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## Table of Contents

<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>A. Suggested Practice Plans.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>B. Pushing/Hitting &amp; Trapping drills.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>C. Shooting drills for the goalkeeper before a game or in practice.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>D. Circuit Drills.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>E. Shuttle Drills.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>F. Rectangle Drills.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>G. Attack/Defend.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>H. Mini-games.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>I. Example Practice Record.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>J. Blank Practice Record Sheet.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>K. Coaching Articles by Peter D’Cruz.....</i>	<i>28</i>

## **Introduction**

Practices must meet two requirements, consistency and variety. These two requirements appear to be mutually exclusive, however consistency is important so that players don't have to keep learning new drills in every practice. Within the same drills, variety is introduced by changing the drill slightly from practice to practice. Variety is also introduced by changing the sequence of the drills from practice to practice. The same drills can be applied for recreational, junior, club, national and international players by varying the level of intensity and tactical requirements.

The only drills that are used in practice must apply technical skills and tactical methods that will be used in games. Drills that do not meet these criteria must never be deployed. It is of the utmost importance to have an overall tactical method of play that your team will use so that the drills can demonstrate and apply the tactical method clearly. At each practice, there must be one or two specific tactical strategies that need a particular emphasis. It is important that the coach express the specific tactical strategies that will be learned during practice before practice begins and continues to emphasize them throughout the practice.

Practices are used to develop technical skills and learn tactical methods. Practices for competitive level players must also teach them how to play at match intensity and focus. Therefore, there are two types of practices, the Learn Technical/Tactical Skills practice and the Match Intensity practice.

The Match Intensity practice should last the same length as a game (with a half-time break) and should not have any rest periods to teach a new skill or a drill. In a Match Intensity practice, the players will know the drills and will move from drill to drill without any rest other than the half-time break. If you are coaching an elite level team, Match Intensity practices must be used regularly to develop the intensity, focus and game fitness of your players.

**A. Suggested Practice Plans**

Three practice plans are listed below for a 90-minute or a two-hour practice. In a 90-minute practice, a maximum of 12 minutes can be applied to each of the activities. In a two-hour practice, 15 minutes can be applied to each activity. Please note that it is not necessary to use an equal amount of time for each activity as the coach will also decide which tactic or technical skill requires extra emphasis.

1.
  - 1.1. Warm up pushing & trapping or a Game warm up drill (includes goalkeeper warm up)
  - 1.2. Circuit drill (choose from list of circuit drills)
  - 1.3. Rectangle drill (choose from list of rectangle drills)
  - 1.4. Penalty corner practice (attack/defend or shuttle drills for other players)
  - 1.5. Attack/defend drill (choose from list of attack/defend drills)
  - 1.6. Mini-game/game situation (choose from list of mini-games)
2.
  - 2.1. Warm-up pushing & trapping or a Game warm up drill
  - 2.2. Mini-game/game situation
  - 2.3. Circuit drill
  - 2.4. Attack/defend
  - 2.5. Rectangle drill
  - 2.6. Penalty corner practice (attack/defend or shuttle drills for other players)
3.
  - 3.1. Warm-up pushing & trapping or a Game warm up drill
  - 3.2. Rectangle drill
  - 3.3. Penalty corner practice (attack/defend or shuttle drills for other players)
  - 3.4. Attack/defend
  - 3.5. Circuit drill
  - 3.6. Mini-game/game situation

If there are many players in attendance at practice or needed for a specific drill, then you should run two or more drills at the same time. Also, some drills such as the Rectangle Drill do not involve a shot on goal, so when such a drill is chosen, the goalkeepers must be provided with a drill that they can do on their own or with a few field players.

At an elite level, Technical/Tactical Practices can and should be devoted to one or two items only so that the above practice examples that introduce variety would not necessarily be appropriate. I have devoted whole practices to one attacking or defensive concept with elite teams I have coached.

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**B. Pushing/Hitting & Trapping drills**

1. Three players in a triangle.

**Tactical skill:** Change of direction passes are practiced; players can execute disguising the direction of the pass.

**Elite Intensity:** players sprint to get the ball if they mis-trap or make an inaccurate pass.

This is my ideal first drill for players as they warm-up for practice or a game.

2. Three players in a line.

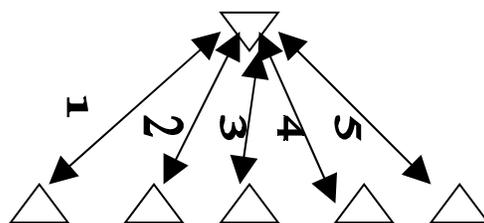
All passes go through middle player.



**Tactical skill:** The middle player learns to pivot to change direction of a pass. Note, the middle player must face the same direction at all times and not “spin” around to change direction thereby learning to receive from left to right and from right to left and also to pass left to right and from right to left.

**Elite Intensity:** players sprint to get the ball if they mis-trap or make an inaccurate pass

3. The Target



A. One player as a target for three or more players; each player has a ball that is rapidly passed to the target player and returned to the same player

B. The drill can also be done with one ball that is passed rapidly to the Target player from left to right, or right to left; more than five non-target players will not work if you have only one ball because the non-target players will spend a lot of their time without a ball during the warm up.

**Tactical skill:** The Target player learns to do their trapping skills under pressure

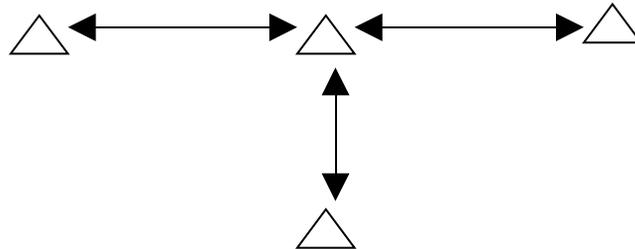
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**Elite Intensity:** players sprint to get the ball if they mis-trap or make an inaccurate pass.

The Target drill can be used a competitive relay drill between two or more groups of players. The relay starts with player A in the Target position and then after each ball is passed from A to player B, C, D, E and F (assuming six in the drill), then player B goes to the Target until every player has successfully completed being the Target. The winning group completes the relay before the other group(s).

4. The T drill

All passes go through the player in the middle; there is only one ball in the drill.

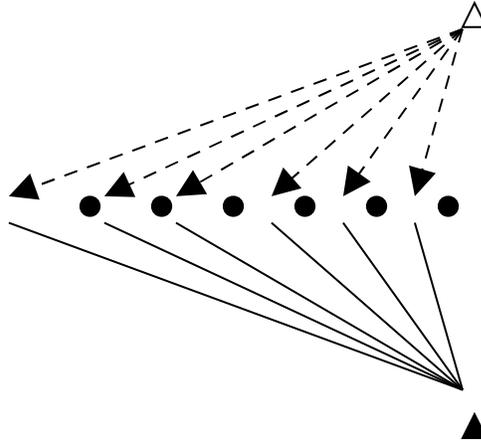


**Tactical skill:** The middle player learns to pivot to change the direction of a pass. Note, the middle player must never turn their back towards the player bottom of the T and not “spin” around to change direction.

**Elite Intensity:** players sprint to get the ball if they mis-trap or make an inaccurate pass.

5. Passing to a target from different angles

Players learn to make a forward pass on the run from different angles. The player runs with the ball to each cone and then as she reaches just past each cone, she passes to the target.



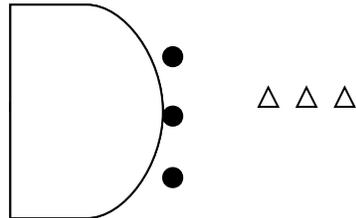
The diagram shows passes from left to right. The drill must also be done with passes from right to left. The push or the hit should be used to develop the different technical skills. The Target can also be the goal so the players learn to shoot on goal from different angles.

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C. Shooting drills for the goalkeeper before a game or in practice

(Diagrams are not to scale)

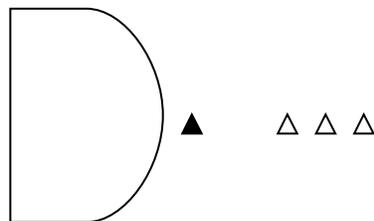
1. Dribble to one of three cones and shoot.



Players dribble one at a time towards one of the cones and shoot as soon the ball gets in the circle.

**Elite Intensity:** (1) players sprint to get the ball after the shot is taken, no matter where the ball goes, and (2) players must sprint back to the end of the line.

2. One-on-one with a passive defender.

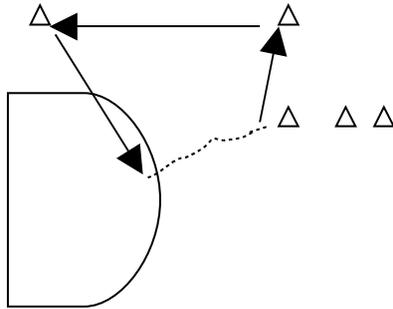


Player passes the ball to the defender who makes a return pass. A one on one takes place, but the defender plays a passive role, allowing the attacker to get past and take a shot. The defender can become more active as the warm up continues. However, the purpose of the drill is to warm up the goalkeeper, so every one on one must end with a shot on goal.

**Elite Intensity:** (1) players sprint to get the ball after the shot is taken, no matter where the ball goes, and (2) players must sprint back to the end of the line.

- 2.a. Switch the defender to be the centre-forward. The CF moves towards the pass, receives, delays and makes a return pass to player who goes in for a shot on goal.
- 2.b. Pass to the centre-forward with two lines of attacking players. The CF moves towards the pass, receives, delays and makes a pass to the player who didn't make the initial pass. The player goes in for a shot on goal along with the other attacking player and plays out the first rebound.

3. Pass to the wing, pass into the corner, cross and shot.



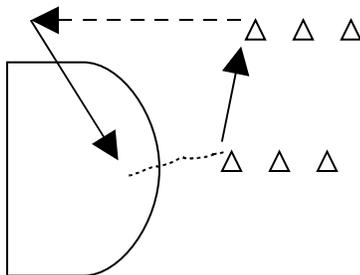
The player passes to the right wing. The next pass is into the right corner, and the corner player passes to the top of the circle. The player who started the play receives the pass at the top of the circle and takes a shot. The players on the wing and in the corner remain at their stations and are substituted with players from the line after a few passes.

The drill is played on both sides as each starting pass alternates between left and right.

**Elite Intensity:** (1) players sprint to get the ball after the shot is taken, no matter where the ball goes, and (2) players must sprint back to the end of the line

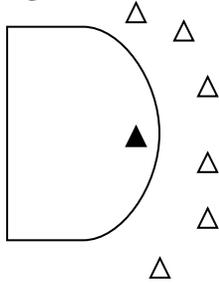
4. Variation on Drill 3 above.

Player (striker position) passes to the wing and the winger runs down to the top the circle and makes a cross pass to the top of the circle where the striker receives and takes a shot



As noted at the beginning of this section, all these drills are excellent warm-up drills prior to a game.

5. The Target with shot on goal



Each player outside the circle has a ball. A pass is made to the Target player in the circle who takes a shot on goal. Passes can be made in different sequences from left to right, right to left, etc.

If the Target player is near the top of circle, a hit is used. If the Target player is 9m or closer to the goal, then a push shot is used.

A variation can allow the outside of circle players to play the rebound before the next pass is made.

6. Random passes all over the circle

The player in the circle receives a pass in the circle and shoots on goal right away. Passes continue to be made all over the circle until the player tires, usually after 10+ passes.

A variation allows additional players to play a rebound.

## D. Circuit Drills

Circuit drills are a series of stations (cones) placed in parts of the field that simulate the positions on the field, i.e., defenders, middle player, forwards (in the corner and at the top of the circle). Circuits should always end with a shot on goal.

Circuits work technical skills, develop field hockey specific fitness and teach tactical methods. The intensity, pace and time spent on circuits is dependent on whether your team is a recreational or elite level team.

There are two types of circuits:

- Movement of Player and Ball
- Movement of Ball Only

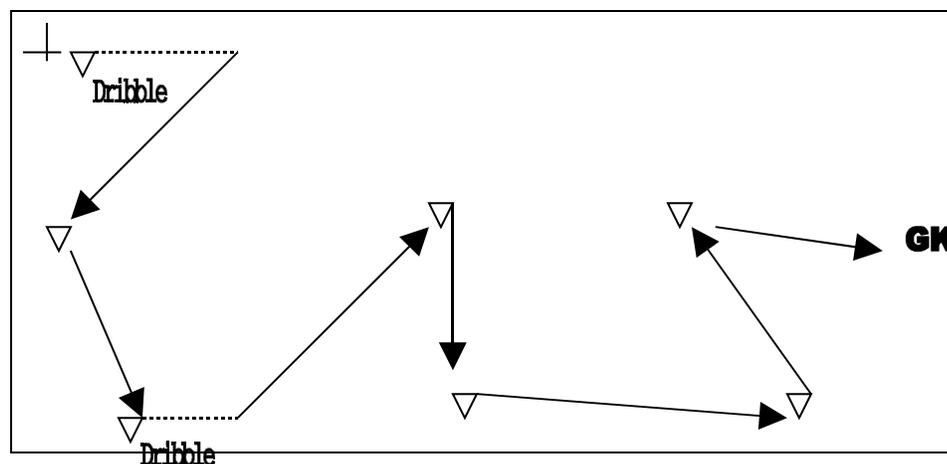
The “**Movement of Player and Ball**” is a more common circuit where each player goes onto the next station after doing the skill, and finally gets back to the first station.

The “**Movement of Ball Only**” circuit is applied in the following manner:

- Each player remains at the station
- All the balls in the practice are worked through each station
- When all the balls have gone through, they are gathered up, returned to the beginning and then each player moves onto the next station

The **Movement of Ball Only** circuit can only be used when you have one player for each station, otherwise some players will not be in the drill.

Circuits should be run from left to right and from right to left. The following example shows a circuit running from left to right with six stations. A similar set up can be applied going from right to left, i.e., the ball starts with a right-side defender.



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**Tactical Skill:**

- (1) players learn how to pass the ball to specific locations based on a system of play;
- (2) players learn pushing & trapping skills needed for specific roles on the field in attack.

**Elite Intensity:**

- (1) if a player mis-traps, they sprint to get the ball and go back to the beginning of the circuit (this is extremely important in keeping the circuit running smoothly),
- (2) players sprint to the next station,
- (3) players sprint to get the ball after the shot is taken, no matter where the ball goes, and
- (4) players must sprint back to the beginning of the circuit.

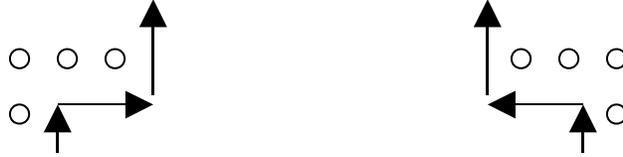
**Things to consider**

- (1) The number of stations that are used depend on the number of players at practice; reduce the number of stations if the circuit has to wait because the players haven’t returned to the beginning; increase the number of stations if a more than one-third of the players in the drill are waiting at the beginning to start again.
- (2) Change the set-up of the circuit while the drill is being conducted so that players continue to experience variety.
- (3) If you want to train a player specifically at a position, e.g., a striker, then keep her at the striker station and all the other players will skip that station in the circuit. This way the player will have many opportunities to work on their specific skills. Note that the **Movement of Ball Only** circuit helps with this intention and you can leave players at a station depending on the position you wish them to learn fully.
- (4) Stations can be set-up that involve more than one player, e.g., two players can make rapid passes to each other as they run up the field. This type of station can be developed further by making the station into a 2-on-1 situation. Please note that when a station involves more than one player, only one player moves to the next station each time the ball passes through which means a player stays at a multiple player station for two pass throughs of the ball.
- (5) The concept know as a Pass Return is incorporated into circuits just like players will control the play by passing to each other in a game. For example, station 2 and 3 will involve the ball being passed from 2 to 3, back from 3 to 2, returned from 2 to 3 and then on to station 4.

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**Set-up of Cones determines the technical skill**

A. Set & Square

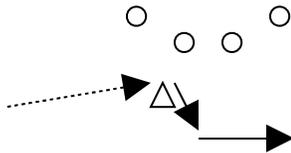


B. Set & Pivot

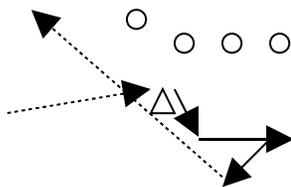


C. Receive & Pivot

The player receives the ball from behind, from their left or from the right and they pivot at the station to go to the other side. Note that the player turns to always face the attacking goal, they do not turn their back towards the attacking goal.



D. Receive, Pivot, Fake, Pivot Back and Pass



E. Shuttle Drills

Shuttle drills are straight-line drills. Players line up one behind each other and run with the ball to the other end. Shuttles can be applied in the following way:

(1) The player remaining at the far end and passing the ball to the next player called a “Shuttle with Pass”

(2) The player can run to the far end and return to the beginning called a “Shuttle Return”

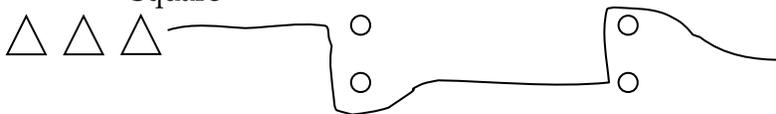
1. With no cones, i.e., run with the ball on the stick
2. Cones in a straight line



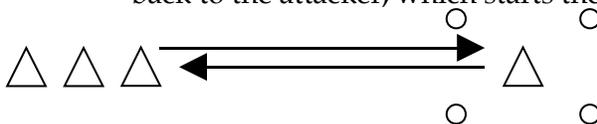
3. Cones staggered; emphasizes changing direction using the Weave



4. Cones square; emphasizes lateral movement and acceleration using the Set & Square



5. A one-on-one with a defender; the defender can be passive or completely active; the drill starts with the attacker passing the ball to the defender, who passes it back to the attacker, which starts the one on one.



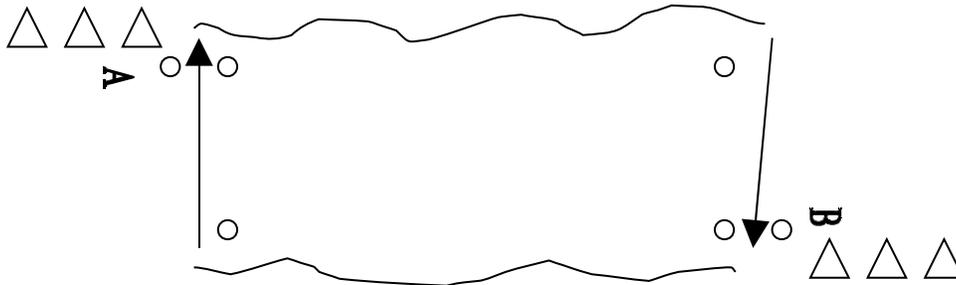
This shuttle involves the player ending up at the far end. Each player needs their own ball, or the ball is passed back outside the cones.

**Elite Intensity:** (1) Players sprint to get the ball if they lose control, and (2) players sprint to the end of the line. Making relays out of drills 1 to 4 as Shuttles with Pass or Shuttles Return will force players to do the skill at maximum speed.

**Things to consider:** In the Shuttle with a Pass, remind the players that the technical skill is to receive and look up fully before or while they start running with the ball.

## F. Rectangle Drills

Rectangle drills include a square pass between two “shuttle” lines as shown in the diagram:



1. A player from line A starts with a ball and carries it past the single cone, makes a square pass on the run to the first person in line B, and joins the end of the line B.
2. The player from line B receives the pass and runs with the ball past the single cone and makes a square pass to the first person in the line A, and joins the end of line A.
3. More than one ball must be used in this drill if players are spending a lot of time waiting for a pass.

Setting up cones as per the five shuttle drills changes the rectangle drill, so there are five variations of the rectangle drill. Also, rectangles are set up with the pass from left to right (as shown above), and with the pass from right to left.

**Tactical Skill:** Players learn how to make a square a pass (a push and a hit) on the run from either the left or the right.

**Elite Intensity:** (1) if a player mis-traps, they sprint to get the ball and go to the end of the line (this is extremely important in keeping the drill running smoothly) and (2) players sprint to the end of the line they must join after making the square pass (3) keep adding balls so that players aren’t waiting for a pass.

Things to consider:

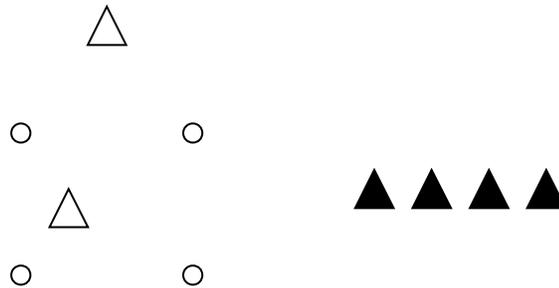
- Remind players to receive and look up fully before or while they start running with the ball.
- For beginners, don’t have them make the pass, they just run with the ball to next corner.
- Change the emphasis on receiving the ball so that the players do a pivot before they start running with the ball.
- To develop the sideways shuffle control skill, skip the pass and have the players do the sideways shuffle run across to the next corner while controlling the ball.

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**G. Attack/Defend**

1. One on one

Played within a quadrant of cones that limits the space for the one-on-one to a small area as in a game situation. Please note that keeping the quadrant really small teaches the attacking player to be successful in very tight areas such as the area in and around the circle.



The attacking players are in black. The defender is inside the cones. The defender's partner stands outside the cones and is available for an outlet pass from the defender if the defender successfully stops an attacking player.

The attacking player starts the drill by passing the ball to the defender who makes a return pass and then the one-on-one commences. If an outlet pass is made, the defender's partner passes the ball to the next attacking player who begins the drill again.

The defender's partner is very important to the drill as it simulates the game situation where a defender must gain control after breaking up an attacking play and make a safe pass to a team mate who starts the counter-attack.

At the Elite level this drill can be (and should be) played with one ball as the ball will remain in constant play with the defender's partner returning it to the next player in line, and if the attacking player is successful, she makes a pass to the defender's partner who in turn passes to the next attacking player in the line.

2. One on one (with a goalkeeper)

The same as above except that a shot on goal is played by the attacking player if she is successful on her one-on-one.

If the attacking player is not successful, the defender's partner passes the ball to the attacking player instead of passing it back to the next player in line. This ensures that the goalkeeper gets a shot on goal on every opportunity. You can't do this drill with one ball.

3. Two on one

Follow the same structure as in the one-on-one except that the quadrant can be a little larger, but not necessarily. Please note that keeping the quadrant really small teaches the attacking players to be successful in tight areas such as the area in and around the circle. The defender’s partner remains integral to the tactical issue of gaining team possession and beginning the counter-attack. One ball can be used in this drill at the Elite level. The attacking players starts the drill by passing the ball to the defender who makes a return pass to one of the attackers and then the two-on-one commences.

4. Two on one (with a goalkeeper)

The same as above except that a shot on goal is played by the attacking players if they are successful on the two-on-one.

If the attacking players are not successful, the defender’s partner passes the ball to one of the attacking players instead of passing it back to the next set of players in line. This ensures that the goalkeeper gets a shot on goal on every opportunity. The attacking players starts the drill by passing the ball to the defender who makes a return pass to one of the attackers and then the two-on-one commences.

5. Three on two

In a slightly larger quadrant than for “two-on-ones” and with a second set of two defenders outside the quadrant, the attackers start with a pass to the two defenders, who make a return pass to one of the three attackers. If the defenders stop the attack, they make the outlet pass to their defensive partners outside the quadrant who then pass the ball to next set of three attackers.

The attacking players starts the drill by passing the ball to a defender who makes a return pass to one of the attackers and then the three-on-two commences.

One ball can be used in this drill at the Elite level.

6. Three on two (with a goalkeeper)

In a slightly larger quadrant than for “two-on-ones”, the attackers start with a pass to the two defenders, who make a return pass to one of the three attackers. Then, the attacking play takes place until a goal is scored, or the ball goes off the end line, or the defenders successfully clear the ball to the next set of three attackers.

The attacking players starts the drill by passing the ball to a defender who makes a return pass to one of the attackers and then the three-on-two commences.

7. Four or five on three (with a goalkeeper)

Played with the same rules as above, but the quadrant can be as large as one-quarter of the field, i.e., the right or left side of the attacking half.

In this game, the attacking play takes place until a goal is scored, or the ball goes off the end line, or the defenders successfully clear the ball to the next set of attackers.

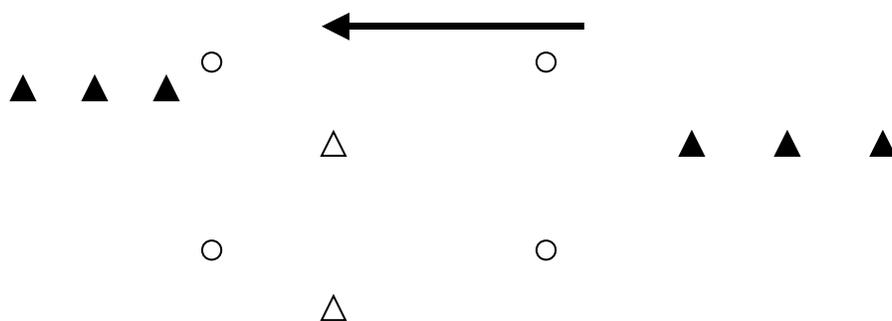
The attacking players starts the drill by passing the ball to a defender who makes a return pass to one of the attackers and then the attack commences.

**A. An important tactical variation for drills 3 through 7.**

Almost everyone does these drills where the two, three or more attackers start in front of the defenders and then move forward to beat them in the defined space. Very few two-on-ones or three-on-twos develop this way in games, so in each of these drills, you should try the following example shown below for the two-on-one.

The players are attacking in the direction of the arrow. One of the two attackers is at the traditional starting end of the drill. The other attacker begins behind the defender. When the attack begins after the pass back and forth, the attacker behind the defender has to run back towards the ball to make the two-on-one work. This scenario happens more often in field hockey than the more traditionally practiced starting of square to each other.

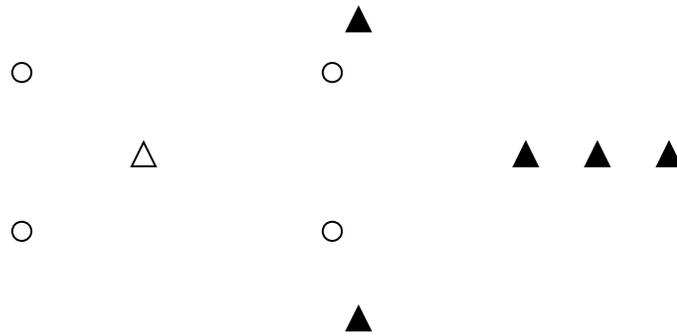
Two-on-one (one starts behind the defender)



Note: The reasons for the pass by the attackers to the defender and the return pass are both technical and tactical. Hitting/pushing and trapping are the technical skills that are always tested in these drills. The tactical or game situation skill that is simulated for the attackers is the intercepted pass, i.e., the pass back from the defenders, so the attackers learn to move quickly into attack before the defenders can set-up to pressure or mark them. For the defenders, they have to react as though they have made a bad forward pass and quickly get into position to defend.

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**B. Variation dealing with teaching the attacking players to keep the play moving**



This set-up of two attacking players who wait just outside and backward of the square of rectangle is designed for when the attacking player (1-on-1) or players (2-on-1, 3-on-2, etc.) get slowed down by the defence, the attacking player then switches the play by passing to one of the two outlet attacking players.

This variation is important in teaching players that the 1-on-1, 2-on-1, etc., is not an isolated situation amongst a few players and that when the attacking move slows down, they need to change the direction and focus of the attack. The supporting players also learn how to “call” for passes.

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## **H. Mini-games**

Game situation drills in practice should not only be the same structure as in a normal game. Changing the parameters of the playing area and the way that points are scored, forces players to think and react to new situations.

Also, games should be played for no longer than ten to fifteen minutes as this maintains a high level of intensity and focus. Therefore, the winning score for a game could be three to five points depending on the type of game. It is a must that the score is kept. If the mini-game is such that points are scored rapidly, then play a series of games (best of three or best of five) to maintain the level of intensity over the ten to fifteen minute periods. Never allow the mini-game to have a score of 15-6 as players on both sides become bored and find it impossible to maintain their intensity, even international level players.

Please note that goalkeepers participate in all of these mini-games. Also, all of the following games assume two teams of players.

### 1. Successive passes

There are no cones set up. A team counts the number of successful passes made without being intercepted. The team with the greatest number of successful passes in one set is the winner.

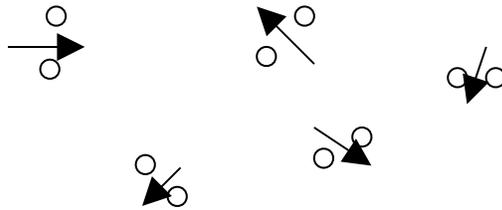
### 2. Touch the cone to score a point

Space cones all over a playing area depending on the number of players. Five to eight players a team is ideal. A point is scored when a player on a team touches any cone with the ball.

(1) After the point is scored, the ball is turned over to the other team.

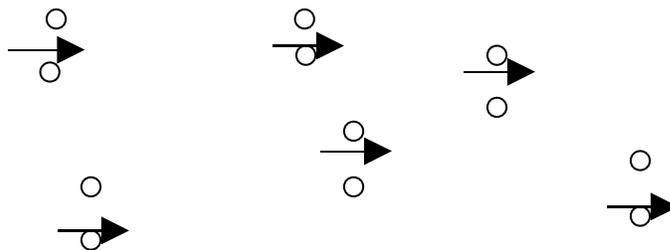
(2) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but they cannot touch the same cone again and must move the ball to another player before they can touch the same cone again.

3. Pass the ball through two cones in any direction



Set up cones in pairs all over the playing area. A point is scored when a player makes a successful pass, in any direction, through any set of cones to a member of their team. After a point is scored:

- (1) The ball is turned over to the other team, or
  - (2) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but cannot make another pass through the same set of cones, or
  - (3) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but CAN make another pass through the same set of cones to count a point
4. Pass the ball through two cones in one direction only

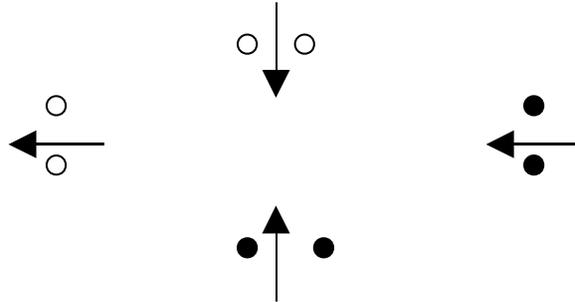


Set up cones in pairs all over the playing area but in the same direction. A point is scored when a player makes a successful pass, in the direction for their team (as the arrows show), through any set of cones to a member of their team. The other team scores a point in the opposite direction only. After a point is scored:

- (1) The ball is turned over to the other team, or
- (2) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but cannot make another pass through the same set of cones, or
- (3) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but CAN make another pass through the same set of cones to count a point

5. Pass the ball through sets of pairs of cones, and defend other sets of cones.

The cones are best set up in a square or rectangle shape. One team defends the white cones, and the other team defends the black cones. Passes can be made in either direction.



After a point is scored:

- (1) The ball is turned over to the other team, or
  - (2) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but cannot make another pass through the same set of cones, or
  - (3) The team that scores a point retains possession of the ball, but CAN make another pass through the same set of cones to count a point
6. Dribble over an end line

Each team defends an end line marked by a pair of cones. A point is scored when a member of a team successfully controls the ball by carrying it over the opposing team’s end line and “setting” it. After a point is scored the ball is turned over to the other team.

If the ball goes over the end line, the defending team gets possession.

There is no need to have a sideline boundary with this game as it slows down the pace of the game.

7. Dribble between sets of cones on the end line

Each team defends sets of cones on an end line. A point is scored when a member of a team successfully controls the ball by carrying it over the opposing team’s end line and “setting” it, but between a set of cones. After a point is scored the ball is turned over to the other team.



Three sets of cones can also be set up.

If the ball goes over the end line, the defending team gets possession.

There is no need to have a sideline boundary with this game.

8. Pass over the end line

Each team defends an end line marked by a pair of cones. A point is scored when a member of a team successfully passes the ball over the opposing team’s end line to a team member in one direction only or you can allow passes to be made in either direction. After a point is scored:

- The ball is turned over to the other team, or
- A team can retain possession and make successive passes that count as points.

If the ball goes over the end line without a successful pass happening, the defending team gets possession.

It is very important to leave space for players to play past the end line safely, so they don’t run into a fixed object at the practice facility.

9. Pass between sets of cones on the end line

Each team defends sets of cones on an end line. A point is scored when a member of a team successfully passes the ball over the opposing team’s end line to a team member, but between a set of cones. After a point is scored:

- The ball is turned over to the other team, or
- A team can retain possession and make successive passes that count as points.



Three sets of cones can also be set up.

If the ball goes over the end line without a successful pass happening, the defending team gets possession.

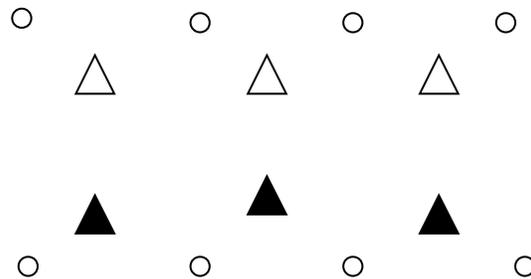
It is very important to leave space for players to play past the end line safely, so they don’t run into a fixed object at the practice facility.

10. One on One

Each player defends a line between two cones. The distance between the two cones is slightly wider the length of a player’s reach with their stick to their right and to their left.

The game duration is a minimum of sixty seconds or a maximum of ninety seconds with a rest equal to double the “playing” time. The game can be repeated three to four times.

Players must maintain a maximum degree of intensity during the playing time and “rest” during the break.



11. Two on Two

Played with the same structure as the One on One game. The cones are spaced a little further apart. Games can be one, two or three minutes with double the amount of rest time between games.

12. Pass to position

Cones are set-up in small squares in the various positions on the field, e.g., CH, CF, RI, RW, etc. A normal game is played with the two teams attacking in a direction against each other. Players don’t wait within a cone but a team scores a point whenever they make a successful pass to a team mate within a set of cones.

This game teaches players where to “run off the ball” plus players learn not to “force a pass” to player who may be covered in a position. It also teaches the defending players to run to get in front of a person within a set of cones and intercept passes, i.e., to mark from in front.

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Tactical considerations for many of the games

1. I like playing all of these games from time to time without an umpire to maintain intensity but the rules of game are such that you don’t need an umpire other than to count points.
2. Players who come into possession are not allowed to run with the ball, but also cannot be tackled or dispossessed. This is a very effective way of teaching players how to “run off the ball” to get open for a team mate and will teach players that by coming to a stop, it is much easier to control the ball and pass it to a team mate. The NOT RUN WITH THE BALL rule can be applied in most of these mini-games. If a player runs with the ball, her team automatically loses possession and you can also take a point away from the offending player’s team.
3. I will choose to play with an umpire to emphasize a certain skill, tactic or rules, e.g.,
  - taking free-hits quickly which means that the players must learn to set up to take their free hits very quickly following the Golden Rule for Controlling the Speed of Game,
  - receiving the ball facing the attacking player, i.e., not with your back facing the defender
  - calling for a pass otherwise one can’t receive the pass,
  - controlling the ball and beating an opponent to the attacking player’s strong side,
  - or to break a bad habit, e.g., soft and weak reverse stick passes or bad tackling or the individual player holding onto the ball too long.

So that if a player does or does not do the item chosen for emphasis, their team gains/loses possession or their team can gain/lose a point.
4. In games 6 and 7, I have changed the points awarded to 3 pts for a “goal” and 1 pt for drawing a foul in the area in front of the end line. This simulates both drawing a PC for an attacking team and defending against giving up a PC by the defending team. You have to use an umpire to enforce the rules of the game.
5. In games 6 to 9, the tactic of controlling the play with square and backward of square passes is taught by applying the rule from rugby whereby a forward pass is illegal. A point is scored by carrying the ball across the line or the final pass is a forward pass across the line.





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**K. Coaching Articles by Peter D’Cruz**

Peter D’Cruz has published a number of articles including some of the following:

Developing field hockey skills  
Keeping your head up while controlling the ball  
Watching off the ball  
The mechanics of trapping and pushing  
The Right Basic Skills for Controlling the Ball – Part One and Two  
Successful Tackling  
Reading a successful forward pass  
Being successful in a one-on-one  
Controlling the speed of the game  
Running and Passing the ball in groups of three  
The Basics of the 5-1-4-1 System  
Attacking in the 5-1-4-1 System  
Defending in the 5-1-4-1 System  
Attacking plays to enter the circle in the 5-1-4-1 System  
Basic tactical choices for a striker  
25 Yard Free Hit plays  
Penalty Corner Variations  
Indoor Hockey Basics – Individual Skills  
Indoor Hockey Basics – Attacking Indoor Hockey Methods  
Indoor Hockey Basics – Team Defence  
Indoor Hockey – Player Movement in Attack  
The Elite Athlete is measured in practice  
Coaching yourself in a game  
Measuring the coach fairly  
Visualization  
Field Hockey Physical Training – General  
The TFHC Method for Developing New Field Hockey Players  
Practice record for a high school team (two sets)

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There are many technical skills of field hockey that need to be learned to become an accomplished player. Learning how to use these skills in games is what makes one an excellent team player. Therefore, technical skills should not be learned without understanding how they are used tactically. I group all the technical skills into what I call tactical skills. The tactical skills are possession, dispossession and the transition between the two states. Each of these is broken down to personal and group tactics. For example, there are personal possession skills and group possession skills.

All possession skills must be learned with the underlying premise that all skills must be done "while looking up". Players must learn this from the beginning as it will ensure they will have vision on the field at all times. Doing one's skills at speed "while looking up" is the platinum level of all skills as there are no unique "advanced" skills!

In a game, the skills of field hockey are deployed on the move within the context of the direction of the attacking goal. Drills that are not directly related to the skills used in the game must not be taught and must be wholly discouraged. Therefore, teaching players how to do their skills without the underlying basis of movement within the context of the direction of the attacking goal should not be taught.

All skills must be learned and implemented as though the player is under extreme pressure. Extreme pressure means that the player must have the skills to be successful inside the attacking and defending circle and 25 yard areas where it is crowded with other players. Therefore, one does not teach players skills as though they have lots of space and time.

Developing a skill can only be done properly if the player begins slowly and then gradually increases the speed till they can do the skill at game speed. Every hand-eye coordination skill is learned this way. The analogy is that you don't begin to learn to drive a car on the highway because driving on the highway is done "at speed". You develop your driving skills by starting out slowly in a place where there are no other cars and few obstacles. "Group possession" skills must also be taught slowly (at a walking pace) and then implemented at speed.

It takes time and effort to improve a player's skills. It will take a promising teenage player at least five to seven years to develop the right skills and make the right tactical choices to play at the international level. Every player must develop foundation skills slowly and patiently before they progress to doing their skills at game speed. The coach and the player must understand the process from a foundation level to an advanced level. The player's knowledge of the process will help them understand why they must develop their skills in a logical manner. Therefore, players must learn skills in a sequence that meets the above criteria. Certain skills must be instilled before the next one is introduced.

Players must learn what the right way to do a skill is. But, it is just as important to understand what the wrong way to do a skill is. The job of the coach is to know what is incorrect, identify the errors and correct them immediately. You will find that as a coach, you need to be vigilant and overzealous in a positive way about correcting errors in skill until the player has corrected the error permanently as well as understood why.

The following is a list of skills that should develop a player to play at the highest levels:

- Holding the stick with the left hand
- Watching off the ball
- Reverse stick trapping
- Pushing
- The hit
- The slap hit
- Stationary control skills
- One-on-one
- Two-on-one
- Tackling
- Pressure and cover defence
- Keeping the head up
- Upright trapping
- Flat indoor trapping
- The flip pass
- The scoop
- The reverse hit
- Running with the ball
- Running off the ball
- Three-on-two
- Man-to-man front marking