

time you feel yourself starting to lose your touch or are slumping on the field, go back to the basics. Practice dribbling, quick movements, and balance. Train your mind to visualize body positioning such as the lead foot and forcing your opponent out on the defensive end, and changing direction and body fakes on the offensive end. Review the key components to all the basic skills and you'll soon find yourself back on the path to recovery.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

"Field hockey is such a challenging game, I think the key is to just have a passion for the sport. I've been playing for 30 years and I still enjoy the challenge the stick and ball present to me—and having fun with that challenge. That's how you come to embrace the game. It can be a very frustrating game and the challenge is overcoming that frustration, which enables you to play with skill."

—Charlene Morett, head coach, Penn State University

DRILLS AND GAMES

Indian Dribbling

Players: One

Equipment: Two sticks and one ball

Distance: One stick length

Lay one stick on the ground in front of you and position your body in an offensive dribbling stance with your feet parallel to the stick. Hold the second stick in the offensive shake hands grip. The stick on the ground represents your control box. Now place a ball on the ground next to the end of the stick in front of your right foot on the side of the stick closer to you. Push the ball down the length of the stick until it is at the other end and therefore in front of your left foot. Change to the reverse grip and pull the ball with the reverse stick the length of the stick back to the spot where you started. This is Indian dribbling—one complete dribble is a forehand push and reverse pull up and back the length of the stick. Time yourself for 60 seconds and see how many dribbles you complete. Aim to increase the amount of dribbling every time, but maintain control of the ball.

Red Rover

Players: More than four

Distance: 50 yards

That's right, it's Red Rover—just like you played in elementary school. One person is Red Rover, or "it." The rest of the players (this is a great game with an entire team) line up on the end line. The Red Rover stands on the 25-yard line and shouts, "Red Rover, Red Rover, anyone wearing blue come over." Everyone on the end line who is wearing something blue sprints to the 50-yard line. Note that blue can be substituted with any other physical description—anyone wearing shin guards, a ribbon in their hair, red, and so on.

As the players who are wearing blue sprint across the field, Red Rover runs after them, tagging as many as she can. Whoever she tags joins her in the middle of the field and together they are all "it." Once the group of players wearing blue has made it to the 50 or have been tagged and are "it" on the 25-yard line, Red Rover shouts for any players remaining on the end line wearing some other particular color or style to cross to the 50. The group of players who are "it" all run after the remaining players sprinting across to the 50.

When all players have left the end line, there should be a significant number of "its," as well as a number of players who have successfully crossed to the 50 untagged. Red Rover then calls out another description, forcing the people on the 50-yard line who match that description to sprint back to the end line. The more Red Rovers that get tagged, the more difficult it becomes for the players to sprint across the field safely.

The sprinters must use offensive footwork and body fakes to get away from Red Rover, and the Red Rovers must use defensive tactics and speed to tag the running players. It is balance and footwork broken down, and it's a lot of fun.

Steal the Bacon

Players: At least six

Equipment: Everyone has a stick, one ball, and four cones

Distance: Use the area on the field between the 50- and 25-yard line

Gather a group of at least six together to play this game. An outside source, ideally the coach, splits the group in half. He or she then secretly gives each player a number. The numbers used are equal to the amount of players per side—if there are three girls per team, the numbers one, two, and three are used. The same set of numbers are given to each team, so there are two ones, two twos, and two threes in the entire group.

One team spreads out across the 25-yard line, the other team is on the 50-yard line. The two teams face each other. Place a ball in the middle of the field between the two lines. At each sideline between the 25 and 50, set up two cones about six feet apart as a goal.

The coach calls out an assigned number, and the two people from opposite teams who have that number race to the ball. The players racing to the ball must break down their steps from their sprint to control their bodies as they approach the ball. Whoever gets there first is offense, the second to arrive is defense. Work on positioning and moving with the ball.

To score a point for your team, dribble the ball on your stick through the two cones you are facing. There is no set direction for each side to aim for, whoever gets the ball first decides that by the direction they first dribble in. The team scoring the most goals by drilling through the cones is the winner.

Defending without a Stick

Players: Two

Equipment: Four cones

Distance: A 10-yard square grid

Mark off a 10-yard square grid on the field. One player, the defense, stands in the middle of the grid. The other player, the offense, starts on one of the lines of the square grid. Neither player has a stick. The offense runs into the grid, moving from side to side, forward and backward, trying to fake the defense. Her goal is to pass the defense and come out on the other side of the grid opposite where she started. The defense's job is to keep the offense in front of her, preventing her from getting to the other side.

In this game, the offense must use quick footwork, body fakes, and changes of speed and direction to fool the defense. The defense stands in a defensive position, weight on the balls of your feet, knees bent, hips bent, and hands reaching out in front of you as if you are holding a stick. Move with the offense. The defense will execute drop steps, backpedaling (running backwards), and shuffling to keep the offense in front of her. The key here, the defense will learn, is that watching the offense's feet or upper body will lead you astray. Concentrate on the belly button or midsection of the offense, and you won't fall for any of her fakes.

Defensive Circuit Workout

Players: One to 25

Equipment: Four cones, stick

Distance: 50 yards (half a field)

Place one cone on the corner of the field where the sideline meets the 25-yard line. Another cone is straight up that sideline on the 50-yard line. A third cone is in the middle of the field on the 50-yard line. The fourth cone is in the middle of the field on the 25-yard line. These four cones form one giant square.

Holding your stick in two hands, start at the first cone and sprint to the second cone. When you come within five yards of the second one, break down your steps. Hold the breakdown position in front of the second cone for 10 seconds. This means you are low, your knees are bent, your rear end is sticking out, and your weight is on the balls of your feet. In this position continue running in place on the balls of your feet, staying low and broken down. After 10 seconds, slide down the 50 to the third cone, leading with your right foot. When you reach this cone, drop step back down the middle of the field to the fourth cone. When you drop step, alternate sides with each step and really swing your hips open and step back and out to the side with each step, pivoting off your lead foot. When you reach the fourth cone, backpedal to the end line. After crossing the end line, jog to the first cone and continue the circuit.

This is a good drill for teams. When the first player finishes breaking down her steps at the second cone and begins shuffling, the second player can take off so everyone is always moving.

Offensive Circuit Workout

Players: One to 25

Equipment: Seven cones, stick

Set up the first three cones as you did for the defensive circuit. After the third cone is in place, take the remaining four cones and stagger them, leading from the third cone back to the 25-yard line. If you are standing at the third cone and facing the 25-yard line, place the fourth cone on an angle to the right about six yards from the 50. The fifth cone is angled to the left, six yards from the fourth cone. Continue placing cones in this zigzag fashion until the four cones create a zigzag between the 50 and the 25. The last cone of this zigzag is on the 25-yard line, parallel to the first cone.

With your stick in the shake hands grip, start at the first cone and stride at about 75 percent of your sprinting stride to the second cone. Break down your steps as you approach that cone and fake to the left of the cone. Change your direction to move to the right and sprint down the 50-yard line to the third cone. When you sprint, hold your stick in just your right hand. Break down your steps as you approach the third cone and return your stick to the shake hands grip. Slow

down your speed and change your direction to zigzag to the fourth cone. Continue zigzagging back and forth between the remaining cones using dramatic body fakes. When you get past the seventh cone, jog back to the starting cone and repeat.

Keep Your Balance

Players: One

Equipment: Stick, stopwatch or timer

This drill is a timed running exercise in which you move in a clockwise direction using the stroke line as the center of the circle. Start on the penalty stroke line with two hands on your stick in the shake hands grip. When the clock starts, sprint to the left post of the goal, touching the post with one hand. Quickly turn and sprint back to the penalty stroke and touch the stroke line with one hand. Pivot and sprint to the right goalpost and touch the post. Turn and sprint back to the penalty stroke and touch the stroke line. Turn again and sprint parallel to the end line until you reach the circle line. Touch the line with one hand, pivot, and sprint back to the penalty stroke line. Turn another 90 degrees and sprint away from the cage until you reach the top of the circle line; touch the line with one hand, pivot, and sprint back to the penalty stroke line. Turn 90 degrees and run parallel to the end line in the opposite direction. Touch the circle line, pivot, and return to the stroke line. When you are sprinting, hold your stick in both hands in the shake hands grip. When you reach out to touch the line, take one hand off the stick.

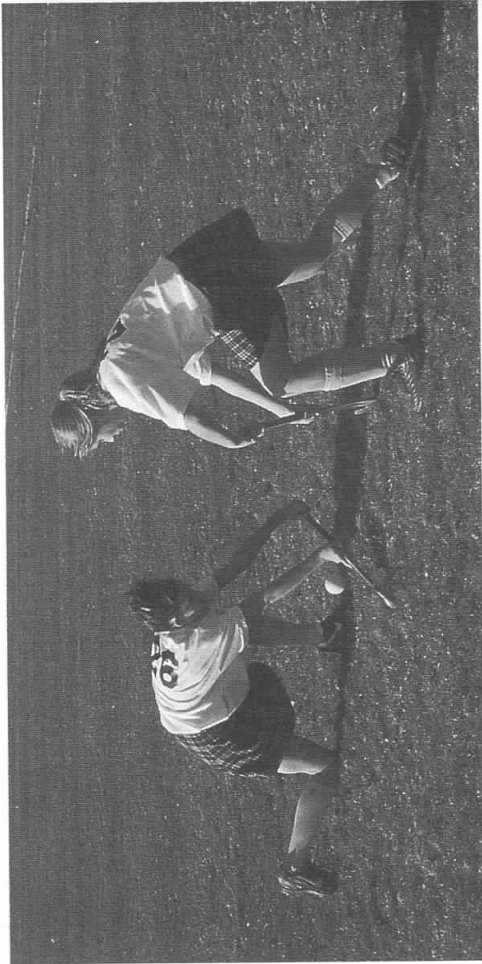
Air Dribble

Players: One

Equipment: Stick and ball

Hold your stick parallel to the ground at your waist with the flat side of the stick facing the sky. With two hands on the stick, tuck the handle and your left hand along your left waist with your left elbow pointing out. Your right hand is near the bottom of the stick on the shaft. Place the ball on the flat toe of the stick, balancing it there. Throw the ball up in the air and continue hitting it with the flat side of the stick to keep it up in the air. This is air dribbling. Count how many dribbles you can complete before losing control of the ball. This is a fun game that will improve your hand-eye coordination and increase your level of comfort with the stick and ball. As you become more comfortable with this, try hitting the ball up with different

parts of the stick—the inside edge, the outside edge, the top of the handle. In addition, when you feel more comfortable, instead of starting by placing the ball on the toe of your stick, scoop the ball straight up off the ground and begin your air dribbles from there. Have fun with this.



The small scoop is especially effective when a defender attempts to use a horizontal block tackle.

face of the stick toward the sky. The bottom of the toe of the stick is under the lower half of the ball. Lift the ball over the defender's stick in a small scoop. Elevate the ball high enough to clear the defender's stick, but not so high that you risk losing possession. Move with the ball over the defender's stick and past the defender.

DRILLS AND GAMES

Working the Ball

Players: One
Equipment: Stick, ball, five cones
Distance: 25 yards

Line up five cones five yards apart from each other. Start five yards away from the first cone and dribble through the cones without using your reverse stick. Move to the left of the first cone and pass it and then to the right of the second cone. Continue weaving through the cones until you reach the end of the line. When you move to the left of the cones, get your feet around and drop your left elbow closer to the ground. This opens up the flat side of the stick to direct the ball around the cone while maintaining your forehand grip position. Do this five complete times up and back. After five times, weave through the cones using the reverse stick. When you move to the left of the cone,

shift to a reverse grip and pull the ball with the reverse stick. Go up and back five times again.

Shifting Gears

Players: At least two
Equipment: Stick and ball, whistle
Distance: 50 yards

One player is on the end line with a stick and ball. One player or the coach is in the middle of the field with a whistle. At the first whistle, the dribbler moves the ball forward in a controlled dribble. When the player or coach in the middle of the field blows the whistle again, the dribbler quickly pulls the ball back and then explodes forward in a speed dribble. The next time the whistle is blown, the dribbler breaks down her steps and slows down to a controlled dribble.

This series is repeated until the dribbler reaches the 50-yard line. The whistler can blow her whistle as few or as many times as she likes, however the dribbler should have at least three pull-back-and-explode series during her run to the 50. Repeat this twice and then switch places.

Keep Your Head Up

Players: At least two
Equipment: Stick and ball
Distance: 25 yards

All players line up on the 50-yard line. One player or coach (without a stick or ball) is 20 yards in front of and facing the group. At her command, the players on the 50 dribble forward but keep their eyes on the coach. The coach tells the group which way to dribble by pointing with her arm to the left, right, forward, or backward. Dribblers move with their balls in the direction the coach's arm is pointing. Because they are facing each other, if the coach is pointing left, the dribbler is pulling right. If the coach is pointing forward toward the dribbler, the dribbler is pulling the ball back. Dribblers must keep their heads up to see what direction to dribble. There is no talking in this drill.

Queen of the Circle

Players: The whole team
Equipment: Stick and ball
Distance: The circle

All players go into the circle with a stick and a ball (each player has a ball). Each player Indian dribbles around the circle, working on stick and ball control.

You cannot leave the circle. Keep your head up and watch your ball and your teammates as they dribble. When the ball comes off a teammate's stick or when you see a teammate who's not protecting the ball, take your stick off your own ball and jab at hers to knock it out of the circle. By sending a teammate's ball out of the circle, you eliminate her from the game. As soon as her ball crosses out of the circle, she's done.

When you move to knock someone else's ball out of the circle, keep an eye on your own ball—another teammate could be hitting yours out of the circle while you're working on someone else. Trust no one! The last player remaining in the circle with her ball wins.

Dodges

Players: One

Equipment: Five cones, stick and ball

Distance: 35 yards

Set up five cones seven yards away from each other in a straight line. These cones are the defenders. Start five yards away from the first cone. Control dribble to the first cone. As you approach, dribble to the left and pull right in front of the cone as if it was a defender. Pull right and explode past the cone (defender) and slow down to a controlled dribble again. When you approach the second cone, dribble on a diagonal to the right and pull left in front of the cone (defender). Explode past the defender to the left.

At the third cone, dribble on a diagonal to the left and spin right around the cone. Dribble on a diagonal to the right at the fourth cone and spin to the left around it. At the last cone, pull back and scoop the ball over the top of the cone. Go up and back the line of cones, or defenders, four times.

To increase difficulty, replace the cones with teammates. The teammates are dummy defenders. Although they are not attempting to take the ball from you, they are standing with their sticks on the ground. This gives you a better idea of the reaching area of the defense and how hard and far you should pull the ball.

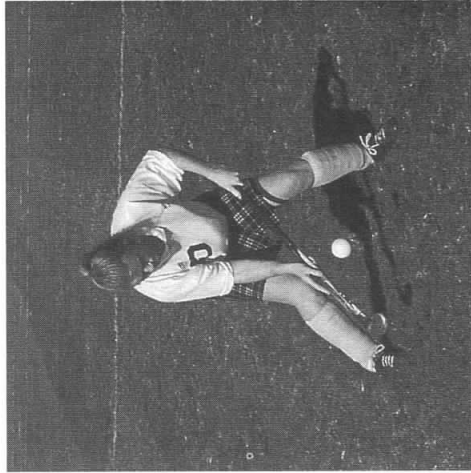
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PASSING AND RECEIVING

Coaches constantly stress the importance of teamwork. How many times have you heard the expression, "There is no 'I' in the word 'team'"? It is true that certain individuals possess superior skill, but even talented players must learn to work within the framework of the team. A winning team boasts a group of players who complement one another. This philosophy rings true in all team sports: You must blend your skills with the skills of your teammates to become a complete player and to create a winning environment.

To use your teammates (and allow them to use you), you must become adept in two essential areas of the game: passing and receiving. Passing is the quickest, most effective method of advancing the ball. Passing stops the opponent from double-teaming an offensive player; it allows you to attack using the length and width of the field, and you can catch defensive players off guard and out of position. Passing creates space, forces the defense to constantly readjust, and creates scoring opportunities. Most important, passing the ball gets you from Point A to Point B much faster than dribbling. Have some-one time you with a stopwatch as you dribble the ball 35 yards. Then, record the time it takes to pass the ball 35 yards. This simple experiment clearly illustrates that distance is covered much quicker when the ball is passed rather than dribbled. You simply cannot outrun the ball.

That said, a great pass is only as good as a player's ability to receive the ball. If a teammate feeds you a beautiful pass to your stick and you're unable to receive and control the ball, the pass is wasted. You must develop "touch" when receiving the ball. In other words, you



an aerial pass face on, do not raise the stick's head above your waist (left); us. Keep the flat side of the stick facing the ball and deflect the ball so it front of your feet (right).

to run its course, it will travel past you and possibly find an opponent. You've got to do what you can to gather the maintain possession. To control this type of pass, use the following.

encounter two types of aerial passes during games. The you're facing the ball in a stationary position, and the second you're on the run and moving away from the passer. Each distinct technique. Always keep in mind that your stick low your shoulders.

ing an aerial pass, lift your left arm up to the height of your shoulder. Imagine pouring soda out of a can onto the ground you. This is the action taken by your left arm. It puts the stick in a vertical position (pointing downward). Your right arm sim- g for the ride. Use the right arm only to make sure the flat stick is facing the incoming pass. As a checkpoint, your should be held in front of your midsection with the back facing behind you.

ne knees as you keep your eyes locked on the ball. As it adjust the positioning of your stick so the shaft and head e ball. Try to intercept the ball at a level below your mid- easier to handle balls in that area. Let the ball hit your your right hand and have it drop down to the ground below y move into triple-threat position.

When you're running away from the source of an aerial pass, look over your shoulder on the side the ball is approaching. Lay your stick out horizontally so you catch the ball on your forehand or reverse grip. Try to drop the ball to the ground a yard or two ahead of you so you can maintain your stride. Angle the flat side of the stick toward the ground so that upon contact the ball is sure to deflect down and not up into the air.

STICK TRIVIA

Field hockey is India's international sport. The men's field hockey team has won eight Olympic gold medals since 1924, the last coming in 1980. In fact, the city of Jalandhar is home to 127 stick manufacturers.

DRILLS AND GAMES

Rapid Fire Push Passing

Players: Four

Equipment: Stick, ball, four cones

Distance: 12 yards

Set up a miniature field that is 12 yards in length. Each end of the field has a goal that is three yards wide. (Use a pair of cones for each goal.) Two yards behind each goal is a player set up in the triple-threat position. Each player's partner stands facing them, 5 yards from the cones. Attempt to pass a ball back and forth as rapidly as possible through the cones using the forehand push pass. Receive and control each pass on the forehand side. Award one team a point for each ball passed between the cones. Play for 45 seconds. Compare your point total against the other two-player team.

Basketball Flicks

Players: At least two

Equipment: Stick, 10 balls, an empty bucket

Distance: 10 yards

Stand 10 yards from an empty bucket. Now, try flicking the ball into the bucket. Execute 10 flicks, then allow your teammates their turns. Whoever sinks the most "baskets" is the sharpshooter of the group.

Driver's Ed

Players: Two

Equipment: Stick, ball, 10 cones

Distance: 25 yards

Position yourself 25 yards from a teammate. Now, use 10 cones to create a passing lane between the two of you. Set two cones three yards apart at five-yard intervals between you and your teammate. Execute 20 drives each, keeping track of how many hits travel the entire length of the passing lane. Try for 15 out of 20.

Semicircle Swirl

Players: One

Equipment: Stick, 10 balls, 10 cones

Distance: 12 yards

Place 10 cones in a semicircle, each cone approximately five yards away from the next. The base of the semicircle is about 12 yards long. Stand in the middle of the base of the semicircle with a stack of balls. Using the push pass technique, attempt to hit each cone. Track your results, recording the number of balls you used to hit all of the cones. In subsequent practice sessions, try to better your record.

SHOOT

Ten, nine, . . . the last seconds of a tied game are ticking. The final offensive sweep, your team surges into the circle. Forward, you're in a position to score. The left wing surges directly in front of the cage. Your stick is on the ground. Low attack position, and your feet are moving toward the goal. You realize the ball is just out of your reach. You are the defender and dive after the ball with your stick outstretched to the ground. Your body stretches through the air, and your stick touches the ball just enough to redirect it into the corner. Three, two, . . . victory is yours!

BEYOND THE SCOREBOARD

Goals build team confidence, and a confident team is a winning team. The center forward is generally a team's lead scorer, but there are other positions in the front half of the field (the front line and the wings) of the offensive thrust. In fact, a good team will have a playmaker (including a sweeper) who can sprint down the field and knock the ball into the cage at any given time. A playmaker should be familiar with and practice scoring situations. You should know when you will be presented with an opportunity to score. Goal scorers are generally evasive, quick players with a good sense of timing and the ability to stay calm under pressure. Good passers because they understand how to place the ball in a certain spot. When you think about it, a goal is a



er coming out of her cage for the ball, you may not have time to reach or push shot. In this situation, take to the air and try for a dive shot. It's of scoring and just might make the highlight tape.

ive shot is to keep your eye on the ball and follow your is performed when you are running for the ball and out of your reach. The momentum built by running at you the fuel to execute this shot. Push off from the our run with your back foot and extend your body so it e ground. Keep the toe of your stick on the ground and er half of the ball. Hold the stick with either a forehand depending on where the ball is coming from. (Make sure your stick is facing the ball.) When your stick reaches your wrists to redirect the ball into the cage. Wrist umental in hitting this type of shot.

r eyes on the ball will naturally lead your stick to the on a landing similar to a headfirst softball slide. Let the earms take the brunt of the fall followed by your mid-er thighs.

SHOTS

ne referee will blow the whistle because the defense has evere penalty in the circle. When this happens, the

offensive team is awarded a penalty shot. Examples of such a penalty include the goalie covering up the ball, catching the ball, or holding the ball with her glove, or a defensive player using her body to stop a shot from entering the cage.

All players leave the circle except for the goalie and one offensive player. The offensive team selects the shooter. The ball is placed on the penalty stroke line. The goalie stands with both feet behind the goal line in the cage. As the stroker, stand in position to the left of the ball, preparing to make a shot.

The best shot to use during a penalty stroke is a flick. It has a lot of power, and the ball can be directed high in the air or low to the ground. With the ball on the stroke line, position your body for the flick shot. The referee will ask you and the goalie if you are ready. Once you reply "yes," maintain that position until the whistle is blown. Your feet must remain stationary from the time you say you are ready until you actually make the shot. You may step with your left foot toward the cage when shooting, but your right foot must remain on the ground until after the shot.

Typically, the upper corners of the cage are the most difficult areas for the goalie to defend. The best spot is in the upper corner of her non-stick side. However, other high-percentage spots include either side of the goalie in line with her knees.

DIMENSIONS

The penalty stroke line is seven yards from the outside edge of the goal cage and 12 inches long. When shooting a stroke, you may place the ball anywhere along that 12-inch line. The goal cage is seven feet tall, 12 feet wide, and four feet deep. The hockey ball has a circumference ranging from 8¹³/₁₆ to 9¹/₄ inches. Seems easy enough to get a ball that small into a cage that large, doesn't it?

DRILLS AND GAMES

Deflections

Players: Four

Equipment: Stick, balls, and goal cage, or cones set up as a goal cage

Distance: Shooting circle, or 16 yards

Form two lines at the top of the circle opposite the left and right posts of the cage. Two players will be outside the circle on the far right and far



left, each with a pile of balls about 10 yards from the end line. On command, the hitter on the right will drive the ball across the circle in front of the goal cage. At the same time, the first player in each of the two lines sprints into the circle, breaking down their steps as they approach the path of the ball. The players must communicate with each other to say who is going for the ball. Naturally, the player on the side closest to the ball will be first in line to get it. As the ball crosses in front of the first player, she deflects it into the cage using either a vertical or horizontal stick, depending on the ground surface. Once the first ball is hit and deflected in, the shooters backpedal to the top of the circle. When they reach the top of the circle the left-side hitter drives the ball across the circle as the shooters spring forward, again racing to deflect the ball into the cage. After the ball is deflected, the shooters again backpedal to the top of the circle to repeat the deflection from the right side. Alternate sides and take two hits from each side. When finished, switch roles so the hitters are now deflecting and the shooters become the hitters.

Follow That Shot!

Players: One and goalie

Equipment: Stick, ball, cage, goalie equipment, mouth guards

Distance: Shooting circle, 16 yards

Start at the 25-yard line and dribble to the circle. When you reach the top of the circle, shoot the ball on cage with a quick hit. Practice shooting from the dribble—don't allow yourself extra time to set up because you won't have that time in a game situation. Once the ball is released, follow your shot with two hands on the stick and break down your footwork as you approach the goalie. Anticipate where she is going to clear the ball. Collect the rebound and shoot again using a push, flick, or edge shot.

This is good work for the shooter and the goalie and can be repeated as many times as needed. To make it more demanding and create a more gamelike situation, time yourself from when you shoot the ball. Allow no more than 20 seconds to shoot the ball, collect the rebound, and shoot again.

Coach's Tip: Make this a game by keeping track of goalie clears and shots scored.

Rapid Fire Deflection and Follow

Players: At least four, useful for entire team practice

Equipment: Ball, goal cage, sticks, goalie equipment, shin guards, and mouth guards

Distance: Shooting circle, 16 yards

One player is in the center of the circle near the stroke line. The goalie is in the cage, prepared to block shots. All other players stand around the circle, each with a ball. The first player on the far right side of the circle shoots the ball on goal. The player in the center deflects it into the cage. If the goalie blocks the shot, the player in the center goes for the rebound and continues shooting until the goalie clears the ball from the circle. Once the ball is cleared or a shot has been scored, the next player in line on the circle shoots on goal and the player in the center again deflects it into the cage. Continue until all players in the circle have shot their balls. Spread out around the circle so that a player in the middle is getting shots from all angles. Rotate once a shot has been taken so a new player is in the center of the circle. Wear your shin guards and mouth guards!

Shots on Goal

Players: One

Equipment: Stick, five balls, goal cage, two cones, masking tape

Distance: Vary 16 yards, 10 yards, seven yards

From the left post of the goal, move 12 inches in along the goal line toward the center of the cage and place one cone on the ground. Do the same from the right side, placing one cone 12 inches in toward the center of the cage along the goal line.

Create two triangles in the upper left and right corners of the cage. Start at the top right corner and move 12 inches down the post. Mark the spot. Again at the top right corner, move in 12 inches along the top crossbar and mark the spot. These two marks create two legs of your triangle. From those two marks, use the masking tape to create the third leg of the triangle, which should also be about 12 inches long. Do the same thing in the top left corner of the cage.

Line up five balls along the 16-yard line, leaving about 12 inches between balls. Start at the ball farthest to the left and one at a time drive the balls into the cage. Aim for the corners and keep track of how many go into the cage. For each ball that goes into the goal between the two cones in the middle 10 feet, give yourself one point. If you shot enters the smaller area marked off by the cones in the left and right corners of the cage, give yourself three points.

Move up so you're 10 yards from the cage and line the balls up in a similar fashion. Push the balls into the goal. Aim for the corners. Score yourself using the same point system as above.

Now place all five balls along the penalty stroke line. Flick the balls, aiming for the sides of the cage and the top corner triangles. Keep track of your points, allotting five points for every ball that goes in.



the cage through the triangle. Keep track of your points and aim to improve your score every time you do this drill.

Endurance in Shooting

Players: One and goalie

Equipment: Stick, five balls, five cones, goalie equipment, and goal cage

Distance: Shooting circle, 16 yards

Place one cone at the top of the circle with the pile of five balls. Set a second cone five yards to the right of the center cone and a third cone five yards to the left of the center cone. The fourth cone is five yards to the left of the left goal post on the end line, and the fifth cone is five yards to the right of the right goal post on the end line.

The goalie stands in the center of the cage, and the shooter stands at the top of the circle at the center cone with one ball. Starting at the same time, the shooter dribbles around the cone to the right and back to the center cone, while the goalie shuffles over to the cone to her left, touching the cone and returning to the goal cage. When the dribbler returns to the center cone, she shoots the ball from the top of the circle. The goalie must hustle to get back to the cage to block the shot.

Once the shooter has shot the ball, she grabs another ball with her stick and dribbles around the cone to the left. The goalie, once she has blocked the first shot, shuffles to the cone to her right, touches it, and returns to the cage to block the next shot.

Repeat this until all five balls are gone, alternating between the left- and right-side dribbles and shuffles. When starting, the dribbler should not use a reverse stick but rather get her feet around, keeping a strong forehead grip. After practicing this method, move on to using the reverse stick when dribbling and shooting. Focus on the mechanics of your shot—keep your head over the ball, transfer your weight forward, stay low to the ground, and snap your wrists cleanly to get off a strong hit.

Practicing Variety

Players: One and goalie (if available)

Equipment: One stick, five balls, two cones, goal cage, goalie equipment

Distance: Shooting circle, 16 yards

Line the five balls up 10 yards in front of the goal cage. Place one cone slightly outside and opposite the left post in line with the penalty stroke, and one cone slightly outside and opposite the right post in line with the penalty stroke. Start at the center with the balls and dribble one ball around the cone to the left, spinning or dribbling around it.

When you come to the outside, shoot the ball with a reverse push, edge shot, or some variation of a reverse stick shot. Be creative. Sprint back to the pile of balls in the middle and dribble again to the cone to the right. Dodge the cone, and when you come to the outside, shoot the ball with a quick hit, flick, or push. Do a different shot every time and practice shooting off your front foot too. Always keep your stick on the ball and shoot as soon as you get around the cone. Time yourself to get all five shots off. Aim to decrease your time every time you do this drill.

stick to continue forcing her to the outside of the field and away from the cage.

Patience

Patience is integral when recovering. Do not tackle your opponent from behind. You'll only receive a penalty and put your team at a disadvantage. And as tempting as it may be, don't run directly at the dribbler and lunge at the ball and overcommit. One minor body fake from her and she'll blow right past you.

To properly recover and defend your opponent, run until you're one step ahead of her and in line with the ball. Once you start closing in on her, break down your steps to get yourself under control. Bring your stick and body back to a defensive position with two hands on the stick and the toe of your stick on the ground. Lower your body closer to the ground, abandoning the straightened posture you had when you were sprinting.

Continue forcing the dribbler to the outside of the field. As you run alongside her, throw some jabs at the ball. Use a block tackle to gain control if the ball comes off her stick. The recovery tackle is actually any combination of the jab and/or block tackle. What distinguishes the recovery tackle is the fact that you are moving at top speed. You are still using the left-handed jab, keeping your eyes on the ball and aiming for the lower half of the ball. Once you knock it out of her possession, control the ball and shift to an offensive mindset.

Recovering on the right side is much easier than recovering on the left side of the field. Your body naturally assumes a defensive position when you're recovering on the right side. The left side requires a bit more speed and dexterity because the tackle is executed with the reverse stick. Recover alongside the opponent, containing her along the sideline. Hold your stick in the reverse grip and lower your body to a tackling position. When the time is right and the ball is off her stick, use your reverse stick to jab or block tackle to intercept her dribble. You're still moving, so don't step into her and overcommit yourself. Be assertive but remain patient.

DRILLS AND GAMES

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

Players: One

Equipment: Stick and ball

Distance: 50 yards

Line up on the end line with a stick and a ball. Position your body as described for the jab tackle. Step forward with your left foot and jab the ball with your stick in your left hand. Aim for the lower half of the ball and move it forward. Quickly recoil, returning the right hand to the stick and standing in the defensive position. Move to where the ball is and prepare to jab again. Continue doing this left-handed jab and recoil until you reach the 50-yard line. Take your time and do this right; it is not a race.

This drill improves your hand/stick coordination when jab tackling. It also helps you understand what area of the ball you're aiming for and how to effectively move it quickly with just the left hand. By continuing to perform exercises that involve the left hand only, you will strengthen the left hand and wrist, which ultimately provides you with greater stick and ball control.

By returning to the defensive position with both hands on the stick immediately after jabbing the ball, you train your body to stay low with two hands on the stick and the toe on the ground.

The Opposite Game

Players: Two

Equipment: Stick and ball

Distance: Five-yard-by-five-yard grid

This exercise is good for players who are already comfortable with the jab tackle. In the five-yard grid, two players face each other, preparing to go one on one. The offense starts with the ball on one sideline. Her goal is to pass over the opposite sideline. The defender holds her stick backwards so that the toe is in her left hand and the handle is on the ground. The defense's job is to stop the offense from making it through the grid by jabbing the ball away with the stick handle.

This game trains the defender to keep her eye on the ball. Timing and aim have to be precise; there is no longer a large toe surface with which to hit the ball.

Practicing the Block

Players: At least two

Equipment: Stick and ball

Distance: 25 yards

Two teammates stand facing each other about 25 yards apart. One player speed dribbles in a straight line, the other runs toward the dribbler and breaks down her steps as she approaches. The defender works on positioning her body and judging the distance to the ball and the

dribbler. Once she is in a defensive position, she executes a forehand block tackle and controls the ball. The two players should intermittently switch roles. When the players feel comfortable in this skill, work on the reverse block tackle by having the dribbler approach on the left side of the defender.

As players improve and become more comfortable with the block tackle, have the dribbler incorporate some dodges in her approach. Confine the dribbling space to a five- to 10-yard wide area, still using the 25-yard length distance.

Coach's Tip: Split the team in two lines and have the players go one at a time against each other. The advantage of having just one offensive and one defensive player go at a time is that the coach can point out to the group when a tackle is performed correctly. Once you've seen all your players go through and feel comfortable with their understanding of the tackle, split the lines into two groups on different sides of the field, or pair the players up one on one, so the drill moves faster.

Tag—You're It!

Players: At least two

Equipment: Just your body

Distance: 15 yards

Leave the sticks and balls behind and stand facing each other about 15 yards apart. One player will act as the offense, one as the defense. The two players run toward each other at the same time. The defender breaks down her steps as the two approach each other and gets in front of the offensive player so that she cannot sprint past her. Practice judging the distance to your opponent and positioning your body accordingly. This resembles a basketball-style positioning when opponents face each other one on one. The defender should keep her body positioning low so she has good balance. The offense should try to use fakes to throw the defender. She can use spin moves or fake with her head, upper body, feet, or a combination of all of the above.

The goal for the defender in this game is to tag the backside of the offense's knees by reaching around her opponent. The trick for the defense is to stay in front of the opponent despite her spins and body fakes. Defensive players learn to stay low and focus on the midsection of the opponent. If a defender is looking at the upper body or feet of her opponent, she'll get beat. By keeping the offense in front of her, the defender is maintaining her defensive positioning and learning how to control her body. The tag does not count if the offense successfully runs away from the defender.

Offense and defense must both learn that the body is just as important in playing field hockey as are the stick and ball. Offense will

become adept at using body fakes to outsmart the opponent.

The game is over once the defender tags the offense's knees or once the offense gets past the defender untouched. The two players then switch roles.

Coach's Tip: Keep score of how many times the offense runs by untouched and how many times the defense tags the offense's knees. This paints a clear picture of areas the team needs to work on.

Recovery Drills

Players: At least two

Equipment: Stick and ball

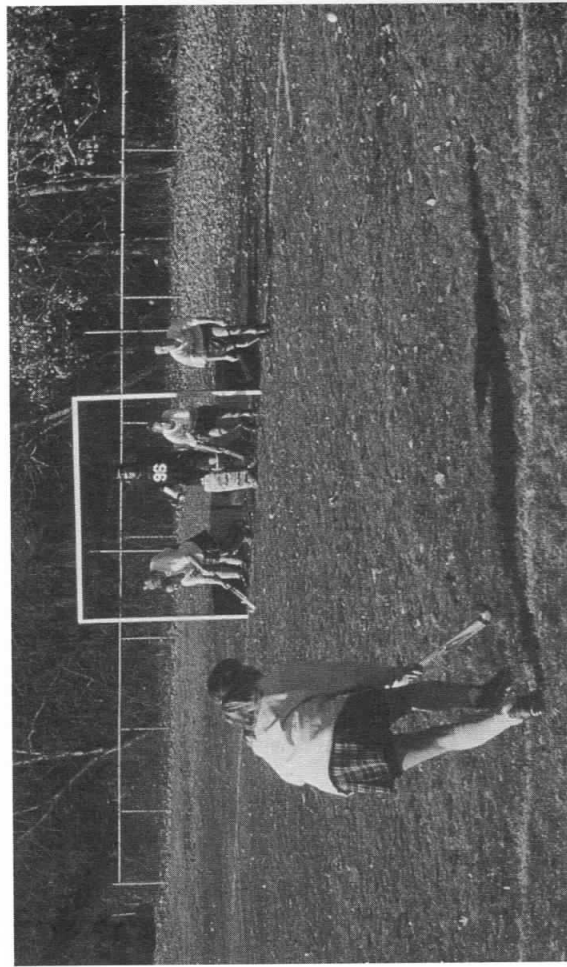
Distance: 50 or 25 yards

One player is standing on the 50-yard line with her back to the goal. The other is facing the goal with the ball on the 40- or 45-yard line (the appropriate distance will be determined once the drill is completed once or twice), slightly to the side of the player on the 50.

When commanded, the offense begins speed dribbling toward the goal. At the same time, the defense turns around and sprints back toward the dribbler, forcing her away from the goal and performing a recovery tackle. If the defense is catching the offense without much effort, move the lines farther apart.

Switch the defensive line to the opposite side of the offensive line so recovery tackles can be performed on both the left and right sides of the field.

Coach's Tip: Ideally, the defense will recover beautifully and gain control of the ball. If the dribbler makes it into the circle, however, she should shoot on goal, giving the goalie a workout and allowing the defender and goalie to practice working together.



With defensive players charging at you, it's important to control the ball immediately and quickly send a ball at the cage.

This leaves two teammates to rush into the center of the circle near the stroke line. Their job is to get their sticks on the ball, distort defensive players' vision of the ball, and pick up any rebounds from the goalie. The remaining players in the circle stay near the top to avoid crowding in front of the cage. They push the ball back in the circle as it's cleared out.

DRILLS AND GAMES

6v4 Plus Goalie

Players: Six offense, four defense, one goalie

Equipment: Sticks, ball, goalie equipment, cage

Distance: 50 yards (half the field)

Four forwards and two links line up in positions at the 50-yard line. The forwards are slightly ahead of the 50 and the mids behind them. Three backs and a sweeper set up in the defensive end behind the 25 so the two teams are facing each other. One defender hits the ball out from the 16-yard line.

The offensive player closest to where the ball is hit stops it, and the six offensive players move down the field. The offense passes flat and

through to work the ball into the circle and around the defense. Practice switching fields and give-and-go passing combinations. Communication is essential. Practice working the ball down the sideline and sending a hit across the circle to be deflected into the goal by teammates. Cut around the defense to create space for a pass or a dribbling option for your teammates.

When you enter the circle, sticks are on the ground. The front line players must remember to cover the goalposts and the stroke area the circle. Pressure the goalie and pick up her rebounds. Constant communication is the only way to ensure you don't get in each other's way in the circle!

Timing

Players: Two

Equipment: Six balls, three cones

Distance: Five-yard grid

Set up three cones in a triangle with each cone five yards apart. Player 1 stands with a pile of balls five yards away from the top of the triangle. Player 2 starts at one of the cones on the base of the triangle.

Player 2 cuts hard toward Player 1 and the top cone, making eye contact and calling for the ball with her stick on the ground indicating where she wants to receive the pass. Player 2 cuts to the top cone and around it. She should receive the pass as she moves around the top cone so she can carry the ball with her toward the third cone. Player 1 should pass the ball slightly ahead of Player 2 so she can move onto the ball and collect and control it with speed.

This drill mimics cutting situations during free hits. Player 2 is the offense cutting in to break up the defenders—in this case the cones. Timing and communication are essential.

Blindfold Time

Players: Two

Equipment: Stick and ball, cones, blindfold

Distance: 10 yards

Partner up with a teammate. Place a blindfold on your partner. Once you are sure she can't see anything, set up a line of cones two yards apart from each other for your partner to dribble through. Place her at the first cone with her stick and a ball. Move to the end of the line of cones and stand five yards away from the last cone. Direct your partner through the cones by communicating with her. Tell her to dribble left, right, or forward. Tell her if she missed a cone and has to pull

back. Practice speaking clearly and directly to your teammates. Your partner should weave through the cones without any problems because of your instructions.

When she reaches the last cone, call for a pass. Be specific about where you are by calling flat to the right or left, or through.

Goals Galore

Players: 10

Equipment: Cones, sticks, ball

Distance: 20-yard square

Mark off a 20-yard square on the field with cones. Set up a goal (using two cones) on the middle of and four yards inside each sideline of the square, four goals total. The goals are four yards wide.

Divide the players so five are on each team and spread out across the grid. The two teams set up to play each other in the grid. Regular field hockey rules apply.

Your team can score at any goal, however to score you must dribble the ball—using a controlled dribble—through the goal or pass the ball through the goal to your teammate on the other side. Keep track of your points!

Circuit Game

Players: Five and goalie, good for the entire team

Equipment: Stick, balls, three cones, cage

Distance: 50 yards

Form five lines around the field. Three are on the 50-yard line at the left, center, and right. The other two are across from each other on the left and right sides of the field near the sidelines on the 30-yard line. Next to the 30-yard line on the left side of the field, set up three cones one yard from each other in a line down the field.

The players at the start of each line work together. The first player at the center of the field on the 50 starts with the ball and sends a strong flat pass to the player to her left on the 50. This left wing passes the ball through to the player at the 30-yard line who is waiting in front of the cones. She cuts back to receive the ball and turns with it toward the cones, dribbling through the cones. When she comes out at the end of the cones, she turns around and passes the ball back to the left wing, where it came from.

The left wing cuts toward the ball to receive it and sends a pass back to the player at the center of the 50-yard line who originally

passed her the ball. This center receives the ball and pulls it across to her right side, shifts her positioning, and sends a flat pass to the player at the right on the 50.

The right wing receives the pass and sends a through ball to the player in front of her at the 30-yard line, who cuts back to receive the ball, dribbles down into the right corner of the field, and sends a flat ball across the circle in front of the cage.

As soon as the center passes to the right wing, the center, left wing and player on the left at the 30-yard line who dribbled through the cones sprint in to the circle and set up in front of the cage for a deflection. They should arrive in the circle just as the right forward player sends the ball across the cage.

One Touch

Players: 10

Equipment: Two goal cages (or four cones), stick, ball

Distance: 25-yard width, 60 length

Place a goal cage in the middle of each sideline between the 25- and 50-yard lines. Set up two teams of five to scrimmage each other within this area, battling the width of the field. Players can only touch the ball one time—they must receive and pass immediately. If you dribble the ball, the other team gets a free hit. Regular field hockey rules apply. Focus on give-and-go, cutting into space, and other passing and movement techniques discussed in this chapter.

Coach's Tip: To increase difficulty, decrease the area of play. To decrease difficulty, increase the area of play.

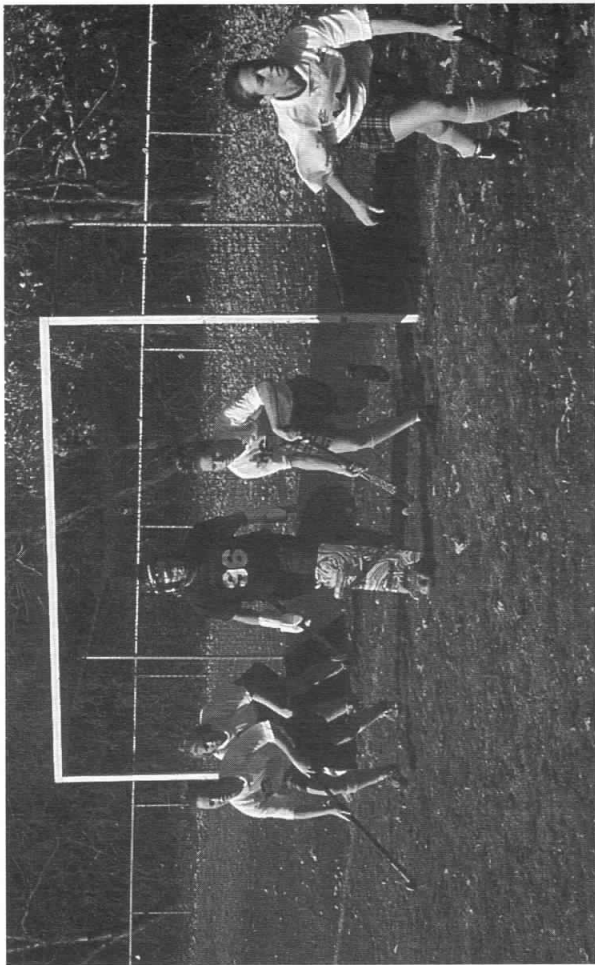
Give-and-Go

Players: Two

Equipment: Three cones, stick, ball

Distance: 30 yards

Set up three cones 10 yards from each other. These cones represent the defense. One player has the ball, and her partner is to the right of her, about two yards away. The player with the ball dribbles to the first cones and passes to the partner, who is moving with the dribbler. After passing, the dribbler cuts to the left side around the cone (the defender) to receive the pass back. Collect the ball and move to the next cone. Repeat this at every cone. Turn around and go back down the field, switching roles so each player has a chance to be in primary and support roles.



These positions are critical for the initial shot. Once the first shot is taken and the goalie clears the ball out, all defenders mark up the most dangerous players.

DRILLS AND GAMES

3v2 with Recovery

Players: Five plus goalie
Equipment: Sticks, ball, cone, cage
Distance: 50 yards

Two defenders stand on the 25-yard line, one on the left side of the field and one in the center. The goalie is in the cage. Place one cone on the right side of the field on the 40-yard line. Three forward players stand on the 50-yard line at the right, center, and left positions, all facing the defense.

The defender on the left hits the ball out to the right forward (left, facing the defense—opposite side where the cone is). As soon as she hits the ball, the other defender sprints to the cone on the 40 and back, recovering to help her teammate defend.

While she is running, the other defender is a 3v1 situation and must be smart and patient, keeping the dribbler in front of her and

staying parallel to the other forwards who are moving down the field. As the recovering defender comes back into play, she calls to her teammate to let her know she's back to help out. When she recovers, pressuring defender can take a more aggressive approach to get the ball. The offense receives the ball and moves—with dribbling passes—to the cage.

3v2 No Recovery

Players: Five plus goalie
Equipment: Sticks, ball, four cones, cage, and goalie equipment
Distance: 25 yards

Set up two five-yard wide goals with the cones on the far left and right sides of the 25-yard line. Two defenders start in the circle. The goalie is in the cage. Three offense start facing the defense at the 25-yard line in left, center, and right positions. One offender has the ball. The offense begins working the ball into the circle with passes and dribbling techniques. The outnumbered defense must use pressure/cover and communication to force the offense out of the circle and get the ball from them. When the defense gets the ball, they send a strong hit up the field and out toward the closest sideline. The goal is to send that pass through the five-yard goals set up on the 25. These goals are outlets; in a game, this would be a pass to wing for an offensive transition. The defense may also dribble through the cones if they get the ball outside the circle and close to the 25.

Every time the defense gets a ball through their goals—by passing or by dribbling—they get a point. The offense receives a point every time they score on the goalie in the circle.

Pressure/Cover in Circle

Players: Seven
Equipment: Sticks and ball
Distance: 15-yard circle

Five players stand in a circle with a 15-yard diameter. Two defenders are in the middle of the circle. One of the five offensive players on the circle starts with the ball. She passes the ball to her teammates around the circle, with the ultimate goal of making a through pass straight across the circle.

The defense is working pressure/cover angles to prevent all passes—in particular, the dangerous through pass—from happening. One defender pressures the girl with the ball. The cover player calls

out which direction to force the pass; if you want to force the ball left, stand more to the right of the dribbler.

As the ball moves around the circle, the pressure/cover roles switch, depending on who is closer to the ball. Pressure/cover roles must communicate with one another by calling out what role they are in every time the ball is passed. Whoever is going to pressure the dribbler always calls out "pressure" or "ball." Cover shouts out, "cover," and directs her pressuring teammate.

When a pass is intercepted, the defense gets one point. Every time a through pass is completed, the offense gets one point. Play for seven minutes.

Focus on the Cover

Players: Six

Equipment: Sticks, ball, cones

Distance: 30-yard square

Place the cones in the corners of a 30-yard square. Draw an imaginary line through the middle of the field and split your group into two teams of three players each. The two teams face each other in the square, each on its respective side. One player on each team is in the cover position and stands on the back end line. The other two are pressure players.

The two teams scrimmage each other with regular hockey rules. The cover role, however, can only come two yards off her end line. She is not allowed to play in the field. The cover role always works with whoever is pressuring the ball on her team. She tells them which way to force the ball and shouts out any other helpful directives.

Every time the ball is dribbled or passed over the end line a point is scored for that team. It does not count if it is an uncontrolled hit from the other side of the field. Play for 10 minutes.

Positioning Ball Side/Goal Side (Beginner to Advanced—Shots on Goal)

Players: Seven and goalie

Equipment: Sticks, balls, cage, goalie equipment

Distance: The circle

Five offensive players stand spread out around the circle, each with a ball. Two offense and one defense are in the circle. The player on the far right of the circle starts with the ball. The offense in the circle are positioned in front of the cage to receive a pass from her and deflect it

into the goal. The defender is ball side/goal side of the most dangerous offensive player in the circle—the player closest to the ball.

The player on the circle takes a shot and the offense moves to stop it into the goal. The defender and goalie must work together to stop this from happening and send the ball out of the circle. When a goal is scored or the ball is cleared out of the circle, the next player on the circle takes a shot and the play continues again. Continue until every player on the circle has taken a shot. In this drill, the defender is focusing on covering the most dangerous girl in the circle and staying ball side/goal side during circle play.