

LACROSSE BASICS"

GAME POSITIONS

Attack

The position of attack requires the most stick skill of all positions, with the exception of the goalie. The attack are always a scoring threat and, more so than any other position, the attack must practice timing pics, shots, passes and dodges. They must work with the midfield on the field as as the midfield moves into scoring position in the front of the goal called the "Hole". Typically the attack work behind the net, called "X Behind", and on the flanks of the crease, called the "Wings". These areas give the attackmen the most room to dodge and cut.

The Attack use dodging, pics (just like in basketball), and passing to create a good shot. Just as in any other sport, the object is to move the ball around until the defense breaks down and the offense is left with an open shot. One way to force this is by letting an attackman go one-on-one with a defender. The attackman tries to beat his defender by dodging, causing another defenseman to slide, creating and unbalanced situation in which he can either shoot or pass to someone else who is wide open. He cannot however clamp the ball in stick with his thumb, chest or helmet. He also is not allowed to push or hit the defenseman's stick with his arms or hands. This is called warding.

Midfield

The midfield are the work horses of the team. They are responsible to play both defense and offense as described in the other positions. However the midfield are largely responsible for the most important part of the game, transition. Transition is by far the most important part of the game, and is how lacrosse got the nick name, 'The Fastest Game on Two Feet'. It involves retrieving loose balls, or clearing saved shots and taking them the length of the field. If a team can get the ball and number advantage on one end of the field, even for a split second, they have a tremendous advantage, and a great opportunity to score.

Along the center of the field is the midfield line. It is this reference point that determines whether a team is off-sides or not. The rules for off-sides are simple, you must have 4 players on your defensive end at all times, and 3 players on your offensive end at all time. Since it doesn't matter what players stay and what players go, it is up to the midfield to keep their team on-sides, by staying on one side or the other. Since the position requires so much running, the midfield change lines on the fly, as in hockey. However unlike hockey, the midfielders must come completely off the field through a box at the timer's table.

Defense

Defensemen have the most underglorified position in lacrosse. They must keep the attack at bay and away from

the front of the goal. The job is difficult. A defenseman doesn't know where the attack are going or what they are going to do. In his arsenal the defenseman has a six foot long stick which allows a defender to keep the attackmen at a distance, thus allowing him to throw checks without being beat. A defenseman must be able to think and react quickly, and most importantly communicate with his fellow defensemen. Defensemen are allowed to check the attackmen that they are covering by using his stick to hit the attackman's stick and arms. A defenseman cannot strike the attackman on the head, and cannot strike the attackman's body with any significant force. This penalty is called a slash. Most slash penalties occur when a defenseman uses a "slap check" which occurs when the stick moves perpendicular to the defenseman's shaft in a swinging motion. The other common check is the "poke check" in which the check moves parallel to the direction of the shaft. Once the attackmen closes within a stick's length a defenseman must use his body to deliver a check. Hitting in lacrosse is very similar to that in hockey. A legal body check is any hit that occurs to the front of the player (no hitting from behind). Players are legal targets if they have possession of the ball or are standing within five yards of a loose ball. Hitting someone without the ball while another player has possession is called interference.

Goalie

The position of goalie in lacrosse is probably one of the most intense positions in all of sports. Essentially you must

play catch with players with passes traveling at 100 mph. Explosive speed, very quick hands, and concentration are key ingredients in making a goalie effective.

A typical goalie wears a helmet with throat guard, a chest protector, and a pair of gloves. Some goalies wear long pants to help snag a ball after stopping a shot. A goalie does not wear any protection on the legs and relies on his stick ability to keep him safe. A goalie stick is typically of normal length, 40-50 inches, with an extra wide head.

The goalie defends a square goal six feet wide by six feet high surrounded by a circular crease. The crease is limited to the goalie and defensive players only. Once the goalie makes a save he has 4 seconds to either pass the ball or run the ball out of the crease. In these four seconds no player may interfere with him.

Unlike goalies in hockey, lacrosse goalies must be very mobile. They often leave the circular crease that surrounds the goal to fetch ground balls or to clear a saved shot. Once the goalie steps outside the crease he is no longer allowed back into the crease unless he yields possession of the ball.

TYPES OF STICKS

The Rule Book states specific dimensions for the length of the stick (minimum 40 inches, maximum 72 inches), with the exception of the goalie stick, which may be of any length.

- Most **attackmen** use a stick of 40 to 42 inches in length.
- Since **midfielders** have to play defense about half the time they are in the game, they will play with a slightly longer stick, about 42 to 44 inches long.
- Most **defensemen** will play with a stick between 5 and 6 feet in length. Even though the longer handle enables the defenseman to be more effective, those who use the 6-foot stick often have difficulty controlling it. A stick between 5 feet to 5 feet, 8 inches long is ideal for most defensemen.
- Most college **goalies** play with a stick in a range of 46 to 60 inches. The optimum size is 50 to 56 inches. Goalies need the length for making long clearing passes, intercepting feeds, and reaching for ground balls outside the crease.

Youngsters up to age twelve or thirteen should definitely play with sticks shorter than those used by high-school and college players. If they are playing attack, their stick should not be longer than 40 or 41 inches, and possibly shorter than 40 inches if they are eight or nine years old or younger. Midfielders can follow similar guide lines, possibly with their sticks an inch or two longer than the attackmen's. Defensemen should play with sticks in the 4- to 5-foot range and goalies in the 40- to 52-inch range.

HOLDING THE STICK

To properly grip the stick the player places his lower hand, with his palm facing down, grasps the stick at the end of the handle for protection purposes. If he fails to do so and the "butt-end" of the stick, even just 1 or 2 inches, is exposed, the defender has a good chance of making a successful poke check on the end of the handle and dislodging the ball. The upper hand, with the palm facing up, is placed on the handle about 12 inches from the left hand. Both hands are in front of the hips or slightly outside them.

Beginners often feel more comfortable grasping the stick with the upper hand closer to the head of the stick, giving them more control in catching and cradling the ball. However, they lose a considerable amount of leverage and power when releasing the ball with their hands too far apart on the stick.

It is not advisable to slide the upper hand down the handle to get more leverage, because this takes a split second longer and the control of the stick is not as complete when the hand is sliding. The hands are placed the basic hip width distance apart when catching, throwing, cradling, shooting, and scooping the ball. The fingers hold the stick with a firm but not a tight grip. The stick rests more in the fingers than the palm of the upper hand. The thumb is on top of the handle. The elbow of the upper arm is pointed toward the ground and not out to the side. These points allow for a free and easy motion to cradle the ball and keep it in the pocket.

Beginners often make the mistake of "squeezing the stick to death" with a viselike grip and consequently lose the feel for controlling the ball.

THROWING

The techniques used in throwing a football or baseball are the same ones used in throwing a lacrosse ball with the stick. The body is turned to the side and the feet are staggered. The upper hand is even with the shoulders or slightly above and controls the stick throughout the throwing motion. When one throws a football or baseball, the upper hand is well above the shoulder. However, the lacrosse player uses his stick to place the ball in this position, and therefore his upper hand remains at shoulder level or slightly above. The upper hand is primarily responsible for accuracy but also shares in providing the power with the lower hand, which is about 6 to 8 inches from the body.

The stick is held at about a 45-degree angle from the horizontal and with the head of the stick facing in the direction the ball is to be thrown. The ball rests in the pocket, and the thrower should have a feel for it. In the actual throwing motion the following takes place:

1. The body weight is drawn back first to the rear leg and then transferred to the front leg.

2. The upper body is turned from a side position to one facing directly to the front. The whipping of the shoulders gives added power.
3. The upper hand is drawn back several inches and then follows through with a snapping motion. This wrist snap is the key to throwing with the lacrosse stick, just the same as it is in throwing the football or baseball, because it gives both accuracy and power.
4. The lower arm is bent at the elbow and places the lower hand in a position closer to the body than the upper hand.
5. The lower hand pulls down on the end of the handle, making a small arc toward the middle of the body.
6. The ball leaves the stick from the center of the pocket.
7. The ball is aimed for the head of the receiver's stick.
8. The stick ends up pointing directly at this target and in a near-horizontal position.

To emphasize the similarity between throwing a baseball or a football and a lacrosse ball with the stick, the beginner can throw with just one hand, his upper hand, on the stick. The wrist snap is of primary importance, and the throw can be made with the identical motion used by the pitcher or

quarterback. The accuracy and power with one hand on the stick are obviously more limited, but it is easy to feel the similarity in the throwing techniques.

The most common error the beginner makes is pushing the ball out of the pocket rather than throwing it. This is caused either by his failure to draw the stick back several inches just prior to his forward motion or by his failure to snap his wrist when making the throw. When the ball is pushed out of the stick, it has limited power and control. The beginning thrower also tends to use primarily the pull-down move by the lower hand to release the ball instead of using the joint action of both the upper and lower hands.

CATCHING

When a player catches the ball, the positions of both his body and his stick are important. The upper body squarely faces the ball in its flight. The feet are about shoulder-width apart and on line rather than staggered. This position allows the receiver to move quickly to either his left or his right, depending on where the ball is thrown. The stick is placed slightly above the head as a target for the pass. The pocket of the stick is positioned so that it is completely facing the ball. The catch is made in front of the body with the head of the stick reaching out for the ball, much the same as a baseball player using his glove to catch the ball.

The baseball player doesn't catch the ball in a position even with his body or a position with his arm completely straightened out in front of his body.

Rather, he reaches out with his gloved hand as the ball approaches and then cushions the ball into his glove, actually making the catch about 6 inches in front of his body. The lacrosse player uses the same techniques in catching the ball with his stick.

The idea of catching in lacrosse is also much the same as trying to catch a thrown tennis ball with a tightly strung racquet. The stick must be withdrawn or the ball will rebound. The receiver cushions the ball in his pocket by bringing the head of his stick back toward his body and making use of a quick but soft wrist action. This cradle motion controls the ball in the pocket and keeps it from bouncing out.

Catching the ball on the backhand side, that is, the side opposite the receiver's stick requires a different maneuver. The receiver swings his stick across the front of his body into the back hand position. The entire stick is moved to the backhand side, not just the head of the stick.

Beginners will often move just the head of the stick and leave the butt end on the forehand side. This makes for a very awkward catch.

The wrist or cradle action is the same, except that it is done in the backhand position. The receiver will either sidestep or cross over to get to a ball thrown to his backhand side. If the ball is close to his body, a right-hander will sidestep with his left foot. A right-hander should pivot on his left foot and make the crossover with his right foot when the ball is not thrown near his body to give him extra reach.

There are several ways of playing a ball that is thrown directly at the receiver's head or body. The right-hander can either move his body to his left by sidestepping with his left foot and then catching the ball in the forehand position, or he can pivot on his right foot and step back with his left foot, catching the ball in the backhand position. The footwork is opposite for the left-hander. Once the receiver catches the ball, he always turns into a position with his body between his stick and the nearest opponent. This gives him the best possible protection of the stick.

Beginners and even some advanced players often make the mistake of turning the wrong way and bringing the stick in front of their body where the opponent can check it.

CRADLING

Each player must be able to run at top speed, often surrounded by opponents, and still control the ball in the pocket of his stick. The key to cradling is the looseness of the upper hand and wrist. The loose wrist motion of the lacrosse player's upper hand while cradling can be compared to the symphony conductor's handling of his baton. When the maestro conducts, he moves his entire arm as well as his hand. And so does the lacrosse player when he cradles.

Most youngsters have played around with either a table-tennis paddle or tennis racquet, trying to keep the ball on the flat surface of the paddle or racquet by moving their arms and turning their wrists in a

swinging motion. This technique is similar to cradling a lacrosse ball. and it may be helpful for the beginner to hold the stick in front of his body with only one hand and cradle the ball this way.

The ball is not shaken or jiggled around in the pocket of the stick by the wrist action alone; it is rocked back and forth with a smooth, rhythmic motion of the entire upper arm as well as the hand. If the wrists are not locked but are allowed to move with the swinging motion of the arms, which results normally from running, the ball will come to a more positive rest in the pocket. Both hands are involved with the cradling, although the upper hand carries the bulk of the load. The lower hand has to have a loose enough grip to allow the stick to be turned in it.

Beginners can look at the ball when cradling just to make sure it is under control in the pocket. As the player gains confidence in handling the ball, he does not need to look at it because he has a feel for its position in his stick.

There are different types of cradles, but each has the same basic motion:

1. The **two hand front cradle**, which can be used when carrying the ball down the field without immediate opposition. This cradle cannot be used when a defender approaches because the ball

carrier's stick is in front of his body and is an easy target for a check.

2. The **two-hand upright cradle** is used when a defender is playing the man with the ball. This cradle gives good protection of the ball and has the stick in a position to release the ball quickly and accurately.

3. The **one-hand cradle** gives excellent protection, since the lower hand is placed in front of the body to prevent the defender's checks from getting to his stick.

SCOOPING

Maintaining the proper body and stick position is essential for the scooper. When he gets within several yards of a ground ball, he bends his knees and upper body in a semicrouch position. If he is holding his stick right-handed, then his right foot is forward on the scoop to give a free flowing scooping motion with his arms. The left (lower) arm determines the angle that the stick makes with the ground in the scoop. The angle will vary according to the size of the player, but a general guideline of approximately 30 degrees can be established. Normally the lower arm will be close to a straightened position in the scoop rather than with a sizable bend at the elbow.

The end of the handle is held to the side of the body rather than in front, where the stick could dig into the ground and force the butt end of the handle into the scooper's groin or

midsection. The head of the stick hits the ground 1 to 2 inches from the ball.

Instead of getting their nose down near the ground to play the ball, players will often take the lazy man's approach, scooping the ball with their body in an upright position and with their stick at a sharp angle. A common mistake is for the scooper to try to place the head of his stick right next to the ball, which may cause it to hit or go over it.

He must keep his eyes on the ball until he has scooped it into his stick with a shovel like motion, and he should keep moving. He should not flip the ball into the air as he scoops it. Stress should be placed on the importance of scooping the grounder with both hands on the stick. It may seem easier to scoop with just the lower hand gripping the stick at the butt end of the handle, but the percentages are not with the one-handed scoop. The chance for error is far less in the two-handed scoop, because the scooper gets his body closer to the ground. He can also control the stick better with two hands on the stick.

Once the ball is in his stick, the scooper's primary concern is protecting it. As soon as he scoops the ball, he determines the location of the opposition.

- If he is surrounded, he tucks the stick close to his body and tries to dodge out of trouble. This maneuver is referred to as the "scoop and tuck".

- If he sees an open area, regardless of whether it's toward the offensive or defensive half of the field, he bursts full speed for daylight.

If he receives pressure from the side once he is on the run, he can hold the stick with one hand and protect it with the other. By removing his right (upper) hand from the stick and holding his forearm in front of his body and parallel to the ground, he gives his stick excellent protection. The left (lower) hand remains in the same position at the butt end of the handle and cradles the ball with a minimum of motion. The stick is held to the scooper's left front and in a position close to the horizontal. Since the scooper is able to wriggle out of trouble with this maneuver, it is identified as a "snakeout."

Younger players have difficulty holding the stick with only one hand at the end of the handle, but as they get older and their wrists strengthen, they will have no problem.

Communication between players is essential in every phase of team play, including the scooping of ground balls. There are several different calls that can be used. Players should call out "Ball, ball" every time they scoop a loose ball. When the scooper has the ball in his stick, he must call out "Release" to tell his teammate to stop his body contact with the opponent. (It is a technical foul to make physical contact with the opposition when a teammate has the ball.) If a player hears his name being called when he is fighting for a ground ball, he should use

his stick to try to flick the ball in the direction of the teammate who is calling.

A final point to be made on the control of ground balls is making use of the feet. Whenever three or more players are contending for the ball, there is continual checking with sticks, and the ball will often remain in the middle of the crowd. A player who kicks the ball with his foot gains an advantage over his opponents because he knows exactly when and where he is kicking the ball and can move quickly to it.

The ball should be kicked to an unoccupied area on the field. Defensive players should not kick the ball toward their own goal, because this will put added pressure on the goalie. The one exception to this occurs when a loose ball is behind the goal and within several yards of the crease. In this situation a defensive player can kick the ball to the goalie if he is in the crease and calling for it.

DODGING

Every player on the team must strive to master the face, roll, and bull dodges. These three dodges give the man with the ball the capability of going by his opponent and advancing the ball toward the goal. Most dodges occur as a result of an opponent's mistake or over commitment. Incorrect body or stick position by the defender can also encourage the dodge. The ball carrier can initiate the dodge himself by baiting his opponent into making a mistake and then taking advantage of it. Protection of the stick by the

dodger is probably the most important factor in completing a successful dodge.

Keep your head between and in direct alignment with the head of your stick and the opponent. If you maintain this "head-on head" position, the defender cannot check the ball carrier's stick without hitting him on the helmet and committing a foul.

There are several other points to be made about dodging. The attacker should avoid forcing his dodge into a defense that has backup men on either side of the dodger and also between the dodger and the goal. When the defense is stacked and waiting for the dodger, he should be ready to pass off to a teammate rather than trying to barrel through.

If an attacker is successful in dodging his opponent, he should not try to dodge one or two more defenders on the same play. The odds normally catch up with him, and he will lose the ball.

Face Dodge

The face dodge is best used when an opponent delivers a slap check at the ball carrier. As soon as he sees the stick coming, the ball carrier pulls his own stick across the front of his body. Actually the stick goes in front of his face, hence the name "face dodge".

The ball carrier can help set up the face dodge by taking a pass to a team mate. He can use a head-and-

eye fake, looking in the direction of the anticipated pass and even calling a player in that area by name. He should have two hands on the stick when faking the pass to make it more realistic. If the opponent raises his stick in the air to block the faked pass, this will open up the opportunity for the face dodge just as well as the opponent's using an aggressive slap check.

In one simultaneous motion the ball carrier pushes off with his right foot, sidesteps to the left with his left foot, and pulls the stick across his face. Once driving to his left, the driver should stay with a right-handed grip on the stick for at least the first two or three steps or his opponent may be able to reach around him from the rear and check his stick.

Roll Dodge

The roll dodge is effective when the opponent is very aggressive with stick checks, especially the slap check when it is delivered with a horizontal thrust and almost turns or pushes the driver in the opposite direction. The check actually helps him to roll away from the pressure. The roll dodge can be done in either a slow-moving or a fast-moving situation. The player pivots on his left foot, which is his lead foot, then pushes off his left leg and takes a step with his right foot in the direction opposite his original path. It should be as close to the defender as possible to facilitate his rolling by him in the new direction. When he takes the first step on the roll dodge, the ball carrier faces away from his opponent and throws his hips

into him. The head of his stick stays even with his own head as he makes the pivot. It is important for the attacker to grip the stick with his hands in the same position throughout the pivot and even after the first two or three steps in the new direction.

The time he wants to be the tightest to his man on his pivot and roll is when the attacker drives from behind the goal and is in the area 5 to 6 yards in front of the goal and 5 to 6 yards from the center of the field. This gives the dodger a point-blank shot at the goal. He can put the greatest pressure on the defender by getting to his point with a hard drive as opposed to a stop-and-start, back and-forth motion.

Bull Dodge

Whereas both the face dodge and roll dodge have the dodger changing his direction and going in a direction opposite to his original path, the bull dodge starts one way and climaxes in the same direction. The name of the dodge indicates brute strength overpowering the defender.

When executing the bull dodge, the attacker normally holds the stick with only the upper hand. He protects the head of his stick by keeping it even with his own head. The lower hand is held to the front of his body to guard against poke or slap checks directed at the handle of his stick.

When the attacker has the ball in a midfield wing area at the restraining line or a yard or two inside it, he can make use of a burst of speed for approximately 10 yards to gain a step on his man. Since the attacker has the advantage of knowing when he is going to start his burst, he will be able to beat even a defender who is as fast as he. By driving hard and using one of these techniques, then bursting full speed in the original direction, he can gain a jump on his man.

CHECKING

POKE CHECK

The poke check is one of the most effective checks, because the opportunity to dislodge the ball from the opponent's stick without over committing is greater than in the other checks. The poke check consists of a thrust of the stick, propelled through the upper hand by the lower hand.

This technique is similar to the billiard player's handling of his cue stick. The lower hand draws the stick back slightly just prior to his stroke to give him more power with it.

It is important for the upper hand to remain in contact with the handle as it slides through the fingers to give better control. If the upper hand loses its grasp, the lower hand will not be able to control the stick, thereby giving an advantage to the attacker. If the attacker is holding his stick with one hand, the thrust can be directed at any part of the

handle that is showing. If he has two hands on the stick, it can be aimed at the cuff of the glove holding the butt end of the stick. The defender must guard against an overaggressive poke that will cause him to step into his opponent and give him an opening to roll by on the side opposite his check.

SLAP CHECK

The slap check, as the term implies, is merely a short, slapping blow directed at the attacker's lower gloved hand or the handle of the stick just above it. It is used mainly when the attacker either has both hands on the stick or is about to put his lower hand on it. The slap check will not be effective if the attacker is holding the stick in one hand and protecting it well with the other. The wrist action of the upper hand on the stick delivers the check, and it should be as quick as possible. The head of the stick will be directed at the target anywhere from a horizontal position up to an angle of approximately 45 degrees above the horizontal.

The check should not cover a distance any greater than approximately 18 inches. In fact, the shorter the check, the less it is telegraphed. When the defender hauls back with his stick as if to bludgeon his opponent, he not only tips off his maneuver but also begins a check that generates so much power it gets out of control and exposes him to a face or roll dodge.

The head of the defender's stick should not go beyond a position horizontal to the ground when it is in the downward motion. If it does, it can cause a foul by hitting the attacker on the lower part of his body or even trip him. When making the slap check with the stick moving in a horizontal path, the defender must guard against using too vigorous a check, which will give the attacker an easy roll dodge.

HIGHLIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE PLAY

- Be patient and play position; the percentages favor this style of play over the aggressive, take-the-ball-away approach.
- Keep pressure on the feeder and don't give the dodger a good-angle shot.
- When you pick up your man with the ball, keep the foot back on the side to which he is going.
- Run hip to hip with your man when he has the ball and is going at top speed: shuffle when he slows down.
- Keep your stick in the same hand when playing your man.
- Place your stick in a position in front of the number on your opponent's jersey and be ready to check his stick.
- The right-handed defender is more effective playing an opponent who is primarily a right handed driver, and a left-hander versus a left hander, because he has the advantage of a better running and checking position and the stronger backhand hold.

- Don't step into your man when using poke and slap checks.
- A check that travels a short distance is the most effective.
- The defender must keep his legs spread to provide a strong base when using a hold.
- Holds should be used only when the attacker is in front of the goal, 10 yards or less from the crease for a midfielder and 5 yards or less from the crease for an attackman.

DEFENSE

Footwork

The key to being a good defenseman. EVERYTHING starts from the feet. Footwork is something that you can work on year-round. During your off season workouts, dedicate some time to your foot speed. This would include the basics of simply doing shuffle drills and cross training by playing sports like basketball and racquetball. These things will increase your fitness and your foot speed, allowing you to get your body in GOOD DEFENSIVE POSITION.

Positioning

Behind every great stick check is good defensive position. That means that your feet are shoulder width apart, your knees are slightly bent and your stick is out in front of you. This should be very similar to basketball defensive positioning. When an attackman is coming from behind the cage, his shoulder should be aimed right at the center of your chest, your knees should again be in a flexed position, and your body should be balanced, so that you are not leaning on the attackman. Your stick should be on the UPFIELD side of the attackman, and you should use your body position to turn the attackman away from, and back behind, the goal. Just by doing this, you have helped your team.

3 For a Nickel:

Named by an elder Carolina D-man, this has been a very effective stick check. It takes a lot of practice, good hand speed and positioning, but when you hit it, it is really nice. This one check gives you 3 chances to get the ball in one check and is to be used on an attackman cradling right handed with one hand (on a right-handed defenseman) behind the goal or on the sideline. The first part of the check is a quick swipe straight down from just above his head, to about his hip. You might get lucky and catch the attackman sleeping and knock the ball out, but this is really just a set-up. In one motion, bring the head of your stick up the back of the attackman, making a big U. This is called a "but-dig." There is a good chance that you catch the attackman's but end of his stick because of the first swipe in

front of him. If you don't get him on the "but dig," don't worry, because here is where the check comes together. In the same motion, pull your stick over his head and back down in front of his face. Nine times out of 10, the stick will be right there waiting for you. Knock the ball out, pick it up and start the fast break.

GOALIE

The best goalies are those who are in command and to be in command you have to know everything that you possibly can. The most important thing is to be mentally sharp. There is no substitute for a goalie who sees the field, knows the goals of his/her team and knows what the other team is attempting to do, before they actually do it. It is essential for goalies to pay close attention to scouting reports and to know, inside and out, the strengths and weaknesses of every player on the field.

Another thing that always helps to keep focused before games is to have set rituals. Listen to the same music, dress in the same order (i.e. socks first etc.), etc. It helps the player concentrate on getting ready for the game and not on pangs of nervousness and indecision.

MIDFIELD

Feeding

The key to being a good feeder is always being in a position to make the good pass. This develops by seeing the field and positioning the stick. Keep your head up and anticipate how a defense is going to react to a given move. Carrying your stick in a way that allows you to make a quick pass when ever you see an opening. Practice making passes with your stick at different angles, whether it is side arm or underhand you always have to be a threat.

Shooting

For a midfielder the crank shots are few and far between. You live and die my shooting on the run. The key to shooting on the run is rotate your hips and shoulders to the cage as you shoot. This generates velocity on your shot and squares you to the goal right when you are shooting.

The "Swim"

One of the most effective ways to split a double team, is to first bait the doubler to play your stick instead of your body by "hanging it". Extend your arm and stick over the defenders head, "swim over him" to beat the slide.

Goalie PRACTICE

About 20 min. are needed to give the goalie a complete warmup with practice against all types of shots. If he uses time both before and after each practice session, he should be able to give about 15-20 minutes to his number-one goalie, 10-15 minutes to his number-two.

Along with utilizing the time before and after practice, the coach can frequently squeeze in about 15 minutes' work with a goalie when the rest of the team is doing calisthenics or basic stick-work drills.

The following sequence can be used as a guide in warming up the goalie:

- High shots at three-quarter speed from 15 to 20 yards.
- High shots at full speed from 18 to 20 yards.
- Bounce shots at three-quarter speed from 15 to 20 yards.
- Bounce shots at full speed from 18 to 20 yards.
- Mixture of high shots and bounce shots at full speed from 18 to 20 yards.
- Mixture of high shots and bounce shots at three-quarter speed from 12 to 15 yards.
- Mixture of high shots and bounce shots at three-quarter speed from 9 to 12 yards.
- Feeds by attackman behind the goal to shooter, who takes a mixture of mostly high and some bounce shots at slightly less than three quarter speed from 3 to 4 yards off the crease.
- Dodges by attackman from behind the goal, who takes a mixture of shots at slightly less than three-quarter speed from 3 to 4 yards off the crease. After the goalie makes a save, he should concentrate on making a sharp, accurate pass to the coach.

Once he has had about 10-15 minutes of warmup and is reacting well to the ball, the coach can simulate a clearing situation after the save by breaking out and giving the goalie a target with his stick. The coach doesn't want to overemphasize the clearing aspect of the goalie's job, so he may call for the break pass on every third or fourth save.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE GAME

A scouting report is very helpful. If the team is playing an away game on a field different from its home field, it should try to simulate the field conditions during the practice sessions prior to that game. For example, if the crease area on the home field is completely bare of grass, but the team is traveling to a school that has grass in its crease area, the goalie should receive his warmups on grass during every practice before that game. If it is raining hard the day before the game and rain is forecast for game day, the coach should take his goalie out in the rain and give him a warmup on the wet field. The rest of the team does not have to practice outside, but the goalie must feel confident in the goal, regardless of weather conditions. The goalie may want to use an old stick while practicing in the rain and save his best stick for game day. The position of the sun in relation to the goal may be a factor in considering which goal the team wants to defend. It is desirable to try to avoid placing the goalie so that the sun will be directly in his eyes in the fourth quarter of the game.

The confidence that the team displays in the goalie and the goalie has in himself are vital to the team's success. This confidence can be bolstered, along with the spirit and morale of the team, by the type of warmup given to the goalie on the day before the game. The coach gives the goalie a ten- to fifteen-minute workout before the start of practice. The team then moves through a light practice, with the last item on the practice schedule a shootout supervised by the coach but carried out by the team's best shooters and even some of the lesser ones.

After giving the goalie about three minutes of three-quarter-speed shots from the 18 to 20-yard mark, the coach places a marker at about the 16-yard spot and turns the shooters loose with full-speed shots beyond that point. The goalie will call out the name of one of his team mates to identify him as the shooter who will fire the ball on the run or just crank up and let it go with all the power he can muster. If the goalie makes the save, he passes the ball to the shooter, who simulates a defensive teammate breaking out on a clear. There is a healthy flow of conversation—the hotshot shooters who are unable to score on the goalie are ribbed, and continuous words of encouragement and praise are given to the goalie. It is somewhat of a relaxed, fun time for the shooters, and it is all work and all business for the goalie, but the whole atmosphere is one of complete support of the goalie.

GAME DAY

The goalie's warmup on game day is the same as in a regular practice. The coach shoots the ball with power and accuracy because he wants to sharpen the goalie's reactions. He may not try quite as hard to score on him, because he does not want to affect his confidence. The coach takes him out on the field about fifty to sixty minutes before game time.

He may first warm up the number two goalie for about ten minutes and then follow with the starting goalie for about ten minutes. The coach will then move to the other goal to give the goalies the feel of operating in it. This is important, because there may be a slight difference in both the area in front of the crease and the location of the sun.

The coach will give the number one goalie another ten to fifteen minutes of warmup in this goal. Since he will be overheated and somewhat tired after this workout, the goalie can move to the sidelines to relax for about five minutes while the coach is finishing with the second goalie.

The goalies should be involved with the defense in making both long and short clearing passes to them. After doing this, the goalies may want to relax for another five or ten minutes; then the coach may want to give the goalie another two or three minutes in the goal right before the start of the game. The goalie is now ready to man the nets.