

Tips For Defense

1. Don't rush an attack man after he has caught the ball. If he is receiving a rather long pass and you are sure you can reach him before the ball, go after him, checking his stick and hitting him with your body.
2. As a pass is made to the man you are playing, move out to cover him as the ball is moving to him, so that you are in position as he catches it. Don't wait until he has caught the ball, and then move out on him.
3. Never take a step into a man while playing him on defense.
4. Once the attack man has the ball, worry him plenty by poke checking, etc., don't give much chance to look over his field, make him worry about you. Don't force or rush him however. There is a big difference between worrying a man and forcing or rushing him. Make the attack make the first move.
5. When not poking at the man with ball, keep your stick a little above the height of your attack man's shoulder. Don't ever carry it at your side, KEEP IT UP!
6. When your man hasn't got the ball, always play slightly to the ball side of him, so that you gain a step as he cuts toward the ball. If he cuts away from the ball, the pass must go over your head which leaves you in good position to intercept or check.
7. When your man hasn't got the ball, stand sideways to the man and ball. You must use split vision watching both man and ball.
8. There must be plenty of talk on defense, this is important. The following are the most important examples: a) The man on each side of the ball must let the man on the ball know if he is backed up. b) If a man leaves to back up he must let the defense know he is leaving, so that they may shift. c) The man playing the ball must holler, "I've got-the ball". d) If a man cuts, the defense man playing him should holler "man cutting" so that he alerts the rest of the defense for a possible switch. e) If a switch is necessary, both men call "SWITCH".
9. If a man leaves to back up on a dodge, the whole defense slides a man, leaving the man farthest from the ball open.
10. Only in extreme cases, should the defense man on the crease leave to back up. Example: To stop a play that would end up in a score.
11. Never cross your feet while playing an attack man unless you are forced to run to keep up with him.
12. Never throw a ball just to get rid of it.
13. Always scoop a loose ball. Never draw it. If there is a crowd, go through and either kick it or scoop it up.
14. When you check, make your check short and hard, making your check across the man's forearm and following through with your body. Never raise your stick high to check.
15. If a man dodges you, keep after him. You should catch him as your backer comes in from the front.
16. Never pass a ball across in front of your goal.
17. If you are after a loose ball, but your attack man is ahead of you, press him hard if you cannot come up with the ball, but don't give him the opportunity to go around you.
18. After the man you are playing throws a ball, step back two steps quickly and be ready for a cut. Also always look in the direction of the ball as you drop off. Don't turn your back on the ball.

19. As the man you are playing starts a pass, check across his arms, but don't step in.
20. A. If the ball is out front, and your man is behind the goal, play on the pipe of the cage on the side of the goal your man is on. B. If the ball is behind the goal and your man is behind also although without the ball, go behind with him.
21. If you ever switch, STAY WITH THAT MAN until your team gets the ball or you have to switch again.
22. When clearing the ball, as you catch the ball, circle away from your stick side if you are moving in to receive the pass.
23. Never let an attack man clamp your stick. If you are on the crease on a screen shot, stop it or catch it, if you can't do either then move so that your goalie can see it.
24. Once the other team has cleared the ball, all defense men must drop in fast, RUN HARD --THIS IS ONE TIME YOU CANNOT LOAF.
25. On clears, make all passes sharp, away from the (attack man) and, as a general rule, to the nearest open man.
26. On a clear, when making a pass to a man who is coming in to meet the ball throw at his face, so that he catches the ball in front of him, making it hard for a (attack man) to check him.
27. If the ball is rolling toward the midfield line, NEVER ALLOW your attack man to beat you to the ball. Be alert, use your stick to goose the ball to teammate. Don't let the attack man clamp your stick or lift up so ball goes under and through. Remember, if the ball is 5 yards away or less you can use your body for position. Don't hit from the rear and don't go offside.

28. How can I be more aggressive?

Sometimes players think that being aggressive means you hack away at someone's stick until you get the ball, or you run over players trying to get at the goal. Usually those people just get thrown out of games! Aggressive should mean that you take full advantage of every opportunity you have. It's most important to keep your eyes open and your head up at all times, especially when you're confronted with an opposing player. Once you start flinching, you won't be able to see the holes and opportunities that develop. If you're playing defense, keep your stick up so that even if you can't check at the moment it's at least in the attacker's way. If you're racing to get possession of a ball, do everything you can to get to it first -- cut off the other player or box him out like in basketball.

If your speed and endurance are preventing you from being aggressive, get the most out of every sprint you do and every weight you lift during practice. Push yourself as hard as you can so that you can maximize your training time. As your strength and speed builds, you'll be much more willing to go the extra step every time.

More Defensive Tips

Defensive Tips from the Best: Tommy Smith

University of Virginia; All-American 1995, 1996, 1997

(from a recent interview by [Great Atlantic Lacrosse](#))

Communication is the key

The number one key to being an All American defenseman, is the communication you have on the field between yourself and the rest of your teammates. Communication can make good players great and great players All-Americans. It's amazing how easy team defense can be with everybody (goalies and short stick midfielders) barking out calls to their fellow teammates. It is even more amazing how you can intimidate an offense just by how loud you can yell out a call (even if a defender is beat). Everyone in the defensive end should be yelling a call. Whether it's the man on the ball (yell "ME"), the players off the ball (yell "I'VE GOTCHA LEFT/RIGHT"), or the slide man (yell "I'M HOT), every player is communicating and working together as a team.

One-on-One

This can be a defenseman's dream or nightmare. With that aside it is definitely the one time a defenseman has an opportunity to show his athletic ability. There are a couple of things for defenseman to keep in mind when going one-on-one with an offensive player. The first thing that defensemen should focus on their "ready position" when preparing for a good one-on-one battle. Defensemen should always have a slight bend to their knees, almost as if they are sitting in a chair. Secondly, defensemen should also always have their sticks out in front of them, not at their waist, this way they are ready to engage their attackman. Finally, defensemen must play on the balls of their feet, not on the back of their heels.

Attacking Defense

My final tip for any defensemen would be to play an attacking style of defense. A lot of defensemen, especially at the collegiate level, will get beat for goals because they are too worried about taking the ball away from their man. Remember, your job as a defenseman is to stop your opponent FIRST. Be physical and initiate the contact and never play on your heels. You have a six foot stick in your hand, make sure you take advantage of this luxury. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the poke check. Keep poking the bottom hand of the attackman. This will drive him crazy! Attackmen cannot stand physical play; so BE THE AGGRESSOR! Your physical play will bother the attackman so much that it will take him out of his game. You can develop take-away checks such as the over-the-head or the "kayak" later on, but the poke check still remains the most effective check in one's arsenal.

Closing Tip

Remember, coaches love aggressive defenseman, however know your opponents and weaknesses and more importantly your own. Keep practicing and best of luck with your game.