

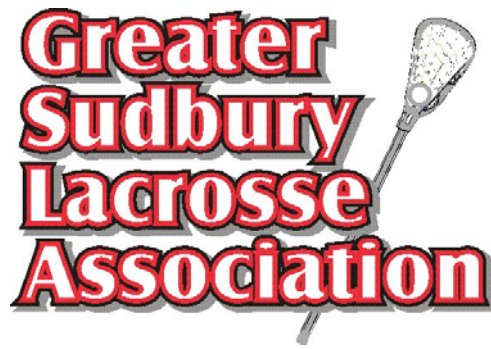
Greater Sudbury Lacrosse Association

In-House Coaching Manual

2008



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GSLA Coaching and Officials' Code of Conduct

Responsibility to the Lacrosse Community

The Greater Sudbury Lacrosse Association believes that that our House League and Rep team coaches and game officials should be role models for our community. As such, they must conduct themselves so as to always maintain the dignity of the game of lacrosse - Canada's national summer sport. Whether our players are practicing and playing here in Sudbury, or competing elsewhere, coaches and game officials are serving as representatives of the GSLA and should conduct themselves accordingly.

Responsibility to the Players

The GSLA believes coaches are responsible to ensure that the health, well-being and development of all athletes - whether House League or Rep - take precedence over the win/loss record of their own team. Officials must ensure that our young players have fond memories of the fun, competition, and excitement of playing lacrosse. Coaches should be enthusiastic and positive and they must ensure that they are generous with deserving praise. Players must be encouraged to win within the laws of the game and whenever players exhibit unsportsmanlike behavior, it is the responsibility of the coach to address that behavior and put an immediate end to it.

Responsibility to the Officials and Organization

All members of the GSLA community, including supporters, parents, referees, fellow coaches, and scorers, shall at all times be treated in a professional and courteous manner. Coaches shall neither exhibit nor tolerate any behavior from others (including players or supporters) - verbal or otherwise - that might reflect poorly on an official. This includes arguing against penalties, or inciting players or supporters against any official. If a coach or official has a concern about the conduct of an official, coach, parent or player, the incident should be described in writing and presented to the GSLA executive as soon as possible. Public displays of displeasure - before, during or after a contest - are not acceptable.

HOUSE LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY

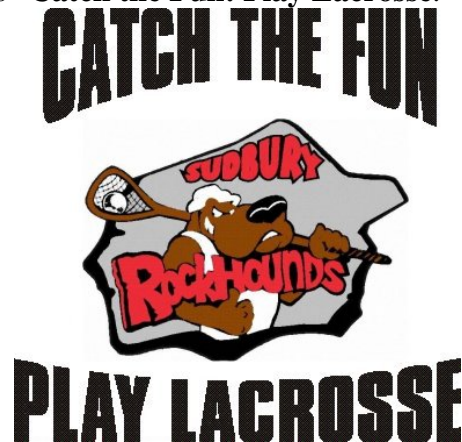
The GSLA offers minor lacrosse for age groups 4 to 21 years of age, and has a masters program for adults. We run both rep and house league programs, and more than 500 individuals from Greater Sudbury and surrounding communities participate each summer. The GSLA is currently the largest lacrosse centre in the OLA Zone 4 and a number of our rep teams have begun capturing medals at the provincials in recent years. What sets us apart from many other minor lacrosse programs, however, is our determination to have all players participate in our house league system.

What this means for you as a coach is that your team likely has 2 or 3, or maybe even 4 “rep” players, then maybe some players who are very good athletes/experienced lacrosse players but who don’t play rep for whatever reason, then the balance of the team is made up of people who are either very new to the game, or who have played for a number of years but might never have really excelled at it. ***All of these players are important.*** In the GSLA house league the focus is not on winning and losing, but on improving skills, staying fit, and having fun, all the while playing our national summer sport. For that reason we do not “double-shift” our rep players to eke out a house league victory, but we do play everyone as equally as possible. In house league games that means you try to line up your players (a left, then a right, then left, then right, etc.). You can try to balance it by putting out a left experienced player with a right newcomer, then a left not-so-strong player with a right “rep” player, etc. etc.) and then run through the bodies that way. But if you send out all your top players on the first shift, you may find yourself with a very shallow talent pool on the next line because you are not allowed to double shift just your best players. So be sure to give all house league players equal floor time during games, even at the end of the house league during the tournament

HAVING FUN

A calm coach, who is there to have fun, will have a team that is having fun. Having a plan written out is helpful since then you don’t have to think too much when practice starts. But the best-laid plans of mice and lax coaches sometimes don’t work out. Don’t panic if 6 players show up, just adapt. Start one shuttle line and you take shots on the goalie. Ask the other team for a couple of players to even it out. **It is house league** and our goal is to have kids **PLAY**. Always take some extra time with players who need help (if you are stuck without a co-coach let the vets start a different drill they know while you address the problem the not-so-good player is having). And be sure to compliment them individually on one thing they have done better (there is usually something).

Remember this: for some of them you are the only coach they may ever have. Try to leave them smiling after the game and they will have fond memories of our national summer sport. Our motto is “**Catch the Fun: Play Lacrosse.**” That says it all.



On this page is a recent story about the Sudbury Youth Basketball league that really emphasizes what house league sports is all about.

Why sports - and sports journalism - really does matter - Column by Laura Young

Sudbury Star 31 March 2008

Back in the days of journalism school, on the glorious campuses that comprise the University of King's College and Dalhousie in Halifax, some sniffed at sports writing. It was not 'real reporting' and too specialized - as in if you didn't do sports, you couldn't understand it.

I wish there had been a week like this to show off to anyone who wonders why sport matters and why we need to fund such things as multiplex recreation centres.... [and] over the weekend, there was a moment where a personal best went in a different direction.

It happened at Lockerby Composite School during the frenzy of games at the year-end tournament of the Sudbury Youth Basketball League....

On one particular team of kids ages 10-11, one player had not scored all year. Now, scoring matters. The prettier the moves en route to the basket, the better. And it does become a point of unity on a team to tell the kids get the ball to so and so. He or she hasn't scored in a game all year. Then watch the goodness in most of the kids as they try. This one child started the season ducking when a pass came his way; he was seemingly always a step or three behind the play. Yet he always took his shift, always made some progress.

So, in the final two games Saturday afternoon, the team ensured he scored. Pass after pass went to this boy to the point where his opponents had figured out who he was, by name, and that the ball would be coming to him. There was tight coverage on him, efforts to block. He kept missing.

With four minutes left in his season/shift, his team hadn't given up and pledged that he would get a basket. A little sports psychology on the bench to motivate and down the court they went.

Two of the players, who also play for their school teams, passed and ran a pick to their other teammate who is a soccer standout, then passed to their rookie teammate.

Finally, he scored. Fans and teammates went wild.

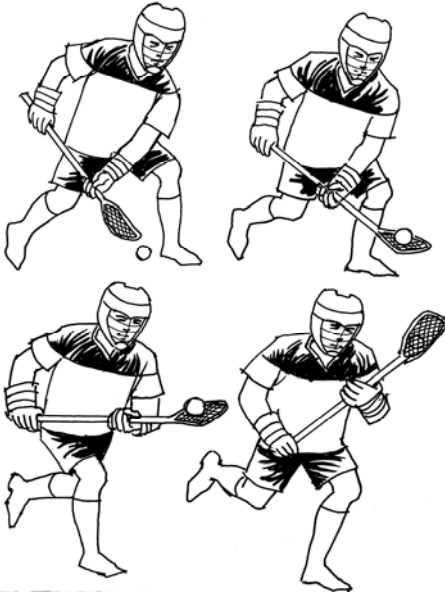
It was that tiny moment in the grand scheme of things - and all that it took to get there - that beats at the heart of sport.

And how covering sports is about writing about life in all its complexities and glory. Play on!

Read Laura Young's Personal Best every Saturday in The Sudbury Star

SKILLS

PICKING UP BALL



PICKING UP THE BALL

There are several ways to pick up a lacrosse ball. There is the scoop, snap and roll, and the “Indian pickup” for example. The most effective way to pick up is by “scooping” it as if one was using a shovel. The Indian pickup is snazzy, but it isn’t all that reliable, and the “snap and roll” used to be common in box lacrosse, because wooden sticks had a big lip on the front and it was hard to scoop a ball up off concrete. But the introduction of plastic heads has made the snap and roll a time-waster for the most part. It is still worthwhile teaching new players how to “trap” the ball (ie. quickly put their stick on top of a ball that is rolling away from them), but then they should just scoop it up and go!

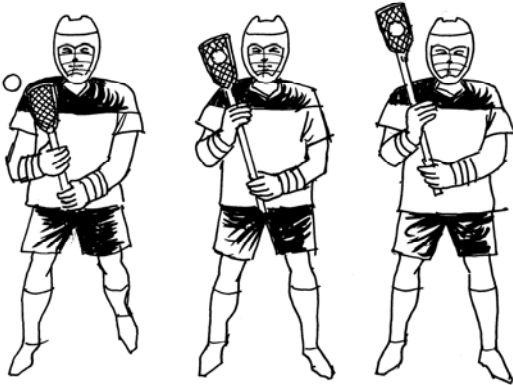
The process is:

- approach the ball placing your foot near the object to protect it from other players
- bend down so both the head **and** butt end of stick are close to the ground
- with a quick scooping motion pick up the ball and go

CATCHING

For new players, holding a lacrosse stick for the first time can be difficult. But Sudbury

CATCHING



kids are easy to teach: tell them to pretend they are taking a slapshot. Now ask them to simply move the head of the stick from the ground up to near their shoulder (keeping one hand on the butt end, and the other about 10” or a foot above that butt end hand). The top hand is their dominant one (if their right hand is near the top of the stick they are a “rightie,” like the guy in the picture, but if the left hand is on the top, they are a natural “leftie”).

To catch properly, players should hold the stick off to the side about a foot

away from the player’s helmet. The head of the stick should be pointing forward, about a foot and a half in front of the player’s helmet, open-mouthed, facing toward the thrower. This gives the thrower a target and provides the necessary cushion for the momentum of the approaching ball. As the ball enters the stick, the catcher lets the momentum of the ball push the stick back toward his/her ear. **All lacrosse players should practice catching with both hands since it makes one able to play on both sides of the floor.**

THROWING

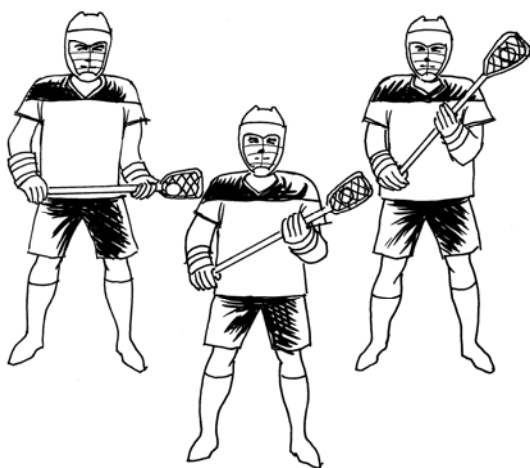


THROWING THE BALL

To throw a lacrosse ball you shouldn't start exactly as this illustration suggests. Instead, a player should start with feet that are about 1.5 feet apart, standing directly facing the catcher. Then, the stick is levered backward (but not so far as to allow the ball to roll out behind the player). Note the hands are about 1 foot apart. The next motion is to have the butt end

of the top hand, as in the last figure. That lever motion provides most of the force. Additional power is provided by the "follow through," as the player steps out on the opposing foot (for a rightie that means their left foot should hit the ground just about the time the ball leaves the pocket). All players should master this ordinary throw – **with both hands** -- before trying sidearms, over the shoulders, or any other kind of passing.

CRADLING THE BALL



CRADLING THE BALL

Teaching new players to cradle should be done carefully. Far too often new players (and some coaches) think that cradling is the most critical of skills, and frequently they end up looking like "eggbeaters" or "paddlers" as they frantically gyrate the stick as they run. That sort of cradling is counter-productive: you can't pass the ball if it is rotating at 200 rpm most of the time. The cradle actually has a purpose -- as you run you employ centrifugal force to keep the ball in the pocket. A quick cradle can also reassure a player that the ball is in the stick after it has been caught, or just

before it is thrown. To teach beginners how to cradle the players should hold the stick nearly horizontal relative to the ground (the head should be raised slightly more than it is in the first drawing since that ensures the ball won't roll out). The player then curls the upper hand toward his/her chest (as in the second and third picture) before lowering it back down. Most problems arise from holding the stick in a "death grip;" suggest they think they are rocking a brand new baby and have to be gentle (this works better with players who like babies, switch to puppies or a brand new X-Box 360 if someone gives you grief). This skill should be practiced standing still, then players may proceed to cradling while slowly jogging, and then full speed running and cradling. Tell them to watch experienced players and copy them too.

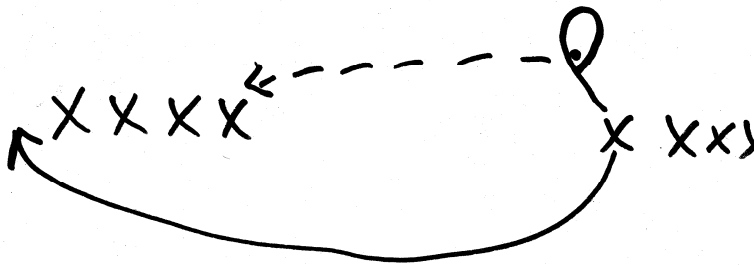
RUNNING PRACTICES

a) 12-13 APRIL FIRST PRACTICES (Shuttles/Stations/Drills)

At the start of the season the most important thing is to

- a) find out who the new players are
- b) take them aside for more instruction on the basics (5 or so minutes on how to pick up, catch, throw) while the other coach has the vets do wall ball or 2 person passing
- c) get everyone involved in shuttles as a team (that includes goalies)
- d) **by agreement with the other coaching staff at the other end of the arena you can set up four stations around the arena to work in small groups (you can do wall ball, one on one, dropping balls between the backs of two players then letting them fight to pick it up, a face-off competition, etc.), and after 4-5 minutes rotate the groups.**

SHUTTLES



Shuttles are the foundation for teaching lacrosse skills. By having 5 or 6 players in total per shuttle line (say 3 on one side of the arena, 2 or 3 facing them on the other side) the players are in nearly-continuous motion. There is nothing more disturbing for a player

than to be standing in a line of 12 kids waiting to touch the ball every 5 minutes or so. It is better than wall ball (which is also important for developing skills because shuttles have the added advantage of moving while catching/throwing etc.) So if you have 15 players, immediately form three shuttle lines (you may have to join in to balance the lines and for little players explain exactly where to go), give **one player** at the front of one line a ball, and then go through a progression of activities. You will likely have to push the lines back occasionally as kids tend to bunch toward the centre of the floor.

PROGRESSION

DEAD BALL: The first person in line places the ball at their feet. They scoop the ball, run to the opposite line, and *gently* place a dead ball (don't let them bounce it or roll it which defeats the purpose) about 3 feet in front of the first person in the other line, and the receiver yells "loose." The original player goes to the back of the second line. Run this so that both lines have at least two chances to pick up and deposit the ball. Have them scream "loose" for the pickup to get used to the idea of talking while playing.

ROLLING: The first person in line picks up the ball and runs toward the opposite line. Halfway there they roll the ball at the second line. The person in front shouts "loose," and puts their stick down to scoop it. The original player heads to the end of the second line while the receiver runs to the centre and rolls the ball back to the first line. The major difficulties to watch for are:

- a) players who don't move toward the ball, they try to reach out, or wait for the ball to come. They need to get in position and actively go for the ball.
- b) players who don't block the ball by getting right in front of the path. If they miss it, it rolls to the side or whatever. The concept is to act like a goalie (get in front of the path of the ball and use legs etc. to make sure the ball doesn't roll past you).

PASSING: The first person in the line takes the ball and runs about 1/3 the way toward the other line and throws the ball at the receiver's stick. The receiver should have their stick in the air and say "Here's your help," or "Help," so they get used to calling for the ball. The receiver then does the same thing while the original player goes to the end of the line. This drill teaches cradling, throwing while moving, calling for the ball, and catching. It can then be modified after 2 or 3 turns (bounce pass: ie. the ball should land about 6 feet before the receiver so that it bounces to near stick level; then passing with lefts/rights, catching left right; having the second person in the line be the receiver, that person then makes a breaking pass to the player in front who starts running once the receiver has the ball, the first player catches the ball about 10 feet out by putting their stick out *facing backward*, catches and runs a few more feet before passing the ball to the second player in the opposing line, etc. etc.)

b) APRIL 14 – 2 MAY PRACTICES

WALL BALL: If you have 30 minutes for practice, it would be wise to let the team members play wall ball for 3-5 minutes or so to work on their throwing and catching. Spread them out about 6 feet apart, facing the boards, about 10-15 feet from the boards. Have them practice both hands catching and throwing. Tell them to aim for a spot and try to hit it. This has the added advantage of letting the slow pokes get out on the floor without missing the major drills.

WARMUP RUN: You can then get everyone to hold a ball and run around the half-rink for 2-3 minutes, at a slow jog at first (later toward mid-season you can blow a whistle and demand fast running for 15 seconds, then slow jog for 20 seconds, fast for 15 seconds etc. to mimic the rhythm of a real box game). Don't exhaust the players (keep it to about 4 minutes max) but do warm up their legs.

SHUTTLES: You have spent about 1/3 of your practice time on wall ball and warm-up. So now it is time for shuttles (dead ball, rolling, left passing/catching, right passing catching). If you gave 2 minutes for dead ball, 2 minutes to rolling, 2 for bounce, 2 for left/left, 2 for right/right, you have 10 minutes left for the next activity.). If you have something that really needs to be worked on (say box setup for man down, defensive posture, breakouts) then make this session shorter. The key is not to BORE the players, keep the shuttle drill changing every few minutes.

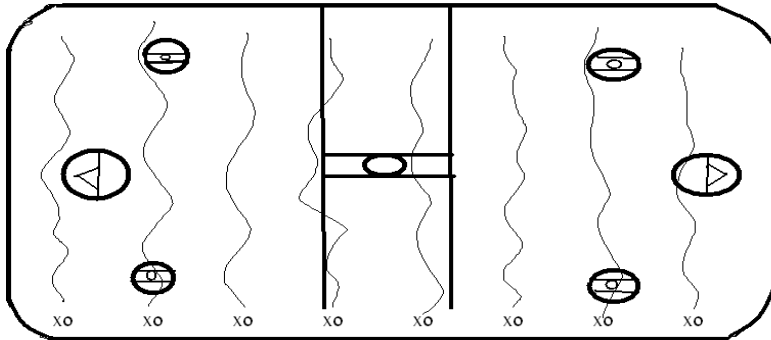
SPECIAL ISSUES: Even by this point in the season issues begin to emerge. During the scrimmages and early games some players will let opposing teams run right past them (known as "Ole Lacrosse" because of its similarity to bull-fighting); they pass the ball but do not move afterward and instead enjoy just watching others play the game; they don't set up in a box when they are a man down; or they abandon the goalie when a shot is taken forcing long floor passes that usually go no where etc. At this point you have to **reflect: What is the biggest problem my team has right now and how can I fix it?**

RESOLVING ISSUES

Half-floor or Full-floor drills

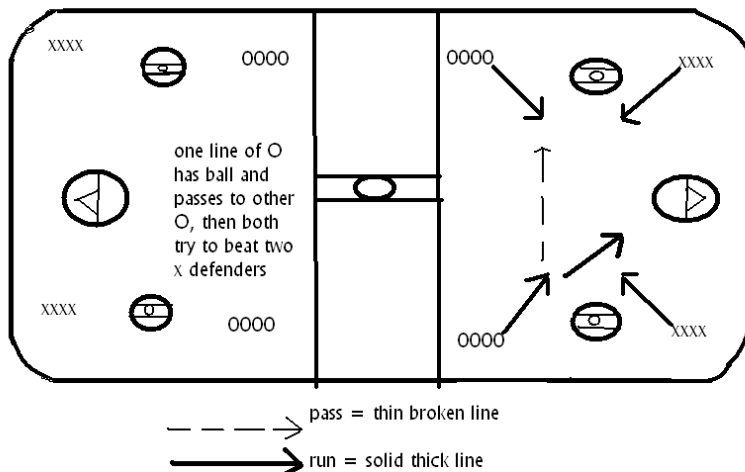
If you have ten minutes left after shuttles, select a drill that works to eliminate your problem. If the players can't get past another player, explain the basic defensive stance (knees bend, stick held in two hands, stick up in air when the opponent is far away to potentially knock down a pass, but bring it down in front of the body to push away as the offensive player approaches) and how to get past a defensive player (dodge by changing speeds, or using the pick and roll, but always hiding the stick whatever you do), **then institute a drill.**

One on One: A good drill for individual offensive/ defensive issues is to pair up the



players and spread them out over the length of the floor along one board. Have them try to get across the width of the floor while their partner offers resistance (this can be done half or full-floor). Once they make it to the other side, they switch offense/defense.

After five minutes of this you can make four lines: one in each corner (say 3 or 4 players per line) and send in the two from the top with a ball to play against two from the bottom:



reinforce that you want them to pass at least once then use dodges etc. to get a quick shot.

Call the play if they take more than 10 seconds to get a shot. The defenders then head up the floor to the back of the offensive lines, the offensive players head to the end of the defensive lines.

Full-floor Drills

There are also full-floor drills like the outlet pass on page 9 that utilize lots of floor space and players so that everyone gets to pass, catch, cradle and shoot. **Talk to your fellow coach at the start of the practice session to organize this at the end of the practice period.** After five or ten minutes of either half-floor or full-floor drills it is now game time and your players have spent some quality time all working on defensive/offensive skills.

c) MAY PRACTICES

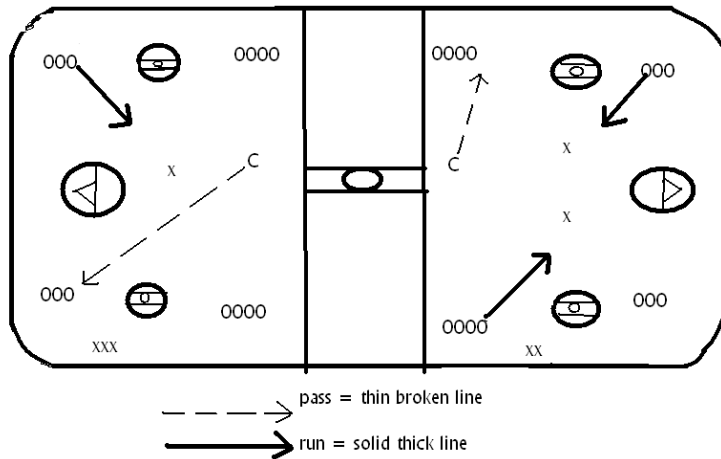
For most of May you may have only 15 minutes for practice before games. It would be best to do a fast 2 minute jog, and 2 minute shuttle, and still have 5-8 minutes to work on whatever issues still exist. If the players are getting slashing penalties, work on defensive posture; if the team still won't pass, go to a man-up drill (ie. 2 on 1; 3 on 2; 4 on 3; 5 on 4) where they must pass within 5 or 8 seconds or you blow the whistle and the next group starts. As coach, you need to figure out what needs be fixed, come up with a solution (you can asked more experienced coaches for drill ideas) then institute the solution.

Four Corner Drill

A really good half-floor set-up for many problems (both defensive and offensive) is the four corner drill. Take most of your players (ie. if you have 15 take 10 or 11 and put 2 to 3 players at each

Coach "c" passes to corner player, adjacent right player becomes "live" and 2 on 1 is created

Coach "c" passes to player, adjacent players on both sides become "live" = 3 on 2



3 players at each corner of the half floor) and put them on offense. Take the remainder (you need at least 4) and they are defence.

Now put one defender in the middle (the other 3 can stand at the side near the boards taking turns going in). Announce that whoever you throw the ball to, the offensive player to

their left joins them (see left hand side of full floor diagram above). So you throw the ball down to the far left corner near the goalie. Now the player in the other corner is "live" and you have a two on one (they return to the end of their own line). Switch recipients all around, but at random, to keep everyone involved.

You can progress to three on twos by having the two players directly adjacent to the receiver (see diagram above on right hand side of floor) become live once the receiver catches the ball. You can even go to 4 on 4 by just having all defenders in and all players in the corners live when you toss in the ball. After a few minutes take out the defenders and replace them with a whole line or two of offensive players.

Man-Up Progression

A really good full floor drill that even two teams can engage in all at once is the man-up progression. Both teams line up at random along the boards on one side of the arena. One player is at centre to play defence. The first player in line gets a ball and starts out toward one of the opposing goalies and tries to beat the defensive player who has been placed at centre (**1 on 1**). After the offensive player has had his shot or lost the ball those **two** players now come back and play together against **one** new defender who has run out to the centre (**2 on 1**). They meet the defender at centre and carry on to the other end trying to take a shot on the second goal tender. Once they have shot, or lost the ball they now become a **3-person** offensive unit (facing off **against 2 guys** at centre); then it is **5 on 4** coming back the other way. After those runners have had their turn, you start the

drill over with whoever is next in line (or if you are short players take the last 4 guys who entered at the end of the drill and put them near the front of the line so really tired guys who ran the whole thing can catch their breath). The beauty of this drill is you have people running hard, and playing hard, in a game-like situation, and you can stop the drill and point to issues that arise (ball hogging, forced passes, failure to move after passing).

Full Floor Breakout Drill

Below is a drill from the 2002 CLA handbook (appendix 1). It is a continuous “follow your pass” activity that teaches pretty much all the offensive skills one would hope for.



Appendix A Teaching the Passes of the Full Floor Break-Out Drill
(Advanced Level 1)

Combine the passing drills on page 7-5 by adjusting the positions of the lines.

The players pass the ball and follow the pass to the line they passed to.

Change the passes to teach the options. For example:

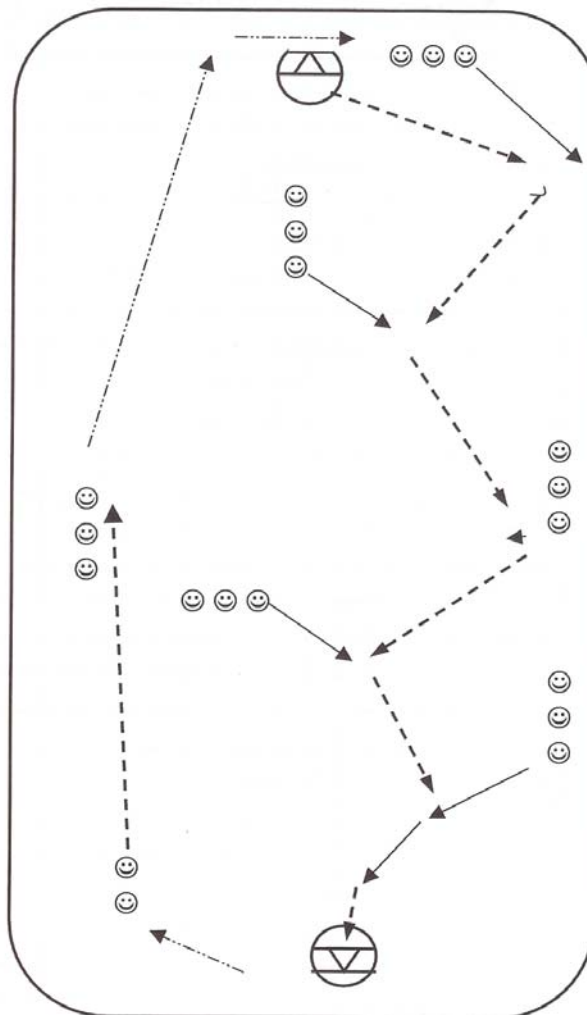
The pass from the goalie can go to the second receiver breaking to the boards.

The second pass can go up the boards.

The third pass can go up the centre.

The fifth passer can take the ball to the net and shoot or pass to the cutter on the crease.

The last pass coming back down the floor is an over-the-shoulder catch. The ball is then taken to the goalie.



PLANNING YOUR PRACTICES

It is always wise to have your practice sketched out on paper (it prevents those embarrassing questions like “What are we doing now coach?”).

If you are pressed for time drop an activity (ie. do not start with wall ball and run, but go straight to shuttles since kids are practicing running and throwing in shuttles anyway) and focus 10 minutes on “two on two” drills or whatever.

Remember that, especially at the beginning, you need transition time to get players into lines etc. As the season progresses, especially for older players, you will just have to say “Shuttle It Up!” and they will hop to it. You can adjust drill length by dropping components (ie. do shuttles straight from “left/left” instead of having dead ball, bounce passes, and rolling balls).

PRACTICE ACTIVITY	TIME
Wall ball	3-5 minutes drop if necessary
Run	2-4 minutes drop if necessary
Shuttles	5-8 minutes adapt if necessary (ie. just left/left; right/right)
Two on Two	5-8 minutes

GSLA HOUSE LEAGUE DEVELOPMENT FORMAT & Schedule: Tyke to Intermediate

The schedule below is designed to help new players pick up necessary fundamental skills, and allow returning vets to hone their skills BEFORE any games that count in the standings are played. As coaches you must adhere to this schedule, and not start unofficial “games” before players are ready to actually play lacrosse. Do not start “scrimmages” at the end of your practices until the schedule allows (i.e. April 14).

April 6-13	In house clinic Coniston 6 April Practice only first weekend April 12-13	3/4 shuttles and stations; 1/4 full floor
April 14-18	¾ practice; ¼ scrimmage	For practice 3/4 shuttles and stations; 1/4 full floor
April 21-25	½ practice; ½ refereed games	For practice section, split 3/4shuttles and stations; 1/4 full floor
April 28-May 2	1/3 practice; 2/3 game *** GSLA executive rebalances teams after this week if needed	Last 5 minutes of practice full floor
5-9 May	¼ practice; ¾ game	Last 5 minutes of practice full floor
12-16 May	¼ practice; ¾ game	Last 5 minutes of practice full floor
19-23 May	¼ practice; ¾ game	Last 5 minutes of practice full floor
26-30 May	Full games with 5 minute warm-up	5 Minute warm-up
2-6 June	Full games with 5 minute warm-up	5 Minute warm-up
9-13 June	Ditto -- Playdowns	5 Minute warm-up
14-15 June	Ditto -- Finals	5 Minute warm-up

****Practices are not to be reduced in time by non-scheduled extra “scrimmages”****

Similarly, you MUST NOT begin trading players. Team lists take literally hundreds of work hours to compose. The people who put them together have to figure out who might be a goalie, who already plays rep, who is an experienced player with a pot of goals but is not on a rep team, how many brand new players each team gets, then adding in all the other potential issues (trying to keep the ratio of rights and lefts equal, while keeping in mind the need for rides, conflicting work and team schedules of parents/coaches who do more than one team, etc. etc.)

SO DO NOT EVEN THINK OF MAKING UNOFFICIAL CHANGES BECAUSE IT IS NOT ALLOWED. However, sometimes issues do arise and trades need to be made because something has been overlooked or whatever. If you strongly believe a player should not be on your team, or needs to be on another team, you must follow the process below:

- a) make a written submission explaining the need for the change to the VP of House League (Vicky Hood hood.vl@persona.ca)
- b) the GSLA executive will then consider the application ASAP and determine if the trade is acceptable/necessary