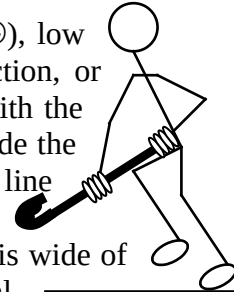
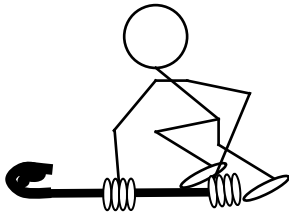


## Indoor Defensive Positioning, and Team Combination Tactics

Initial “ready” position (you need a **left glove**- two gloves are better ☺), low hips, and maintain balance by not taking any large steps in any direction, or lunging for the ball (don’t lunge with either foot, and NEVER lunge with the right hand). No dodge may be made over a defender’s stick, unless inside the “D” **and** shooting directly on goal. A lifted shot must cross the goal line

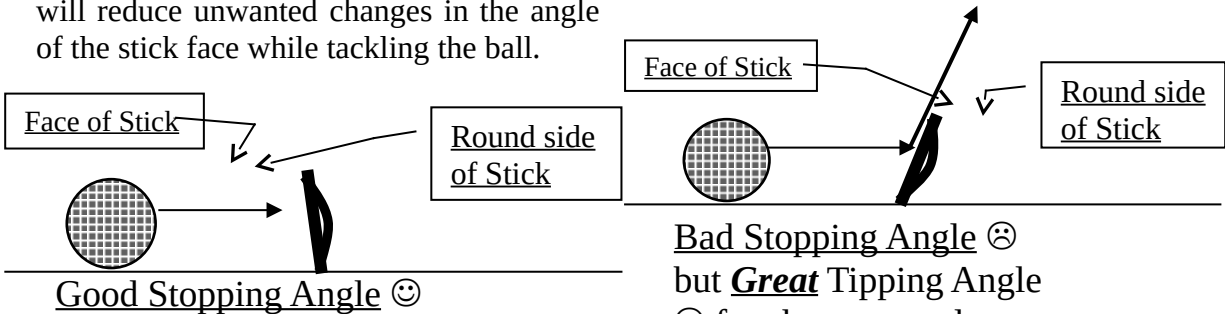


Initial “ready” Position



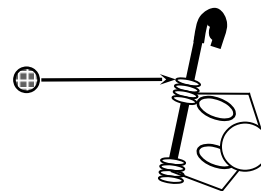
“Low” Position

without bouncing or a deflection by another attacker, to be considered a legal lift. If the lift is wide of goal, and hits a defender, deflecting into the goal, it is an offensive foul: dangerous lift- e.g. high but NOT on goal. Use your entire stick along the floor to present the biggest obstacle possible to the ball handler (see “Low” position to left). Do this to stop a dribble AND also to block up passing lanes. Note how the defender on the left is low, stick along the floor, but not flat footed (BOTH heels on the ground and unable to move quickly ☹). Pay attention to the angle of your stick face, with respect to (wrt) the floor, while in the low position. If the stick face is not slightly “closed” towards the floor (less than perpendicular), the ball will pop-up and go over it, and it will be a foul on you as defender. Remembering to keep the left wrist straight as you reach out with the left hand will reduce unwanted changes in the angle of the stick face while tackling the ball.

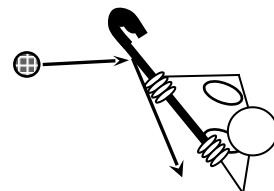


Lead with your left hand when tackling, and keep the ball to the right of your belly button whenever possible (unless denying a flat pass to the attacker’s left or steering the ball handler towards a teammate supporting you on your left- a “double team”- see below). Leading with the left hand allows the ball to naturally deflect to your stick side while it slips to the non-stick side of your opponent. Move your feet (both of them- in quick little steps), to eat up

**View from above of ideal defensive stick angle wrt the direction of the ball. Note how left hand is farther from the defender’s body than the right hand.**

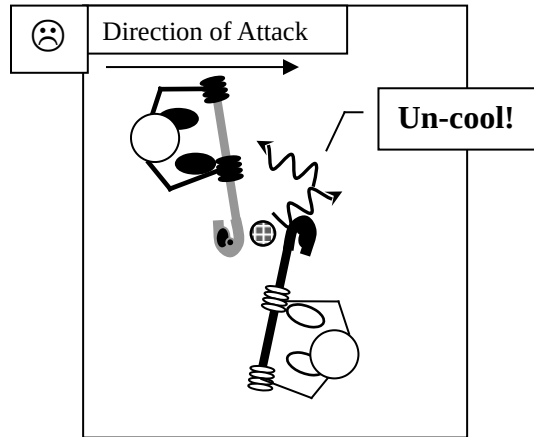


**View from above of bad defensive stick angle wrt the direction of the ball. Note how the right hand has “lunged” farther from the defender’s body than the left hand. Be patient, or fail ☹. Be cool, the cool girl wins!**

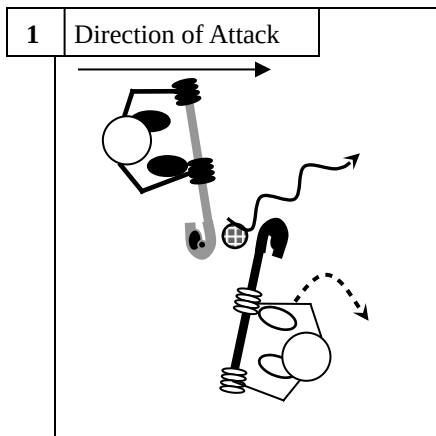


any “soft” space between you and the ball carrier. This is both intimidating, and reduces the likelihood that you will lunge with the right hand. Remember, it is a foul to pin the ball against the sideboards (a common foul against left side defenders who lunge ☹ with the right hand to tackle near the left boards- un-cool girls.....).

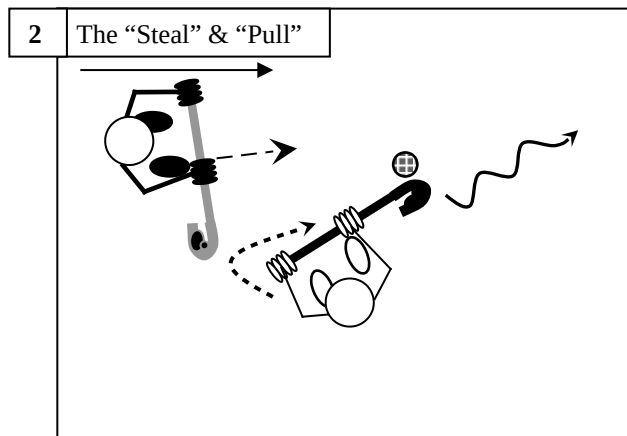
If a steal is possible while tackling, **do not** carry the ball directly back into defender (do not go forward into them). Please see figure ☹ to right. A successful front stick tackle by the light player is followed by a quick smileie stick pull (the “steal”). Here the successful steal is followed by a senseless forward dribble into the former attacker’s defensive front stick. The light player failed to even give the dark player an opportunity to do anything stupid (such as lift their stick, lunge with the right hand, chase the ball too much, or run away). Simply removing the ball from an opponent’s stick does not vaporize the defender instantly. You must now keep the ball AWAY from the



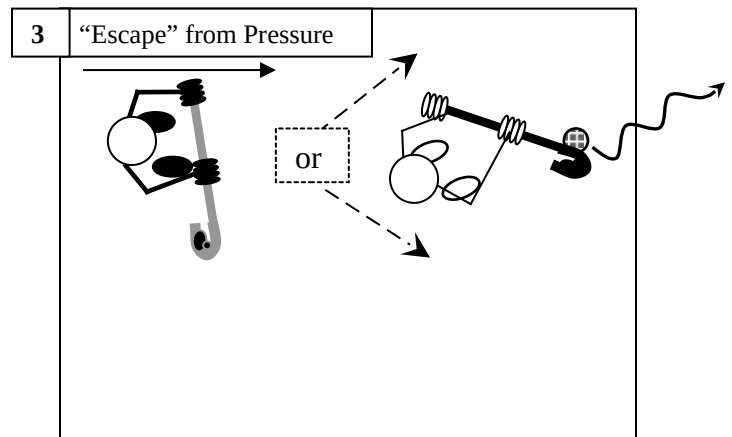
opponent’s stick. Choose the back-right (see fig. 1) or back-left pull (of the Australian “X”- here a “back-right” with the right foot drop-step) followed by a



pass  
or  
short

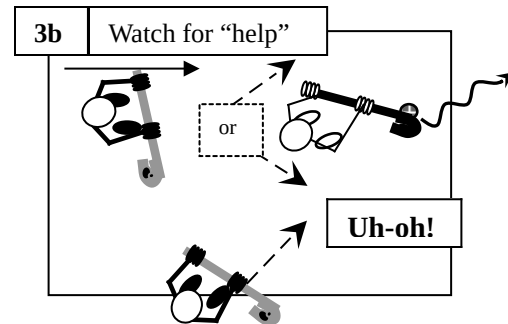


dribble in that new direction, or use a quick lateral dribble to space. Once the dispossessed attacker stands up to move forward (see fig. 2), and tries to regain the ball, opportunities to embarrass them with dodges involving a quick change of direction back into their direction of movement are numerous ☺. The more distance into space you dribble (fig. 3), the more speed a pursuing dispossessed attacker will attain, and the more effective almost any dodge (sudden change of direction) will be. In figure 3, if the dark player pursues the ball on their left, and the light player makes no pass, another “back-right” pull by the

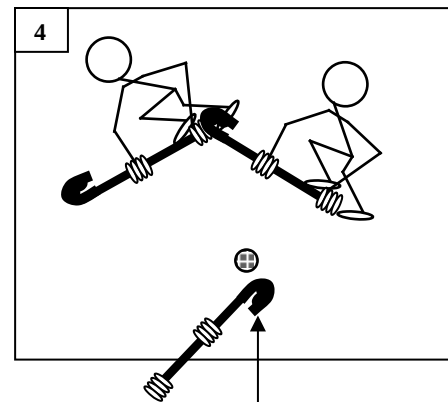


light player will completely eliminate the dark player for the moment. Conversely if they pursue the ball on their right, a quick rainbow, or front-stick-spin, will leave them chasing the ball carrier. If the defender doesn't pursue you, then you are under less pressure, and have more time to make your next decision (to pass or, if necessary, to continue dribbling- just avoid dribbling into a double team, or behind a teammate, creating third party obstruction ☹).

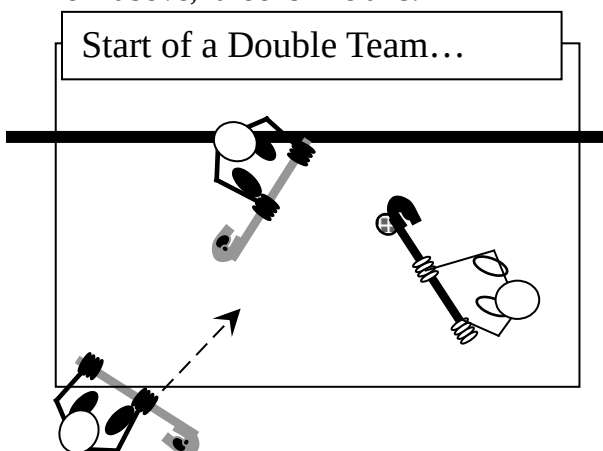
The ball carrier must constantly be aware of nearby teammates of the pursuing player (fig. 3b). The "back-left" pull in Fig. 3b may beat the first defender, but simply turn the ball over to the second defender. That is why a back pass is often a good choice when dribbling towards your own defensive end line: 1) The ball carrier has good vision and excellent stick position to make a strong and precise back-pass to a teammate. 2) The teammate that is closer to the end line than you are when you steal the ball can see more of the opponents than you can once you complete your drop step, and therefore has more information to make a good decision about what to do next with the ball. Also, a back-pass can encourage the pursuing defender to leave you and chase the ball- leaving you open for a "return" pass from the teammate you just shared the ball with ☺ (this return pass will often have to be a "wall" pass, or a combination pass: via another teammate- since the pursuing defender will be running on the line of the original back pass). The other team gets really tired, and your team gets to keep the ball. Sounds like fun, doesn't it?



What does a double team look like? A double team involves two (or more) defenders who want to deny paths of escape for the ball carrier. Like the *Velociraptors* in "Jurassic Park", defenders want to hunt the ball in "packs." A front view of a double team from the ball carrier's perspective looks like Fig. 4: Note how the defender's sticks touch end-to-end, preventing any escape between them.

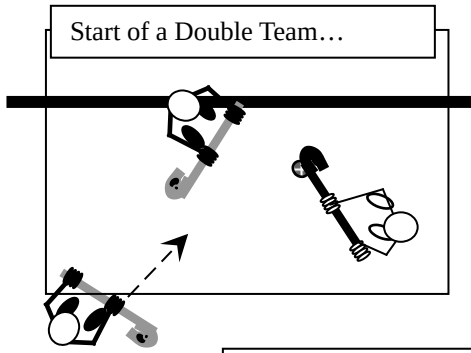


From above, it looks like this:

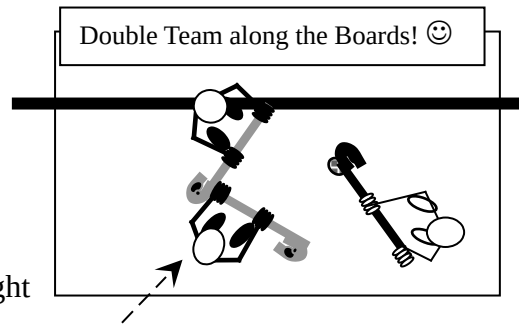
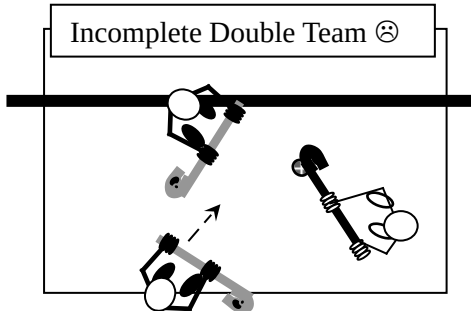


It is very important for defenders to communicate with each other when combining to defend any attack. Usually the player farther from the ball will "call" the double-team, so the player defending the boards knows to WAIT for the assistance of a teammate (and not move off the board, which could allow a dangerous through pass past BOTH defenders).

The progression in these three diagrams show not only the defenders' sticks touching each other, but also the left defender's stick touching their left side board, thus denying



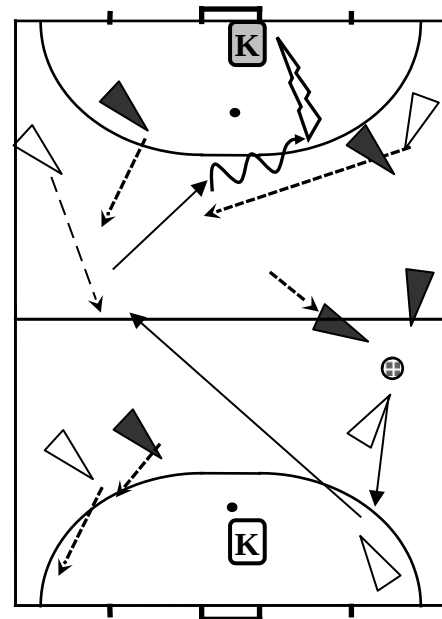
both the space between the sticks, and the space around the defensive left side along the sideboard. If the ball carrier starts to pull back the ball but continue facing forward, the two defenders should approach in unison with little steps, but not break the continuity of their sticks, or they will see the ball zoom right between their sticks ☹️. **Do not be slow if joining a double team.** If this is the LB and CM defending, which third defender could come in and deny what little escape space is left? How about if it is the CM and LW in the diagram? Who could be



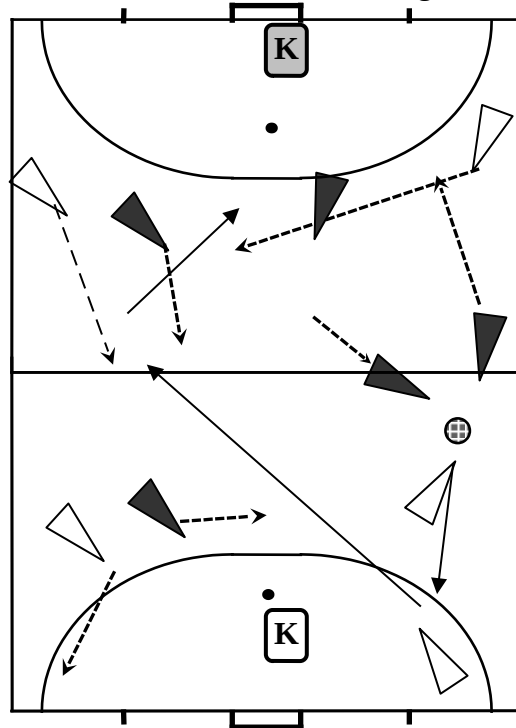
involved in double-teams along the right defensive boards?

Where are the other defenders when the preceding double-team develops? If they are paying attention, they will look for chances to intercept the ball when the ball handler tries to pass away from the pressure of the double-team, or space to receive in to counter-attack if the double-team steals the ball. If the other defenders fall asleep and allow too much space to grow between them and the double-team (allowing large “split” pass opportunities for the ball carrier should they escape the pressure of the double-team), then the defense will only regain possession after the opponent's next goal ☹️.

In the example to the right, when the CM joins the dark LW to double team (pressure the ball), the light LB retreats to the defensive left corner to be open for a flat pass from the RB who receives the back-pass from the light CM. If the dark RW marks the LB in the corner, the split pass opens for the light LW to cut back to mid-court, while the RW cuts to the top of the “D” for the third pass, and a possible split dribble into the “D” for a shot on goal. A little patience by the dark RW (not leaving the middle open by chasing the LB into the corner) and some smart positioning by the dark RB (tighter marking to prevent the reception of the second pass) could have prevented this attack to the top of the “D”. By allowing themselves to get too far from each other, the dark defenders weakened their invisible “force fields” and allowed two split passes ☹️.



In the same example as before, the dark CM joins the LW to double team the light CM. The difference now is that the dark RW does NOT chase the LB forward into the corner, but moves left to close the space between them and the dark CM, who also moved left to double team. Meanwhile, the dark RB does not stand inside the “D” to defend while the ball is being double-teamed in their offensive half of the court (even if there was an attacker inside the “D”, they are at least two passes away from the ball and there is not yet a scoring threat). Most importantly, this decreases the distance between both the RW and RB and their CM, and reduces the ground the RB has to cover to mark a back-cut by the light LW, increases the potential to intercept a pass, while also becoming available for a back pass should the dark CM (via a tackle and steal) or RW (via interception of the attempted long split pass) come up with the ball. Note too how the dark LB chooses to mark the light RW more loosely



in the second example, since a through ball from the double-teamed light CM is basically impossible. By not “watching” the double team from directly behind, the dark LB reduces the distance between themselves and the RB (and also the CM), and is now available to help front stick tackle any attempted split pass or dribble should the light LW somehow receive the ball and beat the dark RB in the middle of the court. By closing the space between each other in the second example, the dark defenders increased the strength of the weak force fields exploited by the light attackers in the first example. While the dark LB closes the weak space between themselves and the dark RB and CM, they call to their LW to drop back and cover the defensive left corner, and the light RW, while the ball is sent back to the light RB (the dark LW does NOT want to chase that ball back, unless the dark CM, RW and RB have ALL stepped up far enough to cut off BOTH the flat pass from the light RB to LB **and** all split pass opportunities).

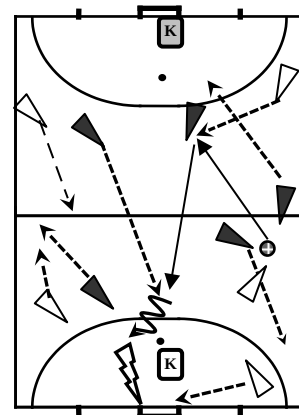
There is a lesson in this: Do not **always chase** the ball **hard** if it is traveling away from your defensive “D”. Just move both of your feet to eat up some, or most of, the “soft” space between you and the ball handler. Keep in mind not to get too far from supporting teammates, so there are not any potential “split” passes perpendicular to the line between you and any teammate. Always chasing the ball on your own will tire you out, present opportunities for the ball handler to dodge you (by reversing the direction of the ball **wrt** the momentum of your body), and increase the chance of “split” or “wall” passes being made if the ball gets away from (“escape” via a dodge or a pass) the pressure you are applying. Chasing the ball **a lot** is only effective as a TEAM strategy (in conjunction with one or more teammates- either a double team, three players- front three, or either side three combination, or as a trap or press- half court or full court). Your team may decide to “press” for the ball if you think the other team cannot pass or dribble fast enough to keep the ball away, or if the other team is substituting players in a careless

fashion (they put the ball in play while temporarily down a player), or if your team really needs to get one or more goals and the clock is running down.

It is very difficult to defend BOTH sets of boards AND the middle of the court. The best defensive plan identifies the two most dangerous areas, covers them, but always is prepared to shift to cover the third area.

Attack players do have an exemption from this “don’t chase” rule, on those occasions where they strongly believe they can steal the ball or force a penalty corner:

- When the ball handler is weak (poor dribbling technique- no vision, loose dribble, pancake dribble, stops to look up to pass, etc.)
- The ball handler has just come into the game- i.e. is “cold”,
- The ball handler has demonstrated an inability to coordinate with the GK when pressured in their defensive “D”
- Also look for these GK weaknesses (which your own GK should be able to spot and relay through the backs to the attack players- or in person on defensive corners):
  1. GKs that do not call for the ball or communicate at all with their defenders
  2. GKs that repeatedly decide “too late” to step out to play a ball in the “D”
  3. GKs that clearly do not have the confidence of their teammates (defenders repeatedly retreat to the goal line to “help”, because they do not trust their GK to prevent goals- if this is the case, one of the backs must consider making repeated long runs into the offensive “D” when a teammate pressures the ball in the offensive “D”. If a steal results, the surprise run by the defender allows them to act as the open attacker at the top the offensive “D” for a pass straight away from the goal line (the hardest pass to defend) - since the real defenders have retreated to the goal line, and the other defenders have probably turned towards the end line also to run and join the “parade of extra goalkeepers.”



Here’s another lesson: **Trust** your goalkeeper, or **put the pads on** yourself. Period.

Understand what commands that a GK will give to you during the game. If your GK is a little dictatorial inside the “D”, do not take it personally. If you do not understand what the GK wants of you, **ask them** to explain. This can even be done during a match, but it is best done before the match starts. The GK must talk, and the field players must listen.

Forwards must take frequent risks by making long runs in case the ball squeezes through the defense, and then be willing to do additional **extra running** to **get back into position** to help the team defensively if the risk does not pan out. This is the price of glory for a few goals ☺. Sometimes this extra running is required towards the defensive end to cover for attacking defenders who occasionally can combine both the element of surprise with open space to create excellent scoring opportunities for their team.

Work with your teammates on both attack and defense. You will find yourself increasingly confident in choosing from the options available, and you will also find your teammates increasingly making similar choices. **Hockey is a game of choices**. Make a decision and **follow through on it** until a superior choice is available.