



**Coaches' Education Program  
Level 1 Online Course Reference Section  
Drill and Game Supplement**

**Cradling Drills 101**

*Objective:* To improve player's ability to cradle and dodge.

*Suggested space needed/equipment:* 25 yard by 25 yard area. Cones and balls.

*Players needed:* The whole team can participate in these drills.

*Cradling Summary*

Learning to cradle is one of the most difficult things to do in lacrosse. But it is an essential part of the game. Players must master cradling as quickly as they can. And learning to cradle in both hands from the start will help make the player better down the road. Learning is understanding. A player will learn cradling faster if they understand how it works. In this demonstration, the players will learn the theory of cradling – centrifugal force.

*Demonstration 1*

Have all the players put down their sticks and give each player a ball. With their hand extended and the palm open, have them roll the ball around in the palm of their hand. The ball should fall out. Now have the players cup their hand around the ball and roll it. The players should have a little more control of the ball but it should fall out. Now, the coach should demonstrate cradling using the ball in the palm of his hand. By cupping the ball and moving it in a rocking motion (cradling), the ball will not move in your hand. The players should then do the same motion as the coach. While the coach is watching, he can explain centrifugal force and why the ball stays in the player's hand. Now, once the players have a firm understanding of the cradling motion, it is time to try it with their sticks.

*Stick Protection*

Younger players should be encouraged to use two hands on their sticks until they become proficient in cradling, catching, throwing and shooting. The next level of stick protection is learning to cradle with one hand. This is not for

beginners. Offensively, the advantage of cradling one-handed is that the defense, by rule, is not allowed to check the offensive player's body or free arm. Defense can hit the stick but cannot make any type of stick check to the body. This is why offensive players, especially attackmen, should be taught to cradle with only one hand. But this should not be taught until the players have a sound understanding of two handed cradling. The key things players should be taught when cradling one-handed are:

- **Hand position:** The cradling hand (the top hand) should be as close to the head of the stick as possible (remember, you are not allowed to touch the plastic head of the stick). This will give you more control over your stick and make it harder for the defense to check the stick.
- **Arm Position:** The free arm should be held directly out, away from the player's body (similar to a stiff arm in football). The palm of the free hand should be turned out and directed at the defensive player. Some coaches call it: "Showing the palm." Another good way to remind your players of the proper positioning is: always have the thumb of your free hand pointed at the ground.

### *Drills*

#### 1 - Warm Up Drill

Most teams do warm up laps. Have the players do these laps with a ball. As they are jogging and warming up, have them change hands and cradle on the whistle. Double whistle is sprint with the ball. Whistle: one-handed cradle right. Whistle: one-handed cradle left. Whistle: run backwards and cradle. Whistle: shuffle. Whistle: split dodge. Etc. This drill gives coaches the opportunity to do conditioning while the players are improving their skills.

#### 2 – Mirror Drill

Many times, players can see their own mistakes. Encourage players to practice cradling in front of a mirror. This allows players to see exactly what they look like. Coaches should tell players to practice keeping their sticks tucked into the shoulder area, keeping two hands on their sticks, and their heads up. Players do not want to get into the habit of looking down at your stick. And again, encourage all your players to practice cradling on the right and the left.

#### 3 – Cone Drill

Learning to cradle standing still is tough. But learning to do it while a player is running is even tougher. After a coach feels the players understand the rocking motion of the cradle, they should put the players in a situation where they can use the skill.

### Beginner level:

Set the cones five yards apart in a straight line. Have the players make a line in front of the first cone. Then have each player weave in between the cones cradling the ball. Once everyone has gone through in one direction, have them come back using the opposite hand. Encourage the players to go slow and to perfect the skill. Then, progress to two lines with one competing against the other to see which is faster. This competition will give players a great reason to learn cradling.

### Drill key aspects:

1. players must understand the fundamentals of cradling
2. players need to use correct form in order to get better

### *Skills practiced*

1. cradling
2. running while cradling

*Goalie involvement:* Full, goalies should be involved in these drills using a goalie stick and appropriate protective gear for the activity.