

Defense

Defense is what wins games. Defense is a team effort and never an individual player effort. A player – a midie, or defensemen or the goalie – doesn't get "beat" – the team gets "beat". The goalie does not get scored on – the defense gets scored on. We believe in defense first – everything in the game comes from our defense and from our ability to defend. The elements of our defense are;

- We don't do anything alone
- We don't defend alone
- We don't play offense alone
- We don't transition alone
- We don't defend our goal alone

We play as a team, we communicate as a team.

We are a "sliding" team – we don't believe in one person stopping the other team – we help each other. We don't expect a midfielder or defensemen to do anything other than "force" the person with the ball to an area we want the ball in – we want the ball in our hands, or on the ground or on the side of the field. We don't want the ball in the center of the field.

Attack on the Defense – A Riding System

In our program – we believe in defense – relentless defense at both ends of the field.

This section introduces Riding – riding is a system – where at the transition of our offense – from a ball down or bad pass or missed shot on goal – that our attackmen go on the defense immediately. We believe that the attackmen are the key to our defense. The quality of the decisions of our players – at every point in the game – determines the outcome of the game. Lacrosse is a fast moving, improvisational game – and requires that all players know their role at any point in the game – and act on that responsibility. A key element of coaching lacrosse – is teaching players to make good decisions on the field.

One of the most important aspects of our program is Riding – we teach riding and use riding with abandon.

Good riding technique and riding fundamentals creates a lot of offensive opportunities a team usually does not get.

The Riding Game

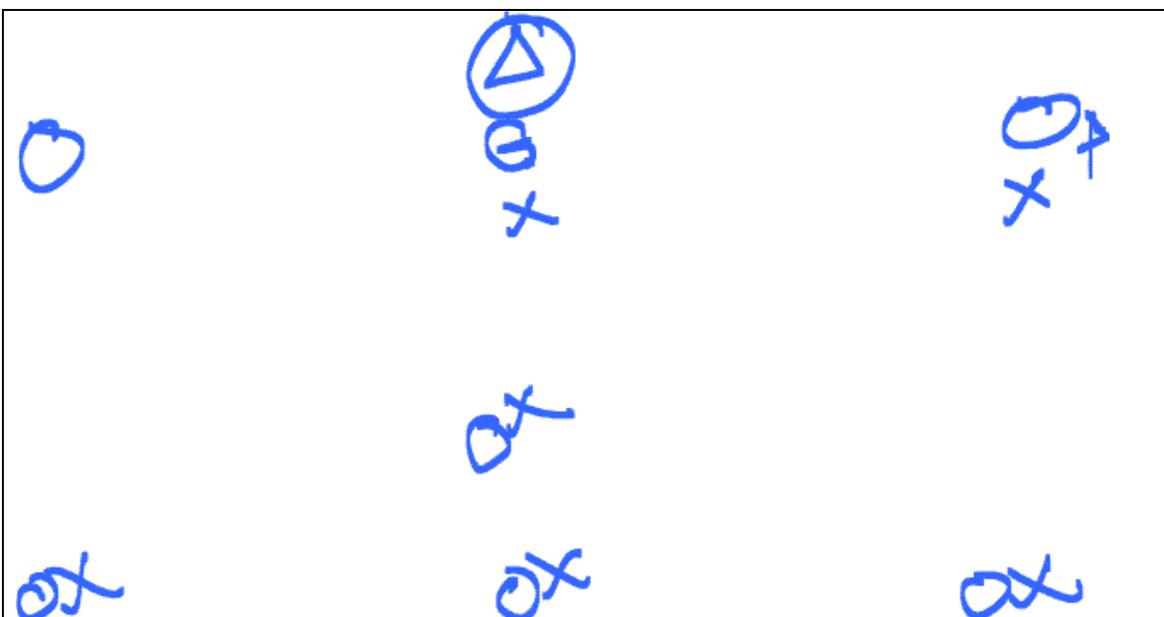
The benefits of being a riding team are;

- Riding will help a team develop a hard nosed style of play

- Reinforces what makes a successful lacrosse team – relentless, physical play and making opponents understand that nothing – not even clearing a ball is for granted – nothing will come easy.
- Create a sense of urgency for the other team. We don't concede anything. We want to force or only allow a cross field pass, and then close on the pass and force them to make decisions.
- Create ball down situations at our offensive end, when we are in transition.

The Ride

As we turn over the ball in our offense end – goalie makes a save, shot is missed and their defense recovers, we loose a ball down etc – we automatically go into the ride. Below is a diagram and step by step review of a Ride.



The players designated by X were on offense – but the ball turned over to the defense. They transition to offense. G designates their goalie. The offensive players are marked as a O. The flag – on the top right of the diagram – notes where the ball is – their defensemen has the ball – low in our offensive end of the field. The first steps of our attack and midfield to “turn on” a two man ride are:

Attackmen

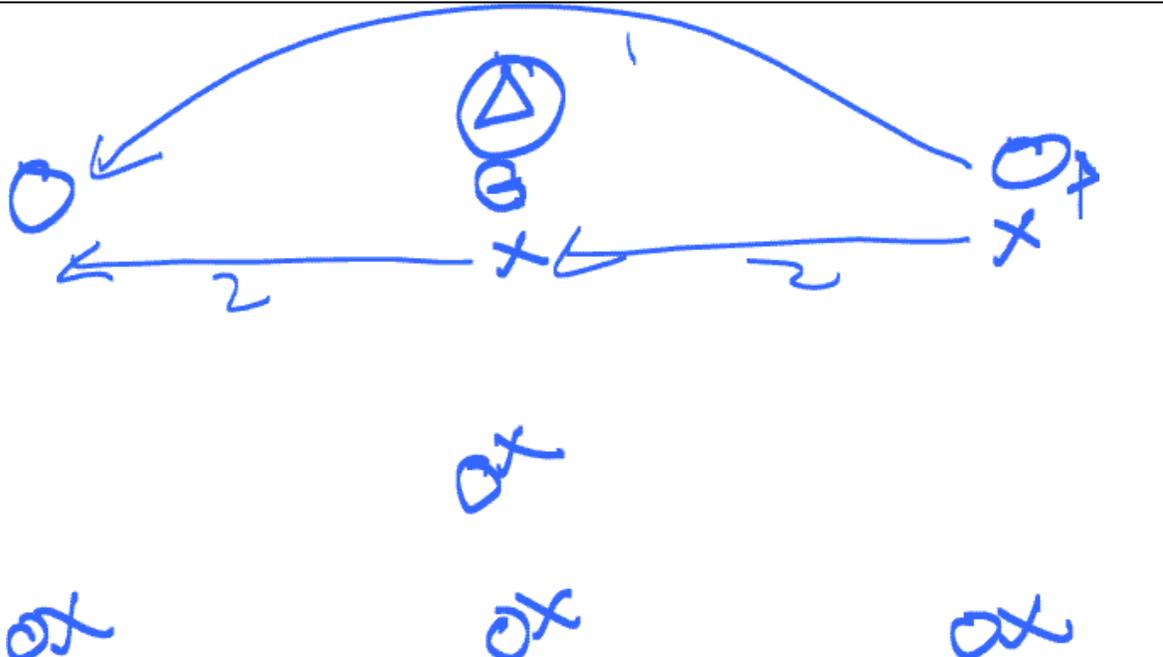
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- The ball has been turned over near the goal end of the field – low.
- Our attackmen nearest the ball – turns into a defensemen and forces the ball
- The goalie is covered by the attackmen nearest the goalie
- The third attack moves to the center of the field and center of the box
- We leave open the other teams player across the field. We want that player to be open – to put pressure on the ball and to have their only outlet to be the cross field player. A pass to the cross field is hard to do, takes time and does not allow them

to advance their offense.

Middies:

- When our middies read – that the ball has been turned over, and turned over low at goal level. They should do the following:
- Drop back to midfield – on our offensive side – into zone coverage – and being adjacent to their player and the ball – taking away a pass to the midfield as an outlet.

The offensive player has only one easy pass – to the other offensive player low and across field.



Option 1: The offensive player throws cross field.

The offensive player being forced by our defensive attackman reads the following; their goalie is covered, the middies are covered – and reads that their teammate – low and across the field.

1. The low offensive player throw cross field
2. On the throw – with out looking at the ball – run first – the two low attackmen run cross field – the attackmen on the goalie runs to the player catching the ball. The attackman on the ball runs to cover the goalie.
3. We leave the passer open, which encourages the offensive player to throw cross field again – a difficult throw, takes time and delays the offense

We force the player with the ball – leaving open a pass low, cross field open. All other players are covered – including the goalie. Long cross field passes lead to turnovers, ball out of bounce or ball downs.

If the person with the ball dodges, the attackmen forces the ball. We don't double the ball, but leave the man cross field open.

If the pass / dodge pass the ride to the center of the box – the middies should drop to their defensive positions and the attack should come up to midfield – pressuring the ball.

Substitution

Substituting after an offensive position – is key to maintaining defensive pressure. Substituting offense middies for defensive middies and one additional long pole is key to our defense. As we transition from offense to defense at our offensive end – a lost ball down, a bad pass a missed shot on goal – we will do the following steps;

- Drop our middies to just the offensive side of mid field. We will have a middle on each side of the field – just outside the box lines, and a middle at center. They will play zone – ball side zone.
- We keep two attackmen low on the defense – as low as the ball is – one attackman on the ball – in a force position (good stance – take away the middle, give the side of the field). The other attackman is low in the center – covering two – one the goalie and two the center defensemen.
- The third attack drops back – but just to the center top of the box.
- We leave the low off ball / backside defender open. Up top we leave the their midfielder open – who is opposite and diagonal to the ball. We will allow a cross field pass or a long diagonal pass across the field – these are the low percentage / high turnover passes.
- We force the ball, the other players are playing ball side zone.
- As the player with the ball – under force passes – we break the attackmen on the ball – scrambling to the ball and to the center position.
- As the play is done low – we have begun our substitution immediately – our near offensive middle – is replaced by a long stick defensive middle, who slides to the middle – replacing the offensive midfield middle. As that middle leaves the field – he is replaced by another defensive middle. If possible – the long stick defensive middle slides one player over – who scrambles off the field and is replaced by a third defensive middle.

Substitution is dynamic – we should always be able to substitute one player, often two and sometimes three – it depends on how affective our attackmen are and how good the other teams defense is.

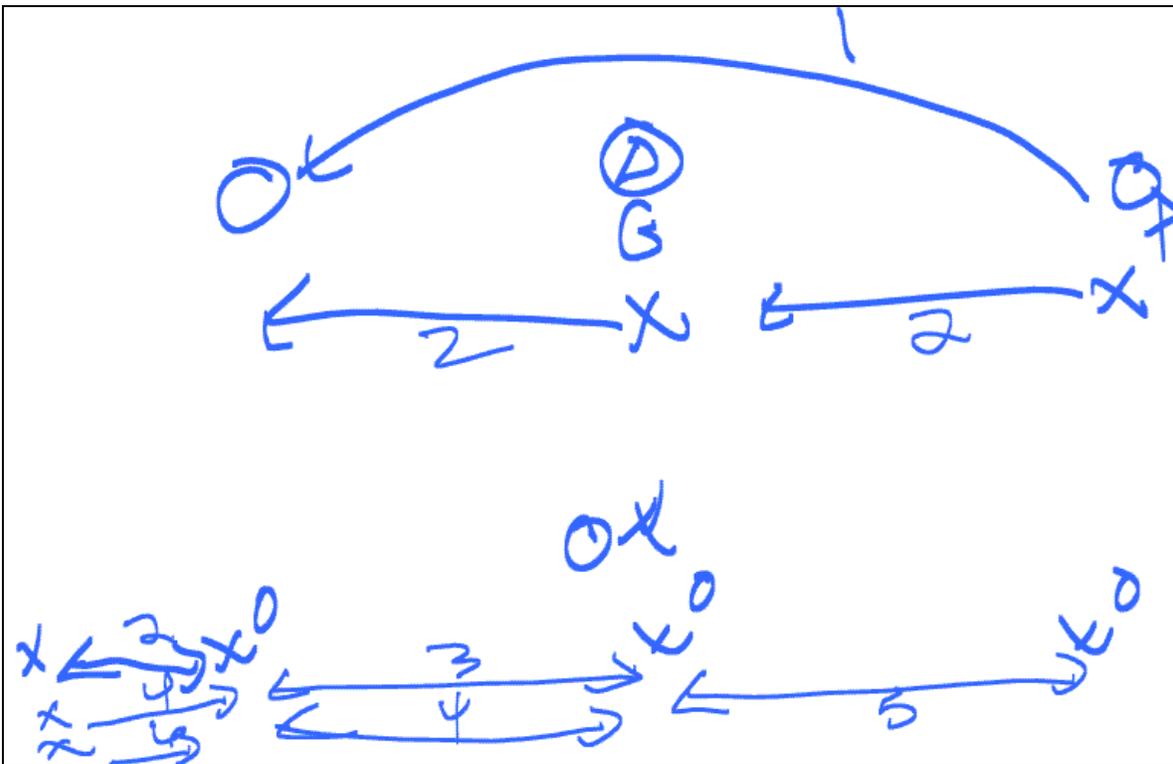
If the other team is able to make a successful transition out from their defensive end to midfield – we drop attack back to midfield, and our mid fielders back to their defensive positions. Our defensemen – this whole time – should be playing their attackman on the ball side – in between the attack and the ball. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that their attackmen does not get a long pass. If they have a chance to break on a ball –

they are free to make that decision – they have to take care of their primary responsibility – their attackman – but they are free to break on the ball if they believe they can get the ball.

The Coaches or goalie can yell for **HELP** at anytime of the Ride – this indicates to the attackmen and middies that the ride is off – transition out of the ride – to their defensive positions.

Substitution

Riding provides us with the time to substitute midfielders. If the ball is low, and we “Ride” we can substitute Middies for a long stick middle as well as fresh middies to play defense.



Option – Substitution of Offensive Middies with Long Stick Middle / Defensive Middies

The ball is low, our Ride is on. We can substitute a long stick defensive middle for the closest on field / near our sideline middle. As the ball remains low, the long stick middle and move to substitute with the midfielder located at the center of the field. A new substitute middle would come on to the near field position. This could occur again, depending how long the ride is “on”. The long stick middle, know at the center of the field, if time permits, could move to the far side, with that midfielder coming off and a

near middle substituting.

When the ball is low, the ride is on, we should always be able to substitute a long stick midfielder – putting four long sticks on the defense at all times.

1. Cross field pass is forced
2. Attack run to cover – goalie and catcher – leaving passer – low and open, long stick middle substitutes the near sideline middle
3. As the ball stays low, the long stick middle moves to the middle, midfielder comes off the field
4. New middle enters field near side
5. As the ball stays low, the long stick middle moves from the center to the far side of the field. The far side middle comes off, near side middle moves to the center of the field
6. New middle comes in near side

Shutdown Defense

A two attackmen low with one in force – is Riding. If we are playing fast team with good stick handling – we may adjust the riding defense to a shutdown defense. A shut down defense is with only one attackman on the ball. We will drop two attackmen back to the top of the box – playing ball side. This will leave the goalie and backside defender open. We will drop the three middies to just offensive side of the midfield – and will begin our substitutions. Between the top of the box and the midfield line – we will have 5 players playing ball side zone. We will have the attackmen on the ball low – forcing the defender. On the pass – the low attackman will break on the pass towards the center, find the ball and pressure the ball.

If they are successful in clearing the ball – we keep the attackmen up at midfield, drop the middies to their defensive position and drop our defensemen back to their positions.

We have one man pressure the ball, the ball is usually passed to the goalie, we pressure the goalie, we leave cross field, diagonal open, we look for a bad pass or ball down – and seize the turnover to fast break the offense.

The principles of defense – taking away the center of the field, good stance, good footwork etc. are true in a defensive position all over the field – all of the time.

The Shutdown is diagrammed below:

