at GLE
GREEN	adjacent pressure
RED	slough in and support
BLACK	shut off on particular player
LIGHTENING	shut off on everyone
BRONCO	early slide from adjacent or crease
COBRA	deny X

### *Key ingredients for Success*

**Recognition:** Interpreting what formation the offense is in, it's strengths and weaknesses. The unit must recognize the opponent's big guns on offense.

**Reaction:** Ability to move immediately to an area or man. Positioning is key to reaction. It is important that each defender is in position to play his man, backup, and occupy a passing lane. This can be achieved by slides, doubles, and traps. Defenders must be aware of where the ball is at all times.

**Anticipation:** After recognizing offensive formations and plays, getting the jump on taking away their best shot is a key to success on defense. Eliminating the passing lanes, calling out cutters, and being aggressive on ground balls creates a lot of turnovers and transition for our offense.

**Communication:** This is the key to every defense! The goalie is the quarterback of these calls, but everyone must talk to one another.

**PRIDE:** It takes a great deal of pride to win each game, and it takes more pride to play good defense. All great teams have an excellent defense.

## **Brunswick Lacrosse Club Boys Practice Guidelines**

Below is an overview of the things we need to insure we do as we build our practice and season plans. The goal of these guidelines is to establish basic program wide practices while giving each Head Coach the latitude to build and create his own practice plans and drill sets that best fit his age group and player needs.

### **Important Practice Concepts**

Fundamentals build great players and athletes. No amount of plays, offensives sets, etc can make up for lack of fundamentals and athleticism in our players. Our practices need to focus on developing the boys ability to be fast, agile, and catch/throw/shoot/scoop while running flat-out. Good practices will create good players.

#### *Tempo*

Practices should be high tempo with all kids doing something useful at all times. We want to minimize standing around as much as possible.

Transitions from drill to drill should be very quick. Use your assistants or parents to setup the next drill while you are running the current one.

Stations can help a lot with high tempo practices. If you setup multiple stations that focus on 1 skill at a time and then rotate small groups (5-7 kids) through each of them it allows for a high tempo to maintained.

#### Station Example:

- Shooting
- 2 Man Passing
- Ground Ball
- Over the Shoulder Clearing/Passing
- Box Drill (with or without defenders)
- Dodging

Everyone, attack, defense, middie and goalies should become proficient at ALL skills – we don't want 1 dimensional players.

### *Intensity*

Practice should be HARDER than games so that the kids don't need to "play-up" for a game.

Expect the kids to perform drills at full speed and push them to get faster each time.

When teaching new skills it is OK to slow down the speed to insure they get the mechanics correct – we don't want to practice bad habits or form. But then expect execution at full speed as they demonstrate proficiency.

The players should always be running while on the field, even from station to station or drill to drill – NO LOAFING

Introduce competitive drills as you feel the boys can handle them.

Remember to keep the competition fun and fair.

### *Repetition*

Practice makes perfect and the more reps of any skill that are performed the better the kids will get. There are many college level studies out that state that as many as 10,000 reps of skill need to be performed over an athletes career to master any given skill.

Certain core skills should be worked on every day and incorporated into as many multi-skill drills as possible

Passing, Catching, Shooting, Scooping ON THE RUN

It is better to practice fewer skills with many reps than many skills with fewer reps. This does not mean practices have to be monotonous. For example all of the following drills are focused on pass/catch while in motion. You can spend ½ the practice focused on this one skill with numerous drills and stations without boring yourself or the kids.

- 2 man passing drill
- 3 man weave
- Triangle Passing
- Box Passing Drill
- Offset Line Drill
- Star Drill

AVOID the basic line drill as much as possible as it builds bad habits and does not simulate any kind of real game situation passing.

EVERY position needs to master the basics.

## Practice & Season Planning

No offense, defense or play works if the kids can't pass and catch on the run so spending lots of time, early in the season on your offense and defense when the basics are not solid is a waste of time. A good season long plan breaks things down into thirds or quarters and lays a solid foundation on which to build with the boys peaking in time for the big tournaments near the end of our seasons.

Here is an example for a 12 Week Season with 2 Hour long practices

### Weeks 1 & 2

- No contact Sticks & Helmets only
- Focus on conditioning, speed, agility, ball handling
- Low variation/high reps

#### *Warm-ups/Footwork*

2 Leg Lateral Hops 10 seconds as many as possible with good form, 30 second rest, 3 sets  
2 Leg Forward Hops 10 seconds as many as possible with good form, 30 second rest, 3 sets  
Alternate Leg Hops 10 seconds as many as possible with good form, 30 second rest, 3 sets  
X Hops 10 seconds as many as possible with good form, 30 second rest, 3 sets

#### *SPEED & AGILITY*

Intervals: 5x20 yds, 4x40 yds, 3x60yds, 2x80 yds, 1x100 yds  
CONES T DRILL 10 REPS  
CONES BOX DRILL 10 REPS  
CONES ZIG/ZAG INSIDE PLANT 10 REPS  
CONES ZIG/ZAG OUTSIDE PLANT AND ROLL 10 REPS  
CONES STEP OVER SHUTTLE 10 REPS  
CONES IN/OUT 10 REPS

Each drill is a station. 4 complete rotations without stick, 4 complete rotations with ball in stick (work on cradling and stick handling while running hard)

## *Stick Work*

2 man passing drill  
3 man weave  
Triangle Passing  
Box Passing Drill  
Offset Line Drill  
Star Drill

10-12 Reps per station, 2 Rotations  
Finish with sprints or West Gennies

### **Weeks 3-4**

Continue Week 1 & 2 Drills but reduce number of rotations  
ADD Position Specific Work with light contact (setup as stations)

1. Shooting drills
2. face-off work with Middies
3. clearing pass drills (break away over the shoulder catches and throws)
4. Goalie work
5. Dodging Drills
6. Defense footwork & long passes
7. 1v1, 2v3 ground balls both to the cage and not
8. Rides

Lay in Basic Offense (1-3-2)

Lay in Basic Defense (man with near man slides)

Lay in 1 EMO play and Man Down D

### **Weeks 5-7**

1. Speed/Agility/Stick Work Drills 40 Minutes
2. Position Specific Drills & small sided stations (1v1, 2v3) 40 Minutes
3. Fast Break (4v3) and Set Practice (6v6) 40 minutes

## Weeks 8-10

1. Speed/Agility/Stick Work Drills 30 Minutes
2. Position Specific Drills & small sided stations (1v1, 2v3) 30 Minutes
3. Fast Break (4v3) and Set Practice (6v6) 30 minutes
4. Game Situations
  - a. Substitutions
  - b. 2 minute drill (ahead & behind)
  - c. BLACK Out a player
  - d. Etc

## Weeks 11-12

1. Speed/Agility/Stick Work Drills 30 Minutes
2. Position Specific Drills & small sided stations (1v1, 2v3) 30 Minutes
3. Fast Break (4v3) and Set Practice (6v6) 30 minutes
4. Game Situations
  - a. Substitutions
  - b. 2 minute drill (ahead & behind)
  - c. Add plays/sets
5. END OF SEASON TOURNAMENTS

### *Sample Practice Plan*

Time	Activity	Notes1	Notes2	Notes3
0	Warm-up	Sprints	Stretch	3 Man Weave (gb's & pass/catch)
10	2 man passing drill			
15	Traingle passing drill			
20	Star drill			
30	Navy Shooting drill	Goalie Warm-up	Defensive 5 cone foot work drill	
40	1v1 from the corners			
50	Break			
60	2v3 GB's with shot/clear			
70	Fast Breaks	clears	mad-middies work on passes, rotation, dodges, cuts	
80	OFFENSE WORK	30 set	ball, adjacent cut off, slides	middie face off practice
80	Defense Work	Tiger	freeze play and correct	
90	6v6	full OvD	Box & 1, pole in the middle	
110	ManUp/Man Down	3-Mar		
120	Coaches Chat			

### **Drills from our HS Program**

#### *Shooting Drills*

Pre-Game  
Alley  
Sniper  
Sniper with step  
Cross fire

Position (attack)  
Turn the corner  
Inside roll  
Question mark  
Rocker

Position (midfield)

Alley

Sweeps

Alley roll-back

Wing (high & low)

Offense (combined)

Wing to wing

Point to wing (backcut) or pass to backside

X to wing (backcut) or pass to backside

Point to X (sneak); X to point (sniper or sniper with step)

Crease cut; Crease pop

“31” Shooting drills:

Give & go shooting

Pick & roll shooting

Crease shooting (off cuts & picks)

Hard Sliding Defense

Dodge, re-dodge, & shoot

Dodge, re-dodge, & feed the crease

Pick, re-pick, & feed the crease

Feed the sneak or sniper

### *Offensive Team Drills*

Skeleton offense

1 v. 1, 2 v. 2, 3 v. 3, 4 v. 4, 6 v. 6

Build-up

Lose a man

### *Defensive Team Drills*

Skeleton

Build-up

Lose a man

Breakdown

## **Use of Tools & Resources**

Each you will have the book of drills and sample practice plans. Build your own season outline and plans with the material provided or with new things you develop or discover.

Use the right level of difficulty and complexity for your kids. You know them best, you see them every day, BUT, always remember our mantra: we play a very fast, east coast style of game thus we must do everything well ON THE RUN.

Keep notes & write down your practice plans and add them to this book. They don't have to be pretty, we'll clean them up and add them in at the end of the season.