



## COACHING BASICS 2: PLAYER POSITIONS

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### GOAL KEEPER - GK

The goal keeper is the last line of defence. There is little point in a defender simply standing her ground and watching balls sail through the ring. The Goal Keeper must attack the ball and gain intercepts for her team. She can do this in one of three ways;

a/ **Defending goals.** The most important thing for a GK is balance and focus on the ring, so try to upset the shooter's focus on the ring. Use some variety – stand 4 feet from the opponent and jump at the ball when it is released, interrupt the goal shooter's vision, defend with your hand to the left or to the right. Standing on one foot will increase elevation and stretch. Remember to pivot on one foot and turn your body after the ball is released so that you finish defending with your back to the shooter – guarding the space to the front of you, then the intercept will be yours if the ball misses and lands short. You will then be likely to receive the rebound if it drops on your side.

b/ **Shutting down the GS** and attacking the ball. Starting position, position of the feet (i.e. in relation to the opponent) and peripheral vision are vital components in the GK's toolkit. Keep your chin and eyes up – keeping sight of the shooter so you can track her tightly, but also know where the ball is so that you can attack and make an intercept when able to do so. The defender's starting position depends on many variables, but as a rule of thumb – be in front of the attacker or to the side. Defenders won't achieve much if they're constantly behind.

c/ **Anticipation.** So long as the defender isn't behind her opponent, she can look to see how the ball is about to be delivered / fed into the goal circle. Ask; "how has the feeder chambered the ball – will it be a high pass, or a low pass?" Try and anticipate the type of feed and subsequent flight of the ball - move quickly to that position to make an intercept. If you are coming to the front of your opponent – come around feet first (not body first) so that you don't incur an infringement.

### GOAL DEFENCE - GD

The Goal Defence works with the GK in the defensive goal circle, as well as being a link player moving the ball from defence into attack (see also WD).

a/ **Defending Goals:** same as for GK above. In addition to defending an opponent who is shooting, a defender will just as often be the "other defender" or loose defender. This does not mean she is passive – she must actively set up and protect a space for a possible rebound. The ideal position is to have the feet at a 45 degree angle to the base line with the back to the opponent. In principle, set up on the opposite side of the ring to the shooter, and keep your opponent out and the space in front of you open.

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**b/ In the goal circle** - be in front when the opposition is feeding the goalies. One defender ought to be in front and if an intercept cannot be anticipated then the defenders work together to force a high ball. This requires one of the defenders (normally the GD) to play in-front of both attackers when four players are in the defensive circle. The GD should be well balanced and up on her toes with knees bent, reactions must be quick, seeking to force the ball to be fed high to the shooter behind. Properly executed, this allows the defender at the back to attack the ball – remembering that the longer a ball stays in the air, the better the chance a defender has of making an intercept.

**c/ Get the ball** – A defender must constantly tell herself; “go out and get the ball.” Being a defender involves some risk, but the risk will pay off if the defender works up on her toes and drive hard for intercepts, moving early and anticipating the flight of the ball before it is released.

## WING DEFENCE – WD

The Wing Defence requires speed as she is a vital link between defence and attack. Depending on team strategy, she may be designated a “go to” when one of the in-circle defenders makes an intercept and turns the ball over.

**a/ Float or Track?** Depending on the opponent’s strengths, the WD must decide whether to float (play off the opponent) or track (plays tight against the opponent and prevents her driving down the court). If the decision is to float off the opponent, the WD must have good peripheral vision so that she can anticipate the flight of the ball and make an intercept. If she decides to track and prevent an opposing WA driving down the court then she sacrifices her own game a little to prevent an opponent becoming dominant.

**b/ Pressure on the feed.** When the ball is being worked around the goal circle, the WD must try and get ball side to force a high ball so that an intercept may be made by one of the defenders coming off her opponent and attacking the ball. It may be useful for the WD to stand off her opponent a little to create the illusion of an easy pass, and then attack the ball to create a loose ball or turnover. When the ball is being fed into a goalie, the WD has her hands over the ball and exerts maximum pressure on the feeder to help the in-circle defenders.

**c/ Being a link player:** Along with the GD the WD is a vital link between defence and attack. The WD needs to be quick and steady, as play changes between defence and attack. Some coaches encourage a “fast <-> slow” action when a turnover occurs i.e. the intercept happens quickly, the next pass is short and slow to enable the team to reorientate to attack. The WD must react quickly if the other defenders have created a turnover by cutting and driving down the court to provide a link into attack. The WD must keep her eyes up and read off the C so they’re not in the same place on the court. When driving down the court, the WD must not be at the forward transverse too early or she will unwittingly shut down the space required by the GA. Timing and special awareness are important features of a WD’s game.

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## CENTRE – C

The Centre is a vital link player, and works with the coach to *choreograph* the movement of the ball into attack, and helps to set up and deliver the ball to the goalies.

**a/ Spatial awareness and drive:** The Centre must have a good sense of space and where it is on court. She must know where spaces are, where they will open up, and how to create space in order to be the link player in the team. While the WD position suits players who love to run, and the WA position is suitable for those who can dance and dodge, the C requires a capacity to do both. Dodge, front cut, second offers are the dance like movements. To execute these the centre must learn to dig in (short step, bend knee) and drive off hard toward the ball, or step in front of her opponent (front cut) – her movements involving constant change of direction. It is important that in so doing, the Centre also draws the ball forward, toward the goal, finding and making space closer to goals. It will depend on team game strategy, but some coaches prefer to give the C the middle corridor of the court so that she has space to work, and stays away from the side lines. Just as there is a time to do the dance (dodge, cut, 2<sup>nd</sup> offers), equally there is a time to drive hard down the court, opening the game up and going into attack quickly and with confidence.

**b/ Choreography:** Perhaps more than any other player in your team, the C needs the coach to be an excellent choreographer, and as the coach you will need to convey a clear understanding of your game plan to all players, but especially to the Centre. Do you want her to give and go, or give and wait – depending where she's passed the ball to? Do you want her to follow the ball after she's passed it (using the next player for a screen) or do you want her to run away from the ball and into space? Do you want her to stop and pass to slow the game down in certain places, or do you want her to deliver the ball on the run and get it into attack quickly? Where do you want her on the goal circle and who do you prefer her to feed to, when, and how do you want there to deliver the ball to the goalies (high, low, from the transverse, or the goal circle), and how do you want her to fit into any set plays? There isn't necessarily right wrong about these things, except the main thing that goes wrong is when the coach does not convey clear expectations to the Centre, or the Centre does not understand what the coach requires. Good choreography relies on clearly conveyed expectations and an articulated game plan.

## WING ATTACK - WA:

The WA plays a vital role along with the centre in linking the ball from around the centre circle to the edge of the goal circle, and also has the responsibility of feeding the ball into the ring. This position requires the ability to work efficiently in a relatively small space and to change direction quickly.

**a/ Get out for centre passes:** It is often seen as the primary role of the WA to get most centre passes. Therefore it is vital that the WA have an effective strategy to do so. At its simplest level, the WA should endeavour to stand on the line and get on the inside of her player (i.e. have the WD between the WA and the sideline.) This is essential as this gives the most options – straight dodge, front cut etc for an effective lead. A more advanced WA may choose to stand off the line and make a lead like any other in the game, attempting to beat the WD from behind the line. **NB:** If at the centre pass the opposition centre chooses to stand on the WA, meaning that the WA is double teamed – move as close to the sideline as

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possible. Not only will the centre most probably leave you, but if she does not, it gives the GA the entire line to make a lead. If the WA is not successful in getting the centre pass (and it's not her responsibility to get every centre pass in the entire game), the second lead needs to be very strong, and towards the circle edge (i.e. assuming the GA has received the ball).

**b/ Get Ball Side:** As a WA it is your responsibility to feed the ball into the goalies. This may take more than one try. Therefore at all times when the ball is in the goal circle, the WA needs to work hard at getting ball side. "Ball side" means having yourself be the closest player to the player with the ball; do not allow the WD to get between you and the player with the ball. This makes the passes around the circle much easier and less risky.

**c/ Feeding:** Feeding is a deceptively difficult skill to master. When feeding to goalies, a nifty trick is to look at the feet of the defender. The pass should go to the opposite side to the feet therefore giving the goalie the greatest chance to get the ball, or the penalty. **GIVE TO THE FRONT OPTION:** Goalies work very hard in a small amount of space, so if one presents in front of you; give it! Make sure the pass is strong and to the outstretched hands, not the body of the goalie. When feeding a lob, the WA needs to aim for the space behind the goalie, not where the goalie is or where they're hands are. Watch the angle of the hold; make sure the pass is in line with any angle presented, not just behind the general bunch of people. Don't be afraid to throw in fakes, this is often effective in causing the GD or GK to commit to a movement in one direction and allows the goalie space to move in the other and an easier feed. Don't forget about the C. Feel free to use the C if there is nothing on offer in the goal circle. This gives the goalies time to reset, and may present a slightly better angle. Don't think you have to get the ball close to the post on the first try – be patient.

## GOAL ATTACK - GA:

The GA has the role of shooting goals as well as helping to bring the ball down the court from around the centre circle into the goal circle. She also has to work with the GS in the goal circle, and with the WA and C in the goal third.

**a/ Bringing the ball into the goal third:** The GA shares the responsibility with the other mid court players in bringing the ball from the centre third into the goal third.

**b/ Movement in the goal circle:** Movement in the goal circle begins by the GA's drive into it. Timing is very important in a GA's game. It is often a matter of staying outside the circle until the optimum moment and then driving hard into the circle at the last second. The optimum moment will usually be if the GS is outside the circle and the ball is already on the edge. Depending on the style of game you're playing (be it a holding shooter or a moving circle) will affect what movement the GA will perform. With a holding shooter the GA must work around the GS's hold. This will usually mean the GA will work the front half of the goal circle leaving the back half open for the drop. If a moving circle is being implemented, the GA and GS will ideally run a figure 8 (see below) to encourage continuous movement that involves moving from the top of the circle to a base line drive. It is very important that if the ball is on the edge of the goal circle that the GA keeps moving. A way to coach this is at training to have the GA and the GS run figure 8's in the goal circle, firstly without a ball, and then adding the ball. Once the ball is added, throw it in randomly, making sure that both

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goalies have their eyes up, watching the ball, and not their feet, or each other. Even when the other goalie is shooting, the movement does not stop. The GA must be continually offering just in case the GS is having doubts about her shot or is being hassled by the defender.

**c/ Shooting and Rebounding:** It is imperative that a GA be confident with her shot. Be sure to teach the shooting action properly. Being the ball in one hand (the preferred hand) with the other hand on the side for support only – ideally the player should be able to shoot successfully with the one hand. Make sure that the elbow is straight and no ‘chicken wings’ being arms that look something like this >. The elbow should be by the ear. There are many acronyms that are used to teach goal shooting. The one I choose is;

B – Balance: make sure that the feet are shoulder width apart and facing the goal post.

E – Eyes: It is often helpful to teach goalies to pick a spot either on the ring or just above to give them something to aim for.

E – Elbows: As above

F – Follow through: once the ball is released, make sure that there is a flick of the wrist. This gives the ball backspin and can sometimes help the ball to fall back into the ring.

It is important that the GA not think her job is done once the ball has left her hands. There is always the unfortunate possibility that the ball will not go through the ring and therefore leads to the need to rebound. The F in BEEF can also be interpreted to follow the shot in – this meaning the need to run in behind the shot so that you’re prepared for any rebound opportunity.

## GOAL SHOOTER – GS:

**GS:** The goal shooter is obviously allowed to shoot goals. This position also requires the ability to work efficiently in a small space and also timing, and ability to work closely with the GA. A shooter must determine whether she is a holding or a leading shooter.

**a/ Shooting and rebounding:** see above GA

**b/ Movement in the goal circle:** The same drills can be done to teach the GS movement in the goal circle as the GA. Keep moving at all costs if the other goalie is holding.

**c/ Holding:** The key to holding is not to move too early. The player must not move until the ball has passed over her head, and is behind her. The GS must be aware of where the space is and allow enough space to move into. Holding on the base line is therefore not a good idea. The best hold is either directly in front of her opponent –with feet wide apart and use the body to stay in front of the opponent (back to the opponent), or in a T figure behind the opponent. With the T hold, the GS stands behind the defender with her side against the defender’s back. A wide strong stance is essential, as the defender will usually lean back into the hold as the ball goes over in an endeavour to intercept it. The ball should be fed into the GS slightly to the ‘open’ side (i.e. the front of the defender).

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**d/ Reset:** Two of the most important aspects of shooting goals include breathing and balance. Coaches are advised to permit idiosyncrasies (habits) that allow the gaolie / shooter to steady herself. If a goalie is off balance, she will need to reset herself, passing the ball off to a feeder (WA / C) who should not stand directly behind, but a little to one side, calling "back left" or "back right," and the goalie will need to remain aware of her landed foot in such circumstances. To reset, pass the ball back to a feeder and move a grounded foot closer to the goal post. The defender must then step back to give three feet. Reset passes should be given quickly and into each others hands, to advantage, when goalie and feeder move the ball in and out quickly.

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