

**Coaching Guidelines
for Intermediate and Secondary
11 aside hockey**

Basic Position Requirements

By
Bryce Collins
Sharon Williamson

Introduction

These Position Requirements guidelines aim to assist the coaches of North Harbour Intermediate and Secondary 11 aside hockey teams.

North Harbour Hockey follows the Hockey NZ playing policy which considers that a team has:

- 3 strikers,
- 3 midfielders,
- 4 defenders, and
- a Goalkeeper.

If another system and/or tactical approach is being used, some of the defining roles in this guide will need adjustment.

Please note that North Harbour considers it imperative that players have the ability to play in more than one position, e.g. a good striker should be capable of playing Left Wing, Centre Forward, and Right Wing; or a good defender should be capable of playing both fullback and wing half. This is very important for player development during intermediate and secondary years.



General Concepts

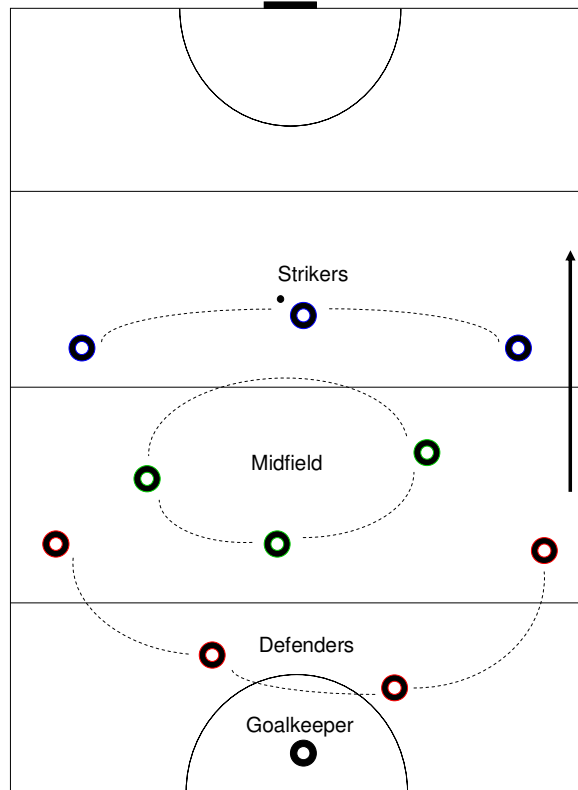


Fig 1 – general playing formation

- 3,3,4,1 playing formation (as shown in Figure 1)
- High passing rate
 - to increase the speed of play and attacking opportunities
- Mobile and flexible players
 - capable of playing in a range of positions
 - the modern game requires athleticism and speed in all positions
- All players proficient in base skills
 - push
 - hit
 - sweep hit
 - reverse stick
 - overhead
 - receiving skills
- Expansive
 - played equally down both flanks
- A mixture of zonal and man to man defence as the situation dictates
- Organized set pieces
 - Penalty Corners
 - Free hits – defence and attack
 - Long corners

Goalkeepers



The goalkeeper is arguably the most important position on the hockey field! A good goalkeeper can win you games. It is therefore paramount that goalkeepers get the attention and time they deserve at trainings.

The goalkeeper is responsible for the defensive circle and a strong goalkeeper will often take a leadership role on defence.

Key attributes of a good goalkeeper:

- Fast and agile
- Proficient with both the left and right foot
- Ability to judge and close down shooting angles
- Ability to make aerial saves with the glove (left) and stick (right)
- Ability to go down correctly at defensive PC's and / or remain standing depending on circumstances (hit / flick)
- Good communicator and organiser of the defence

Main requirements of the position:

- To save straight shots at goal
- To clear the ball wide of the goal
- To organise the defence so that the attacking team's ability to score is minimised
- To communicate with other defenders

Hockey NZ provides a comprehensive resource booklet for goalkeepers, which provides all the requirements of the position, as well as many training drills to improve goalkeeping skills. Click on the icon below to access this booklet.



Hockey NZ
Goalkeeping Resource

Defenders

Right Half, Left Half, Right Back, Left Back

The primary role for the back four is defensive. They must work as a unit and ensure that the opposition has limited opportunities to score.

This is not to say that they can not join the attack, but as a rule only one of the back four players would aggressively attack at any one time. The remaining players must move forward with the attack, ensuring relativity between the layers (defenders, midfield, and strikers), and also marking free attackers in case of quick turnover and/or counter attack.

These players have a key role in providing quality ball for the midfield and strikers to generate constructive attacks.

Key attributes of a good defender:

- Fast and agile (ability to turn and get back quickly, or move up on a player)
- Strong basic skills, particularly trapping, passing, tackling
- Ability to channel opposition attack away from the danger zone
- Understanding of both man to man and zonal defence, and ability to correctly decide which approach to use
- Vision – understanding of where other players are, and where the best passing opportunities are

Main requirements of defensive positions:

Right Half

- Defensive responsibility first
- Mark opposition Left Wing (mixture man to man and zonal defence)
- Ability to overlap (move into the strikers or midfield) and occasionally join the attack
- Responsible for taking the majority of free hits on the right hand side of the field
- Priority passes include Inside Right, Right Wing, Centre Forward, Centre Half
- Outlet passes include Right Back, Left Back

Right Back

- Defensive responsibility first
- Mark opposition Centre Forward or operate as the 'free man' (see note below)
- Move forward with the attack picking up the free central striker and be available as an outlet pass
- Responsible for taking the majority of 16 yard and free hits in the defensive 1/3, right side of the field.
- Priority passes include opposite fullback, Left Half, Centre Half, Inside forwards and strikers
- Outlet passes include Right Half, - right side players (Inside Right, Right Wing)

Left Half

- Defensive responsibility first
- Mark opposition Right Wing (mixture man to man and zonal defence)
- Ability to overlap (move into the strikers or midfield) and occasionally join the attack
- Responsible for taking the majority of free hits on the left hand side of the field
- Priority passes include Inside Left, Left Wing, Centre Forward, Centre Half
- Outlet passes include Left Back, Right Back

Left Back

- Defensive responsibility first
- Mark opposition Centre Forward or operate as the 'free man' (see note below)
- Move forward with the attack picking up the free central striker and be available as an outlet pass
- Responsible for taking the majority of 16 yard and free hits in the defensive 1/3, left side of the field.
- Priority passes include opposite fullback, Right Half, Centre Half, Inside forwards and strikers
- Outlet passes include Left Half, - left side players (Inside Left, Left Wing)



Additional notes to assist with defensive positions:

Fullback teamwork:

A cohesive defensive structure requires all opposition strikers to be marked at all times. As there are only three opposition strikers, this means that one fullback will not have a marking role.

This fullback is referred to as the 'free man'. It is the free-man's responsibility to get themselves in line with the ball and the goal, to be able to confront any opposition attack that has broken through the midfield, and also to provide cover for the defence.

It is best for the free man to be positioned higher than the marked fullback (who will be marking the opposition centre forward). This means that they can shut down attacks high up the field. The free man also needs to cover the 'hot-line' - the line between the ball and the goal – so if the ball position shifts, the free man must cover accordingly.

If you choose to play a left and right fullback, they must operate like a piston with the left fullback pushing up in front of the centre forward when the ball is on their side of the field and vice versa when the ball is on the right side of the field.

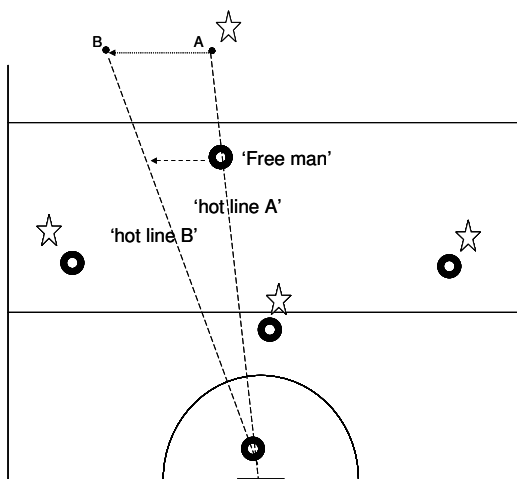


Fig 2 – position of the free man – covering the 'hot line'

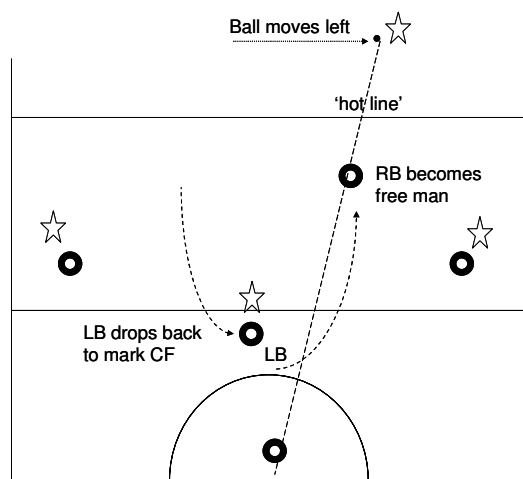


Fig 3 – Left and right backs, operate like a piston

Zonal v Man to Man defence:

Your defensive style will probably change throughout a game, depending on the position of the ball on the field and the score line. You will not necessarily finish a game with the same defensive style that you began it.

Man-to-man defence requires players to take responsibility for an individual opponent. The defender will immediately challenge the attacking player on the receiving end of a pass.

The principle of man-to-man marking requires the defender to be positioned 'goal side' and 'inside' their opponent, which means they will be positioned between the attacker and the goal. This position provides good vision of both the ball as it approaches and the player they are marking. If the player marks from in front of their opponent, they will need to rely on players behind them to call their line as their opponent moves into a different space to receive the ball.

In a deep defence man-to-man situation, there will usually be a spare player who will be in a good position to read the play, call players into better defensive lines, make interceptions and tidy up loose balls. Refer to the 'fullbacks' note above for the position of a free-man in general play.

Zonal defence is mainly about protecting the most critical attacking area on the field. This is commonly referred to as 'defending the castle'.

In zonal defence, defenders cover the most dangerous spaces in the zone rather than their specific opponents. Although players are not as tightly marked as in a man-to-man situation, there should still be little or no space in the 'castle' for the attacking team to deliver the ball without risking a turnover or a 50/50 contest.

Players can use their body positioning to defend space on the field, and if play is up and down the field, then mini-zones may be set up, but this would usually be done in conjunction with man-to-man marking.

The size of the zone must be appropriate to the game. If it is too big, the attacking team will be able to find space with a clever pass. If it is too close together or too high up the field, an overhead could eliminate the entire zone.

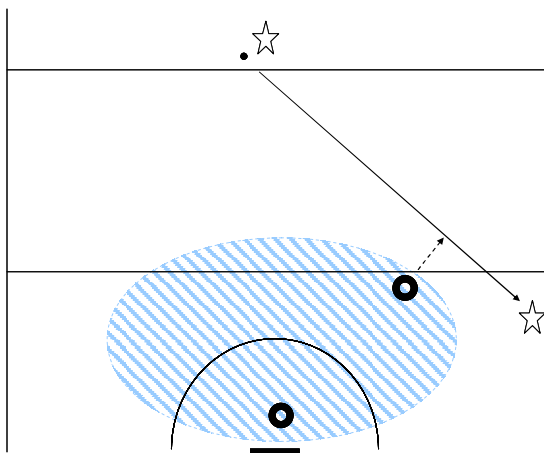


Fig 4 – Zonal defence example – the defender protects the danger zone and is also able to intercept a wide pass

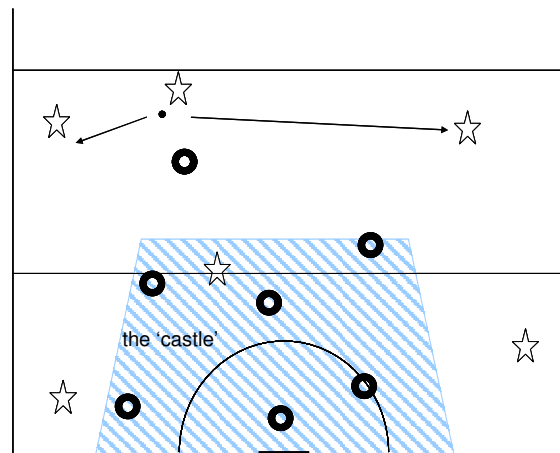


Fig 5 – Defending the 'castle' – the defence covers the danger zone so that moving the ball wide is the only option.

Midfield



Inside Right, Inside Left, Centre Half

The midfield is the engine room of the team. It is required to support and contribute to the attack (especially the Inside Right and Inside Left), but also has key defensive responsibilities - ensuring the opposition can not make clean breaks through the middle of the field.

Midfielders must be good distributors of the hockey ball and have exceptional game awareness. Creativity separates the best from the rest!

Key attributes of a good midfielder:

- Fit, fast and agile with good acceleration
- Strong all-round basic skills, including passing, receiving, ball carrying and shooting
- Vision and game awareness – understanding of where other players are, and where the best opportunities are
- Ability to switch play or change the point of attack i.e. move the ball from one side of the field to the other efficiently
- Understanding of both man to man and zonal defence, and ability to correctly decide which approach to use
- Ability to appropriately weight passes
- Understanding of angles and lines of attack and defence in midfield play

Main requirements of midfield positions:

Inside Right

- At least one of the 3 midfielders must join the attack - preferably 2 at any one time
- In the shooting circle, will normally be positioned around the circle edge, for rebounds, direct and post (deflection) shots
- Responsible for marking the opposing Inside Left
- One Inside must support the Centre Half in providing an outlet to the back four when in possession at the back
- Be mobile when receiving the ball and look to go forward as a first priority
- Can take quick free hits anywhere on the right hand side of the field, or alternatively offering up a pass for the wing half, full back or Centre Half
- Priority passes include Right Wing, Centre Forward, Left Wing, Centre Half and Inside Left
- Outlet passes include Right Half, Centre Half, left and right full back

Inside Left

- At least one of the 3 midfielders must join the attack - preferably 2 at any one time
- In the shooting circle, will normally be positioned around the circle edge, for rebounds, direct and post (deflection) shots
- Responsible for marking the opposing Inside Right
- One Inside must support the Centre Half in providing an outlet to the back four when in possession at the back
- Be mobile when receiving the ball and look to go forward as a first priority
- Can take quick free hits anywhere on the left hand side of the field, or alternatively offering up a pass for the wing half, full back or Centre Half
- Priority passes include Left Wing, Centre Forward, Right Wing, Centre Half and Inside Right
- Outlet passes include Left Half, Centre Half, left and right full back

Centre Half

- Responsible for marking the opposing Centre Half and occupying the centre of the field
- When on attack in the shooting circle, will normally be positioned at the top or just outside the circle, for rebounds, direct and post (deflection) shots
- Has a key role in providing an outlet pass for the fullbacks and must be available when the fullbacks are under pressure
- Be mobile when receiving the ball and look to go forward as a first priority
- Responsible for taking free hits in the centre of the field (roughly in the attacking 2/3 of the field)
- Priority passes include the Inside Left, Inside Right, Left Wing, Centre Forward, Right Wing, Right and Left Half.
- Outlet passes include either of the fullbacks, Right and Left Half

Strikers



Right Wing, Left Wing, Centre Forward

The striker's number one role is to generate and convert scoring opportunities. Strikers must do this by:

- working as a unit,
- creating depth and width on attack,
- linking well with the midfield, and
- making the most of the opportunities they are presented.

In saying this, strikers are also the first line of defence, and their ability to 'reverse press' (putting defenders under pressure) is a critical component of the game. A strong reverse press results in less time for the opposition to construct effective attacks, and generates turnovers in advantageous positions. This must be actively encouraged!

Key attributes of a good striker:

- Fast and agile with good acceleration and change of pace
- Good basic skills, including receiving, ball-carrying and shooting
- Ability to identify and execute the best shooting opportunity (e.g. direct shot v deflection v pass around etc.)
- Vision and game awareness
- Constant movement – leading, creating space and attacking opportunities,
- Ability to put pressure on opposition defence
- Ability to use skills to force a PC or attacking free hit at the right time
- Appropriate weighting of passes
- Understanding of angles and lines of attack and defence

Main requirements of striker positions:

Right Wing

- Look to receive the ball in behind the defence and link with the Centre Forward and Left Wing
- Receive the ball going forward where possible, and take on the opposing Left Half
- Accelerate ahead of the ball carrier – use the baseline
- Shoot where possible, or create a shooting opportunity for another striker
- Be ready for the ball in the attacking circle at all times e.g. deflections, rebounds
- Responsible for marking the line to the Left Half and forming the first line of defence
- Priority passes include, Centre Forward, Left Wing, Inside Right , Inside Left
- Outlet passes include the Inside Right, Right Half, and Centre Half

Left Wing

- Look to receive the ball in behind the defence and link with the Centre Forward and Right Wing
- Receive the ball going forward where possible, and take on the opposing Right Half
- Accelerate ahead of the ball carrier – use the baseline
- Shoot where possible, or create a shooting opportunity for another striker
- Be ready for the ball in the attacking circle at all times e.g. deflections, rebounds
- Responsible for marking the line to the Right Half and forming the first line of defence
- Priority passes include, Centre Forward, Right Wing, Inside Right , Inside Left
- Outlet passes include the Inside Left, Left Half, and Centre Half

Centre Forward

- Look to receive the ball in behind the defence and link with the Right and Left Wing
- Receive the ball going forward where possible and take on the full backs
- Run hard to get ahead of the ball carrier – use the baseline
- Shoot where possible, or create a shooting opportunity for another striker
- Be ready for the ball in the attacking circle at all times e.g. deflections, rebounds
- Link with the midfield to create attacks
- Responsible for setting the first line of defence and applying pressure to the opposition full backs
- Priority passes include, Left Wing, Right Wing, Inside Right , Inside Left
- Outlet passes include, Centre Half, Inside Right, Inside Left, Right and Left Half

Additional notes to assist with striker positions:

Striker width and depth

Strikers are expected to be mobile and constantly moving. This includes interchanging positions and being at different depths on attack. The days of strikers running in a straight line, with each striker staying conscientiously in their 'lane' are behind us!

The most important thing is for strikers to work as a team. They need to be frequently monitoring what the other strikers are doing. For example, a wing may accelerate over to the opposite sideline to receive a straight pass – the other wing and centre forward need to immediately move into positions to support the opportunity that has now been created (refer to Fig 6 below).

Strikers can also use the baseline to move the ball from a wide position into the attacking zone, as defenders will mainly focus on the space between the ball-carrier and the goal, leaving the baseline free for a 1-2 pass, or to carry the ball into the circle and pass back to another striker (refer Fig 7).

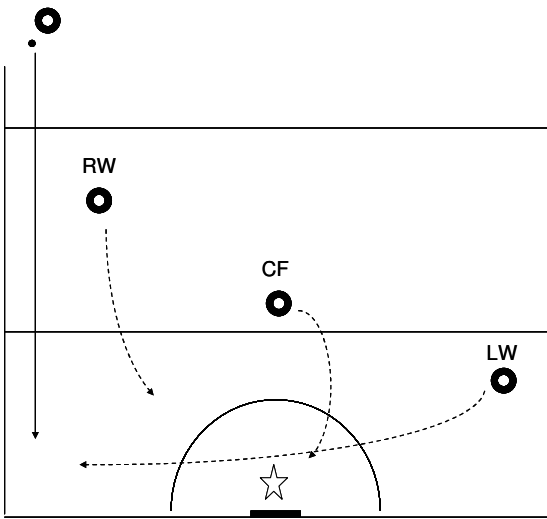


Fig 6 – Example of strikers moving into other channels to set up a scoring opportunity

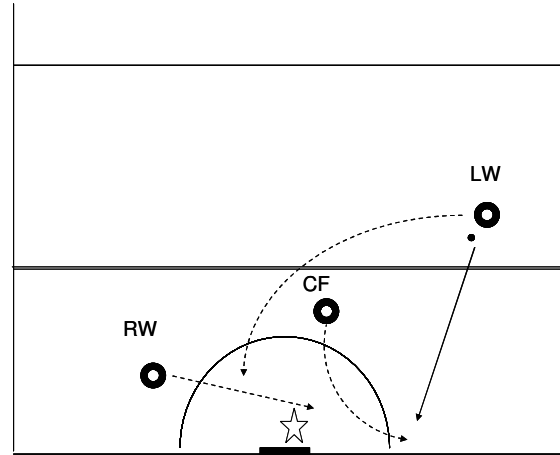


Fig 7 – Example of strikers using the baseline to move the ball into the circle and into a scoring position

Penetrating the circle

Entering the circle as close to the middle of the circle as possible, means that shots can be made at the best angle to the goal, and therefore have the best chance of scoring. Also, shots from in front give team-mates the best chance for a second or third chance to score from a rebound.

It is necessary at times to enter the circle from out wide, but it gives a smaller shooting angle and limits passing options. This is why defenders try to channel the ball out wide in the circle.

The baseline can be used effectively however, to bring the ball into the circle and pass it back into the middle to a player with a better shooting angle. In this situation team-mates need to understand where to best position themselves to support the player on the baseline.

While it is important for strikers to practice ways to enter the circle in the best position for the direct shot, it is also very important to practice baseline running and passing so you can maximise your goal shooting opportunities in all situations.

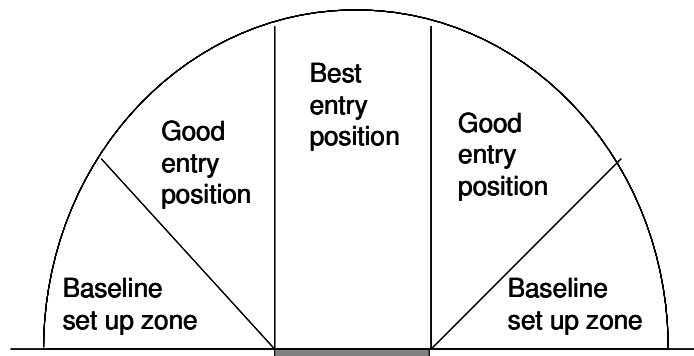


Fig 8 – Circle entry positions for shooting