

Last-Minute Preparations.

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SINCE THE OUTCOME OF many [lacrosse games](#) is determined by the coaches' ability to control the waning minutes of the game through ball-control and special defensive situations, it will behoove every staff to prepare their players for such occasions. The key to this preparation lies in the repetitions through practice. Although a coach cannot anticipate every special situation, he must expect to see a lot of them during the course of a season.

Coaches cannot expect their (high school) [athletes](#) to rely solely on their athleticism to win the game. That would put too much pressure on them. In the final minutes of a game, the coach must bear much of the burden, and the entire team must have [confidence](#) in their preparation. They must be poised and unflappable.

It is important for the coach to keep the preparations and directions simple. This becomes particularly important whenever a team becomes tired and thirsty and the key [information exchange](#) is crucial.

Situation 1: Under two minutes remaining with a lead

1. Consider switching to a zone defense, if you are playing a man-to-man team. A single player cannot dodge and dominate a zone. The offense will be forced to make more passes and take shots from farther outside their normal range.
2. If you are a zone team, consider switching to a man-to-man. The advantage is that you may force the offense to panic.
3. Consider shutting off their go-to guy. If you can deny their key offensive threat the ball, you may force them to find another way to score, disrupting their offensive flow.
4. Develop a ball-control offensive series that utilizes the playing space behind the cage: At Detroit Country Day, we call this our OMEGA (last letter of the Greek alphabet) offense. It is our "legal" stalling offense, where the ball is passed inside the restraining area and behind the [lacrosse cage](#).

Situation 2: Under two minutes without a lead

1. Decide who/where/when/ to double the ball: Throughout the game and with the scouting report, the coach should decide how and to whom the desperation double team should be applied.
2. Decide what key out-of-bound [play](#) to run on either the end line or sideline.
3. Consider inverting your midfielders: Enabling the offense to isolate a short stick defensive midfielder in an unfamiliar area behind the goal. The offensive must also be prepared for a defensive "jump and run," that is, where the defense
 1. may decide to jump the offensive midfielder with a long pole, leaving one player open briefly. Being prepared for this could lead to a quick unsettled goal.
4. Prepare a zone offense in case the opposition switches to a zone. A single set zone offense play with two [options](#) may be sufficient, providing your team's best shooters with an opportunity to score.

5. Consider altering the defensive slide package: If your defensive slide package consistently comes from the course area, an adjacent slide may cause a quick double team and an unexpected turnover.

Situation 3: Overtime

1. Consider the face-off personnel; either an offensive face-off group or a defensive group. Most importantly, the players selected should be great groundball **men**. Additionally, if your team wins the face-off, the players should know what **play** or formation is expected.
2. Anticipate being either man-up or man-down: Have a plan ready when called upon to start the **overtime** period in a penalty situation.
3. Anticipate being on defense: What key match-ups do you want to employ? How aggressive do you want to be? Do you want to deny their "star"? Do you know how to prepare for their invert midfield offense?

These situations can also be practiced when beating a weaker opponent by a big score. I am not advocating **running** up the score, I am advocating the use of selective situations in **games** that become runaways early on.

Whenever we gain a large lead by half **time**, we use the starters sparingly. We'll play them only for the first five minutes of the third quarter. When they leave the field, we'll have the players **work** on simulated situations. We'll keep the starters out to avoid embarrassing the opponents, while still maintaining our game tone.

During the season, coaches should script 10 situations into their daily practice sessions, such as:

- Two minutes, up by a goal.
- Two minutes, down by a goal.
- One minute game tied with possession/without possession.
- End of the quarter (inside a minute), hold for one shot.
- Middle of the game slow the tempo.
- Out to bounds down by a goal sideline **play**.
- Out to bounds down by a goal end line play.
- Face-offs, down by a goal.
- Face-offs up by a goal.
- Face-offs overtime-key personnel.