

RUNNING YOUR PRACTICES

The following is a suggested way to run progressive practices. Coaches may choose to modify the practices to address participant's needs or simply to have some variation to the practices each week. Coaches may also introduce some fun type games in the practice setting while still addressing 'skills and drills' component of the game.

A) PRACTICES Weeks 1 and 2 (Mid April to the end of April) Focus: 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: i.e. 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) PRACTICES Weeks 3 to 5 (All of May; first week of June)

Focus: Wall Ball, Warm-up, Shuttles, Issues

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.

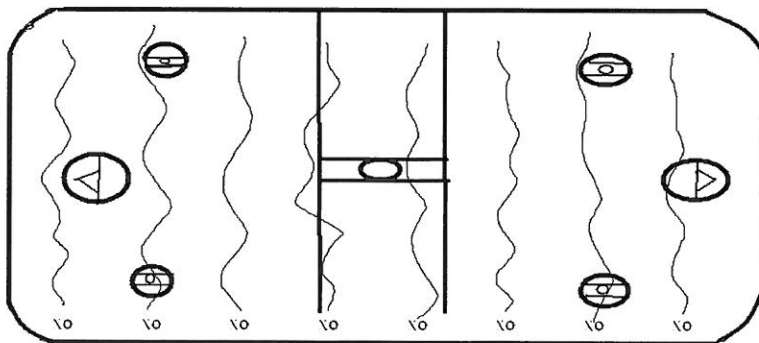
SPECIAL ISSUES

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?**

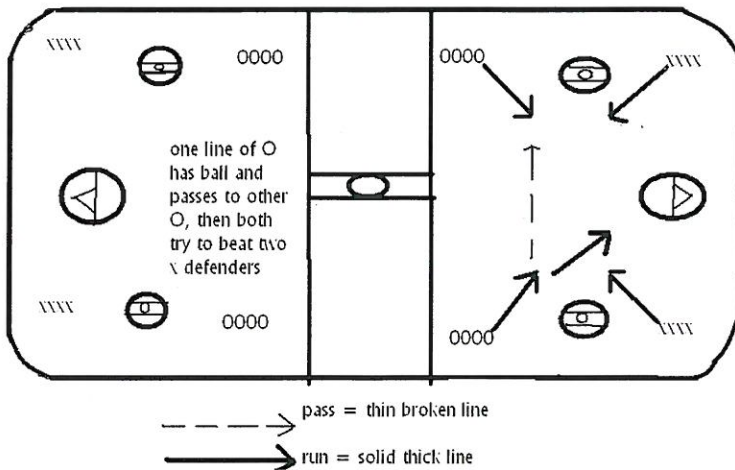
RESOLVING ISSUES

HALF FLOOR AND 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 is 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) PRACTICES Weeks 6 to 10 (Balance of June)

Focus: Four corners, man up progression, full floor breakout

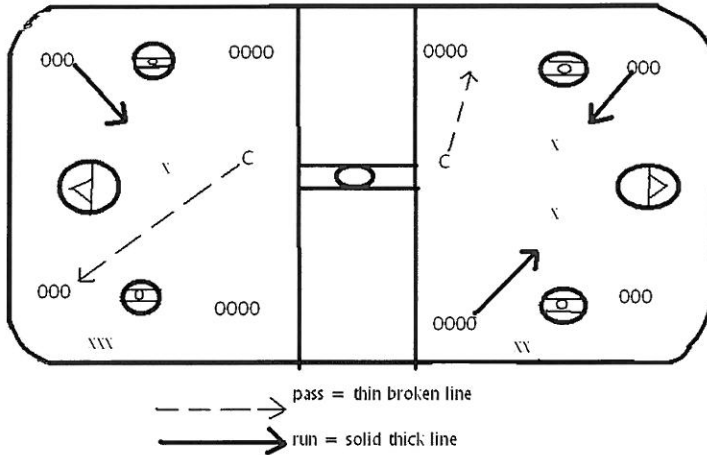
For most of June you may wish to incorporate some components of earlier drills. It would be best to do a fast 2 minute jog, and 2 minute shuttle, and still have 5-8 minutes to work on whatever issues still exist. If the players are getting slashing penalties, work on defensive posture; if the team still won't pass, go to a man-up drill (i.e. 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 (i.e. if you have 15 take 10 or 11 and put 2 to 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.

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



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:

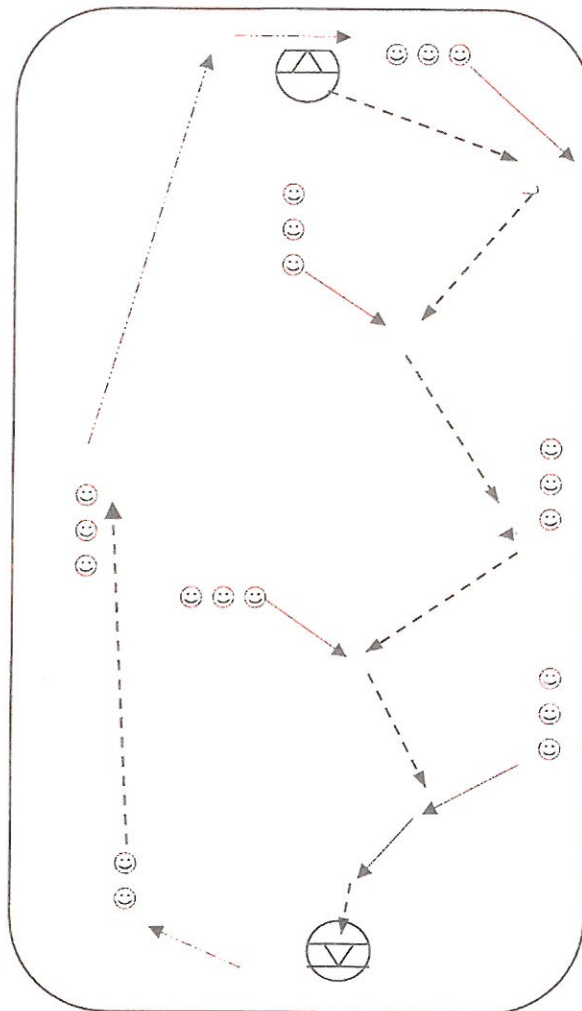
The pass from the goalie can go to the second receiver breaking to the boards.

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.



RUNNING YOUR GAMES

When it comes time for longer scrimmages and games, house league coaches can once again rely on their rep players and experienced lacrosse kids to help get organized. Remember, you want to line them up left, right, left right, etc. on the bench and distribute your talent as evenly as you can. Use only one door for them to go on, the other is for them to come off the floor. Goal scorer types usually play “crease,” more defensively minded players are

“corners” and play up higher, and your best face-off person and passer/catcher could be the centre. But everybody in lacrosse plays offense and defense (the 5 players go up and down the floor for a shift, then come off and are replaced by 5 more) In lacrosse, your stick should be toward the centre of the floor (when bearing down on the opposing goalie you want your stick to be near the middle of the floor, not way out by the boards).

ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE!