

The Complete Box Lacrosse Goalie



A book for beginners to coaches;
and a little something for everyone in between.

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Part I Introduction

In 1982, I was 17 years old and I got play in 12 regular season games and two playoff games for the Gloucester Griffin's Jr. B club. At best I was a decent back up who was distracted by your usual teenage interest: girls, cars and jobs. That was pretty much the pinnacle of my box lacrosse career. Almost 25 years later, when my middle child started playing lacrosse as a goalie, a lot of fond memories came back to me and I sought out some older players where I was able to suit up and let some lovers of the game take some shots on me. I'm currently still playing pick up modified master rules lacrosse out of Gloucester and I am a far better goalie than I ever was as a youth!

As I got more and more involved in minor with my boys, I was reminded that the amount of material dedicated to goaltending in box lacrosse is very limited. This is not a new phenomenon! During the 1982 season we travelled to Orangeville or Huntsville, I don't quite remember which, but I do remember they were one of the top scoring clubs in the Jr. B circuit. I got the tap to start the game and for the first two periods we shut out the highest scoring squad in the province. We were up 12-0 going into the third period. Then something unexpected happened; the defense relaxed and started allowing left shooters to take underhand shots un-challenged from outside the 25' line. Before the 6 minute mark of the third period, the lead had slipped to 12-7. I faked an equipment issue and while the trainer messed about with my leg guard I asked the coach what I was doing wrong... He answered: "I don't know, get back in the net and stop the ball". Well maybe not in those exact words but that is how I remember it!

Suffice to say, in 1982 we goalies were on our own, and not much has changed in 2010. So I took it upon myself to create an accessible manual for players and coaches alike. I have been speaking with many old timers, friends other masters players my coaching colleagues and pretty much anyone who will listen; much of this manual is derived from those discussions.

A few **Key** thoughts for you to keep in mind as you read through this book:

1. There is no right or wrong as long as it works for you! You will find throughout the manual I strive to phrase instructions in the positive. Do vs. do not. Although there really is no right or wrong there are some universal truths to box lacrosse goal-tending which no goalie I have ever met has ever disputed! There are not too many and I will point them out. Other than those, this book should be used as a guide so that coaches and goalies can find the best practices that work for them.
2. You can't change your size, fit yourself for safety! Too often I have seen minor goalies dressed in equipment which fits within "sizing rules" but the equipment is simply too big. Oversized equipment can be dangerous for your goalie. It inhibits movement, and opens gap in the armor which, with an unlucky shot, can lead to an injury. If you have a player willing to be that guy who will stand in the net, make sure you protect them with the properly sized equipment, teach them the whole game. Yes, stopping the ball is the primary job of a goalie. However in your average 60 minutes of play, less than 25 shots on net is the average. If you consider 25 seconds for a shot to develop (passes between players) that's less than 15 minutes a goalie spends positioning for and stopping shots. What do you do for the other 45 minutes of game play? Regardless of

- age or of size, prep your player for when he will grow into the position.
3. Practice as you play, coaches protect your goalies with this philosophy! You should encourage your players to practice hard so they will play hard, they should shoot to score but if your goalie is involved in the drill the shot should come as it would in a game as well. Warm up is not a time for shooters to tweak their sticks: that is what wall ball is for! Shooting practice is not a time to see how hard you can shoot with your toes on the edge of the crease: that is what wall ball is for! Learning under hands and side arms is not part of pre-practice loosening up: that is what wall ball is for! (Are you seeing a theme?) Younger goalies are easily taught to fear the ball (mainly because of getting hurt by a shot they did not see). Only through good floor management can you ensure your goalie does not develop a fear of the ball. Why? Because it is a hundred times harder to learn not to fear than it is to learn to fear! Have your shooters challenged (a defender between the shooter and the goalie or have the shooter pursued) as they would be in a game. Your goalies will improve and your shooters will know how to deal with game situations.
 4. I don't cover the "Rules" in this manual, I'm not a referee and I won't pretend to know all the rules but there are four you need to know as a goalie (the specifics of these rules can vary based on the governing body):
 - a. The 5 second rule, once a player gains control of the ball in the crease, they have 5 seconds to get it out. Either by a pass or by stepping out of the crease.
 - i. Masters players, there is a 5 second rule for all players which states that you can only hold the ball in your stick for 5 seconds. This runs concurrently with the 5 second get it out of the crease rule!
 - b. Back in, once the ball has left the crease it cannot be passed back in to the crease nor can a player carry the ball back into the crease if they have possession of it outside the crease (some younger ages it is permitted to go back in once per possession)
 - c. 10 second rule, if a team is penalized, it has only 10 seconds to get to the opposing teams zone. If you use the whole 5 seconds in a. it does not leave a lot of time to get out of your zone.
 - d. Defenseless player. A goalie cannot come out of his crease to hit a player who is running to catch a break out pass. That player is deemed defenseless and cannot prepare himself to the impact. Frankly if it is not a rule in your jurisdiction, just don't do it. In this author's opinion, it is an attempt to injure and that is not part of my lacrosse philosophy.

Part II Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Gloucester Lacrosse Association for allowing me to use floor time and the use of jerseys and goalie equipment for the photographs included in this manual, to Nhu Tang, who did all the page layouts, to my goalie buddies, the Renegades and Akwesasne Masters players for always being willing to tell me how they scored on me, the photographers: Adam McLelland, Sabrina Thorpe, Paula Brand. I also want to thank the many children who participated in the photo shoot and for being part of this project.

Special thanks go to Rob Reynolds who authored the section on goalie attributes: physical and mental and who acted as my primary editor. A final thanks to Dave Butters, another veteran goalie, who I share friendly rivalry in our weekly masters scrimmages.



Part III Equipment

Goalie equipment changes frequently, this section is not intended to declare the rules of goalie equipment but to ensure that goalies are equipped properly. Please refer to the CLA and appropriate provincial body for exact sizing rules and measurements. Some brands may be visible in the photos but this is not an endorsement of that product. It was simply the equipment the kids were wearing at that time.

As a general rule, goalies require at a minimum the following equipment:

- **Helmet:** Hockey Goalie, CSA approved lacrosse helmet, CSA approved hockey helmet. My personal preference is a helmet designed for goalies, either hockey or Lacrosse, as they are built to distribute the impact across the whole face. The others are good but typically will only distribute impact across the forehead and chin.
- **Throat protector,** use the system intended for your preferred helmet, the D shaped ones which are attached to the cage work well. Avoid the narrow baseball catchers design. I recommend the team invest in a spare for the trainer's kit although designed to take a beating they are also designed to break at a point to help absorb the impact if it is too great.
- **Uppers:** incorporate chest protection and arm guards. This is where most coaches go wrong in the sizing. A Lacrosse goalie has to handle the ball and they have to handle it very well. If the shoulder pads are too large the goalie will not be able to get his stick above his shoulders to catch and pass the pass with any accuracy nor any distance. More importantly this is the piece of equipment that can endanger a goalie! Oversized uppers leave gaps at the collar bone, at the arm pit and at the elbow. These gaps expose un-protected skin and bone to direct contact with the lacrosse ball. From Peewee and up there is no such thing as a light shot in lacrosse. Unless a shot is interfered with in some way, the velocity of the ball can do damage to unprotected flesh.
- **Goalie Jock:** a goalie jock offers extra protection for the lower abdomen which is not protected by the uppers or the pants.
- **Goalie pants.** Hockey pants would be acceptable for most house league applications, however in higher divisions and in competitive play goalie pants which are designed for box lacrosse are best. These should cover the kidneys at the back and end just past the top of the knee cap at the front
- **Leg guards.** Make sure you have leg guards designed for box lacrosse. The top of the pad should be $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way up the upper leg and cover the toes completely. Most goalies wrap tape around the toe guards and the foot to keep the leg guards from spinning on the leg.
- **Shoes.** Running shoes are definitely a must. Tales abound about broken toes and lost toe nails. Personally, never happened to me. Never happened to anyone I know. But everyone I know has a story about a bloody running shoe after a nasty shot on the toes. My son wears safety (in Ontario they are labeled

with a green diamond) running shoes with steel toes and steel shanks. These are not required wear but if you are concerned about losing a toe nail or treading on a broken toe, this type of protection can help. I still wear a good set of basketball high tops or court shoes with good traction and trust the leg guards to do their job.

- Gloves. Look for gloves designed for a box lacrosse goalie. A box lacrosse goalie's hands are mainly used for stick control, passing and catching.



HERE IS THE FIRST UNIVERSAL TRUTH: **NEVER CATCH A SHOT WITH YOUR HAND!** There is absolutely no padding on the inside of a lacrosse goalie glove. It is not intended to be a trapper. Catching a shot is a good way to break bones in your hand and end your lacrosse season!

- Stick. There are basically 4 kinds of goalie sticks available at the time this book is being written.

- Classic Wooden



- Field style



- Plastic triangle



- Carbon triangle

A note on stick choice: this is really a personal preference and each stick has advantages and disadvantages. Size, weight, durability and cost are all factors in stick choice. The classic wooden stick is my favorite, they typically are the most

durable, however, it is the heaviest, the most difficult to tune and maintain. At the other end of the spectrum is the Field Style which is the lightest, easiest to maintain and the easiest to tune.

Tune a Stick?

The term “tune” your stick is in reference to how a player personalizes his stick set up. Goalies should spend as much time as players ensuring they can pass and catch. They have to ensure that they can make short medium and long passes as effectively as any other player on the floor. This skill is critical if you want your goalie to become an offensive threat.

If you own a stick which is not traditional (i.e. 2 pieces shaft and head), switch to a wooden shaft as soon as you are strong enough to handle the additional weight. Aluminum shafts will bend and make it difficult to be a consistent passer.

Last point; leave the shaft as long as possible! The butt end is good for one save a game!

Part IV Stance and Angles

Stance

Stance is a very personal thing and will change with regards to stick position, off hand location, and other subtleties as a goalie develops.

The basic stance from the ground up:

Feet shoulder width apart leaning slightly forward on the balls of your feet will give you the best maneuverability in the crease.

THE SECOND UNIVERSAL TRUTH: **STAY ON YOUR FEET!** Maximize the amount of net you can cover at any point in time and maximize your maneuverability. Quite simply, you cover more net on your feet and once you are on your knees, you are conceding all other shots to be without a goalie.



Above are a Bantam, a paper weight and Novice goalies. Notice how the Bantam becomes the same size as the paper weight when he drops to his knees.

Knees should be slightly bent.

Hips should be above your feet.

Chest slightly forward to create a “cup” which helps a goalie control rebounds.

Hand and arm holding the stick, the elbow should be tight to the body. The head of the stick should rest on the floor three (8 cm) to six inches (15 cm) ahead of your toes.

- Note- typically goalies hold the stick in the basic stance with the hand that would be the top hand if he were to pass the ball overhand. This allows for the swiftest transition from ball recovery, to passing stance, to executing a pass. Some goalies do the opposite and learn to transition to a throwing position with the stick hand at the bottom but it typically means that the entire stick has to cross the goalies body.

The stick, the head as described above should rest on the floor three (8 cm) to six inches (15 cm) ahead of your toes. The shaft is held as near to the base of the head as is comfortable. Your grip should be relaxed. The shaft should pass between your elbow and your body with a lever point at the arm pit. The end of the shaft comes out behind the shoulder.

- Traditional wooden sticks, triangle plastic and composite heads have the benefit that the top of the head is parallel to the floor and you can use the shape of the head to keep the stick from spinning in your hand.
- Field style plastic heads which younger players and NLL goalies use have a disadvantage in that the round nature of the head means that there is less surface area making contact with the floor when the stick head rest too far back in the stance. It is imperative when you have a young goalie (who will prefer this style as it is typically lighter, less expensive and easier to pass and catch with) to emphasize that stick head must rest ahead of the toes. This will minimize the amount of spin potential in the goalies hands. Older goalies with more hand strength may overcome this through brute force, but I never could.

Off hand (or the hand that does not hold the stick) is used to help orient the goalie between the posts and to help block shots. The hand can be positioned above the waist making a triangle of the upper arm, lower arm and the inside of the body (Triangle) or a goalie may choose to hold the hand below the waist and tight to the body making him wider (Bar). The other choice is to have the arm slightly off the body and use that arm more actively in reacting to shots (Loose).



A word of caution on the last option; a common mistake in lacrosse goal tending is not moving then entire body to block a shot. If the triangle or the bar is encouraged for starting goalies, they are more likely to learn the good habits of moving your feet and meeting a shot with as much body as possible. The loose style tends to encourage a goalie to move just the arm; which by definition will always cover less net then the whole body.



One final note on the off hand: The palm of the glove has no padding! For: Triangle, Bar or Loose off hand style, the back of the hand must face the shooters!

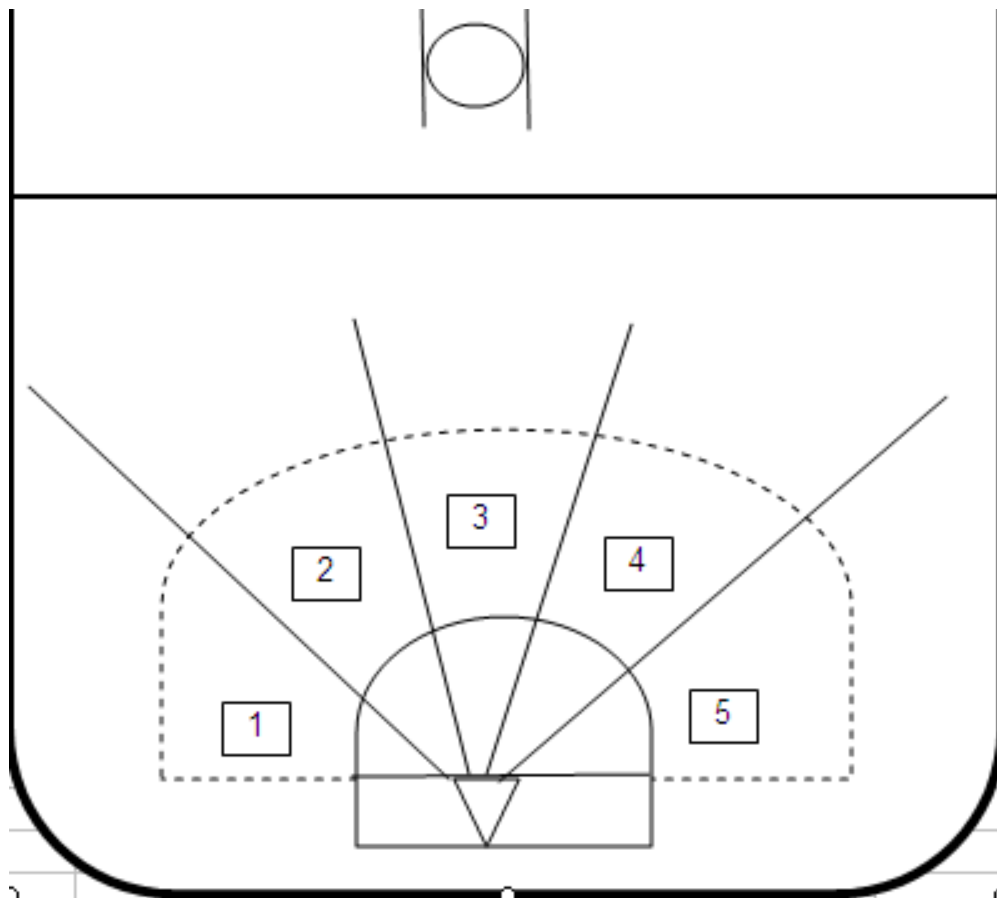
All goalies in Lacrosse should know these 4 Golden Rules:

Stay on your feet, the game is played above your head
90% of saves are positional, the other 9.99% are a goalies reaction, .01% is the but of the goalies stick.

1.5 steps from the cross bar ***is*** far enough out to cut down an angle, go further out and shooters will go over your shoulders.

NEVER try to catch a shot with your free hand

Basic Angles



When working with your goalies whether they are beginners or advanced, all goalies should learn these 5 angles.

- ✓ Position 1 and 5: hip should be against the post and shoulders should be square to the ball carrier.



- ✓ Position 2 and 4: $\frac{1}{2}$ step off the post towards position 3. The goalie's nose should line up to where the hockey blue line meets the boards. The goalie should still be able to reach the post at arm's length.



- ✓ Position 3: Goalie's shoulders should be square to two lines on either side of the center floor face off circle



Goalies should practice movement from position to position until they can move through them without thinking. Movements between the 5 points are your starting positions as the play moves up the floor to the net you are defending or as the ball is moved around the house. In your basic stance you still need to be aware of the actual shooter. Within the arc of the five angles a shooters position can change and will vary in distance and from left to right. So a goalie needs to make those adjustments literally inches at a time within the position/angle arch. When the ball moves from one angle arch to another the goalies moves to the corresponding position 1,2,3,4 or 5. If a ball carrier stays in an angle arch long enough the goalie may make the slight adjustments described in "playing the stick" in the advanced techniques section.

Part V M.A.S.S. And ACE

There are a number of different kinds of shots a goalie will face in Lacrosse. Unlike any other sport a lacrosse goalie has to deal with the multiple angles of approach... The ball can come from over the players shoulder (top down), from a side arm (level) and underhand (bottom up). Incorporate a bounce and a spin and the number of different shots a goalie can face

becomes staggering. Remember how I said you can't change your size? This is how a lacrosse goalie gets bigger: **M.A.S.S.**

- **M**ove your entire body so the ball hits your center line. (the vertical line that is drawn from your nose to your belly button to between your toes)
- **A**ttack the ball with your body. Especially on bounce shots; a goalie moving forward on a bounce shot reduces the effectiveness of the bounce and spin.
- **S**hift between angles as the ball moves from one attacker to another
- **S**tay on your feet!

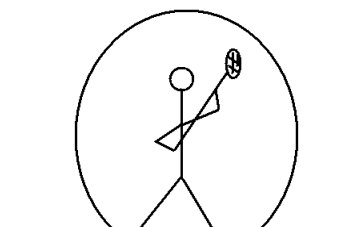
Another would be A.C.E.

- ⤴ **A**lign your shoulders with the shooter to cover your angles.
- ⤴ **C**oncentrate on the players positions around the crease to see potential shooters.
- ⤴ **E**xplode on the shot.

Part VI Advanced techniques



An average goalie will perform above average against average players if he is good at covering his angles. There will always be a small percentage of players who are what we call the elite! For those players an average goalie might save 75% of shots with good positioning. For higher level of lacrosse goaltending, it is not enough to be big and have perfect angle coverage! Great shooters see through the head of their stick! Great shooters can change the sticks position from the highest point on their strong side to the lowest point on their weak side in the blink of an eye. Which means, the shot can come from anywhere within the radius of the circle of the illustration below. I call this the shooter's circle of attack (CoA).

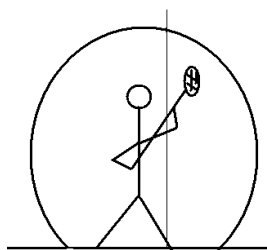


A shooter's circle of attack.

So are there only 5 angles to cover? Actually there are 5 angles times all of the points in the CoA! There are an infinite number of shot angles for a lacrosse goalie. It would be impossible to cover absolutely all of them. So, as goalies, what do we have to do?

There are basically two techniques for a lacrosse goalie to counter the shooters CoA: "Playing the Stick" and "Take Away".

Playing the stick, although it sounds self-evident and easy, the title is misleading. Playing the stick actually means playing the stick side of the player. In other words, the goalie should position them self between the players vertical center and the end of the stick.



Playing the stick

As I mentioned before, great shooters can change the position of the head of the stick very quickly! It can move from anywhere in the CoA to any other point of the CoA in the blink of an eye. Fortunately, the convention for shooters is to stay on the strong side of the floor when attacking. This means that most of

the time a shot is coming from a shooter, where the shooters body is closest to the boards and the stick closest to the center of the floor. From the goalies point of view: right handed shot would be on the right side of the floor and a left handed shot will be on the left hand side of the floor. As discussed in the basic angles we move from position to position but the goalie now makes small adjustments, not to the player but the players stick side.



Take Away, is the other technique, this is where a goalie intentionally leaves a shot open enticing a shooter to a open portion of the net and as the shooter is releasing the goalie shifts positions and quite literally takes away the shot. This is a risky technique if you do not really know a shooter. It also typically only works once or twice. Good shooters will recognize the move and the next time they will shoot at where you were not what you gave them.

Other common Goalie challenges are:

Fakes, as players skills improve, their ability to fake increases. Goalies tend to focus on the head of the stick and some with excellent reactions can do this with success. For the rest of us whose reaction time is not quite as good; we can focus slightly past the shooter. This puts the head of the players stick in our peripheral vision. If we trust that part of our sight we can actually react faster to the ball as it exits the head of the stick and we are less likely to move on a fake. Train yourself to watch for the ball leaving the stick as opposed to the ball. Once it leaves the stick, then keep your eye on it!

Behind the back. It takes a long time for shooters to perfect a behind the back shot. But as a shooter moves through the house from their strong side to their weak side this is a very good way for a shooter to increase the amount of net they can shoot at. While a goalie shifts, following the ball, from left to right or from right to left there comes a point in time where the shooter has run out of room on their forehand shot. This is when a goalie will see the behind the back shot. The behind the back shot is the lowest % success shot in the game so unless you are absolutely positive that a shooter will go with a behind the back shot you should not give up the post the shooter is moving towards. A normal shot is the most effective and most accurate, so if you cheat off the post anticipating a behind the back shot you will likely get beat on the post side. Good movement through your angles and reacting to the less likely is your best defense against this shot.

Quick stick is lacrosse's equivalent to a "one timer". This comes down to goalies agility and practice in moving from each of the base angle set positions to any other set position. You simply have to get there as fast as the ball. This where it is absolutely critical to stay on your feet! Shooters practice crease to crease passes all the time. So if a goalie drops to his knees on a crease to crease and that quick stick becomes a pass instead of a shot; that goalie just conceded a goal. If you stay on your feet, you have a chance to get back across. Quick sticks (most commonly crease to crease) are not limited to crease to crease by the way. They can come from anywhere. Crease to top, shooter to crease... literally if you can think it, it can be done! I even had a shooter take a pass while cutting through the house. The pass was late, so he did a quick stick behind his back! I have only seen it once and it was once too often! The point is, if you get lazy or don't train on the 5 set positions you haven't got a chance to make these saves.

** A note for the defense, if there is ever more than two crease to crease passes, the defense failed! **

Breakaways are very common in lacrosse. With offences designed around the fast break, goalies are often faced with one on one situation. Generally

speaking the advantage lies with the shooter. The most common school of thought for defending a break away is to hold your ground, trust your angles and be the last one to move. Use your reaction skills to get to the ball if it is going to find the back of the net.

A Lacrosse stick's design is such that fantastic fakes can be made; a shot can look like it is coming from one side and suddenly it is coming from another. I have even had a player do a quick stick with a pass to himself off the glass behind the net. Over the last 3 years my son and I have been working on a different method to deal with breakaways and fakes. We have been having success, my self in masters' lacrosse and my son who has played Peewee, Bantam and playing up in Midget with this new method.

The methodology stems from the basic genetics of our species. Our heads are designed for hunting: both eyes face forward like a predator's eyes. We are genetically programmed to react to movement. This is why a fake works for a player. How can goalies use genetics to turn the advantage to the goalies side of the floor in a breakaway situation? Simply put, if a goalie can time a major movement slightly before or as a shooter commits to releasing the shot, the shooters eyes will be drawn to the movement and the shot tends to go towards the movement as well! This is a timing critical move, move too soon and the shooter has time to pull his focus back to where he was originally aiming or find a new corner to shoot at, move too late and the shot can be already by you. This technique requires lots of practice! Shoot out competitions at the end of practice are the best time to practice this.

Part VII An integral part of the team

5 minutes left in a semifinal game up by a single goal. The lead team takes a side arm shot and misses the net. The ball is coming back across the line but a fast breaking opponent has 20+ steps on the nearest defender. The goalie shoots out of the crease and shoulders the opposing team runner! The referees call possession.

After the game, I asked the goalie, why did you do that? The goalie says to me: “Well if I did nothing, I’ll be one on one with him till my team mates get back, if I play the ball I would likely not be able to hold it or defend against a stick check, but if I get the possession call, the play stops, the ref can’t blow the play back in until the player actually gets possession of the ball and my whole defense is back and set. Seemed like the right thing to do...”

Set aside the fact that this was a peewee goalie and never mind that I would never teach a goalie to do this, as many bad things could happen, this creative intuitive act helped this team win the game not just by stopping the ball. It is an example of what a great goalie can do for your team!

It is easy to think of a goalie as the last line of defense. But how many coaches think of the goalie as the first part of offense? After the shot is stopped the goalies job should not stop. This following section describes how goalies can be part of your overall team strategy. Picks, outlet passes, using the crease, breakout, supporting the power play, loose balls and intercepting passes are all aspects of a lacrosse goalie's game. I know of no other sport where a goalie can be so versatile and effective in making your team successful by doing more than just stopping a shot.



Starting an offense:

When a goalie recovers a ball following a shot, the goalie should look to make the pass that the teams break out scheme demands (short pass away from the bench, medium passes, fast breaker from the floor away from the bench or even fast breaker from the bench). If the goalie cannot find an open player to pass to within the 5 second rule, they should step out the back of the crease behind the net. The crease is now the goalies shield. The shield comes from the rule that an opposing player(s) cannot cross the crease to reach another player or shorten their route to the ball.



If a player pursues the goalie, the goalie can move around the crease keeping the opponent at the opposite side of the crease creating time and space for the goalie to find an open player. The goalie has to keep an eye up the floor for an open man because eventually a runner will catch up.



This is also why a goalie needs to be able to cradle and pass while running (shuttle drills are for goalies too!).

Other starting offense options are situational:

- If the defense is collapsing to their own zone, then the goalie can casually step out of the crease and do a stick to stick exchange with a player entering the floor on the line change.
- If the defense is playing a full court man to man, your goalie can step out of the crease to be a 6th player. This provides an outlet pass option which tends to free another player of the pressure creating an open man to pass to and move the ball up the floor. When giving an outlet pass option to your team mates, step out of the crease on the opposite side or away from the player with the ball. This will give you your shield again.



- If a player recovers the ball outside the crease and is being harassed so that they are unable to make a pass, then the goalie can choose set a pick. This can be in open floor or at the back of the crease with 1 foot inside of the crease. This creates a very small lane for the player and allows them to use the crease as a shield like above creating time and space. Both the behind the crease and open floor picks are especially helpful when short-handed and the opposing team has two men pressuring the ball carrier.



A goalie can support an offense by being aggressive retrieving loose balls and moving the ball back up the floor quickly. Especially on a power play, a goalie's quick loose ball recovery can keep a tired defense on the floor. It can create scoring chances if the line change is poorly timed. Some very advanced goalies (and this is extremely rare) will actually move up over a third of the floor and quarterback an offense by calling out audible plays or identifying miss-matches between players.

As a defender, a goalie can also look to intercept cross-crease passes by quickly moving the head of their stick from the set position to above their shoulders. This is tricky and risky but the payoff can be huge if you have an alert fast break player on the floor.

Part VIII Attributes: Mental and Physical

For this section I turned to a friend and co-coach Rob Reynolds. His roots are deep in lacrosse, he played as a child, his sister was a goalie and his parents were long time volunteers in the Gloucester Lacrosse Association. But it was not for this reason I turned to him for this section. He is, among other qualification, a Level 4 certified Ski instructor and Examiner (roughly translates to the international level). As we talked about this book and specifically how we could prepare goalies we realized that there was much that a goalie or goalie coaches could learn if they looked at the goalie not as just part of the team but also as an individual sport elite athlete. The following is a result of that thinking...

Physical Attributes

Although goalies need to be as physically fit as the remainder of the team and need to participate in the regular fitness plan designed for the team, there are a few key physical attributes that will need more attention amongst goalies than with the rest of the roster. Unlike the rest of the teammates, goalies play the entire game, not just a handful of shifts with a well deserved rest between each. To compound the fact they play the entire game, their equipment is considerably heavier and warmer than their fellow teammates. Goalies need a high level of physical fitness, endurance and stamina. These attributes can be achieved through the regular fitness program the entire team is exposed to. In addition to this, a "Goalie focused" fitness plan will pay particular attention to developing reflexes, flexibility and agility.

- Great goalies are known to have "cat like" reflexes. Fitness plans and drills incorporating the use of balls, hand signals, verbal cues or the introduction of the unknown that tunes a goalie's reaction time to split second occurrences will stimulate a goalie's sensory system, thus improving reaction time. These types of drills will improve a goalie's reflexes in games when moving body segments to intercept a fast moving ball destined to hit the back of the net. Finely tuned reflexes will also allow the goalie to move within the crease as required in order to follow the attacking team's passing plays and ensuring he is always well positioned for an eventual shot on goal.
- In lacrosse, as in most sports, a goalie must be able to follow the play. The farther out the play, the goalie follows with his eyes. As the play gets closer and closer to the net he is defending, he depends more on his body's ability to move in order to stay with the play. Lacrosse is a very fast paced game where the ball moves at tremendous speeds, it is not uncommon that a "quick stick" pass will have a goalie moving in one direction while the ball changes direction and heads the other way. Flexibility gives the goalie the ability to stretch and reach in a different direction while his momentum continues in its original path. These types of saves are spectacular and often follow with "how did he do that" echoing from the crowd. A complete stretching routine for goalies will develop flexibility, allow for the defender

to remain loose and limber and to contort his body to the needs of each shot directed his way.

- Both reflexes and flexibility will lead to an agile athlete. Agility helps goalies move on a moment's notice to meet the challenges of the attacking team. Skills like hopping, jumping, "burpies" and especially balancing exercises all develop a goalie's ability to move his body in an appropriate manner with the quickest reaction time possible. Station training is a great way to compress many different types of activities into one organized training session

Mental Attributes

Goalies are often referred to as the last line of defense. This puts the goalie in a unique situation where he can be labeled the hero or the one who let the team down. Many defensive errors can occur as a play develops from the attacking team's end into a goal against the defender. Most of these errors go unnoticed or without blame however everyone sees the goal that was let in by the goalie. A certain level of mental toughness is required for someone to stand between the posts and bear this amount of pressure. Goalies are unique, they dress different, their role is different and are imposed a higher level of responsibility. Being a goalie can be referred to as an individual sport within a team environment as he is easily identified by the crowd for both the good and bad. Mistakes will happen; bad goals will be let in. Strong goalies are mature enough to maintain their composure in these situations and put it behind them. This is essential as the goalie plays the entire game and does not have the opportunity to take a break in order to reboot. The sooner he puts a bad goal in the past the sooner he will regain his focus and concentration in order to get back in the game. A goalie needs to be courageous, one for the extra weight that he bears on his shoulders, not necessarily from his equipment but mainly from the points mentioned above and also because it takes a certain breed of person to stand in front of a hard rubber ball travelling through the air at 100 miles per hour!

Goalies need to be strong communicators as they are essential to the defense of the team and often see more of the floor than the other players. As a play progresses, the goalie is well positioned to follow the play and communicate to the players allowing them to better organize the defense. This also requires a certain level of alertness in order to stay in the game, even when the play is in the other team's zone. The best goalies develop a telepathic ability to read and understand the game in order to do the right thing at the right time.

A goalie will live many highs as well as many lows and will need to be strong enough to deal with this. He needs to accept that it is alright to make mistakes as this is how he will learn. He will receive positive and negative feedback at some point from players, coaches or parents. Although we want to discourage negative comments towards a goalie, they happen and a goalie's armor is to protect his body from the ball not his emotional state. A goalie needs a tough skin in order to avoid getting down on himself by allowing a negative comment to get the best of him. Being a goalie is a high stress, but high reward position.

For the coaches and parents out there, not everyone is the same and often our approach needs to be tailored to the individual. We need to first understand the type of person our goalie is in order to develop an appropriate approach to preparation, development and feedback. I remember many years ago listening to a former National Team Ski Coach speak on athlete preparation. Although this was many years ago and I don't remember the majority of the speech, the one thing that has stayed with me over the last twenty some odd years is when he spoke about changing his approach depending on the athlete as they entered the starting blocks. One athlete needed an aggressive voice stating that the country was counting on her and that the whole nation was watching, he'd continue with comments like, "you are the best, you can beat the others, show them who is number one". This athlete needed the coach to impose a certain level of stress in order for her to perform to her maximum potential. On the other hand, another athlete needed to be calmed and relaxed in order for her to perform to her max. In a soothing voice he'd provide comments to her to put her at ease. "It is just you and the mountain, it is just another run like we do in training, it is not a big deal just left and right turns on the snow". It is important for us to understand what makes our goalies tick and what approach is required for that individual in order to influence a certain performance or reaction. In many cases the wrong approach can do more harm than good, we need to remember that it is confident, comfortable athletes we want standing between the pipes. Whether a goalie needs to know that the team is counting on him or that he is just another player on the floor, whether he needs to be pumped up before the game or given some alone time to relax, it is our place to identify the needs of the individual in order to be more effective in the development of the athlete and his emotions, as well as contributing to the goalie's effectiveness with regards to the entire team.

People have different ways of learning; recognizing and adjusting your approach to the dominant learning style of your goalie will increase the success of his development. Learning styles are often combined in order to provide a stronger effect; people can be classified in the following learning styles;

- The Watcher – Good listener, visual, learns by watching
- The Thinker – Needs to understand
- The Feeler – Receptive learner, catches on quickly
- The Doer – Practical and functional, learns by doing

The emotional state of a goaltender is directly related to his confidence level when he dons his pads for a big game. The way a goalie thinks, reacts and processes information are key to ensuring the proper positive approach is used in his development. This will ensure the goalie can achieve his maximum technical potential and more importantly promote a lifelong love for the game.

Part IX Expectations

Coaches need to have the right set of expectations which are age/skill appropriate to the goalie they are coaching. The information in this book is designed for the end game: becoming a great goalie. If you as coaches teach with the techniques in this manual when you see a goalie is ready for the next level or the next advanced skill or even go back to the basics from time to time you will see improvement from your goalies and your teams will benefit from a skilled quarterback who is an integral part of your lacrosse team.

As a Coach you are expected to protect your goalies, set ground rules and enforce them on floor. If you do this simple thing you and your team will be rewarded ten times over.

Part X Drills

All drills should include your goalies. They need to learn to pass and catch on the run, pass from the crease and face literally thousands of shots to get to their potential. Include them in all shuttle drills.

As I mentioned before coaches should use the philosophy of "practice as you play" but to accomplish this for a goalie you have to make a few goalie friendly twists. You will find that most of these variations will benefit your shooters as well. Here are three common drills we use in Lacrosse but with my goalie friendly variations on them. This will give you an idea how you can make any shooter drill a little more goalie friendly.

Drill for the team:

Horseshoe drill:

Set up players in a semi-circle around the net and allow shooters to shoot on net from various distances. The shots can be consecutive around the horseshoe or alternating sides. Shooters should be on their strong side.

Goalie friendly variations:

1. Add a defender in front of the shooter and have the shooter shoot off the shoulder of the defender. Have the defender stand still or check the shooter as he releases his shot.
2. Have the shooters turn their backs to the goalie. On a whistle have the shooter spin and target the net.
3. Add a defender to #2 above but have the shooter roll off the defender taking a shot as soon as they clear the defender. (Slightly more advanced: allow the defender to stick check after the roll.)
4. Increase and decrease distance to from the shooters to any of the above or insist on a type of shot. (i.e. bounce shots only)

Breakaway drill or shoot out competition:

Players leave from center floor, run towards the goalie replicating a breakaway.

Goalie friendly variations:

1. Add pursuit. Have a chaser...
 1. leave a few steps behind the shooter
 2. leave the bench from on the defenders end of the floor
2. Have one goalie make the breakaway pass to begin the drill at one end of the floor. Have players stay at the shot end of the floor then have the other goalie start the drill.

Star Drill:

Players start in the 5 offensive positions making passes through the 5 points having the shot come from the top of the house. Variation: players follow their pass.

Goalie friendly variation:

Have the coach call the shot randomly. The next player to next receive the ball shoots regardless of the position.

Just for the goalie:**Reaction drill:**

For this you need 24 or more tennis balls and a tennis racket. Standing mid-way between the top of the crease and the 25' line, "shoot" each tennis ball (using the tennis racket) in as quick succession as possible. Have an assistant feed you the balls to increase the speed. The goalie should try to get to every ball.

Angles drill:

Have the goalie set to position one. Then call out various positions 1 through 5 and have them move from position to position increasing the speed of the position changes. Try calling out random numbers, not just 1 through 5 or vice-versa.

A last note: "Heat Management"

Box lacrosse goalies are always at risk of heat exhaustion. Make sure you have plenty of water breaks and ensure your goalies drink. On exceptionally hot days you can have your goalie participate in shuttle and running drills but have them drop off leg their guards and pants (make sure they have shorts). Always encourage your goalies to pass and catch with their uppers on because this is how we play!