

## **Ten favorite lead-up games for young handball players**

As the name “lead-up” suggests, these games usually follow general warm-up routines and precede precise technical/tactical drills planned for the majority of practice. It was not an easy task to choose only 10 lead-up games to be included in this article; they are very popular, natural choices and valuable when used in daily training of young handball players. There are probably as many of them, including countless versions of each, as coaches working in the field.

To come up with the list of my 10 finalists, I went through my mental bank of games, a large body of written materials, accidental notes from my own practice and several coaching resources authored by practitioners whose published and unpublished works I accumulated over 25 years. All 10 activities presented below meet the following set of criteria: They are easy to organize and play but competitive in nature, require minimal equipment and set-up, can be easily adapted to almost any circumstance, provide learning and practicing opportunities for participants of various mastery levels, combine physical and skill practicing moments, stimulate continued participation and interest, and have added the advantage of resembling number of key technical and tactical situations most often present during handball matches. Each lead-up game can be used as a standalone unit (i.e., mini-tournament, festival, promo clinic, etc.) or be part of your regular training session. To facilitate their practical applications, all recommended games include a short description of the idea and its main purpose, materials needed and field set-up diagram, variety notes and teaching tips. They are not arranged, however, by any specific criterion; depending on the objective, each game may be freely molded to fit one’s needs. They are offered at random with just two specific goals in mind: First, to provide coaches, who do and/or will coach our youth handball enthusiasts, with much needed practical information in a straightforward manner and second, to encourage instructors working with junior athletes to experiment, adapt and create their own unique introductory games.

Enjoy and good luck in your daily practice,

Mariusz Wartalowicz  
Technical Director  
USA Team Handball

## Lead-Up Game 1

**Name of Activity:** Cone Handball

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching and throwing, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free) in a game-like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Practice with an emphasis on overhand passing/throwing and catching.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

\* *Indoors:* Use cones to mark the game fields that are approximately 30-40 ft wide by 80 ft long with two (2) 15-18 ft deep goal areas on opposite sides. Place four to six cones equally spread apart on each end-line. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.

\* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags, large cones and spray paint to mark the game fields.

**See Diagram 1 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (four to eight) compete to score as many points as they can within set time by knocking down cones (four to six) placed in their opponents' respective goal areas.

The goal areas are off limits for both attackers and defenders except for throw-ins. All shots at the cones and defensive actions such as steals, interceptions and blocks must take place outside the goal areas.

The game starts with team captains trying to win first possession during a jump ball in the middle of the field. The game is played according to no body contact rule. Players are allowed to dribble, pass, catch and hold the ball for three (3) seconds and make three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and traveling create a turnover situation from the spot where it was committed. A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game.

All shots on cones should be made with one hand, preferably using overhand technique. A point is scored when the cone gets knocked down by the ball's impact. After each point, the team scored upon restarts the game with a throw in executed by the team's captain from within the goal area.

A penalty shot is awarded and taken by the designated player from the line marking the goal area in two situations: (a) when a defender enters his/her goal area for the intentional purpose of keeping the opponents from scoring, and (b) when a defender fouls an offensive player who attempts to take a shot from the goal area line.

If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by a player from the opposite team with a throw-in made from the sideline where the ball left the field.

### **Variations:**

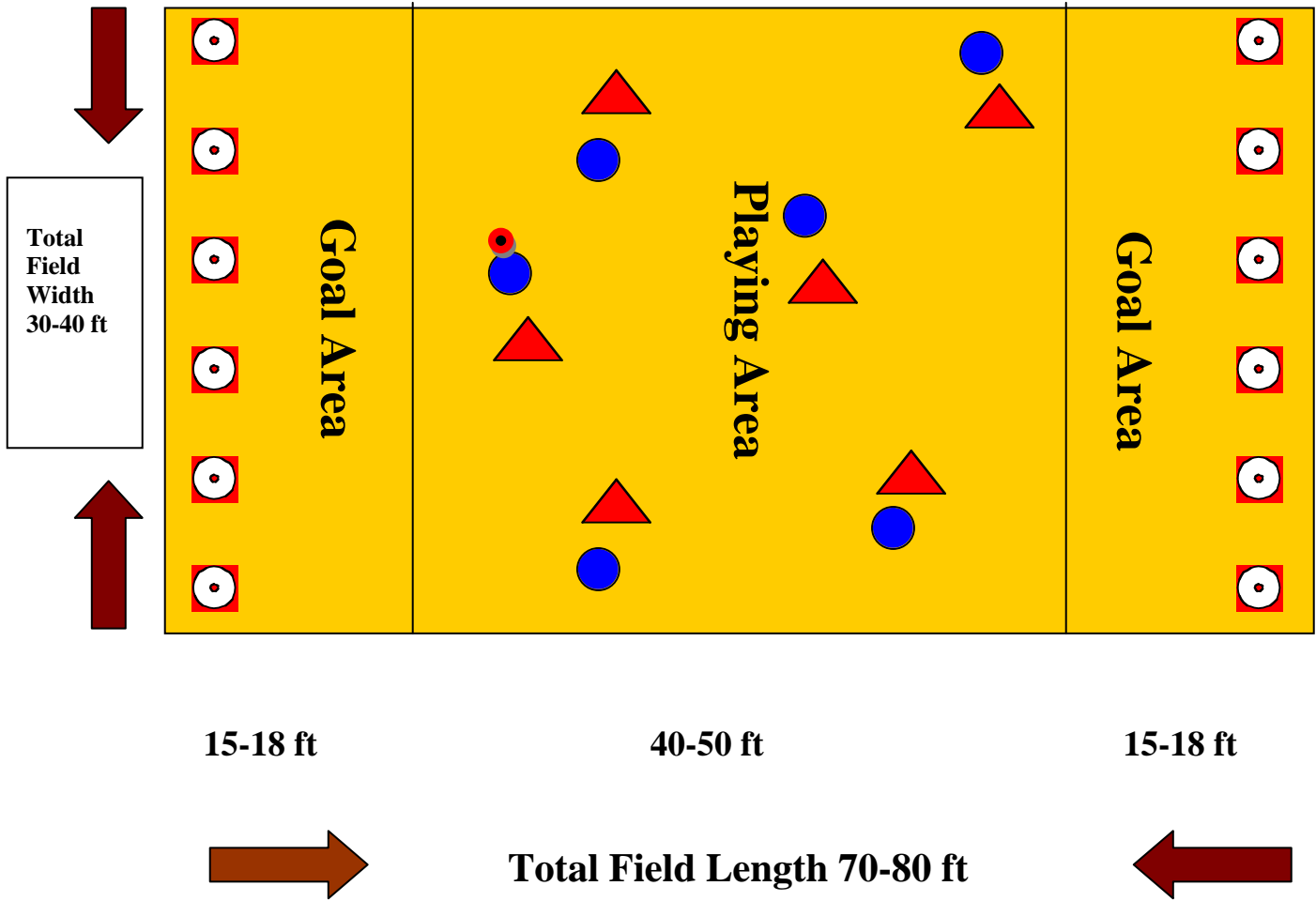
With time, increase difficulty by:

- a. letting the players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- b. allowing only jump shots and/or
- c. requiring set minimum of passes made before taking a shot and/or
- d. replacing cones with smaller/different targets (i.e., bowling pins, medicine balls, a small hurdle/box/serving as a goal) and/or
- e. prohibiting dribbling, etc.

### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Full court individual defense ("person to person") without switching should be used.
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants' preparedness and coach's preferences.
- Do not allow players to form any zone-like defensive formations.
- Encourage constant movement and short passes as well as simple "break free from your guard" and "pass and go" offensive strategies.
- Emphasize holding the elbow high (above the shoulder) and ball high above the head prior to passing and/or throwing.
- Remind players often that passing is always faster than dribbling.
- Challenge players to pass the ball to all teammates positioned in unguarded areas to receive the ball and not to just a few "friends."
- While on defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the attacker and their own goal.

# Diagram 1 Cone Handball Field Set-Up



## Legend:

 - Cones/Pins

 - Team 1

 - Team 2

 - Handball

## Lead-Up Game 2

**Name of Activity:** Hula Hoop Handball

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching and throwing, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free) in a game-like situation, (c) improve cardiovascular endurance.

**Prerequisites:**

Practice with overhand passing, catching and basic defensive marking.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, two to four (2-4) Hula Hoops for each game played, color vests/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

\* *Indoors:* Use cones to mark the game fields that suites your space situation. When playing 4 vs. 4, field size 30 ft wide by 60 ft long is ideal. For larger groups, adjust the size accordingly. Scatter two (2) to four (4) Hula Hoops on the floor considerable distance apart and at least 10 ft from the field's boundaries.

\* *Outdoors:* Based on the ground's surface, use spray paint, chock, cones, jumping ropes and/or any other available equipment to mark the game fields and score areas.

**See Diagram 2 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (four to 10) compete to score as many points as they can within set time by placing a ball inside two to four Hula Hoops spread randomly on the floor. Each player on the team is assigned a consecutive number between one and 10, depending on the total number of players per team.

The game starts with a jump ball between team's leaders in the middle of the field or can awarded to one team after a draw. The game is played according to no body contact rule. Players are allowed to dribble, pass, catch and holding the ball for three (3) seconds and make three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and traveling create a turnover/free-throw situation from the spot where it was committed. A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game with the opponents standing at least 3 m or 10 ft from the thrower.

The objective of the game is to pass accurately and move the ball fast enough around the field to find unguarded Hula Hoop and put the ball down inside it. A point is scored when the ball touches the floor inside a Hula Hoop. After each point, the team scored upon restarts the game with a throw-in executed from that Hula Hoop by consecutive students according to their assigned numbers. If a ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by a player from the opposite team with a throw-in taken from the sideline where the ball left the field.

### **Variations:**

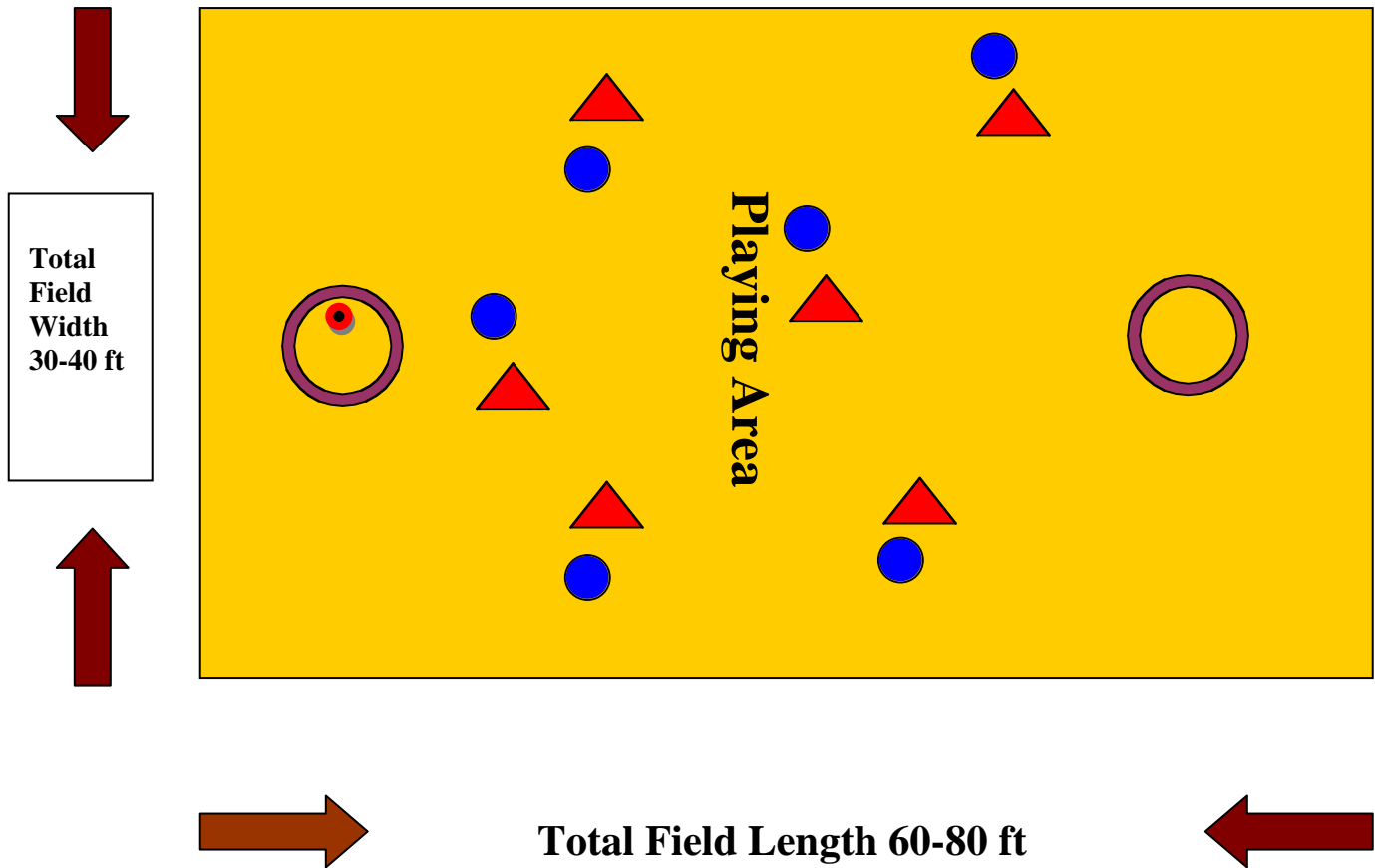
When introducing the game for a first time, play it with only two (2) Hula Hoops. As players gain confidence in their individual skills, you may increase the difficulty by adding one to two (1-2) more Hula Hoops. This will create situation with increased decision making, use of peripheral vision and spatial orientation challenge for both offense and defense. In time, experiment with:

- a. using various balls' sizes and shapes,
- b. letting the players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- c. allowing players to use only their "weak" hands and/or
- d. requiring set minimum of passes made before an attempt to score and/or
- e. replacing Hula Hoops with smaller targets such as one foot circular floor markers and/or
- f. prohibiting dribbling, etc.

### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Full court individual defense ("person to person") should be used.
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to students' preparedness and teacher's preferences.
- Do not allow players to form any zone-like defensive formations around Hula Hoops.
- Encourage constant movement, short one-hand overhead passes as well as simple "break free from your guard" and "pass and go" offensive strategies.
- Use verbal cues such as "Hold your elbow high!" and "Keep the ball above the head!" prior to passing to a partner.
- Remind players that excessive dribbling slows down the game.
- Challenge players to pass the ball to all teammates advantageously positioned in unguarded areas. Praise players for using situational passes (i.e., bounce pass) as the tactical circumstances may dictate.
- While in defense, stress the importance of footwork (without crossing legs) and constant anticipation of the next pass to either intercept it or block it.
- Stress positive encouragement, unselfish team play and active participation.

## Diagram 2 Hula Hoop Handball Field Set-Up



### Legend:

 - Hula Hoops

 - Team 1

 - Team 2

 - Handball

### **Lead-Up Game 3**

**Name of Activity:** Six-Passes Handball

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free), (c) spatial orientation and positioning in a game-like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Practice with overhand passing/throwing and catching.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

- \* *Indoors:* Use cones to mark the game fields that are approximately 30-40 ft wide by 60-80 ft long. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.
- \* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use spray paint to mark the game fields.

**See Diagram 3 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (4-10) compete to score as many points as they can within set time by attempting to make six (6) consecutive passes between their teammates.

The game starts with team captains trying to win first possession during a jump ball in the middle of the field. The game is played according to no body contact rule. Players are allowed to dribble, pass, catch and hold the ball for three (3) seconds and make three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and traveling create a turnover situation from the spot where it was committed. A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game.

A point is scored when the team completes six (6) passes without the ball being intercepted and/or turned over to the opponents due to a technical error. After each point, the team scored upon restarts the game with a pass executed by the team's captain from any place within the playing area. Players or coaches should count out loud number of passes being made.

If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by: (a) a player from the team in possession of a ball, if it was touched last by any of their opponents, or (b) by a player from the opposite team, if it was a turnover, with a throw in made from the sideline where the ball left the field. All passes made prior to a ball leaving the playing area are considered null and the team in possession of the ball needs to start their count from zero. No more than one pass can be made between the same two players in a row.

### **Variations:**

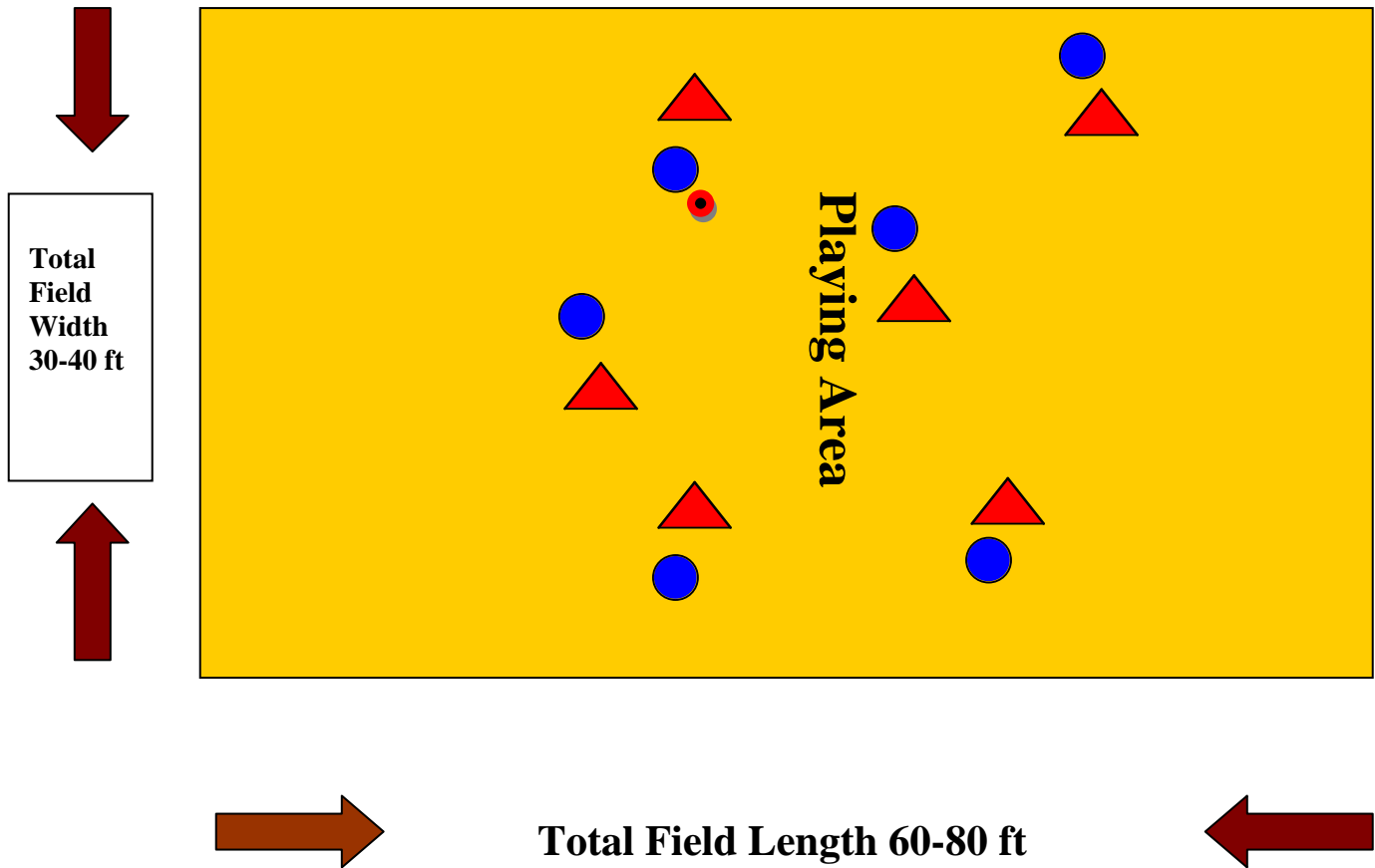
With time, increase difficulty by:

- a. letting the players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- b. prohibiting dribbling and/or
- c. allowing only bounce/overhead pass, etc.




### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Full-court individual defense (“person to person”) without switching should be used.
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants’ preparedness and coach’s preferences.
- Encourage constant movement, short passes as well as simple “break free from your guard” and “pass and go” offensive strategies.
- Emphasize holding the elbow high (above the shoulder) and ball high above the head prior to passing and/or throwing.
- Remind players often that passing is always faster than dribbling.
- Challenge players to pass the ball to all teammates positioned in unguarded areas to receive the ball and not to just a few “friends.”
- While on defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the player with a ball and their own opponent.

### Diagram 3 Six-Passes Handball Field Set-Up



#### Legend:

-  - Team 1
-  - Team 2
-  - Handball

## Lead-Up Game 4

**Name of Activity:** Gates Handball

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free), (c) spatial orientation and peripheral vision, (d) correct space usage and positioning in a game-like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Individual defense practice with overhand passing/throwing and catching.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys, soccer flags.

**Field Preparation:**

- \* *Indoors:* Use cones to mark the game fields that are approximately 30-40 ft wide by 60-80 ft long. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.
- \* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags to make “gates” and large cones to mark the fields. On hard black top surfaces, use large cones for both.

**See Diagram 4 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (five to 10 per team) compete to score, specified number of goals or as many points as they can within set time, by either dribbling or passing the ball through two to four (2-4) “gate(s).”

The game starts with team captains trying to win first possession during a jump ball in the middle of the field. The game is played according to no body contact rule. Players are allowed to dribble, pass, catch and hold the ball for three (3) seconds and make three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and traveling create a turnover situation from the spot where it was committed. A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game.

The objective of the game is to pass accurately and move the ball fast enough around the field to find unguarded “gate” and score a point by either (a) dribbling through the “gate” without losing control of the ball or (b) the completing a pass through the “gate” without the ball being intercepted and/or turned over to the opponents due to a technical error.

After each point, the team scored upon restarts the game with a pass executed by the team's captain from any place within the playing area.

If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by: (a) player from the team in possession of a ball, if it was touched last by any of their opponents, or (b) by a player from the opposite team, if it was a turnover, with a throw-in made from the sideline where the ball left the field. No more than one pass can be made between the same two players in a row.

### **Variations:**

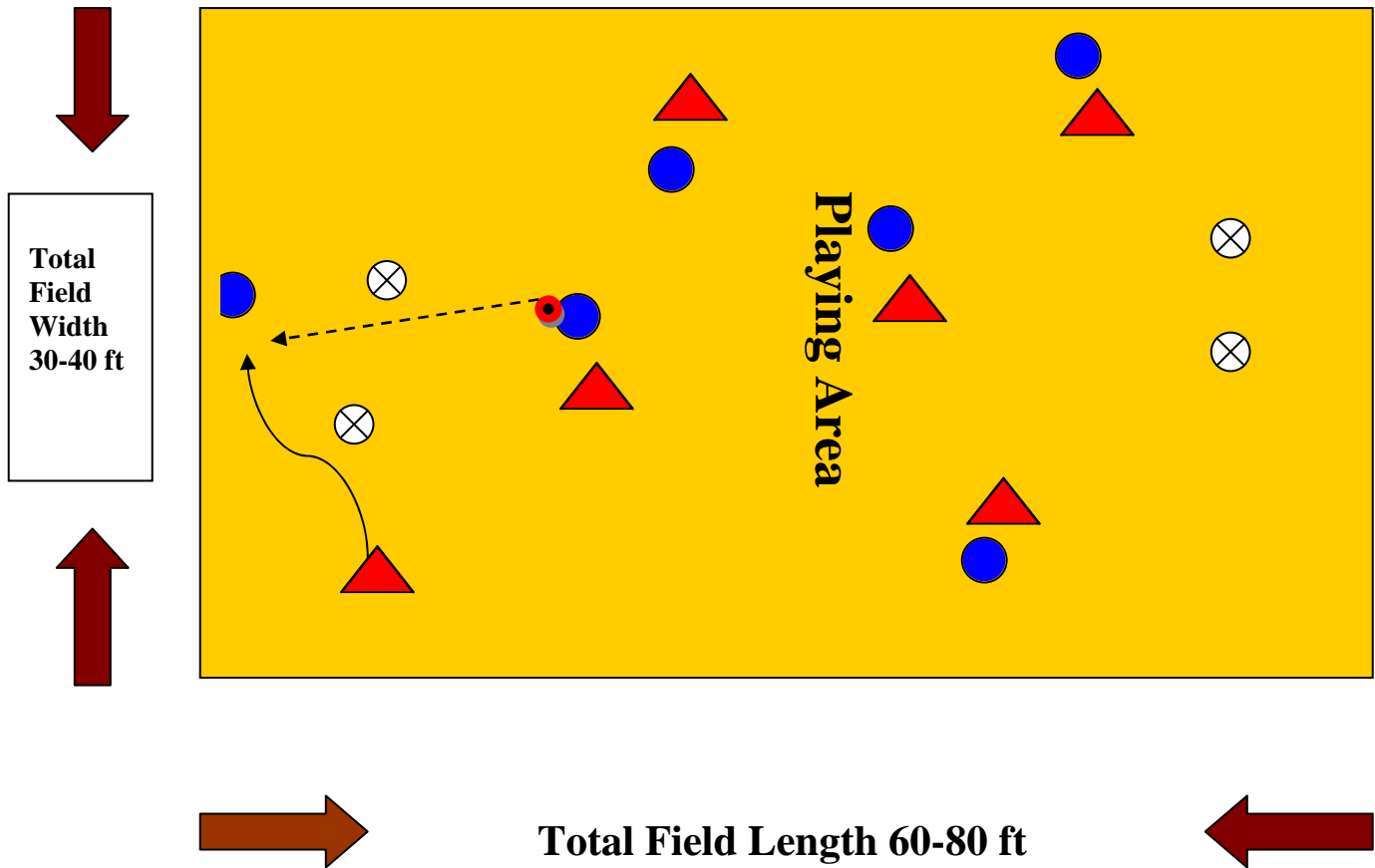
With time, increase difficulty by:

- a. adding more "gates"(up to four),
- b. allowing the team in possession of the ball to score multiple goals until it commits technical turnover,
- c. letting players hold a ball for only one (1) second,
- d. decreasing the width of "gates,"
- e. allowing only a bounce pass, etc.







### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Full-court individual defense ("person to person") without switching should be used but as players master the former, introduce "switches."
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants' preparedness and coach's preferences.
- Encourage constant movement, short passes as well as simple "break free from your guard" and "pass and go" offensive strategies.
- Emphasize holding the elbow high (above the shoulder) and ball high above the head prior to passing and/or throwing.
- Remind players often that passing is always faster than dribbling.
- Challenge players to keep their heads up and look for teammates positioned in unguarded areas.
- While in defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the player with a ball and their own opponent.
- When playing with three or four "gates," consecutive points must not be scored on the same "gate" two times in a row.

## Diagram 4 Gates Handball Field Set-Up



### Legend:

-  - Team 1
-  - Team 2
-  - Gates made out of cones
-  - Handball
-  - Ball's path
-  - Defender's path

## Lead-Up Game 5

**Name of Activity:** Scooter Handball in Zones

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, (b) spatial orientation, and(c) fundamental understanding of defense/offense in a game-like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous practice with an overhand passing/throwing and catching has taken place.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys, smaller-sized floor hockey goals (2-4), or gymnastic mats (2-4), one (1) PE scooter per player.

**Field Preparation:**

\* *Indoors:* Use cones to mark the game fields that are approximately 30-40 ft wide by 60-80 ft long. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.

**See Diagram 5 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (five to 10) compete to score, specified number of goals or as many points as they can within set time, by throwing the ball into their opponents' goal. Within each team, participants are divided into offensive and defensive players. They can move freely around the playing area but only within their assigned zones and must remain sitting on their respective PE scooters throughout the game.

The game starts with team captains trying to win first possession during a jump ball in the middle of the field. The game is played according to no body contact rule. Players are allowed one-hand passing, catching, and holding the ball for three (3) seconds. A free-throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game. After each point, the team scored upon restarts the game with a pass executed by the team's goalkeeper.

If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by: (a) a player from the team in possession of a ball, if it was touched last by any of their opponents, or (b) by a player from the opposite team, if it was a turnover, with a throw-in made from the sideline

where the ball left the field. For the throw-ins, players can stand up to retrieve the ball but need to sit down on their scooters to restart the game.

Half-way through the game, goalkeepers as well as offensive and defensive players switch roles. All players should be encouraged to play as goalkeeper for their teams.

### **Variations:**

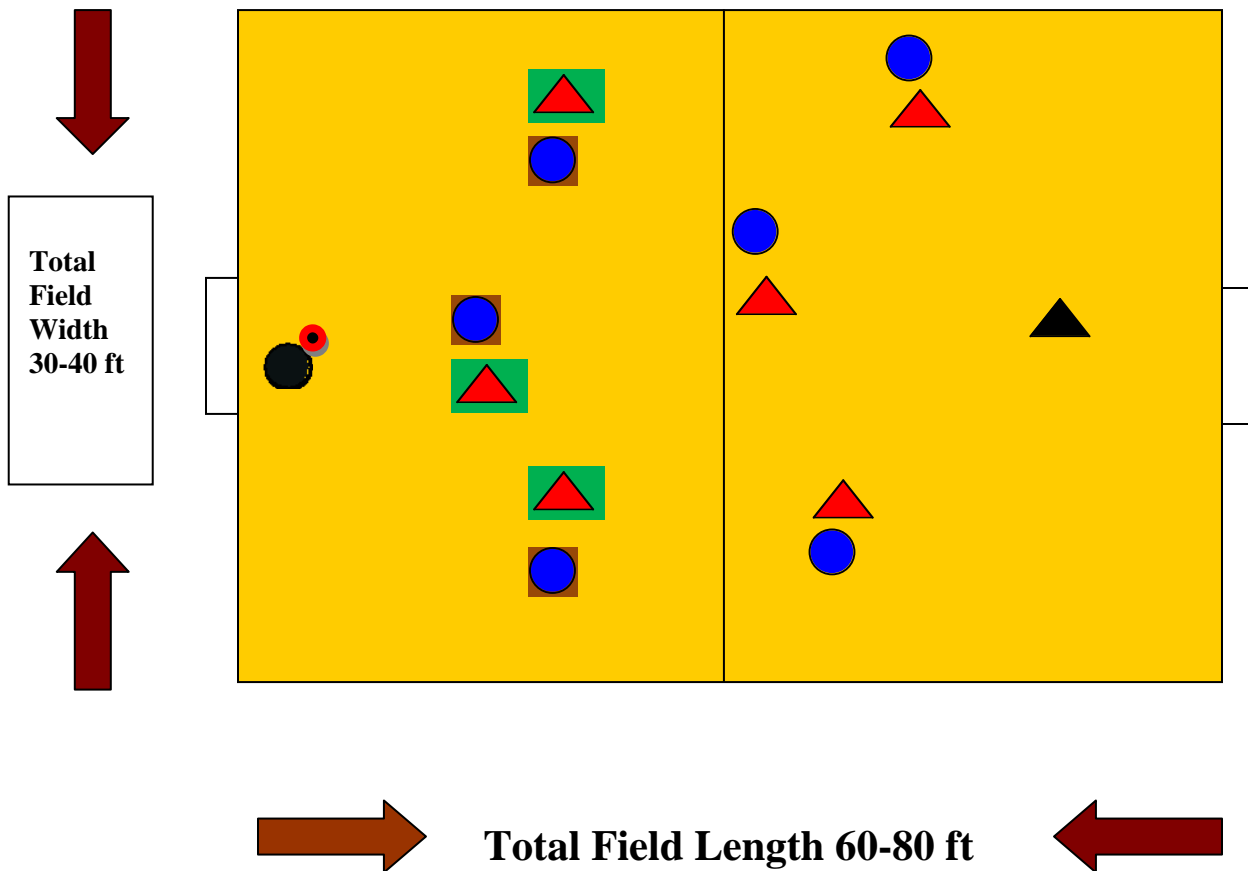
With time, change/increase difficulty by:

- a. letting players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- b. passing only forward and/or
- c. requiring to make four to five (4-5) passes before attempting to score and/or
- d. requiring a pass to female athlete if teams are co-ed before attempting to score and/or
- e. “lifting” zone restrictions (introducing concept of crease/goal area), etc.






### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants’ preparedness and coach’s preferences.
- Encourage short and safe passes.
- Emphasize holding the elbow high (above the shoulder) and ball high above the head prior to passing and/or throwing.
- Challenge players to pass the ball to all teammates positioned in unguarded areas to receive the ball and not to just a few “friends.”
- While in defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the player with a ball and their own opponent and using their hands to block shots and/or intercept passes.
- Discuss the importance of wide spacing and team work in advancing the ball from the goal area forward.

## Diagram 5 Scooter Handball in Zones Field Set-Up



### Legend:

-  - Team 1 - Defensive Players
-  - Team 1 - Offensive Players
-  - Team 2 - Defensive Players
-  - Team 2 - Offensive Players
-  - Handball

## **Lead-Up Game 6**

**Name of Activity:** Zone Handball

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, dribbling and throwing, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free) in a game like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous individual defensive/offensive skills practice with an overhand passing/throwing and catching has taken place.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

\* *Indoors:* Use cones to mark the game field that is approximately 30-40 ft wide by 60-80 ft long and divided into three (3) equally-sized zones. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.

\* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags, large cones and spray paint to mark the game field(s).

**See Diagram 6 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (eight to 11) compete to score, specified number of goals or as many points as they can within set time, by advancing the ball from zone to zone and throwing/passing the ball to their captains standing in the end zones. Within each team, participants are divided into groups of two or three and assigned one zone to play in. They can move freely around their respective playing areas but can't enter any other. The end zones, where captains stand, are off limits for both attackers and defenders from both teams.

The game starts with team leaders trying to win first possession during a jump ball in the middle of the field (central zone). The game is played according to no body contact rule. Players are allowed to dribble, pass, catch and hold the ball for three (3) seconds and make three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and traveling create a turnover situation from the spot where it was committed. A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game.

To advance the ball between zones, players must make at least two (2) passes within their respective zone before passing it up. A point is awarded for each successful pass to either captain standing on opposite sides of the playing area. The captains from the opposite teams, however, should also guard each other to make the final pass more challenging. After each point scored, the game restarts in the central zone with a jump-ball. If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by a player from the opposite team with a throw-in made from the sideline where the ball left the field. A penalty shot is awarded when a defender fouls an offensive player who attempts to make a pass to the team's end zone captain. It is taken by a designated player, in the form of unchallenged direct pass, from the central zone towards either captain standing in the end zone.

### **Variations:**

With time, change/increase difficulty by:

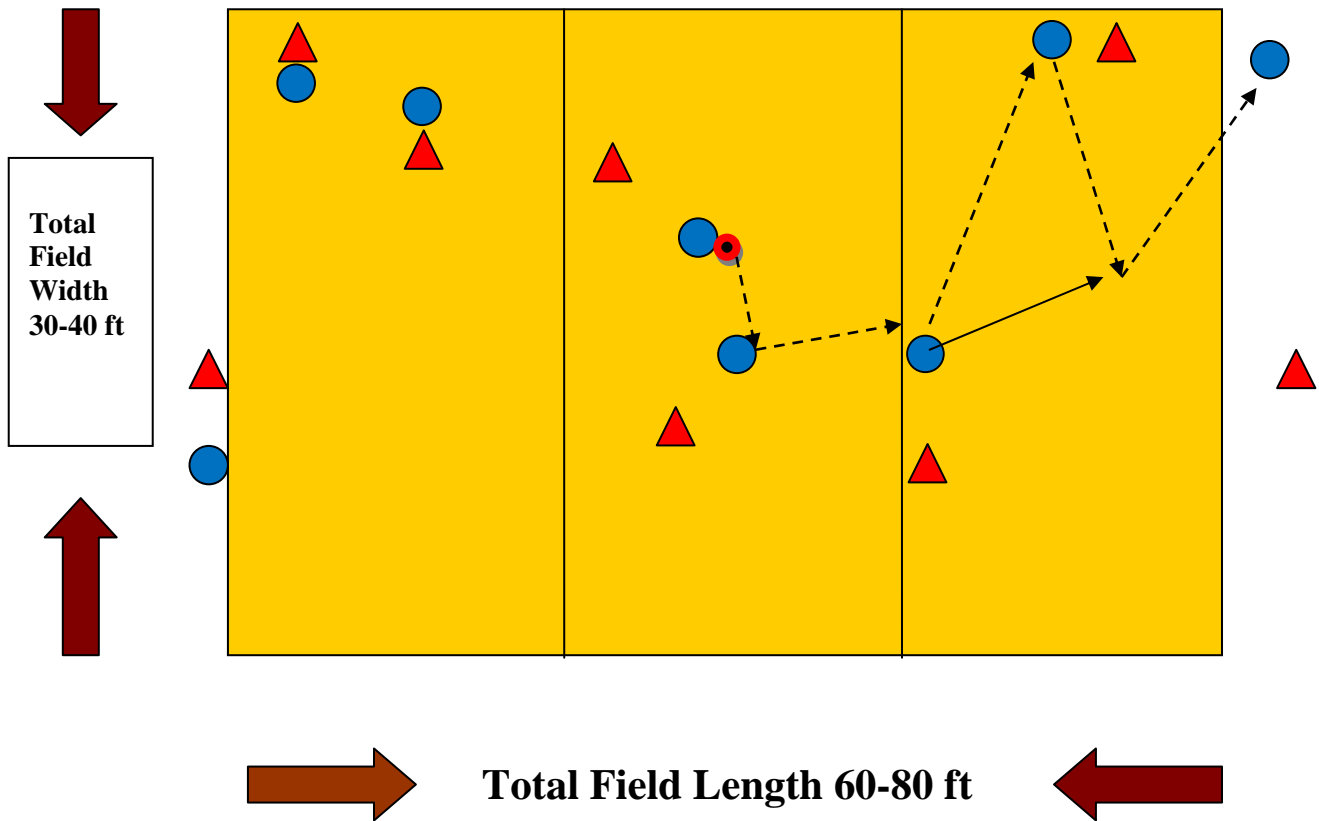
- a. letting the players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- b. allowing only a bounce pass to score and/or
- c. requiring more than 2 passes to be made before moving the ball up and/or
- d. prohibiting dribbling and/or
- e. restarting the game after each point scored from the end zone instead of the center zone and/or
- f. increasing size of the field, etc.

Later on, consider either limiting number of zones to two (2) or "lifting" zones restrictions altogether. Once the zones' restriction lift is in effect, the game can be continued with captains standing in the adult size or mini-handball goal areas or their various versions such gymnastic mats, large Hula Hoops, basketball's 3-point areas, basketball's key areas, or any other available clearly identified spots.

### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Within each zone, players should use individual defense ("person to person") without and/or with switching depending on their level of readiness.
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants' preparedness and coach's preferences.
- Encourage constant movement, short passes as well as simple "break-free from your guard" and "pass and go" offensive strategies.
- Emphasize holding the elbow high (above the shoulder) and ball high above the head prior to passing and/or throwing.
- Challenge players to be creative in solving 2 vs. 2 (3 vs. 3) situations within their respective zones.
- While in defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the attacker and their own goal and positioning in the passing lines to increase chances of intercepting the ball.
- Rotate players between zones, change captains, assign additional conditioning tasks to be done by players in zones farthest from the "action"

## Diagram 6 Zone Handball Field Set-Up



### Legend:

- - Team 1
- ▲ - Team 2
- - Handball
- - Player's path
- - - -> - Ball's path

## **Lead-Up Game 7**

**Name of Activity:** Touchdown Handball

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, dribbling and throwing, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free), (c) second wave of counter-attack (fast-break) in a game-like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous individual defensive/offensive skills, direct and indirect counter-attack practice with an overhand passing/throwing, dribbling, and catching has taken place.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys, full size handball court or at least mini-handball size court/playing area.

**Field Preparation:**

- \* *Indoors:* Use regulation handball court or similar playing area approximately 30-40 ft wide by 60-80 ft long. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.
- \* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags, large cones and spray paint or chalk to mark the field(s). On hard black top surfaces, use large cones for both, court boundaries and touchdown areas.

**See Diagram 7 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (seven to 10) compete to score, specified number of goals or as many points as they can within set time, by advancing the ball up the court and throwing/passing the ball to their players in the end zones.

At the beginning of the game, players from both teams assume 6:0 zone formations around their respective goal areas with their goalkeeper standing inside. The game starts with a throw-off by a goalkeeper of one team towards the opposite team. Once the ball is released (in the air), players from both teams are free to assume any position they see fit. The receiving team tries to use variety of skills and strategies to move the ball up the field and ultimately score by passing it to any open and available player in their opponents' end zone. The game can be played according to no body contact rule or official handball rules. Players are allowed dribbling, passing, catching, holding the ball for three (3) seconds and making three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and traveling create a turnover situation from the spot where it was committed.

A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game. If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by a player from the opposite team with a throw-in made from the sideline where the ball left the field.

After each regularly scored point, the scoring team's goalkeeper attempts earning a bonus point. To earn the bonus, a goalkeeper throws a ball directly from his goal to opposite goal or, if the goals are not available, towards any target designated by the coach. Consequently it is possible to make two points per each offensive drive. The game is then restarted with another throw-off by a goalkeeper towards the team that was scored upon.

A penalty shot is awarded and taken by the designated player from the center line to a designated receiver standing in the end zone when a defender fouls an offensive player who attempting a direct pass to a teammate standing inside the end zone.

### **Variations:**

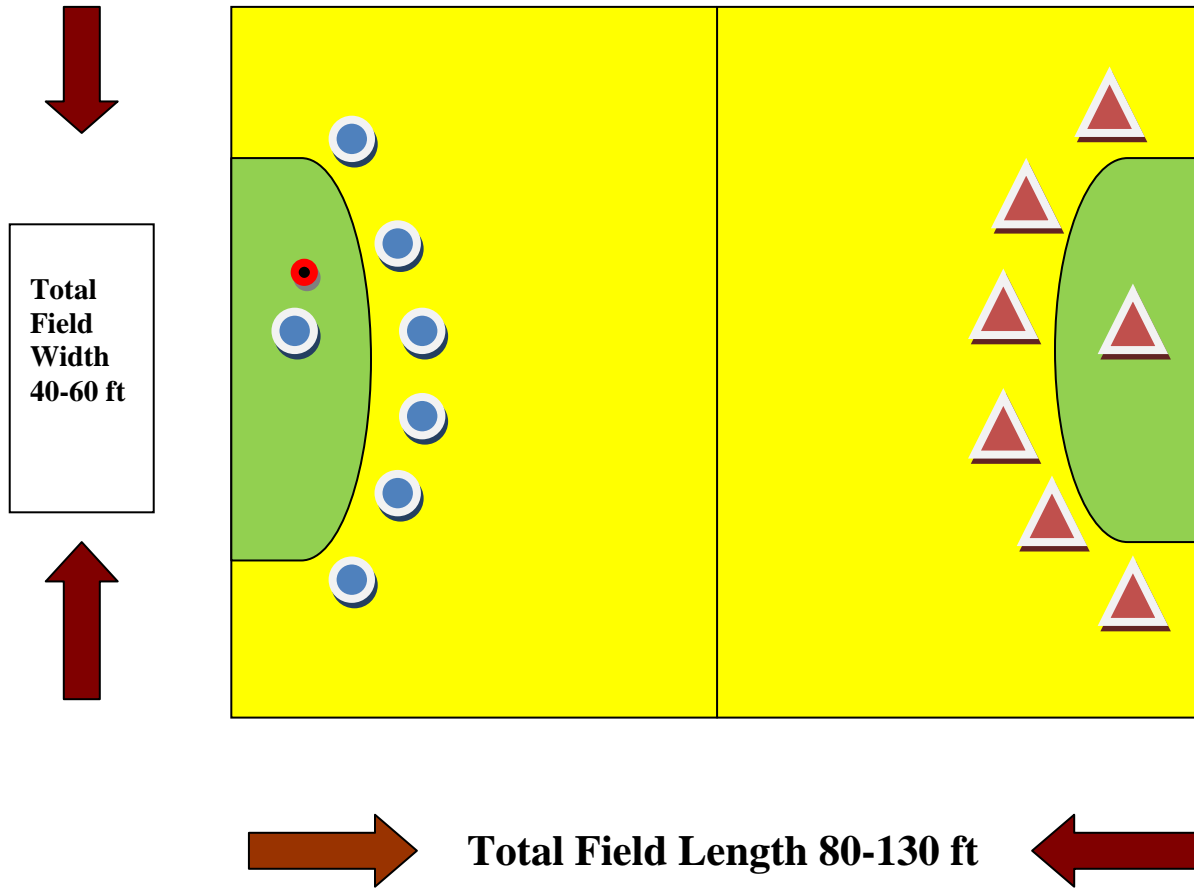
With time, increase difficulty by:

- a. letting the players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- b. allowing only forward passing and/or
- c. limiting dribbling to two to three (2-3) bounces or prohibiting it altogether and/or
- d. requiring set number of passes made before scoring and/or
- e. implementing defensive two-hand touch either forcing a pass within three seconds or a turnover and/or
- f. designate up to three (3) exclusive receivers per team, etc.

### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Full court or half court individual defense (“person to person”) without or with switching should be used depending on player’s readiness level and practice objectives.
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants’ preparedness and coach’s preferences.
- Do not allow players to form any zone like defensive formations.
- Encourage constant movement, quick and short passes as well as simple “break-free from your guard” and “pass and go” offensive strategies.
- Accent importance of “bridging” or advancing the ball by short and accurate lateral passes in direct contact with opponents.
- Discourage crossing patterns, long passes, and jump passes.
- Remind players often that passing is always faster than dribbling.
- Challenge players to pass the ball to teammates positioned in unguarded and less defense dense areas.
- While in defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the attacker and their own goal, importance of correct footwork, tactical fouls to stop the attack, etc.

## Diagram 7 Touchdown Handball Field Set-Up



### Legend:

-  - Team 1
-  - Team 2
-  - Handball

## **Lead-Up Game 8**

**Name of Activity:** Protect Your Royals

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, dribbling and throwing, (b) individual defensive (marking) and offensive skills (getting free, attacking gaps, setting picks), (c) small group and team tactical strategies in a game like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous individual defensive/offensive skills, indirect counter-attack practice with an overhand passing/throwing, dribbling, and catching has taken place.

**Materials Needed:**

One (1) soft-skinned handball (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

\* *Indoors:* Use regulation handball court, mini-handball court or similar playing area approximately 30-40 ft wide by 60-80 ft long. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.

\* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags, large cones and spray paint or chalk to mark the field(s). On hard black top surfaces, use large cones for marking both, court boundaries and goal areas.

**See Diagram 8 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (eight to 10) compete to score, specified number of points as they can within set time, by throwing the ball at their opponents' two captains ("Royals") standing inside their respective goal area within clearly marked smaller area or a circle with a radius of approximately 3-4 m or 10-12 ft. Both captains can move freely inside their designated area ("Royal Castle") and dodge the shots fired by the opposite team but must remain inside until hit by a ball. The goal areas are off limits for both attackers and defenders. All shots and defensive actions such as steals, interceptions and blocks must take place outside the goal areas.

The game starts with team captains trying to win first possession during a jump ball in the middle of the field. The game can be played according to no body contact rule or the official handball rules. Players are allowed to dribble, pass, catch and hold the ball for three (3) seconds and making three (3) steps with a ball. Kicking, double dribbling and

traveling create a turnover situation from the spot where it was committed. A free throw is a simple pass made by one player to another to restart the game. If the ball goes out of bounds, the game is restarted by a player from the opposite team with a throw-in made from the sideline where the ball left the field.

All shots taken should be made with one hand, preferably using overhand technique. A point is scored when either of the two captains is hit with a ball anywhere except the head. After each point, the team that was scored upon restarts the game with a throw-in executed by the team's other non-hit captain from within the goal area. If both are hit by the same shot, the throwing team receives two (2) points and the game is restarted by either captain. If the captain gets hit but manages to catch the ball no points are awarded and game continues without interruption.

A penalty shot is awarded and taken by the designated player from the line marking the goal area in two situations: (a) when a defender enters his/her goal area for the intentional purpose of keeping the opponents from scoring, and (b) when a defender fouls an offensive player who attempts to take a shot from the goal area line. Both captains must stand in the middle of their designated area until the referee blows a whistle for a penalty shot to be taken. After the whistle, goalies are free to escape the "bullet" but must remain within the goal area.

### **Variations:**

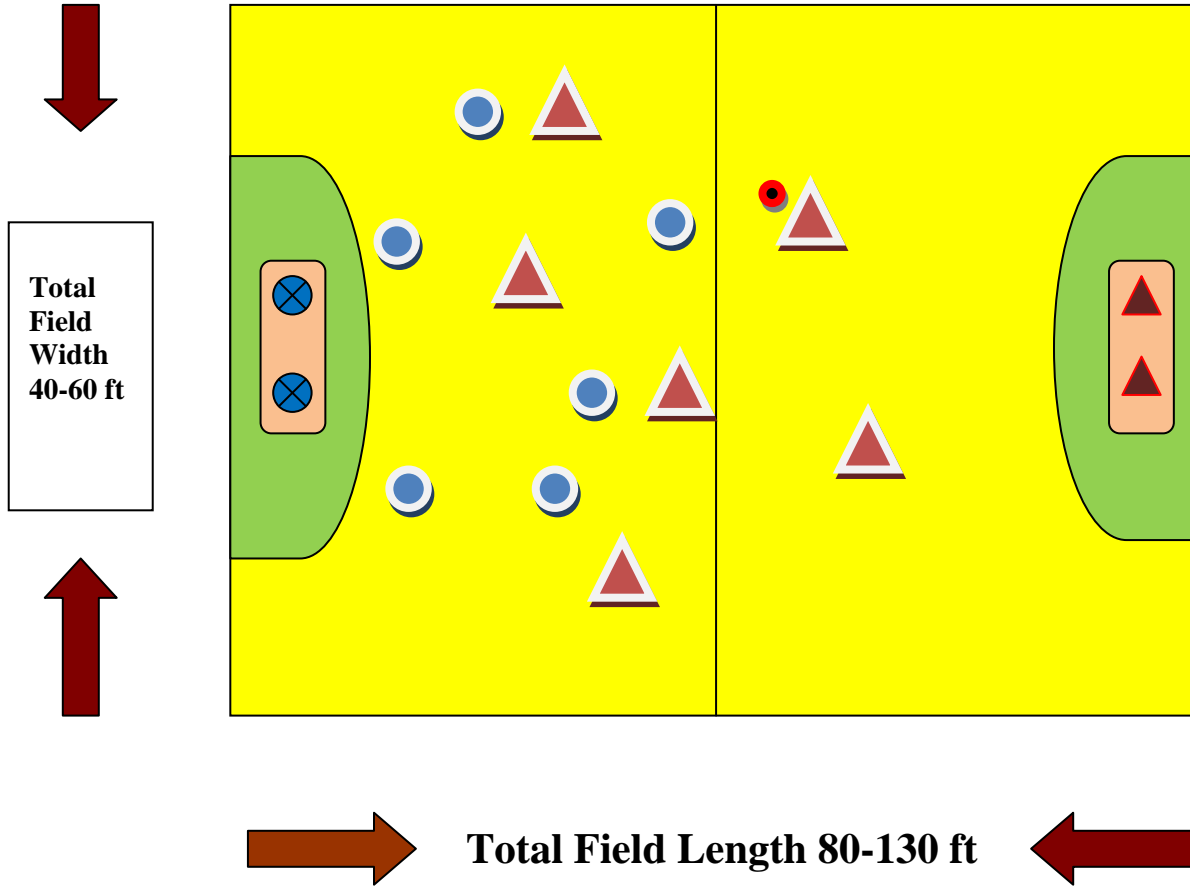
With time, change/increase difficulty by:

- a. making the goal area smaller and/or
- b. decreasing number of defenders per team and/or
- c. prohibiting dribbling and/or
- d. allowing for only jump shots or set shots and/or
- e. limiting number passes or time prior to shooting at the target and/or
- f. letting the players hold a ball for only one (1) second and/or
- g. decreasing number of captains from two to one, etc.






### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Half court individual defense ("person to person") or zone defense can be used.
- Rules should be simple to make fair and uncomplicated calls and can be modified according to participants' preparedness and coach's preferences.
- Challenge offensive players to use "piston" movement and attack the gaps.
- Encourage creativity (simple crosses between two players, pick and roll, screens, overload) in producing shooting opportunities.
- Emphasize holding the elbow high (above the shoulder) and ball high above the head prior to passing and/or throwing.
- Remind players often that passing is always faster than dribbling.
- While in defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the attacker and their own goalkeeper (captain), protecting their goalkeepers (captains) by continuous shifting, checking, blocking, challenging passing lines, intercepting long passes, etc.

## Diagram 8 Protect Your Royals Field Set-Up



### Legend:

-  - Team 1
-  - Team 2
-  - Handball
-  - Team 1 Captains (“Royals”)
-  - Team 2 Captains (“Royals”)

## **Lead-Up Game 9**

**Name of Activity:** Prisoners and Guards

**Purpose:**

To practice (a) individual as well as group defensive (footwork, shifting, closing gaps) and (b) offensive skills (various fakes) in a simple game like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous practice of basic defensive footwork and faking without the ball has taken place.

**Materials Needed:**

Enough cones or floor markers to establish boundaries, color pennies/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

\* *Indoors:* Use floor markers or small cones to create two to four (2-4) circular playing area(s) with a radius of 3-4 m or 10-12 ft. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.

\* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags, large cones, and/or spray paint to mark the fields. On the hard black top surfaces, use cones or spray paint/chalk to mark desirable number of circles.

**See Diagram 9 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants (6) compete to score points by breaking through each other defensive 6:0 like formations.

The game starts with one team positioned around circular playing area and facing inward while half of the other team is standing inside the circle facing outward. The other half awaits its turn and supports participating teammates. Such set-up creates 6 vs. 3 starting situation. On signal, players who were inside the circle (prisoners) try to run outside through gaps between defensive players while defensive players (guards) shuffle/shift sideways and try to close the existing gaps. If two neighboring defensive players shift fast enough to touch each other hands, offensive players must back up and try again. They can't dive low, slide into the floor, jump over defenders' hands or use body contact to force entry or to barge through. Once first group of players gets outside the circle, the second groups comes in and attempts to escape in similar manner by using variety of faking techniques and tactical strategies. Offensive players can ask for one time only 30 seconds time out to briefly discuss group actions. The game continues until all players escape or by set time. The team with the bigger number of escapees wins the game.

### **Variations:**

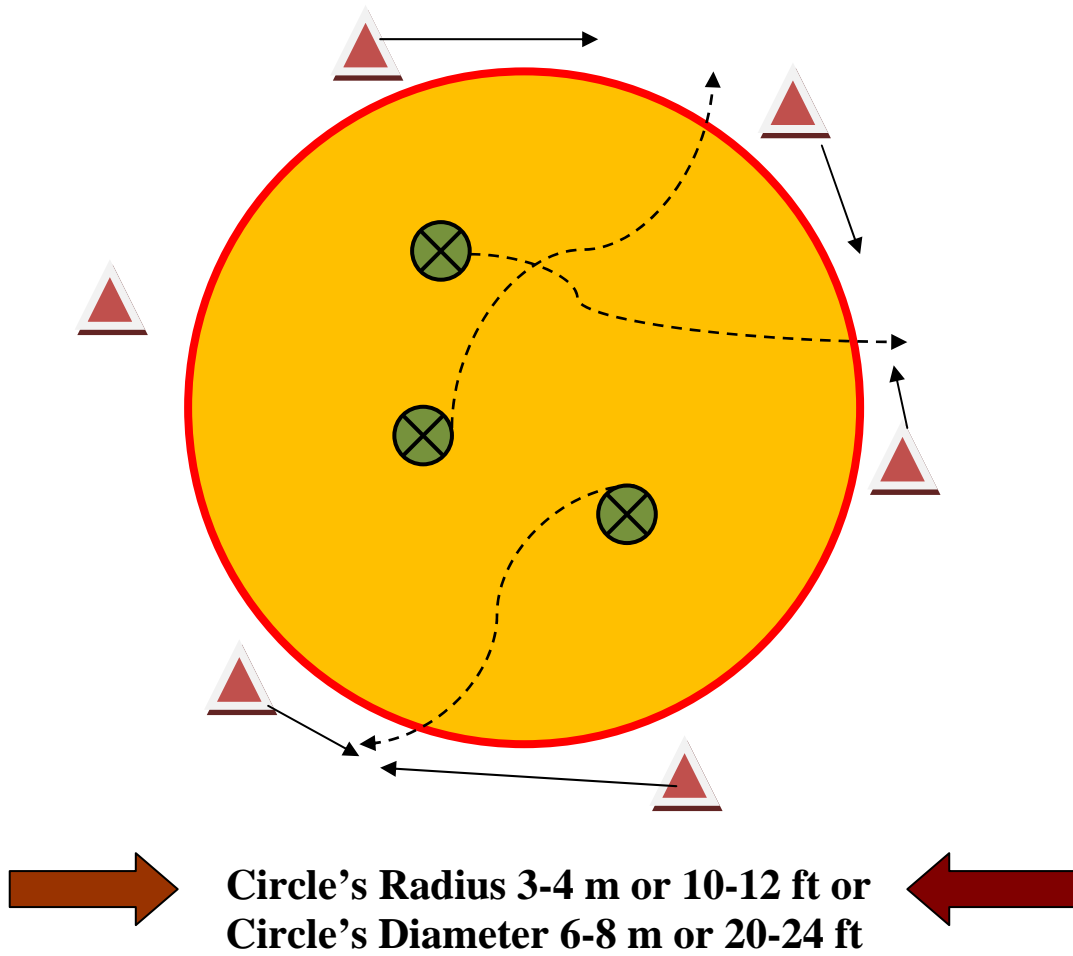
With time, change/increase difficulty by:

- a. increasing circle's radius which in turn will increase the length of circles perimeter and/or
- b. decreasing number of defenders and/or
- c. requiring offensive players to escape from the circle while dribble the ball, etc.

### **Teaching Suggestions:**

- Encourage players to take a time-out and discuss possible tactical solutions.
- Remind offensive players to experiment with variety of techniques, strategies and use rapid direction/tempo/rhythm/pattern changes to increase their chances.
- Challenge players to pass the ball to all teammates positioned in unguarded areas to receive the ball and not to just a few "friends."
- While in defense, stress the importance of proper footwork, cooperation with adjacent defenders, and verbal/visual communication between teammates.

## Diagram 9 Prisoners and Guards Field Set-Up



### Legend:

-  - Defensive Players
-  - Offensive Players

## **Lead-Up Game 10**

**Name of Activity:** Feed the Tigers

**Purpose of Activity:**

To practice (a) passing/catching, (b) individual defensive (marking), and (c) offensive skills (getting free) in a game-like situation.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous practice of basic defensive footwork, marking opponents, breaking free from individual marking, overhead passing has taken place.

**Materials Needed:**

One to two (1-2) soft-skinned handballs (Size 2 or 3) or a substitute ball for each game played, cones, color pennies/jerseys.

**Field Preparation:**

- \* *Indoors:* Use floor markers or small cones to create 2-4 circular playing area(s) with a radius of 3-4 m or 10-12 ft. Modify the field(s) size to your respective space availability.
- \* *Outdoors:* On grassy surfaces, use soccer flags, large cones, and/or spray paint to mark the fields. On the hard black top surfaces, use cones or spray paint/chalk to mark desirable number of circles.

**See Diagram 10 (attached) for more explanation.**

**Description of Idea:**

Two teams of equal numbers of participants five to seven (5-7) with two (2) neutral captains compete to score points by passing (“feeding”) a ball to players guarded closely by defenders who attempt to intercept those passes and/or deny a pass to reach a recipient.

The game starts with both teams positioned around circular playing area. Offensive players face inward while defensive players face outward. Such set-up creates 6 vs. 6 “person to person” starting situation. Two neutral captains stand inside the circle facing outward, each with one (1) handball. On signal, offensive players (“Tigers”) try to break free from their respective defenders and receive a pass from one the two neutral captains. If they catch a pass, they switch place with captain who “fed” them. Defensive players mark their opponents and try to deny a good pass and/or intercept the ball. If they make a “steal”, they switch with captain responsible for a bad pass. Both captains can freely move within the circle to find open offensive players. The game continues until all participants play at least once as a captain or by set time. Offense receives one point for

each successful catch while defense receives one (1) point for each interception. If the ball becomes loose and bounces back or rolls back into the circle, no points are awarded. All participants must remain outside the circle at all times. The game can be played according to no body contact rule or official handball rules based on players' readiness and coach's plans.

### **Variations:**

With time, change/increase difficulty by:

- a. requiring neutral captains to dribble their handballs prior to making a pass to offensive players and/or
- b. increasing number of captains from 2 to 3 or 4 and/or
- c. increase/decrease size of the circle and/or number of players per team and/or
- d. allow for a feed with a bounce pass and/or
- e. limiting offensive players' space to break free and receive the pass from circle's full perimeter to half, quarter, and finally 1/6 for 6 vs. 6 situations, etc.

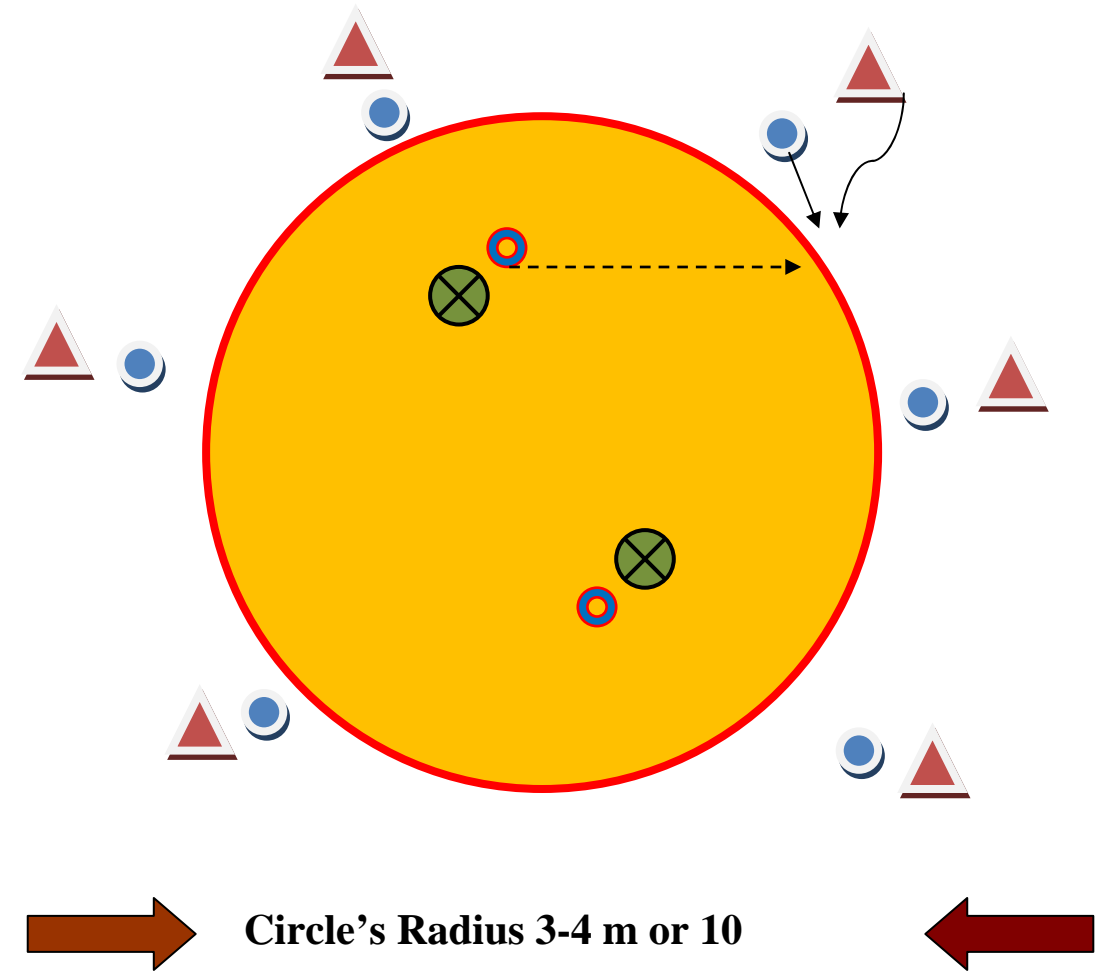
Also, this lead-up game can be used to practice "pivot" marking in two most common situations when defender assumes position either in front or directly behind the offensive player ("pivot"). In such case, both pivot and defensive player will face inward and see two neutral captains face to face.

### **Teaching Suggestions:**







- Individual defense ("person to person") without switching should be primarily used but switching opponents can be introduced as soon as players are ready and can handle it.
- While in defense, stress the importance of keeping their bodies between the attacker and the neutral captains operating inside the circle area. Defenders should keep an eye on both their opponents and neutral captains holding the ball. They need constantly reassess their position and change it continuously to remain not only in control but also to put offensive players in disadvantageous situations. Their main objectives are to deny the pass and possibly intercept the ball by correctly reading/anticipating the pass' path.
- While in offence, encourage constant movement, quick position changes, simple fakes without the ball to break free from guards, using other players' motions to gain body position advantage that could be enough to catch the pass.
- Remind neutral captains of using their peripheral vision to "scan the horizon" for more than one available receivers. Emphasize the importance of timing and variety of passes that make defending challenging or easier.
- When practicing guarding pivots, have players practice both scenarios: in front and behind the pivot. Make them be aware of their pivot's physical attributes as well as technical/tactical strong and weak sides that can be exploited in defense (i.e., left/right-handed, tall/short, fast/slow, can turn both sides/always turn right, feels tempo/usually late to react).
- When practicing positional play as pivots, allow players to experiment in finding their own solutions to very unique and often rapidly changing situations that are associated in

playing this position. Stress significance of observing the field of play, “fighting” for a body advantage, catching passes with one and two hands, etc.

### Diagram 10 “Feed the Tigers” Field Set-Up



#### Legend:

-  - Team 1 (defenders)
-  - Team 2 (offensive players)
-  - Handball
-  - Neutral Captains
-  - Ball's path
-  - Players' paths