

Counter Attack: Designing the Technical Component by Guy Baker, Head Coach, Women's National Team

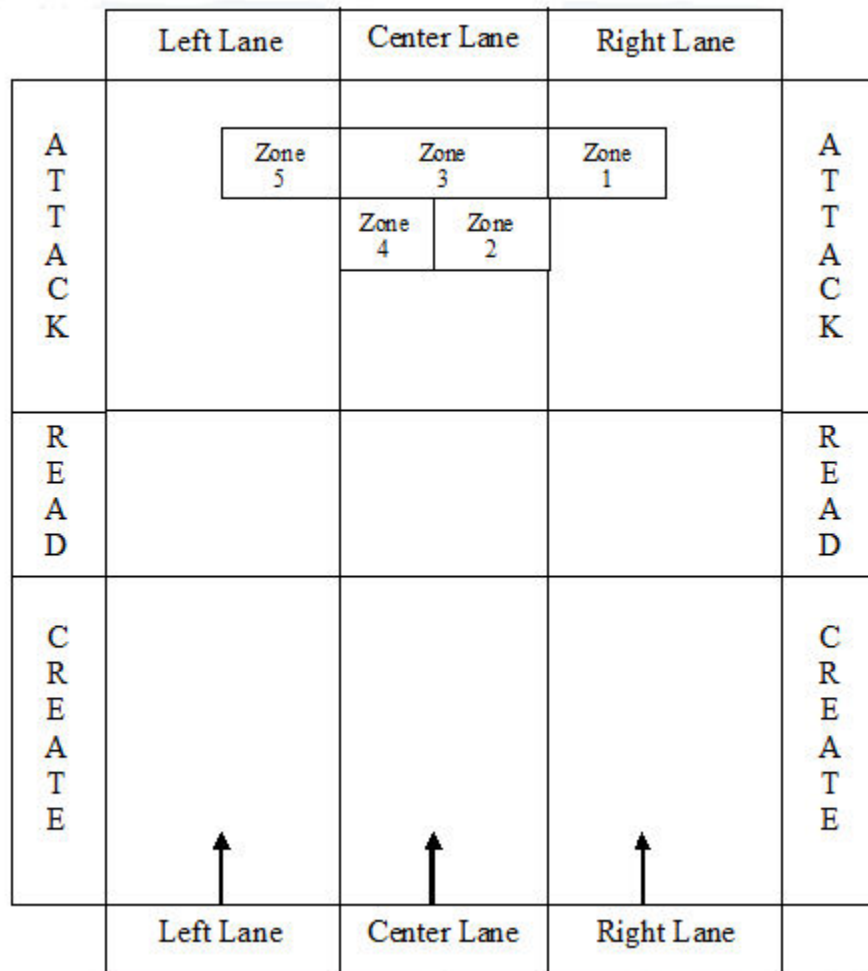
TERMINOLOGY

Lanes	Three vertical counter attack lanes
Right Lane	Right defensive side line to right defensive post
Center Lane	Right defensive post to left defensive post
Left Lane	Left defensive post to left side line
Lines	Two counter attack lines
1st Line	First players in the right, center and left lanes
2nd Line	Second players in the right, center and left lanes
Categories	Three counter attack categories
Primary	1st Line advantage
Secondary	2nd Line advantage
Transition	No advantage
Sections	Three horizontal counter attack sections
Create Section	Defensive goal line to the defensive ten meter line
Read Section	Defensive ten meter line to the offensive ten meter line
Attack Section	Offensive ten meter line to the offensive goal line
Zones	Five designated areas inside the Attack Section
Zone 1	Two meter line to the four meter line from the offensive right post to three meters outside the offensive right post
Zone 2	Four meter line to the six meter line from the center of the goal to the offensive right post
Zone 3	Two meter line to the four meter line from the offensive right post to the offensive left post
Zone 4	Four meter line to the six meter line from the center of the goal to the offensive left post
Zone 5	Two meter line to the four meter line from the offensive left post to three meters outside the offensive left post
Advantage Rules	Three counter attack advantage rules
#1	Ball is pressed, move to the ball
#2	Ball is not pressed, commit defensive player then move away
#3	Defense has not committed, accelerate to commit the defensive players
	and then apply Advantage Rules 1 or 2

Vertical Direction Goal Line to Goal Line Direction

Horizontal Direction Side Line to Side Line Direction

COUNTER ATTACK DIAGRAM



DESIGNING the TECHNICAL COMPONENT

Before establishing the technical component, the tactical component must be determined. Listed below are our Counter Attack Philosophy and Tactical Principles.

Philosophy

1. A great Counter Attack will begin on defense

2. A great counter attack will be established in the first quarter
3. A great counter attack will have at a minimum one player with an advantage
4. A great counter attack will have proper spacing and move players quickly into the offense
5. A great counter attack will designate a tactical role for each player
6. A great counter attack will have each player executing their role

The order is important. Each step is interdependent upon each other. First, defense is the most important factor for a great counter attack. Next, a team must be in top physical shape to counter attack for four quarters. Next, there must be a commitment to creating advantages. Next, the quicker the offense can set up, the more time on the shot clock to attack. Next, determine the role for each player, starting with defense proceeding through the counter attack and concluding with the offense. Each role must connect to each other. Next, design and implement the physical, technical and psychological components, in order for each player to execute their tactical role.

Tactical Principles

1. Position players defensively that will enhance all aspects of the counter attack
2. Cut off at x1 and x5
3. Outlet the ball to the Line with the advantage
4. Locate the ball, the advantage and the center in the Read Section
5. 1st Line establishes Zones 1, 3 and 5
6. In order to shoot the ball in Zone 2 or 4, the player must have time to pick up or catch the ball and move forward

Again the order is important and each step is interdependent upon each other. The tactical principles support the philosophy of the counter attack. Number 1 connects the defense to the counter attack. Number 2 covers two important areas of the counter attack; maintaining a 2nd Line Center Lane advantage and creating the proper 2nd Line spacing. Number 3, determines where the goalkeeper should pass the ball. Number 4 is critical. Each player must be moving in a vertical direction with their heads up. Number 5 creates the vertical and horizontal spacing that is important in every counter attack. Number 6 ensures there will always be defensive balance and connects the counter attack back to the defense.

Determining the Technical Skills

The counter attack technical component is divided into eight categories.

1. Techniques without the ball
2. Starts
3. Outlets
4. Goalkeeper Outlet Passes
5. Dribbling
6. Passing

7. Shooting
8. Transition

The techniques without the ball can also support other counter attack technical skills. For example; Head up Free is a technique without the ball that also supports dribbling the ball, horizontal start, cut off-swim... Water Polo Backstroke is a technique that supports the Stomach to Back Outlet. The Up and Slide Movement supports Horizontal to Vertical and Vertical Passing and Shooting.

Technical Skills Chart

Techniques w/out the ball	Starts	Outlets	Goalkeeper Outlet Passes	Dribbling	Passing	Shooting	Transition
Free	Horizontal	Stomach to Back	Stomach to Back Outlet	Dribble	Outside Hand	Horizontal	Center Entry Pass
Head Up Free	180° Change of Direction	Stomach to Back 2nd Line Center Lane	Stomach to Back 2nd Line Center Lane	Ball in Hand	Inside Hand	Horizontal to Vertical	Drawing a Foul
Water Polo Backstroke	Vertical to Horizontal	Button Hook	Button Hook	Dribble to Ball in Hand	Push	Vertical	Pressure Pass
Head Up Free to Water Polo Backstroke	Cut Off	Catch, Turn, Look & Go			Pressure Base Position		Cross Over Release
Forward Lunge		Catch, Turn, Look & Pass			Pressure Step Away		Post Drive
45° Lunge					Pressure Roll Away		Vertical Passing
Backward Lunge					Pressure Runaway		Vertical Shooting
45° Change of Direction					Horizontal to Vertical		Center Base Position
Pivot over the Hips					Vertical		Center Snap to Ball
Up and Slide							Center Turn, Spin

Movement							and Seal Movement
Horizontal to Vertical							Center Layout Shot
							Center ½ Turn
							Center Kick Out Pass

Brief Descriptions of the Technical Skills

Head up free

1. Horizontal Position
2. Head up high
3. Chest High
4. Elbows high with quick and shorter strokes
5. Head on a swivel
6. Game Example
 - A. Head up free is the primary stroke of the counter attack
 - B. Dribbling

Water Polo Backstroke

1. Incline position
2. Shoulders slightly out of the water
3. Head up and on a swivel
4. Shorter and wider arm strokes
5. Eggbeater Kick
6. Game Example
 - A. Stomach to Back Outlet

Head Up Free to Water Polo Backstroke

1. Horizontal Position to Incline Position
2. Alternate Head Up Free and Water Polo Backstroke
3. Head Up Free for 3-5 strokes to Water Polo Backstroke for 3-5 strokes...
4. Important to maintain speed while in Water Polo Backstroke position
5. Game Example
6. Stomach to Back Outlet

Forward Lunge

1. Horizontal Position

2. Start Coil Position
3. Lunge forward (spring) with breast kick
4. Reach forward with arm slightly out of the water
5. Other arm pulls under the water
6. Glide, reset to Coil Position and repeat
7. Alternate the arm that reaches forward
8. Game Example
 - A. Horizontal Start
 - B. 180° Change of Direction Start
 - C. Vertical to Horizontal Start
 - D. Ball in Hand
 - E. Outside Hand Pass
 - F. Inside Hand Pass
 - G. Push Pass
 - H. Horizontal Shooting

45° Lunge

1. Horizontal Position
2. Start Coil Position
3. Lunge to the right at a 45° angle
4. Reach with arm slightly out of the water
5. Reset to Coil Position facing forward
6. Repeat with Lunge to the left...
7. Game Example
 - A. Cut Off Start
 - B. 45° Change of Direction

Backward Lunge

1. Incline Position
2. Lunge backwards with a breast kick
3. Start with arms sculling
4. Add strong arm in position of holding the ball overhead and off arm sculling
5. Game Example
 - A. Pressure Pass Base Position
 - B. Step Away Pressure Pass
 - C. Roll Away Pressure Pass
 - D. Run Away Pressure Pass

45° Change of Direction

1. Horizontal Position
2. Head up Free
3. Change Direction with 45° Lunge
4. Game Example

- A. Advantage Rule #1: Ball is pressed, move to the ball

Pivot over the Hips

1. Horizontal Position
2. Start Coil Position
3. Bring legs up into stomach area
4. Pivot over the Hips and Change Direction
5. Complete pivot with forward lunge
6. Game Example
 - A. Change of Direction Start

Up and Slide Movement

1. Vertical Position
2. Rise up with a breast kick
3. On fall, slide forward with a breast kick and reach forward with the off arm slightly under the water
4. Reset and Repeat
5. Game Example
 - A. Vertical Passing and Shooting

Horizontal Position to Vertical Position

1. Head Up Free to Up and Slide Movement
2. When moving into the vertical position; rise up with a breast kick
3. On fall, slide forward with a breast kick and reach forward with the off arm slightly under the water
4. Game Example
 - A. Horizontal to Vertical Passing and Shooting

**The Up and Slide Movement covers Vertical Passing and Shooting, whether the player starts vertically or changes from a horizontal position to a vertical position. Up and Slide Movement, Passing and Shooting will be covered in detail in the April 2008 Offense Technical Component article.*

Horizontal Start

1. Forward Lunge with Head Up Free
2. Game Example
 - A. Perimeter Press Base Position to Horizontal Start

180° Change of Direction Start

1. Start begins facing the opposite direction of the counter attack

2. Pivot over the hips to change direction
3. Forward Lunge with Head Up Free
4. Game Example
 - A. Defensive player is defending the offensive player's drive, when there is a shot or turnover. The defensive player must change direction to start the counter attack

Vertical to Horizontal Start

1. Start begins in vertical position
2. Forward lunge with Head Up Free
3. Game Example
 - A. Defensive player not in Perimeter Press Base Position at the start of the counter attack

Cut Off Start

1. 45° Lunge with Head Up Free
2. Game Example
 - A. x1 and x5 counter attack starts

Stomach to Back Outlet

1. 1st or 2nd Line Outlet
 - A. 1st Line Right, Center or Left Lanes
 - B. 2nd Line Right or Left Lanes
2. Cut Off Start
3. Defensive player pauses to move to the inside position
4. As the defensive player is transitioning from the outside defensive position to the inside position; change quickly from Head Up Free to Water Polo Backstroke
5. Turn towards the inside (goalkeeper) when changing from head up free to water polo backstroke
6. Receive Outlet Pass from Goalkeeper
7. Outlet pass either wet to the outside position or wet overhead
8. After receiving outlet pass, always turn away from the defense

Stomach to Back Outlet: 2nd Line Center Lane

1. 2nd Line Outlet
2. Advantage 2nd Line Center Lane
3. Head Up Free to Water Polo Backstroke
4. Receive Outlet Pass from the Goalkeeper at or before the defensive 10 meter line
5. Catch, Turn and Look Technique
 - A. Catch outlet pass
 - B. Turn with ball
 - C. Look, as turning, and read the defense when completing turn

- D. Catch, Turn, Look and Go: Defense is not applying pressure on the ball
- E. Catch, Turn, Look and Pass: Defense is applying pressure on the ball
- 6. Game Example
 - A. Defender creates an advantage and receives an outlet pass from the Goalkeeper
 - B. The Catch, Turn and Look technique must be executed each time

Button Hook Outlet

1. 2nd Line Outlet
2. Cut Off Start
3. Defensive player is cut off and remains in the outside position of moves to the front position
4. At half court, complete 180° turn towards the goalkeeper to receive the outlet pass
5. Horizontal position to Center Base Position
6. Goalkeeper pass is on the hand
7. Locate defense
8. Turn with the ball to the outside
9. Outlet pressed
 - A. Pressure Pass or Draw Foul
10. Outlet not pressed
 - A. Turn, Look and Go
11. Game Example
 - A. Cut Off Start at x1.
 - B. Defensive player remains in the outside position
 - C. 2nd Line Right Lane Outlet at half court

Dribble

1. Chest up and high
2. Head over the ball
3. Quick strokes with elbow high
4. Strong flutter kick
5. A player must be able to look forward, backward, left and right while dribbling.

Ball in Hand

1. Palm ball (Cup the ball if hand is too small)
2. Stroke with the ball
3. As ball is coming out of the water, lunge forward and stroke with off arm
4. Repeat
5. Game Example
 - A. A player has to be able to move in a vertical direction, with the Ball in Hand, as the pressure is coming or prior to the pressure arriving.
 - B. Ball in Hand is an excellent technique for a defensive player that is stunting to slow down the advancement of the ball. By using the Ball in

Hand technique, the player with the ball will be able to maintain the vertical direction and will be able to pass if the defensive player applies pressure or will be able to continue in a vertical direction if the defensive player does not apply pressure.

- C. Ball in Hand when preparing for counter attack shot

Dribble to Ball in Hand

1. Dribble for 4 strokes to Ball in Hand for 2 strokes
2. Repeat
3. Game Example
 - A. Primary Counter Attack
 - B. Player with the ball is open
 - C. Player goes from dribbling to ball in hand to up and slide to shot

Outside Hand Pass

1. All passes are with the strong hand
2. Outside Hand=Strong hand away from the defensive player
3. Dribble to Ball in Hand
4. With ball in hand pick up ball and forward lunge up and out to outside hand pass
5. Game Example
 - A. Primary Counter Attack
 - B. Player in the Right Lane has the ball
 - C. Defense from the left is close to applying pressure on the ball
 - D. Player with the ball makes outside hand pass to the player moving to the ball in the Center Lane

Inside Hand Pass

1. All passes are with the strong hand
2. Inside Hand = Strong hand closest to the defensive player
3. Dribble to Ball in Hand
4. With ball in hand pick up ball to forward lunge up and out to inside hand pass
5. Game Example
 - A. Secondary Counter Attack
 - B. Player in the Center Lane has the ball
 - C. Defense from the right is close to applying pressure on the ball
 - D. Player with the ball makes inside hand pass to the player moving to the ball in the Right Lane

Push Pass

1. All passes are with the strong hand
2. Push Pass = Forward Pass
3. Dribble to Ball in Hand

4. With ball in hand pick up the ball to forward lunge up and out to push pass

Pressure Pass Base Position

1. Incline Position
2. Ball overhead away from the defense
3. Off hand sculling
4. Use breast kicks to create and maintain separation from the defense

Step Away Pressure Pass

1. All passes are with the strong hand
2. Pressure Pass-Step Away = Strong hand away from defense
3. Step Away from the defense
 - A. Right Hand Player pressure is applied from the left
 - B. Left Hand player pressure is applied from the right
4. Dribble to Ball in Hand
5. Defense is applying pressure on the ball
6. Go from Ball in Hand moving in a vertical direction to Pressure Pass Base Position moving in a horizontal direction
7. Step Away Pressure Pass Steps
 - A. Ball in Hand
 - A. Simultaneously; push ball away from the defensive player, drop hips into a vertical position and from vertical position step away from the defensive player
 - B. Quickly move into Pressure Pass Base Position

Roll Away Pressure Pass

1. All passes are with the strong hand
2. Pressure Pass Roll Away = strong hand closest to the defense
3. Roll Away from the defense
 - A. Right Hand Player pressure is applied from the right
 - B. Left Hand Player pressure is applied from the left
4. Dribble to Ball in Hand
5. Defense is applying pressure on the ball
6. Go from Ball in Hand moving in a vertical direction to Pressure Pass Base Position moving in a horizontal direction
7. Roll Away Pressure Pass Steps
 - A. Ball in Hand
 - B. Roll Away, (move ball away), from the defensive player applying pressure
 - C. Quickly Roll Away into Pressure Pass Base Position

Run Away Pressure Pass

1. All passes are with the strong hand
2. Run Away Pressure Pass = Defense is applying pressure from the front
3. Run Away from the defense
 - A. 180° Change of Direction
 - B. Horizontal Position moving in a vertical direction to Incline Position moving in the opposite vertical direction
4. Dribble to Ball in Hand
5. Defense is applying pressure on the ball
6. Go from Ball in Hand moving in a vertical direction to Pressure Pass Base Position moving in the opposite vertical direction
7. Run Away Pressure Pass Steps
 - A. Ball in Hand
 - B. Pick Up ball and Pivot over the Hips into Pressure Pass Base Position
 - C. Use breast kicks to maintain separation from the defense

Horizontal Shooting

1. Dribble to Ball in Hand
2. Forward lunge up and out with ball
3. Maintain semi-horizontal position
4. Keep ball overhead away from the defense
5. Use breast kicks to maintain separation from the defense