



# Victoria School of Quidditch

## Training Manual and Playbook



by Alejandro Enriquez

How To Play Quidditch

<http://howtoplayquidditch.org>



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Please note: In this context, an experienced player is anyone who has been playing with interest for more than a year. I make no claim to being the definitive expert on quidditch, and anyone who is more experienced and insightful than I am may find even the “advanced” chapters uninspired and redundant.

## About the Author

My name is Alejandro Enriquez, and I am a longtime player, coach, referee and manager of quidditch. I started playing at practices with the Silicon Valley Skrewts sometime in 2013 or 2014, and have been playing ever since.

I am passionate about quidditch because to me it is a true body/mind workout that forces each of us who plays it to grow and develop while also finding something good about ourselves that we can depend on. I also love that while everyone can benefit from strength, stamina, and good hand technique, there is no single body type, size, mentality, gender or previous experience that is “ideal.” It truly is the ultimate team sport.

I have been training in Shotokan karate for over 15 years, and I have a 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt. I teach karate for fun and self improvement. I apply a lot of what I have learned in karate to quidditch, such as the emphasis on hand, foot and hip technique, the mentality of constantly finding things to improve, and the concept of the whole body bringing its energy together in a single moment with perfect timing. While I don’t include too much of these ideas explicitly in this book since few quidditch players have a karate background, those with an extensive martial arts experience may see the subtle influences of the martial artist mentality in this manual.

I hope you enjoy this book and find valuable things to bring to your own team. If you are interested in starting a team but have not played and don’t know anyone who has, please reach out to me through How To Play Quidditch through the website, facebook, or twitter and let me help you. I love spreading the sport of quidditch and I am excited to be your biggest fan!

Keep finding a better you! Thank you for your attention and best of luck.



--Alejandro Enriquez  
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## Chapter 1: The Sport of Quidditch

Quidditch is a team sport based on the fictional, magical sport played in the Harry Potter series of books. Sometimes called Muggle quidditch, the sport has grown massively in popularity around the world over the last few years. Different versions of the game are played in different parts of the world, but this book will be structured specifically to focus on quidditch played under the IQA and USQ official rules. As of this writing, USQ Rulebook 10 is the standard for quidditch rules.

Quidditch has been explained in a plethora of ways, each more confusing than the last to the untrained ear. My preferred oversimplification of the rules is this: Four people on each team are playing grass basketball with a bit of rugby flavor, while two of their teammates are playing dodgeball to help them score points and defend their hoops. If this book is your first exposure to quidditch, that probably raised more questions than it answered, but fear not, you will rapidly become comfortable with this sport and soon feel like enough of an expert to explain it to your friends, at which point you will probably resort to a similar oversimplification. The following page contains a flyer that can be used to educate the general populace.

Quidditch got its start on college campuses, which continue to be the most fertile ground for player recruitment to this day. Middlebury College was the birthplace of this version of quidditch, and was the dominant force in quidditch for many years, winning the first five World Cup tournaments. There have as of this writing been twelve consecutive annual national tournaments in the United States, and the World Cup is now a true international event with teams from 21 nations playing in Germany in the summer of 2016. In a stunning upset, the USA was defeated by a snitch pull in the finals, losing to Australia, showcasing the incredible growth of the sport.

This begs the question for a new reader: why has this strange sport grown so popular? Of course, everyone plays for their own reasons, but the sport has a lot to offer: excellent physical exercise, mentally stimulating strategy, a necessity for good teamwork that builds camaraderie, a progressive attitude towards gender, and a worldwide community that has many fantastic participants meeting and playing regularly. Players need not match particular dimensions or have special athleticism to be effective, and because the sport is still new, each new dedicated teammate immediately becomes a valuable resource. Ultimately, we are social creatures, and the social interaction and the satisfaction of accomplishing something as a group are irresistible. So please, if this sport seems strange to you, set aside your doubts for a few minutes and appreciate it on its own terms, and you may find yourself someday as dedicated as the other fine people playing this sport.

### **Key Concept: The First Explanation**

When new people jump into quidditch, they often get the basic concept explained to them and then want to get some immediate hands-on experience. Often, watching prior to playing is not very helpful, since the untrained eye does not even know what to look for. Unlike many similar team sports, the beaters may get involved in action some distance from the quaffle, and soon there are people literally running in eight different directions at once, making the game overwhelming when compared to basketball or hockey which otherwise have similar rules.

The key concept that helps people adjust to the sport is that the different positions are subject to different rules and may only play with certain balls. Many teams mandate that new people only play chaser at first, which simplifies the learning process, and helps them draw on knowledge of previous sports such as basketball and rugby.

The essential core of quidditch is a 4v4 basketball game with the dribbling of the ball replaced by the challenge of staying on broom, while two people on each team use dodgeballs to knock out people on the other team. This one-sentence explanation helps outline the structure of the game and draws on prior understanding of other sports (notably that basketball, unlike football, is a two-way sport where all players contribute on offense and defense). This explanation helps guide the understanding of the new people and gives them a basis to start asking questions as needed.

Since the explanations are almost always oversimplified, this means new players will inevitably make some legal mistakes that need to be corrected. How the team and leadership reacts to fouls will say more to these new people about who your team is made up of than anything else you could possibly do. Consider carefully the famous quote by Maya Angelou: “People don’t remember what you said, they remember how you made them feel.”

## Chapter 2: Sports Theory

Team sports permeate our modern culture, with seemingly every other channel on the television dedicating time to the many professional sports played across the country. It is easy for those who are a part of sports culture to get wrapped up in numbers, measurements, and intricate positions and plays, while people who do not live in sports culture can easily regard the entire affair with suspicion. The most important thing to understand about team sports is that *they are ultimately a human experience*. That is to say, they tap into our natural desire to be part of a group, to work towards a common goal, and to collectively achieve greatness. We love playing with and following “our” team because they make up part of our identity, and to a human, there is no more powerful pull than the desire to belong to something.

This book will explore the strategy of quidditch, but I must begin by saying that strategy is meaningless unless properly applied to the players you have. What works for one team will not work for another if they have different players with different physical limitations and mentalities. The greatest coaches in sports history all know how to get the most out of their players, and the way they do it is by objectively evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, getting to know them personally, and then putting their players in the best possible position to use their talents while making them feel the sense of belonging they crave.

Professional athletes are often stereotyped as oozing with confidence, stubborn to a fault and excessively sure of their own ability. This is because when two people are evenly matched physically, the more confident and stubborn person will win every time, causing the most confident players to rise to the top and become professional athletes. The psychological aspect of sports absolutely cannot be underrated, as even these athletes earning millions of dollars can give in to the perception that they are not good enough. The applicable expression is that these

players or teams have lost as soon as they get off the bus, and this is a real effect that can happen anywhere in life. After all, sports are a human experience, and they represent a physical, mental and emotional test, which means all three must be trained for maximum effectiveness.

In a volunteer amateur sport like quidditch, it becomes even more important to get to know your team, because they are making a conscious decision to be there and will continue to do so only as long as they're getting something out of it or expect to get something in the future. Natural competitiveness can be harnessed, as can a desire to fit in or a stubborn commitment to see a project through, but all of these mentalities have a dark side that can turn a team experience ugly if not managed well. It is the responsibility of every player to contribute to a positive playing experience, but especially the captain(s) and/or coach(es) to monitor the mental health of the players and ensure that they feel that they can belong on this team.

The captain/coach must create buy-in, where the players all believe they are making good use of their own time. Depending on the mentality of the players, the team may be billed as "player first" or "team first," but ultimately all effective teams will do the same thing: identify what motivates their players and cater to it with drills, scrimmages, game plans and cultures that everyone believes in. Humans make emotional decisions, including unconscious ones to commit or not commit all our energy onto a particular action, and if people believe deep down that diving headfirst for a loose ball will make a difference, they'll do it every time.

There is a saying: "Your players don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This is as true as can possibly be, since every sports team will encounter adversity and a lot of glances will be shot at the coach in those moments. To be a highly effective coach, one must be an effective emotional communication. Many coaches believe they must show no emotion to appear being strong, but true strength is not a lack of emotion or even



an ability to control emotion but the ability to maintain a clear head despite strong emotions and an awareness of the emotions of others.

Sports strategy typically revolves around creating favorable matchups, where your player is able to use his or her strengths against the opposing team's weaknesses. Physical ability, mental precision, and emotional toughness all come into play, and each can play the deciding factor if the other qualities are evenly matched. Also, physical abilities typically come with tradeoffs. Notably, larger people are usually slower than smaller people, and the rarest athletes possess unusual amounts of both size and speed.

Strategies also typically incorporate tradeoffs that are carefully managed. One of the most illustrative examples of this is the "blitz" concept familiar to fans of football. The idea of the blitz is that someone who would typically be assigned to cover a receiver and prevent them from catching a pass instead charges the thrower without warning. It's visually distracting, unexpected, and shortens the available time to make a decision. However, now at least one receiver is wide open, and if the thrower has the reflexes, instincts and nerves, they can complete the pass more easily despite the surprise.

Strategies become more complex to attempt to cover up these deficiencies. For example, in a zone blitz, people change their coverage assignments at the last second, fooling the thrower's eye and covering the apparent weakness of the blitz, but the more complex the strategy, the more likely it becomes that someone will make a mental error, resulting in a huge opportunity for the receivers. This in turn can be addressed with effective coaching, leading to an escalating arms race of ever-diversifying schemes, with the winning strategies being the most complex ones that can still be grasped in real time by a group of athletes who are all on the same page and that puts each athlete in a position to play to their strengths.

This book does not attempt to replicate the complexity of a professional playbook, but instead is built as a foundational work, upon which a complex scheme can be built. Be warned, however, the more complex a scheme may be, the more susceptible to failure it becomes when introducing new people or new combinations of people, or even when your integral players don't eat their breakfast or have mildly injured their favorite body part. The top level summer leagues such as Major League Quidditch in North America and the Quidditch Premier League in the UK (and now expanding to continental Europe) may find itself a testing ground of new, more complex schemes as players with high levels of experience work together for months to perfect their strategies, but no sport reaches its true pinnacle until professionals are able to work together on a strategy year-round.

Quidditch is still a new sport, and the tradeoffs inherent to the different strategies are poorly explored. Much of the game is still dictated by physical ability and breadth of team experience rather than scheme strength, but the day may yet come when different schools of quidditch vie for supremacy on the pitch.

### **Key Concept: Separation of Achievement from Self Worth**

We learn from an early age that we are praised when we achieve something. From learning to walk and talk, to earning good grades in school and even earning money for a job, achievement feels good because of the positive social feedback we receive for it. The real question, however, is whether positive social feedback reflects your value as a person. We cannot escape the sense that it does, because our brains are designed to seek safety as part of a social group that we are to contribute to (a solitary caveman wouldn't last very long, after all).

The inherent risk to this human condition is that when we set our mind to something and fail, our sense of self-worth is assaulted. This can occur even when there was no reasonable expectation for success (such as trying a new sport for the first time). Thus, failure is frustrating, threatening our personal and social standing. The paradox in this is that failure is **required** for growth and improvement, so a fear of failure is a growth-stunting phenomenon.

Being able to disconnect your performance from your evaluation of your own worth is a vital, challenging skill in today's world, not simply for quidditch but for all endeavors. A very helpful component of this can be a strong social support group (consisting of people who are not afraid to make your high value to them known despite a lack of achievement). Once a proper distance between achievement and self-worth is created, we can feel safe to fail enough to improve. Having a team that supports each other is a big part of why we play sports in the first place! Getting better feels great, after all.

Being competitive can drive a team to ever-greater achievements, but the toxic by-product is that failure can become intolerable, poisoning the attitudes and creating a fear of failure all over again. Harnessing competitiveness while creating an open and safe environment is an ongoing challenge that coaches must face every day.

### Chapter 3: Quidditch Theory 1

All *italicized* terms are found in the glossary. Please refer to the end of Chapter 1 for the basic rules of the game.

The four positions in quidditch are outlined here with a few notes on desired traits:

- Chaser: This is the most varied position, and it is recommended that everyone learn the basics of the chaser position when first learning the sport. Height, speed, strength, endurance, good hands, arm strength, accuracy, and physicality are all valuable, but none are indispensable for effective play.
- Beater: The most integral position to a successful team, the beater's ability to influence the game is much greater than that of chasers. To be a highly effective beater, field awareness is critical, which is partially a natural talent but is also honed with experience. Additional benefits include accuracy, arm strength, aggression (or at least a temperament to stand up to aggressive play), short-area quickness, and good hands.
- Keeper: The keeper is essentially the same as a chaser in many respects, but their ability to *goaltend* means height is valuable, and they are also often the initial quaffle carrier, especially as this means they can easily initiate a *fast break* after being scored upon if there is an opportunity.
- Seeker: Athleticism, long arms, speed and awareness of the score and other players are all crucial for an effective seeker. Defensive seeking (where the seeker prevents the opposing seeker from pulling the snitch) requires a slightly different skillset, comprised primarily of strength and physicality.

The most reliable way to gain the advantage in quidditch is to have both beaters have a bludger in hand. This is known as having *bludger control*. An empty-handed beater is useful only for preventing opposing beaters from having their way with their teammates. On the other hand, a beater with bludger in hand can control a large area of the field, the size of which is determined by their arm strength, accuracy, and field awareness. Defense is much easier with two beaters, even if the offense brings their lone bludger up.

Probably the biggest strategic tradeoff in quidditch is what to do when your team has bludger control and is on offense. Bringing up one or both beaters exposes them to the risk that the opposing team could get back bludger control, but keeping them back puts enormous

pressure on the chasers to score points when outnumbered and vulnerable to the defensive beater. One common compromise is known as running “1.5” (also known as the bull rush, Falcon, Napalm, Silver Bullet, Blitz, and many other names). In this strategy, one of the offensive beaters leaves their bludger back at their own hoops with the other beater protecting it with his or her own bludger, while the empty-hand beater runs up and makes a tackle on the lone defensive beater. The beater must make an effective charge so that if the defensive beater tries to beat the offensive empty-hand beater the bludger can either be caught or will fly off into oblivion, but making contact after being beaten is now strictly illegal (after many people were injured by a charging beater twice their own size).

Quidditch is a full-contact sport, which is necessary for chasers to be able to defend opposing chasers 1-on-1. With three hoops, it is impossible to defend a chaser’s charge unless you can physically block them, tackle them or strip the ball from their hand. This is still a difficult thing to do at full speed (especially as the tackles must be 1-handed, initiated from the front plane, be aimed neither too high nor too low, and accomplished while still on a broom), and so requires a lot of practice. Typically the best chaser on the field with regard to this skill set is known as the *point defender* and takes primary responsibility for guarding the ball carrier.

Covering an offensive chaser who is not carrying the quaffle (known as an *off-ball chaser*) also requires practice, as people naturally watch the quaffle action and may lose track of the person they’re marking. Typically for new players the easiest instruction to follow is “stay between your opponent and the hoops,” which is a good mix of simple and effective scheme. Defensive technique is as much a matter of stubbornness as any physical trait.

Chasers on defense are typically the first line of defense, and they may be arranged into a number of different formations to be discussed in Chapter 11: Defensive Systems. If they are

able to make a tackle or force a bad pass to create a turnover, so much the better, but bludgers remain the most effective tool for defeating a driving chaser, which is why having beaters with bludgers on defense is so important.

There are many different styles of beating, some more common in certain regions of the US. Bludgers are easier to retain and use on defense due to the fact that tagging back in when on defense is spatially much easier than tagging back in on offense. For this reason many philosophies often center around acquiring bludger control and then retaining it, going so far as to keep both beaters all the way back at their own hoops when the chasers are on offense. This is a very conservative style of play, which is very successful at preventing *fast breaks*, but isolating chasers against a beater with a bludger in hand is a lot to ask of them, and requires a lot of training. Bringing up bludgers relieves the pressure on the chasers, but if any mistakes are made, it is possible or even likely that the defending team can simply intercept the quaffle and run it back for a goal. In this way, the beaters control the speed and tempo of the game by their field positioning.

The most crucial advanced concept of the sport is the synchronicity between chasers and beaters. Individual drills can rapidly hone skills necessary for each, but only with extensive practice and/or an effective system will the chasers be able to capitalize on the openings that the beaters create. There is no true substitute for gameplay for building this *chemistry*, but extensive dialog between the chasers (especially the ball-carrying chaser) and the beaters during practice and scrimmages will help accelerate this growth process.

### **Key Concept: Specialization vs. Versatility**

When building a team, one of the key team philosophies that the leadership must tackle is the conflict between specialization and versatility. In essence, when you have a new player join your team, you must decide how much you want to help this player specialize in certain aspects of the game, and how much you want this player to be exposed to all aspects of the game.

Of course each player truly represents a unique case. A player who has played a dozen sports, is highly athletically gifted, and masters each position will inevitably be encouraged to become a chess piece that can fill any need on the team, while a player who is physically limited and only enjoys one aspect of the game may be encouraged to focus on that aspect.

Specialization carries an obvious reward: putting someone in the same situation every time they play will help them achieve more when in that role, and help the team as a whole more. However there is also a two-part risk to this approach. First, the player's usefulness depends on that position being important to the game, which a change in strategy may obviate. Second, limiting a player's role marginalizes them, making them less useful to the team overall and making them unprepared to handle the other parts of the game.

The most egregious example of specialization gone wrong is that female players are often taught as chasers to go behind the hoops when on offense and catch passes for quick scores, having no other role on offense. To be sure, this is a valuable role in the team, but their ball-handling skillset is not typically developed when in this role, making them liabilities when in any other position, stunting their athletic development, and making them strategically useless unless the ball carriers are effective at dishing out the necessary passes.

To be sure, in order to rapidly be able to compete as a team, specialization is more effective. But to make players into better athletes, be sure to teach everyone everything.

## Chapter 4: Fundamentals

Listed below are a number of fundamental skills necessary for competing effectively in quidditch. They are listed in approximate increase in difficulty, but due to variations in prior experiences and athletic gifts, different people may find great differences in how quickly they acquire these fundamental skills. After each fundamental skill, a brief comment will illustrate whether it has any analogous fundamental in other sports.

**Running with a broom:** The most basic and essential component of quidditch is staying on your broom while walking, running, and jumping. This is the skill most unique to quidditch, and serves as an athletic impediment that heightens the competition, similar to dribbling the ball in basketball, not using the hands in soccer, or not grabbing the ball in volleyball.

To successfully walk or run with the broom, one hand (normally the non-dominant hand) should be holding the broom near one end, placing the middle of the broom snugly between the legs. In certain situations, having the broom be farther forwards or backwards may be advantageous, but in general the broom should be held with enough length in front of the legs to make it an easy target to re-grab but not so much length that its weight is hard to control or easily slips out from the legs.

No physical analogy is present in other sports. The philosophical analogy is the dribbling of the ball in basketball, to increase the athletic challenge.

**Throwing a ball (stationary):** For both chasers and beaters, throwing the ball is a vital component of their success. The arms should be warmed up before practice and games with this skill, and this particular iteration of the skill is particularly vital for beaters, who are often throwing from a stationary position more so than chasers.



To throw a ball from a stationary position, one foot (typically the one corresponding to the non-dominant hand) must be farther forward than the dominant hand-side foot. The hand holding the ball is drawn back while the other hand holds the broom (using your legs to drive the power of this throw means they cannot also be holding the broom unassisted). The hips, shoulders, arm and hand should all be synchronized to throw the ball forward. Ideally the head is NOT twisted or rotated at all but remains fixed on the target, to improve accuracy.

This is most analogous to the throw a quarterback makes in football. Non-pitching baseball players also must typically incorporate their entire body in order to make rapid throws that cover an entire baseball field with time being a crucial element (baseball pitchers use a different, more exaggerated windup due to the available time they have to make the throw and the exceptional power required to throw a 90mph fastball).

**Catching a ball:** Chasers and beaters must both be adept at catching balls. Dropped passes result in turnovers, and dropped beats lead to no-bludger situations, so catching is an exceptionally vital component to both chaser and beater play.

The temptation any new player will experience is to catch the ball against the chest using one arm while the other is holding the broom. This is a lower-percentage catch (though it is easier to remain on broom while running when catching this way) so the players should be strongly encouraged to catch with two hands. At first, players will only be able to execute this while stationary, but with time and practice players can learn to run without holding their broom briefly so as to catch with two hands while on the run.

Catching a pass the way chasers must do so is practiced by receivers in football and all players in rugby. Catching bludgers is an equivalent skill in dodgeball.

**Fielding (picking up) a ball:** Despite the apparent simplicity of the task, effective fielding is a vital skill that must be practiced properly since executing it at high speed is an essential part of elite quidditch play. Two methods may be used: picking the ball up from the top or from the bottom. Picking up from the top requires good hand and finger strength and breadth, and may be foiled by wet balls or balls with poor grip. For this reason, players should also learn the “scoop” method of fielding a ball, which requires more overall body strength since the player must lower their body with the legs to scoop up the ball from below. Fielding a ball with both hands is also legal (contrary to popular belief, the broom need not touch the body to count as “between the legs and under control”) and is very useful in wet conditions.

Fielding is treated as a key fundamental in baseball and cricket, though obviously with a glove and much smaller ball.

**Diving on a loose ball:** A key defensive skill, this prevents anyone else from getting to a ball, at the cost of having difficulty getting up. Sliding or even leaping to the ball may be incorporated. Wrapping your body around the ball is called turtling, and essentially places the expectation on your team’s beaters to come and beat the opponents.

This is a common action following a fumble in football and rugby, since the ball is dead once possessed by a player on the ground.

**Blocking a beat:** Holding a quaffle or bludger and blocking a live bludger from hitting you is something both chasers and beaters may occasionally be called upon to do. It is more of an opportunistic action than a first line of defense, but it is something that can round out the skill set of a beater or ball carrier effectively.

Blocking in this manner occurs in dodgeball.

**Throwing a ball (on the move):** While it may appear to be approximately the same skill as a stationary throw, throwing on the move is in fact quite different. The legs cannot effectively drive a throw while also running, and so the most effective throw is accomplished by extending the arm outwards to “push” the ball. This has less force than the full windup throw but can be supplemented by the movement of the body itself adding force. It can also be highly accurate, and by not incorporating the body, there is much less telegraphing of the throw prior to release. The lack of force means it is more easily caught in the case of attempted beats, so this is more frequently used as a chaser pass or shot.

This type of pass sometimes occurs in basketball, though the weight of the basketball as opposed to the quaffle changes the dynamic substantially. It is also known in football as a “shovel pass,” an uncommon but occasionally effective pass notable for its quick release.

**Cutting:** To change directions quickly, with no prior indication that the change of direction is imminent. A “sharp” cut is one where the entire body changes direction rapidly without slowing down. Preventing a “tell” in the head or hips and not rounding of the curve are both components of good cutting, and can leave defenders in the dust.

Many sports feature cutting. Wide receivers in football exhibit the version most closely associated with quidditch. Soccer players must also be able to execute change of direction quickly and effectively without telegraphing their movement.

**Dunking:** There are two very different applications of this skillset: dunking a quaffle through a hoop with one or more defenders trying to stop you, and beating an opposing empty-handed beater at close range. Both require pure arm strength to be effective, and both may also benefit from using the free hand to ward off a defender’s arm.

The term dunking comes from basketball but the application is very unlike other sports.

**Blocking a shot:** Standing in front of the hoops is a common feature of defending players, especially for the keeper but also for chasers. Simply putting your arm up does not do the trick, unless you monstrosly loom over the offensive player to begin with. You must read their body language, including head fakes and hip turns, to read where they are going with the ball and where to put your arm to stop them.

Both basketball and volleyball feature blocks of this type.

**Taking a fall:** To prevent head injury when falling, the chin must be tucked all the way forward for the duration of a backwards or sideways fall. Failure to do so may result in concussions and other head injuries. The curvature of the back and use of the free arm to absorb the fall are more advanced skills that may be developed with practice, but all players expecting to be tackled must be comfortable with taking a fall.

This skill is commonly developed in judo, wrestling, and football.

**Pass coverage:** Chasers with a ball in their hand can be hard for another chaser to stop, so the best solution is simply to prevent them from getting the ball in the first place. To cover a chaser and prevent them from being passed to, you must read their movement, turn your hips to be moving the same direction they are, and stay with them no matter what. The most challenging part of this action is that there is a natural temptation to watch the person with the ball instead, allowing a window of opportunity for the person you are covering to escape. Effective coverage requires reading primarily your opponent and at most taking occasional glances at the rest of the field.

To complete this effectively you must also understand the concept of leverage, which is the area where a player being defended may easily move. For example, if you are standing square with the person assigned to prevent the ball from being passed to you, and your defender

moves to your right, you now have leverage on your left, since the defender cannot effectively prevent you from moving this direction at a diagonal. Leverage is often referred to as “inside” and “outside” leverage in reference to the middle versus edge of the field.

Covering a player in quidditch is actually slightly easier than in other sports since there are fewer rules governing contact. In quidditch you may keep a hand on your target to be defended, push them, shout at them, and faceguard (put up hands to block view) with impunity, actions that are not always legal in other sports. Be careful not to push or hit a player going for a pass, however, and instead be sure to go for the pass as well, lest you receive a card for hitting a defenseless receiver.

This is the most common type of defense in many sports. Defensive backs in football, soccer players, ultimate Frisbee players, and basketball players are a few examples of where these skills are frequently employed.

**Tackling:** Quidditch is a full contact sport, and a player may tackle another player playing the same ball they are (chasers and keepers may tackle chasers and keepers, and beaters may tackle beaters). However, the tackle in quidditch is restricted with four rules:

1. Contact must be below the neck and above the knees.
2. Contact must be initiated from the front (meaning the tackler’s navel must be in the front plane of the receiver’s body, though contact may proceed to the back).
3. Tackles must be one-handed (the other hand should be holding the broom and not assist with the wrap).
4. Tackles may only be used on a player holding a ball (though pushing and screening is legal against empty-handed players, a full wrap may only be used on a player holding a ball, and it is illegal to continue the tackle once the ball is out).

Chaser tackles are primarily designed to arrest the momentum of the opponent, while beater tackles focus more on restricting the range of motion of the ball-holding arm. Grabbing the opponent by the arm is legal if they have a ball, so beater tackles frequently begin with a grab, while chaser tackles are usually executed with the arm on one side and the head on the other, to ensure full body engagement and prevent spinning out of the tackle.

Tackling is featured in many sports, especially football and rugby, but never with these exact four rules.

**Blocking a Player/Setting a Screen:** Players may physically stand in the way of an opponent, making full body contact so long as their feet are not moving, or may seek out contact with one arm only while moving the feet. It is typically performed by an offensive chaser on the point defender, but may also be performed on an off-ball defender by another offensive off-ball chaser to disrupt defensive assignments.

This is a common move in basketball, where it is done without moving the feet and is called setting a screen (or pick). It is also performed in football, and is known as blocking, though it has far fewer restrictions with regards to body-slamming.

**Retaining Bludger Control:** Less of a fundamental than a skill set built from experience, this is nonetheless worth mentioning here for the various tools beaters use to keep two bludgers in their own team's possession, including throwing the bludger back as they are beat, throwing their own bludger back before picking up a loose one on the ground, and throwing a bludger back to execute an empty-handed tackle on an opposing beater while their partner guards the bludger near their own hoops. Additionally, the nuances of more complex rules such as third bludger immunity must be trained for all-around excellence.

No analog exists in other sports, making this the skill set most unique to quidditch.

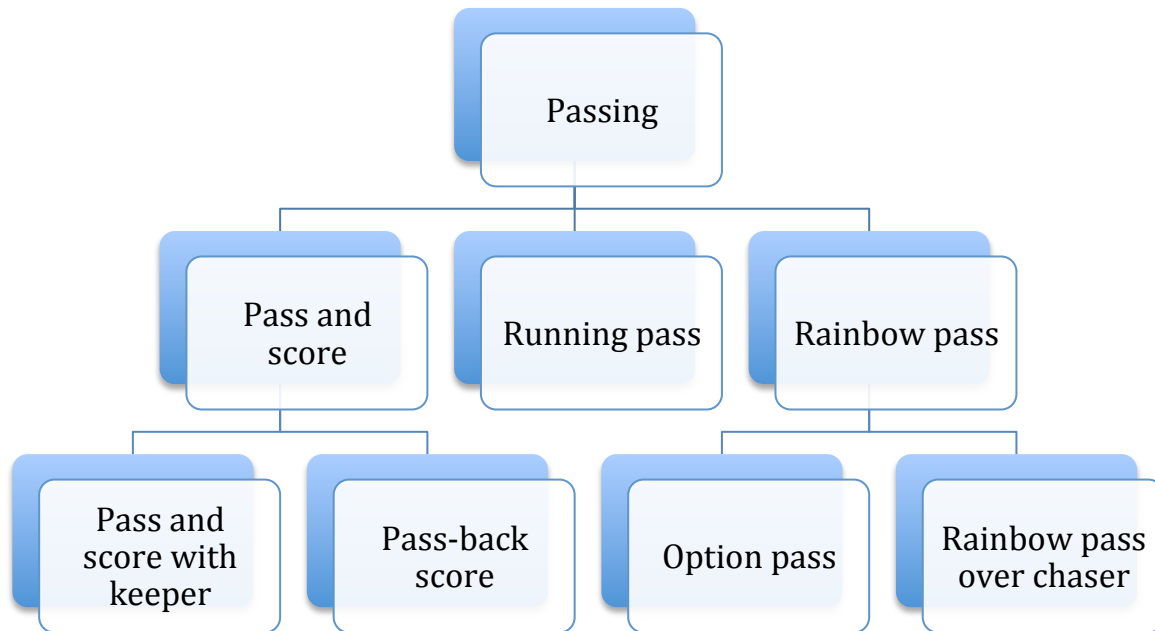
## Chapter 5: Basic Drills

The training drills outlined in this chapter are organized into trees and each is rated by complexity. The most important thing to understand about each of these drills is that they are not set in stone and they are not intended to be completed in a precise order. Each drill teaches and emphasizes a very particular set of skills, and different people will have natural abilities and different weaknesses that need training.

Keep in mind that designing a good practice requires good people skills. Understanding what parts should be kept the same for familiarity and what parts should be changed to make the practices stimulating is an art that must be developed over time and requires knowing your players. It is also important that the individual(s) in charge of practice have confidence in themselves and trust that the people there are excited to be there and are looking to you for guidance that they believe you can provide. Never be afraid to make adjustments as needed and stick with them to see how they play out.

The number provided with the drill is the number of people best suited to running the drill, though modifications are always possible. It is important to keep people involved and minimize drill-watching unless there is a specific purpose to having people watch (e.g. critiquing, teaching players to read opponents, etc.) and then convene for a water break and discussion afterwards. Always keep people involved and engaged by directly encouraging them to keep moving and split them into smaller groups as needed. Also, always be open to suggestions if something isn't working. If people are making suggestions, it is healthiest to view it as that they are becoming invested and want to improve the experience for everyone, rather than viewing it as an attempt to take control away from you. Everyone should have a stake in the practice!

## Basic Chaser Drills Tree



**Passing (2+):** The most basic practice possible. Keep a broom between your legs and pass the ball to a partner (or within a small group). Take some time to instruct people on how to make a good long throw using good body mechanics, and how to catch with two hands when needed.

**Pass and score (2+):** One player is the passer while another is the receiver. Standing ten to twenty yards from the hoops, the receiver runs to one of the hoops, and the passer passes the quaffle to the receiver, who receives and immediately scores. Easy drill to execute and is often the first drill performed in practice. Often done in two lines, with one line throwing and the other receiving. For new players who are struggling, have them come to a full stop at the hoop before the throw is made, potentially even receiving multiple passes behind the hoops.

**Pass and score with keeper (3+):** The same structure as Pass and score, but a defending keeper stands in front of the hoops. For the basic exercise, they stay in front of the hoops, forcing a more accurate deep pass to behind the hoops. The exercise can become more complex if the keeper is allowed to roam around more, and may necessitate allowing the passer to score if the keeper covers the receiver too heavily.

**Pass back score (2+):** Structure begins same as Pass and score, but the receiver should not be in position to score by the time they receive. Immediately after throwing, the passer should sprint to the hoops, while the receiver immediately passes the quaffle back to the passer, who scores on the far hoop from the receiver. Structurally show that this play, often called give-and-go when executed with shorter passes, is excellent for defeating coverage and can easily pull a beater out of position.



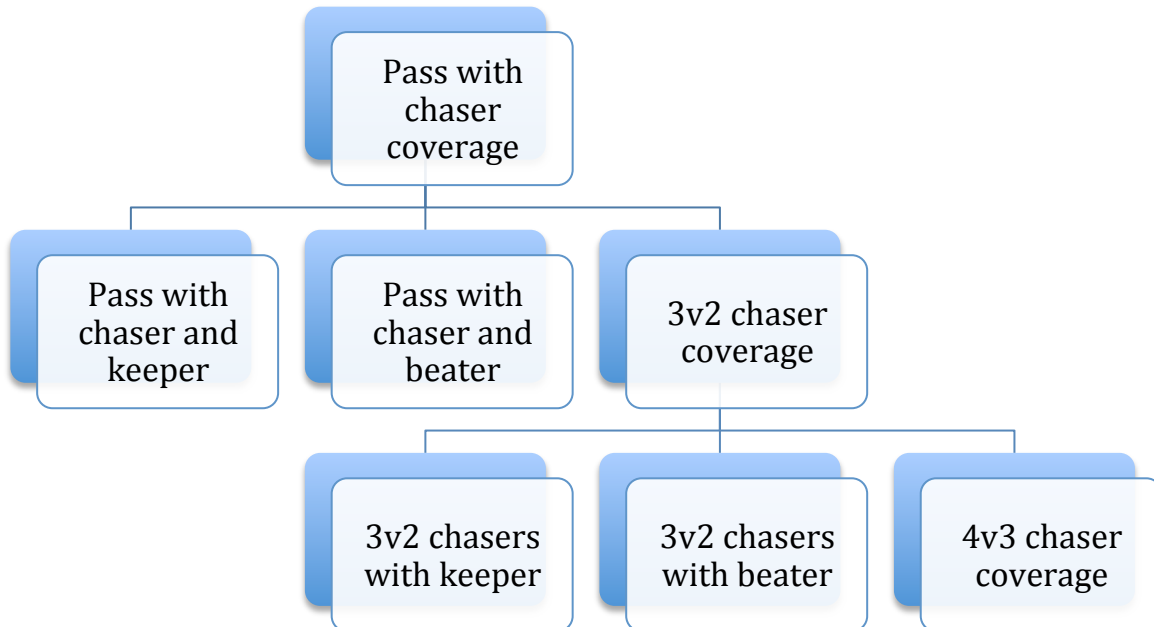
**Running pass** (groups of 3-5): Everyone stand in a triangle/square/etc. with one (or two, if 4 or more) quaffle holders standing opposite each other. On the signal of the quaffle holder(s), everyone runs clockwise to the next position (cones are optional for this exercise). During the run, the quaffle holder passes the quaffle to the next person (the person who was occupying the position they are running to). This can be repeated and reversed many times. It rapidly becomes a test of endurance.

**Rainbow pass** (2+): One person passes the quaffle to another person who is running away from them. Emphasis should be placed on having the quaffle arc high over their head. Scoring a goal at the end is optional but recommended.

**Option pass** (2+): One person is holding the quaffle some distance from the hoops, and the other person begins a full sprint from their starting position laterally across the field towards the ball carrier. After a few seconds they turn and run towards the hoops. The ball carrier may choose to pass either immediately when they start their sprint, or to wait a moment and effect a slant pass towards the chaser who is now breaking towards the hoops, leading them properly in either case.

**Rainbow pass over chaser** (groups of 3-5): The structure is the same as the Rainbow pass, but now there is a third player, a chaser defender, standing between the passer and receiver, and who pursues the receiver. If the pass is underthrown or off-course the defending chaser attempts to grab it.

Chaser Pass Defense Drill Tree



**Pass with chaser coverage** (3+): A more open version of the “rainbow pass over chaser” drill from the previous tree. A chaser with the quaffle stands in place, and another chaser acting as the receiver moves to get open from a defending chaser in any way that will allow them to rapidly score.

**Pass with chaser and keeper (4+):** Similar to the previous drill but the addition of a keeper complicates the pass and score. The keeper is instructed to stay near hoops but may leave to intercept an errant pass.

**Pass with chaser and beater (4+):** In this drill, the goal is not necessarily to train the beater, but instead to train the chasers to read the beater. The recommended version of this drill is that a beater stands between the ball-carrier and hoops, and will at their own whim drop or roll away their bludger. At that point but no sooner, the wing chaser reads the beater and attempts to break towards the hoops. Taking inside leverage is only advisable if the bludger is well out of reach of the beater, and the defending chaser must react to the wing chaser's movements.

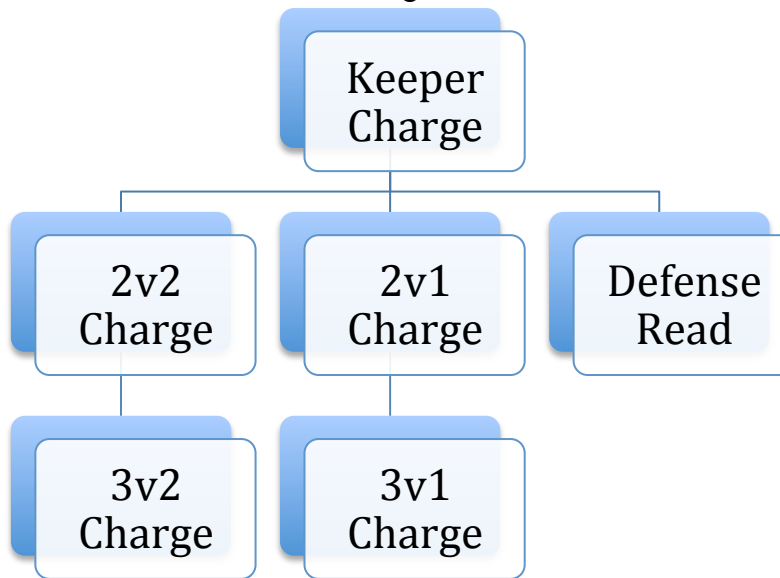
\*A variation on this drill which is also valuable is that the beater may instead press the ball carrier, forcing the wing chaser to get open very quickly by backpedaling or burning the defender with speed.

**3v2 chaser coverage (5+):** This is the same as the pass with chaser coverage but with two pairs of wing chasers and defenders simultaneously attempting to break open. The ball carrier should have a shot clock and may or may not get involved in the play afterwards, depending on whether the focus is on good habits (always aggressively finishing the play) or on good technique (more effective breaking from coverage for the wing chasers).

**Diamond Drill (9+):** This can also be considered a scrimmage-type drill. Four chasers on offense, three chasers and a keeper on defense, and the defenders are instructed to score after completing a fixed number of passes (5 for beginners, 8 to 12 for advanced players). Any drops, steals or interceptions reset the count, and scores made before the count is complete are invalid. A non-playing coach should be keeping the count. If such a person is not available (only 8 at practice), the keeper may count, but this is not recommended since the keeper should be busy preparing to break on passes near the hoops. This develops man coverage effectively and improves offensive chaser chemistry. Tackling should be incorporated for more effectiveness, but a noncontact version is also a viable strategy.

\*With 3v3, a "triangle drill" can be performed with the same concept.

## Ball Handling Drills Tree



**Keeper Charge (2+):** One player is the keeper at the hoops, other players take turns with a quaffle driving to score. Dunking is not required, as an elite short-range shot with pump faking is also very effective. However, the keeper must be instructed to be physical and step up on opponents, using intimidation as well as physical stopping power. The keeper must also be able to tolerate being scored on repeatedly, since most players will soon develop the necessary skills to accomplish this easily.

**2v2 Charge (4+):** One player plays keeper at the hoops, another is the point defender. Both are instructed to stop the quaffle player by physical tackling, but there is a wing chaser assisting the quaffle carrier. They may be given freedom to play as they desire or may be instructed to set a screen, receive a pass, or work behind the hoops.

**3v2 Charge (5+):** One player plays keeper at the hoops, another is the point defender, a third is a wing defender. The point defender guards the ball carrier while the wing defender covers the offensive wing chaser. The offensive players are instructed to score, while the defenders are instructed to use physicality to stop the offense.

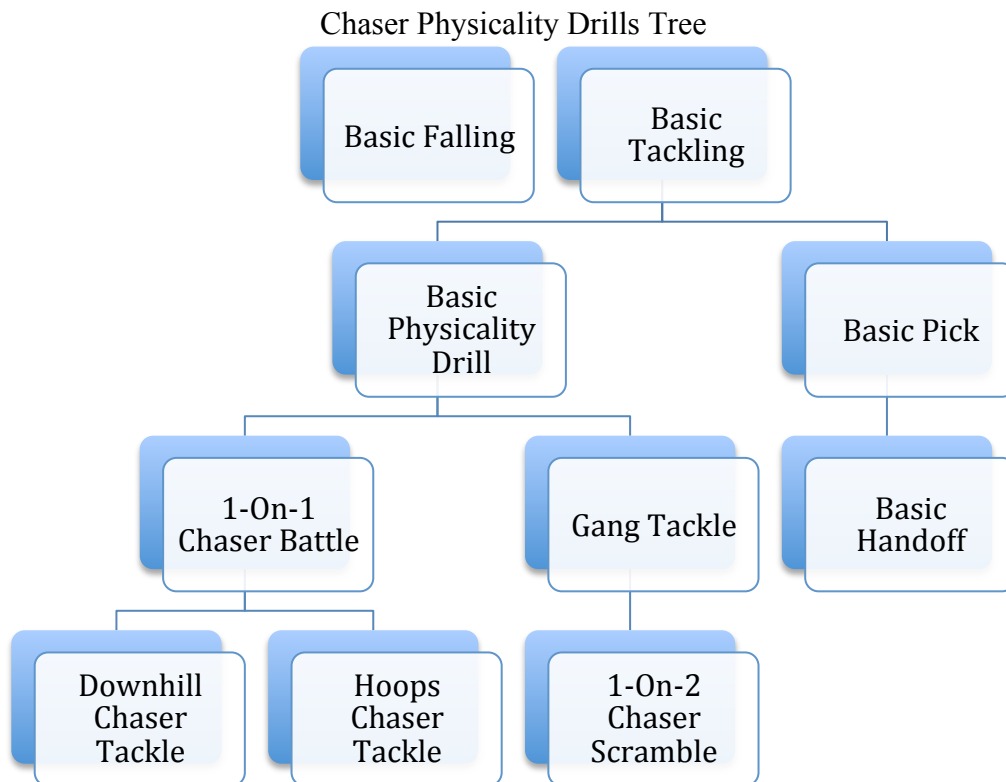
**2v1 Charge (3+):** One player plays keeper at the hoops, another is the point defender. Both are instructed to stop the quaffle player by physical tackling. The quaffle player has no help and must drive on both players.

**3v1 Charge (4+):** One player plays keeper at the hoops, another is the point defender, a third is a wing chaser who is instructed to double-team (or “trap”) the ball carrier. All are instructed to stop the quaffle player by physical tackling. The quaffle player has no help and must drive on all three players.

**Defense Read (5+\*):** An excellent drill for honing field-reading ability. A ball carrier runs at the hoops, where the other four players are clustered. One is a defending beater who charges the ball carrier, making a beat or pump fake at the ball carrier. The ball carrier has been instructed to pass to his/her open receiver, who are both shoulder to shoulder at the middle hoop. When the

beater crashes on the ball carrier, the two chasers rapidly dash to opposite sides of the hoops. The last player at the hoops is a defender who is instructed to randomly guard one of the two receivers. This means in the space of a second the ball carrier will see one open receiver and one covered receiver as a beater is attacking them, and they must execute a good on-the-move pass to the open receiver who may then put in the ball for an easy score (assuming it was a good pass).

\*An additional improvement to this drill is that the ball carrier receives the quaffle by a pass from the sideline at the start of the drill, necessitating a sixth person. This helps the ball carrier rapidly adjust focus.



**Basic Falling** (any): Players must be comfortable with going to the ground. The key when falling backwards is tucking the chin forward as much as possible to prevent head injury. This also creates a natural arch of the back to help absorb the fall into a roll. Players should be able to do this on their own, then they should be pushed backwards while still maintaining the chin tuck. Falling to the side should also be experienced. Do NOT reach for the ground with your arm, as the shock can cause injury to the arm or collarbone.

**Basic Tackling** (pairs): Players should practice tackling in pairs, ideally a new player with an experienced player and with similar sizes. The tackle begins with arm contact on the chest, leading into a wrap with one arm and the head and shoulder acting as the other arm. This is a chaser tackle with the goal of arresting momentum. Players should also be comfortable with the wrap moving to the back (remember, initiating contact from behind is illegal but may be initiated from the front and persist to the back). The receiver must have a ball to be tackled.

**Basic Physicality Drill (2+):** The ideal tool for this drill is a handheld kicking bag, often several feet long and rectangular. The coach or defender holding the bag stands within 10 yards of the hoops and is to try and block the quaffle-carrying chaser with the bag (if no bag is available, the defender or coach may be broomless and use both hands to push the quaffle carrier). The quaffle carrier starts about 10 to 20 yards from the hoops (only one is needed) and is instructed to dunk the quaffle after pushing through contact. The defender or coach is not necessarily attempting to prevent the goal or strip the ball, merely to provide resistance that the quaffle carrier must push through.

**1-On-1 Chaser Battle (2+):** The quaffle carrier again starts anywhere from 5 to 20 yards from the hoops (again only one is needed), this time lined up with a chaser defender directly in front of them. The quaffle carrier is instructed to score by dunking the quaffle within a specific amount of time depending on the distance to travel (typically 5 to 10 seconds). The defending chaser must make a stop either by tackling the quaffle carrier, stripping the quaffle, or otherwise staying in front of the quaffle carrier.

**Downhill Chaser Tackle (2+):** A more specific version of the 1-on-1 Chaser Battle, the ball-carrying chaser lines up 20 yards from the single hoop, with a single defender instructed to start 5 yards from the hoop. The offensive chaser is instructed to charge directly through the defender, while the defender must execute a clean, legal and hard tackle to stop the score. Dunking only is permitted. This is a dangerous drill as it involves full contact at high speed, but if it is not practiced then your team will be in for some bad surprises at their first tournament.

**Hoops Chaser Tackle (2+):** Another more specific version of the 1-on-1 Chaser Battle, but the players begin lined up nose to nose within 5 yards of the hoop. The tackle must be powerful and the reaction time quick in order to prevent a score from this distance.

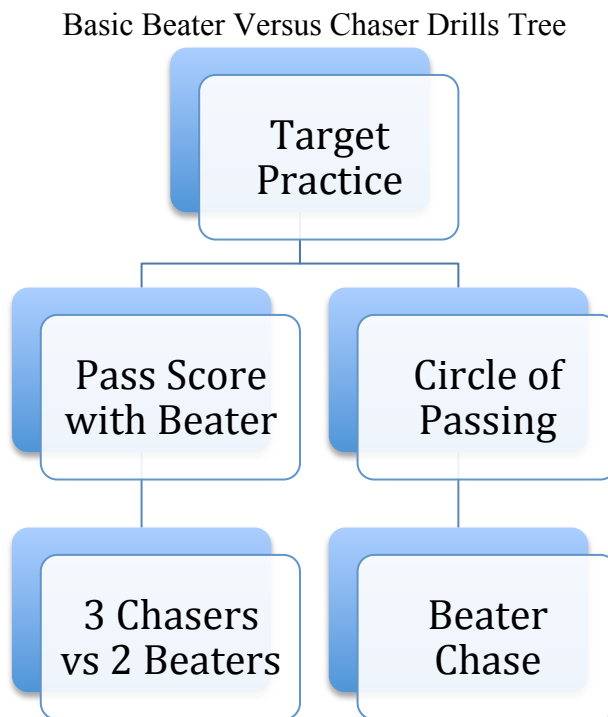
**Gang Tackle (3+):** Two chasers simultaneously attempt to tackle a ball-carrying chaser. Less unfair than it sounds, since nonverbal coordination between the two tackling chasers is required to effectively arrest the momentum of the ball-carrier.

**1-On-2 Chaser Scramble (groups of 3, or 3+):** This can be worked as a drill or as a game. A square of about 10 yards is set up with cones, with a single short or medium height hoop placed in the center. One chaser starts on the outside, with the other two defending. The chaser is instructed to score by shooting or dunking the quaffle, with both defenders attempting to block or steal the quaffle. The quaffle is turned over if the quaffle carrier comes off broom or either defender secures the quaffle. On a goal or turnover, another chaser begins the same drill. If played as a game, with groups of 3, score is kept and the chaser with the lowest score gets the quaffle on a goal, playing to 10 goals. If played as a drill, a line of chasers are waiting their turn to attempt to score, with frequent subs for defenders since the physicality can be quite demanding in this drill.

**Basic Pick (4+):** Functions as a walk through of the pick (also known as the screen). The purpose of the pick is to neutralize the defender who is covering a quaffle carrier. To accomplish this, the quaffle carrier and another chaser run somewhat towards each other, with the chaser coming to a stop directly in the path of the defender guarding the quaffle carrier. The standard

defensive response is to have the defending chasers switch their assignments if the pick is successful, but this requires communication and practice, so this is a vital drill to perform even if the team does not anticipate using the pick. The basic drill starts as a 2-on-2 scenario, starting with a walk through and gradually increasing the speed of the drill until all players are comfortable with their assignments. The more complex version includes the picking player “rolling” towards the hoops but this is only to be executed in a game when there is not a beater in front of the hoops, so the emphasis of the basic version of the drill should be that the chasers do not roll by necessity, and instead stay outside the defensive zone, preparing to make another pick if needed. Tackling should be incorporated for maximum effectiveness.

**Basic Handoff (4+):** A walkthrough of the handoff (also known as the jet sweep and the reverse). Similarly to the pick, it involves two chasers cooperating by running towards each other, but in this case the off-ball chaser moves behind the quaffle carrier instead of in front of him/her and receives a handoff of the quaffle. The chaser who was formerly carrying the quaffle can then continue running as though still carrying the quaffle, set a pick on the chaser guarding the now-quaffle carrier, or get open for a pass. The basic drill starts as a 2-on-2 scenario, starting with a walk through and gradually increasing the speed of the drill until all players are comfortable with their assignments. Tackling should be incorporated for maximum effectiveness.



**Target Practice** (groups of 2-5): One person stands at a distance from the rest of the group. Each person takes a turn with a bludger in hand and their back turned to the single individual. On a verbal signal, the person with the bludger must turn around and throw the bludger, making a beat on the isolated person. Typically the target may move around before the call but stands still for the throw. The distance should be far enough to be challenging but not so far that it is an unrealistic beat to make in a game.

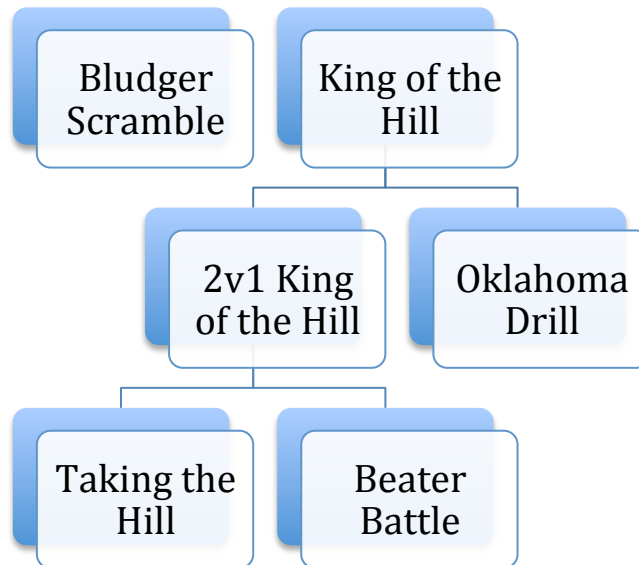
**Pass Score with Beater (3+):** The same pass score drill from the Basic Chaser Drills Tree, but now a beater is inserted as a defensive player. Typically they are instructed to threaten the point chaser, force a pass, and whirl around to make the beat with the pass in midair. If the beater attacks the receiving chaser, the point chaser should take the layup to make the point that beaters must maintain good field awareness.

**3 Chasers vs. 2 Beaters (5+):** The same as Pass Score with Beater, but now two beaters defend against three chasers. This is a vital drill for building beater communication and positioning. Optionally, one of the three offensive players may play beater for some variety and to improve chaser-beater communication on offense.

**Circle of Passing (4+):** Everyone stands in a spacious circle with a single person with a bludger in the middle. One quaffle is being passed around. The beater’s goal is to force a dead quaffle, by beating a chaser holding a quaffle or beating the recipient of a pass right before they catch it. Rotate new beaters in once the beater successfully makes a stop or has allowed a certain number of passes.

**Beater Chase (groups of 3):** Two chasers stand on one end of the field and pass the quaffle back and forth to each other while a single beater stands between them, trying to force a dead quaffle. The drill ends when a goal is scored on the far end of the field or a dead quaffle is achieved.

Basic Beater Versus Beater Drills Tree



**Bludger Scramble (2 at a time):** Two players stand some distance apart, typically 10-15 yards. Three bludgers are placed on the ground between them. One is in the very center between them, the other two are on a slightly diagonal line so there is a bludger a bit closer to one player than the other, though the distance should not be too much closer than to the center bludger. On a signal, the beaters each attempt to gain two bludgers for their own “team”. This can be accomplished by beating the opponent, throwing bludgers back, catching/blocking bludgers, and

any other type of creativity available. This both tests and develops bludger awareness, physical ability and reflexes. It is also useful as a tryout for beaters.

**King of the Hill** (2+, best with 4-6): One player is the “King” and stands near the hoops with a bludger. Everyone else takes turns attempting to dethrone the King, one at a time, with a bludger. Ties mean the King remains the King, so to become the new King one must successfully beat the King (or force an off-broom) without being beat or coming off broom. This is an excellent conditioning exercise, as the King must defeat all comers as quickly as they come. This is one of the greatest (and most fun) basic beater exercises that finely hones beater skills in duels, but it must be complemented with other beater exercises or the beaters will develop tunnel vision.

**2v1 King of the Hill** (3+): Very similar to King of the Hill, but two beaters (only one with a bludger) attempt to dethrone the King. This is a key simulation of taking back control when on offense and invites all kinds of experimentation.

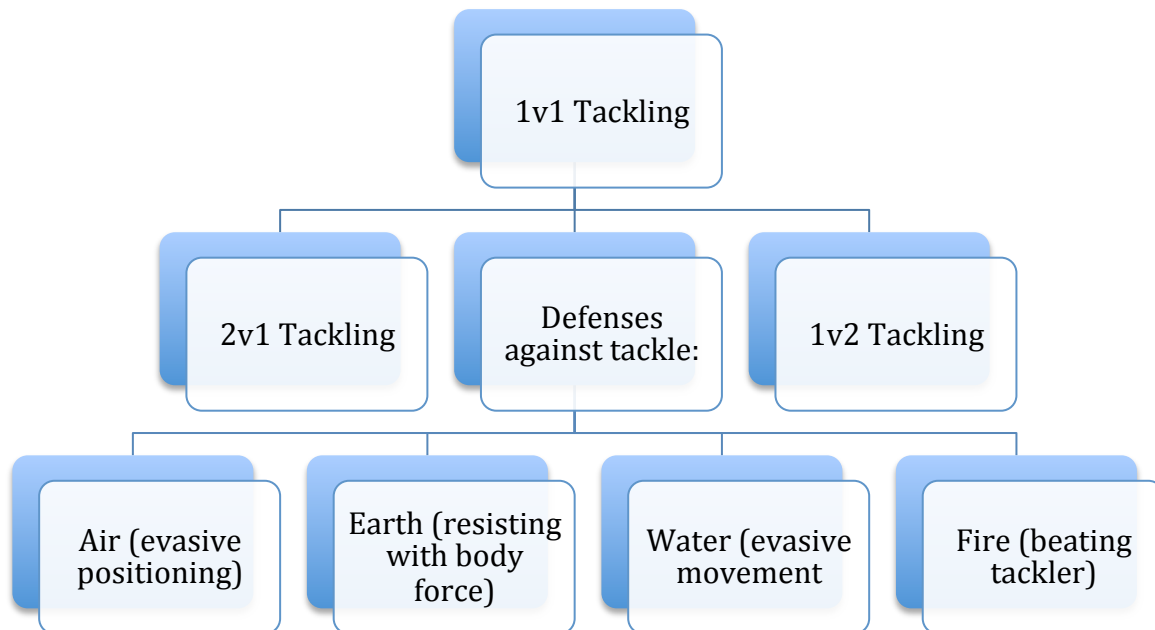
**Taking the Hill** (4+): Similar to 2v1 King of the Hill, but there is an empty handed beater on the defensive side instead of the offensive side. This is very challenging for the offensive beater to complete. Despite its lack of applicability to the real game, three defensive beaters can be deployed for an even greater challenge. So long as only one defensive beater has a bludger, however, you may find it is more doable than you might think. It emphasizes being quick-witted, using good bludger management and effective bludger recovery.

**Beater Battle** (4 or 6): Two beaters on each side, three bludgers. Score can be kept by number of beats, number of times control is held, or just subjectively, or no score need be kept at all and the two teams just go at it until everyone’s exhausted. Optionally, adding a keeper on each side with a live quaffle for scoring points can help create additional chaos and force the beaters to focus on two things at once, a staple beater skill.

**Oklahoma Drill** (3+): Taking its name from an analogous football drill, this drill involves a beater blocking for his chaser against a defensive beater. The play ends when the chaser scores or is beat, so the defensive beater is developing their ability to see two players at once and know their position on the field. The different versions of this drill are in the Chaser-Beater Coordination Drills tree.



## Beater Versus Beater Tackling Drills Tree



**1v1 Tackling** (groups of 2): A beater with a bludger is tackled by a beater without a bludger. There is less of a singular form of the tackle. The chaser-type tackle (head lowered, body propelling into the body of the tackle receiver) exposes the tackler to an easy beat, and so a heads-up, hands out approach is more likely to be effective. A grab or wrap, especially on the bludger-holding arm, is often effective, and smaller beaters tackling much larger beaters may find success in working a wrap around to the back and pulling the beater down (be careful to avoid tripping).

**Defenses against tackle:** this flow chart details four different ways to defend against an incoming tackling beater. The four styles are rooted in kung fu teachings

**Air defense:** defending by positioning, using light feet to move to an area where the tackler cannot easily complete a tackle, either by moving laterally, backwards, or even forwards to get around the tackler. This defense is highly effective against slow-footed beaters. Weakness: moving around too much may result in being taken out of the play and possibly colliding with other players.

**Earth defense:** resisting the tackle using bent knees, straight back and physical strength. This defense is highly effective against smaller beaters and those not using good form. Weakness: a beater with good technique can complete an effective tackle even if they are undersized.

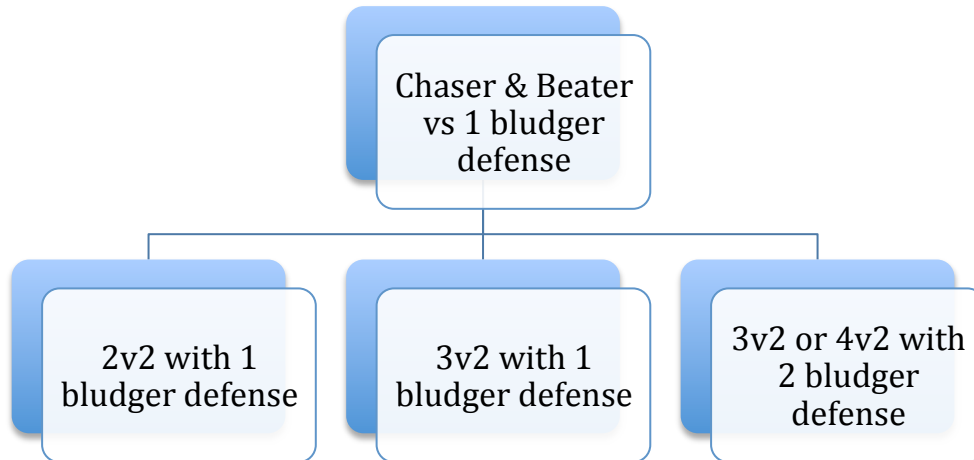
**Water defense:** moving out of the way of the beater through rapid foot movement, possibly incorporating a spin move or swim move, ideally to get your back to the beater so they cannot tackle from behind. This is highly effective against beaters coming in with a lot of momentum. Weakness: beaters will get wise to these moves and read them, and beaters who can *break down* effectively will be able to complete the tackle.

**Fire defense:** beat the incoming beater. Excellent for negating the dangers of the tackle, and may draw a yellow card in the event that the beater carries momentum into the beater. Effective in all situations but carry situational risks. Weaknesses: slow-moving beaters with hands out are a catching threat, and beating fast-moving beaters creates ricochets that are likely to result in a no-bludger situation.

**2v1 Tackling (3):** Both beaters attempt to tackle the bludger-holding beater. May seem patently unfair but is surprisingly challenging to complete effectively until the beaters develop effective chemistry.

**1v2 Tackling (3):** One beater is attempting a tackle on a bludger-holding beater, while the bludger-holding teammate attempts to screen the empty-handed beater to protect their teammate. This is an effective simulation of 1.5 and how to counter it. The screening beater essentially creates a “pocket” for the bludger-holding beater, who must learn how to move around to help their teammate do their work. Notably, it is illegal to wrap a beater without a bludger, so keeping your teammate between yourself and the tackler while also being able to read the field is a challenging and valuable skill (and due to the challenging and demanding nature of this skill, NFL quarterbacks get paid \$100 million to do just that). The goal of the beaters should be to create or not create a no-bludger situation.

#### Chaser-Beater Coordination Drills (Oklahoma Drills)



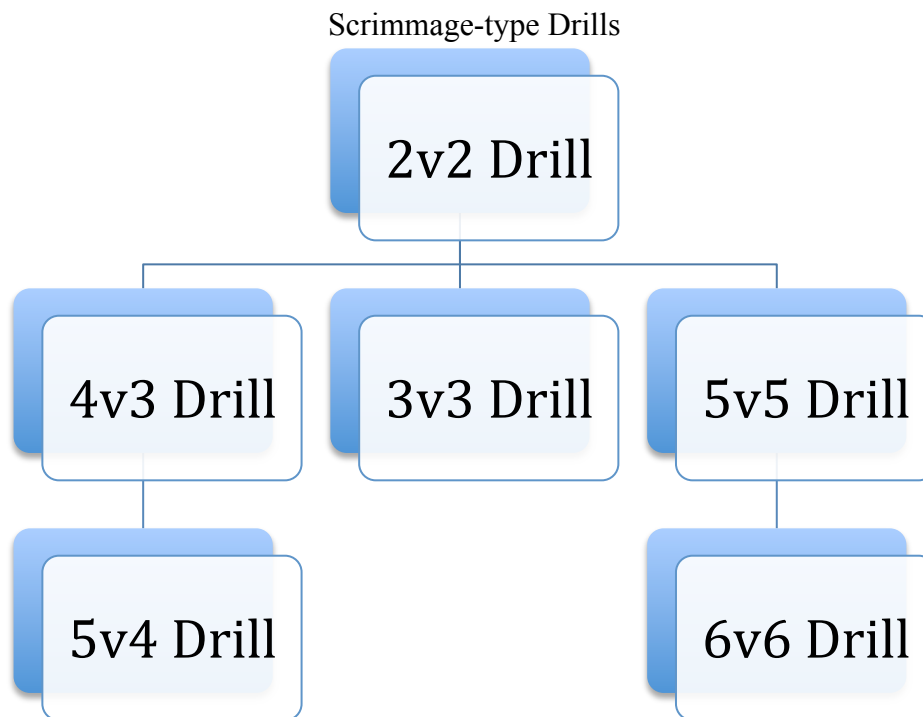
**NOTE:** in all of these drills, a keeper and/or additional offensive behind-hoops chaser may be added for additional practice. When not using additional players, a single hoop may be used. These drills are excellent for building and evaluating chemistry between players.

**Chaser & Beater vs 1 bludger defense (3+):** One beater with a bludger defends. One chaser carrying the quaffle and a beater must coordinate to achieve a score. The beater may have a bludger, or they may be empty-handed once the previous beater tackling tree has been incorporated.

**2v2 with 1 bludger defense (4+):** A ball-carrying chaser and a beater must score on two beaters. In this drill, one of the defending beaters has a bludger. There are two varieties of this drill: the offensive beater has a bludger, or does not have a bludger. The latter is simulating the 1.5 offense, and should be practiced after the beater physicality tree has been incorporated.

**3v2 with 1 bludger defense (5+):** A ball-carrying chaser and two beaters must score on a 1 bludger defense. The three versions of this drill involve zero, one, or two bludgers in the hands of the offensive beaters, with commensurate influences on scoring percentage and physicality. This also trains the ball carrier to read the beater strategy quickly.

**3v2 or 4v2 with 2 bludger defense (5+ or 6+):** A ball-carrying chaser and two beaters with one bludger must score on a 2-bludger defense. This is a vital component of getting back bludger control and training beaters to coordinate their efforts effectively. Often a receiving chaser is incorporated to help the ball-carrier stall for time and prevent excessive pressing by the defensive beaters, but also to improve chaser chemistry.



All of these drills operate on the same basic principles: some defenders are arranged around the hoops, while the remaining pool of players gather at midfield and step up to play the role of chasers, a specific number at a time. Beaters are designated and may rotate separately as needed. There is a very large variety of possible arrangements. Presented are different ways to effectively put offensive and defensive concepts together with different numbers of people.

**2v2 Drill:** One chaser and one beater on defense, two chasers on offense. In a chaser-heavy defense the chaser steps up on the quaffle carrier while the beater stays nearer the hoops, in a beater-heavy defense the beater steps up and the chaser covers the other chaser.

**4v3 Drill:** Two chasers, a keeper and a beater on defense, three chasers on offense. This emphasizes the role of chasers in offense and helps simulate not having bludger control while on defense.

**5v4 Drill:** Three chasers, a keeper and a beater on defense, four chasers on offense. This is considered the ideal drill for developing chaser effectiveness.

**3v3 Drill:** A chaser, beater and keeper on defense, three chasers on offense. Sometimes used as a warmup before tournament games.

**5v5 Drill:** Three chasers, a keeper and a beater on defense, and four chasers and a beater on offense (can use an empty-handed beater on offense to practice the 1.5 offense).

**6v6 Drill:** A full complement of chasers, keepers and beaters. Often employed with two bludgers on defense, so as to function as a cooperation drill to get the beaters to open up space for the chasers and regain bludger control. Can also be used with two bludgers on offense to simulate attempting to score more aggressively while still keeping bludger control.

Many additional variations exist to train specific aspects of the flow of the game. Some suggestions are listed (further thoughts can be found in Chapter 7: Advanced Drills).

- **Countdowns:** Many drills benefit from countdowns, even those not explicitly identifying a countdown, because the added pressure causes players to make errors that they would not otherwise make, thereby improving technique and ability to operate while under pressure.
- **Blind start:** Rather than having players looking at each other to begin, start with offensive players' backs turned. On a signal they all turn and read the defense (notably the position and number of available bludgers on defense) and react accordingly, which can be varied for the purpose of the exercise. Many drills operate more effectively with this element to help speed up reading a field and help prepare teams to execute fast breaks more effectively
- **Matchup:** Typically, players should be mixed up and rotate positions in the lines so they have the benefit of working with everyone else on the team. However, with this variation, two players are instructed to always work together, either both on the same team to build offensive chemistry, or always opposed to each other to improve their abilities. Tapping into a player's competitive nature by keeping score between them is a potential tool, but must be employed judiciously by the leadership.

### **Key Concept: Physicality in Practice**

The question of how physical to be in practice is a philosophical one that the leadership must come to an answer they believe in, in order to consistently stick to this philosophy. Options range from the non-contact approach to day 1 tackling drills and anywhere in between.

The primary considerations should be the team goals. The more competitive the team is trying to be, the more comfort with tackling and physicality must be created. The more challenging recruitment is, the less physicality should be incorporated, due to injury concerns and to people being scared off. Tackling should also be taught by someone experienced in contact sports, and if no such person is on the team, a highly incremental approach is recommended to minimize injury risk. Finally, regional culture must be a factor, since play is more physical in some regions than others (\*cough\*USQ Southwest\*cough).

Related to this, coaches must be able to solicit feedback on practices in a manner that is likely to elicit honest results so that the practices can be adjusted to suit the needs of the players and the team. Team philosophy also enters this aspect, as “the team” may be in reference to the goals of the leadership or to the goals of each individual player. Saying that “this is a physical team” means if someone is not a physical player and does not desire to be, the “team” in this case reflects the values only of the leadership, and the player’s values are not a consideration. The potential end result may be this player quitting, an event that can harm team morale if not handled with diplomacy and tact.

When every player on the team has the same desires, coaching is extremely simple. However, creating buy-in from players who have different goals and philosophies is more challenging (and realistic), and a philosophical decision must be made early in the team’s creation: do the players exist for the team or does the team exist for the players?

## Chapter 5: Scrimmaging

Scrimmaging! It's why we came out to play! Scrimmages are extremely fun and also very physically demanding, which leads to a sense of growth and accomplishment as players build up their muscle mass and red blood cell count. There is also no substitute for real-time play for learning the game, and ten minutes of scrimmaging can be more instructive and exhausting than three hours of drills.

But of course, while having twenty experienced players ready to go makes scrimmaging simple, what if you have eight? Is that enough? How do you set it up? This chapter will discuss your options for running scrimmages. Refer to the table on the next page to see the options, but read this brief discourse on two key components to help you interpret your options best: bludger inequality and Cheaters.

Bludger inequality is the situation where one team will have more bludgers than the other (usually 3 bludgers for 4 beaters, but also occasionally 1 bludger for 2 beaters). It is not necessary for a scrimmage to have bludger inequality to be fun or to be an effective experience, but it does substantially change the complexion of the game. Think carefully about how important that experience is for your beaters to develop, and balance that against the need to develop your chasers as able to play against bludgers and work with beater teammates.

One possible solution to the bludger inequality question, and a fun way to mix up the teams, is to have one (or more) players on the team be Cheaters (for additional zaniness, the entire team can be cheaters if you're feeling it). A Cheater is a Chaser-Beater who can play either the quaffle or the bludger, though not both at the same time. Having a Cheater mixes the game up which can be fun, but it also takes the game farther from "official" quidditch, so again

consider what it is you're trying to do at your practice. If you have a snitch, you can also have your Cheater be the designated seeker as well.

For each number of players, the options are listed as number of players of each type, in descending order of my own personal preference (but remember, work with who you have on your field!). If you have an odd number, you can stack the less physically gifted team, or you can have someone be the referee to keep them involved. Lastly, consider whether you'll want substitutes or just get frequent water breaks. The number of active players may be fewer than the number of players you have on your field.

<b># Active Players</b>	<b>Scrimmage options (types of players on each team)</b>
Fewer than 6	Scrimmaging is probably not going to work. Recruit some bystanders!
6 Players	2 Chasers, 1 Beater (Optionally with one de-facto keeper) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes chaser coordination and defense. Optionally require your beaters to stay back on defense.</li> </ul> 1 Chaser, 2 Beaters, inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A highly effective way to focus on your beater ability, as keeping control is vital in this version.</li> </ul>
8 Players	2 Chasers, 1 Keeper, 1 Beater <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes chaser coordination. Optionally require your beaters to stay back on defense.</li> </ul> 1 Chaser, 1 Keeper, 1 Beater, 1 Cheater, inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A compromise between focusing on bludger control and chaser coordination, but limits applicability to USQ games.</li> </ul> 1 Chaser, 1 Keeper, 2 Beaters, inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses the team on bludger control as a central aspect of the game</li> </ul>
10 Players	2 Chasers, 1 Keeper, 2 Beaters, inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended arrangement, closely simulates a USQ game.</li> </ul> 3 Chasers, 1 Keeper, 1 Beater <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes chaser coordination. Optionally require your beaters to stay back on defense.</li> </ul> 2 Chasers, 1 Keeper, 1 Beater, 1 Cheater, inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not recommended for USQ preparation</li> </ul>
12 Players	3 Chasers, 1 Keeper, 2 Beaters, inequality

14-16 Players	Same as above with frequent substitutes
18+ Players	Same as above with frequent substitutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative: Form three teams and play to 10 goals, resting team plays winner. Determine from the number and attitudes of players how to approach.</li> </ul> <i>Include snitching if desired</i>

A note on forming teams: people don't enjoy having no chance of winning, so be considerate and be sure the teams are at least somewhat balanced. Common strategies include counting people off 1 and 2 to randomly assign teams, having the team captain assign teams based on who wants to play what, and pairing up with someone of approximately equal skill then splitting. A good (and polite) policy is to ask everyone if they're okay with the teams once they're formed, making it clear from your intonation and body language that you will pay attention if anyone voices any concerns.

New players should always play chaser first unless there is a highly compelling reason for them not to, since it is much easier to grasp that game and they will be playing with teammates who can support them in their play. Experienced players should be paired with newer players whenever possible, and ideally the beaters on each team should be relatively balanced as much as possible since they are integral to the flow of the game. If one team has a lopsided victory, reshuffle the teams afterwards, but if it was a close match, the same teams or only cosmetic changes is a completely acceptable strategy.

Many people develop a preference for a particular position. It is important to respect their choices and work around them as much as possible, since again, people make decisions emotionally and the feeling of not being at one's best can be a toxic feeling. Players should always be encouraged to branch out and try new positions so that they can understand the demands of the position when playing against such a player.



The initiation of the scrimmage can be done from brooms-up (especially if there is inequality), or alternatively the initiation can simply start with both teams at their hoops with the balls in their hands already. In a full scrimmage, teams often flip a coin whether to start with bludger control or with the quaffle, or allow the winner of the previous game to decide.

### **Key Concept: Soliciting Feedback and Conflict Avoidance**

There is a very simple secret to soliciting feedback effectively: **caring**. To give an example, if you ask players what feedback they have on a practice and they tell you that one of the other players got on their nerves, one of two things will result: either you will care about this player's feelings or you will not. At least, that is the **perception** that the player will have. In reality, you almost certainly have compassion for your player, but your feelings for the other player will also come into play, as well as any conflict-avoidant tendencies you may have.

Many people will be reluctant to address the behavior directly with the player, fearing conflict. Unfortunately, the fact that another player reported them as behaving in an irritating fashion means conflict has already occurred. As a leader, you have many options, but the instinct to minimize the conflict is a treacherous one, since the conflict already exists and pretending it doesn't will exacerbate it.

To get back to the original point, if you take no visible action, the player you asked for feedback from will intuit that you have no real interest in their opinion and will be less likely to divulge any further feedback. The player is now a risk for quitting, or worse, causing a rift in the team by initiating a whisper campaign against the offending player and the leadership. Taking some kind of action, even as simple as speaking privately with each player and acting as a go-between to facilitate a meeting, will go a long way, because now the player you originally solicited feedback from will feel a sense of agency in this team and will be more likely to help resolve conflicts in the future.

Finally, if your player reports someone is behaving poorly, but that other player refuses to apologize since it's "part of the game" or "just me being me," that player is refusing to acknowledge conflict is occurring and is therefore part of the problem. Don't let that stand!

## Chapter 7: Advanced Drills

This is actually going to be a short chapter, because developing advanced drills is by necessity a custom job. To design an advanced drill, the coach must first watch scrimmages or game film and identify weaknesses in the team's play, then design a drill that simulates that in-game instant to program the correct response. This is one part art and one part science, and can only be explored via case study examples, which I will illustrate below. One important note is to consider who is practicing what in each drill. Having your players repeat the same role in particular drills over and over specializes them, making them more skilled but less versatile, so choose your strategy wisely! Make it clear to the players that you will adjust the drill as needed to help them learn. Lastly, having a catchy name (or any name) for the drill is helpful but not required.

*Case 1:* A coach watches a game and decides the team is getting scored on too frequently in no-bludger situations with opponents making end-around runs and drives. The aggression of the beaters suits the coach's philosophy, so he decides to train his team to make more chaser-only stops rather than alter his beater strategy.

**Drill: Quaffle Blitz.** One player holding the quaffle is running a large loop around the hoops, while a defending chaser is buffering this player, staying between the quaffle carrier and the hoops. Without warning, the quaffle carrier immediately attempts to drive directly through the defending chaser, who must initiate a full-speed wrap, attempting to bring down the quaffle carrier. From there the quaffle carrier attempts to break the tackle, and if able, scores. If unable to break the tackle or make a shot, the defender has successfully made the stop.

*Case 2:* A coach has been watching game film of one of her team's upcoming opponents. She notes that a number of the chasers lack confidence in their drive and are often coerced into passing to their most athletic player as he approaches the hoops. She notes that her team is not likely to be able to maintain bludger control against this team's talented beaters but that the team tends to keep both beaters back on offense. She devises a strategy to capitalize on this dependence on bludger control and frequent passing, based also on the depth of her own team at chaser.

**Drill: Train Robber.** A typical 5v4 drill is initiated, with a beater, keeper and three chasers on defense and four chasers on offense. One athletic offensive player is designated to be playing the allegedly unstoppable "Train" and is instructed to run around near the hoops, causing havoc. Due to this player's size and ability to box out defenders on passes, the beater is instructed to shadow this player around the field. As he begins his approach down the left or right side the beater begins to shade in that direction, ostensibly leaving a large zone open for the quaffle carrier to exploit. However, as soon as the quaffle carrier advances, another chaser leaves their assignment to "blitz" the quaffle carrier, forcing a pass. Other chasers continue this pattern of blitzing whoever has the ball, expecting the passes to become progressively more hurried to the open chaser. Meanwhile, the beater is assigned to beat the Train if his attention is diverted at any point from the beater. This is designed to force the Train out of the play either by staying away from the beater or by getting beat as soon as he breaks towards the hoops. The strategy depends also on chasers constantly charging quaffle carriers, as the captain knows she has enough chaser substitutes to have chasers constantly sprinting then substituting out frequently. The captain also explains to the team that if this defense is effective, the opponents will begin to bring bludgers up.

*Case 3:* A team captain has just watched his team lose three close games in a row to snitch pulls. His seekers are already his most athletic players, so no personnel change can help, and he concludes instead he must deploy his beaters most effectively.

**Drill: Bludgers on Snitch.** A snitch is designated and equipped for this drill. Two beaters and a seeker on each team are at the hoops. Each team has one bludger, and a third bludger is loose near midfield with the snitch. At the captain's signal, the seeker and the beaters must run up and gain bludger control while also beating the opposing team's seeker. The snitch is instructed to stay in one small area, while the majority of the snitch defense is accomplished by the beaters. Typically, as soon as a seeker is allowed a free shot at the snitch s/he is expected to make the pull, allowing the captain to keep an easy score for the beaters. The best-performing beaters will be deployed once the snitch is on pitch in close games.

### **Key Concept: In-Game and Between-Game Adjustments**

There is a certain exquisite frustration involved with drilling something repeatedly in practice only to see it never materialize on the field. This may happen for many reasons, including fatigue, adrenaline, and insufficient instruction relative to a system's complexity. Anger is a natural occurrence, since it is, after all an insult to your coaching and hard work, but recall the saying by one of the great sages of sports: "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth" (Mike Tyson). Have compassion for your player who may have just been metaphorically or literally struck in the face and is not executing their assignment despite their own best efforts.

As a coach it is generally important not to shout the same instructions repeatedly, as this is a good way to vent your frustration but a bad way to let the players know you care for them. While players are on the field, do not try to correct their faulty behavior with any complex instructions, though these may be conveyed to players on the sideline. Yelling at the players on the field while they are concentrating on their opponents does three things: 1) let the player know they have failed (and in the heat of the moment, they may conclude that they are a failure); 2) let the opposing team know what you're planning; and 3) let everyone on both teams know you have no confidence in your team. Even simple instructions such as "make them respect you!" may have the opposite effect, informing the other team that this either hasn't been repeated often or is being repeated unnecessarily, in either case signaling poor coaching.

Between-game adjustments should be limited unless your players are experienced enough to have the presence of mind to understand what is happening at all times in advance, in which case you are simply advising a different set of choices. With newer players, re-emphasize and walk through their assignments but only change them if they are being simplified.

## Chapter 8: Quidditch Theory 2 and Notation

In the remaining chapters, a lot of diagrams will be used to illustrate concepts, strategies and specific plays. These will be introduced in some detail in this chapter.

One of the central notions of the following chapters is that players can have different general assignments, ideally ones that are suited to their physical and mental abilities. It is important not to view these as set in stone but rather guidelines to give players a “first read” on what their task should be, as they take in the field. As people spend more time on a particular task they become more adept at rapidly comprehending the state of what it is they are looking at, and quidditch is no different.

Additionally, while three different chaser positions are articulated, it is important to note that a team may not have the personnel to field one of each, and in fact different plays will be drawn up for different personnel groupings.

### Offensive Assignments

- Q: Quaffle carrier (often but not always keeper). Makes initial read of defense, attempts to run or pass appropriately.
- X: Escort chaser. Is relatively close to Q (within 5 yards), looking to receive handoffs or to physically force opposing chasers out of the way.
- Y: Wing chaser. Occupies a position to the side of the Q, ready to receive passes, come across for picks and screens, and run towards the hoops as needed. Most teams play with two Y chasers and no X chasers.
- Z: Deep chaser, AKA Finisher. Occupies a position behind the hoops. This is played exclusively by a female chaser in some systems but any player should be prepared to lurk behind the hoops to catch and score off well-thrown passes.
- A: “Aggressive”/“Athletic” beater who moves up with or ahead of the quaffle, attempting to beat opposing chasers and beaters.
- B: “Balanced” beater who moves up with the quaffle in a more defensive position to attempt to control the middle of the field.
- C: “Conservative” beater who stays back near own hoops when team is on offense.
- E: Empty-handed beater, such as one making a tackle on a 1.5 offense or attempting to steal a bludger.

### Defensive Assignments

- K: Keeper, stays near hoops to intercept passes and block shots. Best performed by the actual keeper, in order to take advantage of the keeper's goaltending ability.
- P: Point chaser, squares up on the advancing quaffle carrier and prevents them from advancing the quaffle into shooting range.
- M: Man coverage chaser, matches up with an opposing off-ball (non-ball-carrying) chaser and trails them across the field
- R: Region or zone chaser, guards a particular area of the field and attempts to cover any chaser in that area.
- H: High beater with bludger in hand, steps up to directly challenge opponents as they enter the defensive half of the field (may also use A or B as appropriate).
- L: Low beater with bludger in hand, remains near hoops to threaten any opponents attempting to score. (may also use B or C as appropriate).
  - Note: High and Low positions may also be left and right, in which case the High beater is the one who steps up to challenge an offensive push on their side.

### Drawing Plays

- Use white circles for own team's chasers (can be filled in with the letter of their assignments).
- Use black circles for opposing chasers (their assignments are not known, though they may be rapidly guessed).
- Use white squares for own team's beaters (can be filled in with letter of their assignments, use E or an X for empty handed).
- Use black squares for opposing beaters (may put an X through the empty-handed beater).
- Use black or white small circles of the inverted color from the player for balls.
- Use solid lines for movement and dashed lines for quaffle passes.

### Sample Diagram



An offensive formation diagram without bludger control against a 2-2 zone high-low defense.



### **Key Concept: Distribution of Information**

Even the simplest pro sports strategy is vastly more complex than the information that will be outlined in the next few chapters, for the simple reason that (1) the players have been playing their sport of choice for decades (quidditch is barely a decade old) and (2) these are athletes that are paid to play their sport of choice, and thus may easily dedicate 8 hours a day to practice, study, and discussion. Even the most dedicated quidditch players must still either complete their coursework or their day jobs in almost all cases, so the time for preparation is relatively limited.

The key to building a quidditch strategy, then, is one that is easily learned by people who may be lucky to dedicate a few hours a week to their sport. The notations provided in chapter 9 are designed with high flexibility in mind, but are almost certainly not needed to teach to people, especially new people but even experienced players who simply don't have time to learn complex systems. This system can be used by coaches and captains exclusively, or they can be drawn up with names or letters to simplify the reading for the players.

There is a certain amount of work that must go into building a system, but the more effort the coaches and captain put into preparation the less work the players will need to expend to learn the system.

Videos can also be prepared to teach the systems better. They may be prepared using private view settings if they contain classified information, and game film can also be incorporated along with animations (either free-standing images or even animations drawn onto the game film to highlight particular players). This of course requires someone have the time and technical ability to complete these films, but the technology required for them is now widely available with many video editing softwares bundled onto computer operating systems.

## Chapter 9: Playcalling and Communication

A functional team strategy depends on every player understanding his/her assignments. Being able to understand this strategy and recognizing how to navigate the opposing team's actions is the most vital part of executing the strategy, and a successful strategy's complexity is ultimately limited by the ability of the players to perform their assigned roles without hesitation.

On-field communication can serve many different purposes. In quidditch, which is still a developing sport with few teams using standardized strategy books, communication often is used to essentially tell players what to do. Having players simply reading and reacting opportunistically with little advance planning is often called "backyard" or "sandlot" play, and in this instance communication is vital so that all players may coordinate their efforts to put their opponents in bad positions and force them to react quickly. A common weakness in new quidditch teams is that beaters and chasers do not cooperate or time their engagements to coincide, leaving their teammates without support.

In a more organized scheme, players should already know their assignments, but may need reminding or assistance making decisions. Telling players whom to cover (with the understanding that they are capable of continuing to cover their opponent without any further instruction) and similar directions help incorporate players into the game plan when their preparation or ability to read opponents is limited.

The most advanced type of communication involves calling plays, which are predefined sets of assignments that the players attempt to execute in harmony after having practiced them repeatedly as a unit. Calling plays requires an exceptional level of preparation, not only because each player's position and action depends on his/her teammates executing their own assignments correctly, but also because plays are called to exploit weaknesses in the opponent's scheme,

which must first be identified by the most perceptive players or coaches on the team and relayed concisely and effectively. Additionally, communicating plays carries an element of necessary cryptography, since it must be easily decoded by the players but not by opponents. Lastly, unlike in American football where defenders yelling out words to confuse opponents is illegal, quidditch currently has no such rules against disrupting communication with false flags. At the time of this writing, few teams have even experimented with playcalling, to say nothing of depending on it. Elite quidditch players rely on jointly reading the current situation the same way and having the same thought process of how to capitalize on what the opponents are doing.

### Situational Code Words

These are code words that rapidly convey a simple but vital concept. They are almost always one or two syllables, are easy to repeat for emphasis, and can easily trigger a particular behavior. Words like this are substitutes for ideal field awareness, as the most in-tune players will be aware of what's happening all across the field at all times.

- “Wolf”: Essentially “look out behind you,” possibly preceded by the person’s name (e.g. “Alex Wolf!”) often from a beater but potentially also from a chaser attempting a strip on a quaffle carrier from behind.
- “Fire”: A signal by offensive beaters that defensive bludgers have been nullified, or that bludger control has been acquired. Often offenses without bludger control will advance and retreat slowly until the bludgers have been neutralized, waiting for this signal.
- “Ball out”: A signal by the defender guarding the quaffle carrier that the carrier has made a long pass. Not only a signal for the defenders right by the hoops, it is also a vital signal for defending chasers that the opponent they are marking may be about to break on the quaffle.

Further suggested playcalls may be found for the different formations and plays in the following two chapters, Offensive Systems and Defensive Systems. The most important thing about constructing your own playcalls is that everyone be on the same page. Being able to use

them repeatedly in scrimmages helps cultivate everyone's familiarity with the terms and shortens their reaction times. It is vital when installing these playcalls that the coach or captain (1) not be self-conscious about how they sound (because of course they'll sound silly, unless you've managed to somehow choose only dangerous wild animals as all your terms) and (2) be both patient and relentless with the players, repeatedly correcting them without losing your temper until everyone has mastered the language, which will take longer than you expect it to.

### **Key Concept: Flow Chart Strategy**

Teams that do not use audibles instead develop flow charts that reflect their philosophy. A sample flow chart is provided. It is based on three sets of conditions: offense/defense, with and without bludger control, and with and without snitch on pitch. This is NOT a universal flow chart—this is just one example based on one philosophy. Flow charts often also incorporate how to play when in scoring range versus out of scoring range (40+), but that has been cut for space.

- OFFENSE, BLUDGER CONTROL, NO SNITCH: All chasers advance and try to score. Beaters stay back, may execute 1.5 at the beater and ball carrier's discretion.
- OFFENSE, NO BLUDGER CONTROL, NO SNITCH: Chasers spread out and advance the quaffle slowly to give beaters time to attack opposing beaters. If both beaters are beat, shift into a mid-pitch passing game to give beaters time to recover. Continue until bludger control has been secured.
- OFFENSE, BLUDGER CONTROL, SNITCH ON PITCH: One beater stays on quaffle, the other on snitch (superior beater-vs-beater player on snitch, expect the attack there). Chasers attempt to drive on no bludger situations repeatedly.
- OFFENSE, NO BLUDGER CONTROL, SNITCH ON PITCH: Play slowly to give beaters time to attack the snitch-guarding beater.
- DEFENSE, BLUDGER CONTROL, NO SNITCH: Zone defense, high-low beaters
- DEFENSE, NO BLUDGER CONTROL, NO SNITCH: Man defense,
- DEFENSE, BLUDGER CONTROL, SNITCH ON PITCH: Man defense, one beater on snitch and one on quaffle
- DEFENSE, NO BLUDGER CONTROL, SNITCH ON PITCH: Man defense, beater on quaffle, empty-handed beater on snitch

Refer to chapters 10 and 11 for more information on the system terms.

## Chapter 10: Offensive Systems

This chapter will be using the player assignments and notation found in Chapter 8. When selecting an offensive system to use, keep in mind your available personnel must ultimately dictate what you're assigning the players to do. There is an inherent simplicity (some would say laziness) in simply assigning all chasers the same role, but whatever role you're identifying for players also dictates how you practice.

### Offensive Tempo

One way to control the game of quidditch is to control the pace of the game when on offense. If one team has superior athletes (meaning they do not tire as easily as their opponents) it is in the best interest of that team to speed up the pace of their offense, draining the energy of the defenders. This means not only bringing up the quaffle faster but also having beaters initiate their assignments sooner and chasers attempting to break from coverage more quickly. A team with inferior athletes is recommended to slow the pace of the offense by bringing up the quaffle more slowly and having beaters slowly move forward rather than charging ahead, waiting for the right moment to capitalize on a scoring opportunity and withdrawing if none appears to attempt another score while keeping possession. The extreme form of this strategy, also used to keep the score low and give seekers a better chance of determining the outcome of the game, is also called "slowballing" or running the "Sloelze" offense.

### Beater Assignments

Beater assignments vary wildly by style, personnel and condition of the game and the opponents. When both bludgers are in possession of the team on offense, it is possible to bring

both beaters up, keep both back, or any intermediate between those extremes. There are often regional variations in strategy. For example, teams in the Southwest often retain both bludgers back and prize keeping bludger control highly, while teams in the Northeast often use one bludger ahead of the quaffle to create scoring opportunities. Ultimately, the decision of what to do with two bludgers must be made by the coach, captain, or senior beater intent on putting their own personal stamp on the team play. It is strongly recommended that some flexibility be incorporated into this strategy, rather than simply declare that the team will always use the same one, since your matchup will vary wildly from one game to the next.

With only one bludger it is almost always the case that both beaters must advance to attempt two goals simultaneously: recover bludger control and disrupt the opposing defense. How that is achieved and which goal takes priority is also a matter of philosophy and matchup, but the reader is warned that mistakes or overaggression on the part of the beaters will inevitably lead to goals allowed through no-bludger situations on defense.

Possible one-bludger offense opening strategies include:

- The beater with the bludger steps up and beats the point defender, then puts their fist up claiming their bludger as soon as it is dead (it is a penalty to do so while the bludger is still live). They then read and react to the defending beaters, likely attempting a beat on the closer one with the recovered bludger.
- One beater attempts a beat on the beater closest to the quaffle carrier, while the other attempts a tackle or steal on the other beater on the far side of the field.
- Both beaters converge on an isolated beater far away from the quaffle, forcing the other beater into a difficult split-second decision of whether to defend against the quaffle or bludger. Defensive beaters are often advised to stay on quaffle in this situation, but again, maintaining bludger control may be more valuable than 10 points in some scenarios.

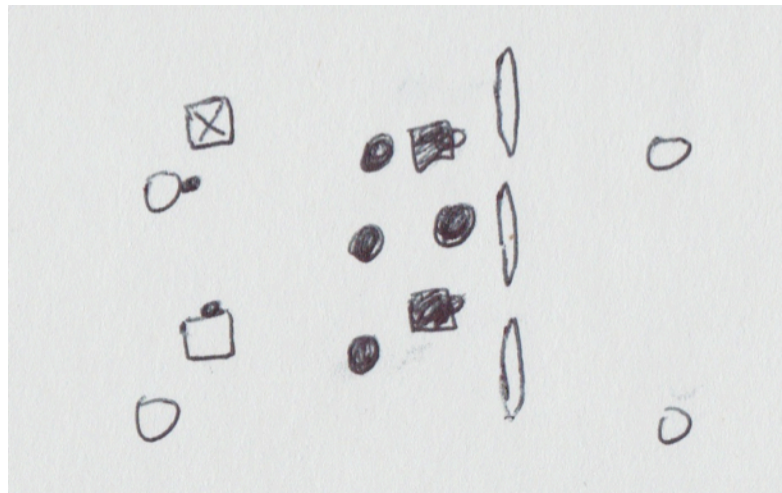
## Chaser Assignments

When chasers advance on a defense, the different spacings provide for different types of opportunities. Chasers who are closer together can complete picks, handoffs, and short passes that create confusion in defenses and thus create scoring opportunities. Chasers who are farther apart force beaters to cover more distance and can threaten the hoops. Thus, there are different arrangements of players that can be employed.

A common mode of thought is that on offense, mid-pitch is a starting point, and players go “deeper” the closer they get to the hoops. Thus, having chasers closer together starting around the same distance from the hoops can be referred to as a “horizontal” offense and having some chasers closer to the hoops than others can be termed a “vertical” offense. Most successful offenses incorporate both horizontal and vertical components.

Note that these formations do not include beaters, who are expected to either respond to threats to the quaffle carrier or actively disrupt the effectiveness of the defending beaters as dictated by bludger availability and chaser matchups.

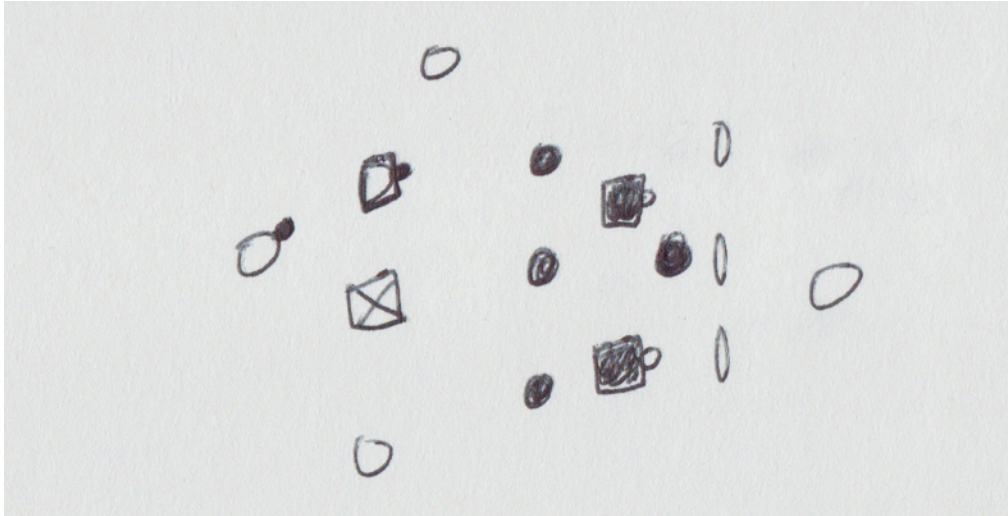
### Rectangle Formation



This formation is a blend between horizontal and vertical offenses. The quaffle carrier has an outlet and two deep threats, providing an array of options. The Q must have an excellent art and accuracy to complete long passes to ensure this offense will work effectively.

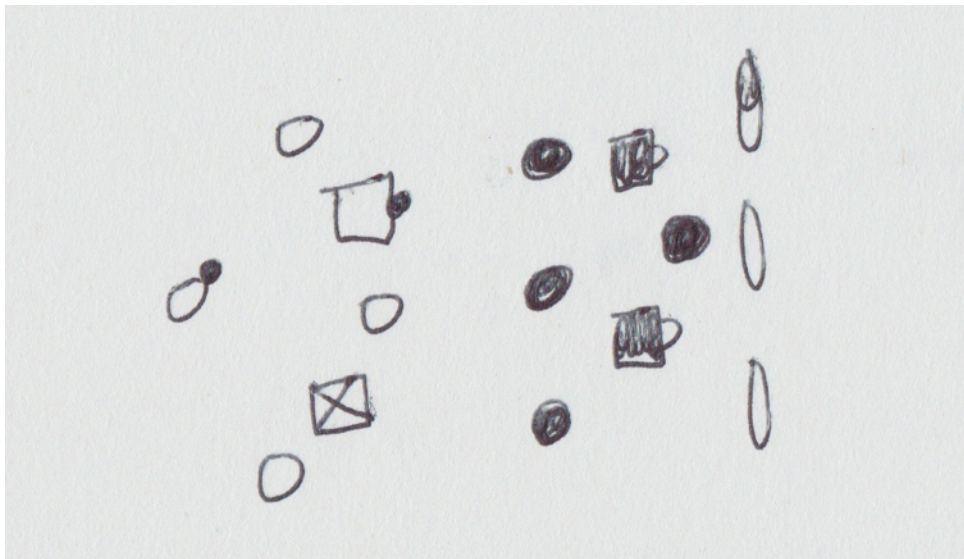


### Diamond Formation



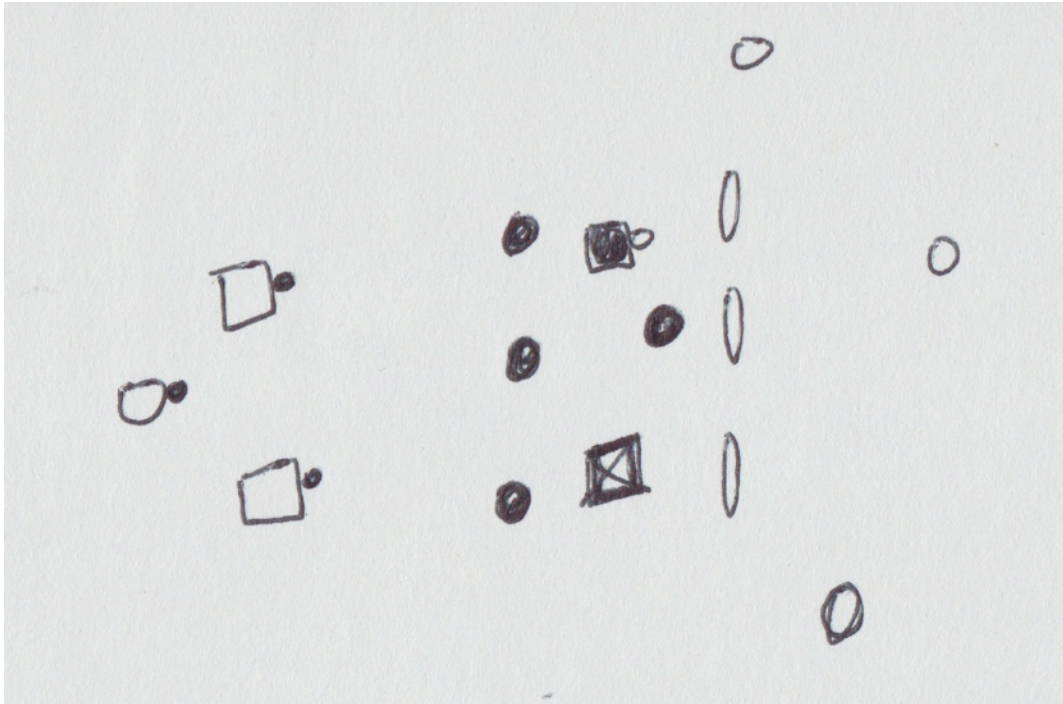
This is a more horizontal offense, allowing the Q player a larger diversity of high-percentage plays while still retaining a deep passing threat to prevent total defensive collapse.

### Stack Formation



This is a highly horizontal offense, with chasers supporting each other with picks, lead blocking, and short passes. Extremely vulnerable to effective beating, but an excellent way to physically impose one's will with a highly physical chaser corps.

## Wide Formation

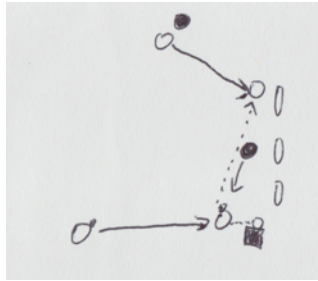


This is a very vertical offense, designed to spread defenders apart or risk allowing easy passes around the perimeter. This offense depends heavily on a very physically and mentally adept Q who is in tune with the rest of the chaser corps, as well as aggressive beaters with bludger control to prevent the Q from getting pressured into making bad passes.

## Basic Chaser Plays

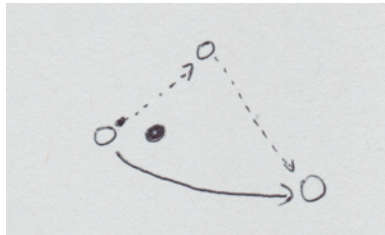
These are plays (some very small, some more complex) that chasers can use to create scoring opportunities. These should be practiced many times in practice so that they come naturally. You will note that most of these are also featured as some type of drill in Chapter 4.

### Drive and Dish



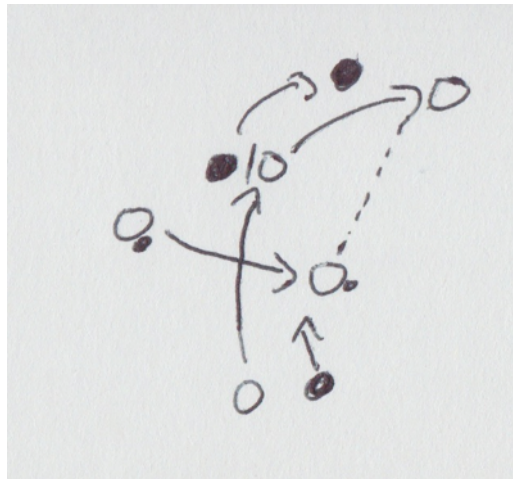
This is the fundamental chaser play against one or no bludgers. The Q runs at the hoops, forcing a defender to attack them. At the same time one or more wing chasers run at the hoops, attempting to attain inside leverage on any man chasers to better catch a pass and score.

### Give and Go



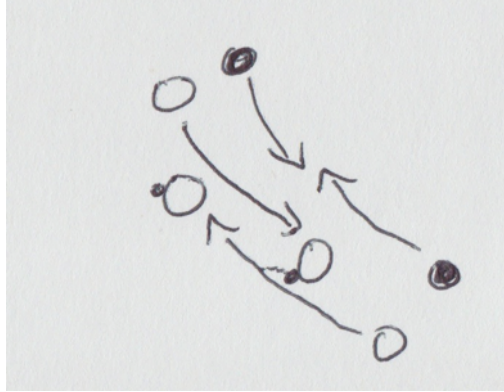
A quaffle carrying chaser can pass to another chaser then immediately break away from coverage while the receiving chaser immediately passes it back to the original chaser. Ideal for getting free of chaser coverage.

### Pick and Roll



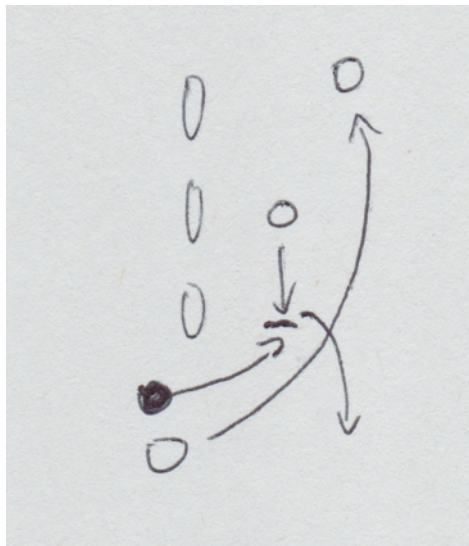
The off-ball chaser and quaffle carrier run towards each other, with the off-ball chaser interposing him/herself into the path of the chaser defending the quaffle carrier. This is known as a "pick" or "screen." The second part, the "roll", comes from the pick chaser coming open immediately afterwards by "rolling" off the defender, creating separation and running towards the hoops, offering a passing option to the quaffle carrier who may or may not be defended at this point.

### Handoff (also known as Jet sweep or Reverse)



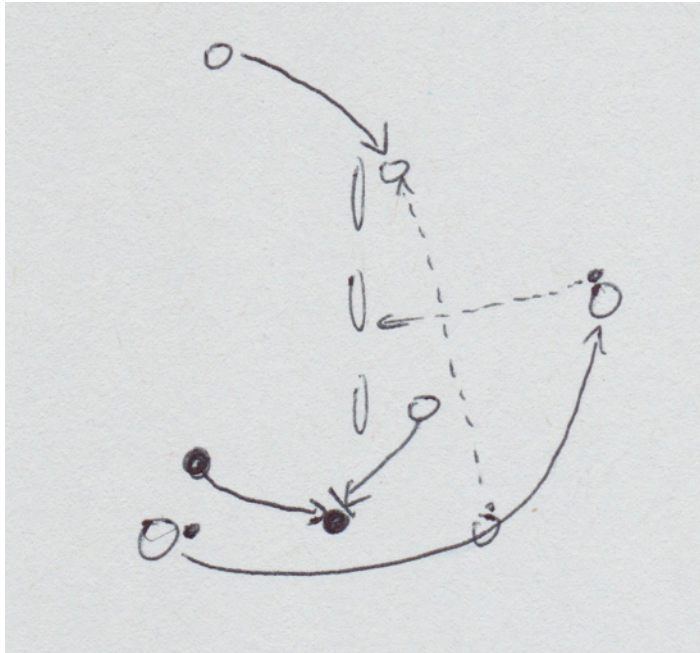
The quaffle carrier runs laterally around the outside of the defense. As they pass another chaser running the opposite direction they hand off the quaffle to the other chaser moving towards the middle of the field. With practice this can also be executed as a fake. This can fool defenders' eyes but is primarily a way to help the quaffle move past the point defender.

### Offball Screen



One of the wing chasers who is covered by a man chaser runs behind the hoops (often faking watching for a pass to draw the eyes of the defender) at which point the deep chaser sets a pick on the wing chaser and then proceeds to the wing position. This now forces the defender to decide who to cover, and the hesitation often results in open receivers behind the hoops or coming out to the wings. This is particularly effective against teams who leave offensive female chasers uncovered behind the hoops, as there is now an uncovered male chaser behind the hoops and a female chaser in the wing, forcing a defensive adjustment. Chaining multiple screens with the same player can cause even more defensive chaos.

## Outside Sweep



The ball carrier runs in a large circle in the direction of their dominant arm, making them able to make relatively pinpoint passes at any point on the run. This creates opportunities for their teammates to set screens, make cuts, and generally get open or help their teammates get open. If no pressure has been placed on the ball carrier they are also in position to take shots on the hoop once they are behind the hoops.

### **Key Concept: Field Alertness**

The most vulnerable time for a defense is before it has set up. Players may be out of position, not aware they scored right away, or tired from the exertion of scoring. Additionally, many drills are defined as ending when a goal is scored, and so a natural habit of relaxing is built in to players from practicing this way. That means that time is of the essence for a newly offensive team. For maximum competitive advantage, all players must *immediately* assess the status of the bludgers as soon as there is a turnover, and if there are not bludgers in position to stop a drive, this is a fast break opportunity waiting to happen.

This is much easier said than done. Someone who is walking may not feel tired, and yet they in fact are too tired to run and if the team has chaser depth this person should be subbed out before they are truly exhausted. It is much easier to recover from being tired than from being exhausted, and circulating your teammates onto the field gives them the chance to play that they came to the tournament for.

Some teams develop an audible by the coach or captain for a fast break, which can help motivate players to crack the whip on themselves, but players must also learn their own bodies and manage their own egos for this strategy to be effective. Showing good team discipline requires a mental fortitude that can be eroded by a long day in the hot sun playing quidditch. Ultimately, if a coach does not structure practices in a way that prepares players for this trial, then it will be reflected in slow chaser play, missing many fast break opportunities.

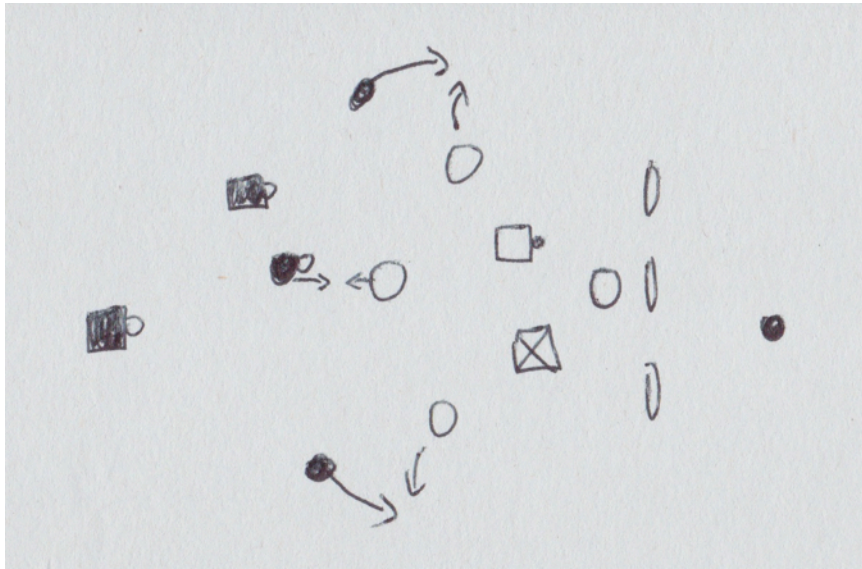
## Chapter 11: Defensive Systems

Offense sells T-shirts, defense wins tournaments, or so the saying goes. In many respects, offense is easier. The person with the quaffle in hand acts, and the defenders must respond. Winning a 1-on-1 battle as a chaser with only one arm allowed for tackling is an exceptionally difficult task even when the physical traits are evenly matched, and of course the ball is often in the hands of the team's best athlete.

Yet playing defense has many perks. Beaters can be more aggressive, since they have a shorter trip back to their hoops. Chasers similarly cannot be removed from play for long, and the invulnerability of the keeper to tackling adds a certain finality to the end of a successfully defended drive. Having a stout defense that prevents goals and creates turnover opportunities can easily demoralize opponents, and retaining bludger control throughout a defensive series, especially a defensive stop, puts opposing teams in a bad position that can spiral out of control.

Strong defense, more so even than offense, requires effective drills that teach assignments and physicality effectively, especially to chasers. Being an effective beater on defense requires good reflexes and accuracy, but an effective chaser on defense must be able to defend passes, tackle opposing players, get off picks and switch assignments with fellow chasers in perfect synchronicity. The various defensive formations are generally more of suggestions, as an effective defense will always respond to the offense's attack with an appropriate change in formation. Disciplined defenders will always be moving to a position where they are able to prevent the opponents from scoring.

## Man Defense



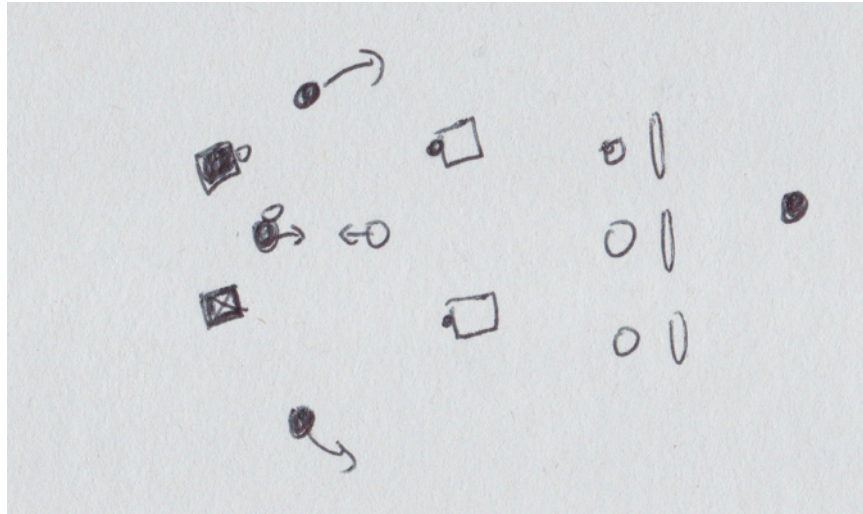
This is the most standard defense employed by programs all over the world. In this defense, the keeper stays by the hoops while each chaser locates a single offensive quaffle player and is responsible for covering them. This will leave one chaser uncovered, which is normally the chaser behind the hoops that the keeper will prevent passes from reaching (in many offensive systems, this is invariably the female chaser, though the writer finds this to be a sexist and harmful way to coach). The chaser covering the offensive player with the ball is known as the point defender and the other chasers are off-ball defenders. Due to passes, picks and handoffs, any chaser may be called upon to be the point defender. Chasers are typically instructed not to permit inside *leverage* from their mark, but instead force their marks outside.

In this defense, beaters may be arranged in a number of patterns. The most common is high-low, with the more athletic beater closer to the middle of the pitch and the less athletic beater farther back, closer to the hoops. Typically the low beater's assignment is to watch the quaffle while the high beater watches the incoming beaters. If the team lacks bludger control,



the bludger is typically assigned to watch quaffle while the empty hand beater watches the opposing beaters to respond to whatever strategy they employ.

### Zone Defense

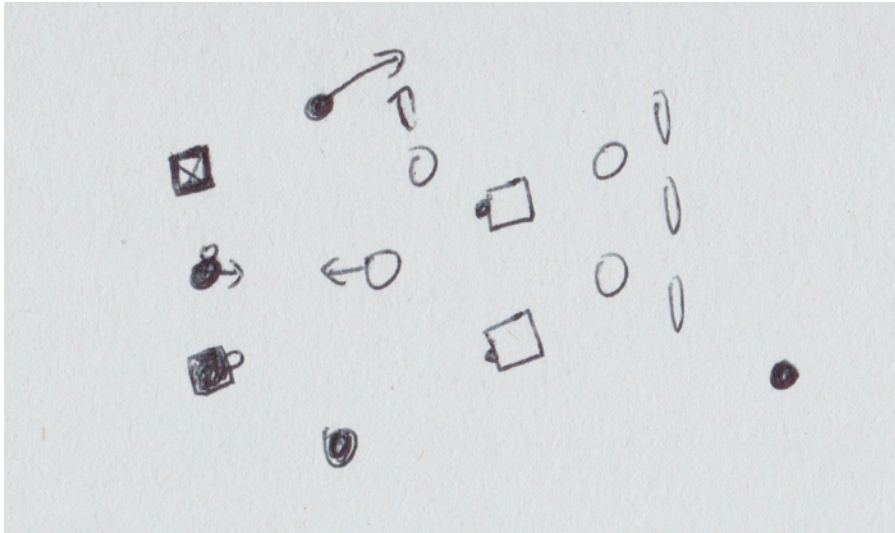


Also known as the Baylor defense and by other names, this is a very different type of defense, predicated on having excellent beaters able to maintain bludger control consistently, since it fails without bludger control. In this defense, one point chaser marks up on the quaffle carrier while the two beaters occupy the left and right fields of the pitch, watching the ball-carrier and the wing chasers. The keeper and other two chasers each stand in front of one hoop, able to block shots while conserving energy. If the point chaser is beat, one of the hoop chasers must run up to replace them rapidly. Failure to do so leaves a gap in the defense that can be easily exploited.

While this defense has existed long enough that teams now understand ways to attack it (predominantly by passing around to an area not covered by beaters then by driving in for a dunk), it remains effective if executed properly, and is an excellent way to keep chasers from becoming exhausted if the depth of the chaser corps is shallow. It is also a good philosophy for

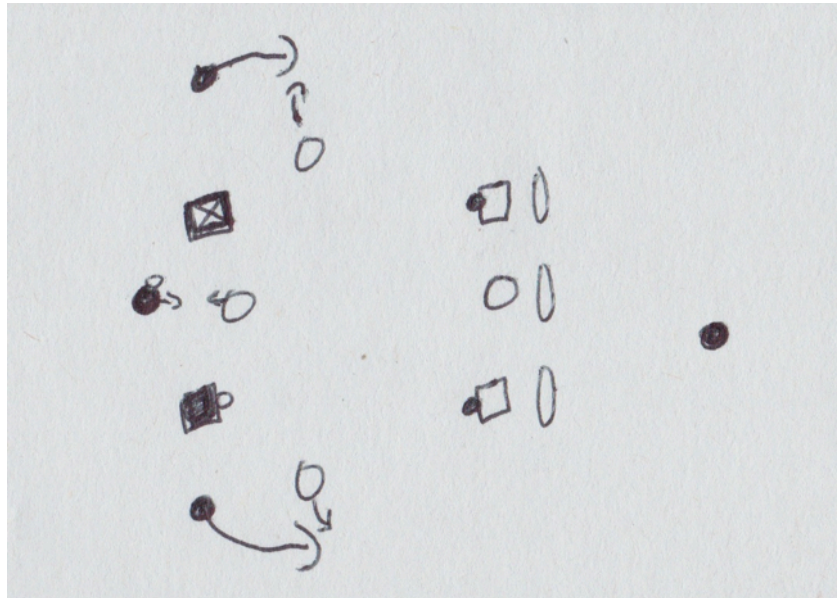
when a play breaks down and defensive assignments become confused, especially when the quaffle is behind hoops.

#### Rectangle Defense (or 2-2 Zone)



A defense that has become more popular recently, this defense involves two chasers marking up on offensive players while another chaser and the keeper remain near the hoops. Beaters are usually situated in a high-low configuration but may also be in left-right, depending on the physical talents of the beaters in question, and this system also works well with a single bludger. As with the Zone defense, replacing a chaser who has been beat is an important component of maintaining a strong defense.

## West Coast Defense



A defensive system that only works with bludger control and an elite keeper. The chasers are arranged in man defense, but the two beaters stand directly in front of their hoops, drawing up opposing beaters extremely far from their own hoops. Offensive chasers will find themselves able to drive but unable to finish due to beaters being almost impossible to knock out, and the resulting turnovers generated from passing near the hoops and beaters result in many fast break opportunities. It helps conserve bludger control but limits their usefulness in chaser defense.

## Chapter 12: Glossary

Some of the terms listed here are quidditch-specific terms but many are terms familiar to followers of other sports.

- **Arm strength:** in reference to throwing ability, also called having a good arm, and colloquially called having a “cannon arm.” Having poor arm strength means the player must make a larger throwing motion, incorporating their entire body, to make an effective distance throw, and may have a smaller overall throwing radius.
- **Audible:** a code word or phrase said by a player or coach to adjust the team’s strategy. Must be pre-determined and drilled repeatedly for fluid team response.
- **Bludger:** a ball used in quidditch to “knock out” opposing players. As it is virtually identical in style to dodgeball, a dodgeball is almost always used. There are three bludgers on pitch in a standard quidditch game field.
- **Break down:** a maneuver where a running player takes very short steps, helping them change their momentum more effectively. Often seen in tackling drills by both the runner and tackler to attempt to make/evade the tackle.
- **Chemistry:** a term for the unspoken coordination between players, built over time. Chemistry is often underrated as the players who have played together for years and have had many practices and games together often know where their teammates are without even needing to look at them, giving a huge advantage to that team.
- **Fast break:** when a turnover leaves defenders in bad position to defend, the offensive team can often score easily.
- **Goaltending:** the act of blocking a goal with one’s body inside the goal area. In basketball it is illegal, while in hockey and soccer it is legal only for the goaltender. In quidditch it is legal only for the keeper.
- **Off-ball:** a player who does not have the ball but is eligible to receive it, or the defender guarding this potential receiver.
- **Pitch:** The playing field in quidditch. An official pitch is 36 yards long.
- **Point:** the person who is advancing the ball, or his/her defender.
- **Quaffle:** the scoring ball in quidditch. Typically a slightly deflated volleyball, suitable for gripping with one hand.
- **Screen (or pick):** to physically prevent an opposing player from reaching your teammate by interposing your own body. Moving screens are illegal in USQ Rulebook 10, but basketball-style pick plays are a staple of chaser-based offense. Additionally, pushing a player from the front is legal if they do not have a ball, and this is legal even with moving feet, so long as the rest of the body does not make contact and the arm does not go to full extension in the push.
- **Turnover:** the defending team gets control of the ball (in this case the quaffle).