

Men's Lacrosse Positions

(source: U.S. Lacrosse New Start Manual and Wantaugh H.S. Web Page, with some editing), 4/99

THE ATTACK

The Position:

The position of attack requires the most stick skill of all positions, with the exception of the goalie. Attackmen should demonstrate good stick work with either hand and have quick feet to maneuver around the goal in heavy traffic. Effective attackmen have good peripheral vision, precision passes, and can effectively dodge, screen and shoot. The attack are always on the field as a scoring threat and, given an even match up, should score often. Typically the attack work behind the net, called the "X" area, and on the flanks of the crease, called the "wings". This gives the attackmen the most room to dodge and cut. Attackmen generally restrict their play to half of the field. They must work with the midfield to run an effective offense. An attackman should be quick, alert, confident in one-on-one situations and be able to withstand physical punishment by the opposing defensemen.

Some Rules:

The attack use dodging, picks (just like in basketball), and passing to generate a good shot. Similar to basketball, the object is to move the ball around until the defense breaks and someone is left with an open shot. One way to do this is by letting an attackman go one-on-one with a defender. The attackman tries to beat his defender by dodging, causing another defenseman to slide, creating an unbalanced situation in which he can either shoot or pass to someone else who is wide open. The attackman can move in any direction with any amount of force, as there are no charging rules. The attackman, however, like all players cannot clamp the ball in his stick with his thumb, chest, or helmet. He is also not allowed to push or hit the defenseman's stick with his arms or hands. This is called warding.

THE MIDFIELDER

The Position:

The midfielder is considered by many to be the backbone of the lacrosse team. Good midfielders need speed, stamina, hustle and determination. They are required to play both defense and offense. However, the middies are largely responsible for a key aspect of the game - transition. Transition is by far the most important part of the game and helped create the nickname, 'The Fastest Game on Two Feet'. It involves retrieving loose balls, or clearing saved shots and running and passing the ball up the length of the field. If a team can get the ball and have an extra man advantage on the offensive end of the field, even for a split second, they have a good opportunity to score. When this advantage occurs in transition it is called a fast break. A midfielder should be able to shift quickly from offense to defense. Midfielders do not have to be proficient scorers, but should be able to "read" what is about to happen next.

Some Rules:

Along the center of the field is the midfield line. It is this reference point that determines whether a team is offside or not. The rules for offside are simple: you must have 4 players on your defensive end at all times, and 3 players on your offensive end at all times. Since it doesn't matter which players stay on what side, it is up to the midfield to keep their team onside, by staying on one side or the other. Since the position requires so much running, the midfielders often change lines on the fly, as in hockey.

THE DEFENSEMAN

The Position:

The defenseman's responsibility is to defend the goal. Although size aids the defenseman, more importantly defensemen should be quick, agile and aggressive. Speed is always a valuable commodity, but the ability to act and react, to judiciously apply pressure and to recover are the key ingredients to an effective defenseman.

They must keep the attack at bay. Their job is to keep the ball away from the net so the opposing attack doesn't get a good look at the goal. The job is difficult: A defenseman doesn't know where the attack are going or what they are going to do. In his arsenal the defenseman has a long stick (14U and above). This stick allows a

defender to keep the attackmen at a distance, thus allowing him to throw checks without being beaten on foot. Good footwork is an extremely important part of playing good defenseto be able to apply pressure and be aggressive, without lunging a foot and body forward is key, otherwise the offensive player can then easily go around the overly aggressive defenseman. A defenseman must be able to think and react quickly, and most importantly communicate with his fellow defensemen.

Some Rules:

Defensemen are allowed to check the attackmen they are covering. What this means is a defenseman is allowed to use his stick to hit the attackman's stick and arms. A defenseman cannot strike the attackman on the head, and cannot strike the attackman's body with the stick with any significant force. This penalty is called a slash. Most slash penalties occur when a defenseman employs the use of a 'slap' check, which is when the stick is swung perpendicular to the attackman's shaft in a slapping motion. The other common check is the 'poke' check, in which the defenseman simply jabs straight on at an attackman's stick in a motion like that of a pool cue. When the attackman is close enough, a defenseman can use his body for defense. Body checking, or hitting, in lacrosse is very similar to that in hockey. A legal body check is any hit that is head to head (no hitting from behind). People who are legal targets are anyone standing within five yards of a loose ball, or anyone with possession of the ball. Hitting someone without the ball, while another player has possession is called interference.

THE GOALIE

The Position:

The position of goalie in lacrosse is probably one of the most intense positions of all sports. Essentially, you must play catch with people at a very high speed. Unfortunately for the goalie, most people don't throw at his stick. The goalie wears additional protective equipment: throat guard and chest protector. A goalie stick is typically of normal length, 40-50 inches, with an extra wide head. Unlike goalies in hockey, lacrosse goalies must be very mobile. They often come out of the circular crease that surrounds the 6'x6' goal. Explosive speed and very quick hands are key ingredients in making a goalie, as well as a tolerance for pain. When a goalie comes out of the crease to fetch ground balls or to clear a saved shot, he becomes a target, much like the quarterback in football.

A good goalie leads the defense by reading the situation and directing the defensemen to react. A goalie also directs the clearing patterns and provides intangible cohesion that binds a team together. A good goalie should have excellent hand/eye coordination and a strong voice. Quickness, agility, confidence, a "thick skin" by not getting too down when scored on and the ability to concentrate are also essential.

Some Rules:

The goalie defends a square goal six feet wide by six feet high. Around the goal is a circular crease. The crease area is limited to entry by the goalie and defensive players only. Once the goalie makes a save he has 4 seconds to either pass the ball or run the ball out of the crease. In these four seconds no one may touch him. Once the goalie steps outside the crease he is no longer allowed back into the crease unless he yields possession of the ball.