EXERCISES AND GAMES FOR HITTING THE BALL

(DIFFERENT FROM THE ONES LISTED IN THE "PASSING, RECEIVING AND SHOOTING GAMES"
)

1. One Against One
Two players, facing each other at a distance of 15 (20) meters, are competing inside a 8 meters wide area. Each player tries to hit the ball across the opponent's end line. The ball has to be returned with a hit from the point where it ran over one of the side lines or where it was controlled by the opponent. Scoring is as follows:
+1 point = for every goal scored with a "sweep hit",
- 1 point = for every ball hit across one of the side lines,
- 1 point = for every slight elevation of the ball during the "sweep hit"
- 1 point = for any mistake in the reception and the control of the ball in front of the 8 meter wide goal.

After a pre-established time the winner plays against the winner of the same competition played in an adjacent area.

2. Disguise Passes in a Two-on-One Situation
The same exercise as 1) with a defender situated in between the two hitters in a square with the dimensions of 12 x 12 meters and for less skilled players 15 x 15 meters. All "sweep hits" which cross the square defended by the opponent and which can be controlled by the receiver score one point for the two attackers. For every interception of the ball within his square the defender gets one point. The game is played until one team gains 10 points. The winner is the one of the 3 players who manages to win more points in the 3 competitions. Apart from practicing the correct technique of hitting the ball, the attackers learn to disguise the direction of their passes and to communicate before executing a hit.
3. **Twice “Two-on One”**

Two players keep possession of the ball in a limited zone (with not more than 3 passes) against one defender until one of them has sufficient time and space to pass the ball with a hit through a central zone to one of two team-mates in another area at a distance of about 12- 22.90 meters, following the level and age of the players.

The first defender should do everything to prevent the ball being hit across the central zone, as does his fellow defender on the other side of the central zone. His objective is to read the intention of one attacker to pass the ball. He then tries to intercept the ball hit to the 3rd or 4th attacker in the opposite grid or at least disturb them during the reception and the control of the ball. No player is allowed to step into the central part of the field with dimensions in depth and width which, as said above, depend on the skill and fitness level of its participants.

When the ball doesn't reach a fellow-attacker in the opposite playing area, bounces on its way, runs out of the marked zone or the defender could touch it three times consecutively, a point is awarded to the team of two defenders. The game is played up to 10 points. In continuation, a rotation of the positions of the three teams made up of 2 players takes place. Every team has to defend once.

4. **Four-on-Two Across Two Lines**

Two defenders control a square 22.90m x 22.90m. Without leaving the zone assigned to them, they must try to prevent the 4 attackers from passing the ball from outside the square across two lines. The 4 attackers try to establish a record of consecutive passes without losing the control of the ball once. The passing and receiving is always executed outside of the square. Every 5 minutes the two defenders switch positions with 2 attackers until all players have played once in defence.
Variation:

A fifth attacker is now playing inside the square. He is continuously offering himself for passes from one of his 4 team-mates outside of the square. For each control of the ball and return-pass the team collects two points.

As in the previous game, each pass between the attackers which crosses it, despite the presence of 2 defenders, scores 1 point.

The coach may ask the players to use a pre-determined technique for passing the ball (for instance only with slaps-two hands are separated at the handle- or "sweep hits " with both hands close together and the curve always in contact with the ground).

5. Games to Keep Possession of the Ball

4-on-4 or 5-on-5 in quarter of the field or 6-on-6 or 7-on-7 in half of a regular hockey field. Only passes executed with a "sweep hit" over distances in excess of 10 meters count.

6. Hitting Game “Five-on Five” in Three Separated Areas

See the 3rd. Game “Twice “Two-on-one”. This game is played with two more players (one attacker and one defender) situated in the field of the centre where they receive or intercept passes from the two fields on the side where two attackers play against one defender ( and his substitute who waits outside the area).

All three adjacent areas, which none of the 3 or two players assigned to it may leave, have the same size (22.90meters x 22.90 meters). The 2 attackers, despite the presence of a defender, have to manage to pass the ball to their fellow-player who offers himself in the central zone where he is closely marked by another defender. In case a pass to him is not possible, the two attackers from the first area try to pass the ball directly to one of his two team mates in the third area, where another defender will do everything to avoid them succeeding. The number of passes from one area to another are counted. Once a defender wins the possession of the ball, he will be substituted by another fresh one who watched the practice.

A long pass through the middle field which is controlled in the opposite one scores two points, whilst any short pass from one field to the one aside scores only 1 point.
7. Scoring into Targets

Six balls are placed between two cones, separated by a distance of 10 meters, and 22.90 meters in front of a goal-line. The striker starts with any ball which he has to dribble in front of the balls to the cone furthest away, round it and then hit it on the move from the inside-right or inside-left position towards the target (six cones placed on the goal-line).

After his ball crosses the target line, the same player picks up a second ball, dribbles it past the cone furthest away and hits it toward the targets of 1, 2 or 3 points. He continues to do this until the 6th ball has been played.

A ball can be collected only from the line between the two cones., once the previous one has crossed the scoring line or stopped rolling. When reaching a score of 9 or more points, the time is stopped with a stopwatch. If the player fails to score 9 points with 6 balls a nil score is recorded.

“A crisis starts when the old one hasn’t died and the new wasn’t born yet.”

Berthold Brecht
CHAPTER 8:

Simplified Games for the Penalty Corner Training in Attack and Defence

“The development of the game is so fast these days that the coach who says it can’t be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it.”
1st PART:

SIMPLIFIED GAMES FOR THE "DRAG OUT", THE RECEPTION AND THE BASIC VARIATIONS IN GOAL SCORING

1ST. EXERCISE: DRAG THE BALL OUT FROM THE ENDLINE

After a visual signal various players in possession of a ball "inject" it with the assigned technique from the goal line toward the 22.90 metre line. The winner is the player whose ball crosses the 22.90meter line first. To gain more experience, every player may also choose the technique which suits him best.

Coaching objectives:

1. To know how to execute the techniques of a drag.

2. To know how to execute the pass without prior body movements so that the opponent has difficulty anticipating the moment of its execution.

3. Make sure that the ball doesn’t rise and that the player concentrates on the followthrough. This ensures the desired direction of the pass.

4. To assure speed of the drag.

"All behaviour of a player is consequence of his personal feeling."
SOME HINTS FOR PASSING THE BALL WITH A DRAG-PUSH:

- Both hands grip the stick the same way as during the “Indian dribble”.
- The flat side of the stick faces towards the ground forming an angle of about 30 degrees.
- The ball is placed close to the right foot on the end line with the upper part of the edge of the curve in contact with it. The rule demands that during the execution of the drag, one foot has to remain outside the field.
- The left shoulder and the left foot are pointing towards the receiver.
- Feet are placed wide apart (more than shoulder width). The left one points into the direction of the pass and the right foot forms a right angle with it.
- When dragging the ball along the ground from the right (behind) toward the left (in front), the ball always remains in contact with the edge of the curve of the stick until it is released as it comes level with the left foot.
- During the quick pull (drag) the player looks to the receiver and shifts the body weight from the centre towards the left foot.
2ND. EXERCISE: RECEIVING THE BALL OUTSIDE THE SHOOTING CIRCLE

Two teams compete in the same circle. One player of each team pushes the ball from the end line through his 1 metre wide cone goal, situated at the edge of the circle towards his receiver who stops the ball with a technique indicated by the coach. Every couple have 5 drag pushes.

The winner is the couple whose receiver manages to trap more balls just outside the shooting circle. Balls which miss the cone goal don't count. For the return match, both players change positions and functions and both teams switch places (go the other side of the goal).

Variations:

After a drag push-simulation by the coach from inside the goal, both players pass their ball from the end line through their respective cone goal to their stick stoppers. Whilst the latter try to trap the ball outside the circle and pushes it half a meter into the circle, each “injector” o the ball follows it as quick as possible with the intention to strike it first from inside the circle against the boards of the full-size goal. Meanwhile the stick-stoppers run along the circle line to the end line from where they are supposed to start the next penalty corner. After 5 trials both teams practise the drag push from the other side of the goal until 10 penalty corners have been “injected” and received outside the circle.
Coaching objectives:

1. To select the most effective technique for playing in the ball with speed and accuracy.

2. To consider additional functions after having executed the pass from the end line.

3. To learn to receive the ball with the horizontally placed stick. The left hand should grip the stick below the right, the left fingers should point downward with the palm behind the stick (see also "More hints for trapping the ball with the stick").

3. To retain good balance so that the striker is not obstructed and any penalty corner variation is possible to put into practise.

“Enthusiasm is more powerful than money, politics, fatigue and influence.”
MORE HINTS FOR STOPPING THE BALL DURING THE PENALTY CORNER:

- Legs should be bent and for better balance one foot should be moved forward at the moment the ball is being trapped outside the circle. Generally the right leg is situated in front and near the circle, whilst the left foot is placed further backwards. The low body position permits a better view of the ball's trajectory and a possible bounce.

- It's important not to bent too much. Be relaxed and think positively.

- Watch the ball until it touches the stick.

- Have the body weight over the front foot when trapping the ball in a stationary position, and in front of both feet with the arms away from the trunk.

- Place the stick (with the curve generally on the left side) in a right angle to the trajectory of the oncoming ball in order to avoid a deflection towards one side.

- To be able to absorb the shock of the oncoming ball, bend the arms slightly and keep the wrists loose. Incline the surface of the stick slightly forward.

- Be prepared to adjust your position quickly, should the oncoming ball deviate from its course.

- After the stop, move the stick quickly towards the right side of the body, grip it again correctly with the right hand in the centre of the stick, which allows you to continue to take part in the penalty corner play (receive a pass or take a rebound with the stick).

3RD. EXERCISE: LOOKING FOR VARIATIONS

An attacking team with five players is positioned as shown in the diagram. The coach asks the players to demonstrate at least 4 variations of the penalty corner attack. For instance:

After trapping the ball with one touch outside the circle:

- the stick stopper pushes the ball into the circle for the striker who scores,
- the stick stopper pushes the ball some 3-4m. to a third attacker on his left side. From inside the circle the 3rd.attacker scores.
the striker pushes the ball from outside the circle into the circle towards the 4th attacker on his right side. The latter returns the ball with a triangular pass to the striker who scores,

the striker pushes the ball to the 4th attacker who had run at the moment of the push-out with high speed to the penalty stroke point. There he traps the ball which is hit or flicked quickly by the striker into the goal.

Coaching objectives:
* Immediately after having stopped or/and passed the ball, move away to allow the specialist sufficient space for shooting, feinting or passing.
* Synchronise the action of the trap with that of the shot or pass.
* To learn 4 basic penalty corner variations.

“An individual who proceeds too soon may lose the pre-requisite self confidence that is essential for success at subsequent levels.”

Ric Purser
4TH. EXERCISE: QUICK SHOT

Two or three pairs of players are positioned outside the circle close to its edge. The right player of each pair, in a low position, holds his stick horizontally as though he has just trapped the ball. Together with the stick, he holds the ball in one hand. After the simulation of a drag-out from the end line by the coach, the stick-stopper releases the ball and the striker moves it into the circle to score with any technique. The pair that scores first with a shot against the boards, wins a point. After very 5 shots, the players of each pair swap their positions and functions.

Variations:

- Various teams formed by three players compete to establish the one who scores more goals with 5 attacks. A goalkeeper can be added.
- Various teams formed by three players compete to establish the one who scores in the shortest time.

Coaching objectives:

- To reduce as much as possible the time between the trap of the ball and the actual shot from inside the circle.
- To learn more about penalty corner shooting.

“It’s generally assumed that the more you know about something, the better you’ll be at it, but a certain innocence will help you to perform better.”

L.Moorhouse/L.Cross
“It’s generally assumed that the more you know about something, the better you will be at doing it. But a certain innocence will help you to perform better.”

L. Mourhouse / L. Cross
SOME HINTS FOR PENALTY CORNER SHOOTING:

1. To be able to hit the ball with maximum speed. The weight of the stick as well as its stiffness has to be considered.

2. Decide the exact place from where to hit the ball towards the goal. Consider the running path of the defender and the habits of the goalkeeper.

3. Ask the player who traps the ball outside of the circle to use the trap-technique which suits you best for striking the ball with a flick or hit.

4. Watch the ball closely before and when you strike it. The quicker the strike at goal is executed, the less chances the defender has to block your shot. Consider also the way opponents are running out.

5. When running towards the ball which was played into the circle, the rhythm and the timing of the striker influence the power and the accuracy of the shot, as does the correct position of both feet, at the moment of the impact of the stick with the ball.

6. During the hit at goal lift the stick relatively slowly but increase the speed progressively in the swing follow-through, until the moment of impact. There should be no interruption of the pendulum in the turning point (see "The art of hitting the ball properly").

7. When maximum power is employed in all phases of the shot, the co-ordination level decreases. Don't try too hard. Be relaxed and have confidence in the important task.

8. Don't look up immediately after the impact stick with ball because that will result in less accuracy of the hit.

9. Choose the technique and direction of your shot after having carefully studied the habits of your opponents in penalty corner defence.

10. After the execution of the shot, anticipate a possible rebound. Therefore, the right hand must grip the stick in its centre.

11. Also, the best penalty corner specialist needs frequent practice. He must train with and without opponents and team mates until he has improved a few effective variations in attack. Too many variations are detrimental to perfection.

“The way you think after a defeat will determine how much time will pass until you win the next game.”
2ND. PART:

EXERCISES AND SIMPLIFIED GAMES FOR THE PENALTY CORNER DEFENSE

5TH. EXERCISE: CLEAR THE BALL QUICKLY OUT OF THE CIRCLE

When one player simulates a push-out, various players in different positions behind the end line and with the stick held only in the right hand, run with the intention of playing their respective ball out of the circle.

The balls are placed at a distance of 13m in front of each player. The one who first plays his ball out of the circle is the winner.

Coaching objectives:

- Running out from a position just in front of the ball but slightly on its left side will enable you to play the ball quickly and always with the front of the stick.
- Grip the stick always with the right hand at the top of the handle.
- To anticipate the moment of the push-out of the ball.
- The first 3 steps should be short ones without lifting the head to look to the ball. A wide stride and lifting the head too early will negatively influence the speed of your sprint.
- In order to achieve maximum possible reach, play the ball with the right arm completely stretched and the right foot in front. Take care that the curve of your stick, facing forward, is in a vertical position at the moment of playing the ball and not inclined backward.
6TH. EXERCISE: QUICK RUNNING OUT AND BLOCKING THE BALL

Before the 7th. game is practised and a competition is organized, all players should experience the following drill:

The right shoulder of two players are facing each other. One player is positioned on the end line and the other on the 22.90 meter line. After a visual signal (for instance a simulation of a push-out), both players run as quickly as possible towards the ball, which is placed in the centre between them.

The winner is the player who touches the ball first (with preference only with the right hand as far up as possible on the handle of his stick). After touching the ball he moves it at least 2 meters out of range of the opponent.
7TH. EXERCISE: BLOCKING THE SHOT ON GOAL

One attacker passes the ball with a drag push from the end line toward the edge of the circle where two team-mates expect the pass. One traps and the other strikes the ball at goal, despite the active defence of one opponent running out of the goal with the aim of blocking the shot.

After a goal is scored, or the ball has gone out of the circle, a second penalty corner is taken, but this time a 4th attacker passes the ball in from the opposite side of the goal. Meanwhile, the first player running is substituted by another fresh team-mate. In order to perfect the drag, the trap and the strike at goal, no variations are allowed in the execution of the penalty corner.

For every goal, the attacker gains 2 points as do the defenders for a successful play with the ball out of the circle. But, should the attackers make a mistake and fail to score a goal, the defenders gain only one point. Any infringement of the rules by the defender is penalized with a penalty stroke. The team scoring 10 points first is the winner.

After the first competition both teams swap positions and functions. Finally, the coach may allow the attackers to vary their play instead of always hitting the ball directly towards the goal.
Coaching objectives:

• After having studied the habits of the opponent in pushing the ball out, try to anticipate its moment of execution.

• Don't look towards the ball during the first three steps.

• Be aggressive and confident as you are running out.

• Don't run in front of the goalkeeper. Let him see the trajectory of the ball all the time. That is why the first defender running out should always position himself on the left side of the goalkeeper, aiming to block the shot with the front of his stick only.

• Once the runner has managed to touch the ball, he should attempt to clear it out of the circle.

• After 2 or 3 successive interventions, vary your defence. For instance run out with less speed and anticipate a combination of the attackers.

• To learn more about running out during the penalty corner defense.

Hints for the first defender running out:

• Generally, the first defender positions himself on the left side of the goalkeeper. He grips the stick with the right hand at the top of the handle.

• In case of any infringement of the rules by the attackers at the circle's edge, the first defender should immediately take the free hit.

• The goalkeeper must inform the first attacker about his intentions. Should he decide to run out very far, two defenders should accompany him on either side with the intention of preventing a combination between the attackers, or to block a shot when the ball is passed from the end line towards an attacker in an inside-forward position.

“Small details may dramatically change the outcome.”
8TH. EXCERCISE: LOOKING OUT FOR UNDERSTANDING IN DEFENCE AND IN ATTACK

Two teams formed by 3 players compete in a simplified penalty corner game. One team attacks with 3 players (the stick stopper is the neutral player) and the other defends with a goalkeeper and two defenders rushing out.

To score, the attacking team must pass the ball after the stick stop at least once before it is directed towards the goal.

The defenders gain a point when the ball moves more than 3 meter outside the circle, or if any of the defenders commit an infringement of the rules a penalty stroke is awarded.

Variations:
• The teams are obliged to practise the drag-out from the side of the goal which the coach indicates.

* Practise the same game without any limitations to the attackers.

“Only a coach who has got enough brain can be simple.”
Coaching objectives:
* To stimulate creativity and imagination in attack, the attackers should always look to surprise the opposing defence.

- In the presence of active defenders, the attackers should master 2 or 3 penalty corner variations.
- Gain experience concerning the effectiveness of determined penalty corner variations.
- To learn how to modify the attack considering the opponent’s tactics in defence.
- To always look out for the rebound whether you are an attacker or a defender.
- To learn how to establish and improve understanding between the attacking players as well as between the defenders.
- To learn more about the functions of the second player running out.

HINTS FOR THE SECOND DEFENDER:

- The second defender runs out from the right goal-post with the main aim to anticipate and intercept with his front stick any pass between the opponents who are situated on the left side of the striker.
- At the same time he should also anticipate a possible return-pass to the player who pushed the ball in case he does it from the right side of the goal.
- Due to the danger of getting injured, tackling with the reversed stick should be avoided during the execution of the opponent's shot at goal.
- If the opponents hit the ball directly at the goal, the second defender should look out for a possible rebound of the ball from the goalkeeper's pads.
9TH.: PENALTY CORNER TRAINING "FIVE AGAINST FOUR"

This game is similar to the previous one but with an extra player in attack (on the right side of the stick stopper) and also in defence (on the left side of the goal). A neutral goalkeeper is also added.

Before a competition between both teams is organized, the coach practise with both teams the attack and defence, stopping the play various times at the moment the shot at goal is taken. In this way the coach verifies the positions of all defenders as well as those of the attackers. When all players involved have understood their specific task in attack as well as in defence, the competition may start.

After 5 penalty corners are completed, both teams change their positions and functions. The winning team is the one which scores more goals after having executed 10 penalty corners in attack and another 10 in defence. A penalty corner finishes with a goal, an infringement by an attacker or when the ball moves out of the 22.90meter zone.

Variation:
• The number of attackers is increased to six.
• The 6 defenders behind the centre line can now take part in the game.

Coaching objectives:
* Allow the goalkeeper to gain valuable experience in the defense of penalty corners
* Improve the cooperation in defence, including the goalkeeper's play.

“The secret of a good team is order and discipline. One important function of the coach is to let each of his players know what to do in which moment of the game.”
SOME HINTS FOR THE GOALKEEPER'S PLAY:

- The goalkeeper is only allowed to play with full equipment, including helmet.

- The goalkeeper should generally move 3-4m out of his goal in order to reduce the shooting angle of the striker. He should be in a stationary upright position when the ball is trapped dead by the opponents.

- As well as the "flyer" (the first player running out), on his left side, the goalkeeper should anticipate the moment of the push-out with the aim to run out and assume in time an optimal ready-position to stop the shot.

- When the goalkeeper and his defenders have observed the opponents in their penalty corner routines in training or just before the match, they will find it easier to anticipate the exact moment of the push-out.

- If the goalkeeper assists the flyer before he runs towards the attackers, by putting one of his kickers behind the second foot of the flyer, this may help his teammate's acceleration but could result in poor concentration for the goalie's defensive task.

- Whenever the goalkeeper has not anticipated the hit, flick or pass of the striker, he should remain in an upright position.

- Should the goalkeeper decide not to come out of the goal, he should inform his teammates of his intention.

- When the attackers decide to pass the ball, the goalkeeper has to adjust to the new position of the ball with small steps in order to be able to cover the shooting angle. The closer the goalkeeper is situated to the ball, the less angle the attackers have to score.

- The goalkeeper, after he has run out of the goal, should not let the forwards know his real intention. He should slightly incline his head and upper part of his body to the right side until his right knee almost touches the ground. In doing this, it looks as though he is going to lay down on his right side. Once the attackers have noticed his intention, they may decide to flick the ball. At this moment the goalkeeper returns to an upright position in order to save the flick or he lays completely down on his side in case the attackers hit the ball.
• To flop onto the ground from a standing position, this must occur quickly. First bend at the right knee, taking the body weight to the right side and then stretch out the upper part of your body, so that there is no gap under the right arm or stick, which is held firmly, half-way up the shaft. When lying down on the right side, with the pads one on top of the other and as the chest facing the ball, there should remain no gaps for the ball to travel underneath the goalkeeper into the goal. The legs are the first part of the body to go to the ground.

• The goalkeeper has to wait in a standing position until the ball is definitely going to be hit. Only an the moment of impact between the stick and the ball and after having processed all other relevant information he starts to assume a lying position. Both pads are together and should present a large barrier when the ball arrives onto them.

• The left hand should be used to stop and protect helmet and especially the throat. The small area not covered on the left side of the goalkeeper (who lies horizontally on the ground) is looked after a defender who moves slightly out of the goal.

• Frequent training of the penalty corner defence with tennis balls, mini hockey balls or official balls will built up the goalkeeper's confidence.

SOME HINTS FOR THE DEFENDERS BEHIND THE CENTRE LINE:

• Two of the six defenders should run as quickly as possible into the shooting circle to assist their 5 team mates in case an attacker doesn't hit the ball directly at goal or one of the fellow-defenders commits an infringement outside of the circle. In this latter case there being a free hit for the attacking team the presence of two or even more defenders is crucial for winning back possession of the ball.

* The remaining four defenders must prepare for a possible counter-attack, anticipating a successful penalty corner defence with a following quick through pass. Two of them should remain close to the centre-line. There, they "serve as bridge" for the remaining two defenders offer themselves in the depth of the field. Besides ensuring depth in their possible attacking action, they also should make sure of their possible counter-attack.

"To determine the player's performance, his level should not be compared with that of others, instead it should always be related to his own capabilities.”
10th. Exercise: Improve the Defence on the Goal-line

From a distance of 12m one attacker hits 10 tennis balls one after another to the goal which is defended by two opponents, one close to the right and the other close to the left goal post.

After every hit, the attacker has to leave the circle before he runs in again to strike the next ball. The two defenders who manage to save the maximum number of the 10 balls directed at the goal mouth are the winners.

Variations:
- Only one opponent in goal has to defend it.
- A goalkeeper is added in order to develop understanding between him and the two defenders.
- Instead of tennis balls, 10 mini hockey balls are hit at the goal which is defended by goalkeeper and two defenders.
Coaching objectives:

- The defender, situated very close to the left goal-post, must anticipate a save only with the front of his stick. Because of his position, he should not attempt to save the ball with the reverse stick (which would demand more time).

- The defender situated close to the right goal-post should come half a meter inside. This position will allow him to concentrate only on a front stick save, because all balls directed to his left side have to be saved by the goalkeeper.

- At the moment the ball is hit or flicked at goal, both defenders must step in front of the goal line, which they are not allowed to touch with their heels.

- In order to assure good balance, legs should be shoulder-wide apart and bent.

- The stick is held close to the defender's feet and on the ground with the curve facing the oncoming ball. This way, a minimum number of movements are necessary to trap the ball with the front of the stick.

- Should the ball rebound from the goalkeeper's pads, the defender closest to the ball has to get it before the arrival of any attacker. The ball should be cleared with a forehand slap with the player facing the centre-line or even the goal, thus protecting the ball with his body. When the ball is cleared, the stick has to remain on the ground in order to assure that the ball runs along the ground, a quick execution of the slap and accuracy in directing the ball to a team-mate or toward a zone, which is not controlled by opponents.