

CANOE POLO

103 DRILLS

Compiled by Ian Beasley

1. Paddling drills	1
2. Rolling	4
3. Ball drills	5
4. Ball/paddle drills	13
5. Dribbling drills	15
6. Boat control drills	17
7. Watching and listening drills	19
8. Defence drills	20
9. Offence drills	24
10. Game drills	32

PREFACE

Drills are an integral part of training sessions to provide challenging and consistent workouts. They are a great way to lift individual skills and team tactics. The following drills are suitable for players at all levels and cover all aspects of the game. Practised well, they lay the foundation of good technique and good game play. Practised poorly, they have only limited value.

Choose drills to meet your training needs and those of your squad. At first, practise slowly and precisely to get it right before lifting the pace; be aware of where you are in relation to others, what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Practise all drills:

- slowly, before increasing speed and pressure
- precisely, ensure each action or technique is done correctly
- on both sides of the body, left and right
- observing normal playing rules.

Grading

A grading is given to assist with selecting appropriate drills for players and the area of water available. Grading is in two categories:

Difficulty	
E	Easy – suits new players
I	Intermediate – suits skilled players
A	Advanced – suits players with high skill levels
Venue	
P	Pool – swimming pools and waterways with limited training areas
R	Rivers, lakes and open waterways, which allow drills to continue over extended distances

Acknowledgement

The drills in this collection come from many sources, including club and team websites, training and coaching manuals, players and coaches, and original ideas. It is impractical to acknowledge every source. However, each drill is included with the belief that by sharing them, we encourage the development of the game to the benefit of everyone.

Contact

If you have any comments, contact: ianbeasley@bigpond.com.

For more about coaching canoe polo see Ian Beasley's books:

Canoe polo – basic skills and tactics

Canoe polo – advanced skills and tactics

Internet: www.sternturn.com.au

1. Paddling drills

Drill P1: Paddles up

Grading: E, off-water

Number of players: four or more

Skills

- fun
- warm up

Drill

1. Paddlers form a circle, facing inwards.
2. Paddles are held in front, at arm's length and vertical
3. On command, paddlers step 1, 2, or 3 steps to either left or right, leaving their paddle standing, ready for the person beside them to grasp.
4. Last person holding a paddle wins.

Comments

This is a fun drill that is especially good for children but also a challenge for adults. Instead of calling steps to the right or left—adding to the surprise element—paddlers can be called to clap or spin themselves. Choose a flat area to play, preferably grass or other soft surface to avoid possible paddle damage if done on concrete.

Drill P2: Forward stroke

Grading: E, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- forward stroke

Drill

1. Sitting up straight and with good body rotation to plant the blade, make one stroke on the right.
2. Exit the blade at the hips and pause to hold the paddle in recovery position, at chest height.
3. Make the left side stroke.
4. Exit and pause to hold the paddle in recovery position, at chest height.
5. Continue for several metres.

Comments

The purpose of the drill is to emphasise the importance of the recovery position in forward paddling. Recovery creates an instant for the body to relax and position for the following stroke. It also takes advantage of the boat's momentum to continue forward. The drill must be done slowly with exaggeration of the catch, power, exit and recovery positions of the stroke. Pay special attention to body rotation.

Drill P3: Sweep strokes

Grading: E, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- forward sweeps
- reverse sweeps

Drill

1. Forward paddle 3–4m.
2. Start a 360° turn by executing a right forward sweep to start the boat turning.
3. Follow immediately with a left reverse sweep stroke to complete 180°.
4. Continue the turn with a second right forward sweep stroke.
5. Finish with a second left reverse sweep to complete the 360° turn.
6. Forward paddle to the finish.

Comments

The drill is useful for demonstrating the full body rotation necessary for moving from the finish of the forward sweep to the start of the reverse sweep. Vary the turn by edging the boat.

Drill P4: Bow draw

Grading: E, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- bow draw
- turning

Drill

1. Forward paddle 4–5m.
2. Execute a right bow draw.
3. Forward paddle 3m, left bow draw.
4. Forward paddle 3m, right bow draw.

5. Forward paddle 3m, left bow draw.
6. Forward paddle to finish.

Comments

The drill produces a zigzag pattern as each bow draw takes the paddler in a new direction. Vary the drill by edging the kayak with each bow draw. An off-side edge producing a tight, fast turn; an on-side edge producing a wider, slower turn.

Drill P5: Stern turns

Grading: I, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- left and right stern turn

Drill

1. Take two forward strokes and on the third stroke complete an 180° stern turn on the left.
2. Follow with another two forward strokes and on the third stroke, execute a stern turn on the right.
3. Continue alternating left and right turns as required.

Comments

Flat turns can be used in place of stern turns. 360° turns may be made instead of 180° turns.

Drill P6: Basic strokes

Grading: E, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

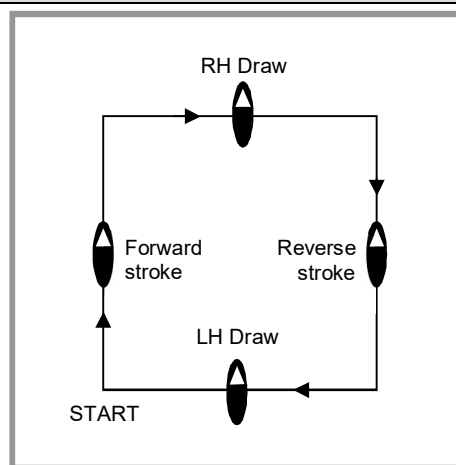
- forward and reverse stroke
- left and right draw

Drill

1. Forward paddle 10m.
2. Right draw for 10m.
3. Reverse paddle for 10m.
4. Left draw for 10 m.

Comments

The size of the course may be varied to suit the paddlers.



Drill P6: Basic strokes.

Drill P7: Figure 8 drill

Grading: I, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- forward sweep
- bow draw
- feather from bow draw to forward stroke

Drill

1. Forward paddle for three strokes.
2. Sweep stroke to start the boat turning.
3. Bow draw to complete the turn.
4. Forward paddle for three strokes.
5. Sweep stroke on the opposite side to start the boat turning.
6. Bow draw to complete the figure 8.

Comments

The drill emphasises the body rotation required to move from a sweep on one side of the body to a bow draw on the other side. The paddle remains submerged to feather from bow draw to forward stroke.

To begin, keep a flat hull during the bow draw. As skill builds, edge the boat on its off-side edge to create a sharper turn. Also experiment with the angle of the blade when it is placed in the water. Holding the paddle with the power side of the blade facing forward produces a faster turn. Compare this to holding the power side parallel with the side of the boat or facing to the back of the boat.

Drill P8: In-line paddling

Grading: E, R

Number of players: three or more

Skills

- forward stroke

- speed
- aerobic/anaerobic fitness

Drill

1. Three or more paddlers form a single line and paddle at a relaxed pace. Kayaks are about 50 cm apart.
2. The last paddler sprints to the front of the line to take the lead position.
3. When the paddler reaches the lead, the next paddler sprints from the end of the line.
4. Paddlers continue to rotate from the end of the line to the lead.

Comments

This exercise builds stamina and is best completed over 200 m or more. When overtaking, sprinters should stay as close as practical to the line without clashing paddles. Be aware of the bow wave created by the line and the need to paddle around it or of the extra effort needed to overcome it.

The exercise may also be used as a dribbling drill by allowing paddlers to dribble the ball as they sprint forward. On achieving the lead, the ball is left on the water ready for the next sprinter to retrieve. Alternatively, the gap between the kayaks may be increased to 1–1.5m to allow a slalom through the line.

Drill P9: Sprints

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- forward stroke
- speed
- stern turns

Drill

1. Set up a start line with 15m of unobstructed area.
2. Paddlers form pairs with the first paddler of each pair lined up along the start line.
3. At an agreed signal, the paddlers sprint 15m, stern turn and return to the start line.
4. Immediately the first player of a pair returns to the start line, the second player sprints, turns, and returns.
5. Sprinting continues until each player has completed 10–15 sprints.

Comments

This is an anaerobic exercise because each player has a rest between sprints. The drill may be varied using reverse paddling, edging, or a combination of strokes. For added incentive, set pairs against each other (the first pair to finish wins).

Drill P10: Sprint and turn

Grading: A, P

Number players: one or more

Skills

- forward and backward sprinting
- 180° and 360° turns

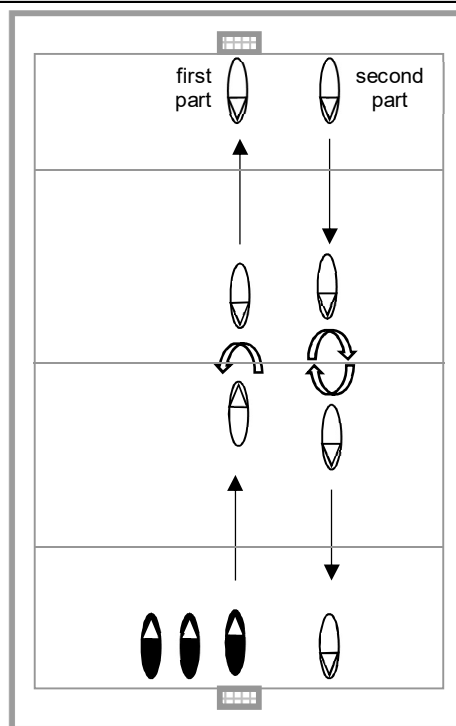
Drill

1. Starting at a goal line, sprint to the centre of the pool, turn 180°.
2. Backward sprint to the other goal line.
3. Forward sprint to centre, turn 360°
4. Sprint to the first goal line.

Comments

Players may sprint and return as a group of players. Or to put players under pressure, form two or more groups that compete to be the first to rotate through all players.

As a training drill, begin slowly to ensure that paddling and turning technique is solid before emphasising speed.



Drill P10: Sprint and turn

Drill P11: Pyramid sprints

Grading: E, R

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- forward stroke

- speed
- anaerobic fitness

Drill

1. Paddlers form a group of up to five abreast and paddle slowly for 10 forward strokes.
2. Paddle fast for 10 strokes.
3. Paddle slowly for 15 strokes, followed by 15 fast.
4. Continue to alternate between slow and fast, increasing by five strokes each time until 50 is reached.
5. When 50 is reached begin a reverse count and return to 10 slow strokes.

Comments

Players should hold a constant line across the water and not break ahead of the group.

2. Rolling

Drill R1: Rolling with ball

Grading: E, P

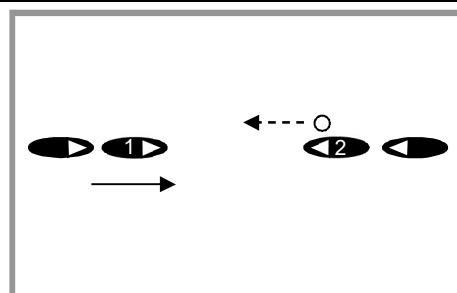
Number of players: four or more

Skills

- catching
- rolling
- diving

Drill

1. Players form two groups, in a straight line, 6m apart.
2. No paddles.
3. ❶ paddles forward (with hands).
4. ❷ throws the ball to ❶ at head height, within arm's reach, to either side of approaching player.
5. ❶ catches the ball, rolls and passes to the next oncoming player.
6. After passing the ball, ❷ paddles forward (with hands) to catch the ball.
7. ❷ passes to the next player paddling forward.
8. ❶ goes to the back of the opposite group.



Drill R1: Rolling with ball

Comments

Instead of catching the ball and rolling, the ball can be thrown to the water allowing players to dive and roll.

Drill R2: Rolling confidence

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- rolling
- confidence under water
- keeping possession

Drill

1. Players line up, side-by-side, about a metre apart.
2. The first player rolls with the ball.
3. Under water, the first player gives the ball to the second player.
4. The second player passes the ball, under water, to the third player.
5. Passing continues under water to each player.

Comments

Make it a competition! Form two groups of an equal number of players and, starting at the same time, see who finishes first.

Drill R3: Party trick

Grading: A, P

Number of players: one

Skills

- party trick

Drill

1. Player sits stationary on the water. The ball is in the boat, underneath the spray deck.
2. The player capsizes.
3. While under water, the player swaps the ball with their helmet and replaces the spray deck.
4. The player rolls up with the ball on the spray deck and helmet in the boat.

Comments

Have a race, who surfaces first?

3. Ball drills

Drill B1: Passing basic skills

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- passing
- catching

Drill

1. Two players sit facing each other 1m apart.
2. The ball is passed between them.
3. Progressively increase the distance between players to 6m.

Comments

The drill can be used for all types of passes. Start with the players close together and throwing slowly to emphasise technique. Focus is on accuracy. Break each pass into its components. For baseball passes, start using only the forearm and wrist to throw the ball, no body rotation. Increase to 2m with part body rotation and then increase to 3m with full body rotation.

For round arm passes, position players side by side, also starting at 1m apart. For variation, players can throw the ball with eyes closed using voice cues for direction to the receiving player.

Drill B2: Passing basic skills

Grading: E, P

Number of players: four or more

Skills

- passing
- catching

Drill

1. Players form a circle and face its centre.
2. The ball is thrown around or across the circle from player to player.

Comments

This drill can be used for all types of passes. For longer throws, the circle can be made larger or players can throw to every second, or third, player.

For increased difficulty, players paddle in a circle to pass and receive the ball while moving. Two or more balls can be used to increase the pace and lift concentration. Change direction of the paddle to exercise both sides of the body.

Drill B3: Chase ball

Grading: E, P

Number of players: five or more

Skills

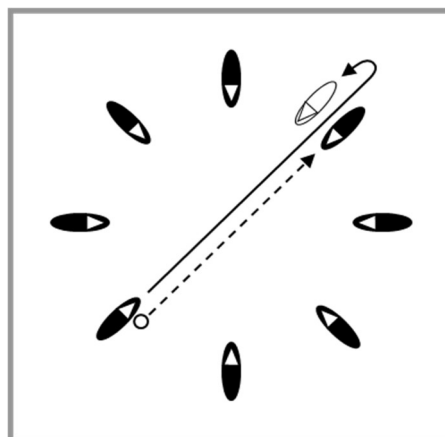
- sprinting
- passing
- turning
- blocking

Drill

1. Players form a circle.
2. Pass the ball to the player opposite and immediately chase the ball.
3. Take up the position of the player that received the ball. (They should have passed off and sprinted before you get there.)

Comments

Players sprint hard to place pressure on the receiving player to pass off and sprint. Accurate passing is essential. For variety, the sprinting player can attempt to block the pass of the receiving player. For an additional challenge put two balls into play.



Drill B3: Chase ball

Drill B4: Round arm passing – 1

Grading: I, R

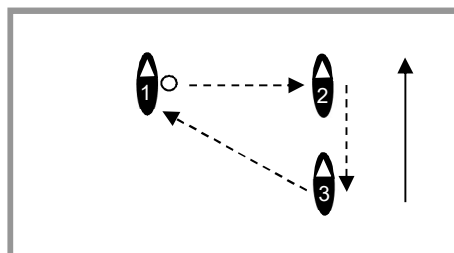
Number of players: three

Skills

- round arm and base-ball passes
- catching

Drill

1. Three players paddle forward in the formation shown.
2. The ball starts with ① and is passed to ② with a left round arm pass.



Drill B4: Round arm passing – 1

- 2 catches the ball with the right hand clasping the ball against the chest. The ball is then placed on the water to the right of the boat.
- As the formation continues to paddle forward, 3 retrieves the ball and passes it to 1.

Comment

Players alternate positions for variation.

Drill B5: Round arm passing – 2

Grading: I, R

Number of players: three

Skills

- passing from behind
- round arm pass

Drill

- Three players set up as for drill B4.
- 3 starts by throwing the ball to and 1–2m in front of 2.
- 2 retrieves the ball and round arm passes to 1.
- 1 throws the ball to the water in front of 3 to restart the drill.

Comments

Players alternate positions for variation.

Drill B6: Triangle drill

Grading: E, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- passing
- catching
- sprinting

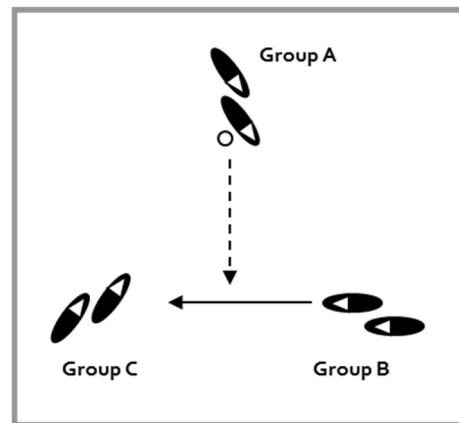
Drill

- Players form a triangle, with a group at each point.
- The first paddler in group A starts with the ball and from stationary, passes to the first paddler in group B, sprinting toward group C.
- B receives the ball on the right and passes to C. B joins group C.
- C passes to A, sprinting toward group B.
- A receives the ball on the right and passes to B. A joins group B.
- B passes to C, sprinting toward group A.
- The drill continues to rotate through all players

Comments

Use this drill for baseball and two-handed passes. Use it for left and right hand passing, as well as single hand catching. For variation, players can throw the ball over the front deck for catching with the paddle. The drill described rotates A–B–C. For dexterity, also train A–C–B. Keep the triangle formation tight and the pace fast.

To increase pace and concentration, use two balls. The first starting with group A, the second starting at group C, passing to sprinting A, just after the first ball is passed off.



Drill B6: Triangle drill

Drill B7: Parallel line passing

Grading: I, R

Number of players: four or more

Skills

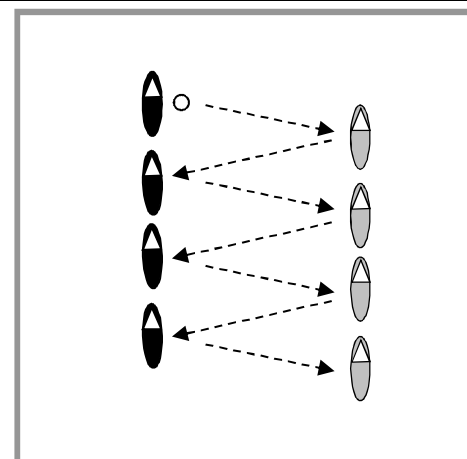
- passing
- speed
- stamina

Drill

- Players form two parallel lines about 3m apart and paddle forward together.
- The ball starts front left, is passed to the right and then on down between the lines as shown.
- Once the ball reaches the last player it is returned by the same route.

Comments

The drill should be continued for 100m or more. The challenge is to hold the two lines parallel and to not let the ball hit the water when passing. All types of passing can be used. Players passing the ball should turn to face the person they are passing to. Players receiving the ball should turn to face the person that is passing the ball.



Drill B7: Parallel line passing

Drill B8: Star drill

Grading: I, P

Number of players: ten or more

Skills

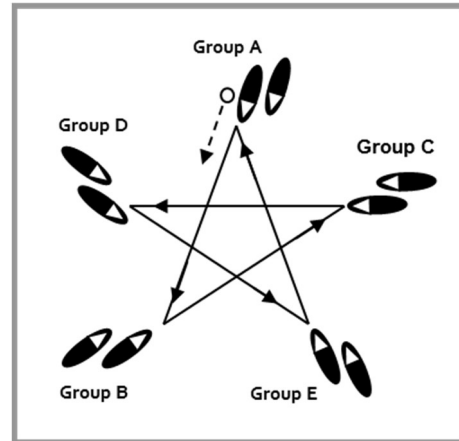
- passing
- chasing
- sprinting

Drill

1. Players form a five-point star with two or more players at each point.
2. Player A passes to B and chases onto B. A takes up position in group B.
3. Player B passes to C and chases onto C. B takes up position in group C.
4. Player C passes to D and chases onto D. C takes up position in group D.
5. Player D passes to E and chases onto E. D takes up position in group E.
6. Player E passes to A to continue the drill.

Comments

A good drill for large squads. At first players pass and chase the ball. As skills develop, players can actively block the ball as the receiver passes to the next player. For additional pressure introduce a second ball, starting with group C.



Drill B8: Star drill

Drill B9: Long passes

Grading: A, P

Number of players: eight or more

Skills

- long passes
- fast breaks
- speed

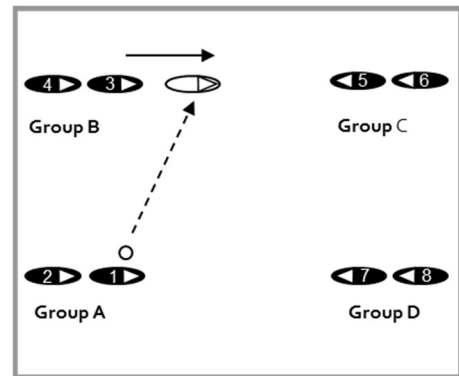
Drill

1. Players arrange themselves into four groups as shown.
2. Stationary ① passes the ball to sprinting ③. After passing, ① moves to back of group B.
3. ③ passes the ball to ⑤. ③ goes to back of group C.
4. ⑤ passes to sprinting ⑦. After passing, ⑤ moves to back of group D.
5. ⑦ passes to ②, now at the front of group A.

Comments

The groups are set up for passes of at least six metres. Passes can be to the hands or to the water, one metre in front. Baseball passes and lobs can be used. For additional challenge, pass the ball to behind the player, over the rear deck, or forward, over the front deck to be caught with the paddle.

When the drill starts with group A, players catch the ball on the right side. For variety, start the drill at group B so that players catch the ball on the left side. Two balls increases concentration and keeps players moving. Start one ball with group A, the other ball with group C.



Drill B9: Fast break

Drill B10: 6m penalty shots

Grading: E, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- shooting

Drill

1. The player sits on the 6m line, directly in front of goal. There is no goalkeeper.
2. Place the paddle on the water, alongside the kayak but on the side opposite to the throw.
3. Sit up straight and place the ball on the water with a hand resting upon it. The other hand is relaxed and resting on the spray deck.
4. Shoot for goal, aiming at its centre.

Comments

The intention of the drill is to develop a consistent approach to taking penalty shots. By adapting a routine of paddle on the water, hand on the deck, and hand on the ball, the pressure of the moment is controlled. Use either baseball passes or two-handed passes.

Drill B11: 4.5m shots at goal

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- shooting

Drill

1. A player sits 4.5m out from and directly in front of the goal. There is a goalkeeper.
2. Place the paddle on the water, alongside the kayak and on the side opposite to the throw.
3. Sit up straight and place the ball on the water, a hand resting on it. The other hand is relaxed and resting on the spray deck.
4. Assess the likely blocking action of the goalkeeper.
5. Shoot purposely for a specific corner or to achieve a particular reaction from the goalkeeper.

Comments

A useful drill for practising penalty shots awarded in front of goal.

Drill B12: Huddle

Grading: I, P

Number of players: no more than eight

Skills

- passing
- catching
- turning
- intensity

Drill

1. Players paddle wherever they choose within an area of about 12 x 12 metres.
2. Pass the ball to hands as teammates call for it.

Comment

This is an excellent warm up drill that creates focus and teamwork. Put rules in place to make it effective:

- pass only to hands, no lobs
- pass only to a moving player. The ball is called for by either the player with the ball or the player calling for it.
- passes must be one hundred percent certain—no dropped balls
- after passing the ball, the player sprints hard for five strokes
- keep the team moving, with speed and focus.

Drill B13: Three-way weave

Grading: A, P

Number of players: three or more

Skills

- passing, receiving
- sprinting
- cutting

Drill

1. Form player groups at A, B and C.
2. ❶ passes to moving ❷, follows the ball and cuts to the right.
3. ❷ passes to moving ❸, follows the ball and cuts to the left.
4. ❸ passes to moving ❶, follows the ball and cuts to the right.
5. ❶ passes to moving ❷, follows the ball and cuts to the left.
6. ❷ passes to moving ❸, follows the ball and cuts to the right.
7. ❸ passes to moving ❶, follows the ball, cuts to the left and finishes the drill.
8. ❶ passes to moving ❷, follows the ball, cuts to the right and finishes the drill.
9. ❷ shoots and finishes the drill.

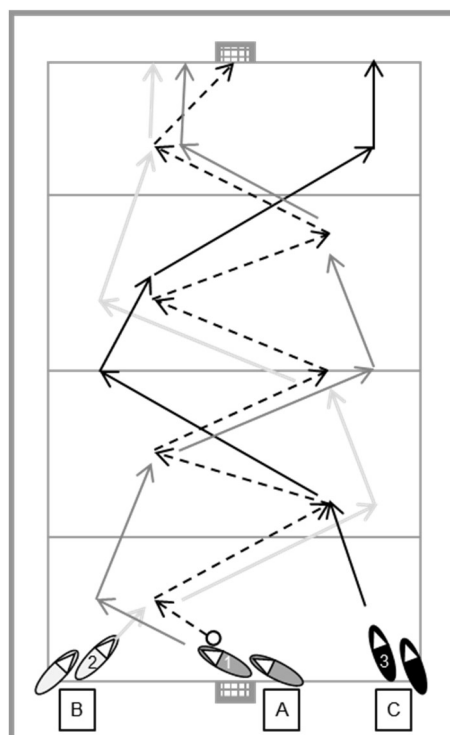
Comments

This is a complex drill that takes time to get right—it is good for keeping people alert! Start slowly and allow players to dribble before passing off. The pass may be to the water, in front of the moving player. As skill develops, pass to two hands and then to one hand.

Notice that the ball follows a zig-zag path down the centre of the field. Players find it helpful to know the order of action so that they can anticipate what is required of them. For player ❷, the order of action is:

Receive the ball on the right—pass directly in front—paddle/cut to the left—receive the ball from the left—pass directly in front—paddle/cut to right—receive ball from right.

Each player follows the same action but will start receiving the ball on the right or left depending on their start point.



Drill B13: Three-way weave

Drill B14: Box drill

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

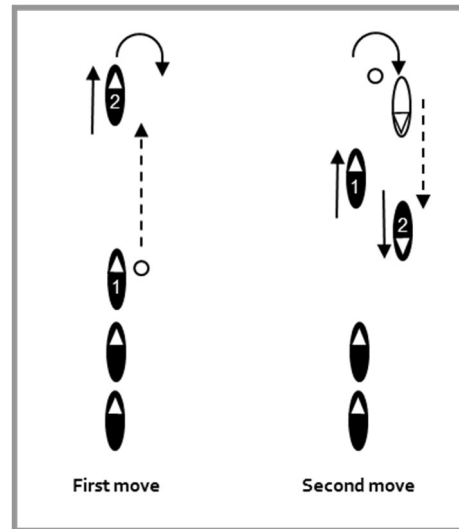
- sprinting
- passing

Drill

1. ❶ passes to forward paddling ❷.
2. ❷ places the ball on the water, turns and sprints back.
3. ❶ sprints to the ball, turns, picks it up and passes to ❷; before ❷ returns to the start.

Comments

Place the ball directly ahead of ❶ so that it is a straight line sprint to retrieve it. ❶ sprints to the ball as soon as it is placed on the water. ❷ must work hard to try and get out of throwing range.



Drill B14: Box drill

Drill B15: Straight cut drill

Grading: I, P

Number of players: five or more

Skills

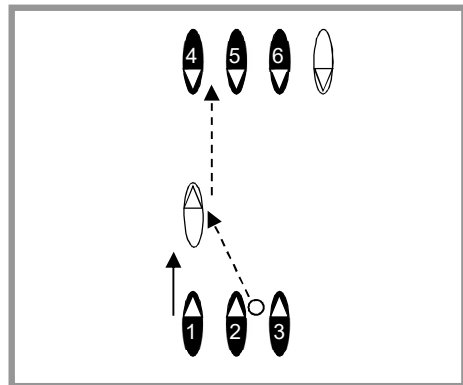
- catching from behind
- passing

Drill

1. Player ❶ paddles forward.
2. ❷ passes to ❶.
3. ❶ passes to ❹ and takes up position beside ❸.
4. ❺ paddles forward.
5. ❹ passes to ❺.
6. ❺ passes to ❸ and takes up position along-side ❷.
7. ❷ paddles forward to receive the ball from ❺ and continue the drill.

Comments

The drill emphasises catching the ball from behind. The player catching the ball turns to face the coming ball and calls for it. Baseball or two-handed passes can be used. When performing the drill with five players, the drill must start with the group of three.



Drill 15: Straight cut drill

Drill B16: Cutting drill

Grading: I, P

Number of players: five or more

Skills

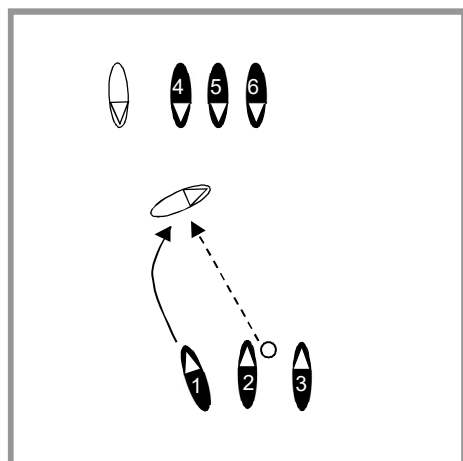
- passing
- peripheral vision
- boat skills

Drill

1. ❶ paddles forward and cuts sharply to the right.
2. ❷ passes the ball to ❶.
3. Having received the ball, ❶ passes the ball to ❹.
4. ❶ continues paddling and takes up position beside ❹.
5. The drill continues with ❸ cutting to receive the ball from ❹.

Comments

Vary the drill with baseball, lob, and two-handed passes. The player about to receive the ball calls for it. When performing the drill with five players, the drill must start with the group of three.



Drill B16: Cutting drill

Drill B17: Give and go

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

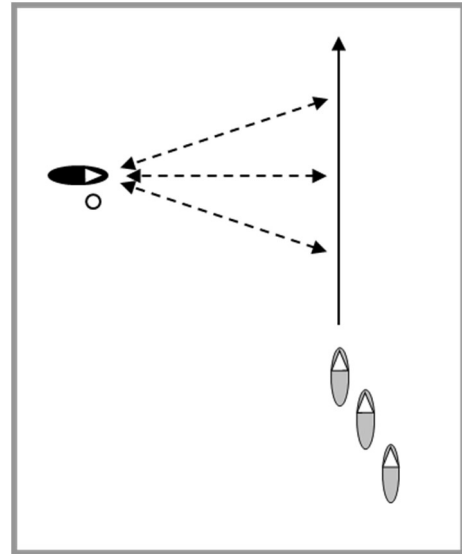
- sprinting
- passing
- catching

Drill

1. A feeder passes the ball to a sprinting paddler.
2. The sprinter immediately returns the ball
3. The ball is passed and returned three or more times.

Comments

Catch the ball with one hand, do not drop the paddle. Catch the ball and return it while sprinting. The ball should not hit the water.



Drill B17: Give and go

Drill B18: Southern Cross

Grading: E, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- passing
- catching
- boat control

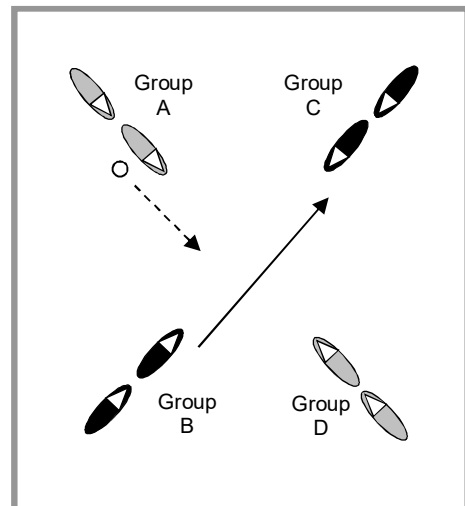
Drill

1. Players form a cross with a group of players at each point.
2. The first paddler in group A starts with the ball and from a stationary position, passes it to the first paddler in group B as they paddle toward group C.
3. B receives the ball on the left and passes it to C. B joins the end of the queue at C.
4. After throwing the ball, A paddles to D and receives the ball from C.
5. A passes to D and joins the end of the queue at D.
6. The drill continues to rotate through all players.

Comments

A minimum of six players is needed for this drill but many more can be accommodated. For six players, two groups of two are formed, each opposite a single player. The ball starts at a group of two and the first player to sprint is also from a group of two.

Use this drill for baseball, two-handed, and lob passes. It can be used for left and right hand passing, as well as single hand catching. To vary the routine, players can throw the ball over the deck to catch with the paddle. To increase group concentration and prevent players becoming cold, use two balls, one starting at group A, the other at group D.



Drill B18: Southern Cross

Drill B19: Australian cross – one ball

Grading: A, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- passing
- sprinting
- concentration

Drill

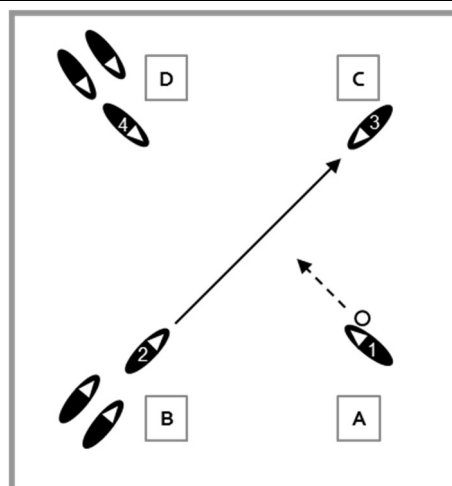
1. Players form groups at B and D. There is a single player each at A and C.
2. The first player in group B (2) sprints towards C and receives the ball from stationary 1.
3. 2 passes to stationary 3 and takes up position behind 3.
4. 3 passes to 4 sprinting to A.
5. 3 joins group D immediately after passing.
6. 4 passes to 1 and takes up position behind 1.
7. 1 joins group B immediately after passing.
8. The drill restarts.

Comments

To start the drill, 1 must wait to pass the ball a second time before moving to B. Players must continually be alert as they move to each of the four positions.

The following reminders assist players:

- after passing the ball to the sprinting player, the player at A joins group B to the left. The player at C joins group D to the right.
- after the sprinting player passes the ball, the player must sprint forward and turn quickly to take up position to receive the next pass.



Drill B19: Australian cross – one ball

Drill B20: Australian cross – two balls

Grading: A, P

Number of players: eight or more

Skills

- passing
- sprinting
- concentration

Drill

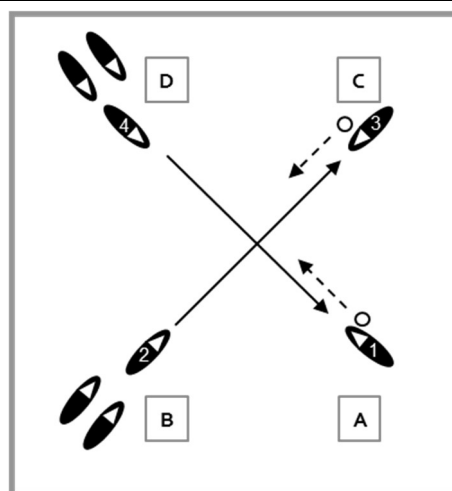
1. Players form groups at B and D. There is a single player each at A and C.
2. At the same time, the first player in groups B and D (players 2 and 4) sprint forward.
3. 2 receives the ball from 1. 4 receives the ball from 3.
4. 2 passes to stationary 3 and takes up position behind 3.
5. 4 passes to stationary 1 and takes up position behind 1.
6. 3 joins group D immediately after passing.
7. 1 joins group B immediately after passing.
8. The drill restarts.

Comments

To start the drill 1 and 3 must wait to pass the ball a second time before moving to B and D. Players must continually be alert as they move to each of the four positions. It is best to get the one ball drill working well before attempting the two ball drill.

The following reminders will assist players:

- after passing the ball to the sprinting player, the player at A joins group B to the left. The player at C joins group D to the right.
- after the sprinting player passes the ball, the player must sprint forward and turn quickly to take up position to receive the next pass.



Drill B20: Australian cross – two balls

Drill B21: Sprint for ball

Grading: E, R

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- reaction time
- sprinting

Drill

1. Two players, A and B, sit stationary, side by side.

2. Player A paddles forward, in a straight line at medium pace and away from B.
3. Player B shouts 'ahead', 'left' or 'right' and throws the ball to the water three metres in front of or to the left or to the right of A.
4. Player A immediately sprints hard to touch the ball.
5. The ball is left on the water. A continues in the original direction.
6. B retrieves the ball to be thrown again.

Comments

The objective is to improve reaction time for getting to the ball. The word *ahead, left or right* is the cue to sprint for the ball. A third person can attend with a stop watch or video to record reaction times.

To be effective, the sprinting player must develop paddle placement, body rotation and other skill nuance that contribute to improving speed.

Drill B22: Long pass/short pass

Grading: A, P

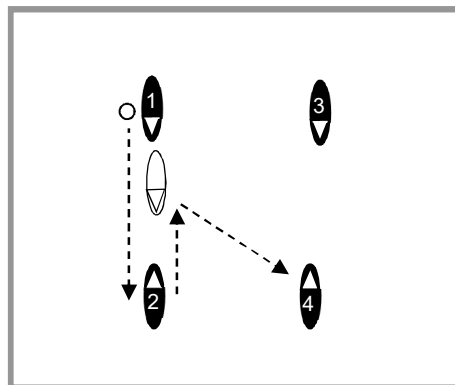
Number of players: four

Skills

- passing
- sprinting
- turning

Drill

1. Stationary ① starts with the ball and passes it to stationary ② (the long pass).
2. ① paddles forward and receives the ball from ② when halfway to ② (the short pass).
3. After passing the ball, ② sprints forward and makes a 180° turn to take up the position vacated by ①.
4. ① continues moving and passes the ball diagonally to ④.
5. Stationary ④ passes to stationary ③.
6. ④ paddles to ⑤ and receives the ball to pass it diagonally back to the start.
7. The drill starts again.



Drill B22: Long pass/short pass

Comments

The drill requires fast 180° turns as players sprint and turn to receive the diagonal pass.

Drill B23: One handed catching

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- one handed catching

Drill

1. Sit opposite another player, not too far away.
2. Throw the ball fairly softly to the other person; to an arc within arm's reach so that they catch the ball with one hand.
3. The ball is caught and returned in one movement.
4. Increase power of the throw as skill develops.

Comments

Catch the ball in such a way that hand speed matches ball speed as it approaches. The hand moves back as it grips and slows the ball. As skill develops, throw the ball harder and faster.

Drill B24: Wrist flick

Grading: A, off-water

Number of players: two

Skills

- one handed catching
- wrist strengthening

Drill

1. Off water, stand facing another player, about a metre apart.
2. Hold both hands up, upper arms level with shoulders, forearms vertical (surrender pose!).
3. The ball is passed directly from one player to the other. That is, from the right hand of one player to the left hand of the facing player.
4. Change hands to pass from left hand to right hand.
5. Change direction to pass across the body from right hand to right hand and then from left hand to left hand.

Comments

The upper arm and forearm are held still throughout passing. Emphasis is on wrist movement and finger extension to give direction. For additional challenge, use two balls.

4. Ball/paddle drills

Drill BP1: Juggling

Grading: E, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- paddle dexterity
- hand/eye/paddle coordination

Drill

1. Sitting stationary in the kayak (or on a chair), throw the ball vertically up with the paddle. About a metre high.
2. Follow the ball upward with the paddle blade to catch it with the paddle and return it to the starting position, sitting on the blade.
3. Repeat on the other side of the body.

Comments

Once throwing and catching the ball is mastered on both sides of the body, direct the ball overhead so that it passes from one blade to the other. For further challenge, direct the ball behind the body to lean back and catch it with an extended paddle.

Drill BP2: Around the world

Grading: I, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- paddle dexterity

Drill

1. Sitting stationary in the kayak (or on a chair), gently bounce the ball five times on the power side of the paddle blade.
2. Follow by bouncing five times on the back of the blade.
3. Then bounce the ball on each of the blade's edges.
4. Repeat on the other side of the body.

Comments

Fairly simple, but it takes practice. Aim to achieve one bounce on each surface and edge of the blade. That is, bounce the ball around the blade in this order: *power side – leading edge – back side – trailing edge* and return to the power side.

Drill BP3: Paddle passing circle

Grading: A, P

Number of players: four or more

Skills

- paddle/ball handling

Drill

1. Paddlers form a circle.
2. The ball is passed across the circle with a flick of the paddle.
3. The ball is caught and immediately passed to another player.
4. The drill continues as the ball is passed to each player around the circle.

Comments

Hands should not touch the ball at any time during the drill. If the ball misses its mark, it should be retrieved with the paddle, not the hands.

Drill BP4: Dribble with paddle

Grading: A, R

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- paddle/ball handling
- paddle dribbling

Drill

1. Players form two parallel lines about 6m apart.
2. The first player dribbles twice using the paddle to retrieve and forward the ball.
3. On the third time that the ball strikes the water, the ball is passed from the water with the paddle to the next player in the opposite group.
4. The receiving player catches the ball with the paddle and sends it forward to the water.
5. The ball is then retrieved and passed to the next player.
6. The drill continues as players alternately dribble from one group to the other.
7. When the ball reaches the front player, it is returned down the line.

Comments

Practice the drill slowly to be confident of good ball retrieval and forwarding. Once that is established, speed can increase. At its best, dribbling with the paddle becomes part of the forward paddling stroke with hardly a break in rhythm. Aim to position the ball at about a metre in front at chest height.

Drill BP5: Up and over

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- paddle/ball handling

Drill

1. Player dribbles forward.
2. Coming from the opposite direction, an opponent attacks for the ball.
3. Dribbling player lifts ball from the water with the paddle to flick it up and over the opponent.
4. The player continues past opponent to reclaim the ball and continue paddling.

Drill BP6: Ball up/keep paddling

Grading: A, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- paddle/ball handling
- hand/eye coordination

Drill

1. Paddle forward in a straight line and place the ball a metre in front of the boat.
2. Retrieve the ball with the paddle and toss it vertically up.
3. While the ball is in the air, take a paddle stroke, on the same side. Withdraw the paddle quickly to catch the ball with the paddle and send it up again.

Comments

A challenging drill! Get it working on each side and then alternate from side to side.

Drill BP7: Parallel line paddle passing

Grading: A, R

Number of players: four or more

Skills

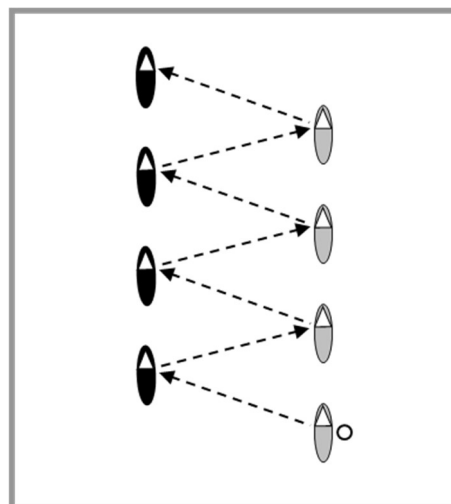
- passing with paddle
- catching with paddle

Drill

1. Players form two parallel lines about 3m apart and paddle forward together.
2. The ball starts bottom right, is passed to the left and then on up between the lines as shown.
3. Once the ball reaches the last player it is returned by the same route.

Comments

The drill can continue for 100m or more. The challenge is to hold the two lines parallel and keep control of the ball. The hands should not touch the ball at any time.



Drill BP7: Parallel line paddle passing

Drill BP8: Volley ball

Grading: E, off-water

Number of players: two teams

Skills

- paddle/ball handling
- team work
- fun

Drill

1. Set up a volley ball court, approximately 9m wide x 18m long with a 2.4m high net. The court may be indoors or outdoors.
2. Players form two teams.
3. The first team to score 25 or more points with a two-point margin wins.

Comments

Volley ball is a fun warm-up game that enhances paddle/eye coordination and strengthens paddle control skills. Players do not touch the ball with their hands but instead use the paddle.

Standard volley ball rules apply but are adapted as needed. Generally, play begins by serving the ball from the rear, right hand corner of a team's court. To score, the ball must hit the floor of the opponent's court. Teams and players alternate serving. The first team to twenty-five points wins. If the ball passes over the court boundaries, a point is not scored and the ball is returned to play by the team on that side of the court. In play, the ball can be touched within a team three times before shooting, but not consecutively by the same player.

5. Dribbling drills

Drill DR1: Dribbling

Grading: I, P

Number of players: one or more

Skills

- dribbling

Drill

1. Dribble the ball so that it is retrieved every two strokes. Repeat five times.
2. Dribble the ball so that it is retrieved every three strokes. Repeat five times.
3. Continue the drill for four and five strokes.

Comments

The purpose of the drill is to link the distance the ball is thrown in front of the kayak with the number of strokes needed to retrieve it. Notice that for an even number of strokes the ball is retrieved on the same side each time. But for an odd number of strokes the ball alternates from one side to the other.

Drill DR2: In-line dribbling

Grading: I, R

Number of players: three or more

Skills

- dribbling
- speed
- attacking from behind

Drill

1. A group of players form a single line.
2. The first player dribbles the ball slowly five times and immediately continues with three fast dribbles.
3. On the fifth slow dribble, when the ball hits the water, the second player in the line sprints forward to tackle.
4. When the tackle is complete, the first two players drop back to the end of the line and the drill restarts with the next two players.

Comments

The intention is to put the dribbling player under pressure and turn them from their intended path. It is not necessary to win the ball. For variation, the ball may be dribbled with the paddle. Maintain a straight line during the drill.

Drill DR3: Dribbling relay

Grading: E, P

Number of players: four or more

Skill

- dribbling

Drill

1. Two groups of players face each other about 20m apart.
2. The first player of one group paddles forward, dribbling the ball and passes it to the opposite player in the second group.
3. This player then dribbles forward and passes back to the first group.
4. The drill continues to alternate dribbling between each group.

Comments

Players should focus on holding a straight line and developing a regular ball placement and retrieval as they dribble. For variation, a chaser can follow the player, or a defender can be introduced between the dribbling player and the player receiving the pass.

Drill DR4: Dribbling under pressure

Grading: I, R

Number of players: two

Skills

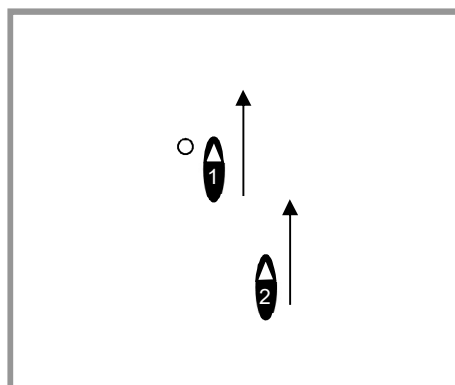
- dribbling
- speed
- tackling

Drill

1. ① dribbles the ball at speed.
2. Starting at a boat length behind ①, ② attempts to catch ① and turn them from their intended path.

Comments

The drill aims to place the dribbling player under pressure to develop dribbling skills. The attacking player must decide whether to power through the bow wave, ride the bow wave in, or go around the bow wave.



Drill DR4: Dribbling under pressure

Drill DR5: Keeping possession

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two

Skills

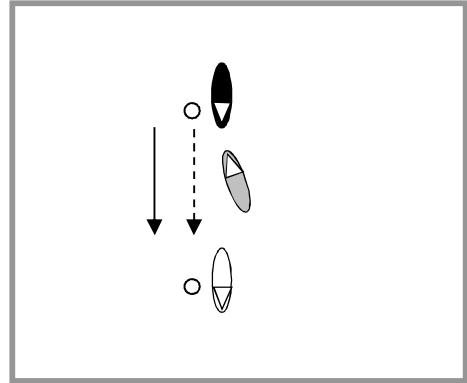
- possession
- dribbling through an opposing player
- feigning boat and ball moves

Drill

1. Two players sit opposite each other, 6m apart.
2. The ball carrier paddles toward the other player and attempts to pass without losing the ball.
3. The defender attempts to block progress and win the ball.

Comments

The object of this drill is to pass through an attacking defender while maintaining possession of the ball. To get the ball past the defender, the ball carrier dribbles around or throws the ball over the defending player. The player must then get past the defender to retrieve the ball.



Drill DR5: Keeping possession

Drill DR6: Dribbling/round arm passing

Grading: I, R

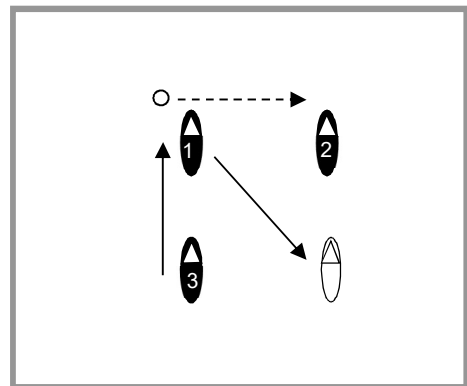
Number of players: three or four

Skills

- left and right hand dribbling
- left and right round arm passing
- boat positioning

Drill

1. Three players position themselves as shown. The front players are 3m apart.
2. **1** paddles forward and dribbles the ball three times with the left hand.
3. **1** passes the ball to **2** with a left round arm pass.
4. After passing, **1** falls back diagonally to take up position behind **2** while **3** moves forward to the position vacated by **1**.
5. On receiving the ball, **2** paddles forward and dribbles the ball three times with the right hand.
6. **2** passes the ball to **3** (now in the front position) with a right round arm pass.
7. **2** falls back diagonally to take up position behind **3** while **1** moves to take up the front position but this time on the right hand side of the group.
8. The drill restarts.



Drill DR6: Dribbling/round arm passing

Comments

This drill combines dribbling and round arm passing skills. Players must continually be on the alert as they move between the front and rear positions on the left and right. This is a good drill that requires constant focus. It may also be adapted for four players with two at the front and two at the back. In this formation there is no need to fall back diagonally, instead the front player swaps position with the player directly behind.

6. Boat control drills

Drill BC1: Slalom

Grading: I, P

Number of players: three or more

Skills

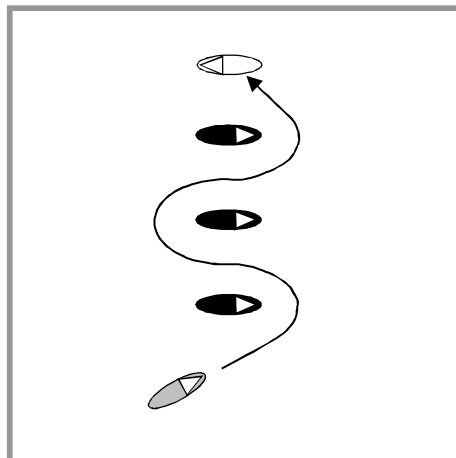
- agility
- bow draw
- boat positioning

Drill

1. Two or more kayaks sit side by side, about 3m apart with noses aligned.
2. Another kayak slaloms between the stationary kayaks.
3. Once through the course, the paddler takes up position at the end of the line.
4. The next paddler in the line slaloms to continue the drill.

Comments

Paddlers should aim to keep the course as short and direct as possible without hitting the stationary kayaks. This is an excellent drill for developing tight turns.



Drill BC1: Slalom

Drill BC2: Nose to bank

Grading: I, P

Number of players: three or more

Skills

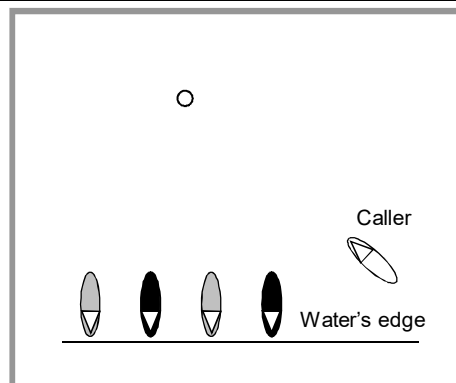
- turning
- tackling
- boat positioning

Drill

1. Two or more players sit side by side with boats facing the water's edge or a sideline.
2. The ball is thrown 3–4 boat lengths behind, but roughly equidistant, from each player.
3. While the ball is in the air, two players are called by name to retrieve the ball.
4. The first player to return the ball to the caller wins.

Comments

If possession becomes deadlocked, two additional players can be sent to create a 2-on-2 play.



Drill BC2: Back to ball

Drill BC3: Edging

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two

Skills

- paddling on edge
- boat control
- strength

Drill

1. Two players position side by side with their boats touching.
2. The players can only paddle on one side.
3. At an agreed signal, both players paddle forward and work hard to try and break ahead of the other.
4. The boats must hold contact throughout the drill.

Comments

A good drill to build ability and confidence in the one-on-one encounter.

Drill BC4: Screen

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two

Skills

- screens
- tail under

Drills

1. One player holds a stationary position (defender, facing away from goal).

2. Second player is alongside the first player but facing opposite direction (offender, facing goal).
3. Offender uses strong forward and reverse sweeps and edging to force defender out of position.

Comments

The defender works hard to hold position and prevent offender forcing them out of position. Consider the defender part of a zone defence and the offender as setting a screen to create space for a teammate to drive to goal.

As a variation, the offender can use reverse sweeps to slide their tail under the defender and direct them to a side line or to centre of the field.

Drill BC5: Tackling from behind

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two

Skills

- tackling
- understanding the bow wave

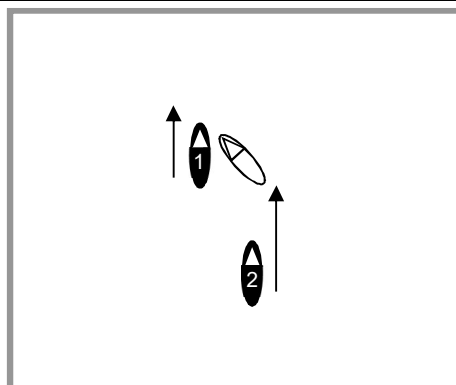
Drill

1. ❶ paddles forward at a steady pace.
2. ❷ starts a boat length from behind ❶ and a metre to the side.
3. ❷ paddles hard to ride over the bow wave and tackle.
4. Once over the bow wave, ❷ executes a strong sweep stroke with the boat edged to dive under ❶ and turn it.

Comments

At first, ❶ should move slowly to allow ❷ to establish an attacking technique. Speed can then be increased. ❶ can dribble the ball for a more realistic game situation.

Instead of powering through the bow wave, the attacker may ride the wave and be taken to the side of ❶. Or paddle around the wave to avoid it and achieve a better tackling angle.



Drill BC5: Tackling from behind

Drill BC6: Turn to ball

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two

Skills

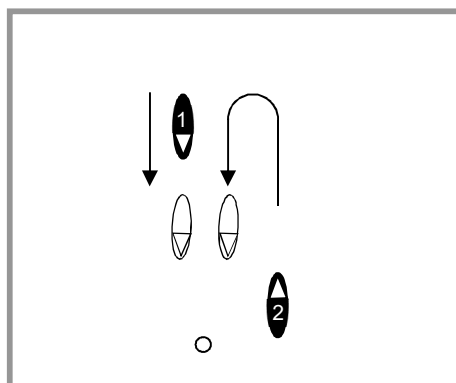
- sprinting
- turning

Drill

1. Two players face each other 9m apart and offset to one side.
2. A ball is placed on the water 10–12m from ❶.
3. ❶ sprints forward to retrieve the ball.
4. At the same time, ❷ sprints to retrieve the ball but must first turn to come alongside ❶.

Comments

❷ must not turn too early but aim to come along side ❶ and race to the ball.



Drill BC6: Turn to ball

Drill BC7: Stern turn

Grading: A, P

Number of players: four or more

Skills

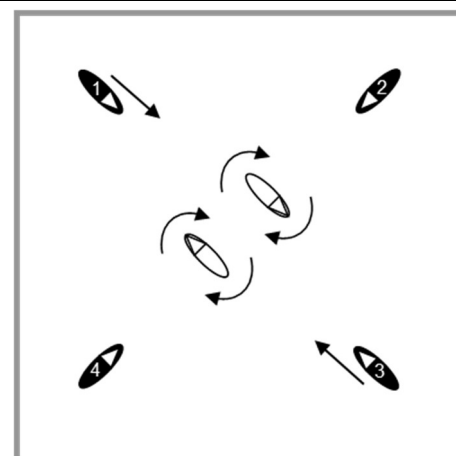
- stern turns
- core strength

Drill

1. Players form a square and face each other at about 12m apart.
2. ❶ and ❷ sprint to the centre of the square and complete a 180° stern turn.
3. Both players sprint back to their original position.
4. ❸ and ❹ sprint to centre, turn and return.

Comments

For increased challenge each player first throws a ball to the centre and then sprints and turns on the ball, retrieves it, and passes it to the next player.



Drill BC7: Stern turns

Drill BC8: Over and under

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two

Skills

- use of body and legs to control the boat

Drill

1. Two players sit directly opposite each other with the nose of their boats overlapping, to one side, by about 30 cm.
2. Beginning at the same time, one player dips the nose of their boat to go under the other boat. The other player lifts to go over. The nose of each boat encircles the other boat. Encircling is achieved by first dipping the nose into the water, edging slightly to take it under and across the other followed by lifting out and up and over the other boat to return to the water on the other side. One player circles to the left, the other to the right.

Comments

An advanced skill, but a lot of fun. Encircling once is challenging enough, try to do it several times successfully. Good for edging, core strength and buoyancy control.

7. Watching and listening drills

Drill W1: Wall drill

Grading: E, off water

Number of players: one

Skills

- peripheral vision

Drill

Stand in front of a wall and focus on a point just above eye level. Throw a polo ball, or a tennis ball, at the point so that the ball is thrown by one hand and caught by the other. Do not look at the ball directly or follow it with your eyes. Keep focused on the point. It helps to mark the point with a tape or paint.

As an alternative, throw the ball above the head. Throwing it higher causes the ball to momentarily pass out of the visual field.

Drill W2: Front-on

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two

Skills

- peripheral vision

Drill

Two players sit opposite each other, about three metres apart. Both are stationary. One passes the ball, the other receives. The receiving player holds both arms extended out at shoulder height. The other player throws the ball to either the left or right hand. The receiving player must not watch the ball but look straight ahead and maintain constant eye contact with the player passing the ball. The ball is caught with one hand. For variety, the receiver can hold the hands above shoulder height or above the ahead.

For a challenge, use the paddle. Throw the ball within paddle reach to a point anywhere within an arc around the body. The receiver maintains focus on the player in front and moves the paddle to block or catch the ball.

Drill W3: Side-on

Grading: I, P

Number of players: four

Skills

- peripheral vision
- round arm passing

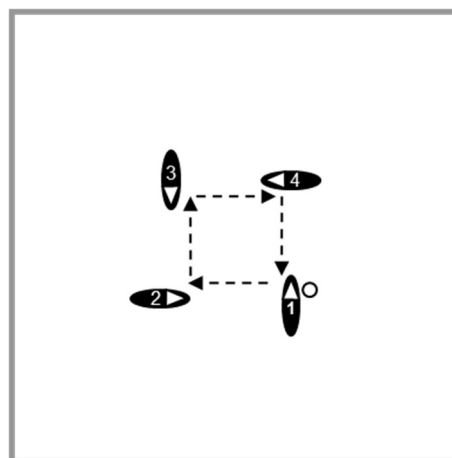
Drill

1. Players form a square, positioned at right angles to each other and 3m apart.
2. ① looks directly at ④ and makes a round arm pass to ②.
3. ② looks directly at ① and makes a round arm pass to ③.
4. ③ looks directly at ② and makes a round arm pass to ④.
5. ④ looks directly to ③ and makes a round arm pass to ①.

Comments

Players making the pass must look directly ahead (central vision) when passing but sight the player to the side with peripheral vision. The side player may call or move their paddle as a cue for the pass.

The figure shows positioning for right-handed passes. For left hand passes, each player repositions by turning 90°.



Drill W3: Side-on

Drill W4: Blind passing/catching

Grading: A, P

Number of players: three or more

Skills

- visualisation

Drill

Not strictly a vision drill but none the less useful for concentrating imagery and hearing awareness. The drill exercises passing and receiving to a voice. One player is stationary and blind folded. The others take up different positions 3–5m away and pass the ball to the sightless player. The person passing the ball calls the target's name and passes to the chest. In return, the person that passed the ball calls their name, and the blinded folded person passes to them.

Drill W5: Listen to the goalkeeper

Grading: A, P

Number of players: seven to ten

Skills

- listening
- talking, banter
- visualisation

Drill

Players set up a standard 1-3-1 or 2-2-1 zone defence. Zone defence wear blacked out glasses to prevent them seeing attacking players. The goalkeeper remains fully sighted and calls the play to defend. Individual defenders tell teammates what they are doing as they engage with attackers.

Comments

The play is necessarily slow as defenders listen to, and take instruction from, the goalkeeper to meet attacking players.

8. Defence drills

Drill D1: Pig in the middle – 1

Grading: E, P

Number of players: three

Skills

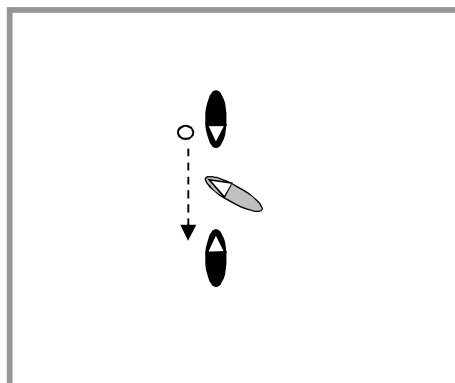
- blocking
- passing under pressure

Drill

1. Two players sit opposite each other 5–6m apart; a third player is free to move between them.
2. The outside players remain stationary and pass the ball to each other.
3. The player in the middle blocks or tackles as appropriate to achieve a turnover.

Comments

All types of passes can be used but the lob should be avoided as it limits the value of the drill. The player passing the ball should wait until the pig (the middle player) is committed before passing off. The two players involved with the turnover swap positions at each turnover.



Drill D1: Pig in the middle – 1

Drill D2: Pig in the middle – 2

Grading: E, P

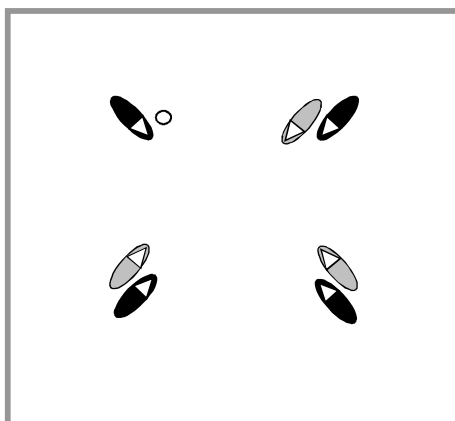
Number of players: five or seven

Skills

- blocking
- passing under pressure
- next pass
- team work

Drill

1. Players form two groups: an outside group and an inside group. The inside group (the pig) has one less player than the outside group.
2. The outside group forms a circle with players sitting equally spaced around it.
3. The inside group is free to move within the circle.
4. The outside group passes the ball within its group and must keep possession.
5. The inside group's aim is to block the passes and win possession.



Drill D2: Pig in the middle – 2

Comments

In this drill, the inside group is constantly on the move as they attempt to block passes. They position between the ball carrier and a potential pass to anticipate the next pass. Communication is essential as the inside players work together to win the ball. The outside players hold position and should wait until the pig is committed before passing. The two players involved with the turnover swap positions at each turnover.

All types of passes can be used but the lob should be avoided as it limits the value of the drill. For an even number of players, start one sitting out, to be substituted when there is a turnover. At a turnover, the outside player missing the pass leaves play and goes to the substitute position. The inside player blocking the pass moves to an outside corner. And the substitute player takes up the vacated inside position.

Drill D3: Turn on the ball

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two

Skills

- ball control
- boat control

Drill

1. A player places the ball on the water 1m from the kayak and is tackled from the opposite side by another player actively trying to get the ball.
2. The first player accepts the tackle and turns on the ball.
3. The drill ends when the ball holder breaks away with the ball or the attacker wins possession.

Comments

For a change of emphasis, do the exercise beside a real, or imaginary, boundary line. The ball is between the first player and the boundary. The second player tackles with the aim of forcing the ball over the boundary line.

Drill D4: Zone defence and offence

Grading: I, P

Number of players: seven or more

Skills

- zone defence
- offence
- team work

Drill

1. One team sets up a zone defence.
2. The second team is offence.
3. Teams use the various defence and offence tactics to protect or break the zone.

Comments

Each team sets up with either of the zone defence/offence strategies. It is best to practise a particular strategy repeatedly so that players learn to identify its setup and take up position without instruction. The teams swap roles after 3–5 turnovers.

Drill D5: Player rotation – 1

Grading: I, P

Number of players: four or more

Skills

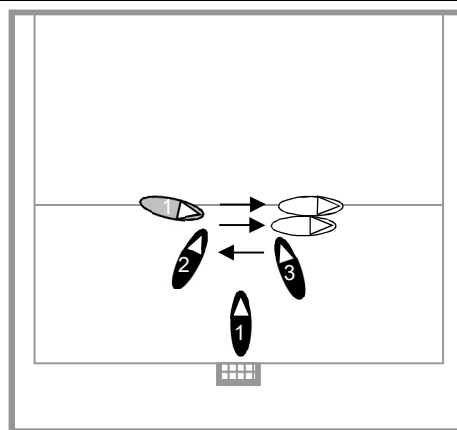
- zone defence
- team work

Drill

1. Three players set up 2-1 zone defence.
2. One player attacks the zone.
3. As ① attacks, ② engages the attacker and deflects them to the sideline. ③ rotates position with ②.

Comments

The drill can be practised with and without a ball. The defence players must talk with each other to ensure that rotation is effective. An additional offence player, attacking from the right increases difficulty.



Drill D5: Player rotation - 1

Drill D6: Player rotation – 2

Grading: I, P

Number of players: four or more

Skills

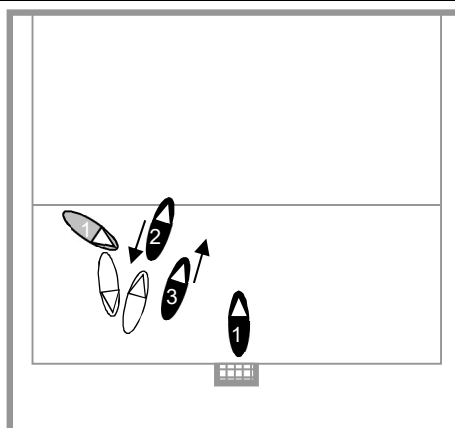
- zone defence
- team work

Drill

1. Three players set up defence as shown.
2. ① attempts to enter the zone behind ②.
3. As ① attacks, ② engages the attacker and directs them to the goal line.
4. ③ rotates position with ②.

Comments

The drill can be practised with and without a ball. The defence players must talk with each other to ensure that rotation is effective. An additional offence player, attacking from the top, increases difficulty.



Drill D6: Player rotation - 2

Drill D7: Goalkeeping

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- goalkeeping
- reflexes
- eye-hand coordination

Drill

1. The goalkeeper sits in front of goal, with paddle held low across the deck.
2. Players shoot from 5–6m, from anywhere on the water, moving or stationary.
3. The paddle is raised to block the incoming ball only when the ball has been thrown.

Comments

The exercise is intended to develop the quick reflexes needed to block an open goal. A goalkeeper sitting with the paddle across the deck leaves an open goal to entice a shot. There is ample time for the goalkeeper to prepare while the ball is in the air.

Drill D8: Goalkeeper

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- goal keeping
- reflexes
- eye-hand coordination

Drill

1. Goalkeeper sits in position under the goal.
2. Shots at goal from 5m.
3. Shots at goal from 4m.
4. Shots at goal from 3m.
5. Shots at goal from beside the goalkeeper.

Comments

The goalkeeper uses different blocking techniques for shots that are in close compared to those taken at a distance. Use this exercise to practise leaning the paddle forward to reduce shooting options.

Drill D9: Beat the goalie

Grading: E, P

Number of players: three or more

Skills

- eye-paddle coordination
- reaction time
- shooting

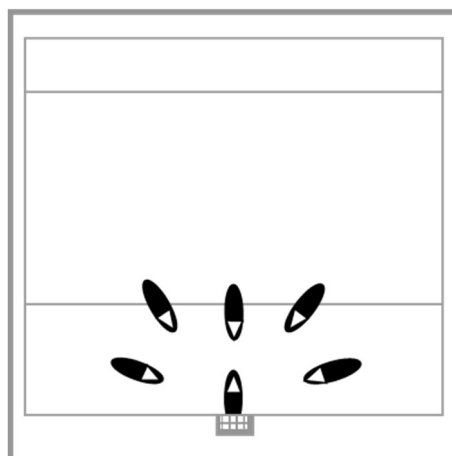
Drill

1. Goal keeper takes up position under goal.
2. Players form a semicircle with an arc of 5m around the goal.
3. Each player shoots, one after the other, several times
4. Reduce the arc to 4m, 3m, 2m, and 1m.

Comments

The drill allows goalkeepers to practice anticipating and blocking shots. The semicircle should extend to the goal line so the goalkeeper takes shots from the full range expected in a game. The drill is also good for players to practice shooting from a stationary position. Initially the shot should be from one player in one position. But the player can also fake the shot—and convince the goalkeeper of the shot to come—but pass to a teammate at the last moment.

Take care that players do not simply pepper the goalkeeper with two or three balls at once so that the value of the drill is lost. Instead allow the goalkeeper to set up and take one shot at a time.



Drill D9: Beat the goalie

Drill D10: Cover goalie

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- goal keeping
- shooting

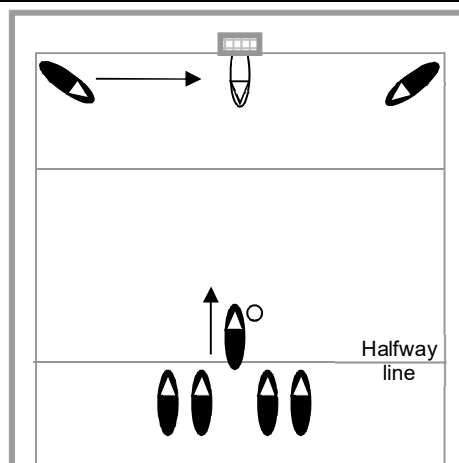
Drill

1. Two goal keepers take up position, one in each corner.
2. Attacking players gather at the halfway line.
3. At the call of 'go', one attacking player dribbles at speed to shoot.
4. At the same time, a goal keeper sprints and takes up position under goal to block the shot.
5. When the shot is blocked, or a goal is scored, the goalkeeper continues to the opposite corner.
6. A second attacker and goal keeper continue the drill.

Comments

A good drill to place the goalkeeper under pressure while setting up. The goal keeper should pay particular attention to the relationship of paddle strokes as they sprint, turn and elevate the paddle—determining the most effective combination to get there, turn and lift the paddle. There is little value in the drill if the goal is open and a shot taken. Attackers may need hold fire if the goalkeeper is not close to position.

For variety, goalkeepers can start with the squad at the halfway line. Requiring them to sprint past the dribbling attacker to take up position under goal.



Drill D10: Cover goalie

Drill D11: Blocking

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- reaction time
- blocking
- throwing

Drill

7. Two players, A and B, sit opposite each other, six metres apart.
8. A sits relaxed, looking straight ahead, with the paddle held low across the deck.
9. B shouts 'go' and immediately throws the ball hard and fast to any position within paddle reach in an arc around the body.
10. A blocks the ball and returns it to B.

Comment

The objective is to improve reaction time to blocking the ball. The word 'go' is the cue to raise the paddle and block the approaching ball. The player throwing the ball should have several balls at the ready to avoid time wasted retrieving missed

blocks. The distance between players may be varied to suit skill and reaction times. A third person can attend with a stop watch or video to record reaction times.

To be effective, the blocking player must practice vision and anticipation, which contribute to quickening reaction times.

9. Offence drills

Drill O1: Goal shooting

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- shooting
- passing
- catching

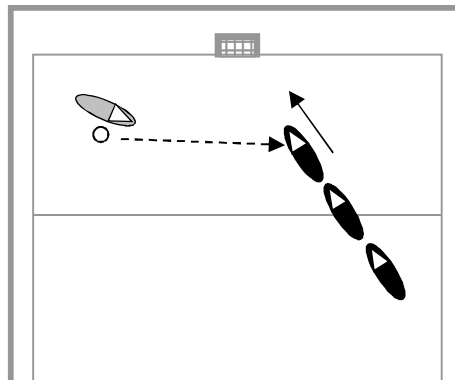
Drill

1. Players form a line at 50–60° to the goal line.
2. A stationary player feeds the ball to each player as they paddle forward to shoot.
3. After shooting, the player returns to the end of the queue.

Comments

Adapt for the various types of shots and passes. For example, pass to water in front, pass to hands, or pass to water at side.

For variety, a goalkeeper can be added. Or one or two defenders can be placed with the goalkeeper. Or a chaser can be used to place the shooting player under pressure. For advanced players, the player receiving the ball could roll with it before shooting.



Drill O1: Goal shooting

Drill O2: V drill

Grading: I, P

Number of players: four or more

Skills

- shooting
- passing
- catching

Drill

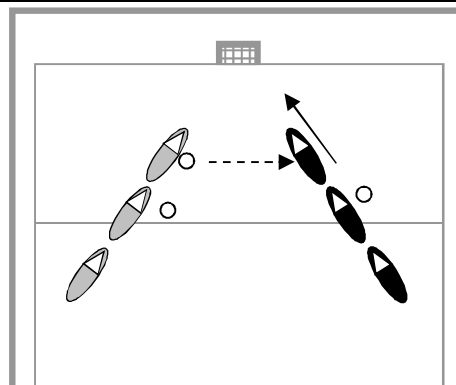
1. Players form a 'V' in front of the goal. Each side of the V making a 50–60° angle to the goal line.
2. A player on one side passes the ball to a moving player on the other side who then shoots at goal.
3. Having shot, the player paddles through and takes up position at the rear of the opposite line.
4. The player that passed the ball now moves off and receives the ball from the other side.
5. Players continue to shoot and circulate from side to side.

Comments

Adapt for the various types of shots and passes. For example, pass to water, pass to hands, or pass to water at side.

Add a goalkeeper. Add one or two defenders with the goalkeeper. For advanced players, the player receiving the ball could roll with the ball before shooting.

The position of the 'V' can also be varied. Position one arm of the 'V' parallel with the goal line so that the other is diagonal to the goal. Or have one arm on the centre of the field, directly in line with the goal, and the other at an angle.



Drill O2: V drill

Drill O3: Shooting – round arm

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

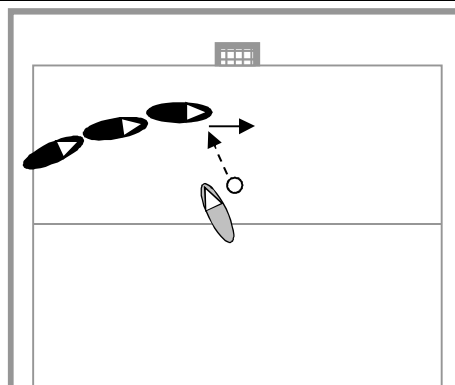
- shooting
- round arm

Drill

1. Players form a group at one end of the goal line.
2. The first player paddles parallel with the goal line, 1–2m from it, and receives the ball for a round arm shot.
3. Having shot at goal, the player paddles through and returns to the rear of the line.
4. Players continue to shoot and circulate.

Comments

Add a goalkeeper for an additional challenge.



Drill O3: Goal shooting - round arm

Drill O4: Fan drill

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

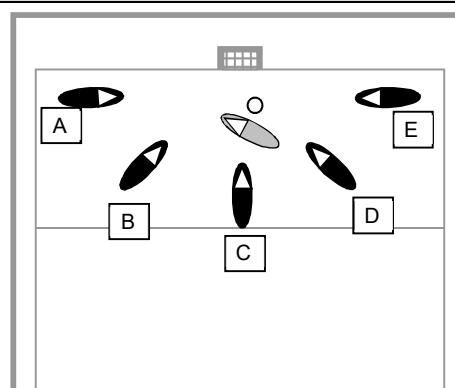
- goal shooting

Drill

1. The ball is fed from a stationary player to a moving player.
2. Start at A: right hand round arm shot then paddle through and take up position B.
3. Position B: right hand baseball shot, paddle through and take up position C.
4. Position C: two handed shot, paddle through and take up position D.
5. Position D: left hand baseball shot, paddle through and take up position E.
6. Position E: left arm round arm, paddle through and take up position A.

Comments

Add a goalkeeper for an additional challenge.



Drill O4: Fan drill

Drill O5: Y drill

Grading: I, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

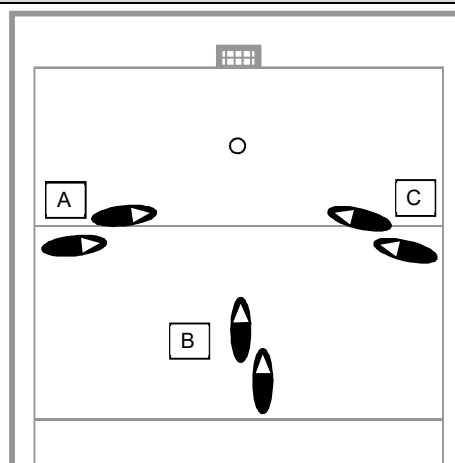
- winning possession
- maintaining possession
- shooting
- defence

Drill

1. Players form three groups A, B, and C.
2. The first player of one group throws the ball to an open area in front of goal and calls for a player from each of the other two groups to retrieve the ball for a shot at goal. (For example, player A throws the ball and calls for players B and C to get the ball.)
3. The two players work to gain possession and ultimately to shoot at goal. The player not winning the ball becomes a defender to block the shot.
4. The drill continues with a player from the next group throwing the ball.

Comments

If the two players competing for the ball cannot produce a shot, another two players can be sent to help so that the drill becomes two-on-two.



Drill O5: Y drill

Drill O6: Goal shooting with chaser

Grading: E, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

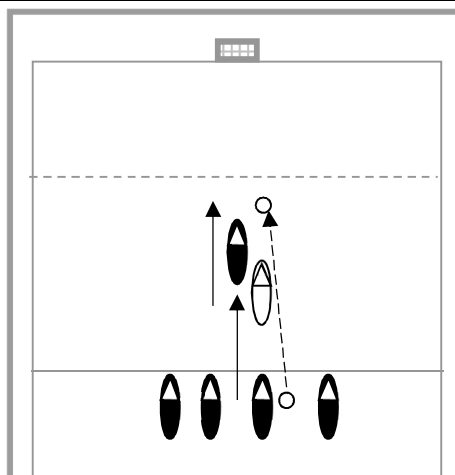
- goal shooting under pressure

Drill

1. Players form a group at the halfway line.
2. Two players are called by name to compete for the ball.
3. The first player sprints toward goal.
4. The second player throws the ball to about a metre in front of the sprinting player.
5. After throwing the ball, the second player immediately sprints to tackle the first player and prevent a shot.
6. The player shoots.

Comments

The second player must put in extra effort to catch the sprinter and turn them away from the goal. Ideally the defender should tackle at the bow of the sprinter. It is not necessary to gain possession, only to prevent an effective shot. A goalkeeper can be added for increased difficulty.



Drill O6: Goal shooting with chaser

Drill O7: Long shots

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

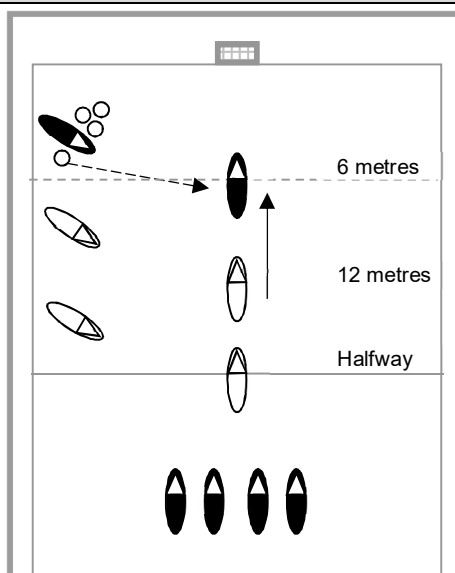
- long shots

Drill

1. One paddler sprints from the group toward goal.
2. At the 6m line, a feeder passes the ball to the hands.
3. The sprinting player shoots.
4. The drill continues with the ball passed at 12m and at the halfway line (17.5m).

Comments

The intention of the drill is to practice long shots. Players start with shots from 6m and increase to halfway. The length of shots may be increased gradually by a metre or two. Players may shoot as they sprint or take up stationary positions.



Drill O7: Long shots

Drill O8: Cross ball

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

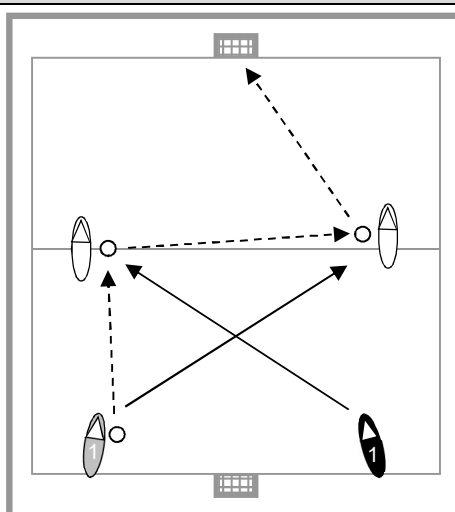
- long passes
- long shots
- sprints

Drill

1. Two players line up on the goal line as shown.
2. ① throws the ball to land directly ahead and on the half way line.
3. While the ball is in the air, ② sprints across the field to retrieve it.
4. ① paddles to the other side and receives the ball from ②.
5. ① shoots.
6. Both players continue to the goal line and turn ready to repeat the drill.

Comments

Players should sprint, pass and shoot fast and hard. The ball is passed to the hands to allow an immediate shot at goal. For a change, the ball can be passed to the water, a metre in front of the sprinting player. Additional players can join the drill by forming a que at either goal line.



Drill O8: Cross ball

Drill O9: Give and go

Grading: E, P

Number of players: five or more

Skill

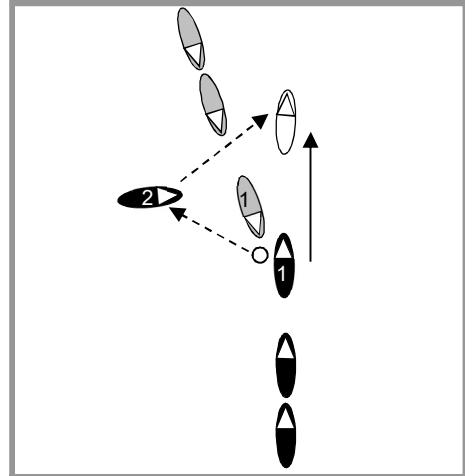
- two player team work
- passing
- offence

Drill

1. ① paddles forward and dribbles the ball.
2. As the attacking player ① approaches, ② passes the ball to stationary ③.
3. Once ① passes the attacking player, ③ returns the ball to ①.

Comments

All types of pass may be used for the 'give' and the 'go'.



Drill O9: Give and go

Drill O10: Give and go and shoot

Grading: I, P

Number of players: four or more

Skill

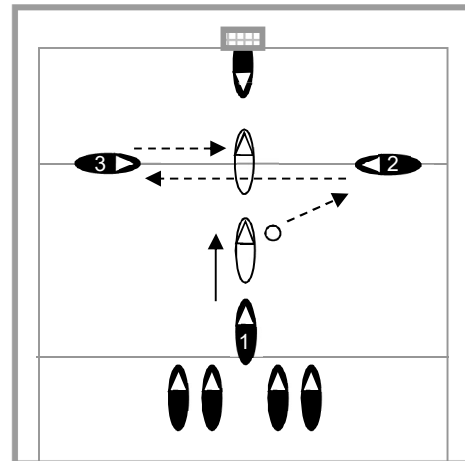
- shooting
- passing
- teamwork

Drill

1. ① sprints from the squad, dribbles and passes to ②.
2. ② passes to ③.
3. As ① approaches the 6m line, ③ passes to ① for a shot.

Comments

A defender can be added to challenge the shot.



Drill O10: Give and go and shoot

Drill O11: Creating holes

Grading: I, P

Number of players: seven or more

Skills

- create holes
- teamwork

Drill

1. Set up a standard 2-2-1 or 1-3-1 zone defence with five players.
2. Two, three or four offence players (with ball) work together to create holes in the defence.
3. When a hole is created, play is immediately stopped and its position, and knowledge of it, is assessed with the players.
4. The zone is reset and play restarted.

Comments

The object of this exercise is to teach players how and where holes are created.

Drill O12: 1-2-3

Grading: I, P

Number of players: five or more

Skills

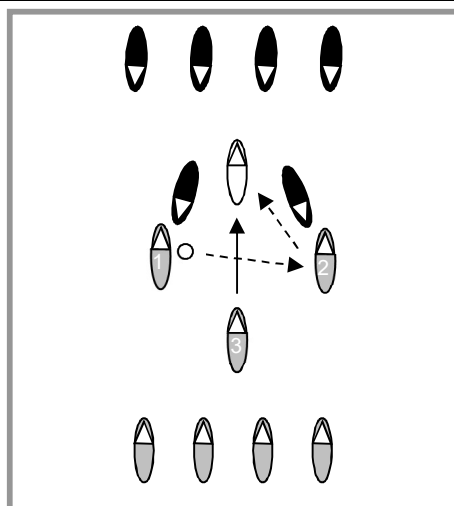
- team work
- offence
- passing

Drill

1. The ball carrier ① dribbles forward. The guard ② also paddles forward but coming from behind.
2. The ball carrier passes the ball to ② once a defender has committed.
3. ② passes to ③ when a defender commits to ②.
4. ③ paddles forward and receives the pass from ②.
5. ③ passes the ball to the waiting players to start again.

Comments

The drill is for five players, three in offence and two in defence. Offence uses 1-2-3 to take the ball forward while the two defenders try to force a turnover. The drill can also be used to shoot at goal.



Drill O12: 1-2-3

Drill O13: Two-on-one attack

Grading: I, P

Number of players: four or more

Skill

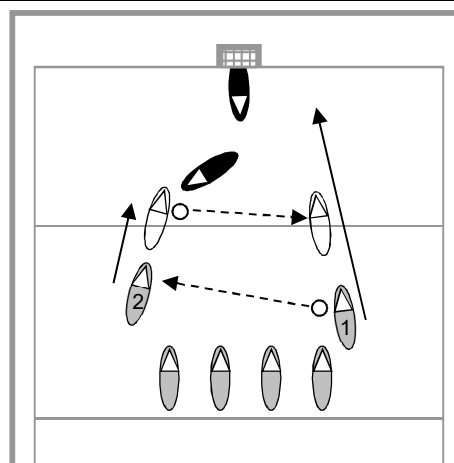
- team work
- set up shots for goal
- commitment

Drill

1. Set up a defence with a goal keeper and one defender.
2. ① makes a long pass to ②, either to hands or to the water.
3. ② drives hard to goal, committing to shoot and draw the defender.
4. The defender tackles ② to stop the shot.
5. At the last moment, ② passes back to ①, who then has a one-on-one shot with goal keeper.

Comments

The purpose of the drill is to build the team work between two offenders setting up a shot against one defender. One offender must pose a real threat to the goal to draw the defender out of position to allow a teammate a one-on-one shot with the goalkeeper.



Drill O13: Two-on-one attack

Drill O14: Three-on-two attack

Grading: I, P

Number of players: six or more

Skill

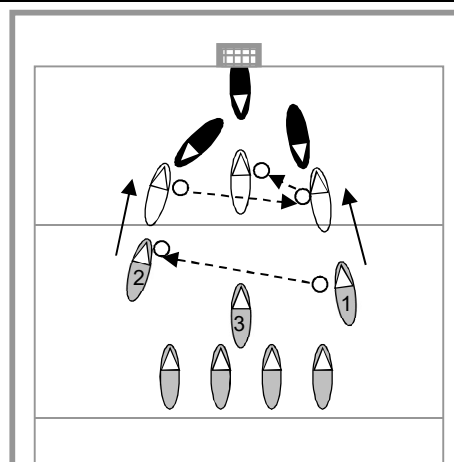
- team work
- set up shots for goal
- commitment

Drill

1. Set up defence with a goal keeper and two defenders.
2. ① passes to ②, to the hands or to the water.
3. ② drives hard to the goal, committing to shoot and draw the defender.
4. The defender tackles ② to stop the shot.
5. At the last moment, ② passes to ①, who in turn is tackled by the second defender.
6. ③ drives into the hole created by ① and ②, receives the ball from ② and shoots.

Comments

Offence may use overlap or wedge tactics to create a hole for a driving shot.



Drill O14: Three-on-two attack

Drill O15: Commitment/overlap

Grading: A, P

Number of players: eight or more

Skill

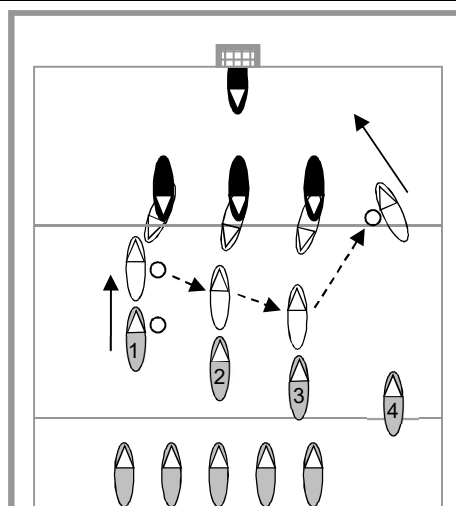
- team work
- overlap
- commitment

Drill

1. Set up defence with three defenders and a goalkeeper.
2. ① drives hard to shoot at goal.
3. The first defender tackles to prevent the shot.
4. When the defender is committed to the tackle, ① passes back to ②.
5. ② drives hard to shoot at goal, passing back to ③ once the defender is committed to the tackle.
6. ③ drives hard to shoot at goal, passing back to ④ once the defender is committed to the tackle.
7. ④ shoots at goal.

Comments

Each offender must drive hard and pose a real threat to the goal. If not, the defender has no reason to move out of position and tackle. The attacker should not direct their drive at the defender's boat (which would most likely result in an illegal tackle). But instead aim to the rear or across the front of the defender. Once the defender is committed to the tackle, the ball is passed to a teammate coming from behind.



Drill O15: Commitment/overlap

Drill O16: Shooting

Grading: I, P

Number of players: one or more

Skill

- shooting

Drill

1. With goal keeper – short powerful drives down the middle of the field, and at 45° and 30° from the goal line.
2. With stationary defenders – see how many paddles you can beat.
3. With mobile defenders – in 2 on 1 or 3 on 2 situation. Make defenders move to open up the driving lane for a team mate. This becomes a passing, positioning and shooting drill, which is more game like. Vary the starting points of drives and attackers to add variety.

Comments

Variety is critical, shots can be taken from all angles. Practice leaning the boat and use different release points. Practice short wind ups and balking to get the goalkeeper's paddle moving and then different release points to get the ball around the paddle. Practice both near side corners and *across-goal* or far side corners, top and bottom.

Drill O17: Shooting test

Grading: A, P

Number of players: two or more

Skills

- shooting
- shooting under pressure

Drill

1. Players line up directly in front of goal with the ball fed from the side.
2. There is no goal keeper.
3. Each player takes the following four tests:
 - Test 1: 5 x 6m stationary shots from directly in front of goal
 - Test 2: 5 x 6m moving shots with a chaser
 - Test 3: 5 x 9m moving shots with a chaser
 - Test 4: 5 x 12m moving shots with a chaser
4. The results of each test are recorded and compared.

Comments

Excellent shooting skills are critical for success. Each player takes five shots at an undefended goal. The number of successful shots, out of five, are compared with the table below to determine the shooter's overall performance.

For the moving shots, the shooter lines up at least 5m behind the shooting line and then sprints forward. The ball should leave the hand on or before the 6m, 9m, or 12m shooting line. Record a miss if the shooter passes over the line before the ball leaves the hand. The chaser starts at the same time as the shooter but with their nose 3m behind the tail of the shooter.

Record the number of successful shots for each player and compare with the typical scores given below.

Typical scores for the shooting test:

Level	Below average	Average	High performance
6m stationary	0 – 3	4	5
6m moving	0 – 3	4	5
9m moving	0 – 2	3	4
12m moving	0 – 1	2	3

Drill O18: Goal mask

Grading: A, P

No of players: one or more

Skills

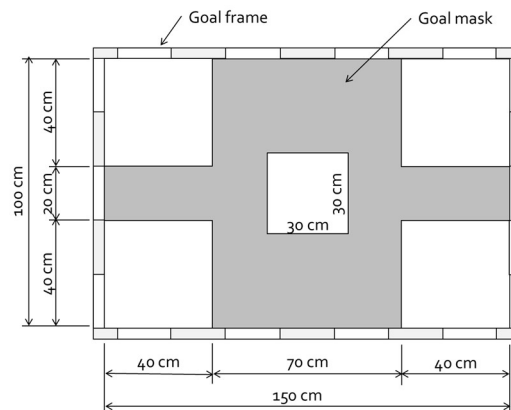
- shooting accuracy

Drill

1. Attach a mask to the goal face
2. Players receive the ball and shoot to an opening in the mask
3. Shoot first at the centre opening and then each corner, one after the other.

Comments

The mask can be used with standard shooting drills and in games to encourage players to pick a target area in the goal and to develop accuracy. The mask can be used with or without a goal keeper and also left in place for games.



Drill O18: Goal mask

Drill O19: Ski jump

Grading: A, P

No of players: four or more

Skills

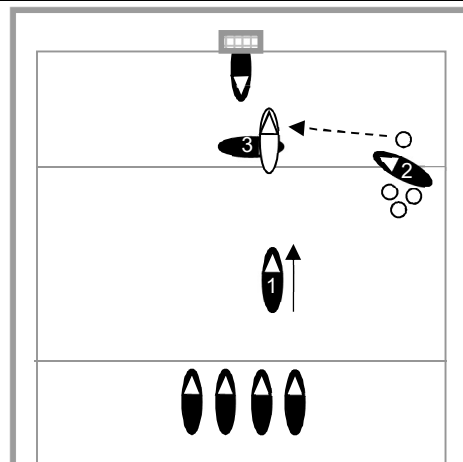
- boat control
- shooting under pressure

Drill

1. ③ holds position in front of the goal keeper and parallel with the 6m line.
2. ① sprints to paddle up and over the front deck of ③.
3. ② passes to ① for a shot.

Comments

A good drill to build skill and confidence in riding up and over a defender's deck. At first, the defender should allow the attacker to be on the deck. But as skill develops, the defender should actively work to prevent it.



Drill O19: Ski jump

Drill O20: Outlet pass – 1

Grading: A, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

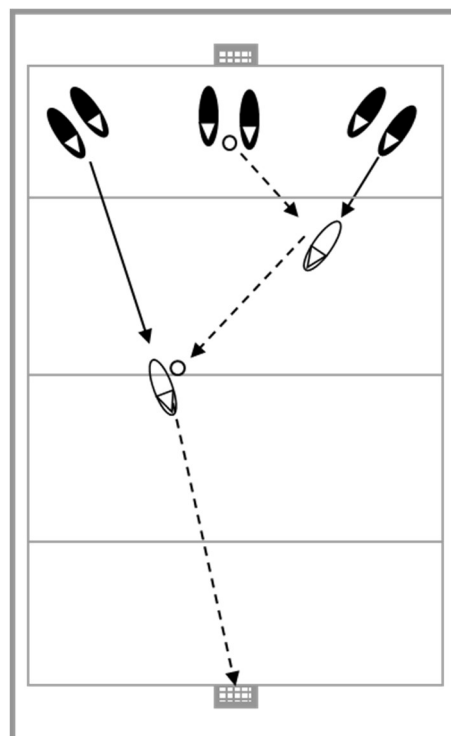
- sprinting
- passing
- long shots
- dribbling

Drill

1. Form three groups of players as shown.
2. The ball starts at the goal.
3. The ball is passed to a player sprinting from a corner.
4. While sprinting the ball is passed to a second sprinter, coming from the other corner, who receives the ball, dribbles and shoots.

Comments

Make the drill more challenging with a chaser to pressure each sprinter.



Drill O20: Outlet pass – 1

Drill O21: Outlet pass - 2

Grading: A, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- sprinting
- passing
- shooting
- dribbling
- goal keeping

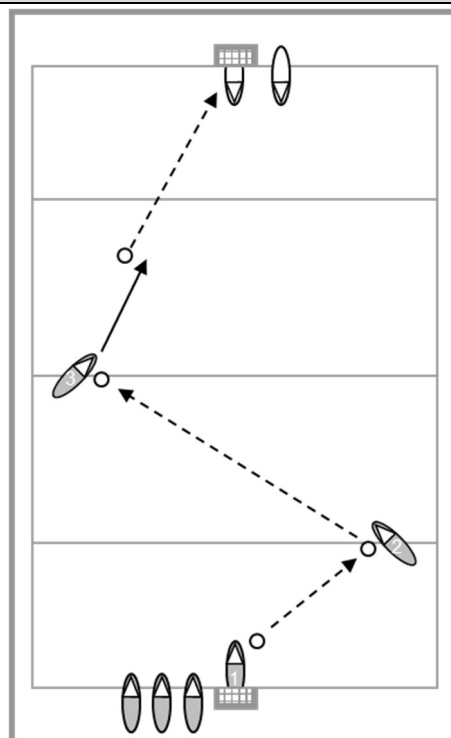
Drill

1. Players take up positions ①, ②, ③.
2. Goal keeper ① makes outlet pass to ②. After passing, ① moves to ② ready for the next outlet pass.
3. ② passes to a sprinting ③. After passing, ② takes up position ③.
4. ③ dribbles and shoots.
5. After shooting, ③ turns to take up goal keeper position and block the next shot. After block ③ moves aside.
6. ① is replaced with another player from the squad.

Comments

Make the drill more challenging by:

- a. having a player shoot at goal, or tackle ① to place the goal keeper under pressure when making the outlet pass.
- b. adding a second ball. Start the drill, at the same time, from each end of the field. Goal keepers will need to swap out quickly to avoid clashes.
- c. combining a. and b.
- d. using four balls, two from each end (one after the other).



Drill O21: Outlet pass – 2

10. Game drills

Drill G1: Brandy

Grading: E, P

Number of players: five or more

Skills

- fun
- teamwork
- sprinting
- turning
- edging

Drill

1. One player starts with the ball and strikes (brands) any other player with it.
2. Once branded, that player joins the first player and together they attempt to brand the remaining players.
3. The game is complete when every player has been branded.

Comments

This is a fun game that combines team tactics with speed and boat skills.

The rules of the game are:

- to brand a player, the ball must touch either the front or rear deck of their kayak. A ball striking the sides or bottom of the kayak, or the paddle, does not count. A ball striking a player does not count.
- to avoid being branded players may dip, edge, or roll the kayak. Players may also use the paddle and hands to block, catch or throw the ball.
- boundaries are set to confine players to a fixed area.

Drill G2: Keeping off

Grading: E, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- fun
- teamwork
- game skills

Drill

1. Form two teams of three to five players.
2. One team starts with the ball and must keep possession. They do this using skills and tactics within canoe polo rules.
3. When a turnover is achieved, the game continues without a break.

Comments

This is a fun game. There are no goals. Teamwork is essential for success as players continually look for the next pass. Boundaries are set to confine players to a fixed area.

Drill G3: Half court

Grading: I, P

Number of players: two teams

Skills

- teamwork
- game skills

Drill

1. Players form two teams.
2. A game is played using only half the length of a standard field. The length of the field is from the goal line to the half way line. The field is standard width.
3. When a team changes from defence to offense—from a scored goal, or a penalty turnover—it must first take the ball back over half way line before a shot is allowed.

Comments

Half court is played when only one goal is available. Games are played to standard rules.

Drill G4: Press

Grading: A, P

Number of players: six or more

Skills

- teamwork
- game skills

Drill

1. Players form two teams.
2. A game is played exclusively using press but without goals.
3. Passing is not allowed through or over an opponent's paddle.

Comments

The passing restriction forces players to out-manoeuve, sprint, or dribble to break free of the press.

Alternatively, teammates can position to create passing opportunities that do not breach the restriction. A turnover is awarded when the passing restriction is breached. Strict observance of the 5 second possession rule places additional pressure on players.

Drill G5: Quadrant drill

Grading: A, P

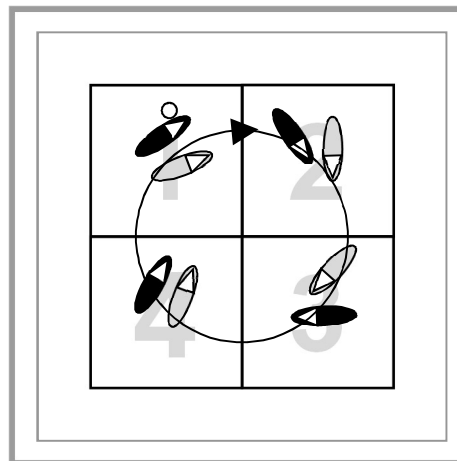
Number of players: eight

Skills

- press

Drill

1. Create four areas, or quadrants, of about 10m x 10m each
2. There are two players in each area. One player is team A, the other is team B.
3. Team A starts with the ball and must move it clockwise from quadrant 1 to quadrants 2, 3 and 4. When the ball reaches quadrant 4, team A is awarded one point and ball is given to team B. During play, the ball may move in the opposite direction, but a point is only scored when it has passed through each quadrant in order.
4. Team B starts in defence, but on winning the ball, moves the ball anti-clockwise from the quadrant it receives the ball in to score its fourth quadrant.
5. Standard rules of play apply. If the ball passes over a quadrant boundary, a turnover is awarded.



Drill G5: Quadrant drill

Comments

This is a game of press with players aiming to position between opponents to prevent a pass. The team with the ball works to pass it to teammates and so progress to each quadrant and, at the last one, score a point. Create pressure by setting a given time of play (say 5 minutes). The team with the most points wins.

Setting and identifying quadrant boundaries is important to contain players and recognise when the ball is out of play. Other players or markers can indicate boundaries, or a grid of floating ropes would be ideal.

Drill G6: Seven-up

Grading: A, P

Number of players: fourteen

Skills

- one-on-one
- boat positioning
- position, ball and teammate awareness

Drill

1. Form two teams of seven players each (no substitutes).
2. Using two balls, play a game of strict one-on-one.
3. A shot at goal can only be made when a team has possession of both balls.

Comments

An intense game requiring concentration, thinking and communication.