

US Lacrosse National Convention
January 10, 2004
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Developing, Teaching and Analyzing Stick Skills

Why stick skills?

Where to begin?

3 Elements of Development:

1. BASIC SKILL = Foundation
2. TRICKS = Comfort
3. WALL BALL = Habit

How to make it harder?

- Raising the stakes
- Doing it “On the Move”
- Eliminating the “Cradle”

How do I use this in a game?

DRILLS
STICK PROTECTION

Where do I go from here?

Passing and catching made easy.

Stickwork Development: US Lacrosse National Convention

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Standing Stick Skills/Tricks – “Stickies”

Stick skills are the basic foundation of every lacrosse player. They will characterize a girl throughout her career. While natural gifts like speed, quickness and overall athleticism will determine a great player from a good one in many cases, solid stick work is an assured way to be better.

It is unlikely that any of us will ever be able to do what Michael Jordan does: leap from the foul line and dunk the ball, run the court with ease, dominate defensively with a quick and vast wingspan. What we can all do, however, is acquire the same dribbling skills he has developed throughout his career. It is a learned skill. Although coordination plays a small part, the rest is repetition. Do it. Over and over and over again.

Poor stick skills in the climate of the game today are inexcusable and can be a distraction when trying to learn the game. Having stick skills that allow for comfort handling the ball hastily relinquish the walls players often put up when they do not feel good about their hold on the ball. When players are confident with their ability to maintain the ball, they are able to open their eyes to the game. Understanding the game – even without speed, quickness and overall athleticism – will be the most crucial as they develop an overall style.

STICKIES: Dominant/Non-dominant

- Standard Ball Handling – stick parallel to ground, butt up
punch, over, back, out, over-punch
- 5 Step Stickwork Program
Punch, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6
- Tricks
1: Up-down, all the way around, big circle, medium circle, little circle, little circle one way/other way, pop-it-up, pop between legs, pop over left shoulder, alternating pops between legs/shoulder, cross pop to catch behind back, pop and hit on back of stick (front/behind), alternate all popping (between legs, over shoulder, off stick), figure 8 pop between legs
2: Pool hit – on end of butt (two/one handed), over/under and twice around – between arms, indian pick-up (one/two hands), one/two handed dizzy izzy pick-up, balancing ball on sidewall, balancing ball on sidewall spin dizzy izzy, figure 8
3: forward overhead spin (1/2 times), backward overhead spin, backbreaker, non-dom flippy-flop
- Wall Ball – Righty, lefty, throw weak, catch weak, behind the back, around the world, backbreaker, 5 steps, quickstix, one handed catch (body and out)

Teaching Stickies

Teaching stick skills and tricks and making them a part of your practice planning/warm up is so important and fun for those learning. Intertwining tricks and skills not only combines practicality with amusement, but it rounds out a kid's hold on the stick without pretense or expectation. Stick skills run the gamut of gripping, twirling, moving, reacting. It is through trial and error that they will find what they can do, what they like and what will create the style of their ball handling, which is as discernable from player to player as fingerprints are from person to person.

It is great if you can show the tricks, but not necessary – as long as you can *teach* them. It is more fun for you and instrumental for them that they see you doing them. Most importantly, they see it can be done which will allow you to stomp any negative, “I can’t” sentiments.

To an inexperienced group – *introducing* the entire routine can take between 40-50 minutes. After that, it only takes 15 minutes to review it all. Go through rapidly and let them catch up. Each kid will pick up at least one move entirely. You want them to ask their friends how to do this or that, or

even better, you want them to go home and figure it out for themselves. As the season goes on and you continue to focus on reviewing the moves, they will develop all of the skills.

Standard teaching/Practice pattern →Stickies

1. Standard positioning/ballhandling
2. Tricks (1)
3. Wall Ball
4. Steps 2, 3 of 5 Step Stickwork Program
5. Tricks (2)
6. Wall Ball
7. Steps 4,5,6
8. Tricks (3)
9. Wall Ball

Wall Ball

Wall Ball is most helpful for players who need more touches with the ball. It applies to overall comfort and control of the ball, but specifically, Wall Ball is best utilized for accuracy and focus.

Wall Ball only requires a wall and a ball – duh! There is *no* excuse for players with poor stick skills. The remedy for all stick issues, in short: WALL BALL.

WALL BALL ROUTINES

- **30 minutes 2x week**

20x throw/catch – no cradle		R/L
20x punch/throw/catch	R/L	
20x #2/throw/catch		R/L
20x #3/throw/catch		R/L
20x #4/throw/catch		R/L
20x #5/throw/catch		R/L
20x #6/throw/catch		R/L
20x over/throw from weak/catch strong	R/L	
20x over/throw from middle/catch strong	R/L	
20x back breaker		
20x quickstick		R/L
- **10 minutes 3x week**
10x each exercise in above routine – continuous
- **X Marks the spot (Accuracy in Passing/Shooting)**
 - Chalk “X” on wall at various points
 - Dip ball in water
 - Aim for X and see how close you come

Doing it all ON THE MOVE

So they know it standing. Great! The most crucial, important thing about translating standing stick skills to ballhandling on the move is the crucial element of separating the bottom half of the body with the top half.

Having a rhythm to the “cradle” is not desirable for fooling defenders. Rather, if their top half can remain slow while their legs are going slow, fast or making a move in the arc, the defender will have a harder time reading their actions.

Eliminating the “Cradle”

Cradle is a word to use loosely with young players. Excessive cradling is a disguise for insecurity with ball handling skills; an attempt to mask a discomfort. Traditionally, those who cradle less have a good sense of

control. It is not in the rulebook and is therefore not required. A certain level is expected, but too much “cradling” gets in the way of making a play, playing the game.

This is a free for all, mostly you want to mix and match. Always make them jog forward and backward, to separate the feet/hand rhythm. Make them pick up the pace while their arms take the stick at the same speed.

Analyzing Stick Skills

It takes an experienced eye to breakdown a kid’s stickwork to identify what drill will best suit them. As a developing coach, understanding how to do the moves yourself will help to place where the particular skill is used during games or how it applies to a skill used during a game.

In every aspect of coaching the game of lacrosse, you – the coach – need to be asking the following for every circumstance, especially stick skills:

- Why?
- How?
- When?
- Would I have done that if I were the player?

Stickies aid skill in many departments and particular stickies can be exercised depending on where a kid is lacking experience:

Problem

Inability to control ball
 Discomfort/Nerves with ball
 Tunnel Vision
 Inability to adjust with ball / double teams
 Shooting/Passing/Accuracy
 4 corner mobility

Remedy

Tricks
 5 Step
 Pressure Shuttles
 Centipede
 Wall Ball
 Figure 8’s

Pressure Shuttles:

Shuttles packed in tight: Distance between passing distances is minimal as well as the space between shuttle to shuttle. The entire unit of shuttles is compacted into a fierce passing melee of communication and focus.

Centipede:

Half of team (cones can also be used) is put on a straight line with 4 feet between each player (cone). The other half of the team is snaking through the line, dodging each player and altering the position of the stick.

Figure 8’s:

(Best to go into from a 3Man, 2 Ball shuttle.) With two girls standing as posts at least 8 meters apart, the middle girl runs a Figure 8 controlling the ball as she turns every corner.

Stick Protection

Stick/Ball protection always breaks down to the following three concepts:

1. Defender – Shoulder – Shoulder – Ball

As long as the attacker keeps both shoulders in line with the defender and the ball in a 1v1, the only way a defender will get the ball is by fouling. DRILL: Pivot Drill

2. Keep the bad guy in front

Attackers who keep the bad guys – a.k.a. defenders, double teams – in front of them will be most protected. Never turn your back unless you are about to become Marion Jones.

3. Face the cage

Keeping the cage in full view is most important and offensive players can avoid danger by facing it and anticipating future threats.