



Playing Lacrosse: The Boulder Valley Way

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2011 edition

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Overview: Over the past several years, Boulder Valley Lacrosse has connected with a number of celebrated coaches and players to improve the process of player development. This manual will synthesize and simplify the various teachings of these well-known figures in the lacrosse world, including Bill Tierney, Josh Sims, Trevor Tierney, and Jamie Munro, for the benefit of our coaches and players.

Offensive Philosophy: Boulder Valley Lacrosse teams should employ offenses that encourage players to dodge aggressively and play in a freelance style. Coaches should emphasize individual stick skills, toughness on groundballs, and speed in fast-break transition play. All BVL teams will use the “132” (aka “rotating triangles”) formation as their standard offensive setup, because it encourages off-ball movement and proper spacing.

Odd-man situations should be practiced regularly, as these are the primary source of scoring opportunities in youth lacrosse. Teams may have a few set plays as a complement to their offense, but players should be primarily encouraged to play in the “Fun and Gun” style of lacrosse. We have no interest in creating “robots” in BVL, but rather players who understand how to move off-ball without sideline direction in order to generate shots on goal.

Defensive Philosophy: All BVL teams will use an aggressive man to man defense which relies upon an early slide from the crease, and constant involvement from all seven defensive players. This style of defense is commonly known as the legendary “Princeton” defense devised by Bill Tierney. In accordance with our mission to emphasize player development over simply winning, BVL teams will not generally employ zone defenses, as this style of defense is ultimately detrimental to the progress of individual defensive ability. Zone defense will be taught and utilized primarily in man-down situations. Given the relative lack of size in BVL compared to other programs in Colorado, the crease-slide defense should allow us to maximize the comfort level of our players while encouraging a true “team” style that requires constant engagement from everyone on the field.

Coaching Philosophy: BVL coaches will follow the principles set forth by the Positive Coaching Alliance. Our coaches emphasize sportsmanship and fair play above all-- regardless of the situation, or the conduct of a referee or an opposing coach.

Coaches must understand that *stressed-out coaches create stressed-out players*, who cannot perform to the best of their abilities. Encourage players to play with a positive sense of aggression rather than tentativeness-- encourage them to make mistakes. As John Wooden said, “The team that makes the most mistakes will probably win.”

We must always focus on the big picture of developing character and skill, rather than the short term view of winning one game.

Offensive Basics: The Boulder Valley Way

Philosophy: Lacrosse is ultimately a simple game and should be coached that way. Coaches must create a comfortable environment in which *players* are encouraged to be creative and *to make plays*. We will not seek to confuse opposing teams, but rather to insure that we never confuse our players with our own tactics.

The Boulder Valley Lacrosse attitude: “Here’s what we are doing, try to stop us!”

In general, coaches should focus upon TEMPO and FUNDAMENTALS at this level. Rather than spending time training players about formations or set plays, coaches should emphasize the basic skills of throwing and catching on the run, and dodging with purpose to the goal. Our mission is to deliver players who have mastered these fundamental skills of lacrosse to high school coaches, who will then install their own formations and set plays themselves.

Players should be taught a limited set of simple rules which will generate the unsettled, odd-man situations which create most scoring opportunities in lacrosse.

THE 3 RULES OF OFFENSE: Hammered home by BVL coaches at every practice & every game

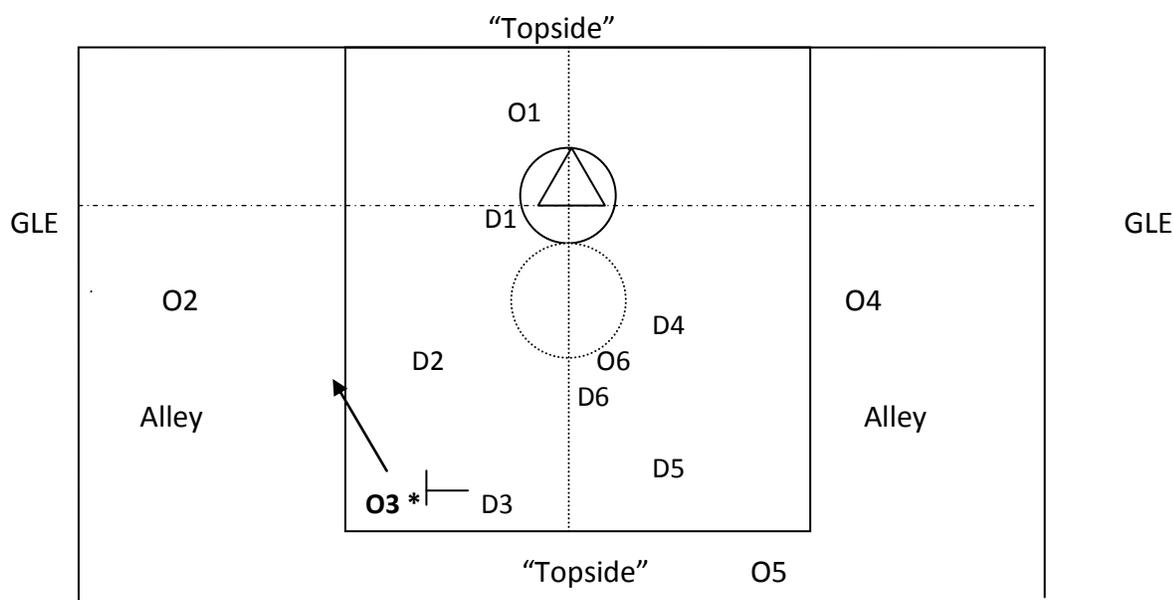
1. **CLEAR THROUGH!** Use this phrase to remind players of the most important rule in the BVL offense: GET OUT OF THE WAY WHEN ANOTHER PLAYER IS DODGING....and position yourself appropriately to react to this dodge, both offensively and defensively.
2. **DODGE OR PASS!** Use this phrase to remind the player with the ball to become an immediate threat to score, or else move the ball along around the perimeter. Do not allow any player to “ball-stop” and hold the ball for an extended period of time, like a basketball player who dribbles endlessly and stalls out his team’s offense.
3. **TRIPLE THREAT!** Use this phrase to remind the player with the ball to maintain the classic “triple-threat” or “sidewinder” position, meaning body language with his stick that convinces the defense that he may dodge, pass, or shoot at any time. His stick should always be held behind his body, well-protected, with his forward elbow high and his back turned slightly toward the goal, signalling his intent to score.

We encourage coaches to develop practice plans which employ the drills described in the pages which follow. Drills which engage multiple players at one time are preferable to drills which engage only one or two players at a time: a low “player to ball” ratio is always desirable. Practices should run at a quick tempo, with minimal interruptions from coaches to address players, and should consist of multiple drills lasting no more than 10-15 minutes each. By planning practices which move quickly from drill to drill, you will alleviate the issue of short attention spans and will maximize the efficiency of your time.

Drills which involve odd-man scenarios are also strongly recommended, as they train offensive players to look for the open man and train defensive players to understand the notion of sliding and recovering.

Defensive Basics: The Boulder Valley Way

Philosophy: Given our connections to Bill Tierney and Trevor Tierney, we believe strongly in their theories of defense and goaltending. Coaches should install an aggressive man-to-man defense which will engage all seven defensive players, and relies upon a first slide from the crease. Players will be taught to drive ballcarriers down the alleys, to prevent players from crossing topside inside the offensive box, and to look constantly for opportunities to double on the ball.



BASIC PRINCIPLES of a CREASE-SLIDE DEFENSE:

- Every player has specific responsibilities in terms of his communication and positioning in relation to the onball defender.
- First, the onball defender must call out "I've got ball". In the diagram above, player O3 is the ball carrier so D3 is the onball defender. He should be closely guarding his man.
- The two players adjacent to the ball must call out "I've got left" (D5) and "I've got right" (D2). They should play approximately 5 yards off their man and oriented to "ball-side", i.e. positioned closer toward the player with the ball but ready to flare out if their man receives a pass.
- The crease defender (D6), whether a middie or defenseman, must call out "I'm CRASH" signalling to other defenders that he will be the first to slide. In this defense, he should be aggressive and even looking to slide early, i.e. even before D3 gets beat.
- This leaves two players who should be calling out "AWAY" (D1 and D4). The "AWAY" players should always be tightly sluffed into the goal area, able to touch an imaginary second crease on top of the "real" crease (signified above with the dotted circle). The "AWAY" player furthest from the ball (here D4) should be calling out "I'M TWO! I'M READY TO GO" signifying that he is ready to slide to the crease attacker if necessary.
- An imaginary line runs down the middle of the goal dividing the field in two halves. This line is called **topside**. Any offensive player inside the box must always be prevented from "going topside" or crossing over from one half of the field to the other.

- Therefore, if player O3 has the ball, onball defender D3 must take a strong position upfield, on his right shoulder, to drive him down the alley and prevent him from going topside.
- If player O6 had the ball *outside* the box near the midline, then D6 is not concerned with preventing him from crossing over topside. In this area, defenders should follow the ball carrier diligently but give a 5 yard cushion and NEVER look to bodycheck.
- IT IS ACCEPTABLE FOR THE ONBALL PLAYER TO “GET BEAT”... as long as the ball carrier is directed into the alley and doesn’t drive to the middle of the field!! *Emphasize this point heavily with your players!!*
- If player O3 beats player D3 on a dodge, the crease defender D6 MUST SLIDE. He calls out “I’M CRASH! I’M GOING!!” and slides to O3. This means that the crease offensive player is now uncovered, which is of course unacceptable defensively. The AWAY player furthest from the BALL (here D4) must call out “I’M TWO!! I’M CREASE” and leaves his man to cover player O6. He should position himself BALL-SIDE and recognize that his man is now O6 and he is no longer responsible for O4.
- When player D3 is beat and sees that player D6 has made a successful slide to his man O3, he must SPRINT to the imaginary crease area, turn and locate any uncovered player (here O4),and then defend that player-- we call this playing “INSIDE-OUT” defense.

The key to running this defense successfully at the youth lacrosse level is this: You MUST train the “AWAY” defenders to communicate with the “CRASH” defender by calling out that they are the second slide. When the ball is down low or below GLE, midfielders often fail to sluff in tight to the imaginary second crease and they don’t recognize that they have second slide responsibilities. This is the most critical element of this defense: the second slide to a crease attacker.

Emphasize this continually to your players: ***The most dangerous man in lacrosse is the one with the ball. The second most dangerous man is the one on the crease. Therefore we can NEVER leave either one unguarded.***

GOALIE PLAY: We agree with Trevor Tierney’s revolutionary theories about goaltending play. Previously, goaltenders were taught to step out to the shooter on an extended arc and to hug the pipes when the ball reached GLE. Trevor Tierney has experienced great success as a player and coach by emphasizing the importance of staying tight in the cage to the goal line and moving laterally, rather than outward on an arc.

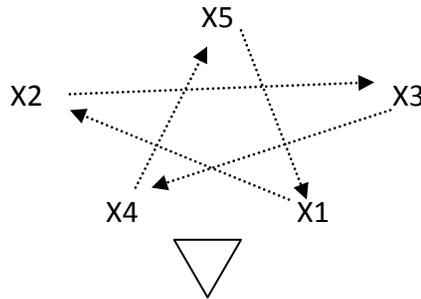
We encourage every coach in BVL to watch and incorporate the teachings of Tierney’s DVD entitled *Evolution In Goaltending: A New Perspective on Goalie Fundamentals.*

Coaches should also take great care to protect young goaltenders from criticism. Goalies often become a target of teammates after a goal; it is important to emphasize to your team that all 10 players on the field share the responsibility for a breakdown. Attackmen may need to ride harder, middies may need to slide earlier, and defensemen may need to communicate better, for example. Given the difficulty of finding young goalies, be sure to encourage and praise them at every opportunity.

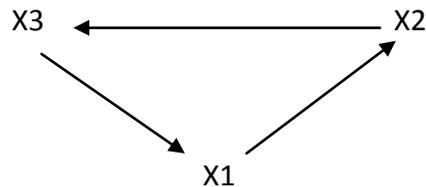
BASIC STICKWORK DRILLS:

Star Drill: Players arranged at five points in the shape of a star. Player passes ball to two points away, then follows his pass by running to the end of the next line. Players rotate through standard passes include catch R, throw R, then catch L, throw L, then catch L, throw R, then catch R, throw L, then groundballs. This drill emphasizes greater awareness than standard line drills, as players must be alert to flying balls as they pass through the star. Once players understand the drill, add in a second ball.

Variation: X5 finishes with a shot on goal instead of passing back to X1.

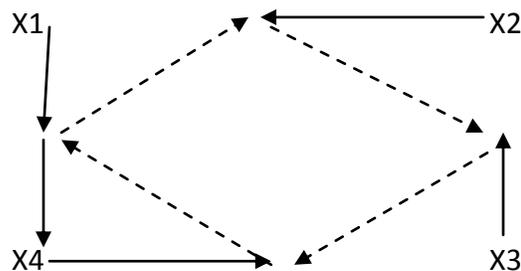


Triangle Passing: Players pass to first player in next line and follow their pass by running. Players rotate through standard passes and mimic dodges as they catch the ball, including face, split and roll dodges. Then reverse the rotation of the triangle so players must use off-hands.

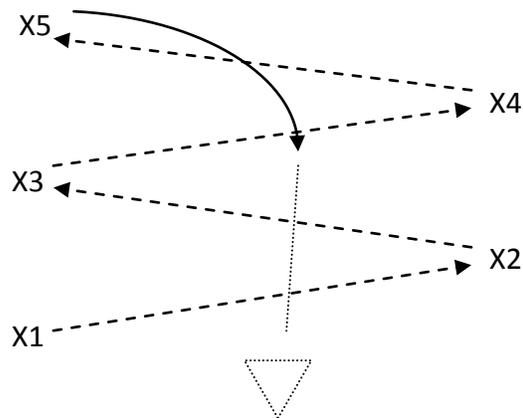


Four Corners Passing: Similar to triangle drill, but encourages longer passes and forces players to make accurate throws to a moving target. Players begin by rolling to their R, catching pass with L and throwing ahead to next line with R. Then players keep stick in R for “throwbacks”: rolling R, they throw to the line following them much as they would in a EMO wheel play or an alley dodge. Then reverse the rotation so players are rolling to their L, catching R, and throwing L to the line ahead.

Throwbacks:



“MAZE” Drill: Ball start at X1 who passes to X2 and follows his pass. X2 passes to X3 and follows, etc. When ball reaches X5, he cuts through the middle of the “maze” and shoots on goal-- developing awareness as balls fly around him to keep his head up. Then he returns to X1 and starts drill again. Players rotate through standard passes and groundballs.



Hash to Hash Passing: Players pair up in two lines approx 20 yds apart. Pairs run downfield passing back and forth with stick in the outside hand. Variation: groundball into a pass, or shuffle sideways and quick stick with partner.

Three Man Weave: The classic adaptation of the basketball drill. Players form three lines well spread apart. X1 passes to X2 and cuts behind his head. X2 passes to X3, cuts behind his head. X3 passes back to X1 and cuts behind his head. Repeat all the way down field. Ideally players should be passing and catching with their stick to the outside of the field.

Man In The Middle: Players partner up in groups of three for timed drills. X1 passes to X2, who turns and passes to X3. X3 returns to pass to X2, who turns and passes back to X1. After one minute, change the “man in the middle.” Rotate through all standard passes L and R plus over-the-shoulder catches and groundballs.



Variation: “Hamster” or “Hourglass” Drill, player X2 runs behind player X1, catches pass from X3, then runs behind player X3, etc.

Sharks and Minnows: A classic favorite of young players. Players line up on one side of a confined space and try to dodge past coaches who attempt to check the ball out of their stick as they run past to a finish line. Last player to finish with a ball in his stick wins.

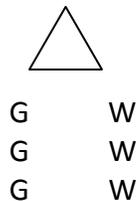
“Zombies and Humans”: A popular variation of Sharks & Minnows. Players run around inside a confined, coned-out space until the Zombie coaches check the ball out of their stick, thereby sending them out of the space to the Zombie graveyard (usually a crease area). Last player with a ball in his stick is the winner.

GROUNDBALL DRILLS:

GBs To, GBs Away, Butt to Butt GBs, Head to Head GBs
 Musical GBs (one less ball than player in a restricted area)
 2v2 GBs to a give & go
 Warrior GBs (3v2v1)
 Rapid Fire 2v1

Groundball Scramble: 5 lines. Set up 5 cones between the midfield and restraining lines, alternating Greens and Whites so there are 3 green lines and 2 white lines. If 3 greens get the ball, they play to a shot. If 2 whites get the ball, they must get the ball to goalie who initiates a clear back to whites. Variation: 7 lines for a 4v3 scramble.

Fireball Scramble: 3v3. Set up players in two lines of 3, head to head as if they were lined up for a free throw in basketball along the tangents of the goal crease. Coach rolls ball out, whichever team gets the GB must pass to coach first, then plays offense.

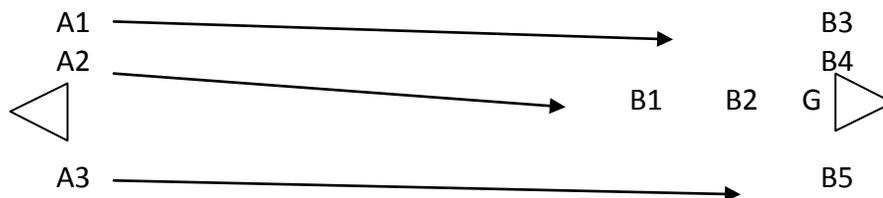


Coach rolls out GB to middle of lines

TRANSITION/ODD MAN DRILLS:

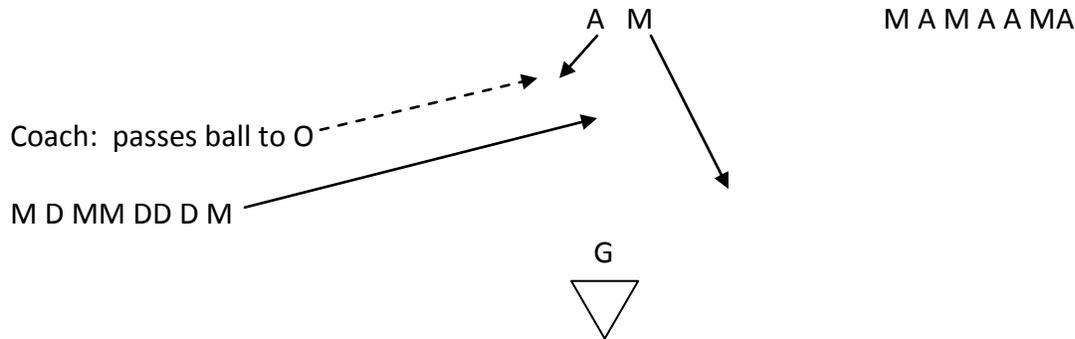
40 Yard Dash aka "West Genny" Drill: Continual 3v2 with cages set about 40 yards apart. Divide players into two teams, green and white at separate ends. Players A1, A2, and A3 attacking two defenders B1 & B2. After shot on cage or errant pass, last player to touch ball sprints back to his line and other two players remain on defense. Example: A2 shoots on cage, G makes save. B1 and B2 step off. A2 sprints back to his original side of field. A1 and A3 remain on field to defend vs B3, B4, and B5 who now attack opposing goal after outlet pass from G.

- Coaches valuing offensive ability to attack, to draw a slide and dump to the open man.
- Coaches valuing defensive ability to get in the hole, to communicate, and to slide and recover in transition situations.

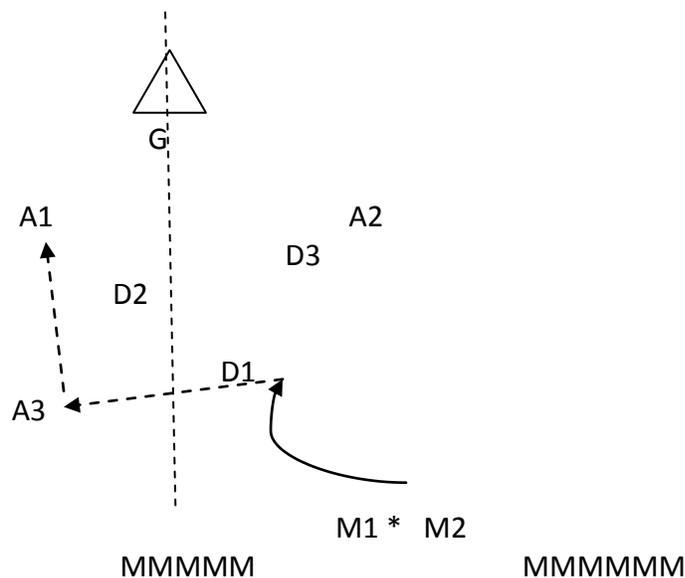


Variation for a half-field (one goal): Start A1, A2, and A3 behind the goal. They execute a three man weave with the ball past the restraining line as B1 and B2 step into place and "stack" on D. Once they have cleared the restraining line, A1-A2-A3 can turn around to attack the goal.

“England” Drill: Transition/progression drill building from 2v1 to 6v5. Add in 1 O and 1 D player simultaneously to progress through odd man situations which teach offense how to find the open man and defense how to slide. Line up Attack and Mids at midfield line. Line up Defense and Mids along sideline. Two offensive players start on field against one defensive player. After shot or turnover, one player from O line and one player from D line sprints into drill, building from 2v1 to 3v2 to 4v3 to 5v4 to 6v5.



“St Joe’s” 4v 3 Fast Break Drill: A basic fast break drill initiated by a 1v1 groundball. Line up 3 A and 3D at restraining line as for faceoff. Two M battle for gb rolled out by coach. Winning player initiates fastbreak, other M drops out. Attack should read the fastbreak and set up “L” formation accordingly to left or right side break. Defense forms tight triangle with one D “stopping ball” and other D calling out “I’ve got left”, “I’ve got right”, “I’ve got two”. MIDDIE drives hard, looking to score or draw & dump. Last O player to touch ball sprints out of drill up to groundball lines while other 3 O reset positions—this allows mids to cycle through as attack and get additional touches.



Here, attack set up in their “L” to accommodate a right side break, making room for M1 who won the groundball. D1 is calling “I’ve got point”, D3 is covering A2 on the doorstep, and D2 is calling out “I’ve got two”— that is, he is covering two players. *M1 needs to draw and drag D 1 and D3 as far to his right as possible*, then bang the ball back across “topside,” ie the imaginary dotted line here dividing the field in two, to A3. If D2 is late rotating up, A3 will have a good shot. If D2 rotates up in time, A3 looks to dump the ball down to A1 for a layup on the crease.

D always rotates OPPOSITE the direction of the ball. For example: If M1 passes across to A3, D2 rotates up to cover A3, and D3 rotates across the crease to cover A1, while D1 drops down to cover 2, splitting space between M1 and A2.

KEEP AWAY: A simple variation of the classic game-- define a restricted space such as the offensive box, and let one team try to maintain possession against the other. Variations: add or subtract one "defensive" player to practice potential double-team situations or slides.

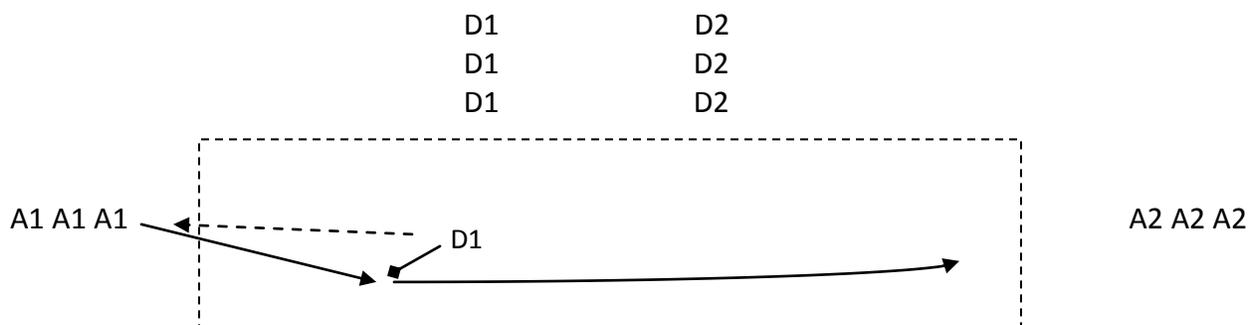
656 Drill: Set players up in a basic 6v6 scrimmage setup. Assign each defensive players a number between 1 and 6. During live play, periodically call out one of the defensive numbers between 1 and 6. This player must immediately drop his assigned man, sprint to the sideline, and sprint back into play. This drill forces the defense to anticipate slides and help situations, while requiring the offense to recognize and feed the open man.

Touch The Cone: Set up 6 O lined up across the midfield line, 5 D lined up across the restraining line. Set up a cone in the "hole" approximately 5 yards above the crease. On the whistle, 6 O start a fast break simultaneously, while the 5 D must "get in the hole", touch the cone, and play "inside-out". Teaches D to recognize the offensive threat on a fast break while defending the hole, teaches O to find space on the fast break.

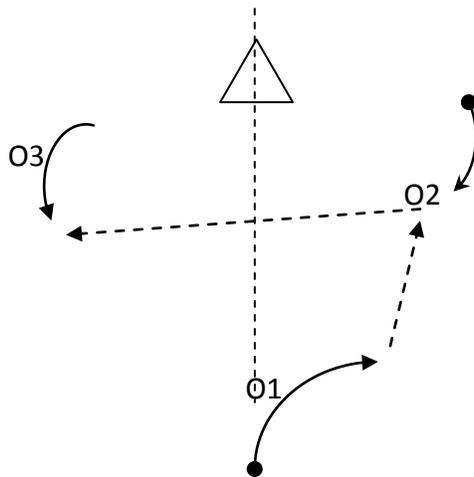
GAME SITUATION DRILLS:

Diamond Dodging: Set up players at four positions around the goal (at X, left wing and right wing, top center) and dodge 1v1 from an entry pass to a shot or clear. Add a crease attacker & defender for 2v2.

Rally in the Alley Drill: Players battle 1v1 to clear the ball from one end of the offensive alley outside the box to the other. Emphasizes strong dodging and riding skills. Generally drills starts with longpoles and goalies in A1 and A2 "winner" lines. Ball starts with first D1, who passes to first A1 and steps into the alley. A1 has 10 seconds to dodge with the ball to the opposite end of the alley (A2). Players in the D1 and D2 lines count down out loud to 10. If A1 steps out of the alley or drops the ball, he loses and must join the D1 or D2 "loser" lines. If he dodges within the time limit to the other end, he wins and returns to a dodging line. If D1 forces A1 out of bounds or creates a turnover, he wins and gets to join the A1 or A2 line. Then first player in D2 steps out, passes to A2 who is trying to dodge past him to the A1 line.



Salisbury 3 Man Shooting Drills: Adapt this basic drill as necessary to mimic plays from various points on the field. Set up cones to direct player movement at each of the three positions. Emphasize quick ball movement and DODGE- PASS- PASS concept to find open man. Once a dodger (O1) is stopped or diverted, generally he will dump the ball to an adjacent attacker (O2). The adjacent man must be trained to pass QUICKLY across “topside” (the imaginary line down the middle of the field) to the open man (O3) on the back side. It is very common for this adjacent player simply to hold onto the ball and kill offensive momentum.



Here, player O1 initiates with a split dodge from left to right, then passes to adjacent player O2 who is curling up to support. O2 looks for a quick skip pass to O3, who finds a passing lane to get wide open on the backside.

Variation: Add in 2 D to increase pressure on O and to practice D communication/slides.

Generally these drills should be done without a goalie as the emphasis should be on tempo and quick shots from close range. Players should rotate lines after each shot.

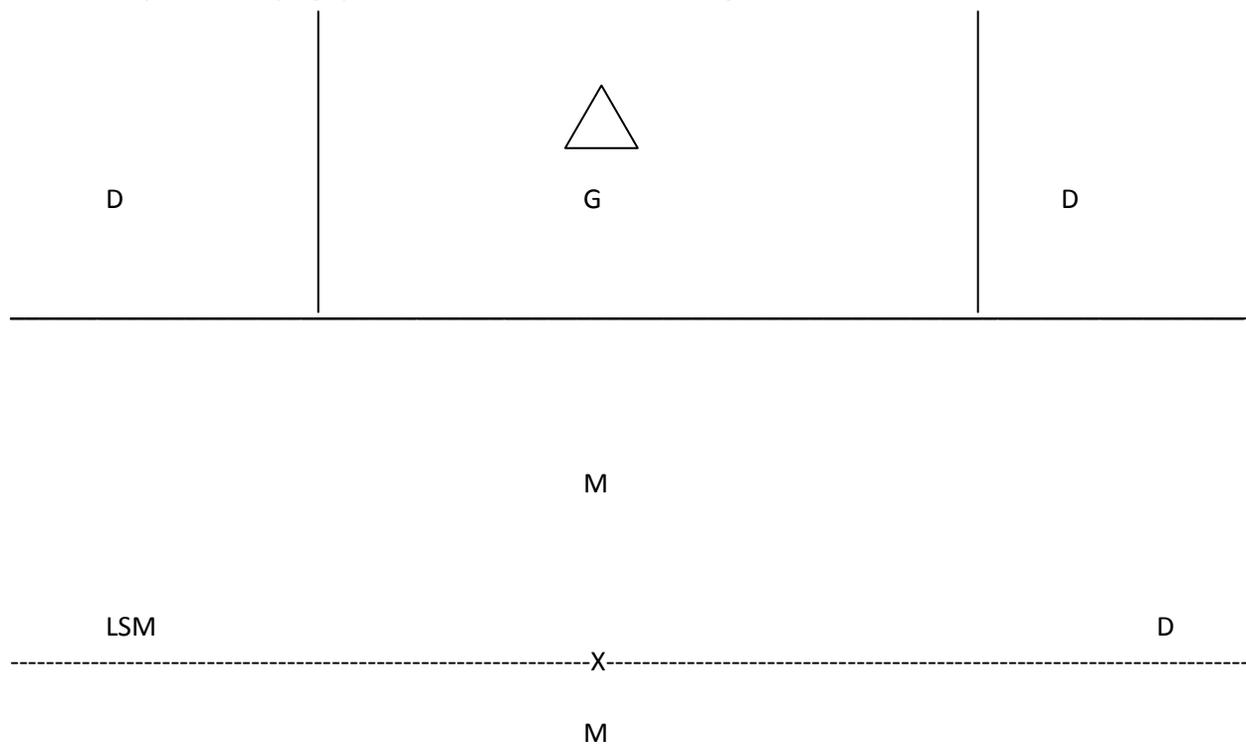
“ULTIMATE LACROSSE”: Think “ultimate frisbee” with lacrosse sticks-- players are only allowed to take three steps with the ball before they must pass. If they don’t pass within three seconds of stopping, they turn the ball over to the other team.

Crazy 8s: Set up two cages approximately 40 yds. apart with two teams of players lined up on opposite sides of the field. Coach for each team will direct from 1 to 8 players to run out on field at same time as opposite coach and play until a goal is scored. Coach can only use each number between 1 and 8 once-- for example, one coach could call out “1” and the other calls out “6” creating a 6 on 1 situation. Team with most goals after all numbers are used up wins.

Clearing: An effective clear can make a huge difference for a youth lacrosse team. We encourage coaches to install the “Basic L Clear” shown below, early in the season. Incorporate clearing and riding into drills as often as possible, for example by playing to a shot or a clear in every groundball drill.

BASIC “L” clear:

- Goalie makes save, yells “CLEAR” at the top of his lungs
- 2 defensemen run “banana” routes at high speed to the sidelines
- One defensemen breaks towards upper corner of defensive half opposite substitution box
- Long stick middie (if you use one) breaks to substitution box, short stick middie breaks out of box toward middle of field
- All players need to be looking over their shoulder at goalie for a quick outlet, especially the LSM
- Two middies stack in middle of field, one at faceoff X, the other just above the offensive box
- Two defensemen must always stay in straight line with goalie
- Emphasize staying spread out in order to make riding difficult



Advanced Offense: The Boulder Valley Way

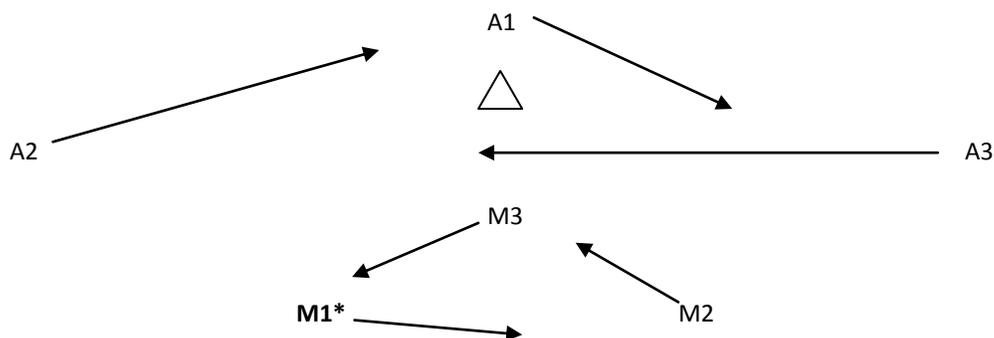
Progression: BVL teams learn the various offensive formations of lacrosse through a progression. The standard offensive setup for *all* BVL teams is the “1-3-2” or “Thirteen” formation (known also as “rotating triangles”).* Teams should also occasionally practice the “Circle” or “Zero” formation, to settle the ball down and gain possession time on offense—particularly when our defense needs rest.

Teams in grades 6-8 will add the “1-4-1” formation in order to change our offensive look and take advantage of players with strong dodging ability.

“DODGE, PASS, PASS, REDODGE”: Coaches of advanced teams should teach a critical concept in freelance offensive lacrosse-- “Dodge, pass, pass, redodge.” If a dodge is thwarted by good defense, including a double or triple team, players usually understand the concept of moving the ball quickly to an adjacent player. However, this adjacent player is rarely in a position to attack and usually ends up holding the ball ineffectively while the defense recovers and resets from the initial dodge. Players adjacent to the dodge who receive a pass must be coached to move the ball again IMMEDIATELY with a second pass. The recipient of this second pass is usually in prime position to attack the backside of the defense.

Formations: The “1-3-2” or “Thirteen”

The first formation which should be taught is the 1-3-2 formation, which will be known as “13”. Players set up in two triangles, which maintain a constant relationship as if players are connected on a string. Attackmen form one triangle, middies form a second like this:



- A1: Your most “two-handed” player, ideally a good feeder with vision
- A2: Your strongest right-handed player, ideally a great shooter and a “catch & finish” guy
- A3: Your best left-handed player
- M1: Your best right-handed dodger
- M2: Ideally a solid left-handed middle who can dodge
- M3: Initially will be the middle who draws the LSM, he should set up on the crease

* Formations should be numbered starting from behind the goal (even though this is the improper, you’re-not-from-Upstate New York way to do it!). For example, in a 1-3-2 formation, one player is behind the goal at X, three are located approximately 5 to 7 yards above Goal Line Extended (GLE) spaced evenly across the field, and two players are located just above the top of the offensive box near the midfield line.

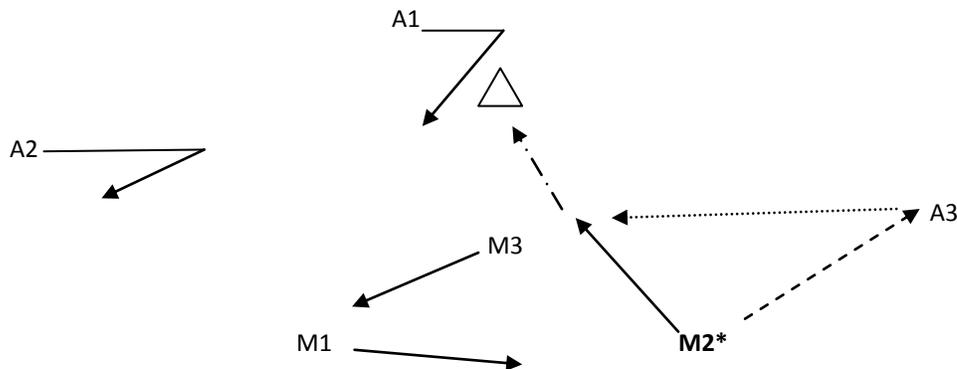
“BROOM” : This is a basic play that can be installed by every BVL team, as diagrammed above. It is a right-handed “sweep” play-- hence the name. Again, we are more concerned about clarity for our own players, and not caring about confusing opponents.

The player with the ball (M1 here) dictates everyone else’s movements. As he sweeps to his right, M2 will “CUT” to the crease—he CLEARS THROUGH—while M3 “FOLLOWS” and “FLOATS” by replacing M1’s position in the triangle. Anytime a dodger leaves one area of the field, another player must look to follow him and *fill* the evacuated area. This will be particularly important when we progress into the 1-4-1 or “Fourteen” formation. M3 should be in a ready position for a “throwback”-type pass from M1 for a quick catch & release shot.

One general rule: The attack triangle should always rotate in the OPPOSITE direction of the middle triangle. This allows attackers to come toward the ball in the event of a pass, instead of moving away from it. A3 also CLEARS THROUGH for the sweeping right handed dodger M1, and can look to set a pick on the far pipe. A2 is responsible for backup, as A1 will now sneak up with his stick in his left hand to provide an outlet option for M1 who is driving to the cage.

Coaches can also institute a simple rule to encourage off-ball movement when the ball is being passed around the perimeter: *When the ball leaves your triangle, your triangle must rotate.* Unfortunately, middies are much more willing to rotate than attackmen, who are generally loathe to leave their preferred areas. You can compensate for this tendency by encouraging attackers to stay active off ball with frequent V- or C- cuts. In the diagram above, if we were passing the ball around in a “Yellow” situation,* if M2 passed the ball to A3, he could then CUT hard to the crease and initiate a middle rotation. This leads to the next progression in the BVL playbook-- a basic give and go play.

“GIVE and GO”: The give and go is a staple of sports like lacrosse, basketball, and hockey. After a player passes off, he CUTS hard to the goal (behind his defender’s turned head) and looks for a quick return pass.



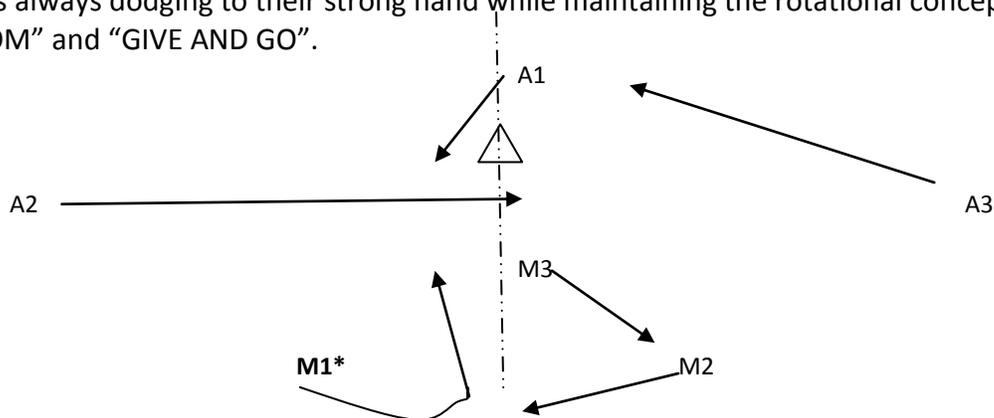
Here, M2 passes off to A3 and CUTS hard to the near pipe with his stick ready to receive a return pass. As the new ball carrier, A3 should be in “TRIPLE-THREAT” position with the ball. He can either dodge hard to the goal, taking advantage of the defensive confusion created by the sudden rotation of the middies, or look to make a quick return pass to the cutting M2. If A3 dodges, M2 should initiate a second middle rotation-- clearing through and floating high as an outlet. Note A2 and A1 using V-cuts rather than rotating to occupy their defender’s attention.

* “Yellow” is the universal lacrosse code word to pass the ball around the perimeter-- to “spin the ball”—in order to control some possession time, to settle the offense down, and to give our defense some time to rest on the other side of the field.

A3 also has two other options:

- 1) Look at A1 who is SNEAKING or going "NINJA"
- 2) Fake the pass to M2, and then pass to M1 who should be FOLLOWING the M2 in a sweeping motion and in prime position for a hard righthanded shot on the run.

"CANADA": This simple play utilizes Jamie Munro's emphasis on the box lacrosse principle of players always dodging to their strong hand while maintaining the rotational concepts of "BROOM" and "GIVE AND GO".



Player M1 starts with the ball and begins sweeping to his right as in "BROOM". Before he crosses "TOPSIDE", or the imaginary dashed line represented above which divides the field in two, he face-dodges his defender and reverses direction to dodge down the left alley. M2 FOLLOWS, M3 FLOATS for a left hand shot. A2 CLEARS THROUGH and looks to set a pick on the far pipe. A1 SNEAKS or goes "NINJA" while A3 replaces A1 and looks to back up any shots.

"GREEN": The universal BVL code word to designate a specific player as the initiating dodger in a freelance play. For example, calling out "Johnny is Green" or "Green 49" indicates that either Johnny or #49 on your team has the "GREEN LIGHT" to dodge the next time he touches the ball. Offball players must then recognize their responsibility to CLEAR THROUGH, CUT, or FOLLOW/FLOAT in accordance with the dodger's movement.

Formations: The "1-4-1" or "Fourteen":

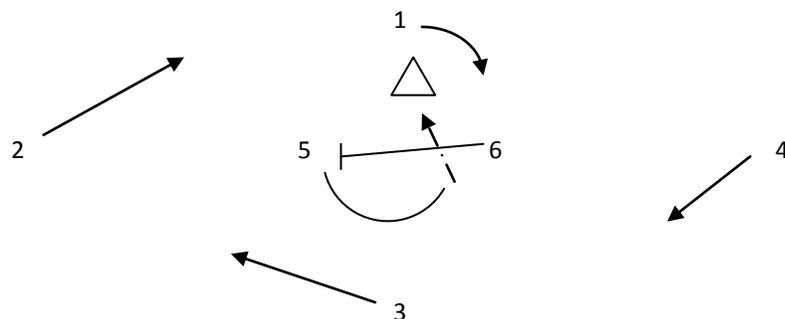
After players have demonstrated significant understanding of "13", coaches of 6th -8th grade teams can begin incorporating the "1-4-1" formation as a change-up and to take advantage of rosters with multiple strong dodgers. Commonly known as "Power" or "Isolation" lacrosse, this formation will be labeled "14" by BVL coaches.

Coaches will be able to use "14" to generate simple but specific plays while encouraging players to understand the freelance style of lacrosse. Plays are initiated by one dodger, who will be directed to pass to a specific area of the field if he draws a slide. The variations of the system are virtually endless and limited only by a coach's individual creativity.

Crease players: Players are constantly moving, picking and repicking in order to draw defensive attention and should always set up "away" from the ball.

- Ball at X: set up high (5-7 yards) above GLE, one on each pipe.
- Ball up top: set up low on each pipe, or in an "1" formation on the dodger's far pipe.
- Ball on the wing: the nearest crease player should be on the opposite pipe.

Players should be taught that each area of the field will be occupied by a player with a specific number:



- 1: Generally your “X” attackman, a solid feeder with two-handed ability and good vision
- 2: Your right-handed attackman OR a strong right handed middle; must be a good outside shooter
- 3: Your best dodging middle, preferably with the ability to drive left or right
- 4: A left handed attacker or middle, ideally a good outside shooter
- 5: A right handed crease middle or attacker, possibly big & slow but with good hands and the ability to finish
- 6: A left handed crease middle or attacker, possibly big & slow but with good hands and the ability to finish

Coaches can generate plays by calling out a two-digit number after players have set up in “14” and swung the ball around the perimeter at least once. The first digit will indicate the “GREEN” dodger, the second digit indicates the player he will look to feed if he draws a slide.

Some examples of plays you can teach:

“15”: See the diagram above. This would be a drive from X initiated by player 1, who should be driving to his left hand. Player 6 will clear through and set a screen on the far pipe on number 5’s defender. 5 “c-cuts” or curls around the pick and shows for a feed from 1 and a quick shot on his right hand. Other players have responsibilities as well. As 1 drives the far side, 2 is responsible for back-up and must FOLLOW. 3 should drift or “FLOAT” to fill the space vacated by 2— he should be set up for an outside time & room shot if 1 is able to throw a skip pass over the defense to him. As 3 drifts down, 4 must float up to draw his defender out of the play. Here, both 3 and 4 share responsibility for sprinting back to prevent a fast break in the event of a turnover-- the primary susceptibility of this formation.

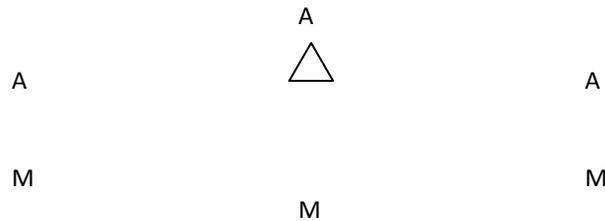
“16”: A simple reversal of the play shown above. Player 1 drives to his *right* hand from X, while player 5 sets a pick for *left*-handed player 6 to curl around for a catch & shoot opportunity. Again, players 5 and 6 must be set up in a high, not low, crease position.

Coaches should feel free to generate their own plays while maintaining this basic numbering system for players. Recognize that the numbering applies to the player within an area, not a specific player. For example, if 2 and 3 exchange places in the course of play, everyone must recognize that the player nearest the midfield line now becomes the “3” in a new call.

For example, you could draw up “24” like this: 2 initiates with a wing dodge. Always picking AWAY from the dodger, 5 could set a screen on 6’s defender. 6 in turn pops out and picks the defender playing 4. 4 curls above the screen, looking for a feed from 2 and an outside shot.

Formations: The “Circle” or “Zero”:

Coaches may want to install the “circle” formation early in the season as a way to improve the offense’s ability to settle the ball down; they should label this formation “Zero”. As the name implies, all six offensive players set up in a circle around the goal with no crease player.



The “Zero” formation should be used when we are in a “YELLOW” situation, i.e. we want to maximize our offensive possession time, make substitutions through the box or the midline, or need to give our defense some rest.

This is also a good time for midfielders to identify which of them is being guarded by a LSM. Frequently in youth lacrosse, middies fail to come off the field with the LSM after a turnover or a shot as the defense begins to clear the ball. This often leads to bad matchup situations where we have three short-sticks on the field defensively. Once the midfielder with the LSM is identified, you can call out “13” or “14” and this player should set up on the crease. Then you can insure at least two matchups on the perimeter where players can dodge against shortsticks.

A NOTE ON PICKS: Given the increasing influence of Canadian box lacrosse on field lacrosse, picks are becoming an increasingly prevalent part of the game at higher levels and should be taught to youth players. However, coaching young players to set picks ON-ball may confuse them when they are also being taught to clear through for dodgers.

To avoid this confusion, we prefer that coaches teach players ONLY to set off-ball picks or “screens” when the ball is above GLE. When the ball is below GLE, coaches may use an on-ball pick as part of a set play or to change a matchup. Of course, coaches should also realize that the area below GLE is also prime territory for a smart defensive team to attempt traps and takeaways by jumping the ball carrier.

Players need to be taught very specifically when to pick on-ball:

- Ball carrier guarded by longpole, pick setter guarded by shortstick: PICKS OK
- Ball carrier guarded by shortstick, pick setter guarded by longpole: DON’T PICK
- Both players guarded by longpole: DON’T PICK
- Both players guarded by shortstick: PICKS OK

In general, we never want to put our ball carrier in a position where he could be double-teamed by longpoles or where the matchup would be tougher as the result of a defensive switch.

RESOURCES for BVL COACHES:

The BVL Board of Directors has authorized a significant investment in coach and player development. We encourage you to take advantages of the following initiatives which have been financially supported by the BVL Board.

US Lacrosse Online Coach Training: BVL coaches can take the US Lacrosse Level I online course free of charge at www.uslacrosse.org. You must be a US Lacrosse member, but we will reimburse your membership cost upon request.

Icon Lacrosse DVDs: We have purchased a substantial inventory of Icon Lacrosse DVDs including *Evolution in Goaltending* by Trevor Tierney, *Fundamentals of Lacrosse* by Josh Sims and Trevor Tierney, and *Advanced Time & Room Shooting* by Josh Sims. BVL coaches will be provided any of these DVDs upon request.

Jamie Munro 3d Lax Clinics: Jamie Munro has posted videos of the drills and concepts taught at his BVL clinics online at www.3dlax.com. Click on "Client Login" then enter user name "bvicoaches" and password "bvla" to access these videos. Incorporate his techniques and training tips to insure dynamic, effective practices.

BVL Website: Check out the "Coaches and Players Corner" tab and the "BVL Select" tab on our website, www.boulderlacrosse.org. We have posted links to drills, practice plans, videos, and wall ball routines there.