



# Playing Lacrosse: The Boulder Valley Way

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# PLAYING LACROSSE: The Boulder Valley Way

**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, Trevor Tierney, Josh Sims, 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 should use the “132” (aka “rotating triangles”) formation as their standard offensive setup, because it encourages off-ball movement and proper spacing. We also encourage coaches to install a circle or “Zero” offense, as an offensive counter to crease-slide defenses and a remedy for clogged creases.

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, where players are effectively freelancing on the field. 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 a slide from the crease, and constant involvement from all seven defensive players. This style of defense was commonly known as the legendary “Princeton” defense devised by Bill Tierney. We refer to this now as the “Tierney crease-slide system”. 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. Programmatic use of 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. Anxious players will literally grip their sticks too tightly for optimal performance— lacrosse is a fine motor sport which demands relaxed concentration. 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

**Lacrosse is a complex game that needs to be coached simply.** The most successful youth lacrosse coaches will 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.

**In general, coaches should focus upon TEMPO, TOUCHES, and TRANSITION at this level.**

Practices should be run at a quick pace, with no drill lasting more than 10-15 minutes. Coaches should not interrupt drills with long-winded monologues, but rather set up drills quickly and “let the drill do the coaching.” Coaches should always plan out practice in advance. Use the drills found at the back of this manual, or print out the plans posted on our website. 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.

**The vast majority of goals scored in youth lacrosse occur in “transition” situations.** Transition can be defined not just as fast breaks, but also as those brief windows when the offense is able to create an odd-man scenario in a settled situation. These odd-man situations (6v5) can be created by effectively dodging and beating a defender or by setting picks. Therefore, practice drills which involve odd-man scenarios are most effective and highly recommended, as these will train offensive players to look for the open man and train defensive players to understand the concepts of sliding and recovering.

**Coaches may wish to incorporate the concept of a “GREEN” dodger into the offense as well.**

For example, calling out “Johnny is Green” tells everyone that Johnny on your team has the “GREEN LIGHT” to dodge the next time he touches the ball. Off-ball players must then recognize their responsibility to CLEAR THROUGH or CUT in accordance with the dodger’s movement. Commonly, coaches will designate the “Green” dodger as one guarded by a short-stick, or naturally as one of your stronger dodgers who may have a favorable matchup against a defender. This works in tandem with the common lacrosse call of “Yellow” to slow down play during a substitution— explain to your players that these calls work just like a stop light does.

**Picks are a great way to create off-ball movement.** The rapid ascent of Canadian and box lacrosse influence in field lacrosse has forced collegiate coaches to rethink the use of picks, as the picking game is now commonplace. We encourage BVL coaches to teach picks, with this caveat: the point of setting a pick is not necessarily to impede the ball-carrier’s defender, but to create an open space for a dodger and to create a temporary moment of confusion for the defense. Teach your players that it’s not about setting the pick successfully—because youth players will often set a moving pick if this is not emphasized.

**DODGE-PASS-PASS to “flip the field” and create effective offense.** 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, ideally to the opposite side of the field—“flipping the field.” The recipient of this second pass is usually in prime position to attack the backside of the defense. We teach this as “DODGE- PASS-PASS.”

## OFFENSIVE FORMATIONS: The Boulder Valley Way

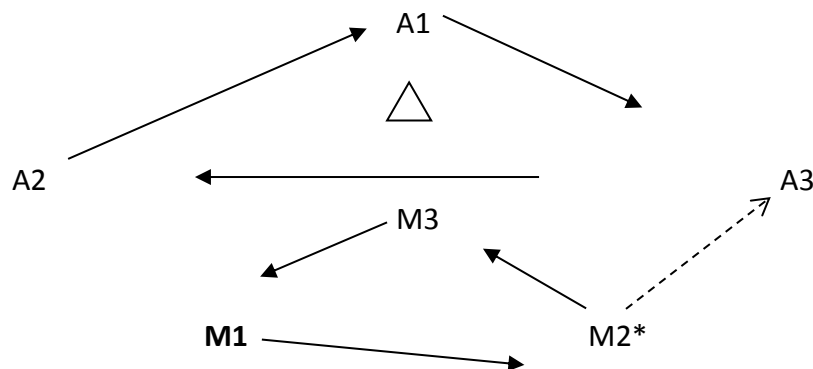
**2 specific formations are the most effective in youth lacrosse: the “132” and the circle.**

Coaches should label these formations as “13” and “Zero” respectively. A few simple rules taught for each formation will enable players of any age or skill level to set up properly, to generate useful off-ball movement, and to dodge effectively. Familiarizing players with both formations will enable coaches to switch up your offense when it stalls or seems ineffective.

### Offensive Formation: The “1-3-2” or “Thirteen”

The first formation which should be taught is the 1-3-2 formation, which should be called “13”. Although numbering from behind is improper, you’re-not-from-Upstate-New-York way to do it, we want to remain consistent in our numbering across all teams in BVL. Teaching this as “13” provides players with an easy way to remember the shape of the formation, as they will set up with 1 player behind the cage and 3 players arranged along GLE (below—A2, M3, A3).

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: The “X” attackman. 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 middle who can dodge

M3: Initially will be the middle who draws the LSM, he should set up on the crease. This allows the middies drawing short-sticks to set up on the perimeter for dodging purposes.

### Rules of the 13 Formation:

- Attackers form one triangle, Midfielders form the second triangle
- When the ball is passed out of one triangle to the other, EVERYONE IN THAT TRIANGLE MUST ROTATE.
- The passer can cut to goal for a “Give and Go”, can cut away to create open space for a dodger, may set a pick down, or may set a pick away. The key is simply that he generates off-ball movement and a transition opportunity.
- When a player cuts into another player’s area, that player MUST move out to a new area.

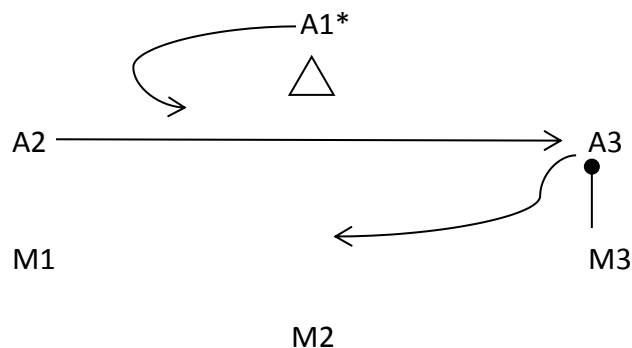
In the example above, when midfielder M2 passes out of his triangle to A3, he must rotate—so he can cut to goal for a “Give and Go” (as shown here), or passes down and picks down on A3’s defender, or passes down and picks away on M1’s or M3’s defender. What M2 actually does is not significant—what matters is that he is moving off-ball, distracting the defense, creating open space, and generating a transition opportunity.

## Offensive Formation: The Circle or “Zero”

The Circle formation has experienced a recent resurgence in popularity over the last few years. It alleviates the common issue of crowding on the crease which often derails a team’s offensive efficiency, as young players positioned on the crease may not understand how to move off-ball effectively in concert with a dodger, or how to move effectively in tandem with another crease player (as in a 1-4-1 formation).

By eliminating the crease attacker, you eliminate “clogging” around the cage and force most defenses to slide adjacent, which creates more difficult slide angles for them. However, circle formations are prone to poor off-ball movement, as the offensive players may simply stand around watching a solitary dodger. Installing a few simple rules (see below) for the Zero offense will help prevent this tendency.

BVL labels this offense as “Zero” because it provides an easy way for players to remember the shape of the formation, as it mimics that of the number “Zero” — and there are “Zero” players on the crease. We are always looking for ways to simplify what we teach our players, so they can play without actively thinking about what they are being asked to do.



A1: The “X” attackman. 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 middie who can dodge

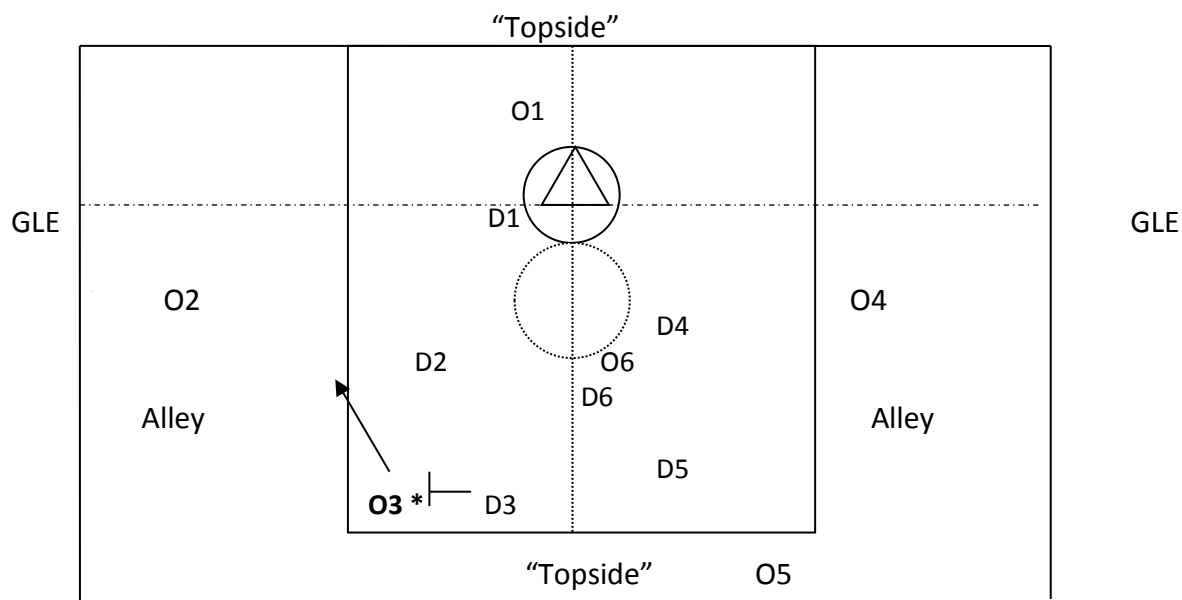
M3: Ideally a middie with strong lacrosse IQ who can read the dodger and react appropriately.

### Rules of the Zero formation:

- All players must understand the strong hand of everyone else in the offense.
- If a player is designated as “Green” or initiates a dodge, the adjacent player to his strong hand **MUST CLEAR THROUGH** to the opposite side of the circle.
- Players on the opposite side of the circle from the dodge should read the play, and one should make a **BACKSIDE CUT** to support the dodger.
- In the example above, coach designates A1 as “Green”. A1 is a strong right-hand dodger. When A1 receives a pass, A2 recognizes that he is the adjacent to A1’s strong hand and **CLEARs THROUGH**.
- On the back side of the dodge, M3 sets a pick down (optional) for A3. A3 makes a **BACKSIDE CUT** to provide an outlet for A1. If A1 beats his man to the goal, he has a shooting opportunity. If not, he can feed A3 for a shot, as A3 should be in position to catch the ball in his strong (left) hand and the offense freelances through this transition opportunity.

## DEFENSIVE BASICS: The Boulder Valley Way

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.***

## COACHING GOALIES: The Boulder Valley Way

The coaching of goalies is perhaps the most intimidating and neglected element in youth lacrosse. Many coaches are hesitant to coach goalies because they did not play the position and end up ignoring the critical impact that a goalie has on a team. Following some simple principles can significantly improve the youth lacrosse experience for a goalie while increasing your team's chances of winning.

Youth lacrosse goalies must be *cherished* and *protected* at all times ! Lacrosse goalie is perhaps one of the most difficult positions to play in any sport, right up there with quarterback in football. They face the physical challenge of being hit repeatedly with a hard rubber ball, and the mental challenge of being blamed inappropriately for goals and losses by teammates.

Coaches must insure that goalies are never used for "target practice" and should never allow players to warm up goalies or shoot on them unsupervised. Goalies often become a target of teammate criticism 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.

**EQUIPMENT:** BVL will provide goalies with all required equipment, including goalie stick, chest protector, and throat guard. Younger goalies and beginning players should be encouraged to use additional protection including shin pads, if desired. BVL will reimburse coaches for the cost of shin pads or other protective gear purchased.

**STICK:** Youth lacrosse goalies should use a shorter shaft (ie a 37"-42" shaft) than commonly provided with store-bought goalie sticks. The shorter shaft allows for quicker reaction times.

**WARMUP:** Coaches only should warm up goalies—NEVER players. When a player warms up a goalie, his intent is to prepare himself for the game—not the goalie. But the purpose of a warmup is to build the goalie's confidence and to sharpen his vision of the ball. Coaches should temper the speed of warmup shots to the ability level of the goalie. If a goalie is missing most shots, slow the tempo down. If necessary, simply shoot the ball into the goalie's stick to build his confidence back up.

Warmups can follow this progression:

- Stick side high (basically shoot the ball into the goalie's stick)
- Off stick side high
- Stick side hip
- Off stick side hip
- Stick side low
- Off stick side low
- Bounce shots
- Random mix of shots
- Coach pep talk with goalie



**THE PHILOSOPHY of LATERAL STEPPING:** Boulder Valley Lacrosse has close ties with legendary lacrosse goalie Trevor Tierney, who developed a revolutionary theory about goaltending. Historically, goalies have been taught to step out to the shooter on an extended arc (“Step to the ball”) and to hug the pipe when the ball reached GLE.

But 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 stepping laterally (side to side) rather than outward on an arc. The concept of stepping out to the ball is antiquated and derives from hockey, where goalies wear significantly more padding and the shot always comes from the ice. In lacrosse, shots may come from any level and passing to a cutter on the back side of the goal is significantly easier.

### **The Principles of Lateral Stepping:**

- Goalies situate themselves in the middle of the net and take “baby steps” to the left or right in alignment with the ball-carrier.
- Goalies often have a tendency to “shade” to one pipe or the other, which opens up more of the goal to shooters. They should be coached to remain relatively centered in the goal, except when a dodger is driving from X to one side of the goal.
- Never tell a goalie to “step to the ball”. This decreases the goalie’s reaction time and opens up the back side of the goal for a feed on the doorstep.
- Goalies keep their shoulders “square” to the shooter’s shoulders at all times. You can tell a goalie to draw two imaginary parallel lines or “laser beams” from his shoulders to the ball-carrier’s.
- Goalie should assume an athletic, “linebacker” stance at all times. Goalie should be on the balls of his feet, not his heels.
- Knees are at least shoulder-width apart and slightly bent. This permits the goalie to push off his back foot and make a quick lateral step along GLE.
- His hands should be held away from the body, his elbows are bent, but his arms are not fully extended.
- A goalie’s primary focus is seeing the ball. Maintaining a “quiet” stance—not moving excessively— will help him to see the ball better.
- The goalie should communicate with his defense but his primary job is to stop the ball.
- The defense is responsible for communicating slides and on-ball responsibility.
- Even coaches uncomfortable with coaching goalies can always provide feedback to them about their stance (hands and feet) along with their positioning along the goal line.

The goalie is the most important player on your team. Don’t neglect him because you’re uncomfortable coaching goalies-- embrace these simple principles and watch your goalie thrive.

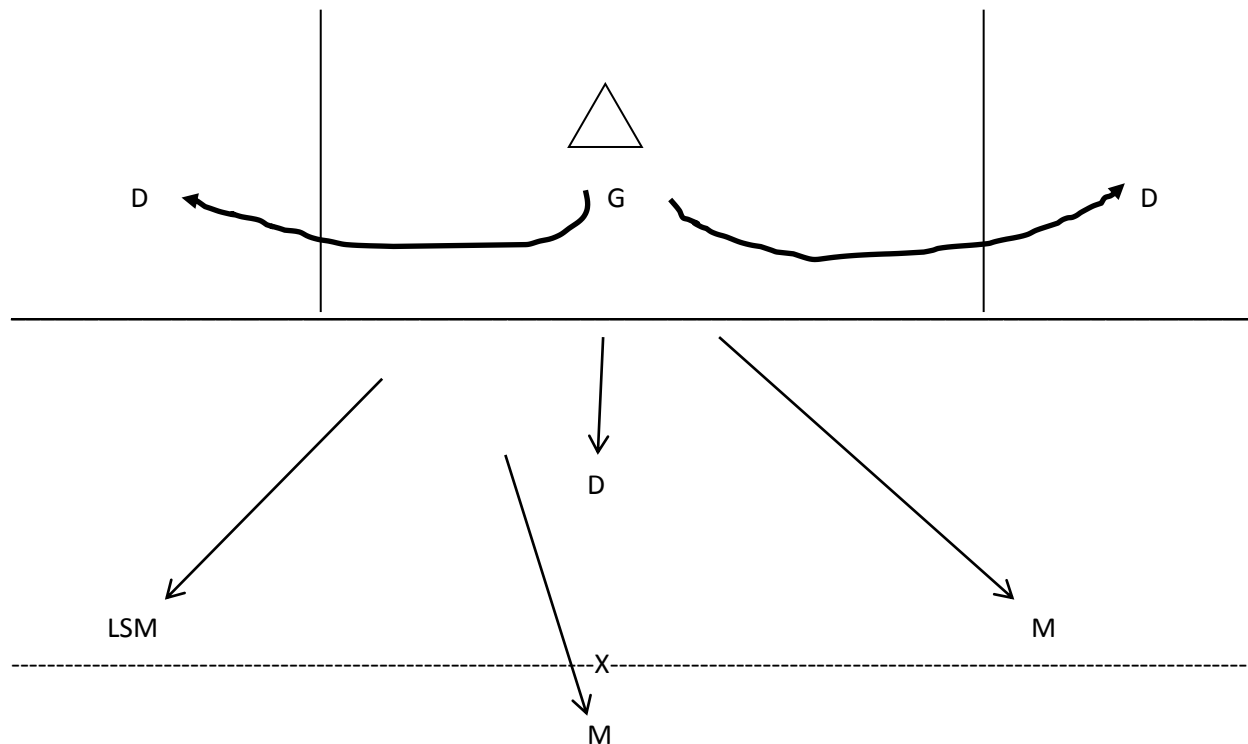
**SEARCH “TREVOR TIERNEY” ON YOUTUBE FOR EXCELLENT GOALIE INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS.**

## CLEARING BASICS: The Boulder Valley Way

An effective clear can make a huge difference for a youth lacrosse team. We encourage BVL coaches to install the “Basic Clear” shown below, early in the season. Incorporate clearing and riding into as many drills as possible, for example by playing out to a clear after a shot or turnover in a drill.

### BASIC clear:

- Goalie makes save, yells “CLEAR” at the top of his lungs
- 2 defensemen run “banana” routes at high speed to the sidelines. Head of stick to the outside of the field, defenseman looking at the stick head and over his shoulder
- One defenseman settles down in the middle of the field at the restraining line, ready to retreat in the event of a turnover
- One SS middie breaks quickly towards upper corner of defensive half opposite sub box
- Other SS middie breaks to the faceoff X
- Long stick middie (if you use one) breaks to substitution box, short stick middie breaks out of substitution box down field. If he is open, tell the goalie to “LOOK BOX”
- All players need to be looking over their shoulder at goalie for a quick outlet, especially the LSM
- Two defensemen must always stay in straight line with goalie
- Emphasize SPREADING OUT in order to make riding difficult
- Goalie coached to look middle first for a quick outlet to a breaking middie, then to sides if that is not open.
- Goalie coached NEVER to clear the ball “late” down the middle



## COACHING BASICS: The Boulder Valley Way

Youth lacrosse coaches will confront a number of issues over the course of a season. Utilize these essential pointers that will help you navigate through them successfully.

**COMMUNICATE:** Communication with parents will make or break your season. Your team can go winless, but if you communicate well with your team parents, they will consider it a successful year. Explain your background, coaching philosophy, and approach to playing time. Many coaches resist communicating with parents because they fear the legendary “helicopter” and “snowplow” parents out there. But you will find that your coaching experience is greatly improved and more enjoyable when you step up and lead from the front with your communication in weekly emails, phone conversations, and team meetings.

**BE ON TIME and DRESS FOR SUCCESS:** Always be the first one at the field. If you tell your team to be at the game field 45 minutes before the game, you should be there 60 minutes before the game. Punctuality, communication, and appearance go a long way with parents. Dress like a coach-- we have provided you with Boulder Valley Lacrosse apparel for a reason. BVL coaches do not wear flip-flops at practices or games— you simply cannot demonstrate lacrosse skills in them. And bring a whistle everywhere you go—keep a spare in your glove compartment.

**PLAYING TIME POLICY:** Playing time creates more friction than any other issue in youth sports. As a coach, recognize first of all that every parent has the right to advocate for their child. You don't have to agree with the parent, but you do need to honor their right to voice an opinion.

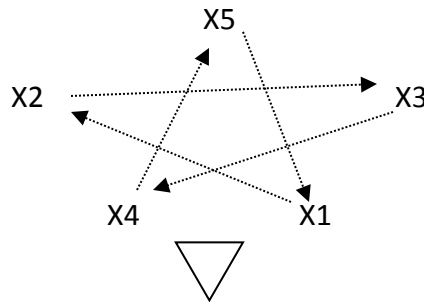
- Every player plays in every game.
- Playing time does not have to be equal, but should be significant for each player. We recognize that this is challenging, particularly on teams with as many as 20+ youth players. Always keep in mind that long-term player development is our primary goal.
- Plan ahead ! A spreadsheet with starting lineups for each quarter is a great way to keep organized in the mass confusion that can be a youth lacrosse team sideline.
- Try to start every player at least once at the beginning of a quarter. This helps parents to see that their son is getting significant playing time.
- Communicate your individual playing time policy to parents before games begin. For example, if a player insists on playing attack only, you may wish to inform parents that he will see less playing time than a player willing to rotate through other positions.
- Even if a player misses practice that week, he should still see some game time. Again, you must communicate with the parents about your personal policy here. When he shows up before the game, have him bring a parent over so you can have a quick conversation about his absence at practice that week.
- Get your less talented players into the game EARLY. Starting certain players in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter is a great way to get them significant playing time while the game is still undecided. Then, if the game is close late in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, you can play your best players in the effort to win the contest. This practice also makes for a more engaged, enthusiastic bench, as every player feels invested in the team when he gets to play.



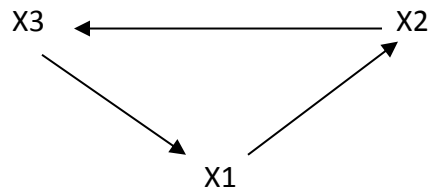
## STICKWORK DRILLS: The Boulder Valley Way

**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.



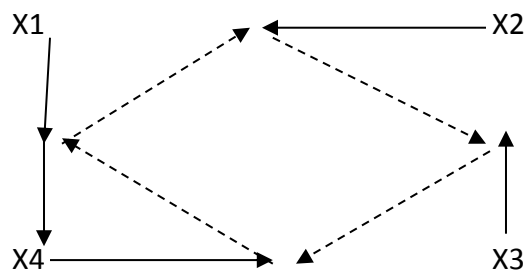
**Triangle Passing:** Players pass to first player in next line and follow their pass by running. Players rotate through standard passes and mimic dodges as they catch the ball, including face, split and roll dodges. Then reverse the rotation of the triangle so players must use off-hands.



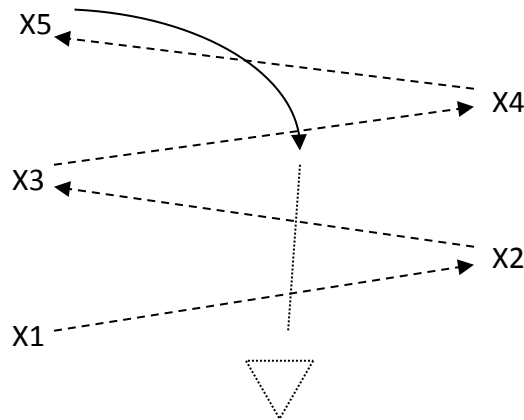
**Hash to Hash Passing:** Players pair up in two lines approx 20 yds apart (the width of the hashmarks on a football field). Pairs run downfield passing back and forth with stick in the outside hand. Variation: groundball into a pass, shuffle sideways and quick stick with partner, windup or “collarbone cradle”, windup into face dodge, face dodge into flip, behind the back.

**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.



**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.

## TRANSITION & GAME SCENARIO DRILLS: The Boulder Valley Way

**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.

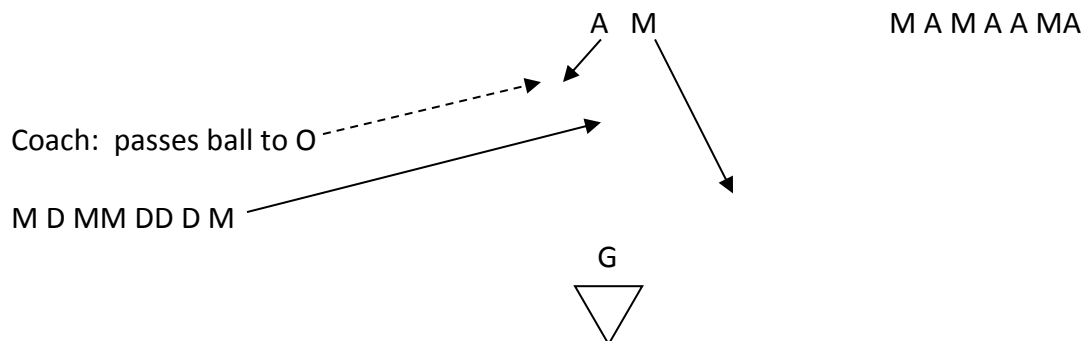
Example: A2 shoots on cage, G makes save. B1 and B2 step off. A2 sprints back to his original side of field. A1 and A3 remain on field to defend vs B3, B4, and B5 who now attack opposing goal after outlet pass from G.

- 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.



**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.

**7 Line GBs:** (Alternate: 5 Line GBs) Organize according to practice numbers (4v3 preferred).

- 4 lines of White, 3 lines of Green. Coach rolls out GB. If white possesses, one pass minimum and play to a shot. If green possesses, D must pass to goalie and clear ball to midfield. Switch offense & defense after 8 mins. Coaches focusing on "SHAPES" Offensively & Defensively.
- For 7 line GBs: 4 O always spread out into BOX, 3 D forming Triangle. O stays spread out, D rotates opposite to ball movement.
- For 5 line GBs: 3 O always form Triangle, D forms I with one man calling and taking "ball" or "man, 2nd player taking "First Pass".

**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.

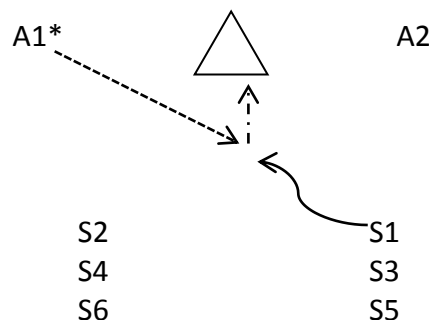
**Touch The Cone:** Set up 6 O lined up across the midfield line, 5 D lined up across the restraining line. Set up a cone in the "hole" approximately 5 yards above the crease. On the whistle, 6 O start a fast break simultaneously, while the 5 D must "get in the hole", touch the cone, and play "inside-out".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

**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.

**Cross Cage Shooting Drill:** Set up 2 lines up top facing the goal & 2 feeder spots along GLE but not right next to goal. Feeders (A1 and A2 below) can be coaches or players depending upon skill level. Have a bucket of balls for each feeder.

- Player in first line (S1 below) cuts to opposite pipe and receives feed from A1 at GLE spot, then shoots on cage. After feeding, player can rotate to feeder line or back to other shooting line.
- Alternate line cuts (S2 below). Practice Shooting On The Run 1st (8 min) then Time & Room Shooting (8 min).

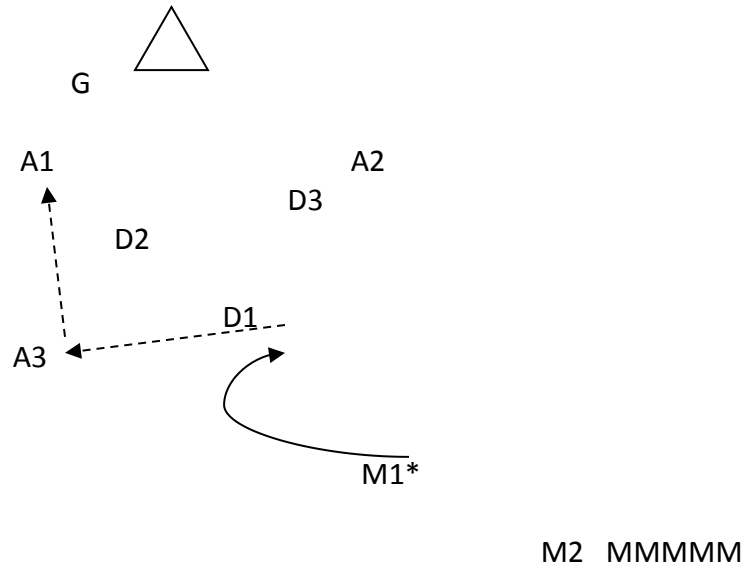
NO GOALIES IN CAGES FOR SHOOTING DRILLS ! Let goalies shoot.





**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 against M2. 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.

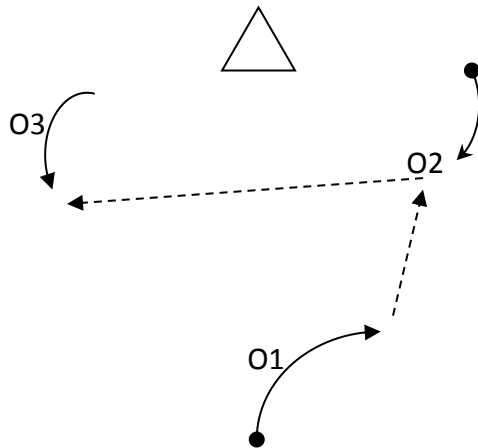
*M1 needs to draw and drag D 1 and D3 as far to his right as possible, then bang the ball back across "topside," ie the imaginary dotted line here dividing the field in two, to A3. If D2 is late rotating up, A3 will have a good shot. If D2 rotates up in time, A3 looks to dump the ball down to A1 for 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.

Play out to a goal or clear, then M1 exits. M2 battles M3 for the groundball to start next rep.

**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.

**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.

**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.

