



Worcester County United Field Hockey Academy Coaches Corner #4 – Taking Penalty Strokes

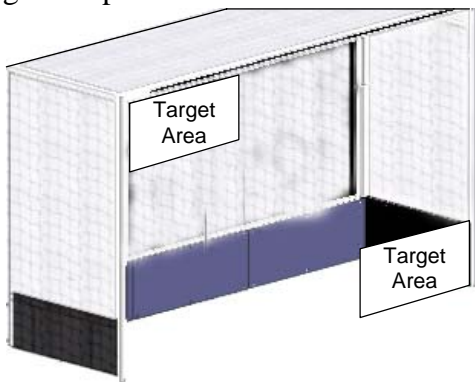
Penalty Strokes

A penalty stroke should be regarded as the best possible goal scoring opportunity for a team, yet many penalty strokes go unconverted.

As with other aspects of hockey, the principles involved in the successful penalty strokes are simple and well defined, and like other hockey skills, they require practice.

The subtle pressure of the penalty stroke will require the coach nominating 2 or 3 players key penalty stokers. These players should be confident and well rehearsed in the rules and regulations governing the penalty stroke and should be able to push the ball accurately and powerfully.

The diagram below shows target areas for penalty strokes, as these are the most difficult areas for goalkeepers to defend.



Coaching points:

- The following points for coaches and players are aimed to assist players and coaches help achieve the ultimate...every penalty stroke is a goal!
- Concentrate the practice on two main target areas and be able to consistently perform either of these strokes, while maintaining the same feet, hand, and stick position to avoid giving the goalkeeper any clues.
- Practice pushing and flicking the ball over longer distances to increase strength and accuracy.
- Decide which are of the goal to aim for before setting up for the penalty stroke. Indecision often leads to poor execution of the stroke.
- Do not be concerned with the goalkeeper's positioning, or their antics; focus on the ball with the predetermined target clearly in mind.
- Watch the ball throughout the stroke; avoid looking at the target immediately prior to contact of stick and ball.
- Do not be overly concerned with practicing elaborate "body feints"; a firm accurate push will still beat the goalkeeper and avoid the added pressure of "body feinting".



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- Whenever there is a break during practice, i.e. in drills, for drinks etc. grab a ball and take on penalty stroke to simulate a game situation.
- Finally, the penalty stroke must be practiced in every session – it should never be assumed that good pushing techniques will get you by!