

Chatham Lacrosse - Parent/Child Drills

Drills For You Children To Do on Their Own

1. Wall Drill -

Phase 1-Quick Stick/Rapid Fire: Line up around 3-5 yards from the wall. First, 50 right hand throw and catches without cradling. After completing 50 right hand throw and catches, do the same with your left. Did you notice I didn't mention starting with your strong hand. With "wall ball" anything you do right, you follow-up left. This stage is great because it allows you to work on quick sticks, hand eye coordination, and one timing. You will become better about getting rid of the ball in a timely fashion without even noticing it by practicing this stage.

Phase 2-12 Yard Passing: Line up 12 yards from the wall. Start with 30 right hand throws, which will come back to you on one bounce. When you retrieve the ball from the one bounce, cradle once, then follow-up with the next throw. When you have completed 30 right handed throws, follow-up with 30 left. An added step is to draw a 12'x12' box at eye level to use as a target.

Phase 3-Throwing & Catching On The Run.: First line up 5-7 yards from the wall on the far left side of the wall. I begin this stage with the stick in my right hand and while I am running alongside the wall (towards the other end), I throw and catch the ball on the run. The important part is to throw the ball on the run and not always catching the ball stick side. I like to do this during every stage. Do you always get a pass stick side? No. Therefore, in your training you should throw the ball against the wall and catch it cross hand (or across your face). After I run one length of the wall, I run back to the other end throwing lefty (doing the same thing I did with my right). Keep repeating these steps. This stage should be done for about 5-7 minutes.

Phase 4-Shooting: Line-up around 12-15 yards from the wall. Get in proper shooting formation (hands loose, three quarter/overhand motion, snapping of the hips, and following threw) mark a few places on the wall with tape or chalk to aim at. Shoot at about 80% velocity, having the ball come back to you with one bounce. Depending on where you aim, the ball may take bounces that aren't the same, so you have to work a little bit. Start with 25 right, and follow up with about 25 left.

2. Proper form is to throw over the top. Drills to Help reinforce this:

- Throw against a wall on one knee (if right handed, kneel on right knee). When throwing side-arm, the ball will automatically spin making it difficult to catch. You will also hit yourself on the left thigh with the stick butt.
- Find a wall, kneel down two feet from the wall, will force you to throw overhand.

3. Scooping

- Using a Women's Stick - to reinforce the proper fundamentals of scooping (bending down with back hand low to the ground), the lack of a pocket in the women's stick make it near impossible to scoop without proper fundamentals.

4. Dodging

- Use the natural surroundings - Use a tree to practice face dodges and roll dodges.

Drills With You and Your Son/Daughter

1. Basic Catching and Throwing

- Stand 15' apart. When child is comfortable with strong hand, practice catching and throwing off-hand.
- Over the shoulder technique
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2. Ground Ball Drills

- Parent Stands still, rolls ball to child, child scoops and throws ball back to parent.
- Parent places ball on the ground, place stick over the ball and have child scoop through, Develops skill of scooping in 'tight' situations

3. Shooting Drills

- Utilizing a shooting screen on your goal, have child shoot for particular spots. Variations include telling your child a spot to throw at a second before they are about to release.
- Stand 5 yards from the side of the net, have your child cut around a cone. Parent feeds the child for a shot. Key here is spacing.
- Have your child stand 7 yards above the crease with back turned to the goal. Parent yells turn and soon feeds the ball. Develops skills for young players to find the ball in flight, catch and shoot. Recommend wearing helmet for this drill.
- Remember to utilize cones so spacing is correct.
- Have child come from around the net, place a soft check on the arm, have child "Run Through the Check," turn and shoot.

Kevin Boland: Cutting and Chemistry

June 22, 2006

After an average freshman year at Johns Hopkins, Kevin Boland exploded as a sophomore and finished his college career as a three-time All-America and a third round pick in the 2004 Major League Lacrosse Collegiate Draft.

He's not the biggest, the fastest or the strongest player on the field, so he makes his mark with determination and exceptional field vision. In an overtime win over Navy his senior year, Boland hooked up with Conor Ford four times, including the hoop that sent it into OT with 48 seconds left. That's just one example. When all was said and done, Boland sat 10th in career assists at Hopkins.

Here he spreads his knowledge.

By Kevin Boland

The keys to becoming a good off-ball player are constant motion, timing your cuts and having some kind of chemistry with the person who's feeding you the ball.

There are so many players today who rest when they don't have the ball and need the ball in their stick in order to be successful. If you commit yourself to becoming an off-ball player and work really hard without the ball, there is no question you can double your offensive production.

Think about it from a defensive standpoint. When you're guarding



Photo: Jay VanRensselaer



someone off-ball, it's exhausting if your man won't stop moving. It's also very helpful to know what the defense is trying to accomplish. Always know what your defender is trying to do and take advantage of the fact that he's not only trying to cover you, but he's also worried about sliding and helping his teammates.

When someone is dodging from behind the goal, a great time to cut is when you see the back of your defender's helmet. A lot of times when you're inside on the crease, defenders get very worried about sliding, forget about their man and watch the ball. This is an ideal time to cut on an angle to the backside pipe or right behind your defender.

Again, some kind of eye contact and chemistry with your teammate who is feeding the ball is key. Defense is very difficult to play perfectly, and no matter what, there is bound to be some kind of breakdown.

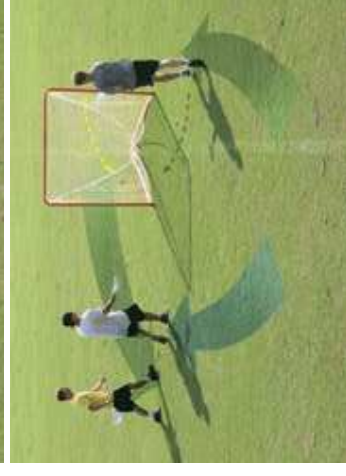
The same goes for up top. When the ball is up top, it's very difficult as a defender to guard a player behind the goal, simply because the goal gets in the defender's way. A great time to cut is when a player dodges from up top down the side. When you see your teammate dodge down the side, cut hard to the opposite pipe with your stick ready to shoot. Again, the point is to not stand still. If you're moving, this is a great way to catch your defender ball-watching and to get an easy goal.

Also, when you are off-ball, always have your stick in a position where you can catch the ball and get a shot off. For example, never have your stick at your feet or down by your waist. Have your stick in a position where the feeder can see it and can feel confident that he can get you the ball in a dangerous position.

In order to become a better off-ball player, you can practice these scenarios over and over with your teammates. These looks should be open in games as long as you communicate with your feeder.

At Johns Hopkins, I had great chemistry with Conor Ford. He was so smart off-ball that he made my job as a feeder that much easier. I always knew where Conor was when I dodged, and before I fed him the ball, we always made eye contact. There were times at Hopkins when Conor was barely open and I'd find a way to get him the ball in a perfect position where he could score. The reason was that I had so much confidence in him as a shooter and he had so much confidence in me as a passer. That was the key to our chemistry. We practiced together every day and did the same things in practice over and over, which translated directly to game day.

Without Conor's finishing ability I wouldn't have had the career I had at Hopkins, and vice versa. If you look at Conor and myself, we are not your typical big, strong, fast athletes. But our chemistry, unselfishness and commitment to off-ball play was what set us apart. That's the beauty of lacrosse.



Janine Tucker: The Art of Checking

June 22, 2006

Janine Tucker says the best takeaway defenders combine athleticism with intelligence, patience and controlled aggressiveness

Checking is not just another defensive skill to be learned. It's an art. In addition to the physical aspects of this skill, there's a particular mindset that sets apart great takeaway defenders from all others.

A takeaway defender is a supreme strategist. She's a seizer of moments, a rattlesnake waiting to strike. Keenly perceptive, she sizes up opponents, watching and waiting until she knows what they will do even before they themselves know it. Then—check—she shuts them down. Her calculated risk pays off. A whopping 90% of the time, a good takeaway defender gets the ball.

A great takeaway defender steals the ball—and more. She chips away at her opponents' self-composure and confidence. She exercises incredible mental toughness. She asserts herself, maintaining control and dominance even when she's a step behind the ballcarrier—especially when she's a step behind.

As a defensive strategy, checking must be taught precisely and practiced carefully. Too many sloppy swipes and dangerous swings attempt to pass for checks because coaches and players are satisfied with poor technique. Women's lacrosse is best served by short, precise check-and-releases, by a snapping motion with no backswing or follow-through.

Female athletes need to be vigilant about learning and practicing checking within the parameters of our game. One of the best ways to harness and streamline the lovely aggressiveness of today's female lacrosse players—who happen to be quicker, stronger, faster and tougher than ever before—is by appreciating and fine-tuning the art of stick-checking. Checking has a tremendous impact not only on the outcome of individual games but also on the whole of women's lacrosse and its future. Out-of-control checking is unsportsmanlike and dangerous, and it will land the women's game on a fast track to mandatory helmets.

Think about it: If a defender's main objective is to dislodge the ball from an opponent's stick and make away with it, fast, then it's actually counter-productive for her to come out waving a metal weapon in her opponent's face. It's impossible to be stealthy and efficient while swiping and swinging. The takeaway defender holds a revered position on any team. She, better than anyone, understands that a fine line separates the great players from the goons. She knows that a check must be executed correctly, precisely, or not at all.

It's that simple: Check the right way, or don't check. It's far better to concentrate on maintaining good body position than to throw a haphazard check.

Players and coaches have long recognized the advantages of being proficient with both hands while cradling, throwing and catching; the same can be said for checking. Among the cutting-edge developments in the sport at the upper levels is that players are learning not only to check equally well with right and left hands, but also to effectively contain opponents with their sticks in either hand.

Teaching the Skill of Checking

First things first: Defensive body positioning, patience and balance are the three fundamentals of stick-checking. These concepts need to be understood before any specific method of checking can be mastered; they need to be reviewed again and again with every new check that you want to add to your defensive arsenal.

Key details:

- Grip and positioning of hands
- “Snap” Motion—work the wrists, NOT the arms

Checking does not require a white-knuckled death grip. Soften your grip by allowing your fingertips to control the check. The bottom hand controls the motion and the top guides it. Place the bottom hand at the very end of the stick, resting the butt on the top of the inside of the little finger. Extend the thumb so it's pointing up the stick shaft. Curl the remaining fingers around the pole.



The top hand is no higher than two-thirds of the way down the stick. It's not right next to the bottom hand, because that gives up control. It's no higher than two-thirds of the way down because you don't want to limit your reach or become off-balance, or inhibit the range of motion of your top arm.

Here's how to arrange your fingers: Keep your thumb in line with the bottom-hand thumb; it will anchor your top hand to the stick. Here's where there's a bit of room for personal preference: The other four fingers all can be wrapped around the shaft, or the top finger can point up the shaft. Try both styles and use whichever feels right to you.

With this grip, you'll find yourself staring straight at the sidewall, with the open part of the stick head facing to your left. The reason for this is

efficiency. You're in ready position to pick up the groundball once you've dislodged it from your opponent.

Here's a slight variation on the theme: Use the right top corner of your stick—keep the open head facing toward you—to try to dislodge the ball from your opponent's stick. With the stick head already open, you'll be able to drop it immediately into a position to pick up a groundball. This technique also gives you more surface area from your stick to connect with your opponent's stick.

Essentially, the stick check is a snapping motion. Snap down to make contact and quickly snap back to release. The wrists—not the arms—are most important in executing an effective check. Wrists, yes. Arms, no.

Arm Position

- Arms Away
- Arms Locked

To maintain good body position, keep the arms away from body, not in tight. You need to put space between the chest and arms: Think about hugging a tree. Now, keep the elbows locked. Holding the arms away from the body and keeping the elbows locked are keys for maintaining balance and proper body positioning for checking.

Body Position

- Knees slightly bent
- Balanced body weight
- Sitting position
- Maintain body position in relation to each check

Here are some thoughts to keep in mind before you check, during the check and after you dislodge the ball. (You will dislodge the ball on the vast majority of your checks if you execute these techniques.)

BEFORE THE CHECK

On-ball body position

Good defensive body positioning depends on maintaining balance. If you're off-balance, don't throw a check.

Keep your knees slightly bent, as if sitting in a chair. Your back is straight up and down, with your butt tucked in and feet shoulder length apart and directly underneath your shoulders. If the shoulders are thrust forward, you're not in a strong and balanced position. Your feet can be square, or one can be slightly in front of another; that's personal preference.

Mentally, you're sizing up your opponent, assessing her speed and style of cradle. If she cradles close to her head and doesn't present her stick often, you're going to defer to maintaining good body positioning and holding the check until a more opportune moment. If you're up against



Proper body positioning

someone who's protecting her stick, don't force something that isn't there. (There are ways to bait opponents into hanging their sticks, but more on that later).

Self-control is what separates great defenders from good defenders. Waiting for the right check is a smart defensive strategy: This way, you won't be in the habit of hanging your team out to dry by sacrificing good body position and forcing a check, and risking a player-down situation because you've been beat.

DURING THE CHECK

Midfield checks

- **Quick Strike:** Snap and release. This is elegantly simple, an excellent check to throw while moving at top speed alongside your opponent. Do not attempt this check if you are behind your opponent; you'll foul by reaching across her body. Catch up first. This check is driven by the wrists. Aim for the corner of your opponent's stick, ultimately turning her stick. As the stick turns, the ball will dislodge. Make sure to stay alongside or slightly in front of your opponent. This requires patience and timing. Always check away from the head—never toward the head or body. Before the check, make sure your stick is pointing to the sky, at about 10 or 2 o'clock. Do not hold your stick across your opponent's body.
 - **Handle Check:** This is a tempting check to take while running alongside your opponent. Don't do it. It involves checking in toward your opponent's body and making contact with the handle of her stick. It is not safe and most of the time results in a foul. This is not a check we recommend.
 - **Poke Check:** This is one of my favorites. The poke check comes from behind, when a defender is trailing her opponent in the midfield. It's a sneak attack from behind. Follow an attacker with your stick extended in front of you. Your top hand grips the stick loosely; it's just a guide hand. Your bottom hand is for control; use a tighter grip here. While timing your opponent's cradle, choose an opportune moment to poke. Extend your bottom arm so your stick slides smoothly and accurately through the top hand; the open stick head is facing down.
- Best-timing tip: When your opponent cradles back, behind her, you poke forward.

The Trail Check





- Trail Check (from behind): The trajectory of your stick needs to stay in a limited range—from the top of your head to your belly button. It's a disciplined snap. If your stick starts above your head or ends up down by your feet, that's unacceptable. Don't swing or swipe. Catch up with your opponent first, as with the poke check. Get as close to your opponent as you possibly can from behind. Your top hand is two-thirds of the way down on your stick. That's where it stays to execute this check. Snap and release (keeping well away from your opponent's head) without sliding your stick through the top hand. Remember, catch up first, wait for the right time to check, snap down and back checking away from your opponent's head and aim for the corner of her stick to dislodge the ball. Be ready when she slows down to establish body position.

- Bait and Check: This is a favorite of takeover defenders. You're flying down the field defending the ballcarrier, who is well aware of your presence and knows you want the ball. Use your bottom arm, your shoulders and the butt end of your stick to fake a check toward the front with a short punching motion. Your opponent's natural reaction will be to pull her stick back behind her head and, possibly, her shoulder. Because your stick head is in good position—essentially straight up and down—you're ready to throw a quick and tight circular check, making contact with your opponent's stick behind her head. To complete the check, finish a counter-clockwise rotation, returning your stick back to where it started. The ball likely will dislodge behind your opponent. Be ready to stop and immediately step between the ball and your opponent for a groundball pickup. (Note: Checking fouls are all too common during groundball pickups. Timing, patience and a quick release will lead to a successful check on a groundball.)

- Butt of the Stick Check: Players these days don't expose the butts of their sticks very often, so the opportunities to use this check are waning. Hooking or checking the butt ends of sticks generally is unsafe. We don't recommend it. Most times, these checks result in a defender sacrificing her body positioning and fouling.

- The Out and Away Check: This is a simple but sophisticated advanced-level check that's both safe and effective. The key is to make contact with your opponent's stick by snapping out and away as she attempts to pick up the groundball. Focus on keeping the momentum of the check away from your body, instead of checking up, down or toward your opponent. This check will immediately propel the ball in front of you—be ready to cut off your opponent to recover the looseball.

- The Up Check: This one's commonly used and often draws fouls for being dangerous because, instead of a quick snap-and-release motion, the follow-through brings your stick and your opponent's toward her head and into her face. What's key here is to perfect a short, quick snapping motion that sends the ball out instead of up.

- The Down Check: Even more common than the Up Check, this fundamental technique often creates a hold situation and draws the foul. Remember to have practice when checking down and releasing quickly if you plan to use this check. Also, make sure the downward motion is not a big swipe or swing starting from above the head, but a quick, precise snap starting from eye level or lower.

AFTER THE CHECK

The Butt-of-stick check



You are executing good checking technique and paying close attention to the outcomes of your actions. Did you make contact? Have you dislodged the ball? Where did the ball go? What's your body position in relation to your opponent?

Having dislodged the ball, your first priority is to cut off your opponent's path to the ball by using your body as a barrier. This may be the moment when you simply have to take one for the team. Stepping into the path of a sprinting opponent requires guts—and a sturdy backside. Put your back and butt in between the ball and your opponent and maintain that position as if your life depends on it.

Once you've stepped into your opponent's path, effectively putting yourself between her and the ball, immediately slide your top hand to the top of your stick. This simple but often-neglected action helps to protect your stick and the ball when you pick it up. It helps keep your stick (and the ball) between your shoulders, not exposed to your opponent. When you slide your top hand up, you tend to cradle between your shoulders and not leave your stick exposed.

KEY FUNDAMENTAL: Once your top hand is at the top of the stick's shaft, be sure to bend your knees to get low enough while picking up the groundball.

CRITICAL FUNDAMENTAL: As soon as you pick up the groundball, RUN FAST! Get out of pressure and look to move the ball to a teammate.

If you throw a check and miss your mark, regroup before throwing another one. Don't be tempted to keep attacking like a piranha. Your first priority, before attempting another check, is to reestablish good defensive body position. Wait for another opportune moment. Patience is the key to minimizing checking fouls.

The Dos and Don'ts of Checking:

DO:

- Establish and maintain good body position
- Stay balanced
- Be patient
- Check with purpose
- Check and release with short strokes
- Check under control
- Check when you're 90% sure you can come up with the ball

DON'T EVER:

- Check toward the head
- Check toward the body
- Check with a big swing
- Check out of desperation
- Sacrifice body position for a check
- Check and hold your opponent's stick

Check out of control
Check unless you are 90% certain you can come up with the ball

Casey Powell: The Triangle

May 10, 2006

Welcome back, dude! Casey Powell here! Hope you've enjoyed the first three segments of our lacrosse basics. My brother Mikey and I decided to create the Virtual Lacrosse Academy animated CD-ROM just for you. You can check out an actual cut from the CD for free after reading this segment to help you better understand the technique.

This is an awesome drill for three players who have a good grasp of two-handed catching and throwing. If you aren't there yet, the Virtual Lacrosse Academy CD will help you improve your skills and you'll be in the triangle in no time! It's us - "Virtual Casey" and "Virtual Mikey" - teaching you how to play the game, which we think is pretty sweet.

To start out with, keep each player close, about five yards apart and keep moving the ball in one direction. Keep the triangle between yourself and your two teammates, imagine you are all attached by a string. Whoa, that's a scary thought. As your shots improve, put more distance between the three of you. Don't let yourselves get sloppy and keep your lines straight.

All of you have to move together and keep the ball moving. Don't forget to mix up the pattern, you gotta explore all angles 'cause the game will have you all over the field.

The triangle copies the motion and movement of your linemates' three positions: attack, midfield and defense. This drill introduces a very basic, but very important concept of "spacing" between you and your teammates. Winning the game depends on practicing this drill - and I really don't want you to be a loser.



For real, you can't do it enough and you'll only get better the more you do it! So grab some friends, and your brother if you have to, and get to it!

Casey Powell: Turning the corner

May 02, 2006

And we're back, with more great lacrosse tips from me, Casey Powell. I hope you're learning a lot about the basics, because you've got to have a solid foundation before you learn the other aspects of the game. The Virtual Lacrosse Academy CD-ROM that my brother Mikey and I decided to put together will help you establish those key starter techniques. After you read this segment, you can check out an actual cut from the CD for free.

This is a great drill for attackmen and middies because they must be able to "turn the corner" around the goal and score.

You want to start this move from behind the cage and then practice running around the pipe and firing the bullet when you have the right angle.

The key to this shot is making sure your torso and hips are facing the goalie (this is true for every shot, but very important for this shot).

Don't wimp out, follow through and look the ball into the goal. You have to picture the scoring shot, then picturing the goalie crying like a baby!

A lot of kids fade away from the goal when they're shooting and turning the corner.

Don't do this - it's the fastest way to get your shot blocked. Make sure you keep your focus and get square to the goal. This move takes some thought, but when you pull it off correctly, you will be a huge success! You may even get a homecoming date.

If you go out and take 100 shots, 30 of these need to be turning the corner and over



half should be with your opposite hand. It may sound hard, but no whining! If it were easy, everyone would do it! You don't want to be like everyone do you? Get out there and start shooting, the right way!

Casey Powell's shooting instruction

April 18, 2006

Casey Powell here! I heard you want to play a little lax! That's my game. And the reason I got to be pretty good? Like anything else, I started with the basics, and then learned the other aspects of the game. Think about it... you gotta learn how to handle the stick, get the ball to your teammates and fire it past the goalie. That's why Mikey and I decided to create the Virtual Lacrosse Academy animated CD ROM. It's "Virtual Casey" and "Virtual Mikey" teaching you how to play the game. We wanted to make learning how to get better at lacrosse fun. And we think we did it.

After reading this segment you can check out an actual cut from the CD to help you better understand the technique. Mikey has issues with reading so he really likes the animation part. What amazes me is that the animation makes him better looking than he is in real life. In the coming weeks we'll highlight some other skills, moves and training techniques from the CD so you can see for yourself the benefit of doing it right!

Let's get started with shooting!

First, you gotta focus on the basics. Hold your stick shoulder width apart, have your thumbs up and point your hips to the target.

Stay balanced and step toward the target. You want more power? Focus on your stride. The longer you stride the more velocity on your shot because you're getting your legs and hips behind the shot. Don't over-stride 'cause you gotta have balance too.

Consistency will make or break a shot, so when you're practicing, be sure to follow through to the target every single time you shoot. What you do in practice, you do in



the game. Get sloppy now and you'll be sloppy later.

You can shoot overhand, which is the classic LAX shot and the most powerful. Some guys can fire away at more than 100 mph! You can too with a little practice. You start doing that and you'll see goalies' legs shaking when you're attacking the net.

Don't be afraid to try the sidearm shot. This one is tough for the goalie to get their eyes on. If you bounce the sidearm shot, it makes it even harder for the goalie to stop your shot.

The underhand shot is for more advanced players. It's a great way to get goalies thinking you are going to shoot low. You can release low and shoot either high or low.

Once you have mastered the basics give the "wormburner" a try. As the word implies, this screaming roller can be almost impossible to track as it rips toward the goal. Make sure you give this shot plenty of power and don't be afraid to take out a few worms in the process.