



COACHING YOUTH LACROSSE GOALIES

C3 YOUTH LACROSSE

ADAPTIVE GOALTENDING - 2026





ENCOURAGING KIDS TO TRY GOALIE



- The best way to encourage players to try goalie is to frame it correctly.
 - Goalies are:

Leaders

Inherently brave

Great teammates



Reinforce the fact that the goalie is arguably the most important position on the team, and great goalies must be competent and smart athletes.



MENTAL DIFFERENCES:

- **Scoreboard Consequence:** Field player misses a shot, drops a pass = turnover; Goalie misses a save = scoreboard change.
- **The "Mistake" vs. the "Consequence":** Field players can hide mistakes in a crowd; goalies cannot.



FEAR

- **Reflex Management:** Flinching isn't a "fail," it's biology. It is natural to be afraid of the ball and try to move out of the way, so how do we fix this?
 - Safe exposure
 - Train with tennis balls/soft lacrosse balls
 - Slow down shots when necessary
 - DO NOT just throw goalies into drills if they have 0 training. It's dangerous and worse so, they'll never want to keep playing goalie!!



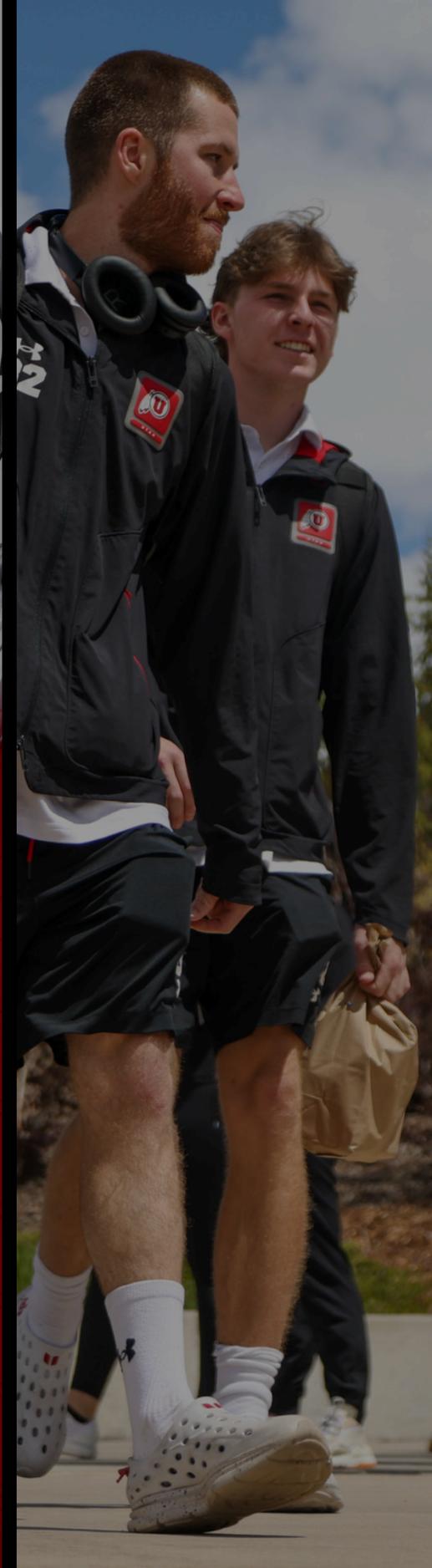
TALKING & EXPECTATIONS



TALKING & EXPECTATIONS

Practice:

- Goalies should be held to the same standards as their teammates
 - Run between drills
 - Communicate consistently
 - Train at maximum effort
- Practice creates the best opportunities for coaches to critique and correct goalies
 - Include goalies in team drills whenever possible
 - Avoid telling goalies to “go do their own thing”
 - Set aside time at the beginning of practice for goalie specific training
 - Training should follow a clear plan, not random reps
 - There should be an assistant coach assigned to conducting goalie training



TALKING & EXPECTATIONS

Pre-Game:

- Allow goalies to go through their pre game routines without interruption
- Goalies should still participate in team drills like any other player
- Allocate specific time for goalies to warm up before games
- The warm up period should be a minimum of 5 to 10 minutes



TALKING & EXPECTATIONS

Mid-Game:

- During games, the best approach is usually to leave your goalie alone
 - The goalie position is mentally demanding and already carries significant pressure
 - Avoid constant coaching or feedback during the game
 - Speak up only if something clearly out of line is happening
 - In most situations, let your goalie handle the game the way they need to in order to win
- **Note that POSITIVE reinforcement (cheering on great saves, clears, and all other plays) is great and should be done. Encourage the bench to get in on the action too.



TALKING & EXPECTATIONS

Post-game:

- More of the same, leave critique and correction for practice time unless something very unusual is going on

HEALTHY TEAM DYNAMIC

- **Clear = Point:** Team should celebrate a successful outlet pass and chase out as much as a doorstep save to show they are a playmaker, not just a wall.
- **Leader by Vision:** Remind the team that the goalie is the only one who can see the whole field; what they see and say goes.





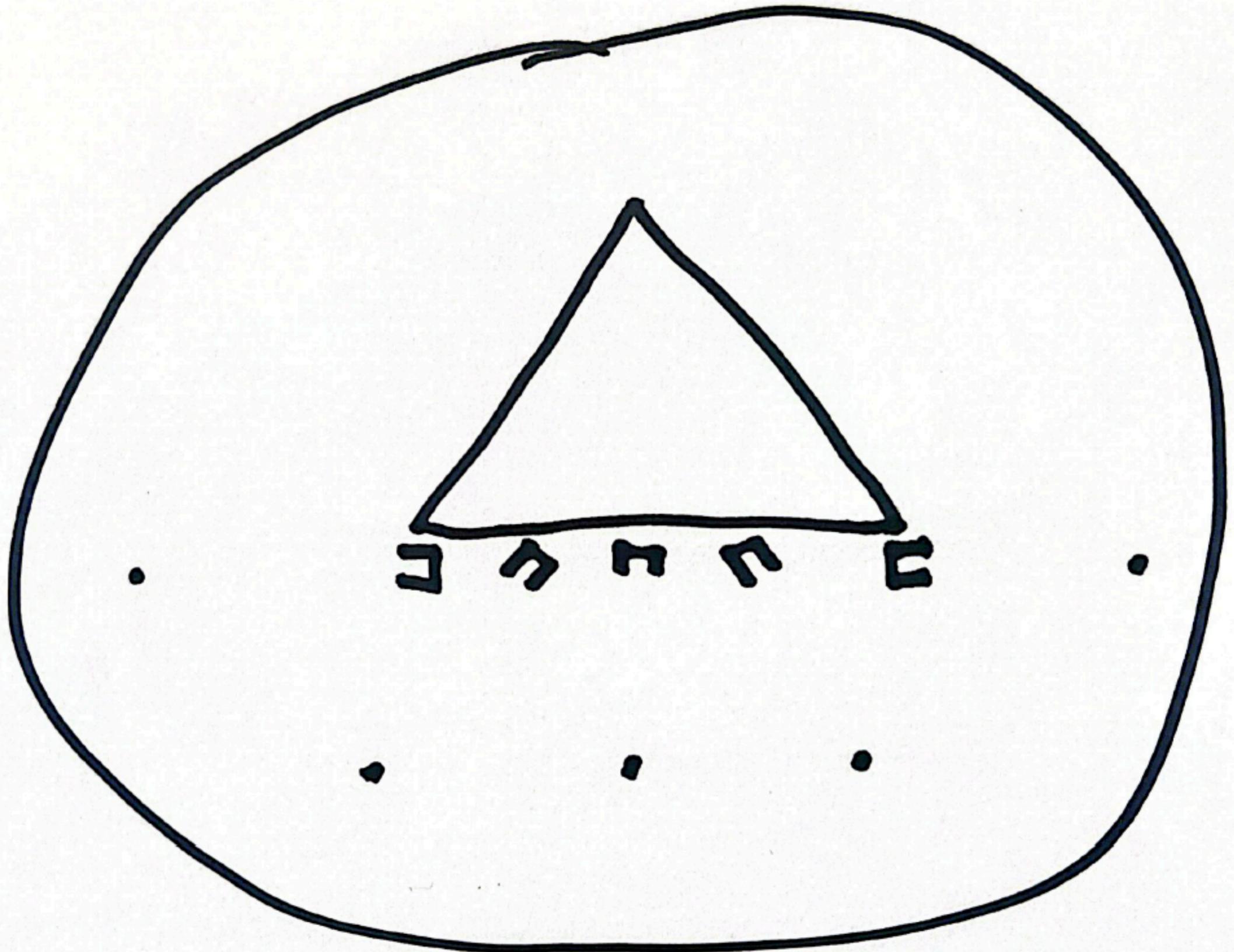
HELPING A STRUGGLING GOALIE

- **The 5-Second Reset:** A physical "trigger" to dump the last goal (kick the pipe, adjust the helmet, spray the water bottle). This is a great technique to use for goalies in between EVERY goal to maintain a sense of mental equilibrium.
- **Breathing Technique:** 4 seconds in, 8 seconds out to lower the heart rate after a flurry of goals.
 - Exhaling twice as long as you inhale is scientifically proven to slow down your heart rate.



FUNDAMENTALS:

- **Brand new goalie in practice**
 - If I only had 15 minutes to teach a goalie how to play, I would focus on:
 - **Stance**
 - Without a proper stance, you cannot learn any other skill.
 - **Stepping to the ball**
 - Allows the goalie to get body behind the shot.
 - **Moving hands correctly**
 - Essential for quicker hands and controlling rebounds.
 - And if I had another 15 minutes, I would focus entirely on:
 - **Positioning!!**
 - This is the MOST important skill to learn aside from barebone fundamentals. Just by standing in the right part of the goal, you increase your odds of making the save exponentially.

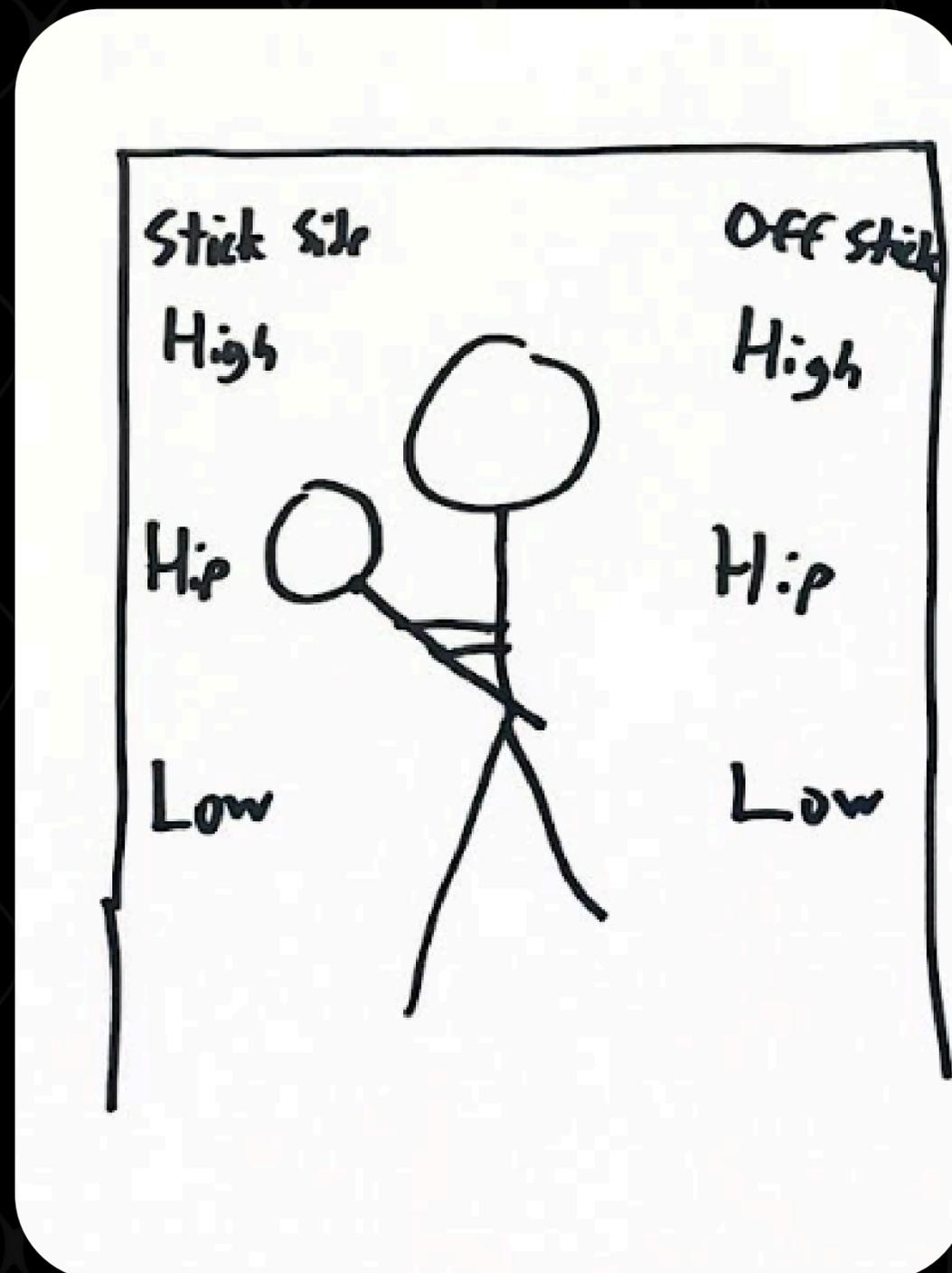


NOTE

At a bare minimum, any goalie stepping in the cage must go through 1 team practice, with at least 30 minutes set aside to work through fundamentals.

GAME DAY WARMUP

- **Scenario:** you've got 5 minutes in between games and need to get your goalies warmed up quickly. What do you do?
- From 8-10 yards away, shooting at 60-70% speed (IDEALLY with 2 shooters so the goalie can practice positioning, ball tracking, and moving between spots)
 - 10 shots anywhere high
 - 10 shots anywhere mid
 - 10 shots anywhere low
 - 5 shots anywhere
 - 10 shots anywhere on crease (make them saveable)





DRILLS INTEGRATION



HOW TO INCLUDE THE GOALIE IN PRACTICE SO THEY AREN'T JUST TARGETS.

- **When to include include goalies:**
 - Realistic (and reasonably safe) shooting scenarios
 - Stepdowns 8-10 yards out (more like 12 for high level players)
 - Crease finishes (ONLY IF SHOOTERS ARE CAPABLE OF NOT CREASE CRANKING AND WHERE THE GOALIE HAS SOME CHANCE OF MAKING THE SAVE)
 - Even number drills
 - Odd number drills
 - 6v6
 - Anything involving clearing



HOW TO INCLUDE THE GOALIE IN PRACTICE SO THEY AREN'T JUST TARGETS.

- **When NOT to include goalies:**

- Midrange shooting UNLESS a soft ball or tennis ball is being used (4-7 yard shots)
- Any drill where a crease crank is a high probability (again, more so talking about the youth level here)
- Crease finishes where the goalie has virtually no chance of saving the ball or where crease cranking has a high chance of occurring

REP SPLITTING SYSTEM

- Goalies should have a system for splitting reps during live drills. Ideally, they sort this out themselves, but if they are not doing so, make sure they are switching after a set number of reps (3 reps, 5, etc).
- If a goalie is solo, especially if they are new, allow them to step in for 3-5 shots, and step-out for 3-5 shots if that makes them more comfortable.



A lacrosse goalie is shown in a crouched position in front of a goal net. The goalie is wearing a white helmet with a red cage, a red jersey with "UTAH" visible, and red and black gloves. The net is white and has a wooden frame. The background is slightly blurred, showing an outdoor setting. The text "Thank you" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Thank you



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