Man Down Defense in Boys Lacrosse

Introduction

There are numerous man down defense systems to run against extra-man offenses. The simplest man down defense system incorporates aspects of a defense system used when a team is at full strength. The best man down defense for young and/or inexperienced players is a 4-man rotation.

Man Down Defense: 4-man rotation vs. 1-3-2 or a 2-3-1

Key concepts

- This formation uses the same basic defensive concepts as in transition and team defense.

- Defenders always slides so that the least dangerous player (the player farthest away from the ball) is left open.

- The defensive player farthest from the ball is the one to "split" or cover two players. If either of those two players cuts to the ball, that defender must go with the cutter, leaving the player farthest from the ball open. The defender who goes with the cutter is still splitting 2 players: the man on the crease and the man farthest from the ball.

- As the ball rotates around the perimeter, the responsibility for splitting the 2 least dangerous attackmen should change. This is similar to the sliding system used during settled team defense where the man either adjacent or closest to the ball slides to cover the player with the ball. It is also similar to transition defense when there are 3-vs.-2, 4-vs.-3, or 5-vs.-4 situations (Please refer to the reference section for transitional defensive schemes for these situations).

Defensive player positions

In a 4-man rotation, 4 defensive players create a diamond.

- One player is on the ball carrier, 2 players are adjacent to the ball carrier, and 1 player is on the opposite point from the player covering the ball positioned closest to the crease.

- This player closest to the crease has the responsibility of always covering the crease on the side of the ball carrier. He must position himself with his body between the ball and the attackman on the crease, while looking over his shoulder to anticipate the next pass and the next area of the crease he needs to cover.

Execution

- The man playing the ball should play the ball aggressively. (See player D3.)

- The 2 adjacent players should be ready to pick up the ball carrier if the ball is passed to their area. They should also have their sticks pointing in toward the crease, allowing only perimeter passes to be thrown. (See player D2.)

- As the ball moves from one player to the next, the defensive assignments switch. The defensive player that was adjacent to the ball steps up and covers the ball carrier. (See player D2.)

- The player playing the ball steps in toward the crease, with his stick pointing toward the crease.

- The player that was farthest away from the ball steps out toward an area adjacent to the ball. (See player D4.)

- The player that was adjacent but now is 2 passes away becomes the bottom of the diamond and can step up to cover the back side of the crease. This continues as the ball is passed around the perimeter.

- When an attackman (see player O1) cuts from the perimeter, the defender guarding him (see player D2) covers him for 3 to 5 steps before releasing him to the inside crease area.

- The crease defender (see player D3) then covers the cutter if he positions himself on the crease closest to the ball.

- If the cutter moves back out to the perimeter, he is the responsibility of the 4 outside defenders in the diamond formation.

- If the cutter stays on the crease to make it a multiple crease offense, the defender in the bottom of the diamond will assist in crease coverage (see player D4)—but should be aware that there may be players behind him for whom he is responsible. The crease defender is now splitting 2 offensive players: 1 man on the crease (see player O6) and 1 player on the wing or up top (see player O4).

- Having the perimeter players keep their sticks toward the inside is important in order to prevent passes being skipped through. A skip pass puts extreme pressure on the defense because it gets to the back side faster than the defense can react.