

**Canadian Lacrosse Association  
Coaching Development Program**

**LACROSSE**  
**PRE-LEVEL 1**  
**TECHNICAL**  
**PRACTICAL**  
**THEORY**



**COACH'S  
MANUAL**  
by Ted Liebich

## THE LACROSSE PRE-LEVEL 1 COACH'S MANUAL

The offensive fundamentals on pages 15–19 were adapted from the lacrosse Inter-Lacrosse Instructional Manual copyright 1990 by the Canadian Lacrosse Association.  
Illustrations by Val Batyi, Editor John Lewis.

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# THE LACROSSE PRE-LEVEL 1 COACH'S MANUAL

Author N.E. (Ted) Liebich

**The Pre-Level 1 Coaching Manual for Lacrosse** was written and edited by Ted Liebich for the Canadian Lacrosse Association Coaching Development Program. The Manual follows the organization of the **3 M National Coaching Certification Program** (3M NCCP) of the **Coaching Association of Canada** (CAC) by addressing the need for:

- the **Technical** aspects of coaching lacrosse,
- the **Practical** application of coaching knowledge.
- the **Theory** to understand entry level players.

The **Pre-Level 1 Manual** focuses on the requirements of entry-level players, and of coaches who are new to lacrosse and/or coaching. It has been deliberately designed to move coaches away from the more traditional coach and lacrosse centred approaches of coaching to an approach that is more **Athlete Centred**, which in simpler terms means coaches are to be focused more on the player than on the game of lacrosse.

The teaching methods, the lesson plans and the information cover all aspects of the what, how and why of athlete centred coaching. The program is for all coaches and instructors whether they are in recreational or competitive programs. The intent is that everyone who signs up for a lacrosse program will get the same standard and level of coaching and thereby satisfying some of the parameters of the **Coaching Association of Canada's** (CAC) **Competency Based Education Training** (CBET) program.

If the Pre-Level 1 program is to be successful then parents and administrators must also understand the concepts. The manual contains on-floor methods that coaches can use to educate parents, and special tips on how to administrate lacrosse in order to maximize the enjoyment of learning and playing of lacrosse. The message is that coaching is to be taken seriously, that it is to be viewed as a professional activity and that any decisions regarding the programs must be based on sound coaching and learning principles.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the **LACROSSE PRE-LEVEL 1 MANUAL** is to provide coaches, teachers, recreation leaders, administrators and parents with:

- The information and a model for coaching newcomers and specifically children five to ten years of age.
- A combined Theory/Technical/Practical course that leads into Level 1 of the National Coaching Certification Program of the Canadian Lacrosse Association and the Coaching Association of Canada.
- A method for teaching all children basic lacrosse skills and movement patterns in a way that is easy for them to learn. The intent is to show adults how to direct players without interfering with the natural way they learn.
- A method of coaching that will ensure that all children, not just the elite, have fun and achieve their potential.
- A self-education tool for the development and understanding of the athlete centred approach to coaching, i.e. the differences between coaching, instructing and managing.

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### How Are The Objectives Achieved?

Technical

The Technical outlines the fundamentals of lacrosse and what coaches need to know to organize and coach a team.

Practical

The Practical prepares coaches for their first two to four seasons of lacrosse, depending on the age of the players. The Practical integrates the Theory and the Technical through a progression of sample Lesson Plans

Theory

The Theory component gives coaches the background needed to plan practices and games that are appropriate for the age group coached and that will lead to the development of the whole player.

## WELCOME

### TO COACHING AND THE GAME OF LACROSSE

**You took your child to practice and returned home the coach.**

**Now what?**

**Where do you start?**

**What did you get yourself into?**

Can you use your experiences as a player to teach these beginners? Will the players be better off if you don't get involved? Will the parents be a help or a hindrance?

Who is the  
Pre-Level 1  
for

The **Lacrosse Pre-Level 1 Manual** recognizes the need for the technical information, the teaching methods and the sport science background to coach and to parent the new lacrosse player. The title suggests a level of coaching that must come before. It means that parents, and then coaches must become aware of the learning process players go through as they prepare to enjoy the world of sport, whether it be recreational or competitive.

The manual can be used as a self-directed learning tool, a reference book or a model by those introducing Box, Inter-lacrosse or Men' and Women's Field Lacrosse to beginners of all ages. The purpose of the manual is to introduce teaching methods that coincide with the way we learn, and to relate the games of lacrosse to the developmental stages of the players.

Getting  
started

*Have you  
checked to see  
if your associa-  
tion has a pro-  
gram for help-  
ing new coaches  
get started?*

If your first practice is next week, then spend this week reviewing the **Technical** and **Practical** components. If you have more than a week, take time to read the Theory component to achieve a better understanding of the children you are coaching and what their learning needs will be.

The introductory phase that all beginners must go through, regardless of age, is now being referred to as the **FUNDamental Phase of Training**. Research has shown that when we are learning a new skill, we need time to experiment and familiarize ourselves with the new techniques. Young players go through this step when they play in their driveways, in the neighborhood parks or on frozen ponds. When it is by-passed or if the pressure to perform is applied too early, enjoyment and achievement are jeopardized and players often drop out. Because the process of learning is universal, the teaching methods prescribed by this manual are fundamental to the athlete centred approach to coaching at all levels.

## Why is a Pre-Level 1 Course Important?

Children have special learning needs.

Most sports have entry levels for children under eight years of age and yet only a few of them, generally the individual sports, provide the special training that is required for this age group. The Pre-level 1 addresses the learning needs of all beginners as they go through an exploratory phase of learning how to play lacrosse.

Formal games are not the best.

Coaches who work with young players soon realize that children do not react well to direct instruction and that they function best when participating on their own terms. Consequently, the tendency is to limit the practice time and to schedule more games in order to “just let the children play and have fun”. Unfortunately, only the early developers, the natural athletes or those from lacrosse families learn in this environment. The rest tend to be too timid to assert themselves and never really get the ball long enough to develop their skills. Older beginners can suffer a similar fate if their needs are not adequately taken care of.

The best coaches are needed at all entry levels.

The house and recreational games that are ultimately organized are not considered serious enough for the more knowledgeable parents and coaches. They very quickly take the best players and organize them into more competitive leagues, thereby leaving the majority of the players and their parents to fend for themselves.

Is this a typical situation? Perhaps. Is it right? No. It is clearly an indication that the decision makers do not understand the learning process or what beginners need in order to learn and to have fun. Even the competitive programs require a more informal learning environment if players are going to develop sound fundamentals. Ironically the parents who were left behind in the house leagues are more aware of player needs and end up being the better coaches. All they need is more control of their programs and the support of their associations.

### Summary

The need for educated coaches is increasing

By the time children are five, they have outgrown the confines of their home and are looking to expand their learning environment. With the playgrounds, neighborhood streets and even back yards now unsafe for unsupervised play, and with both parents working, the need for quality programs for children, including sports, is on the rise. The important issue is the word “quality”. Children learn through their play and if they are to continue learning at the rate they are accustomed to, and if they are to maintain an active and healthy life style, all coaches will need to understand this process.

The cliché that sport develops character does not happen by osmosis, and neither does talent. Character, habits and skills are formed as a result of carefully planned programs run by coaches and administrators that follow the principles and fundamentals of coaching and learning.

# **PRE-LEVEL 1**

# **TECHNICAL**

**MODULE 1****GAMES AND EQUIPMENT**

**Goal** To define a progression of games that will lead new players from pass and a catch to the formal disciplines of Inter-lacrosse, Field or Box Lacrosse and to portray lacrosse as a vehicle for fun, action and discovery.

**Objectives** To give coaches an understanding of how games must be changed when an athlete centred approach is used.  
To show how rules are used to promote learning.  
To relate the equipment to the type of game that is played.

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**Introduction**

*When people think of lacrosse, they think in terms of the formal game that is played by adults or perhaps of the unique way in which the ball is controlled with the stick. It is no surprise then, that traditional coaching practices get new players playing lacrosse as soon as they can pass and catch the ball. Unfortunately, coaches have had difficulty finding the balance between teaching the fundamentals and playing the game. Coaching is currently oscillating between practices and games that are over controlled with too much emphasis on winning and those that are under controlled with the emphasis on “fun” by just “letting the kids play”.*

*The first step in achieving this balance is to switch the emphasis from coaching the game to coaching the players, which is now identified as an athlete centred approach to coaching. To understand this concept, coaches must first think in terms of what they did as kids when they went out to play, or as parents when they played with their three and four year olds. The venue was usually the back yard, the street or a vacant lot, and the games were usually the games passed on from previous generations before the time of organize sport for kids.*

*The next step is for coaches to find ways to organize these same activities in the formal setting of a practice with twenty young players. Chaos might be a good way to describe the picture. A closer examination, however, will reveal individuals and groups having fun as they play and practise. As one activity breaks down because of boredom, another soon replaces it.*

*The third step is for coaches to discover how to organize their practices for both maximum enjoyment and learning. In education, this is called setting a positive learner centred environment, and in sport, it is called the “art of coaching”. **Module 1** redefines the structure of games in a way that will give coaches the control they need to facilitate maximum learning and enjoyment.*

## Seeing Lacrosse through the eyes of the beginner

### Interactive games

For beginners, lacrosse is a game of passes, catches, carries and scoops. The challenges they set up for themselves as they interact with the objects in their environment or with a partner are the first games that beginners play when they pick up a lacrosse stick.

*To get ideas Coaches can watch what the players do while they are waiting for the practice to start. Other ideas such as mirror and follow the leader games etc. are found in the Practice Plans in the **Practical** component of the manual.*

The challenge of these first games is to see if the skills can be performed and then to see how well or how many times they can be repeated. Simple rules are invented to present a progression of challenges that make the activity less boring. Once a certain level of skill is achieved, the players will move on to something else.

### Coaches take note

*When the players are in control of these **Interactive games**, they tend to be:*

*Spontaneous— Exploratory— Repetitive  
Challenging— Adaptive— Inconsequential*

*These characteristics are also the conditions that must be present for learning to take place. Therefore, to teach, coaches should allow players to change the activities as they see fit or to model examples of what players might try next.*

Once the players become familiar with the individual skills, they can be combined into game related activities. i.e. pick-up and shoot or pass; pass and run; games of keep-out or keep-a-way. In these games the players work in pairs and cooperate to achieve pre-set goals or challenges.

### Question

*What concepts are being learned at this point?*

The final stage of the Interactive Games is to increase the group sizes to three or four. Follow the leader games like the taxi cab game along with the airplane teach the concepts of teamwork and floor positions. The keep-out games can be played against players playing the give and go and shoot, the loose ball and the break-out games. These games are more cooperative than competitive as both sides have tasks they are trying to achieve in order to win. The offensive players win by making passes without dropping them and the defensive players by not letting the offensive players carry or catch the ball into the scoring area. There is no need for stick checking to give these games meaning. Because the challenges are personal rather than competitive, the players can focus on developing their skills rather than on the outcome.

## The Progression from Interactive Games to Formal Games

### Minor games and Recreational games

The next step is for players to develop their skills in different situations by organizing the players into small evenly matched groups of 2-on-2, 3-on-3 or 4-on-4 called **Minor Games**. These games provide the opportunity to learn team concepts as well as the skills to execute them. The rules are adapted or invented to match the abilities and understanding of the participants and to provide learning experience in a progressive manner. Minor games are designed for fun and skill development and can be competitive or cooperative<sup>1</sup>.

Older beginners who already have the social skills and the understanding of games will want to play more competitively. Once they can play the minor games of 3-on-3, they will also be ready to play the **Recreational games** at the inter club level. **Recreational games** are games that have varying numbers of players and often smaller playing surfaces than the formal games. Examples are: 3-on-3 games, Inter-lacrosse, Tyke lacrosse. The rules of recreational games are adjusted to match the abilities of the players and are also designed to teach sport skills and concepts.

### Formal Games

**Formal games** are the competitive games of sports that have universally accepted rules and regulations. Many games start at the recreational level and then, because of their popularity, become established as formal games. e.g. Inter-lacrosse.

### Summary

**Formal games** are too complex for entry-level players, and players who are pushed ahead before they are ready tend to be left out of the play and lose interest. Conversely, players who are held back will become bored. The answer is to continually match the players with the games they want to play.

## Which Game to Play

### Box, Field or Inter-Lacrosse

All programs are **Athlete Centred** which means the games are adapted to the needs and age of the players and the focus of the coach is on teaching skills and facilitating participation rather on "winning". At the entry levels they all emphasize

- Non-contact
- The teaching and learning of the fundamentals
- The enjoyment of learning by playing
- FairPlay
- Adapting game rules to meet the needs of the players.

The determining factors are usually the venue and the players the programs are targeted for. However, until players reach the competitive level of development there should be no reason to have to make a distinction between programs.

- **Inter lacrosse** is designed for immediate participation at the recreational level of competition and is currently being used in schools and recreational centers, and at community to international levels of play. The stick is designed to make passing and catching relatively easy so that players can focus on playing rather than on skill development. The Inter-lacrosse manual has an abundance of interesting and challenging lead-up and minor games that make learning fun.
- Organized minor lacrosse offers programs in men's and women's field lacrosse as well as in box lacrosse. At the entry level, the only difference between these programs will be the surface of the venue. Coaches that were using the Inter-lacrosse sticks for five and six-year olds are now being encouraged to use Jr. sized field sticks instead.

*Question*

*What are the advantages of using field sticks instead of inter-lacrosse sticks?*

## EQUIPMENT

### Lacrosse Sticks and Balls

Box and Field  
Lacrosse

Stick preparation: The mesh pockets of new sticks have to be reset because they are too tight when new. Loosen the lace that holds the pocket in place and using a ball, form a pocket that is slightly deeper at the throat. Before tying the laces, make sure the ball will roll smoothly out of the pocket. The pocket and lacing will stretch through use and therefore will need to be reset from time to time.

Balls Coaches of 5 and 6 year-olds and recreational beginners can use a dense sponge rubber ball instead of the lacrosse ball. The ball is easier to control and reduces the fear of being hit.

Inter-lacrosse

The Inter-lacrosse sticks have a one-piece molded plastic head and pocket that makes it easy to throw using upper body rotations only. Because this is the throwing action of most beginners, coaches must pay special attention to developing a throwing action that includes a weight shift from the back to front with some hip rotation.

## Protective Equipment

Inter-lacrosse,  
5 & 6 year-olds (Mini-tykes),  
Recreational lacrosse &  
Women's field lacrosse

No protective equipment is required for lacrosse that does not have contact or stick checking: Inter, women's field and Mini-tyke lacrosse. For box and men's field lacrosse, the skill level of the players, the composition of the ball, the type of contact and the intensity of the games determine the pads that are required. Because of what young players can and need to learn, and because the equipment interferes with the development of skills, it is recommended that there is no contact and therefore no major equipment required up to the age of eight with the following exceptions:

- elbow and knee pads to protect young children when they are playing on hard surfaces.
- the regulations of sport governing bodies.
- young children who are mixed with older players of higher level of play.

7 & 8 year-olds (Tyke) &  
Older players in their second year of play.

Use helmets, face mask, gloves, jock or jill straps, elbow pads and knee pads if playing on a hard surface. When players are using this level of protection, the rules that prevent contact must be strictly taught and enforced.

*Note: Uninformed coaches and parents of young box players will push for more contact and therefore more padding and stick checking. This manual will explain why such a decision will severely interfere with player development, and will give coaches many things to teach before contact is introduced.*

**Stick checking and push checking are not recommended for Mini-tykes and first year Tykes. Lacrosse is a running game and players must learn how to dodge around their checks on offence and how to stay with their checks on defence. Chasing after a player to get the ball is a different concept and programs counter productive habits.**

9 & 10 year-olds (Novice) &  
Older players in their third year of play

Mouth guards, back and kidney pads (box) and upper arm protectors are to be added to the above equipment lists. Players that start the program at five will now be ready for the one-on-one contact of the push check and of the competition for loose balls. Older players of the house leagues will reach this stage after two or three years depending on the level of coaching.

## GLOSSARY

### General Terms

Cooperative games	Games where two or more players work to achieve a common goal
Formal games	The games of organized sport which have rules that are universally accepted and administered by a controlling body.
Interactive Games	Games where players pursue individual challenges or work with a partner to achieve a goal.
Minor Games	Games that are designed to focus on one or two skills and to promote activity and fun. Minor games have only a few rules, can be cooperative or competitive and are flexible enough to meet the needs of the players.

### Defensive Terms

Clamping	The act of placing the defensive stick over the top of the offensive stick using the head of the stick.
Contain	The close checking of a player thus denying that player passes, catches, shots or passing lanes.
Defensive Stance	Knees bent, feet shoulder length apart, lead foot slightly ahead stick held to match the opponent's stick .
Man short/short handed/ Man-down	A situation where one team has fewer players allowed on the floor than the opponent.

### Offensive Terms

Ball Cut	The act of an offensive player moving past the defensive player to receive a pass for a shot.
Cradling	The rocking of the stick to gain feel and control of the ball in the stick.
Dodge	A one-on-one move where a deliberate step is taken in one direction followed by an explosive step in the opposite direction

Face-off	One method of starting or restarting play. See "draw".
Draw	The act of pulling and turning the stick during a face-off.
Fast Break	The rapid attack which occurs during the transition from defense to offense
Left Hander	The player's left hand is at the top or throat of the stick. I
Out of bounds	The area of the arena, box or field designated as non-playable.
Motion Offence	A continuous pattern of player and ball movement around a goal that keeps the floor balanced. In Pre-level 1, the motion offence is used as a teaching tool and as a method of organizing learning activities that are game specific.
Passing Lane	The path the ball would be traveling as it is passed from player to player.
Pivot	The act of rotating or turning on one foot or leg.
Power Play	The situation when one team. has a player advantage as a result of a penalty
Right Hander	The player's right hand at the top or throat of the stick.
Scoop	The act of moving the head of the stick parallel to the ground in a forward motion to pick up the ball.
Strong Side	The side of the floor with the floor that has the extra player .

## MODULE 2 THE FUNDAMENTALS

**Goal:** To ensure that coaches understand the correct technique for demonstrating and executing the fundamentals of lacrosse.

**Objectives:** To provide coaches with the steps for executing the fundamentals.

To provide coaches with information that will help them solve the problems associated with learning.

---

### Introduction

*Learning how to teach the fundamentals is as much about learning why skills are not performed well as it is about understanding the how. To correct errors, coaches must understand two things: the cause of the error and the readiness of the player to make the correction. (It will help if coaches can relate to their own experiences such as when a golf instructor gave them the right correction at the right time.)*

*Players who are born with a natural athleticism intuitively notice or feel how to use their whole body to generate force. The rest of the players use just their arms for throwing, (or legs if kicking) and thereby leave out the contribution of the legs, hips and shoulders. When this concept is not addressed, players never succeed as athletes because they never develop the feel associated with performance.*

*Other factors that effect performance are motivation, maturity, strength and flexibility. The Theory component of this manual explains the progression of readiness children go through and how coaches can help their players through each phase of development. Too many coaches ignore these factors and push players into games that are beyond their abilities. The result causes frustration, anxiety, loss of esteem and eventually the players to give up.*

*Therefore, learning about how not to perform skills, leads to the questions of why, which results in the coach understanding the player. This is athlete centred coaching, and is learning how to teach players rather than just the skills of lacrosse.*

## THE OFFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS<sup>2</sup>

### The Ready Position

The Ready Position is the way to hold the stick in preparation for catching or checking. The fundamentals can be performed more effectively from this basic stance.



1. Place the top hand below the throat of the stick, about 1/3 of the way down the shaft.
2. Place the bottom hand near the butt end. (Hand spacing depends on the size of the person.)
3. The top hand indicates whether the player is right or left handed. Allow the players to experiment to determine which hand feels more comfortable.
4. Bend the arm of the top hand.
5. Position the head of the stick slightly in front of the shoulder and at eye level.

### Common Faults

- Holding the stick with both arms hanging straight down, which results in the stick being parallel to the floor or the head pointing down.
- Holding the stick with one hand and the head of the stick resting on the floor.

### Carrying the Stick and Cradling

When carrying the stick, the left arm (right handed players) is straight, thus positioning the head of the stick at shoulder height and the handle diagonally across the body. This is a more comfortable and relaxed position than the ready position.

When Carrying the ball, the natural back and fourth movement of the arm will cause the ball to pop out of the stick. Cradling is the rolling of the wrists in sync with the movement of the arms to keep the ball in the stick.



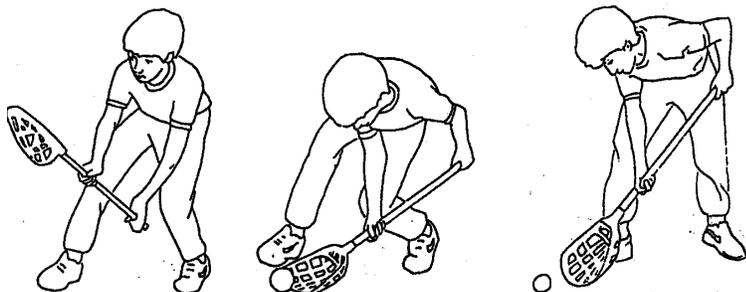
1. Keep the bottom hand loose in order to allow the shaft to rotate.
2. Place the top hand near the throat.
3. Place both thumbs along the shaft, not around it.
4. When the arm moves back, extend the wrist. When the arm moves forward flex the wrist, thereby creating a cradling or rocking movement.
5. The arms should be held close to the body.

## Common Faults of Cradling

- Moving the arm back and fourth and not flexing the wrist.
- Tension in the wrist.
- The lack of coordination.

*To develop the coordination to cradle the ball, have the player hold the stick with the top hand only. Move the arm back and forth in slow motion so the flexing and extending of the wrist can be coordinated. As coordination develops, speed up the movement and then add the bottom hand.*

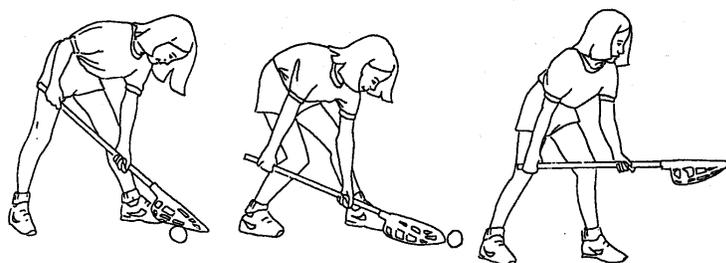
## Scoping



1. Position the instep of the right foot beside the ball (left for left handers).
2. Bend the knees to get the butt of the stick as low as possible keeping head down and eyes on the ball.

3. Push off the back foot to accelerate through the ball.
4. Return to the Ready Position.

## Roll and Scoop



1. Place the mouth of the stick on top of the ball.
2. Pull the stick back alongside the body, rolling the ball backwards.
3. Drop the mouth of the stick behind the rolling ball, allowing it to roll over the mouth of the stick.

4. Scoop as before and return to the *Ready Position*.

### Common Faults of Scooping

- Not bending the knees.
- The handle of the stick being more vertical than it is parallel to the ground.
- Not accelerating the stick head through the ball.



### Catching

1. Start in the *Ready Position* and slide the top hand to the throat of the stick.
2. Present a target by extending the stick head up and in the direction of the passer.
3. Move the head, like a glove into the path of the ball and watch the ball fall into the stick,
4. Cushion the incoming ball by bringing the stick back to the *Ready Position* as the ball enters the stick.

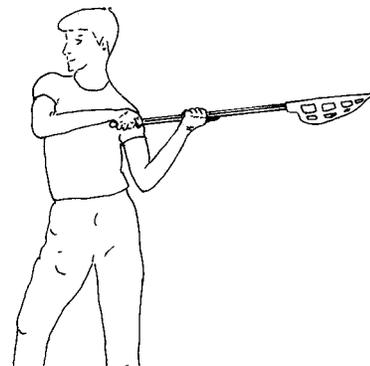
### Common Faults

- Hitting at the ball instead of letting the ball fall into the pocket.

*By the time players come to lacrosse they have had experience in other sports where hitting an object is the main fundamental. Therefore, their coordination has been developed for striking but not for catching. Another consideration for young players is that their ability to predict the flight of a ball that is moving towards them is just developing. Both of these issues can be addressed by using good teaching progressions starting with catching: a rolling ball, a bouncing ball, a ball in front, and finally a lobbed ball at shoulder*

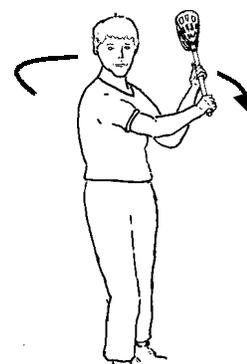
## Throwing

1. Turn so that the shoulder is facing the target.
2. Extend the arms straight back with the elbow pointing at the target.
3. Start the throwing action by rotating the hips and shoulders while stepping onto the front foot.
4. Follow through in the direction of the target.



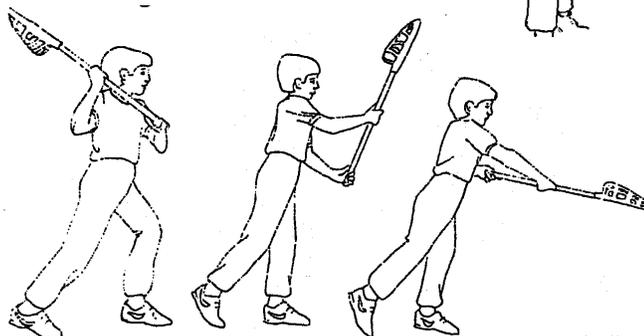
## Shooting and throwing long passes

1. To exert the force required for shooting and for throwing longer passes use the larger muscles of the legs and trunk.
2. For added speed, snap the hips around to face the target.
3. For added accuracy, keep the hands soft. See **Relaxation** in **Module 7** common Faults.



## Common Faults

- Lining up with the chest facing the target.
- Pushing with the top hand.
- Using the arms and not the body to generate the force.
- Not transferring the weight from back to front.
- Throwing off of the wrong foot.



*Lining up to pass or shoot by facing the target all but eliminates the body as a producer of force, thereby leading players: to use their arms to throw, to push with the top hand, and to wind up by dropping the head of the stick or taking it around behind the head.*

*To give the feel of using all of the body parts, hold the head of the players stick when they are preparing to throw and have them pull as hard as they can. Then gradually let the stick move so the players can get the feel. Then have them repeat the feeling when they are throwing.*

## THE DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

*Over the last few decades defence in lacrosse has been a neglected fundamental. The result has been a defence that has degenerated into stick swinging, slashing and indiscriminate hitting with the cross-check. It has created a very negative image of lacrosse and portrays a very poor defensive model for players and coaches.*

*Parents and coaches must be aware that habits are very difficult to break and therefore, the defensive model described above is not to be used in minor lacrosse. Defence in lacrosse is no different than in other sports where the basic defensive fundamental is position. Football uses the idea of keeping the hips square to the direction of movement of the offensive player, and Coaches of young basketball players work very hard to keep their players from "reaching in" after the ball. Both these concepts are powerful tools lacrosse coaches can use to teach their players proper guarding techniques.*

### Coaches of entry level players, must clearly understand that:

Good defensive position will keep the offensive players from:

**Going** where they want to go,  
**Passing** when and where they want to pass,  
**Shooting** when and from where they want to shoot,

and players will learn how to cause:

**Bad** passes,  
**Weak** shots,  
**Frustration.**

Going after the player to:

**Give** the extra push or hit,  
**Hit** the stick,

gives up strong defensive position and makes the defender vulnerable.

(See Practice Planner # 5 on teaching defense)

# **PRE-LEVEL 1**

# **PRACTICAL**

## MODULE 3 PLANNING AND EVALUATION

**Goal** To provide coaches with the steps for preparing, planning and evaluating practices and for the evaluation that leads to higher levels of coaching

**Objectives** Coaches will be able to:

- Set the objectives for their practices
- Plan their practices using the Practice Planners as their guide
- Evaluate their practices
- Evaluate their performance at the end of the season,
- Be confident that they have followed the FairPlay and Coaching Codes.

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## INTRODUCTION

*The **Practical** component is an integral part of the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). It is where coaches use the information from the **Theory** and the **Technical** components to first plan and conduct practices, and then, through regular evaluation, go through the steps of developing their own coaching skills*

*The theme of the Pre-level 1 Manual is that learning is experiential. **Module 3, Planning and Evaluation**, defines the step-by-step process from how coaches can start their own learning to how they should finish each season. (**Module 8** gives more information on how coaches can take control of their learning and thereby avoid getting into a routine of coaching the same way year after year.)*

*The content for each practice is in **Module 4, The Practice Planners**, where coaches will find a systematic approach to teaching each of the fundamentals and the related team concepts. For further help on developing practice content, coaches will find the **Inter-lacrosse Manual** to be an excellent source of minor games and activities. The **Inter-lacrosse Manual** is a valuable tool that coaches can use to keep practices active and enjoyable.*

## GETTING READY TO COACH

### Step 1

The first practice will involve getting the feel of the stick and ball. Watch the players to see what they can do: the players will be watching the coach and others to see how to do it.

To prepare for the first two weeks, read **Module 2, The Fundamentals**, and practice the skills at the same level as the players.

#### Coaching Tips

- *Find a beginner, your child or a friend, to practice your teaching and demonstration skills.*
- *Take note of the parts of the skill that cause problem: these will become the key teaching points.*
- *Notice how slowly you have to demonstrate so that the new players can see and feel what you are doing.*
- *Keep the manual handy.*

### Step 2

Plan the practice. Keep managerial duties short and to the point. If you don't have a manager or have not had a chance to talk to the parents, then set a time for a coach/parent meeting. Do not use practice time to talk to parents.

Some players may need help ( i.e. with loose balls, having someone to pass and catch). Invite interested parents to assist you. (When you have time, see the section on using and mentoring parents in Module 8.

#### Coaching Tips

- *Review and write down the introductory activities for at least the first four fundamentals as you will not know how much material you will need.*
- *For the warm-up, use one of the activities that everyone can do and that will get everyone active.*
- *Use the mirror games to introduce the skills.*
- *Use the more experienced players to lead the groups and to share their expertise. This will keep them from getting bored.*
- *Plan 5 to 10 minutes for each activity*

### Step 3

Check the equipment bag:

Balls

Extra sticks

First-aid Kit

Repair kit for the stick, and equipment.

Coaching aids.

**Step 4**

Phone a reminder to the players the day before the practice.

**Step 5**

Before the first practice, read the FairPlay Codes, particularly items 3, 4 and 5.

**FairPlay Code For Parents<sup>3</sup>**

1. I will not force my child to participate in sports.
2. I will remember that my children play sport for their enjoyment.
3. I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
4. I will teach my child that doing one's best is more important than winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game/event.
5. I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
6. I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing.
7. I will applaud good plays by members of both teams.
8. I will criticize the coach but will discuss concerns and the welfare of my child in an open, respectful and dignified way.

**FairPlay Code for Coaches**

1. I will follow the Harassment Policy
2. I will be reasonable when scheduling games and practices, remembering that young athletes have other interests and obligations.
3. I will ensure that all athletes get equal instruction, support and playing time.
4. I will not ridicule or yell at my athletes for making mistakes or for performing poorly.
5. I will remember there is a reason for failure, it is a part of the learning process and it is my responsibility as a coach to define the problem and find the solution.
6. I will remember the game is for the athletes and the goals that I set will reflect the needs of the players rather than my personal goals.
7. I will teach my players to play fairly and to follow the FairPlay Code for Players.
8. I will not pressure my players to perform at levels I have not prepared them for or in a way that will jeopardize their safety.
9. I will not allow players to harass or put each other down. (See the Harassment Policy)
10. I will be open to communication with parents and will enforce the Parent coaching codes

## PLANNING

*Plan the meeting with the parents, the managers and assistant coaches. Module 8 on Coaching has a section on how to include parents in the program. Do not use practice time to organize parents.*

### Plan the Practices

Objectives	<p>Set a specific objective for what is to be achieved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Objectives are based on information from previous practices or games.</li> <li>⇒ Share the objectives with the players (post the practice planner).</li> </ul>
Warm-up	<p>Relate the warm-up to the objective of the practice</p> <p>Example: When the objective is to work on passing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Incorporate body rotation and flexibility in the warm-up.</li> <li>⇒ Use footwork drills to get the feeling of weight transfer.</li> </ul>
Teaching the Skill	<p>Plan how to teach the skill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Plan how the skill will be demonstrated so that the players become interested in trying it.</li> <li>⇒ Plan the minor games and drills that will teach the skill.</li> <li>⇒ Modify the activities for the different skill levels.</li> <li>⇒ Organize enough groups so that everyone is involved in the play.</li> </ul>
Fitness	<p>Combine fitness with the fun activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Read Module 6 , Physical Development</li> </ul>
Cool-down	<p>Allow time for Players to adjust physically and mentally to their next activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Warm-up and Cool-down are periods of transition.</li> <li>⇒ Review the things the players enjoyed most about the practice and what they would like to do more of.</li> <li>⇒ Make announcements and give reminders.</li> </ul>

## EVALUATE THE PRACTICE

### Becoming a Good Coach?

#### Evaluating practices

To evaluate a practice, ask key questions:

- Was everyone active? Happy? If not, why not? What would improve the situation?
- Did some players need more help or practise in some areas? Identify and group according to their needs.
- Were the better players active and challenged? Identify and group according to their needs.
- Were you happy with the flow, the interest or with the excitement?
- What did the players learn?
- Who was having the most fun?
- What comes next?

*The answers to these questions become the base for the next practice. If your practice did not go well, you will have to review more of the manual. As you progress, you will get new ideas that you will want to confirm and/or more problems you will need to find solutions for. Read the manual: it is about coaching, learning and playing; and attempts to present the information in the order that you will need it. As you will have noticed from the introduction, the approach to coaching that the manual recommends may be different from the way you were coached and it will be helpful if you know why your practices are great and when they are not so great.*

## EVALUATE THE SEASON

### Are you a good coach?

How did you do

Did all the players enjoy themselves? Do they want to continue playing lacrosse?

Did you enjoy yourself?

How much did the players learn?

Did you and the parents follow the FairPlay Codes?

Could you do better given what you now know?

Do you understand the concept of using games rather than drills to teach?

What were the players doing when they had the most fun?

Did you allow the players to make up their own interactive<sup>4</sup> games? If not why not? If you did, what were some of the better games that you used?

Coaching  
Tips

- *Reread the **Theory Component** and relate the information of how and what players learn with what happened in your practices.*
- *Read the FairPlay Codes to ensure you and your parents were involved for the right reasons?*
- *Did you experience frustration, anger or disgust? If so, you may be just learning how to be patient and how to coach, or you may be putting your own needs to achieve and win ahead of the need of the players for fun and to learn.*
- *Make a list of some new things you would like to try in order to improve your coaching, increase the rate that the players are learning or to add more enjoyment.*
- *Set your objectives for next season while your coaching experience is still fresh in your mind.*
- **Remember:** *The seasonal objectives are your own personal objectives of how to improve and not player objectives of what the player are to achieve.*

This completes your season of coaching. You may be requested to submit the official self-evaluation form to receive your certification, but it will only be for your first year at Pre-Level 1. The rest of the time you will be setting objectives and writing evaluations for yourself.

## EVALUATION FORM

Name of the coach \_\_\_\_\_ Association \_\_\_\_\_

Division Coached \_\_\_\_\_ Number of players on the team \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions to be consider:

- The objectives you set out to achieve.
- A brief (point form) summary of what the players learned during the season.
- A statement of the problems or difficulties encountered.
- What will you do differently next year?
- A statement of what the Instructor and/or the Coaching Association can do to make the job of coaching young children easier.
- Samples of two Practice Planners

### My objectives for the season were:

### My successes were:

**Next year I want to try:**

**What program changes or additions would you like to see?**

Coach \_\_\_\_\_ Association \_\_\_\_\_

Association Official \_\_\_\_\_

**MODULE 4****THE PRACTICE PLANS**

**Goal** To provide coaches with a model for making learning to play lacrosse fun.

**Objectives** For coaches to be able to:

- Plan and run practices that keep all players active
- Use a variety activities and games to teach skills,
- Use learning activities that are progressive and are suitable for the age and ability of the players.

---

## Introduction

*The Practice Plans illustrate how to teach beginners in a way that supports the play to learn philosophy of coaching. They are organized so that:*

- *Each one represents one of the fundamentals or one of the specific elements of a lacrosse game.*
- *Skills are presented in a progressive manner,*
- *Content of one practice leads to the content of the following practice.*
- *The content of each practice is based on the skills developed in the previous practices.*
- *Each practice has a variety of activities so that new players as well as the more experienced can be challenged.*
- *Coaching tips, and teaching techniques are included with each practice.*

*The Practice Plans do not represent single practices, but rather the full teaching progressions for each fundamental. When they start out, coaches can use the introductory activities of each practice plan. Then once all the fundamentals have been presented they can return to the practice plans as needed.*

*Young players may take two or three years before they will do all the activities. Older players, however, can get through them in two to three weeks and will move very quickly into playing at the recreational level.*

*With experience, coaches will create their own practice plans by mixing and matching games and drills to keep their practices interesting and challenging. The methods of teaching and organizing the material are fundamental to all coaching and coaches of players up to twelve years of age can use the Pre-level 1 concepts to develop their own teaching systems.*

## **PRACTICE 1 — PICK-UPS**

### **OBJECTIVES**

The players will be able to:

- toss the ball in the air and catch it in their stick;
- scoop a stationary ball so that it stays in the stick;
- perform all movements with the stick in either hand;
- move about in a restricted space without interfering with each other,

### **INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY**

**Spread the players out double stick length apart.**

**Mirror Games:** The players imitate the actions of the coach. Each player has a ball. The purpose is to develop a feel for the ball in the stick and to find out how to best control the ball.

- Hold the stick in different positions — use both hands and switch hands.
- Slide the hands to different positions on the handle.
- Have the players imitate and then have different players lead the action.

#### **Toss and Catch:**

- Toss the ball into the air and let it fall back into the stick;
- Let the players explore to develop medium and high tosses;
- Toss, bounce and catch;
- Walk, toss and catch: create awareness of other players and the open spaces

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Scooping**

**Discovery Method of Teaching:** Children learn through experimentation, exploration and imitation. Coaches can take advantage of this natural learning style by guiding their players through discovery type activities. **Example.**

- Give an instruction on what has to be accomplished. i.e. pick up the ball with the stick
- Challenge the players to find another method to pick up the ball or to find as many methods as they can.
- Group the players for individuals to demonstrate the methods that works the best.
- Identify players who: have their top hand at the throat of the stick; their strong side foot beside the ball and who scoop with an accelerating movement.

## **Scooping**

Through exploration develop the following fundamentals of scooping:

- best foot movement and placement;
- fast or slow scooping motion to pick up the ball;
- flexed arm or straight arms to get control of the ball;
- scooping right handed or left handed.

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

### **Scoop, toss in the air and catch**

- Refine the skills of those that are having difficulties;
- Have the players develop a sequence of scooping, tossing, bouncing and catching.

### **Scoop and run shuttle relay** (see below)

- Use both hands i.e. right hand on first carry and left hand on the second carry etc.

### **The pick-up game** (see below)

- Pick first ball up right hand, the next ball left etc.

### **Scoop & Run Shuttle Relay**

- The players line up in teams of four with half the team on each side of the floor.
- A ball is placed at the feet of the first player who scoops it, carries it across the floor and places it at the feet of the player at the front of the line.
- The players shuttle back and forth until the coach stops the play.
- What energy system is being trained in this drill?

### **The Pick-up Game**

- All the balls are thrown out onto the floor
- The players are divided into two teams, one at each end of the floor or along each side of the box or arena.
- The players scoop up the balls, one at a time, bring them back to throw them in their goal. A coach counts the goals and puts the ball back into play.

### **Variations: The Pick-up and Shoot Game**

- The players throw the balls into the opponents goal.
- After the players are taught the **Keep-out Game** (Practice 5) they can defend their own goal.

## **PRACTICE 2 — CARRYING & CRADLING**

### **OBJECTIVES**

The players will be able to carry and cradle the ball with either hand.

### **INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY**

Toss, catch, bounce and scoop review:

- have the players spread out in the practice space;
- have the players demonstrate their best tricks. i.e. Get the players to show what they did in the last practice.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

Develop the rocking motion for cradling — no ball:

- hold the stick at the throat with the favoured hand with the handle hanging straight down to the ground;
- demonstrate wrist extension and flexion as the arm is moved back and forth across the body;
- develop moving the stick to all positions while flexing and extending the wrist;
- change hands and repeat;
- change hands and check the wrist flexibility of the players;
- co-ordinate the rhythm of the arm swing with the wrist action;
- add the bottom hand and repeat the above exercises.

### **Cradling the Ball**

- Repeat the above drills with the ball — develop the feel of the centrifugal force that holds the ball in the stick;
- Refine the skills of those that are having difficulties,

### **LEARNING ACTIVITY**

#### **Relay Shuttle Game**

**Taxi Cab Game** (see the next page)

- The players work in pairs, the passenger has the ball and is cradling it as he/she runs;
- The driver chooses the path. When they get near the boards the passenger rolls the ball to the boards. The driver “scoops” it up and now becomes the passenger and follows the new driver.

## POSITIONAL GAMES

**Taxi Cab Game** or (Shuttle Craft Game or ... have players choose the type of vehicle and the names of the crew). This game, the **Bus Game** and the **Aeroplane Game** are formation games to teach spatial awareness, teamwork and the concept of floor position. These games also make use of the players' visualization skills and when the players are allowed to make decisions of where they want to go or what they want to do, the games become self-directed.

### The Taxi Cab and Bus Game

The **Taxi Cab** and **Bus Games** are follow the leader games where one player (the driver) leads the group (the passengers) around the floor as directed by the coach or the imagination of the driver. The challenge of the game is for the players to carry out the instructions of the coach while maintaining a specific distance from the other players. The vehicles can move in either direction i.e. the passenger becomes the driver and the driver the passenger

### The Airplane Game

The formation of the airplane uses all five runners and is similar to the way a coach might want the players to move up and down the floor. It can be used to teach team work in picking up loose balls, as a break-out pattern or in getting back to the defensive zone. The formation is a Diamond and One. If the players can come up with a space age craft that would use a Box and One the result would be more applicable to the needs of Lacrosse.



The airplane can move in four different directions with the direction of movement determining which player is the nose. i.e. The formation can move to the side boards for a loose ball and the wing becomes the nose; a pass can then be made up to the wing for a break-out and the wing becomes the nose again.

## **PRACTICE 3 — CATCHING**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The players will be able to:

- catch a lob pass, a bouncing ball and a rolling ball
- cradle the ball in the stick while running.

### **INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES**

- Cradle the ball while running and weaving around floor markers (parents or older children can be used as floor markers).
- Bounce and catch.
- High toss and catch.
- Run and scoop.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

- Have the players choose partners, use one ball and space them about two to three metres apart.

**Choosing Partners** — Where players are too young or are new to the game and don't have the skill to even toss an under handed pass, use older players or parents as the partner. At the beginning level of catching, the throwing will be done by hand because a hand thrown ball is more consistent and is easier for young children to track.

**Guided Discovery Method of Teaching** The following set of instructions is an example of the Discovery Method of teaching how to catch the ball.

- The idea is to have the players find the best way to throw the ball to their partner so the partner can catch the ball.
- Before the activity starts give, the instruction to “**find the best way to catch each of the passes**”. Identify the players **that have their top hand up near the throat of the stick**.
- **Also note** that some players may have to stay with the first two activities for several weeks. Use a catching activity along with the introductory activities of Practice 4 to 9 and then when the players are ready, revisit each Practice Plan for the more complex skills.
- The more experienced players can follow the progressions until they reach their level difficulty.

### **Preliminary Activities** (for the new player)

- Throw the ball by first rolling it and then bouncing it so it goes to the player.
- Vary the distance and the speed.
- Throw the ball so the player has to move to get it.
- Pick out the players that are having the most success and ask the players to identify what the successful players are doing that helps them catch the ball.

### **Catching the Lob Pass**

- Demonstrate holding the stick in the neutral position and how to move the stick to catch a lob pass
- The pass is made so the ball comes down in front of the player.
- After a few passes have been thrown, ask the players to find ways to keep the ball in the stick as the ball enters the pocket.
- Vary the height of the ball and the distance that it is thrown.

### **Catching the straight on pass**

- Throw the ball with less arc so that it goes more directly to the player.
- Gradually decrease the arc until it is taking the most direct route to the pocket of the stick.
- As the above progression is taking place draw the attention of the players to the receiving hand and how it has to be moved to:
  - ⇒ improve co-ordination (move the top hand to the throat of the stick)
  - ⇒ absorb the force of the ball .
- By asking them to **find the best way to keep the ball in the stick gets the players to think about the process.**

### **LEARNING ACTIVITY**

- In groups of three and with an assistant coach, the players will catch a bouncing ball, roll the ball to the coach and return to the end of the line.
- The coach will roll, bounce and lob the ball so the players have to run for them. Make the distances long enough so the coach has only one player in front of him at one time.
- Modify the activity by having the players take one step towards the passer before the ball is thrown. Moving to meet the ball is one of the fundamentals of catching that must be made into an automatic response.
- Finish the practice with games of the players' choice. As more activities are introduced players will have a greater selection to choose from and the coach will be able to allow more opportunity for choice. (This strategy also teaches players games they can play at home with their friends.)

## PRACTICE 4 — THROWING

### OBJECTIVES:

The players will be able to throw the ball to a coach, the wall or the goal.

### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- As the players come into the practice have them pick a partner and any game they want to play. Spread them out throughout the floor area.
- With the players in groups of three and with a coach tossing the ball, have the players illustrate their best catches -- catch low, medium and high passes.
- Practice the shoulder high passes.
- Catch and cradle.

### SKILL DEVELOPMENT

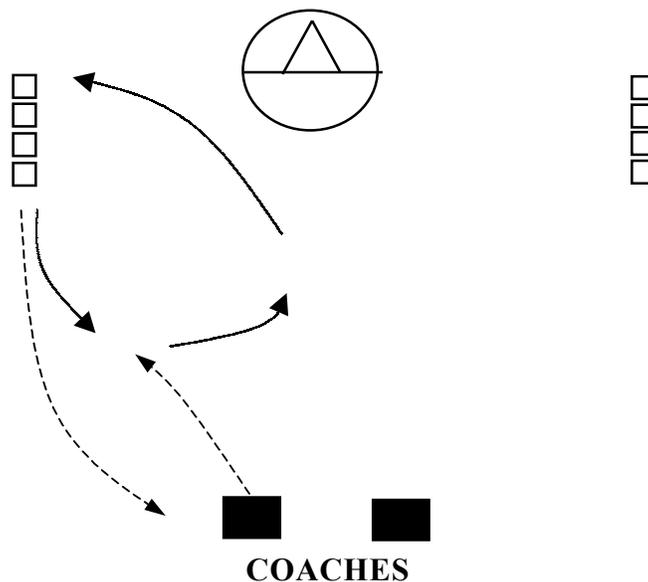
- Have the players form a large circle- no balls.
- Have the players demonstrate their best throwing action (without the ball).
- Demonstrate the teeter-totter action and have them practice.
- Have the players demonstrate how they would put the teeter-totter and the throw together.
- Acknowledge the players (by using them as models) that:
  - ⇒ have their shoulder to the target,
  - ⇒ have the stick straight back at chest height with the **leading elbow up**,
  - ⇒ shift their weight from back to front,
  - ⇒ come straight forward on the throw.
- Wall pass: Have the players mime throwing the ball off the wall. With the ball, have the players practice their throw and catch. The coaches stand behind the players to help with missed catches and to prompt the teaching points.

Stop the play to acknowledge the players that slide the top hand to the throat to catch and move it back down the handle to throw.

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

- Pass (to a coach), run to an opening, catch the return pass and then shoot (at the goal or a target)
- Experiment with different distances and different types of passes.
- Two Line Throwing Game — Divide the players into two teams, each in one half of the floor and with half of the balls. Without going past the 10 second lines the players throw the balls into the opposing end. For safety, have each team throw the balls from the right side of the floor. (Players should first practice watching for the thrown balls while they are retrieving the loose balls.)

### Pass and Catch (game simulation of a "give & go" )



#### Setting up the Activity Example of a drill Progression from simple to complex

- Each player has a ball.
- The activity is timed so that only one player at a time is breaking in on net.
- The player at the head of the line passes to the coach, follows the pass, receives a return pass and then returns to the back of the line.
- The return pass is made while the player is still at the side of the goal as in Fig. 1. Do not let the players move in front of the goal to receive the ball as this will limit the shooting choices of the cutter in a game situation.
- Both sides of the goal and both goals are used. No more than four players in a line is recommended and two or three are better. Groups can be set up in the centre of the floor if more space is necessary.
- As soon as the players understand the routine the defensive players can be added. The defensive players do not interfere with the passing. Their objective is to practise their footwork and the concentration required to stay between the check and the goal at all times.

(see Practice #5)

- Once the players have developed the skill to pass and catch accurately a player can be substituted for the coach.
- The final step is to eliminate the player at the point position and use one ball. Have the players pass from one line to the other. The sequence is a simple give and go with no return pass to the ball cutter. (The more advanced players can fake the pass to the ball cutter.

#### Pass, Catch and Shoot

- At any time in the progression the coach can change the activity to a shooting drill.

## PRACTICE 5 — CHECKING

**OBJECTIVES:**

The players will be able to:

- mirror a partner's moves using slide steps;
- block a players progress using body position.
- stay between a partner and the goal while following the partner around the floor.

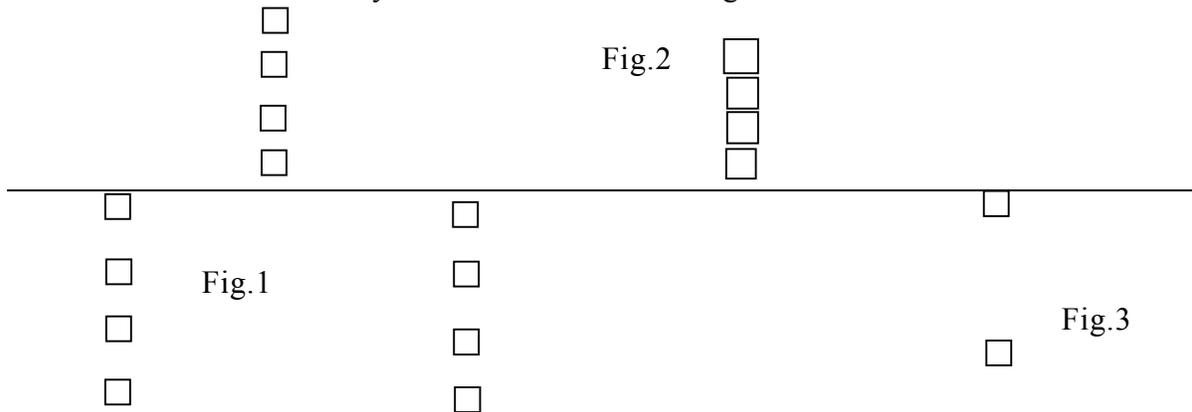
**INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY**

**Movement Drills**

- Have the players form groups of four to make a Bus with a driver and four passengers.
- Spread the players an arm plus stick length apart and give each player a ball.
- Have the driver lead anywhere on the floor with the passengers following. The players are to maintain their distances apart and cradle the ball so it won't fall out.
- Call out the instructions for stopping, starting; running, walking, hopping skipping; going forward, backwards and sideways. Check the flexibility of the wrist and the co-ordination of the movement.

**Catching**

- Line the busses up with the drivers on the center line and the busses facing each other. Only the driver has a ball. Fig. 1



- Have the players make the smallest bus possible. Fig 2.
- Have the players make the biggest bus possible Fig. 3.
- Have the players first roll, then bounce a ball to each other. If one player misses it, the next one will pick it up.
- When introducing direct passes start with close enough, Fig.1, so the passes don't have to be thrown too hard..

## **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Keep-out Game.**

- Line the players up in pairs for a demonstration.
- Using the centre line, challenge a player to try to get past you to receive a pass from an assistant coach. Move to block his path and then let him go by.
- Ask the players what other lines could be used to play keep-out
- Send the players in pairs to find their own line, no ball, to see how long they can keep the offensive player from going around them.
- Have the players take turns at each position.
- Call the players back to demonstrate their best moves. Tell them to experiment to find the best way to get around their checks and the best way to keep the players out.

### **Keep-out and Shoot Game**

When there is not enough room at each goal to play shooting games, the coach can either set up targets mid floor or create stations where different games are played. The players would then alternate between stations.

- The players are matched in pairs on their appropriate side of the floor, just inside the face-off circle. (The coach can choose the appropriate distance from the goal for this game. By limiting the players to playing on their own side of the floor the two sides of the floor can be used at once and the players become conditioned to positional play)
- The offensive player is to create a way to get around the checking player and to take a shot on goal. Once the offensive player gets beside or ahead of the defensive player he/she is allowed to proceed to the goal for a shot. **(No stick checking)**. The defensive player moves back to the face-off circle and waits for a pass from the goalie or the offensive player.
- The offensive player retrieves a ball, passes it to her partner and then moves out to a defensive position.

### **Centre Floor Games:** Keep-out games with Passing and Catching games.

The assistant coach is a teammate and attempts to pass the ball to or receive a ball from the player. The game is for the defensive player to block the passing lane as the offensive player:

- moves to meet the pass,
- follows the pass,
- pass when in the open.

Designate a big spot on the wall as a target.

- The defensive player will keep his/her body between the offensive player and the goal while trying to impede the pass. The priority is to prevent the shot and not the pass.

## **PRACTICE 6 — DODGING**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The players will be able to dodge around players by changing direction quickly and deceptively.

### **INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY**

#### **Mirror Game — Cradling**

- Arrange the players in front of the coach and review cradling in all positions emphasizing the use of both hands;
- Speed up the transition from cradling right handed to cradling left handed until the players can switch from right hand to left hand to right hand etc. with a natural motion.

**Bus Game — Follow the Leader** Four players to a bus, players one stick length apart.

- The driver will lead anywhere on the floor creatively cradling the ball in different ways and hands.
- The players behind will copy.
- Change drivers by having the player at the back of the bus run to the front. Give everyone a turn.
- Finish by having all the buses angle park at the centre line with the drivers facing the coach.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

The following exercises will be a demonstration by the coach followed by the players copying.

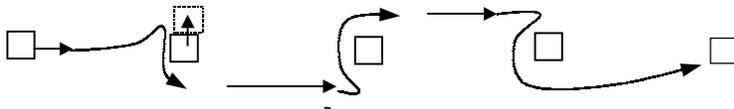
- Stand on the left leg with the knee slightly bent, stick in the left hand.
- Push off the left leg onto the right leg. Repeat to develop a rhythm.
- Repeat using the opposite leg and hand.
- Start as before, but bend the knee when landing on the right leg and immediately push off on the right leg, transferring the weight to the left.
- Repeat, taking one step at a time, to move the group in a zigzag pattern down the floor. Incorporate switching hands once the footwork and weight shift are in place.
- Demonstrate looking straight ahead on each dodge to make the defender think you are actually going in the direction you are facing.
- When the players get back to centre, have a player demonstrate his/her best fake in an attempt to get around the coach. The coach will go for the fake, thus opening up the lane for the player to run through.

- Line the players up in groups of four (bus formation), double stick length apart. Have the back player weave up through the bus making a fake at each passenger. The passenger will go for the fake. See Fig. 1
- When the teams get to the opposite end of the floor, review the techniques and challenge the players to improve their performance as they return.

### Teaching Points

- Absorb the forward motion by bending the knee.
- Look in the direction you are going to make the fake realistic.
- Approach slowly and then shift weight quickly.
- Switch hands to keep the body between the checker and the stick..

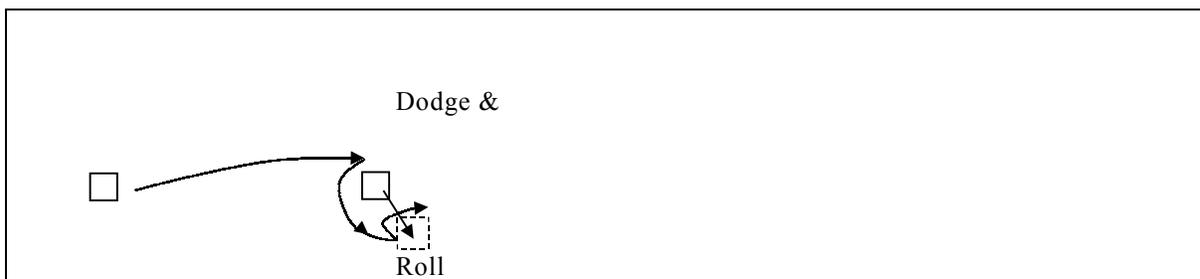
Fig. 1



### Dodge and Roll

- Pair the players up and select a player to check the coach.
- Demonstrate approaching the check, dodge right and then roll left by turning the back to the defensive player and going in the opposite direction. See Fig.2
- Have the players change positions.
- Develop dodging right and rolling left with a change of hands on the roll.
- Develop dodging left and rolling right with a change of hands on the roll.
- Challenge the players to find as many ways as they can to beat their check. Have them switch hands to keep their body between themselves and the defensive players.

Fig. 2



### ADVANCED LEARNING ACTIVITY

**One-on-one** One-on-one challenges with a shot on goal.

<b>PRACTICE 7 — GOALTENDING</b>
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**OBJECTIVE:**

The players will be able to demonstrate the basic goaltender stance, the footwork necessary to move to block shots to the bottom half of the goal and the use of the stick to block shots to the top of the goal.

**INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES for all players**

**Passing** Pair the players for passing drills.

**Teaching Points**

- Shoulder to the target.
- Weight shift from back to front.
- Shoulder turn to throw
- Follow through for lob pass
- Follow the pass with one step and follow the pass if it is missed.
- When receiving hold the stick near the throat and up for a target.

**Goaltender Movement Drills**

- The players will mirror the coach as the following exercises are demonstrated in varying combinations. The stick is held in the goaltending position so that it touches but does not rest on the floor.
- Slide step to the right, then to the left, turning to face the shooter each time
- Take one step forward to cut off the angle and then back.

**SKILL DEVELOPMENT for all players**

- Have the players gather in pairs for a demonstration.
- Demonstrate the basic goaltender position and then have the players show their best goaltender form.
- Using tennis balls or the equivalent have the players throw the ball with the stick or by hand to simulate the ball going to the corners of the goal.

**Teaching Points**

- Hold the stick at the throat and touching the floor
- Weight on the balls of the feet (knees slightly flexed)
- Feet shoulder width apart and back straight.

## Low shots

### Demonstration:

- After each time the goalie is to come back to the centre position.
- Demonstrate how the goalie is to slide the foot to the goal post and to use the body to stop the shot.

- Have the players do the drill and then switch roles.
- Instruct the players to alternate throwing to the left and right side of the goalie.
- Have the players choose whatever side they wish in an attempt to score. The ball is not to be thrown hard, the idea is to make the goalie move to make the stop

## High shots

- Group the players for a demonstration and show how to use the stick to block the high shots.
- Have the players do the drill as before but this time to the top corners.
- Finish the drill by having the players randomly choosing the corner to throw to.
- Get the players to find the goalies weakest area.

## Tykes and Goalies with pads

The above drills can be used at two levels where the ball is hand thrown for young players and stick thrown for older and more advanced players. As the players get older and more accurate with their shots the ball can be thrown harder and harder. At no time is the ball to be thrown so hard that the players lose control. **Make sure the force is generated by the movement of all body parts and not just the arms and that the players are looking at the goalie and throwing to the spaces.**

The training of the goaltender is always combined with the training of the shooters. By using the above progressions, both the shooters and the goaltenders get a chance to program the feel for their respective skills. See Practice 8 on Shooting.

**Teaching Points for Goaltenders** Goaltender skills should be drilled until they are automatic.

- ⇒ Line up on the shooters stick and not on the body.
- ⇒ Stay focused on the ball at all times.
- ⇒ Stay in motion, as the ball moves around the floor the goalie should always be adjusting position. i.e. as the ball move further away from the goal, the goalie should be moving out and vice-versa.
- ⇒ Goalies should always know where they are in relation to the goal.
- ⇒ Goalies should always be aware of players without the ball who are potential scoring threats.
- ⇒ Goalies must learn to relax as soon as the ball moves out of their zone and then refocus when it comes back in.

## PRACTICE 8 — SHOOTING

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The players will be able to control their shots and direct them to target areas in the goal.

(Remember: Shooting drills are also goaltender drills and therefore is advisable to have an assistant working with the goaltenders.

### **INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY:**

**Free Play:** The players choose their partners or groups and the activities they want to participate in. Some players may need direction. Play catch with some, start others shooting and others playing keep-out. The coaches help by checking the fundamentals, keeping the play safe and facilitating the sharing of space.

### **Passing and Catching**

- Using the boards and/or older players, coaches and parents check the passing technique of the players.
- Make sure the players are using all the joints possible and that the passes are being made with control.

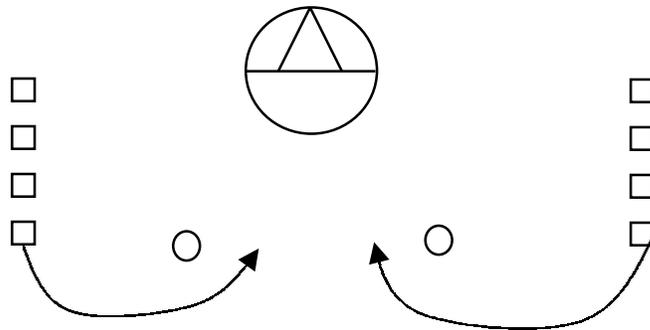
### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

**Note:** All shooting drills should be run from within the motion offence formation. The coach should have a method of marking the floor at the crease, shooter and point positions. i.e. chalk, cones, hoola hoops etc. The distances the floor markings are from the goal vary according to the age of the player and the needs of the drill. For example, in the following shooting games two additional markings are to be set up to indicate the path and shooting spots.

### **The Shooting Game**

- Line the players up on either side of the goal (i.e. right handers on left side etc.) Fig. 1
- Each player has a ball the sides take turns shooting.
- When everyone has shot, the balls will be recovered and the players return to their lines.
- The coach can incorporate the pick-game by throwing the balls in the net into the corners for the players to retrieve.

Fig. 1



### Teaching Progressions

- Once the players understand the movement pattern the coach can begin to develop the shooting skills.
- Targets can be placed in the corners and down the sides of the goal.
- The players can be challenged to find the best way to shoot for:
  - their most accurate shot
  - their hardest shot
  - their hardest and most accurate shot.
- The coach can periodically group the players to have individuals demonstrate their techniques for the other players to imitate. The coach should be looking for:
  - use of all the joints,
  - a follow through with the back foot (coming forward for recovery of balance) as well as with the stick and arms,
  - the lead elbow up and pointing toward the target,
  - the players trying not to shoot too hard or winding up too much. i.e. In the preparation phase the stick should be pointing straight back and should remain parallel to the floor and not wind around the body or point to the floor.

### Coaching Tips

- To develop technique, give enough time shooting at a specific target location before changing.
- Once the players have practised shooting at each target the coach can call out the target just before the players shoot. **(the Name and Shoot Game)**
- When using goalies, the players are to shoot controlled shots to the predetermined locations until the goalies get used to the movement required to stop the shot and to the speed and force of the ball.
- **It is important for the coach to start teaching looking at the goalie and visualizing the target and for the goalies to focus and line up on the stick**
- The Name (the spot) and Shoot Game is a good drill for both the shooters and goalies.
- Once the players and goalies are good, the coach can allow the players to spontaneously choose the target.
- Promote practising shooting with the weaker hand.

## PRACTICE 9 — FACE-OFFS

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The players will be able to put the ball into play with a face-off and work with a partner to get the ball to the goal after the face-off.

**Equipment:** To keep as many players active as possible and the playing area safe, the coach can use two extra goals or targets i.e. plastic garbage cans pieces of plywood etc.

### **INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY:**

- Long shot contest at the goals.
- Pass to the wall, catch then run and shoot at one of the targets. Have the players make up a game (a circuit) using right and left hands, rolling, dodging and combinations of all these moves.
- The non-dominant hand shooting contest.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT:**

- Gather the players for a demonstration of the face-off.

⇒ The sticks must be pulled straight back.  
⇒ Make sure the players don't tense up. Use the heavy arm and big breath relaxation exercise.

- Pair the players using parents as officials etc. to practice face-offs.

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

#### **Face-off, pass and shoot:**

- The player **not** getting the face-off runs to an open area and waits for a pass, if the pass is caught the player goes to the goal and shoots; if the pass is missed, both players chase the loose ball, the one that does not get it runs to the goal and once again looks for the pass.
- Bring to the players' attention the kind of passes that are easily caught.
- Change partners.
- Add a third player for 2 passes before the shot.

## PRACTICE 10 — THE TRANSITION GAME

### OBJECTIVES:

The players will be able to:

- move up and down the floor in a group while maintaining a relative distance between the members of the group;
- control a ball while moving in such a group.
- fill the lanes on a break-out

**The Airplane Game.** (see Practice 2 Page 8.)

The biggest problem in coaching Tykes to play Lacrosse is to get them to understand the concept of position, patterns and plays. As the Practice Lessons have been demonstrating, this is not a problem when the coach can relate the activity to the experiences of the players. Practice 10 is an example of how players can be taught to move as a group to secure loose balls and to play the transition phase of lacrosse .

- The airplane can be used to:
  - ⇒ move the players as a group up and down the floor
  - ⇒ to teach moving to the passing lanes
  - ⇒ to practice passing the ball up the floor
- The airplane can be made different sizes to:
  - ⇒ spread the players out or move them closer together
  - ⇒ to teach the different sequences of passes required to pass the ball through the defence.

### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- Form the players into groups of five and demonstrate the positions of the parts of the airplane using one of the groups.
- Have all groups make the smallest airplane possible.
- Have them make a medium size plane and then the biggest plane possible.
- Bring them back to their smallest plane in front of the goal.
- Give the pilot the ball and have each unit run to the opposite goal.
- The ball is given to the tail who now becomes the nose and leads the group back down the floor.
- Give the ball to the right wing, who now becomes the nose and fly the planes to the right boards.
- Give the ball to the left wing who leads the group to the left boards.
- Repeat flying in formation until the transitions and the spacing are uniform.
- Repeat a few times using larger airplanes.

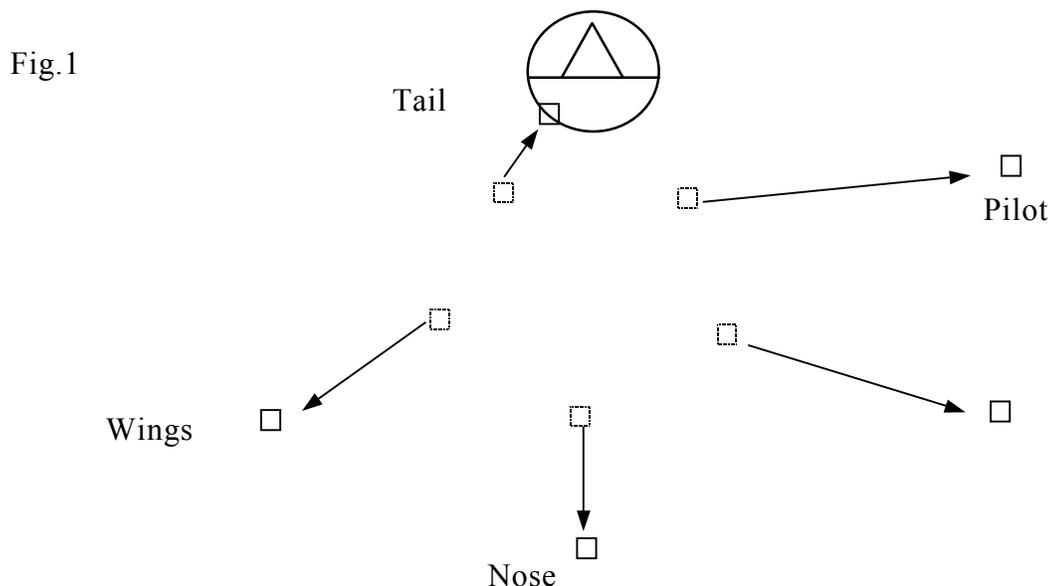
**SKILL DEVELOPMENT:**

Have the players:

- Form little planes and pass the ball from one part to another.
- Form bigger planes and repeat.
- Form the biggest plane possible and repeat the passing; create awareness for the size of plane that allows the best passing and catching;
- Form one very large, one medium and one small plane and challenge each group to get the ball from one end of the floor to the other as fast as possible. [Create an awareness for the quickest method and the most accurate method to get the ball down the floor. The smaller groups will have to move while passing. Let each group try each methods.
- Have the players form a medium size airplane and pass from one person to the next while walking down the floor. All players have to watch the ball while moving.
- Increase the walk to a jog. The player catching the ball must stop and move to the passer to catch, and then run to catch up and make the next pass.

**ADVANCED LEARNING ACTIVITIES****Break-out with a pass from the goalie**

- Start the players in their defensive positions in front of the goal.
- The coach starts the play with a shot on net.
- As the goalie prepares to pass the ball the players move into their designated spots in the airplane formation. Fig. 1



- The tail moves to the crease for safety and the pilot moves to the boards for a pass.
- The pilot passes to the wing, the nose covers for a missed pass.
- Run the play to centre only i.e. complete the pass to the nose.

## Break-out from a loose ball

Starting the break-out from a loose ball is difficult for young players to develop because different players are involved at different times. However, by using the concept of the airplane, the players can use their visualization skills to determine where they should be at any given time. The players will learn the correct responses through repetition of Loose Ball Games. By starting with the ball at different spots along the boards the players get to play the different positions in the airplane. By questioning the players, coaches can get them to come up with rules to produce an efficient and successful break-out. For example:

- ⇒ The closest player to the ball goes for it and becomes the pilot.
- ⇒ The closest player to the goal or a designated player acts as safety and becomes the tail.
- ⇒ The closest players to the wing nose and opposite wing fill those spots.
- ⇒ The players pass the ball to the first open person that is ahead of them and then run to fill their spot or the next open spot in the formation.
- ⇒ Every time a loose ball occurs or a player's position is filled by a team-mate, the players readjust their positions in the formation to keep the positions filled.

Once the players can react to fill a vacant spot, start the break-out by throwing a loose ball at random. (Check to see that the team shifts to the ball side and stays in formation as the nose leads the team down the floor.)

- Establish a rule that all players must touch the ball before a shot is taken.
- Score the game by counting the number of completed passes and by timing how long it takes the team to get a shot.

## Advanced Rules

- Do the drill five times. Each time a different player is set up for his/her shot. e.g. The lead player who has had a shot and has the ball, runs past the goal (or behind the net) and turns to pass to the shooter. Or if the lead player does not have the ball, he/she goes to the crease position to allow the ball carrier to shoot.) Use time and continuous flow to score the game.

## The Motion Offence.

Tyke coaches should have been using the progressions of the Motion Offence for practising the one-on-one and the defensive skills, and from this point on should be using the pattern of the Motion Offence extensively. **The objective of the Transition Game is to develop a flow from getting the ball down the floor and into the ball-cutting movement pattern of the Motion Offence.**

## PRACTICE 11 — THE OFFENCE FOR TYKES & OLDER

### OBJECTIVES:

The players will automatically execute a ball cut after a pass; use the correct side of the floor when shooting; match the hand they are carrying the stick in with the side of the floor they are on and use the five basic floor positions.

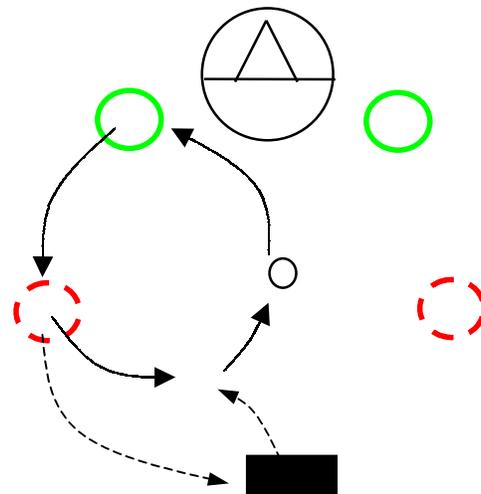
### TEACHING STRATEGIES

- The above objectives will be achieved over a period of time if the coach uses the floor locations and the movement patterns (described below) in as many different ways and as often as possible.
- Examples have already been used in Practices 4 and 8. Practice 11 is written as a progression where the games and drills can be used as activities in other practices.
- The motion offence can be defined as a continuous movement of the ball and the players in a logical and efficient pattern. Coaches should be reminded that even in Lesson 11, all references to and uses of the term refers to a sequence of events that will eventually lead to using the offense in a formal game. For example:
  - ⇒ The pattern of the motion offence should be used to teach all the skills, all the passing options and eventually all the screening options because it is the way they will be experienced in game situations.
  - ⇒ If the defence is used concurrently with the offence, the players learn to **pass away from the defence** and not to the receiver and learn to **read the intentions of the defence** without the coach ever having to teach it.
- Practice 12 is a test. If coaches have given the players ample time to learn to combine the interactive games into team games, the players will automatically use these strategies to achieve the objectives of a formal game. For example coaches should see players:
  - ⇒ moving into the open when a teammate picks up a loose ball.
  - ⇒ moving into a open area to receive a return pass (give & go)
  - ⇒ automatically filling the lanes on a break-out.
  - ⇒ automatically filling the five offensive positions.
  - ⇒ automatically getting back on defence and picking out a person to check.
  - ⇒ habitually staying between their check and the ball.
- In Practice 12 coaches will design their own practices. The interactive games can be used to hone skills, the minor games to develop team-work and the formals game to test. Once the players have been shown how each type of game is used to improve their ability to play lacrosse, they will be able to choose their own practice activities.

## The Hoola Hoop Game

- Two games can be played at one time by using two coaches (the black rectangle) and a group of players on each side of the net.
- Three players are used, one in each of the hoola hoops and one in the small circle.
- The arrows indicate the path the players are to travel, the players go from the solid hoop to the dotted hoop and they begin to move when the player in the centre of the floor has reached the crease in the **Passing Game** or has retrieved the ball in the **Shooting Game**.
- Only one player is allowed in a hoola hoop at one time, which means players don't move until the space in front of them is open.
- Once the players understand the pattern and are reasonably accurate with their passes, a player can take the place of the coach. To increase the number of completed passes the players can:
  - move to meet the pass, follow a pass, arc the ball or even bounce the ball.

Fig. 1



### Add the Defence

Add two defensive players to check the crease and corner players. Once again, they are practising their defensive footwork and positioning and do not interfere with the pass. The game can be made competitive by having the defence trying to stop the return pass. If the offensive player gets free for the return pass he takes a shot: if he doesn't, he goes to the net and then out to the hoop on the crease. The practices can always end with a scrimmage to test the players.

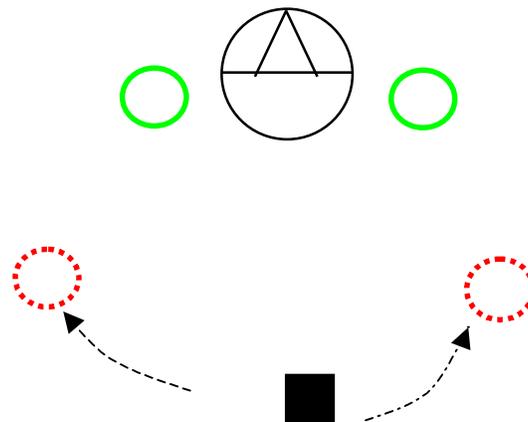
## Four Player Passing Game

Fig.2

### Progressions

To begin with a coach can be in the point position and the players play Give and Go, first one side, then the other. To add difficulty:

- add the defence
- a player can take the coaches spot
- instead of staying on their own side the players can cross the floor.



The second phase is to introduce passing to any open player, but the players must always cut to the net after passing and must learn to follow the rules listed below.

## USING RULES TO TEACH

### Rules used to challenge players

From Practice 11 Fig. 2

The goal is to have players make up their own rules.

In the Four Player Passing Game in Practice 11 use the following rules to challenge the players to find effective ways of getting into the open and getting scoring opportunities. The players can even be challenged to discover these answers for themselves.

- After passing the ball the players must follow their pass and then cut to the net.
- The players must be moving towards the ball to receive a pass.
- When the players are stationary, (already standing in a hoop) the pass is faked to them and the cut to the net looking for a back door pass.
- The best time to throw to a receiver is just after he has left one of the hoops.
- The passes can go to any player as long as they are moving towards the passer.

## Developing The Rules For House Games

### CHECKING

Note: The objective of these rules is to eventually make the one-on-one skills instinctive.

1. The checking of a player will be by position (between the offensive player and the goal) with the stick held so the defensive players can defend both their position and guard the offensive player's stick. The defensive players must:
  - defend their position by moving their feet to maintain defensive position. *As in basketball, the player who establishes position first is the one that is entitled to that space with the other player having to go around. Unlike basketball, however, the incidental contact will not be a factor in rule infractions unless the offensive player is trying to displace the defensive player.*
  - stop passes and shots by blocking the path with the stick.
2. The defensive player shall not be permitted to:
  - attempt to dislodge the ball if it is being cradled near the body,
  - slash at or swing at the ball carrier's stick,
  - initiate the contact between players,
  - push or hit any offensive player.
3. Penalties can be called if the defensive player:
  - hits any part of the body (slashing or high sticking),
  - initiates the contact between players (cross-checking).

4. A loss of possession or penalty can be assessed if the infraction is severe or if it is being repeated if:
  - the offensive player moves into the defensive player so as to displace him/her. (Offensive charging);
  - the ball carrier holds the stick against the body to trap, clamp or shield the ball so that it can't fall or be knocked out of the stick.

## Passing Rules

Not all of these rules are to be used at once

When players first play lacrosse, they use the skills that they know best. Running with the ball and stick checking are prime examples. To get players to focus on the other skills of the game, special rules can be used until the skills become automatic, i.e. the no stick checking rules and the special passing rules. These rules can also be adopted for house games to encourage development of all skills. The rules are usually adjusted to maintain a flow and then eliminated altogether once the players have acquired the skills and understand the options.

Once the players understand the concepts, remove the rules

1. Whenever play starts with the ball in the crease, the offensive team will immediately withdraw from the offensive zone and will not interfere with the play until the ball crosses the 10 second line. The defensive team must then attempt three passes before a shot is taken, one of which must be in the offensive zone. *The purpose of this rule is to give players the opportunity to develop their passing and catching skills and to learn the first part of the break-out pattern.*

Players must learn to make their own decisions regarding when to pass, when to run etc.

2. Other ways to encourage passing is to have the ball passed from one zone to the next or to limit the number of steps that are taken before a pass is made.
3. After a face-off anywhere on the floor or after gaining possession of the ball in their own end or the neutral zone, a team must attempt one pass before a shot is taken.
4. When a loose ball is trapped, the player gets a free pick-up and pass. They cannot run with the ball unless the ball is scooped without the trap.
5. A warning can be given (after a second warning a loss of possession) if an offensive player stands ("camps") in front of the net to wait for a pass.
6. Players can be limited by the number of goals they can score in a game to encourage passing.

## PRACTICE PLANNERS

<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Time:</b> _____ <b>to</b> _____ <b>Loca-</b> <b>tion:</b> _____		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Reminders</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity or Drill</b>	<b>Key Elements</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Things to work on.</b>	

# **PRE-LEVEL 1**

# **THEORY**

## MODULE 5 THE PLAYERS

**Goal** To provide the information coaches will need to plan learning activities that five to ten year olds will find both challenging and fun.

**Objective** To use the growth and development characteristics of the players to plan games that players will understand.

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### Introduction

*The mini-tykes, the cute little "guys", the children adults smile at. Can these children be coached? Most adults that work with this age group say they can't, at least not in the traditional coach directed sense. As soon as coaches give two teams one ball and ask them to play a game of lacrosse, the children invent their own simpler game of throw and chase. Not only do young players lack the skills to play the formal game but they are too young to understand the concepts or to even follow the instructions. Still, many adults insist on dressing their children in full lacrosse protective gear and then organizing them into the formal adult version of lacrosse.*

*Does this mean that adults shouldn't interfere and "just let the kids play"? Perhaps, but there is a way that adults can be involved which can enhance the development of the child. First, however, Douglas A. Kleiber strongly recommends that:*

*"A thorough understanding of child development is invaluable if one is in some way responsible for supervising the play of young children, structuring the play environment or providing aid to those who request it."<sup>5</sup>*

*This recommendations is supported by Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson who in his book "How to Father" deliberately outlines the characteristics of each year and stage of development of the child before talking outlining his recommendations.<sup>6</sup>*

*Similarly, older beginners also have special needs that must be accounted for. Module 5, **The Player**, contains summaries of the developmental needs of all age groups so that coaches will be better able to organize positive learning environments. It will show that all players at all levels play lacrosse to have fun and that an important ingredient of their enjoyment is learning and meeting new challenges.*

## THE MINI-TYKES

### THE FIVE-YEAR-OLDS

Five years of age is an appropriate age to start learning sport skills in the formal setting of a practice. The five-year-olds are more settled, focused and cooperative than they were at four. They are looking for new challenges and are “full of curiosity and enthusiasm for learning”.<sup>7</sup> They have a need for both large and small muscle development and to release energy — “must be on the go from dawn to dusk”.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson author of How to Parent, describes five as “that delightful age” where playing is what this age group does best.<sup>9</sup>

### Must be active

The mini-tykes, as the five and six-year-olds are called in lacrosse, are just coming out of what the professionals call the egocentric stage.<sup>10</sup> The egocentrics play alongside each other, must have what the other children have and like to do what everyone else is doing. There is very little interaction except when they have to share. Even though the mini-tykes are now more cooperative and social than they were at four, the five-year-olds will learn much faster if they can practise on their own or in groups of two or three with an adult helper. In lacrosse, this means that the players need their own stick and ball, and all players must be active. Standing in lines and taking turns is too slow, and does not meet their need to move and learn. Use parents as facilitators, to pick up loose balls, to accurately toss and catch balls for passing and catching, and to generally act as mentors. In other words, the parents are to help keep the play active and the environment safe, psychologically as well as physically. (See Module 8, Parents and Athlete Centred Coaching)

### The formal game of lacrosse is too boring.

The mini-tykes play for the pleasure of skill acquisition<sup>11</sup> and have the ability to create their own games and to plan their own challenges. The formal game of lacrosse is too boring and players will invent their own games, which may not be related to the lacrosse skills coaches want their players to develop. As a result, the players often develop bad habits that they will never break which leads many players to the B leagues or to finally to quit the sport.

### The development of skills through play

The first games children play are ones of small challenges involving motor skills, curiosity and creativity. Even before they can speak, toddlers are driven by the games of: *What will happen; What would happen if I do it this way or I want to try what my mother, father, brother or sister etc. is doing.* If a person watches children closely, one can see the wheels turning.

Everyone reacts in a similar way when faced with something new whether it be the new car, DVD player, computer program, golf club or even a new skill. Learning is experimentation to see what will happen and then followed by an evaluation. Coaching the five-year-olds is providing these opportunities in an organized fashion.

**Coaching Tip**

⇒ *When first introducing lacrosse, play games that allow the players to explore their stick skills. Coaches can help by modeling skills that are within the player's range of possibilities so they can get a feel of how to apply the forces. Play games of how hard, how far, how soft, how high, and a progression of carrying, pick-up and catching games.<sup>12</sup>*

Once the players have developed a feel for the stick, put them into small groups to play the interactive games with the assistant coaches. i.e. the give and go games. The trick is to watch the players as they start looking for new challenges and then increase the complexity of the games.

*Coaches can also get ideas by watching what the kids do when they flood onto the floor between periods of senior games. Coaches will see the complete progression of interactive to minor games: a three year old being closely watched by her dad as she tries to throw him the ball; five and six year-olds shooting at the net, each with their own ball; numerous players throwing the ball at the side boards; a group of seven to twelve year-olds playing 4-on-4 around the other net.*

By the end of their first season the five-years-olds will be able to combine the games of the individual skills i.e. combine a face-off game with a pick-up game with a give-go & shoot game. These games are cooperative by nature and give the players a chance to experiment with their skills

**Warning**

*It is at this point that adults start introducing the players to the structured formal game of lacrosse. Coaches start filling their practices with drills and explanations that adults don't even care for. The "play" in "playing lacrosse" starts to disappear and consequently, so does the vehicle by which the children learn and have fun.*

**THE SIX-YEAR-OLDS**

At six, the mini-tykes are becoming more social, are quite comfortable being away from the family and being on a team satisfies their need to be with others their own age. The six-year-olds are going through a year of change and extremes. When they are successful and enjoying themselves, life and people around them are great. If, however, frustration sets in, e.g. they don't get their way, they hate everything and everyone related to the situation. This is the age where many parenting coaches find it best to have their children under the direction of the assistant coaches.

**Start with 2-on-2 games**

On the plus side, the sixes can understand the concept of working together to achieve common goals, i.e. teamwork. They also

### Games for six-year-olds

have the strength and coordination to execute their skills in the partner type games they played with their parents the year before. Sixes have “boundless energy and all muscles cry out for action”<sup>13</sup> so once they understand the concepts of the keep-out games they can be introduced to 2-on-2 contests and the full floor group chasing and throwing games.

Between school and parents, the six-year-olds get their fill of adults telling them what to do. By organizing interactive games to develop skills, coaches can keep their instructions to a minimum and the children can play. They know what rules are but have difficulty making the decision to follow them. Example: the meaning of “no”.

The second year Mini-tykes should go through all the games of the beginners but at a more sophisticated level and over a shorter period. They will want to focus more on using their keep out games against their offensive counterparts. Start with 2-on 2 with the teams taking turns shooting at one goal or target and progress to 4-on-4 in the half floor. It must be remembered that this age group:

- Is just learning about rules,
- Is interested in skill development not outcomes,
- Still needs maximum stick to ball contact that they get when playing in smaller groups,
- Must play the games involving the players without the ball and need the 4-on-4 half floor games to explore this forgotten dimension of team sports.

## THE TYKES

### THE SEVEN-YEAR-OLDS

The sevens are entering what Jean Piaget described as an age of cooperation<sup>14</sup> where social skills are developing and rules are becoming important for defining a common understanding and a level playing field for their games. Being more cooperative, they are easier to get along with, easier to teach and are anxious to please. This is the ideal age to start combining the partner games of the mini-tykes into the recognizable team plays of lacrosse.

A word of caution about the first year tykes: Dodson describes this age as the age of reflection.<sup>15</sup> Just as toddlers need to practise going up and down stairs, the seven-year-olds need to practise thinking about life and sorting things out at a seven-year-old level.<sup>16</sup> Players will often appear to be in a daze because they may

## The games of the seven-year-olds.

be thinking more about being accepted by the team, being compared with others and being dealt with fairly than about what the coach is saying. Coaches must be patient. It is important to stress personal performances, not outcomes, and to strictly enforce rules.

The tykes are into improving their skills, bettering their own performances and trying to achieve what they see others doing<sup>17</sup>. The enjoyment and fun of playing lacrosse is still in executing skills and imitating, but now coaches can vary the situations by making them more complex. If the sevens were given the opportunity to learn through their play as Mini-tykes, they will be able to play the cross-floor four-on-four games by the time they are seven. Players at this age are more willing to accept the different roles and positions of a team game and will adapt the interactive pick-up, face-off and give-and-go games when playing 3-on-3 and 4-on-4. Games such as the airplane game work well to develop the concepts of the transition from defence to offence and vice-versa.

*The airplane game is an excellent example of how learning works. While the players are focusing on keeping the parts of the airplane together when moving down the floor, they are subconsciously or intuitively learning the advantages of keeping the positions of the break-out pattern filled.*

### Coaching Tip

*The rate of learning, and for that matter the level of enjoyment are related to the number of times each player gets to handle the ball. Players who are not ready for this level of play will resort to chasing when on defence and more running with the ball then passing when on offence. Help players through this transition from the lower level to higher level games by not pushing them ahead too fast and by using rules and their ideas to lead them to the next step.*

## THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS

Dr. Dodson describes the eight-year-olds as being “ready to meet the world with great verve exuberant, expansive, and ready for anything”. Dodson goes on to describe the eight year old as “speedy” and who “does everything in high gear”, is “actively looking for new things to do” and who is “hungry for facts”.<sup>18</sup>

The eight-year-olds have been in a “gang”<sup>19</sup> mode for some time and the gang code and values fit right in with team sports: “daring, physical strength, agility, comradeship, ingenuity, and even slyness.”<sup>20</sup> Sport teams are a natural and safe place for players to have these needs met.

“The eight-year-old has a tendency to appraise what happens to him and what he causes to happen. He constantly evaluates his activities and those of others. This interest in appraising and evaluation is part of his drive to become more grownup. He definitely demands that adults treat him more like a grownup.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, there is no

## The tyke games

doubt that eight-year-olds are mentally, physically and socially ready to play lacrosse.

Teams of eight, with four runners on the floor at one time, will give a good balance of play and recovery time, and having the players on different teams from practice to practice will take the focus off the coach's need to win. Games should still be played across the floor of arenas or large fields. Smaller lacrosse boxes and fields are even better.

The Tyke rules that were provided in the Technical section have special passing rules that were inserted to force coaches to teach the skills. Coaches and teams that have been following the philosophy and techniques of this manual will find the rules quite redundant. When players play passing games over an extended period, the reaction to look for a receiver becomes automatic, and the reaction to make the pass, intuitive.

## SUMMARY

Tykes require a special coach

Because eight-year-olds have an improved ability to listen, to follow rules, and to assimilate information, coaches are drawn into the more direct approach of teaching through instruction and drills. Coaches must remember that players will always need self-directed play to learn. The small groups and modified games that were necessary at the earlier stages must now become important teaching tools. Too many players, who may have had good instruction, played formal games right from the start with very little opportunity to work on their skills. Only those players that played on their own became good enough to make higher level teams. The question is, were the players left behind because of differences in motivation and ability or because of coaching practices.

## OLDER BEGINNERS

The FUNda-mental Phase is for all beginners, competitive and recreational alike.

Older beginners, whether 10, 15, 20, 30 or 50 years of age, must go through the experimental stages or Fundamental Phase of their development, and using the interactive and minor games is the best approach. However, because of strength, maturity and experience, the older beginners will learn much faster than their younger counterparts, and will progress much sooner to the recreational and formal games of three-on-three or Inter-lacrosse. They will be able to practise the fundamentals among themselves (pass and catch, give and go etc.), make up their own minor games and set their challenges at a more sophisticated level.

Once again, it is wise for coaches to observe the readiness

levels and organize the games accordingly. They must be aware of the many reasons older players start playing lacrosse. Some players will be switching sports looking for a new and perhaps more rewarding experience; some will be getting back into sport for the first time since childhood and others will be looking for an activity that will satisfy some of their personal needs. They each will have a different way to have fun and to learn

### Recreational beginners

The recreational beginners will be looking for the fun of playing lacrosse. This does not mean, however, that they are not interested in developing their skills. When coaches use the games approach to teaching in their practices and have the power to adapt the rules of the house leagues, they can combine the coaching, learning and playing all into one

### Beginners in competitive leagues

Competitive athletes who join lacrosse from other sports tend to join teams that are already playing in leagues. Because of the shortage of time and the fact that these players are good in other sports, coaches assume these players will also be good in lacrosse and tend to let them fend for themselves.

Competitive beginners must be given all the instruction and the time to learn that their more experienced team members had. Because of their athletic abilities and knowledge of how to learn, their progress and adaptation is usually quite fast. The message is: ignore this step and coaches will jeopardize the development of these players.

Coaches can integrate the competitive beginner by rehearsing how the players can use their strengths in game situations, much like role players are developed on advanced teams. It will help them become a part of the team, will make them more comfortable in their new environment, and most importantly will give them the floor time required for their learning to take place.

**MODULE 6****PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Goal** To give coaches the information they need to contribute to the physical development of their players.

**Objectives:**

- To enable coaches to incorporate the elements of fitness in their practice activities.
  - To ensure that all players achieve the fitness for playing lacrosse.
- 

**Introduction**

*Some players hit the floor or field with their legs spinning, and don't stop until they are in the car on their way home. Others move as little as possible and find it very uncomfortable to work up a sweat. This difference in activity level has always been a problem that coaches have had to contend with, but not like it is today. Too many children no longer get enough exercise to even maintain their health, and the problems will even be more pronounced in the recreational and house leagues where the lack of fitness could be the reason that players have signed up. Consequently, coaches must be ready to plan a progressive program for physical development rather than just for physical preparation.*

*As in all fitness programs, "progressive" is the key term. If players are to enjoy their lacrosse experience, the games they play must be adapted to their physical as well as their cognitive needs. Players will lose interest and quit when they can't keep up physically just as they will when they are left out socially. The athlete centered environment will motivate players to play harder and longer, which are two ways to create the overload required for physical development.*

## PLAYING TO TRAIN

To Run or Not  
to Run

When players are fit to run, when they understand where and why they need to run and when there is a reward for running, players will run. In fact, they will run so fast and play so hard that their bodies will be triggered to adapt to the increased stress on their bodies. This is training. Then, as players get stronger, their skills also become stronger and they literally have no choice but to become more involved and play even harder etc. Conversely, those that get very little exercise tend to work with a minimum of effort and consequently set themselves into a spiral that is going in the opposite direction.

*A body at rest is inclined to stay at rest. Newton*

Coaching  
Tip



*Develop the skills of the players using the games to teach and the players will move with greater effort and enthusiasm.*

## Plan Practices that are Active

The principles of effective practices

Like the other aspects of player development, endurance, flexibility and strength are best achieved when they are an integral part of the games being played. We have all experienced the pleasure of full out effort as we strive to out-perform an opponent or to meet a challenge. The stiffness and fatigue we experienced afterwards is proof that we often surpass anything we could have achieved in a gym workout. The same will happen in practices if coaches follow some basic principles of effective practices.

Therefore:

- *Use games that teach instead of drills and the players will learn lacrosse as a running game.*
- *Group the players according to skill level so the games they play will match their skill level.*
- *Don't have the players standing around listening to explanations. Give the instructions and let them find the reasons why by playing.*
- *Plan the length and intensity of the activities to correspond to the endurance of the players. Use the recovery time to ask the players what they have learned or how to make the games more interesting.*

## Plan Practices that Players Understand

Use interactive games to teach and challenge

Only when players understand their games and have the ability to execute skills will they be able to put out the effort required to create an overload of the energy systems. This is next to impossible when new players come to their first practices where drills are used to rehearse the fundamentals and regular lacrosse games are used to relieve the boredom. New players tend to stand and watch.

The minor games recommended for skill development are also ideal for physical development. The small groups and one-on-one interaction with parents ensures involvement. Turning drills into mini games that challenge players to take one more shot or chase down one more ball are all that are needed to motivate players to extend themselves.

## Plan Practices that both Challenge and Allow for Success

Set a climate that players are comfortable in

Enthusiasm is the important factor for getting players to forget any discomfort they may feel from exertion. To keep players motivated it is important that the games whether formal, recreational or interactive, are not too easy or too challenging. Players must feel that there is a chance for success but if it is too easy, there is nothing else to learn so why do it. Boring.

The Athlete Centred Approach is ideal for setting the right challenges. Give players the opportunity to pick their groups, games and rules and they will create the right learning environment.

## Plan Practices that promote endurance, strength and flexibility

Endurance

To train the aerobic or endurance energy system, the players must be continuously active for twelve minutes or more. Full floor minor games involving several balls and continuous action of shooting and scoring will keep the players moving. Using targets instead of goals will keep the ball alive and therefore eliminate the need to stop play. Adding special rules for scoring and timing will add a sense of urgency and motivate players to run after loose balls and set up players. e.g. The team that makes the most passes in 12 minutes will win.

**Strength**

The strength of young athletes can be achieved by using the player's own weight. By playing hopping, skipping and balancing games and by using the arms to support some of the body weight, muscles can be loaded with more resistance than the body is accustomed to.

The correct execution of skills requires strength and therefore will build strength. Coaches must take the time to monitor technique and design games that focus on the execution of skills rather than on the outcomes. Nowhere is this more obvious than in teaching the defensive skill of getting and maintaining defensive position rather than trying to dislodge the ball, or focusing on how to shoot rather than on the number of goals scored.

**Flexibility**

Flexibility is also developed during the acquisition of skills and during the activities of the practice. By performing skills correctly and with full range of motion, the flexibility of the players will be increased. Teaching players how to use the large muscle groups for applying force and then playing games of who can throw the furthest or hardest will extend the range of motion in a natural way.

Young and new players are more affected by tension than the lack of flexibility. Getting the players to play the spaghetti arms and soft hands games will relax the muscles and therefore increase the range of motion.

## MODULE 7 MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

**Goal** To provide coaches with the information needed to show how an Athlete Centred approach to coaching leads to the cognitive and emotional development of the player.

### Objectives:

- To develop the mental skills required for learning.
- To relate the concepts of emotional intelligence with the ability to play lacrosse
- To development self-esteem and confidence,
- To help players learn how to control their emotions,
- To focus attention on the need to teach empathy.

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### Introduction

*The goal of the Pre-level 1 is to help coaches differentiate between coaching the game and coaching players. To focus on the player means to pay attention to cognitive and emotional development as well as technical development.*

*Focusing on the players also draws attention to how they learn. The special abilities of the elite to visualize, concentrate and relax that are attributed to natural talent are the mental skills and abilities that players intuitively adapt when challenged. This process is what is happening as we learn how to learn. One of the key issues for coaches, particularly those of the house and recreational leagues, is to learn how to encourage and develop these skills in the average player.*

*Development at the emotional levels requires an understanding of how coaching affects the player's ability to learn, to socialize and ultimately to play lacrosse. These aspects of human development are part of what is now being identified as emotional intelligence (E.Q.) and the theory now is that E.Q. is as important as I.Q. to an individual's success. Emotional intelligence is ultimately responsible for a player's ability to perform under pressure and is composed of those intangible abilities considered to be beyond the realm of coaching. The fact is, just the opposite is true. The research now indicates that coaches and parents can affect a player's potential to achieve. Apart from the inherited factors, E. Q. is developed in the years up to and including the time players are enrolled in minor lacrosse. Coaching at the entry level is even more critical than previously thought in the development of athletes and the Athlete Centred Approach to Coaching is the vehicle by which it is achieved.<sup>22</sup>*

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTAL SKILLS

### Concentration (Attention Span)

Don't tell players to concentrate: use activities that require it

Concentration increases as the players get lost in the challenge or excitement of play. Players become involved when they have knowledge, ability and control—all key components of play. Therefore: the best way to increase concentration is by playing games: not the formal games, but the teaching games that lead to the full game of lacrosse. Concentration increases when success is imminent, and decreases when it is either too easily attained or out of reach. Therefore:

Coaching  
Tips

- *Start players at the level that they can achieve,*
- *Make the drills into a games*
- *Increase the challenges of the games until the players reach their level of incompetence.*
- *Ask the players to pick or invent related games that give them the most enjoyment.*

### Relaxation

Relaxation is required to develop feel

Being relaxed or free of tension is necessary for players to develop the feel of the stick, and the ball in the stick. Players that pick up the sport naturally have either developed or inherited what is known in sport as “soft hands”, and a method of using the body to initiate the movement of the stick rather than the arms and wrists.

Coaching  
Tip

*To teach players how to relax, play the “spaghetti arms” game by letting the arms hang at the sides and using the motion of the body, flop them from side to side like wet noodles. Then keeping the hands soft and relaxed have the players first pick up and then use the stick. When the feeling is lost, start over. Also, use this method to relax the arms before for stick handling or catching and passing, use visualization by having the players pretend the ball is an egg that must not be broken when the throw and catch it.*

Some players are very stiff and will still have problems with tension in their shoulders and wrists. Create an awareness for the tension by having the players take a deep breath and tighten every muscle in the body, and then let everything go as they slowly exhale. Then repeat the “spaghetti arm” game.

## Visualization

Visualization is feeling how to perform the skill before it happens

The observation and visualization skills of children are very powerful. Those that have an aptitude for sport type movements can learn by watching athletes and then repeating what they see. If the movement or skill is too complex, they will ask you to repeat the action until they develop a picture or feel of how the skill is performed.

Coaches that are volunteering in the house leagues won't have it so easy. There are many reasons players are in house leagues instead of competitive leagues, and one could be their inability to make maximum use of their visualization skills. As in the other mental skills, the ability to visualize can be developed.

Coaching tip →

*To teach concepts of being quick, fast, strong, light, clever, tricky etc use comparisons to animals, objects or cartoon characters that depict the desired characteristics.*

*Use ideas like spaghetti arms, and catching an egg to promote the feel of softness.*

*Ask players to see or feel themselves executing the skill as you repeat the demonstration.*

*Demonstrate skills in slow motion. Demonstrating skills at performance speed is often too fast for beginners and young players to see what is happening.*

*Isolate the key teaching points into separate demonstrations. The average player doesn't always recognize the important elements of a skill. Break the skill into a series of progressions, play the mirror game as each one is demonstrated and then create a game involving the steps the players are having difficulty with.*

Make sure the demonstrations are being accurately observed. Before players are sent out to practice a particular activity, have them demonstrate what they saw. This will give coaches feedback on the effectiveness of their demonstrations.

## Self-talk

<p>Be positive</p>	<p>Self-talk is the gateway to ones belief system and relates to the player's motivation to first play lacrosse and then later, to try new things. Any type of type of abuse from physical to put-downs will break their confidence and thereby effect their motivation. (See Emotional Development in the next section</p>
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## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### What players learn when they play lacrosse

Players learn about who they are

As children practise and play sport they develop a concept of who they are and what they are capable of. They discover if they:

- are athletic,
- can play lacrosse,
- will be good enough to pursue their dreams

Self-image is not just being told how good you are.

When players on house league teams, or on third and fourth lines of competitive teams or even in gym classes are not taught the skills to become realistically involved in a sport, or are not given a chance to play, to explore or to create, they will grow up in ignorance of their abilities. They are never tested; and therefore never see themselves as being good enough to play sport.

Building a positive self-image is more than just telling players how good they are. Players need to be involved in activities where they can try things and feel they are being successful. They need to:

- be involved and active,
- feel they are part of the group,
- learn, participate or play like everyone else,
- be accepted and have their ideas accepted

Athlete centred coaching empowers

When players are given the opportunity to not only discover solutions but get to identify the problems, the resulting feeling of accomplishment enhances their self-esteem. The more times they can have these experiences of total control, the stronger their self-esteem becomes. As their confidence to make decisions grows so does their desire to accept and successfully meet new challenges.

Higher level decision making is learned at the entry levels

Children are constantly coming up with different ideas as they learn to express themselves and keep themselves busy in their play. At the same time, they are also discovering the best methods to solve their problems and to discover answers. When adults constantly correct, direct, judge and answer; children learn to distrust their judgment and to rely on the direction of others.

Coaching tip →

*Break formal games into parts and organize the different activities into play stations*

*Have a multiple of activities to choose from, encourage them to find different solutions to problems or to change the games to increase the challenges.*

*Provide guidance by giving ideas and by watching and learning how the players adapt the games and challenges to make the activities more interesting.*

## Empathy — The caring about others

### Nurture or Nature

Our emotional development is responsible for the many special qualities that are often described as “character”. Being successful in life long pursuits, development of empathy and an understanding of FairPlay and the Spirit of Sport is attributed to what is now being identified as emotional intelligence<sup>23</sup>.

*Danielle Goleman describes emotional intelligence as: “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope.”<sup>24</sup>*

Even the power of positive thinking, a critical performance tool of elite athletes and related to hope, optimism and self-efficacy are all products of emotional intelligence.<sup>25</sup> The research indicates that emotional development is influenced more by nurture than by nature<sup>26</sup>, and that the critical ages for development are and continue into the teens and can be modified throughout a person’s life. This means that the significant people in the lives of young players can influence the type of athletes they will become. Inherited characteristics may account for a much smaller percentage of what is called “talent” than previously thought.

### The coach’s role

Consequently, the emotional development of players must become an integral part of coaching in minor lacrosse. Defining athlete centred coaching as shifting the emphasis from the sport to the player more specifically refers to moving the emphasis from the technical development to the emotional development of the players.

All of these issues come to the forefront when players become the focus. The frustrations and challenges of learning a sport give many opportunities for coaches to grasp the teachable moment and to help players to their next level of emotional development. The sports world is full of athletes who didn’t make it to higher levels because of low emotional intelligence or what is labeled as immaturity. When the proponents of fighting in certain sports argue that the release of anger in this fashion is an important part of the sport, what they are really describing is a very low emotional quotient of the players because learning to deal with anger is one of the components of emotional development.

## MODULE 8 COACHING

**Goal** To give the background related to the learning that takes place as players play and coaches coach.

**Objectives** Coaches will be able to:

- use the principles of learning to meet the needs of the players,
  - organize activities that will satisfy their own learning needs,
  - Involve parents in the learning process.
- 

### Introduction

*The games associated with learning were defined in the Technical component, and then, in the Practical, were followed by methods to organize these games into practises. The last step in understanding athlete centred coaching is to take a closer look at the concept of learning. What will be found is that the “fun” that is talked about in sport is actually the process of learning how to meet new challenges. When the challenges are removed, as they are in games that are too easy, there is nothing to learn and the players lose interest. Similarly, when the challenges are beyond the players’ abilities and there is no hope of success, learning is too difficult and the players become frustrated and discouraged.<sup>27</sup> Module 8, Coaching, will help coaches create the right balance by examining the learning processes.*

*Learning is intuitive, which means it happens subconsciously. Adults will make a conscious effort to use drills, sign up for courses and attend practices in order to stimulate the learning response. Young players, on the other hand, will simply make a conscious effort to play and have fun. In both cases, the learning is at the subconscious level and the resulting sense of accomplishment creates the enjoyment and the sense of mastery that we call fun.*

*The second part of Module 8 focuses on the coach as the learner. Just as players learn to play by meeting the challenges of their games, coaches will start learning as they prepare their first practices and will continue as they work to meet the challenges of the athlete centred approach to coaching.*

*The final challenge for coaches comes when they develop the confidence to invite the parents onto the floor to assist in the development of their players.*

## LEARNING AND THE BEGINNER

How children learn

*Children are "active information processors"<sup>28</sup> that have "natural affinities to play".<sup>29</sup>*

Children play to learn not to compete

If natural play is interfered with, learning is compromised.

Children learn by observing, experimenting, imitating and playing. When in their infancy, their curiosity and impatience lead them through the struggle to sit up for a better view and then to crawl for a closer examination. By the time they are five, they have learned to communicate, to perform skills and to understand concepts. They are learning machines. Why then is it so difficult to get five year-olds to play lacrosse? Why do they seem to be content to chase rather than to pass, catch or any of the other skills the older players do?

The simple answer is that the adult version of Box or Field Lacrosse, is a poor learning environment for new players of any age, and is one reason Inter-lacrosse is so popular. The complex answer involves an analysis of how we, and specifically, how children learn. Children learn through their play, and conversely, they play to learn. They see sport as a fun activity involving new challenges rather than as a game to be played against an opponent or a game to be won.

The Mini tykes and tykes, for example, play for the enjoyment of the activity and the pleasure of skill acquisition. In a formal game with only one ball and a few skills, they get little opportunity to even touch the ball. Consequently, new players are left with what they understand best, chasing the ball and checking opponents' sticks with the hope for a pick-up, a carry and a throw.

Therefore, it should be of no surprise that after three years of lacrosse, the best that a second year tyke can do is to complete three or four passes in a game, chase and go after the stick.

*"While the notion that children learn quite naturally without the direction of adults is hardly new, it is to be argued that play is very often the mode of that process and that those who would interfere with and direct a child's play should do so with the understanding that normal, natural development may lie in the balance."<sup>30</sup>*

Compare this model with the players who come from lacrosse families where the children are given the opportunity to play and learn on their own terms and make up their own games and rules. The skill development becomes spectacular. Examples are seen in many other sports as well as lacrosse where six year olds can be seen skiing or boarding down hills, competing on their BMX bikes or dazzling their parents with their hockey or lacrosse skills as a result of their undirected play.

As toddlers, these budding stars watched the behaviour of their parents, their older siblings and the professionals they see on television. Then, when they got the opportunity, they picked out those aspects of the adult activities that looked interesting and achievable, organized them into a series of little challenges or minor games, and

## The value of sandlot learning

then played at them until they achieved a degree of success. When children mature and gain a more realistic view of their environment, their games become more realistic. The learning that is taking place is intuitive, and happens as a result of self-directed participation rather than of a planned event like a drill.

The best way for coaches to understand the learning process is to compare the learning that takes place when kids are playing on the computer, at their electronic games, in community parks or on frozen ponds versus being forced to memorize times-tables, the spelling of words or the regurgitation of historical events. What is the difference?

The research of Jean Piaget, Douglas Kleiber, Robert Singer, Maria Montessori and a significant number of other behavioral scientists is now extensive. Their work has been used for a number of years to redefine what is being done in day cares, play schools, pre-schools, kindergartens and the primary grades. The conclusions from Kleiber's work emphasizes the need for coaches to teach through facilitation rather than through instruction.<sup>31</sup> By observing the following guidelines coaches not only free up the powers of learning but they give their players permission to use their own initiatives to explore and therefore to learn. Learning happens when:

- Practices resemble the natural play environment of the children.
- Coaches provide opportunities rather than information.
- The players control the situation. The learning environment must be free of fear of failure, which can come from intimidation, criticism and correction as when they are relaxed and playing on their own.
- The behavior of the player is intrinsically-motivated. (i.e. The players must be playing because they want to.)
- The players are free to create.

When coaches involve their players in setting the purpose, the content and the pace of their learning, they give the players ownership of their accomplishments. As previously mentioned, it is the sense of accomplishment and knowing that they have engineered their own success that builds the feeling of self-worth. This emotional connection is what leads to the creativity, the exploration and the reflection that triggers true learning<sup>32</sup> and ultimately the love of a sport.

## THE COACH AS THE LEARNER

### The Coach Centred Approach to Teaching

Learning by seeing

**Demonstrating** has been one of the strong points of the traditional style of coaching and it should be continued. Demonstrating takes advantage of one of the first methods of learning inspiration and direction.

Learning by doing

**Trial and Error** comes next as the players experiment to find ways of achieving what they have just observed. In education, this is called the discovery method of learning or teaching and is accomplished during the “play” of the athlete centred style of coaching.

Unfortunately, this method of teaching is all but ignored in the traditional coach directed practice. Typically coaches will plan the demonstrations, the drills and the teaching progressions, but then instead of organizing the players into age and skill related activities (the minor games of children or the 2-on-2 and 3-on-3 contests of older players), they set up full floor scrimmages or move players directly into their next league game. Players need sufficient time to learn and it will only happen when they have meaningful play.

From level 1 Theory

Learning occurs as a result of a rather simple process of:

- gathering information,
- organizing the information
- practicing,
- using the feedback from the rehearsals for the next practice

How do coaches learn?

*Coaches learn when they control the practice by gathering the information i.e. coaching course; plan the practice; conduct the practice and finally evaluate the outcome.*

What do coaches learn?

*The coaches learn how to use the gathered information to present information in new and better ways.*

What are the players learning?

*In the traditional coach centred approach to coaching the players are learning how to carry out the instructions of the coach.*

What are the players supposed to be learning?

*The intent is for players to learn how to play lacrosse. The only way this can happen is in an athlete centred approach where the players are involved in the learning process. Coaches do understand that players need time to play at integrating new skills and ideas, but the expectation is that it will happen during game time and during the players' own time.*

## The Athlete Centred Approach to Teaching

The coach is now the learner

It will be difficult for some coaches to adapt to the athlete centred approach to teaching. The education systems and coaching styles of the last century all modeled a didactic style of teaching that is very difficult to change. Consequently, coaches will have to plan their own learning activities just as they do for their players. In addition, just as a coach might start their players with a game or a drill to give them ideas, the following tips will give coaches enough information or guidance to get them started.

Make the "sandlot" experience part of the practice

The best models that coaches can use are their own experiences. By comparing the situations when their parents, teachers, coaches or bosses were exercising control with the times when they could do what they wanted, coaches can begin to understand the meaning and importance of having the freedom of self-determination. It is the same freedom that we all look forward to on weekends, holidays or in retirement and is what players should be able to look forward to when they go to their practices and games.

Players need structure in order to learn

This is the autonomy that kids have when they play, and as already stated, is the necessary ingredient for learning. Coaches who are still unsure of this approach must understand that it doesn't mean that players are allowed to do anything they want. Letting players turn a practice into chaos, bully or exert control over teammates or even allowing players to go through a season unchallenged, does not constitute fun. Some players will need help to set and follow rules, others will need to be encouraged to develop their senses of caring, respect and responsibility and many will need to be shown how to use rules to set challenges and to play minor games. This is the structure that is required for learning rather than the traditional structure of drills and lessons.

The athlete centred coach is a facilitator

The athlete centred coach is a facilitator instead of a dictator of instructions and information. The Principles of Effective Practices are still adhered to but in a different way. Instead of lining up an hour of drills athlete centred coaches plan how to:

- keep the players challenged by showing them new games,
- present models of what the players can aspire to,
- prompt the players when they seem to be stuck and ask them to find new ways to use their skills,
- let the players evaluate their own effort so they can plan how and what they want to practice next,
- modify the games by changing the rules,
- use the rules of the games to focus attention on skill development and motivate higher levels of achievement.

## ATHLETE CENTRED COACHING

### A Practice Planner for Athlete Centred Coaching

Delay the formal organization of the practice

Players will arrive at their first practice with a preconceived idea of what is going to happen.

- If they are accustomed to an open style learning environment they will start playing and experimenting with the equipment.
- If they come from a more controlled environment, they will wait for permission or to see if it is okay to try things on their own.
- If they come from an uncontrolled environment, they will start doing as they please, even if it means infringing upon the rights of others.

Observation is a coaching tool

Observation is the key to athlete centred coaching. From the first practice, coaches will be able to determine each player's:

- learning style i.e. directed or self-directed,
- level of expertise and coordination,
- personal characteristics and level of maturity.

Warm-up

It is natural for players to start slowly while their bodies warm up. Use this time to:

- Talk to the players that are still watching to help them find a partner or a skill to practice.
- Watch for any bullying or teasing
- Watch the players that are active and take note of what they are doing.

Conclude the warm-up by selecting one or two of the activities that will engage the aerobic energy system and get all the players to participate.

The instruction

The instructional needs of the players are determined from the warm-up exercises and previous practices or games. When there is a common problem, a formal demonstration and discussion can be given for all players. Drills are used to ensure understanding and then players are into their groups to practise on their own. When the needs are too divergent, players should be grouped to find ways to improve their performance. Individual coaching will be extremely helpful to get players to their next level of competency.

### Coaching Tips

- *Follow the Principles of Effective Practices for athlete centred coaching.*
- *Use and expand on the ideas of the players.*
- *Vary the difficulty of the challenges. When the coach controls the level of difficulty, the learning is coach centred and coaches must be sensitive to the need-to-play/need-for-practice ratio. When the players ask to make the activity more interesting (challenging), the learning is athlete centred and the players are expressing their readiness to move to the next level.*

Coaches who are accustomed to being in control will feel uncomfortable even thinking about an athlete centred approach to coaching. However, just as the players need to organize and plan how they are going to practice in order to learn lacrosse, coaches will also have to make a decision to try something new and plan how to use the ideas in this manual. The act of coaching will be the teaching instrument by which coaches will learn.

## Athlete Centred Coaching is Teaching Self-direction.

Freedom  
how to  
choose  
wisely must  
be learned  
and is not a  
right

When coaches give permission for players to set their own goals, make their own decisions, play their own games and ultimately plan their own practices, they are teaching their players to be self-directed. Coaches must be warned that athlete centred coaching can be very uncomfortable.

- Players will be making mistakes that coaches will know how to prevent. Will coaches have the strength and the patience to allow this to happen?
- Empowering the players means the loss of control of the coach. The feeling of being in charge and not knowing what is going on, or where the team is heading is extremely upsetting. Coaches must continually check to reassure themselves that: the players are having fun, they are getting better etc.
- It is the players' prerogative to ask for help and coaches must decide the best way to provide the assistance: to give the answers or to let the players work them out for themselves.
- Some parents will already know about the athlete centred approach to coaching. How can they be used.?

## COACHES AND ATHLETE CENTRED PARENTS

Parents: a help or a hindrance

There are two problems that will be difficult for new coaches to prepare for: one is the large number of players they may have to contend with and the other is their parents. The following idea is a simple and progressive program for solving both problems. It will involve thought and planning but the benefits will be long lasting and beneficial, particularly for the players.

The process

Start the process by inviting interested parents onto the floor or field to help supervise the interactive games. At the end of the practice, (or first team meeting) layout the program, the advantages and the obligations.

The result of this program will be the equivalent of a practical parent education training program where the coach will be the mentor and the Pre-level 1 Manual, the guide. The program is meant to be based on the collaborative model where each person brings their expertise to the group. The objective is to involve the parents in the athlete centred approach to coaching

The advantages

- Young players need one-on-one or small group activities that one coach and a couple of assistants can't provide.
- Parents will develop an understanding of the learning process, which will help watch and play with their young athletes in a way that facilitates both fun and learning.
- The philosophy of athlete centred coaching is a universal approach that is used at every level of a player's development. Understanding this approach will help parents make the right decisions and will foster good parent/coach relations.
- By accepting the parents as coaching assistants, coaches take on the role of mentor and are challenged to:
  - examine their philosophy, values and coaching styles.
  - plan practices to make efficient use of time, space and personnel.

The Parent Education Training Program

To get started, plan and organize the introduction in a progression of steps so that both the coaches and the parents can become comfortable in their new roles. i.e.

1. Present the plan to the parents at the first parent meeting.

*Discuss the coach's philosophy, how the teaching will be done and the pros and cons of having several people involved. Coaching Manuals should be made available, particularly for those that want to debate*

*the main issues. If the idea is accepted, then arrangements can be made to conduct orientation meetings to establish safety protocols and teaching methods.*

2. Use the parents to supervise and help with the on floor activities.

*By being on the floor, the parents will see and hear the explanations that will give them the knowledge to help players with difficulties. Consequently the practices will become a coaching and parenting clinic for parents .*

3. Conduct regular parent meeting or mini clinics to:

- ensure consistency in coaching,
- answer questions,
- discuss and share new ideas
- to cover safety and liability issues.

4. Delegate some of the teaching responsibilities.

*As parents become familiar with the material and develop confidence, some may want to take on more responsibilities. They can be assigned specific groups of players to work with or specific skills where they have developed expertise in teaching. The parents can do their own research and plan their own teaching progressions and learning activities.*

## **Tips for Coaching with Parents**

- Have the parents who wish to help-out on the floor take the Pre-level 1 course. This is the way other agencies cover the liability.
- For children that are reluctant to come on the floor, have parents support the child with whatever makes the child the most comfortable.
- Children or parents should not be forced to participate. There is a readiness factor that has to be considered,.
- Be clear about the teaching progressions that are being used. Make sure that parents understand the objectives of each activity.
- Control all negative feedback; show parents the good things their children are accomplishing.

- Give the parents the choice of whether they want to work with their own children or not. There are advantages and disadvantages to both situations.
- Discourage the myth that boys will be boys. If boys need empathy and support, give it to them: if boys are out of line, show them that their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Become aware of the cultural attitudes we have toward boys and girls that affect how we talk to and treat them and what we expect of them. Treat all players the same, with the same amount of respect.
- Review the harassment policy with the parents. Make parents aware that they are role models and are responsible for their own actions as well as the harassment or abuse inflicted on a player by others. There are several types of dialogue in society that border on harassment or abuse such as: put downs said in jest, sarcasm used as a form of humour or to make a point, nick-names that are less than flattering and teasing. Once these forms of communication are taken out of context and repeated at someone's expense, the behaviour can be classified as harassment or abuse.
- Coaches must set the tone, first through their own behaviour and then by correcting the abusive behaviour of the players or their parents. Not saying anything is often interpreted as permission.
- Encourage the parents to read and follow the FairPlay Codes and Harassment Policy, and to study the background material of the Manual. The FairPlay Codes are the rules to coach by: the Manual tells why it is important to follow these rules.

## MODULE 9 RISK MANAGEMENT

**GOAL** To introduce the anti harassment policy and to outline the protocols for the care and prevention of injuries

**OBJECTIVES** The coach will understand:

- What parts of coaching behaviour constitutes harassment or abuse.
- How to prevent injuries from occurring
- How to recognize serious injuries.
- The appropriate methods for removing an injured player from the playing surface.
- The appropriate first aid treatment for soft tissue injuries.
- When players can return to action following an injury.

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### INTRODUCTION

*Module 9 is not a First Aid course but rather a guide for coaches to safely manage their players. Players must have both a psychologically and a physically safe environment to play in and the priority is prevention. If there is an incidence of harassment or abuse, or if a player is injured, it is the coaches' responsibility to make every effort to correct the situation.*

*When injuries do occur, the coach's duty is to ensure that players get the best treatment possible and that the injuries are not made worse. The ideal situation is for the coach to be a certified First-Aider or trainer, or for the team to have a trained health professional to take on the duties of the **Charge Person**, (the person who takes care of all team injuries).*

*Regardless of who takes on the role of caring for injuries, it is the coaches responsibility to ensure that the Injury Management Protocols are followed. The protocols are provided to ensure that injuries that can't be treated out of the First Aid kit are handled by a professional and not the coach or another adult.*

## HARASSMENT, ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Coaches are responsible

The public awareness of the sexual abuse perpetrated by people in positions of trust has resulted in the following lists of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour. Coaches may be surprised that the way they communicate may be considered abusive, even if unintended. The anti abuse and harassment codes also apply to players and fans and the coach is responsible for any abuse or harassment perpetrated by team members or their parents.

**Harassment** — intentional or unintentional behaviour including comments and/or conduct which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive and/or which creates an uncomfortable environment.

Harassment or abuse may include:

1. Deliberately ignoring a player, placing unrealistic demands on a player; verbal abusing or threatening a player
2. Practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endanger a person's safety, or negatively affect performance;
3. Remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting about a person's body, attire, age, ethnic or racial origin, religion etc.;
4. Sarcasm, condescension, paternalism or patronizing behaviour which undermine self-respect or adversely affects performance;
5. Displaying of sexually explicit, racist or other offensive or derogatory materials;
6. Shouting, swearing, taunting, degrading, demeaning;
7. Physical conduct such as touching, kissing, patting, pinching ;

Teasing, Bullying, Intimidating

Teasing is a behaviour used by children developing their communication skills. In today's society, however, it often turns into bullying and intimidation and is not to be condoned by coaches.

Communication

Adults who work with children should be aware of the ways children can be appropriately touched. Hi-fives, a pat on the helmet, or a friendly touch on the shoulder can all show that you care. If coaches are unsure about their behaviour, they should check with the parents. Also, asking the players for permission before helping them with equipment, clothing or injuries will clarify the coach's intent and prevent any misunderstanding or uncomfortable situations.

Sarcasm and put-downs

Sarcasm and put-downs, although quite common, are not to be used as forms of humour, communication or motivation. Coaches must set the example and communicate with respect. Mistakes are a natural part of learning and players should be encouraged to find appropriate ways of communicating their feelings.

## PREVENTION OF INJURIES

### Medical History

Medical histories should be carried with the team and should contain information on:

- Phone numbers for Parents, Doctors and a friend or relative for emergencies and Medical Insurance Number.
- List of medications, allergies, illnesses, injuries or chronic problems.
- Date of last Tetanus shot
- Blood type
- List of other activities.

### Equipment

- Shoes: Running shoes should be properly fitted with enough support to stabilize the ankle and with a tread that is suitable for the surface being played on.
- Protective equipment: Must be CSA approved if applicable. Must fit and be suitable for the size of the player.
- All equipment must be maintained, e.g. shoe laces done up.

### The Environment

- Outdoors: Check for debris, particularly cans and broken glass, holes on fields, and disrepair of wood and wire structures.
- Indoors: Check for built-in structures such as metal bars or sharp corners that players could fall against. Make sure that things such as hanging ropes are out of reach of children.

### The Activity

Minimize accidental contact by:

- Individualizing the programs. Activities and games that match the ability of the players will reduce the number of loose balls. i.e. Teaching catching by first rolling and bouncing a ball by hand instead of throwing the ball head height.
- Locate games so that the loose balls end up on the boards instead of down the floor.
- Using parents to control activity and to snag loose balls.
- Setting and enforcing rules that control behaviour and create a sense of safety for everyone.

Set game rules to control loose balls.

**MEDICAL HISTORY CARD**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ BIRTHDATE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONAL HEALTH NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ If different from above.

Phone . (home) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone  
(work) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person if parent is unavailable. \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY  
PHYSICIAN \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

RECORD OF ILLNESSES. State illnesses or conditions, past or present, that may affect or be affected by performance.

ASTHMA     DIABETES     HEART DISEASE     SEIZURES

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

**(SPECIFY) OTHER PROBLEMS, PREVIOUS INJURIES OR SURGERY**

HEADACHES     BLACKOUTS     CHEST PAIN     FRACTURES   
# of CONCUSSIONS

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

ARE CORRECTIVE LENSES REQUIRED    NO     YES

IMMUNIZATION: Year of last tetanus shot \_\_\_\_\_

LIST ALLERGIES AND/OR MEDICATIONS TAKEN REGULARLY

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date card completed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian

## MANAGEMENT OF INJURIES

### Step 1

Take note of how the injury occurred

Knowledge of how the injury occurred is important in the diagnosis of the injury and will determine how the coach will approach the player. Coaches and assistants should be as conscious of the interaction of the players as they are of the execution of skills or games.

### Step 2

Assess for life threatening injuries

Is the athlete breathing? Does the athlete have a pulse? (i.e. the vital signs)

- If the answer is **no** to either of these questions **call the ambulance and start CPR. If coaches are not trained in CPR then they should know which parents are or if there is a trained person on site.**
- If the athlete is **unconscious or semi-conscious**, call the ambulance. Keep the athlete still and warm and monitor vital signs until the arrival of the ambulance

Assess for serious injuries

Talk to and relax the player while noting if there are any irregular reactions of the player. If a cut is suspected, check for bleeding and locate the source. **Do not move the athlete during this process.** If the athlete is not moving or can't move, suspect a serious injury. Injury to back, neck or head; fractures and dislocations; and signs of shock are all classified as serious conditions.

- If the athlete **can't move**, if there is **numbness or a tingling** in the feet or hands, if there is any **dizziness or nausea**, or if the **level of consciousness** is severely hampered then:
  - call 911,
  - support the injured area,
  - cover with a blanket or coat.

Injured players must initiate movement on their own accord

The importance of Step 2 is to ensure that the coach or a parent doesn't panic and pick the player up and carry him/her off the floor or field. Step 2 is a checklist that First-Aiders deliberately go through as they look for signs that would indicate that urgent care is needed.

**STEP 3:**

Communicate  
with the  
player

- Determine if there is an injury by asking if and where there is pain, and if the player is experiencing any abnormal feelings.
- Calm the player if s/he is upset and then determine the seriousness of the injury by asking if the injured area can be moved.
- Young players are just learning how to interact with other players and how to deal with their emotions when they fall or are hit. Quite often the pain of losing face or of not getting ones own way can confuse the diagnoses of an injury. When players suffer from psychological trauma, empathy will get them off the floor and then getting the players to think of ways to prevent the incident from happening again will help them to regain their confidence and self-respect.

**Step 4:**

Evaluate  
Function

If the athlete can't initiate movement then a more serious injury must be suspected and the ambulance is to be called.

At Step 4 the coach is dealing with an injury that the player can move or at least support and is ready to assess the athlete's ability to leave the playing surface.

- Check to see if the injured area can be moved and/or supported.
- Ask the player to sit up. The coach can offer support.
- Ask the player to stand. The coach can offer support.
- If the injured area is part of the leg, ask the player to apply a little weight.
- Ask the player if s/he is ready to move off of the field or floor.

**Step 5:**

Assist the  
player off the  
floor

- Ask the player how s/he may be assisted.
- If at any time the injury is too painful to continue or if he player feels faint, the player is to sit or lay down and if necessary, with the head below the heart. If the player does not respond then support, cover and call 911.

## Step 6

Return to activity or go for medical assessment?

### The player can go back into the play:

If the injury was very minor:

- no swelling
- no bruising,
- no pain or favouring of the injured part

If there is no pain during:

- tests for full range of motion,
- full weight bearing,
- full movement against resistance
- demonstration of sport related exercises or drills

Coaches should allow time for the player to recover from the incident before making a final decision for returning to activity. For psychological trauma, the players are to decide when they are ready to return.

### The player must stay out of action:

If there is any evidence of:

- swelling,
- pain,
- favouring of the injured part

And given **P.I.E.R.** and taken for medical attention

## Step 7

**P.E.I.R.**  
Treatment of sprains and strains

- **P Pressure** from a tensor bandage or wrap; do not cut off the circulation.
- **I Ice** 5 to 10 minutes on, depending on the mass of the injured area — 40 to 60 min. off. Keep a wet towel or a wrap of the tensor between the skin and the ice.
- **E Elevation** Try to keep the injured area slightly above the heart.
- **R Rest** Keep the athlete from using the injured part until there is no risk of internal bleeding or further injury.

**Cuts and  
scrapes**

- Wear latex gloves
- Apply pressure with a sterile bandage to stop any bleeding
- Clean with clean water, an antiseptic soap
- Treat with an antiseptic
- Cover with sterile bandage or Band-Aid.

**Step 8****Have injuries  
assessed by  
a doctor**

- Advise parents when their children go down regardless of whether an injury has occurred or not.
- Keep a record of all injuries, treatment and recommendations.
- Have a doctor's note to indicate when a player can return to activity following an injury.

## MODULE 10 ADMINISTRATION

**Goal** To provide administrators with the information to make informed decisions regarding coaching development, practices, games and leagues at the entry level

### Objectives

To ensure that decisions and policies are based on the needs of the players and not of coaches, parents or administration.

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### Introduction

*Administrators make decisions concerning the type of programs that will be offered, which teams players play on, the rules that will be followed, how rules are to be enforced, the equipment that will be used, number of practices, number of games, who will coach, the training coaches will get, communication with parents and the behaviour of parents.*

*Administrators who do not understand their leadership role in these areas or the needs of an Athlete Centred Program end up frustrating coaches, causing players to quit and programs to fail. This very brief module is a plea for administrators to at least read this manual in an effort to understand the educational needs of the Lacrosse Coaching Development Program.*

*British Columbia has been involved with Athlete Centred Coaching for six years and certified coaches are now evolving into administrative positions. As a result, informed decisions are being made about how the game is played and taught, and there is now a noticeable improvement in all aspects.*

*Module 10 relates to the educational needs of a system that promotes learning through the playing of games. Administrators must understand that the games being referred to are not the formal games of lacrosse but rather the recreational games where the rules have been modified to match the abilities and challenges of the players.*

## ENTRY LEVEL PROGRAMS

What type of Lacrosse to play

When players first start playing lacrosse it doesn't matter which program they start out on, the activities and games can be adapted to any surface. Therefore, the deciding factors depend on what the community has to offer, what will attract the most players and where the competition will eventually come from.

Where there are large numbers of players involved, house leagues can be set up. If, however, there are only twenty to thirty players of various ages, a system of minor and recreational games can be used to add variety to the season and to promote learning. These points are mentioned because there is a preconceived notion that house or recreational leagues are substandard, and that talent can only be developed in highly organized and competitive leagues. The point to note is that it is not the type of league that develops the talent, it is the expertise of the coaching.

## Decision-making

Beginners and their games

When organizing house leagues or tournaments it is important that the type of games played are similar to those played in practice. This means, for example, that beginners who are capable of only understanding interactive and minor games should not be playing full games of lacrosse on the weekend. Interclub play-days or jamboree type settings where coaches and players get a chance to share their ideas and skills are far more valuable.

Goalkeepers

One major decision that must be made concerns goalkeepers. Technically, there is no advantage to using goalies when beginners have problems even hitting the goal. In fact there are more disadvantages. Young players have not yet developed the mental and physical characteristics required to be a goalie, and it is more important that everyone develops their strength and agility, their stick handling and their shooting skills before goalies are even considered. Emotionally, however, coaches may not have a choice as there are some youngsters, particularly at the Tyke level who just need to find out what it is like. The following points should be considered:

1. The decision to use a goalie is based on the ability and level of the players. There must be a clear indication that players have the ability to control their shots or move to make a stop. Older beginners will fit into this category.
2. The goal should be of a proportionate height. (See the Brine Goal Blocker.)

3. Players should be rotated in the position. All players who would like to try out for goal should have an opportunity.
4. The goalie game should be played by all players at least one year before goalies are used in games. Players must also be taught how to shoot prior to the use of goalies. Players who have been following this Pre-level 1 program from age five will be ready to use goalies in their fourth year.

## Safety

When setting equipment requirements, always ensure that the safety of the players comes first by using and enforcing rules to protect the player, and then if necessary add protective equipment as needed. The players must be free to move and execute skills while at the same time being protected from injury.

*Once players develop a few skills, they and their coaches have an inclination to implement the hitting and contact seen in older divisions. This is clearly an indication that coaches are focused on coaching the game rather than teaching the players and further education of the coaches is recommended.*

## Rules

In Interactive, Cooperative and Minor games, rules are used to promote the use of specific skills and sport concepts as well as to regulate play. For example, special passing rules, such as in Interlacrosse, are often used for Tykes and Mini-tykes to encourage the development of passing skills and the concept of advancing the ball through passing. When these rules were first implemented, difficulties were encountered when coaches started looking for loopholes and using tactics designed to get the ball down the floor with a shot on goal by one or two of the superior players on the team. As coaches became educated these rules became redundant.

## Practice time

Coaches who have been presented with the concepts of Athlete Centred Coaching soon realize that their seasonal schedules do not allow the practice time for teaching and learning to take place. Unfortunately, what happens in house and recreational leagues is that new players come together for their first practice and then have their first game on the following Saturday.

## Young players

A better plan is to schedule team or group practices during the week and then on the weekend organize practices as development camps where all the players of an age group are brought together. Then once the season is under way teams from other communities can be invited in to share what they have learned. Eventually, when the players can advance the ball leagues can be set up.

**Older players**

Older players can be started the same way, then once the players have been through the fundamentals, teams can be named and the leagues set up. The key to success and learning is that the practice to game ration be a minimum of two to one. If some creativity is used in the way practices are set up, i.e. two practices a week, a jamboree alternating with a formal game on the weekends, a ration of five practices to one game would be even better for the first year.

In Athlete Centred Coaching the formal game is used for players and coaches to test themselves and to give the information needed to identify the next level of challenges. If enough practise time is not allotted, the players simply do what they already know, which at the beginning is not very much.

**Keep rules for coaches and rules for players separate**

Rules for coaches should be dealt with through private consultation and coach's meetings. Coaches should not be allowed to stretch the rules or make them up as they go. What the players learn and how good they become depend on the rules being extremely consistent and this does not apply to just the beginners.

Rules for players should deal with the needs of the players. Use the Mini-tyke rules or the Inter Lacrosse rules and modify them to keep the games simple and interactive for beginners, and more challenging for the advanced.

**The Spirit of Sport and Fairplay****Administrators should thoroughly understand the philosophy of Athlete Centred Coaching**

Athlete Centred Coaching is clearly about teaching through the natural learning processes and by meeting the needs of the players. It becomes obvious when coaches and administrators decisions to meet their own needs. Meetings often break down into angry debate, coach and player behaviour becomes more aggressive and games become more difficult to officiate. As a result, administrative bodies publish Coaching Codes of Conduct and FairPlay policies that are supported by increased penalties and suspensions.

There is a better way and it is through education. Once Administrators understand the principles of Athlete Centred Coaching they have no difficulty establishing sound education and certification policies. The problems that make administration a nightmare seem to disappear over night. Games become more enjoyable to play and watch, and local Associations begin to grow. The most important change is that the Spirit of Sport becomes part of the game and Coaching Codes become redundant. Lacrosse becomes fun.

## RECOMMENDED READING

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**Coaching For Character**, Clifford and Feexell. Human Kinetics 1997.

**Cooperative Sports & Games Book**, Terry Orlick. Pantheon Books, New York 1982.

**How Children Learn**. John Holt, Pitman Publishing Corporation, New York, 1969.

**Straight Talk about Children and Sport**, Coaching Association of Canada 1997

**Winning without Winning**, Gerry Crowley. Mercury Press 1997.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Orlick in the list of recommended reading.

<sup>2</sup> The graphics and the modified instructions are taken from the lacrosse Inter-Lacrosse Instructional Manual with the permission of the Canadian Lacrosse Association. Illustrations by Val Batyi, Editor John Lewis.

<sup>3</sup> The FairPlay Codes have been modified from the FairPlay Codes of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

<sup>4</sup> See page 9 Interactive Games & p. 13 the Glossary.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas A. Kleiber, "Playing to Learn", Quest 26 (Summer 1976), pp. 32-33.

<sup>6</sup> The age related characteristics are based on the work of Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson, in How to Father, (New York: Signet, 1974) and in How to Parent, (New York: Signet, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Fitzhugh Dodson, How to Parent, (New York: Signet, 1970), p. 162.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzhugh Dodson, How to Father, (New York: Signet, 1974), pp. 84– 86.

<sup>9</sup> Dodson, (1970), p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> Michael J. Hardisty, Education through the Games Experience, (Bellingham: Educational Designs and Consultants, 1972), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Dodson, (1974), p. 137.

<sup>12</sup> The Practice Planners of the Practical component contains the interactive games for each of the fundamentals.

<sup>13</sup> Dodson 1974 p. 137.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Piaget, The Moral Judgment of the Child, (England: Penguin books Ltd., 1932), pp. 41,42

<sup>15</sup> Dodson 1974 p.144.

<sup>16</sup> Dodson 1974 p.144.

<sup>17</sup> E. Maulden, H. B. Redfern, Games Teaching, (London: McDonald and Evans Ltd. 1969, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Dodson 1974 p. 148.

<sup>19</sup> The "gang" mode refers to the natural desire for children to be with their friends and to form these secret conspiracies as part of the natural process of breaking away from the family. The problem of safety arises and many parents give space in their garages, attics or basements for the kids to meet.

## End Notes

<sup>20</sup> Dodson, 1974 p. 150.

<sup>21</sup> Dodson, 1974 p. 149.

<sup>22</sup> The information on emotional intelligence was based on the research of Daniel Goleman in Emotional Intelligence, (New York: Bantam Books, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence, (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Goleman, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Goleman, pp. 86-90.

<sup>26</sup> Goleman, pp. 34-45.

<sup>27</sup> Hardisty, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Robert N. Singer, "The Readiness to Learn Skills Necessary for Participation in Sport", in Magill, Ash & Smoll (eds.) Children in Sport, (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1978), p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Singer 1978 p.34.

<sup>30</sup> Kleiber, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Kleiber, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Peter B. Vaill, Learning as a Way of Being, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.,1996), p. 56. The seven "qualities" or conditions required for learning described by Peter Vail are the same conditions that are made possible when coaches use the athlete centred approach to teaching. Also, the subtitle and theme of "Learning as a Way of Being": "Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water", perfectly describes what all players and coaches encounter in their games and even in their practices. The important similarity, however, is Vaill's conclusion that if we are to survive in a constantly changing environment we must use our own learning skills rather than rely on the teaching and guidance of our institutions (*Coaching Courses*). In coaching terms, this means that players who are encouraged to find their own ways to learn how to develop skills, will then have the ability to learn how to adapt to the changing environment of their games.

Along with Daniel Goleman's, Emotional Intelligence, Learning as a Way of Being is highly recommended for those coaches wishing to develop a deeper understanding of Athlete Centred Coaching.