



US LACROSSE COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAM

Goalie Play in Boys Lacrosse

The goalie is the final line of defense.

At this level, temptation might be to take one of your less-skilled players and throw him in the cage. Resist it.

The goalie position requires high-level physical skills and concentration to successfully handle shots at high rates of speed. It also requires natural athletic instincts.

Though a goalie's primary responsibility is to stop the ball from going into the goal, he can help his cause with good stick skills, proper positioning and knowledge of the defense and shooters.

Take time to develop these instincts in your goalie.

Teaching the Skill: Stick Work

A goalie should take time to develop the same stick skills – passing, catching, scooping and dodging – as a position player.

Because a goalie stick comes with a wider head and shallower pocket, it can make for a tricky release.

The top hand is lower down the shaft for longer-distance throws and outlet passes.

His release happens with his hands high above his head to get good leverage on passes.

Practice these passes for accuracy with players cutting away from the goalie.

Teaching the Skill: Stance and Positioning When the Ball is Up Top

“Ready” position for a goalie starts with a well-balanced athletic stance:

- Arms and elbows relaxed and away from the body
- Back upright
- Knees comfortably bent
- Feet shoulder-width apart
- Weight distributed evenly on both feet

This allows the goalie to step in either direction to meet an oncoming shot.





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Instruct your goalie to hold his stick at chest to shoulder height, angled across his body to the top-hand side.

Finally, the goalie's shoulders should be square to the shooter.

Teaching the Skill: Goalie Position When Ball is Behind Goal

When the ball is behind the goal by 10 yards or more, the goalie positions himself on the opposite side pipe to allow better field vision and prevent a backdoor feed to that side.

As the ball carrier gets closer to the crease from behind, the goalie steps on the imaginary one-yard arc.

With each step the ball carrier takes, the goalie does the same, until they eventually meet on the doorstep.

When the ball carrier reaches goal line extended, the goalie is standing right next to the nearest pipe.

If the ball is passed from behind the cage, the goalie resets his feet and shoulders on the arc to position himself to make the save.

Teaching the Skill: Movement

Like all positions, the critical, fundamental element of goalie play is footwork.

A save starts when the goalie puts his best foot forward – literally.

He creates an invisible arc that goes from pipe to pipe and extends 1 yard to all points from the middle of goal line extended.

The goalie steps with his lead foot in the direction of the shooter.

If the shot is coming to his right side, he steps with his right foot, and vice versa.

After each step, the goalie brings his back foot up to the lead foot to reestablish a balanced position.

Get your goalie comfortable with this step-and-recover movement with repetitive high tosses from different angles.





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Teaching the Skill: Defending Shots

After your goalie masters his positioning and first step, he's ready to see some shots.

(It is important to build the goalie's confidence. Coaches, keep all shots in the air as the goalie reinforces the proper footwork.)

When defending shots, the goalie steps toward the direction of the ball, leading with the top hand.

He keeps his shoulders square to the shooter.

Stick-side high shots

If the ball is shot high to the goalie's stick side, the goalie attacks the ball by stepping with the foot nearer to the ball, while moving his top hand toward the ball.

His completes the save by bringing his trailing foot up to his lead foot.

Off-stick side high shots

The goalie attacks the ball by stepping with the foot nearer to the ball while moving his top hand across his face toward the ball.

His completes the save by bringing his trailing foot up to his lead foot.

Low shots

The goalie's mechanics remain the same for low shots as high shots.

Stick side - low

As the shot travels below waist level, the goalie attacks the ball by stepping with the foot nearer to the ball, while dropping his top hand toward the ball.

His completes the save by bringing his trailing foot up to his lead foot and then returning to his athletic stance.





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Off-stick side - low

As the shot travels below waist level to the off-stick side, the goalie attacks the ball by stepping with the foot nearer to the ball, while sweeping his top hand down and across his body toward the ball.

He completes the save by bringing his trailing foot up to his lead foot and then returning to his athletic stance.

Bounce shots

The goalie attacks the ball by stepping with the foot nearer to the ball while dropping his top hand down toward the ball as it bounces, leaning his head over his stick.

He completes the save by bringing his trailing foot up to his lead foot.

Error Detection and Correction

Error:

A young goalie does not step to the shot, but reacts with his stick only.

Correction:

Practice footwork until it is natural, removing the goalie's stick if necessary.

Remind him to get his whole body behind the shot, following his stick.

Error:

The goalie steps with the wrong foot or steps across his body.

Correction:

Practice correct footwork and remind him to keep his body square to the shooter.

Emphasize balance.





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Error:

The goalie consistently gets beat low and on bounce shots.

Correction:

Stress that he keeps a low center of gravity, dropping low for those shots with his entire body – not just his stick.

Error:

As the ball moves from behind the goal, the goalie's steps are too wide and he winds up out of position or off balance.

Correction:

Remind him of the imaginary one-yard arc.

Emphasize making quick steps, calculated in one-yard increments, with his feet moving with every touch of the ball.

Error:

The goalie is frequently late to return to starting position, making saves more difficult.

Correction:

Control his stick.

Do not lean it on the post or wave it for a potential interception.

Rather, keep his stick at chest level and focus on his feet.

