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8:30-9:30

Top 10 Fundamentals To Achieve Success In High School Lacrosse by Emily Becker

1. **Ground Ball Mechanics**: This is by far the area that younger girls come into HS lacrosse struggling with the most. When teaching the fundamentals of GBs, make sure to emphasize keeping their hand at the top of the stick when picking up the ball. This ensures ample control over the ball and requires them to get as low as possible to the ground. Make sure they are getting LOW ("both butts near the ground,") accelerating through the ground ball, and coming up with it in a protected cradle. Please make it a point to get rid of the bad habits of popping the ball up in the air, staying above the ball and brushing over it, going for it with one hand, and stabbing at it with the top of the head of their stick.

Drills to utilize:

- Marquette Ground Balls: lines of 3-4 girls. Girl second in line rolls ball out in front to girl first in line. Roller then trails the girl picking up GB for added pressure and then plays. Defense on the girl who picked up the GB for a pass back to the third girl in line
 - Gauntlet Ground Balls: players move their sticks on the ground where ground ball is being picked up to simulate chaos and protection
 - Dogfight: 3 lines down low at crease. Coach rolls ball from top. Girl who gets ball is on A other two are on D and have to double.
 - Ground Ball Musical Chairs: 1 less ball than there are players. players run around the draw circle with the balls scattered inside the circle. When the music stops, the girls need to run in and successfully and safely grab a GB until there is only 1 player remaining
 - Bridge: one player stands with her stick on the ground next to her making a bridge shape. The ball is placed under the bridge. Next player in line has to run underneath the bridge to pick up the ground ball.
2. **Catching**: When catching, the girls should be giving with the ball as if it is an egg they are trying not to break. Make it a priority to not wrap catch the ball in front of them, or basket catch the ball with their stick turned sideways. The stick should be upright and vertical, they should be asking for the ball with their stick up and facing forward, and once the ball approaches their stick, they should be bringing

the ball back and then cradling. Additionally, it is important to make sure that this is sound with both their dominant and non dominant hands to maximize the opportunities on the field.

3. **Throwing:** When throwing the ball, the girls should be following through with their pass and refraining from stopping their stick's motion once it is vertical. This denies the player to have an ample range of motion and inhibits their ability to make longer passes. Make sure they get their arm up and away from their body and they follow this up with a follow through all the way to their opposite hip. Additionally, it is important to make sure that this is sound with both their dominant and non dominant hands to maximize the opportunities on the field.

Drills to utilize:

- Follow Through to Cone: Players shoot or pass without the ball in their stick at first, following through and hitting a cone next to them with their follow through
 - Kneeling Passing/Shooting: Players kneel on two knees on the ground and practice the follow through motion by hitting the ground with their stick on the follow through.
4. **Dodging:** In levels all the way from beginner to advanced and all the way to college, players often struggle with the pathway of which they should be taking immediately following a dodge. When teaching dodging, make sure to emphasize that they should be sealing off their defender and continuing on a straight path downward towards the goal. This makes it near impossible for a defender to recover once she has been beat. If a player dodges and then moves herself laterally, I am sure you can imagine how easy it is for a defender to maintain her stance and shuffle over to stay on the attacker that attempted to dodge her.

Drills to utilize:

- 3 lines at top. One line of face, one of split, and the other of roll. Make sure shot is in correct hand and switch up what line does what for different lanes and shot angles. Can also add rocker dodge
 - Quick Feet Dodging Progression: Attackers start with quick feet, or stepping over a cone repeatedly, on whistle they complete a series of dodges
 - Turning Down to Goal: dodging lines. 2 back to back dodges in a line straight on from the goal. There are 2 sets of cones on the side of the 8, once they complete dodges and go to shoot, they have to shoot from inside the lines to refrain from fading on the shot
5. **Receiving a Clear From The Goalie:** When the defenders and midfielders are receiving a clear from the goalie after a goalie save, it is essential to make sure that all players are breaking out in the appropriate clearing routes. When

breaking out in the clearing routes, they should be running out wide, cutting sharp and having a distinct change of speed and change of direction. If this initial clearing route does not work, often times, you will see players just remain stagnant and wait for a hail mary. This is NOT the standard. Players should continue to move constantly, switching with other players, recutting, recycling with the attackers on the other side of the restraining line, etc.

Drills to utilize:

- Muddle Drill: 7 A and 7 D run aimlessly around within 12. D should establish numbers for clearing routes and who is going where. A should establish who they are going to defend. Coach “misses a shot” and has goalie save it and then D breaks out in their clearing routes

6. **Defensive Stance:** When defenders are playing defense they should ALWAYS stay in a low athletic stance. On top of this, they should also stay light on their feet and keep their feet moving. The second they plant their feet is the second they get beat! A good rule of thumb from both an attacking and defending standpoint is: “If your defender is standing high, go right by. If your defender is standing low, DON’T GO!” Additionally, it is important to note the direction of the defender’s hips in reference to the girl they are guarding. Make it a point to stress the importance of keeping their hips squared to their girl and not opening them up. When they open their hips up to the middle of the 8, they are giving their attacker a clear path to goal. Instead, when they are not squaring their hips, they should slightly open them to the alley, making their attacker take a harder path to cage. Of course when this happens, the next defender over needs to immediately be ready to slide! Which goes directly into my next bullet: communication:

Drills to utilize:

- 5 Point 1v1: 1v1 from 5 points along the 12 → two behind goal, 2 at wing, and 1 at top.
- Defensive Keep Away: D has to keep girl with ball in between cones or lines 5 yards apart. Girl with ball is trying to dodge around and defender is using body positioning to keep A from getting past. Do this without stick first
- No Stick 1v1s: can be 5 point style or limited lines
- Change of Direction By Watching Hips Drill: Attacker runs back and forth along the line and defender has to break down her footsteps to stay with her and not get lost

7. **Communication:** The concept that can make or break a defensive unit is COMMUNICATION. Get your players in the habit early of talking CONSTANTLY and LOUDLY. When communicating, it is crucial to use direct language. For instance: “Name, ____ with you on your right.” It is psychologically proven that an

individual will be more likely to listen and comprehend an instruction when their name precedes the command. With that being said, a good guideline to follow is one we used at Marquette: "Name → Command → VOLUME." A loud, consistent, and efficient defensive unit allows for the entirety of the defense to remain on the same page as well as get the offense off kilter. Communication doesn't only come into play on the defensive side. Be sure to stress the importance of offensive communication such as an attacker urging their teammate to bump over to maintain balance, telling their offensive unit to pull back and settle, telling a partner to cut through for a backdoor cut/draw and dump / etc. I will attach a list of defensive communication at the end of this document!

Drills to utilize:

- Blind 7s: Defense stands in middle of 8 with eyes closed while ball is being moved around the 12 by A. On coach whistle, defense communicates and recovers while A is going to goal
- Crash Drill: defenders start around 8 (can have them sit or in low athletic stance for reaction time) coach blows whistle and all defenders have to YELL crash and crash to cone or coach in the middle. can have coach then roll GB out for defenders to recover and break out

8. **Shooting Deception**: Another thing that can make or break an attacker's ability to be successful on the offensive unit is their ability to be deceptive as a shooter. When shooting, be sure to stress the importance of changing the level of their cradle, FAKING AT ALL TIMES (high to low, low to high, right to left, left to right, off stick hip to stick side hip, stick side hip to offstick hip, etc.) When teaching faking, remember to emphasize the hitch fake rather than a full fake. When a player fakes with their stick all the way out in front of them, a number of things can happen: 1. They get their stick checked. 2. They allow the goalie to reset themselves. 3. They drop the ball. While these fakes can be important at times, it is more effective to implement a hitch so that they can get the goalie off of her line and they won't get their stick checked. When hitching, the movement comes from the elbow and the chin.

Drills to Utilize:

- Cross Feeds: two shooting lines from top and two feeding lines from low. Coach calls out what fake or what corner to hit
9. **Re-defending**: As an attacker, remember to stress that their job is not ONLY to attack the net and transition the ball down the field. Arguably, their most important job comes from the redefend. Each attacker should be redefending

(whether that be from doubling ball or looking to guard possible outlet passes) ALL THE WAY TO THE RESTRAINING LINE. Even the low attackers should be doing this. If the other team does end up making it down to their offensive end, then the 4 attackers can resume their place in the box.

Drills to utilize:

- Pressured Passing Up Field: pairs of A and D are placed in squares about 30 yards in a line down the field. first attacker by endzone has the ball and needs to dodge to get past D. As this is happening, next A needs to continuously cut to lose her defender and ask for the ball. This continues for however many pairs there are. If wanted, defense transitions can be implemented. If D turns over and maintains possession of the ball, direction changes and defender attempts to move ball back towards endzone.
- Trap Drill: Attackers/middies start at restraining line. Goalie clears to low defender. A and middies have to run in to slow the fast break and trap ball handler in corner or by sideline
- Side Line Doubling: attacker runs down side line with D on her, other D comes in to simulate double using SL
- Buddy System Clearing: training evasion belts to tether played together. on clear, attacker stays GLUED to defender via the belt to simulate tight redefend

10. **Movement on Attack:** Maintaining a continuous flow on offense is imperative to creating a successful attacking unit. There is nothing easier for a defense to defend than a stagnant offense. Create the expectation early that all attackers should NEVER have their feet stopped. If you watch any successful team play attack, you will notice the key to this is continuous movement. This is especially important to create gaps in the defense and maximize opportunities on offense. A common misconception is that movement can only be facilitated through cutting. There are a number of other ways to create movement such as picks, switching at the top of the 12 and mirroring the crease.

Drills to Utilize:

- 3 Woman Set Up From Low: 3 attackers start from low. Coach rolls GB out behind goal, 1 attack picks up GB and hits the crease while the other 2 set up on each wing. First pass goes up to wing player and then moves to other wing. Crease girl will then go set an off ball pick for wing girl to cut in for a feed from wing with ball. Many different variations can be done from this to simulate different 2-3 man game and off ball/ cutting situations
- Offensive Spacing Cone Drill: GB is rolled out in middle of 8. Attack picks it up and each attacker has to run to their cone before attacking the goal.
- Pass Up Pick Up: Ball starts on crease, ball is passed to wing player, passer picks up and girl on wing drives off pick to the goal

Muskego Defensive Communication:

Everything should be addressed with a player's NAME in front of the statement to alleviate confusion and to promote direct defensive language. EVERYTHING SHOULD BE LOUD AND CONSTANT. Each defender should be saying something at ALL times!

- ★ "I got ball" : used when you are the defender guarding the girl with the ball
- ★ "I got your help right/left" / "with you right/left" : used when you are guarding the girl adjacent (directly to the right or the left of the ball)
- ★ "I got your second" : used when you are 2 girls away from the ball
- ★ "CRASH" : used by ALL defenders as soon as an attacker drives into the 8 or receives a feed into the 8
- ★ "Force right/left" : used when telling the girl on ball to position herself to force her attacker towards you. This is used when you are ready to slide or double ball.
- ★ "Leaving" : used when taking a cutter through the 8 and leaving the spot you were in
- ★ "Got cutter" : used when guarding a cutter
- ★ "I got 2" : used when you are defending 2 players in a man down situation or if another defender gets lost. This needs to be LOUD if we are in an even set, so lost defender can figure out where she needs to go ASAP
- ★ "I got stick" / "I got body" : used when you are engaged in a double team. Girl on body is maintaining good body defense positioning and making it so the attacker can not escape. Girl on stick is mirroring stick to block passes (while still staying tight) and taking a checking opportunity if it arises (LEGALLY- check is last resort)
- ★ "Checking in" : used when leaving your girl to enter the 8 when anticipating drives or feeds
- ★ "Shooter" / "Lefty" / "Feeder" etc: These are examples of tendencies to yell to communicate to defensive unit what to anticipate
- ★ "Switch" / "Stay" / "Pick coming on your R/L" : These are used in pick situations
- ★ "Mark up" : Used when telling everyone to pick a girl and stay on her - usually used in clearing situations
- ★ "Ball at top/ R/ L, X, low, wing, etc" : Used to tell the unit where the ball is.
- ★ "1-7" : These are the numbers of clearing routes to call out when breaking out after our goalie makes a save
- ★ "ACE #__" : Used when we are face guarding a player

Muskego Plays (see attached PDF for play descriptions)

- Pairs/ Deuces
- Nike
- Ski
- Money
- A

Muskego Defenses

- Man
- High Pressure
- Backer Zone
- Double Backer Zone