

The Complete Lacrosse Goalie Practice Plan



Overview

A sound lacrosse goalie practice plan is built on principles that rise above the current state of the team or performance of the goalie. It doesn't matter if the goalie had a good game or a bad game yesterday, the routine today needs to be business as usual.

The practice plan needs to be built on the theme of predictability. By keeping the routine in place, goalies can develop a level of comfort and familiarity.

Overview

The practice plan is the place where the goalie prepares their mind and body to take live action shots in the pipes. It is a time where they can get away from the distractions of their day and focus on their game.

It should be a protected time. A time that is a priority for every lacrosse coach out there. They should have the attention of a dedicated shooter and the opportunity to spend regular time honing their craft.

Overview of the Practice Plan

Part 1: Dynamic Stretching

Part 2: Long Passing

Part 3: Area Shots in the Goal

Part 4: Random Shots in the Goal

Part 5: Goalie Specific Drill Time

Part 6: Integrated Drills with the Team

Time

Time is important for a goalie. Not just time with the team, but time alone or working one-on-one with a coach.

It is a very mentally intensive position and it takes time to find the right zone. That is the goal of a lax goalie practice plan. It is consistent and simple.

A place where coach and goalie meet for a time of repetitive and fundamental work.

Building Muscle Memory

Building muscle memory is the key, not save percentage or speed of the shot. Repetition is the secret.

It will take thousands upon thousands of shots for the necessary movements and responses to become reactionary for a goalie.



Pre-Practice or Pre-Game Routine

Dynamic Stretching

The before practice and before a game routine should look very similar. As the old saying goes, we play the way we practice.

Before a lax goalie warm up starts, dynamic stretching should take place. This includes jogging, high stepping, hip stretches, lunges, and others.

These drills get the blood flowing and are a good opportunity to focus the mind on the task ahead. Take a jog around half of the field. Work the dynamic stretches from Goal Line Extended (GLE) to the end line of the field.

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Throwing Long Passes

Just before jumping into the net should be longer passes with a teammate or coach. This is to warm up the stick, throwing arm, and eyes.

Practice rolling out to the left and the right as if you were rolling out from behind the net on a clear.

This will warm up the feet, eyes, and shoulders.

Warming Up in the Net

Warming Up in the Net

Predictable repetition should be the mindset at the beginning of a lacrosse goalie warmup session. The point is never to shoot as hard as possible.

The shooter can begin as just faster than passes and pick up the speed as the time goes on, but at the beginning the focus is to drill the movements.

Remember, this time is for the goalie. Not the shooter!

Warming Up in the Net

Start with high shots to the top-right, top-center, and top-left. The goalie should be stepping toward every shot with their body and following up with the trail foot.

When a save is made, the stick should always be square to the body so if the shot should happen to miss the stick, it would be saved by the body.

The goalie should focus on watching the ball into their stick and making a good pass back to the shooter.

Warming Up in the Net

After 20-25 shots to the upper range, move to hip-right and hip-left shots.

The focus of off-hip shots is to keep the arms out and away from the body as they bring the stick across and meet the shot.

This positioning also helps the goalie cushion the shot and make a clean save without a rebound.

When an off-hip save is made, the stick should be perpendicular to the ground, out and away from the body.

Warming Up in the Net

After 20-25 hip area shots, move to saving low shots. Goalies tend to stoop for these shots. Coach to bend at the knees so as to meet the ball square.

Next come bounce shots. It is important for lax goalies to always step out and meet the shot at the point of impact with the ground.

The head of the stick should be clamped firmly to the turf. Once the ball has been stopped, they are to clamp the ball and pass back to coach.

Warming Up in the Net

When the ball is loose on the crease area, treat it like a game time situation.

Pretend that there is a group of attackmen there trying to scoop it up and score a garbage goal. Clamp the ball, box out with your body, and drag the ball to a safe place inside the crease.

Get the ball up and start looking down field for the outlet pass.

Warming Up in the Net

After each area has been warmed up, it is time to pick up the pace and speed of the shots.

Shots should be taken from all areas of the arc, not just squared up shots from the center of the cage. Work the angles and pipes so goalies are used to facing shots and positioning their body to cover up the maximum amount of net.

The shooter should move on the arc requiring the goalie to move in the goal while staying centered between the pipes from the shooter's perspective.

Drills

Drills

After the general warm up, it is a good time to move into some shooter-goalie drills. The first is called “Shot-Turn”.

This is a simple drill that should be practiced everyday. It starts with the goalie is the goal, standing ready in their stance, looking through the back of the net with their back facing the shooter.

Right before the shooter releases their shot they shout “SHOT!” At this sound, the goalie turn round and saves the shot.

Drills

The next drill requires two shooters. It is a good way to put lame or sick players to work. The focus is to get the goalie moving from pipe-to-pipe in the goal.

The two shooters stand at about 10:00 and 2:00 and pass the ball back and forth.

As they pass, the goalie must move through their arc and center themselves to the ball's new position.

Drills

Random shots are taken to make sure that the goalie is remaining honest.

Shooters should move around, allowing the goalie to adjust to shots from a variety of places and angles.

Mixed with the Team

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Bringing a goalie into team shooting drills is a dangerous thing.

Luckily, most lacrosse coaches have noticed the negative effects this can have on a goalies mindset, health, and confidence.

It is important to include a goalie in team shooting drills, it just must be done is a smart way.

Mixed with the Team

Structured shooting drills that incorporate members of the offense and defense are a really good thing for a goalie.

It gives them the opportunity to face shots and command a defensive player on their positioning. This balance creates more realistic, game like situations that help a goalie advance.

1v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3 are all great shooting drills to work in goalies. Encourage the offense to move the ball quickly and the defense to respond in kind.

A lacrosse goalie in full gear, including a helmet and chest protector, stands in front of a goal net. The goalie is holding a lacrosse stick with a netted head. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with trees and a clear sky.

What if I Don't Have a Lacrosse Goalie Coach?

What if I don't have a lacrosse goalie coach?

Lacrosse is the fastest growing game in the USA and is swiftly growing across the globe, yet still there is a shortage of lacrosse goalie coaches.

If there isn't a goalie coach on your team, that isn't an excuse. You just need to take ownership of your position and your own training.

Make sure that you communicate with the head coach what you need to succeed.

What if I don't have a lacrosse goalie coach?

Most field players have NO IDEA how to train a goalie. They do however know how important a strong goalie can be for a team.

Share this plan with your coach to give them an idea of the process that each goalie should follow when they're preparing for practice and being integrated with the rest of the team.

Lacrosse goalie is one of the most important positions on the field. Don't be afraid to stand up for your right to a proper warm-up and practice plan!