

Better positioned

(The improvement of the system of play using training in theory and in practice for specific positions)

As trainers we require that certain basic principles of the system of play must be present in order to withstand the increased demands in various situations of the game. The “understanding of the game” is a very wide subject area, which has to be dealt with not only methodically and didactically but also with technical practices/exercises. We experience ourselves on the sideline with a manifold of tips before and during the game. We think that we have done a good job, often without asking ourselves, how much of the advice is actually taken in or respectively has been understood. It is only in the most seldom cases do we experience during training or during a match that a special request is made in the form “Could you explain that again, I didn’t quite understand it”. I have often experienced this, since the fear of asking a “stupid” question in front of the group (note: there is no such thing as a stupid question, only stupid answers) deters most people from posing the question. Here are a few tips on this.

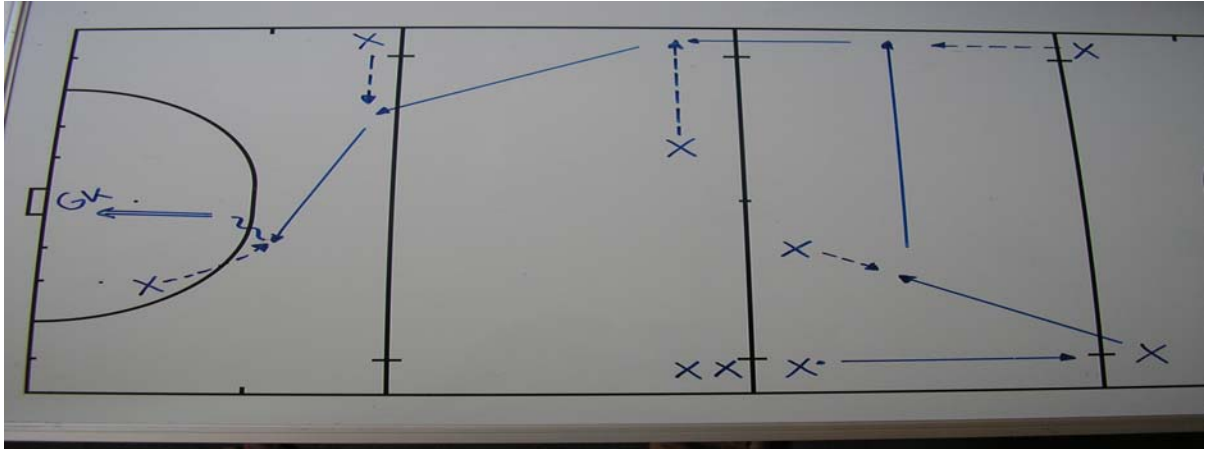
Tip 1: You can use a normal practice game (within the team) or a specific form of play to check the “standard of knowledge”. You can coach very intensively with your usual “vocabulary” and simulate a normal competition situation. The following announcement should be made prior to play: “It could be, that I interrupt the game and ask one of the players what I had meant by the comment XYZ. If I don’t get an answer then the opposing team is awarded 3 points (or something similar).” In this way all the players are sensitized to use the information more consciously and I myself can recognize what has actually been understood and what has not. You will be amazed how many simple questions are posed all of a sudden (which one has as a matter of course taken as already checked). This is the beginning of a “joint” further development.

Tip 2: You can divide the talk up into three small discussion groups: defence / mid field / attack. If you have video material, use this as a support. Otherwise a board with markers and figures will do the job. Begin with 2-3 points (depending upon the level of proficiency) from the “task profile” and then start a lively question and answer game. Here you will also make the experience, that an intensive and very detailed discussion evolves. You will not only be surprised by the alertness and interest with regard to the scope of content but also to the amount of time consumed.

Tip 3: Let each group work out the details of a task profile and let them present them in their own vocabulary (hopefully yours!). The aim should be to code the information and make it understandable. Make it clear to your group that it is not the amount of information which is in the foreground but the number of times it makes “click”. It’s not enough to accept the obvious deficit of understanding of the game as the reason for a bad system of play. The task profiles printed in the attachment should animate you to find your own guideline. These task profiles have no claim to completeness, but contain only one’s own experiences or interesting conclusions from other teams. Extend these and put subject matter in the foreground which gives consideration to age and proficiency. On the following pages some exercises are presented which should deliver insight into specific positions, without set situations like Freehits, PC, LC.

Tip 4: Have a little seminar (“called Tactical Seminar”) about more than one period. We have the time and rest, to make tactical connections conscious. On one day in instruction hours, at the beginning of the season, you have a “useful start”.

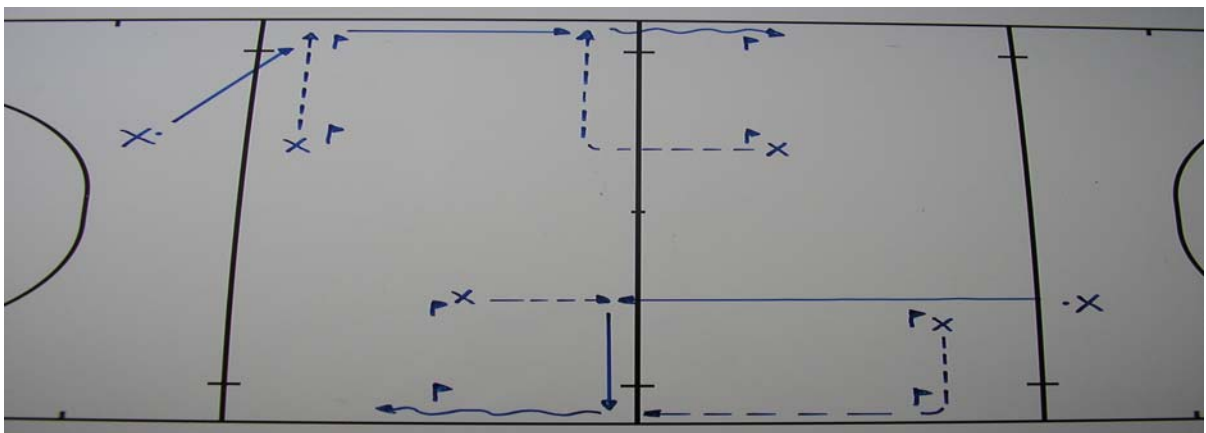
Tactical training



Preparatory practice 1

Technical practice without opponents on the whole field. This way typical pass and running situations of the game are simulated.

The main focuses are on timing running and the pre-orientation for receiving and passing the ball. The players each change positions in the direction of the pass so that they pass through all positions. What is important is high speed during all elements of technique adjusted to the capability of the training group. If, despite a high speed of practice the group is not stretched to the full, further technical elements can be introduced either before or after the central practice element.



Preparatory practice 2

This exercise represents an extension of the previous one. In the first version (above) the ball is passed diagonally to the player who is running towards the sideline, who then passes it straight on to the player who is running sharply outwards to continue the ball control.

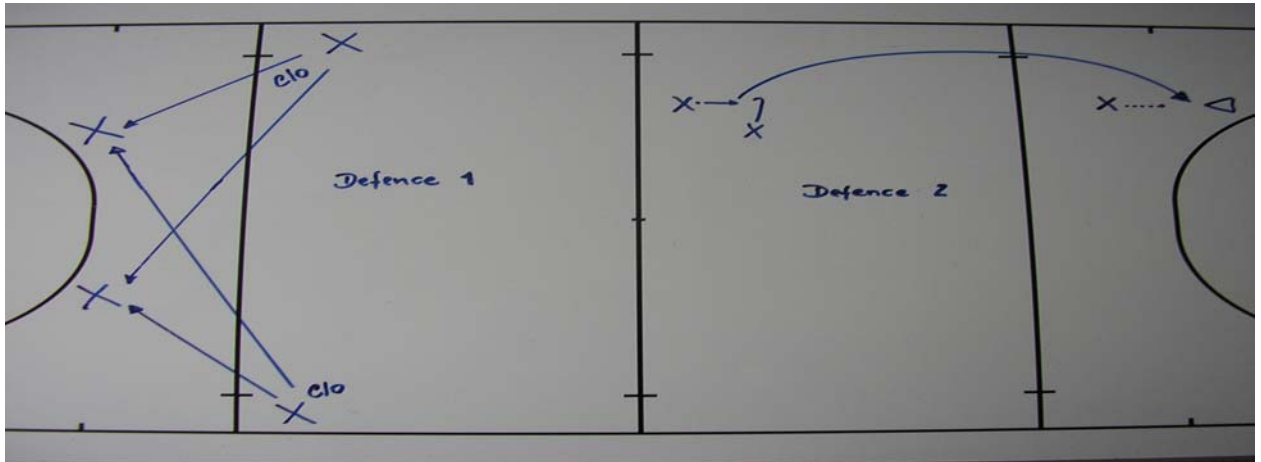
In the second version the player further away is passed straight on to, who then passes to the player running up the sideline to continue ball control.

Decisive for the success of the exercise is the timing of the passes respectively the running patterns up to taking over the ball. It is right when the player can receive or pass the ball without losing much speed, it is wrong if he has to wait before passing or receiving a ball.

This exercise can be completed with a concluding flank and shot at the goal and can be integrated into the main section of the training.

The quality of the pass is important for the quick set-up situation. Low passes – by a push shot is the best – make fast pass combinations possible.

The training speed automatically slows down when balls bounce due to the increased demands on ball control.



Defence training 1

The typical passes between inner and outer defence which move along the half and outer tracks are practised.

It is important to take possession of the ball in the direction of the pass, which should always prepare a fast pass.

When approaching the situation of play the players should always keep changing their positions so that the player passing the ball has to keep re-orientating himself.

Further at an advanced stage a deceived exchange can be played whereby the opponent is lured to one side by slow passes, then to be surprised by a fast return.

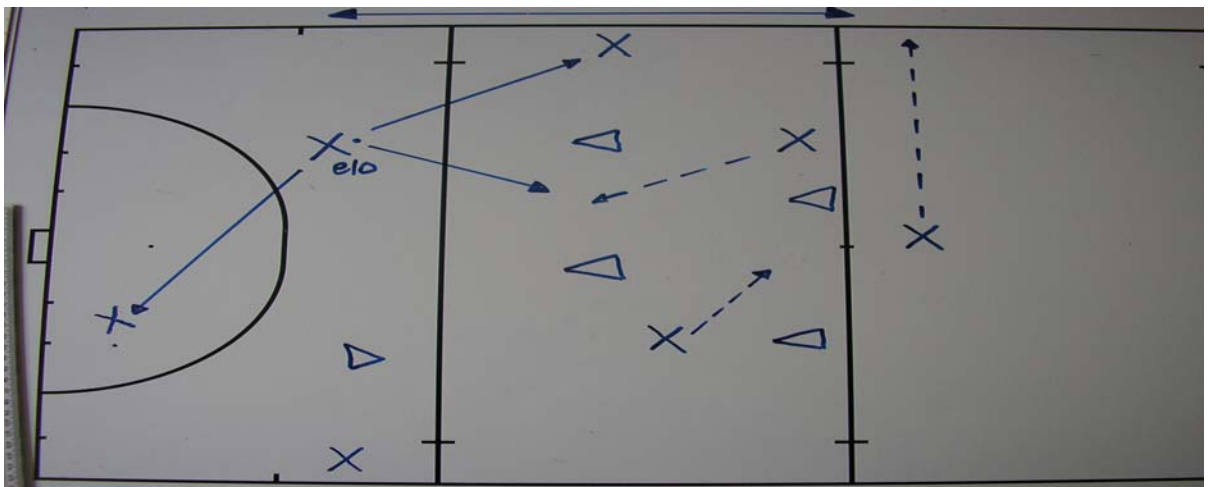
Defence training 2

Below: The ball is forwarded, stopped by the team-mate (free hit situation) and then flicked. The player taking possession of the ball controls the ball and flicks the ball back in the same way.

Top: After taking possession of the ball the player is immediately put under pressure by his opponent. He has to try to lead the ball through one of the two goals in a man-to-man situation.

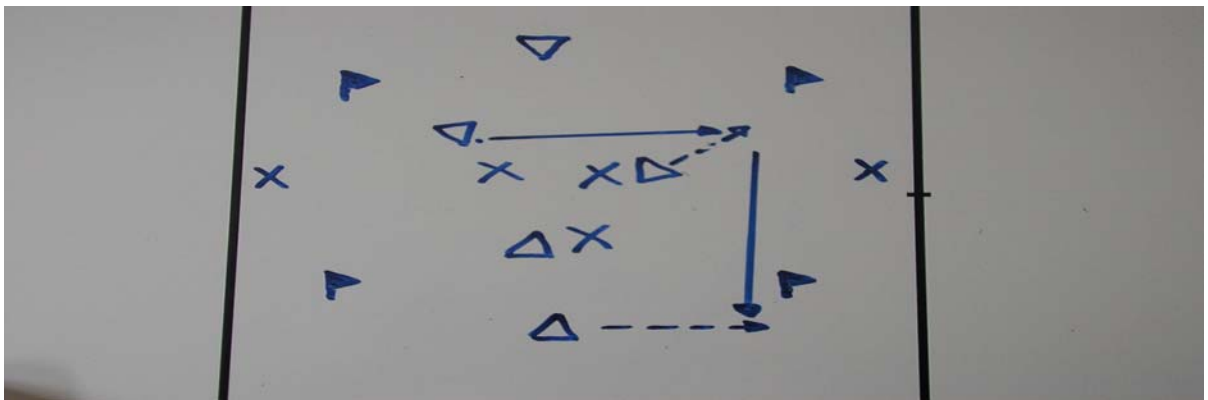
If he succeeds, he flicks the next ball to the other side. If he fails against his opponent then the tasks change.

Alongside keeping the necessary distance which the ball has to roll before the flick one must also pay attention to a regular distance kept by the opponent whilst taking possession of the ball.



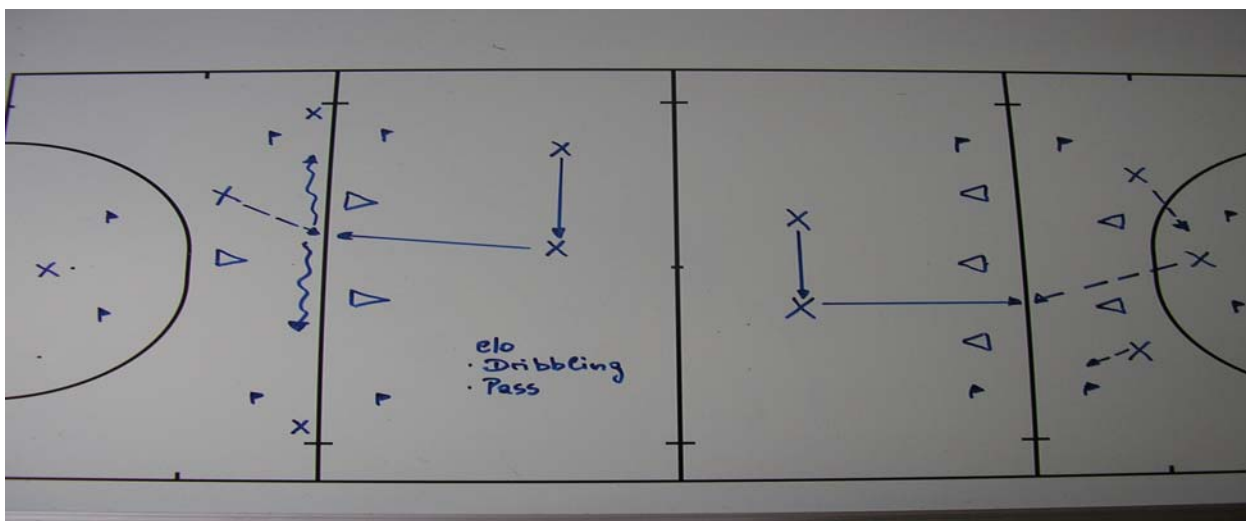
Defence / Midfield practise 1 (7 - 4 e/o - 5)

With this practise we have a lot of variants in build-up in cooperation with midfield. 4 or 5 opponents try variable to disturb the built up. If the ball should have arrived the centreline the new game direction is back to baseline. So we have a contact game between baseline and centreline. Change the 4 (5) "running" opponents : after 5 time loosing the ball.



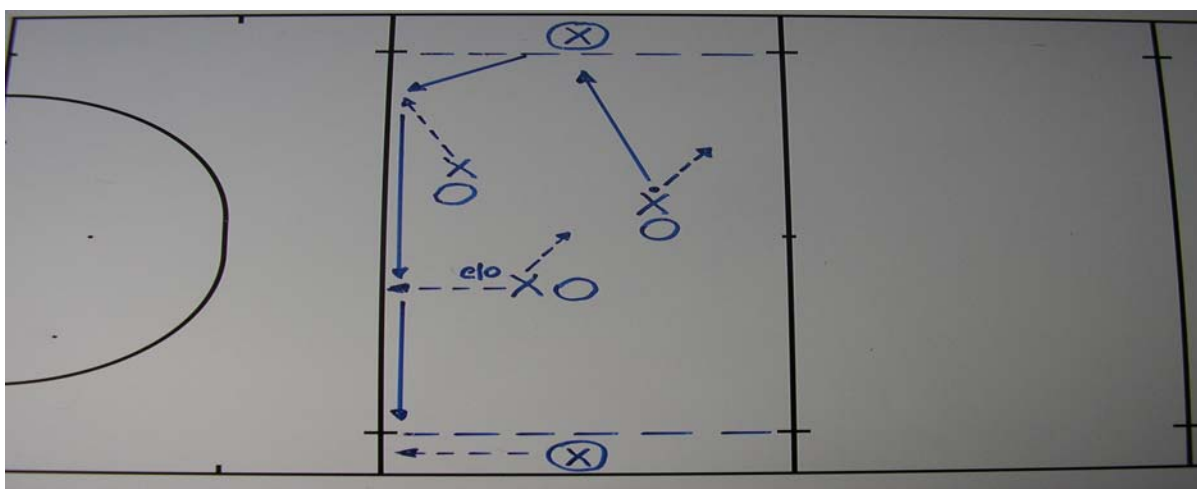
Defence / Midfield practise 2

Here, a three against three situation is played in a limited field. The aim of the game is to contact the ball on the other side from the player hitting the ball whereby here the teams have their own players with different playing positions. What is important in this situation is the distribution and use of the pitch as well as the constant running to fetch the ball and leaving the area of approach so that the next player can run into this space.



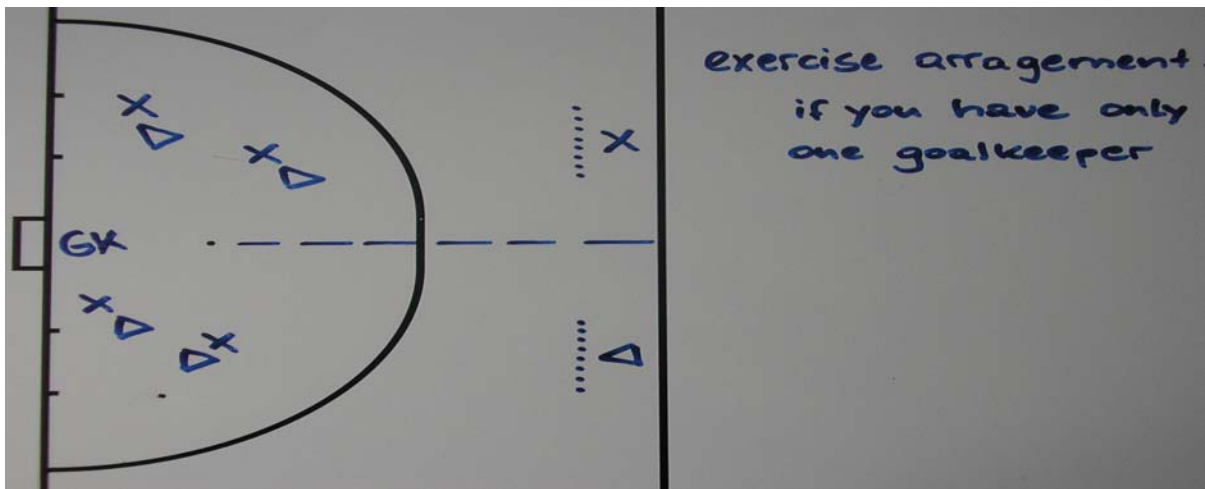
Midfield practice 1 (2 versions)

An inner defence player makes a through pass behind the window of approaching midfield players. This player decides to play round them respectively to dribble until he can push the ball through one of the three goals. It is important to make a fast, confident pre-orientation and decision in order either to keep possession of the ball or to pass it back to the other player. Exercise on the right: now a pass into one of the two triangles followed by a return pass or running through the three goals (here opponents are passive). In the advanced stage both triangles can be approached and vacated again by players, so that in this way the change of position between strikers and midfield players can be practised.



Midfield practice 2

Here again a three against three situation is played in a quarter of the pitch with the aim of playing a complete change of side diagonally. This time the players on the outer tracks are neutral players who pass the ball back to the team in possession of the ball. What is important is that the whole width of the hockey pitch is used and that by clever play the players can run into a favourable position to take possession of the ball.

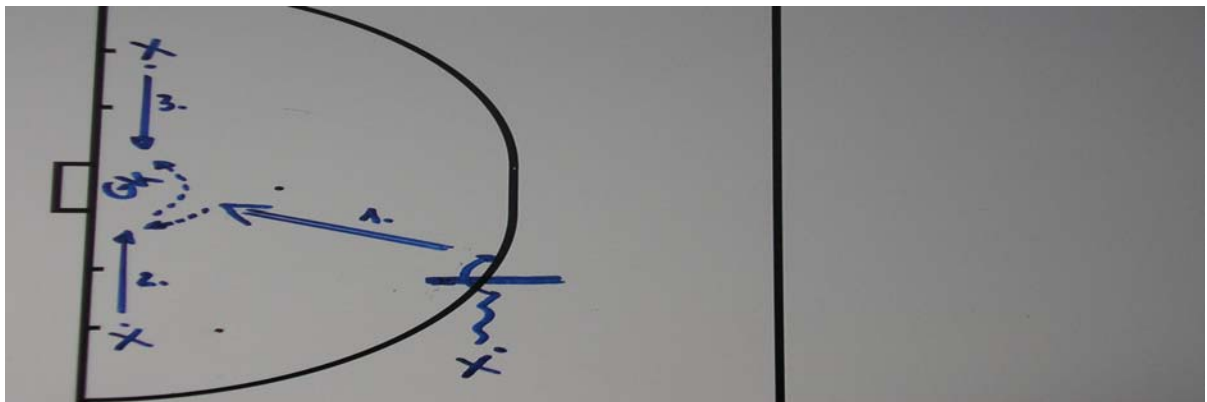


Midfield / Attack practice: (“Distance-Duel”) two against two

Exercise on left side of the pitch: here after a pass from the middle of the pitch a two-against-two is played leading up to a goal.

Thereby one team puts the attackers in one part of the pitch and the defenders in the other part of the field. It's very important, that the both teams have the same numbers of attacks.

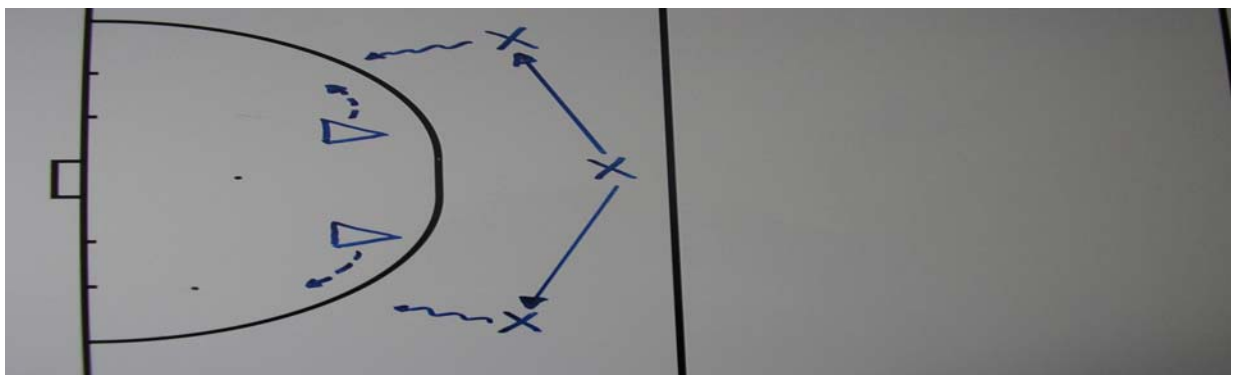
At the end of the practice time both results are added together.



Attack practice 1

(Exercise on right side of the pitch) Three isolated different goal shot situations are strung together and practised.

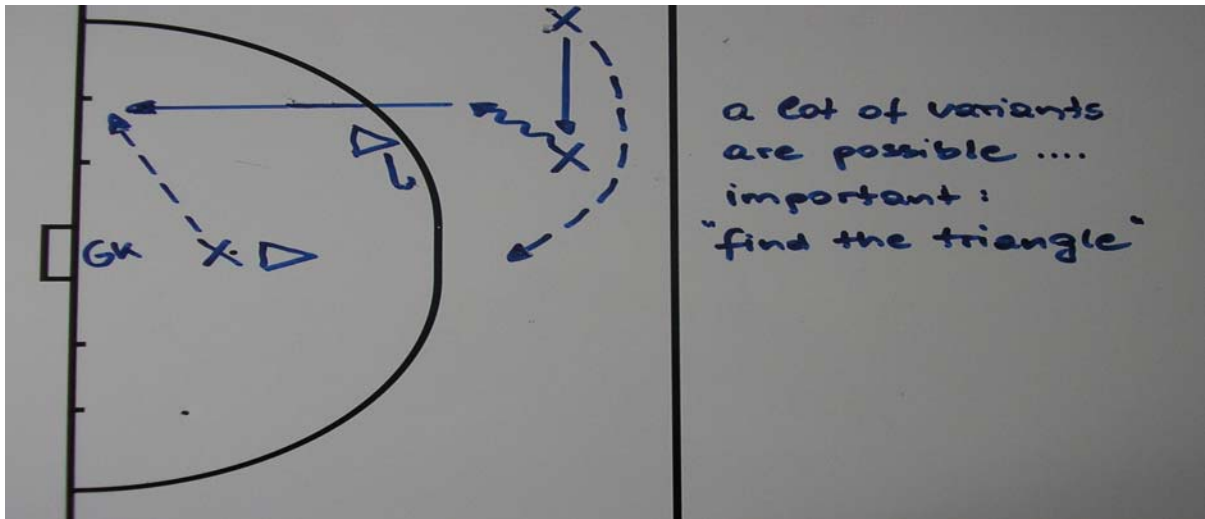
The player starts dribbling the ball then lifts it over a bar followed by a shot at goal. Now he runs past the short post to the (Stecher?) after a flank from the left, then a shot at goal after a flank straight across in front of the goalkeeper.



Attack practice 2 (1-1)

The striker presses after taking possession of the ball from the middle via the wing into the circle.

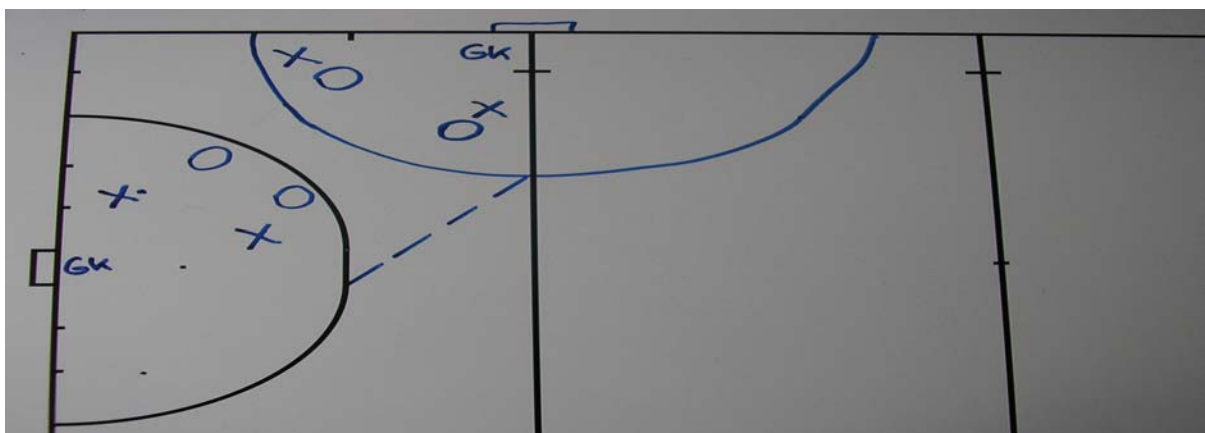
Through clever running he must try to get the defence out of the ideal defence line and by simulating playing around one side and a fast counterattack on the other side to get into a good position to score a goal.



Attack practice 3

Play three against two or three against three with the main focus on starting a through pass on the base line. The exercise begins with a pass from the wing inwards and is followed by the player who passed the ball offering himself in the track of the ball.

The player in possession of the ball now has to decide whether after shortly dribbling he should make a through pass to the player cutting across the back line or inwards to the player who passed the ball. Afterwards the attack is played through up until a shot at goal.



Defence versus Attack (special game)

You can play Right defense versus Left attack or Left defence versus Right attack. Very many decisions on competition situations are provoked by the specific room layout and the raised percentage to striking circle face. In order to increase the place value of PC a Penalty Stroke is carried out at PC.

At the following pages, there are a lot of detail information about the runways and decisions in various situation. To the better one sense :

GK:Goalkeeper / LID:Left inner defence / RID:Right inner defence / RD:Right defence / LD:Left defence / RM:Right Midfield / MM:Mid midfield / LM:Left midfield / RF:Right forward / CF:Center forward / LF:Left forward

Job specification: Defence

Defence during own ball possession

- Goalkeeper as short pass – either/or forming pairs in the centre
- Continually and immediately make passes to dynamic positions
- Built up with 4 players with RID (right inner defence) and LID (left inner defence), defence version, important: dynamic positions of inner defence/outer defence
- Move up immediately to provoke a situation of having a superior number
- Build up with four players also against defence players of the opponent since the attack in the half tracks is feasible because of the right-angle position
- It makes sense to jump positions in order to disperse the defence formation of the opponent
- Build up with 3 players with offensive ID (inner defence) at the crossing points of the opponent's attackers. Aim: first ball through the half track then change of track to RD or LD (outer defence) mostly after development of game
- Deceptive build-up (e.g. through running path) with a fast development on the original side.

Game situation:

- Consistent, uncompromising striking out (reduces the demands of the game!)
- Pass by the outer defence with direct change of track against the running direction of the opponent's attacker (interior development)
- Flick the ball as a technical/tactical version out of extreme zones and hit off situations (if technically possible also wide diagonal, otherwise longline)
- The field of perception of a defence player must reach up to the opponents quarter line (Option: hit balls also in the attack position) – learn to recognize interesting perspectives
- Offensive behaviour of the LID (inner defence) means sporadic e/o either/or often initiated attacks
- Carry through (surprise effect). Precondition is the covering of another player
- RD on the ball side offensive – RID runs along as coverage and break-up station
LD runs into Defense Center-position – LM runs on the side away from the ball to the outer Left – one example for “ROTATION”
- Flick the ball (tactically/under pressure) te/ta carrying out – amongst others diagonally
- 1st option: Ball to midfield, 2nd option: ball to RD, 3rd option: ball to LD
- Patient build-up of game whilst opponents cover the middle line/ 4 player set-up switching dynamically

Defence during opponent ball possession

- When opposition hits off, inner defender in front of the defence, with development of game towards the own goal this position shifts behind the defence
- The time of replacement is determined by the player standing nearest to the goal
- Coaching, positioning of the defence through GK or Defence player respectively
- When the opponents are a superior number secure the direct route to the goal, that means the defence moves up to the side of the ball
- Free man on the ball-goal-line
- The man at the back shouts out which pass could additionally be dangerous, that means a player in a 1-1 situation can include this pass in his defending operations
- Near our own goal there are 3 principles: 1. don't let the opponent run behind your back, 2. nearness to the goal (indented), 3. the opponent and the ball in view
- Secure the 7m point
- During fast flank situations the physical presence of the goalkeeper by “slip ins”

Job specification: Midfield

Midfield during own ball possession

- carry out free hits quickly / Speed control
- make side changes possible everywhere, especially the opponents quarter line during build up of game, run to cross over points respectively half tracks (timed approach of the midfield positions from the more offensive starting positions)
- Principle: cross over point (“window”) large means to offer oneself behind the line of play (field of view of the defenders) – cross over point small means to run into the centres of the triangles
- System of rotation (anticlockwise) during own hits open the lane
- Start a change of track / occupying the central position (distributor)
- Occupy break off / Drop out stations during a change of side (occupy the “centre”)
- Principle: inwards develop-pass-run on-react
- After a pass to the attack the middle field has to follow up the situation
- In build up situations: act with regard to the free running behaviour. Amongst other things: vacate the zone, change of position horizontally and vertically (attackers to midfield), create links between defence and attack, staggered running
- Irritate the opponent marking
- Parallelpass to outer line (90*) must be occupied (division of room)
- When the behaviour of the inner defence is offensive, clearly include the “free player”
- Flick ball lob (into the D or other offensive positions)
- Keep attackers in a good mood (pass to Sideline or Baseline), do not carry the ball into positions
- Lead sidechanges as deception with a quick development on the side away from the ball
- Midfield more often as “team mate” (main focus: make room free)
- Overtake/explosiv Follow up immediately in order to provoke a situation of superior numbers (often by the watching midfield player)
- The midfield player away from the ball conforms to the behaviour of the midfield player near the ball
- Late, not too late running up the opponents defence triangle, timed, but never the less right useful structure of the action field lying behind with midfield and outer defence. Important: 2 coordinated mid field players are the base for a good build-up game

Midfield during opponent’s ball possession

- Clear allocation to the opposing player for the ideal coordination in the defence during opponents 4 player set up in midfield the 3 man midfield chain shifts to the ball side, that means the midfield away from the ball remain free respectively is watched by offensive inner defence.
- Win fights for positions (the ratio of winning and loosing in midfield reflects the result of the game)
- “Intelligent (professional) Interrupt” the opponents attacks in front of ones own quarter line
- Crowding through the attack only makes sense if the 2nd and 3rd level play too
- Communication with ones own attack if necessary “calling back” when “pressing fails”
- Time of the orientation on the opponent when the ball is lost

Job specification: attack

Attack during own ball possession

- Occupy the Baseline positions early with the development of the game on the side of the ball
Advantage: orientation is possible before the decisive action

- No risk play in clear situations of superior numbers, create clear situations to aim at the goal
- Ball control / holding the ball in situations of play, in order to let the midfield players follow up
- Dual manning when attacking a position right/left (foredeck respectively Baseline-position)
2 pass possibilities: a) run towards and b) in the back
IMPORTANT: all 3 attackers have to be on the side of the ball!
- “drifting balls” by even numbers direct take-over
- Whilst breaking through the baseline: shows possibility for the player leading the ball and central player (push to direct take over)
- “curve situation” as a central theme (start behind the “goal area”, respectively first run into the goal area, when the ball is played – Timing)
- Demand a pass against the defence block of the opponents, opponent away passes
- Irritate the opponent marking you that means “fetching” must just still be possible.
- During own build up cover the free position of the opponents offensive inner defence respectively interrupt through clever positioning play
- In build up situation: react in regard to free running behaviour. In a rotation technique the midfield players should use the lanes
- Cut the track (Double lead run), Aim at the decisive moment to run the “hot track”
/ Coordination e.g. right midfield – right attack
- Breakthrough the baseline: occupy 90 degrees and goal area situatively, work hard for
- Mentality of shot at goal, readiness to shoot again (rebounding)
- Increase size of goal by occupying the posts (special : off –ball-side)
- Often marking of the opponents libero (timing!) during standard and normal attacks
- Decision if shoot on goal e/o to provoke an PC.

“Adjectives”

- “full of pressure (special ball-goal-track), ready to take a risk, aggressive, offensive, courageous, goal-hungry, well considered”
- “Attackers: must have the mentality of a sales representative : Ring at the entry doors 100 times (means : run to good positions), but sell only one vacuum cleaner (means : get one pass).....and to be happy.”

Attack during opponent ball possession

- “house”/”tub” (variable tactic orders) that means either/or the attacker away from the ball/Center Forward closes the changing of side. Important: timing of pushing with the opponents 1st action
- Good pressing during opponents build up with the aim of direct counter attack and selective running tracks whilst opponents are short-handed
- 1st rule when opponents hit off: prevent direct pass to midfield players
- Attackers must take on defensive responsibility, that means if the ball is lost they should sprint behind the ball line / no alibi route
- Build up serious pressure / “quality pressure” when opponents hits after 1st pass 1-1, with far brought forward inner defence (version)
- If the opponent plays a good change of sides, concentrating running routes diagonally backwards to the side of the ball
- Direct tapping of passes through a look in the eyes and additional deceptive target of action (timing!)
- Through body “language” reduce the area of play of the opponent (hit). To be able to read hits and learn to influence

Conclusion

The factor tactic which determines the game, taking into consideration technical and athletic skills must be spontaneously recallable. In the most different situations of play the player has to make immediate decisions, if possible the right decisions. Therefore it lies with us to examine “what is taken in”, in order to increase the percentage of right decisions. This means for the player: To learn and understand the tactical guidelines in the form of clear information and above that to sensitize oneself, to occupy oneself with tactical combinations in detail and to take them in.

Michael Willemsen (August 2006)