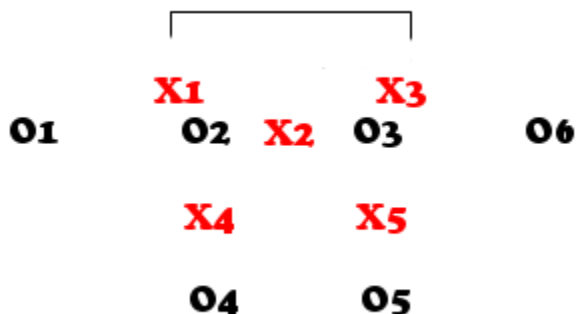


## Tips for Playing Five on Six by Terry Schroeder, Head Coach, Men's National Team

**Man down defense is one of the most crucial parts of any water polo game.** Throughout my career as a player and a coach I have come to understand that a great 5 on 6 usually means the difference in a game (especially a big game). In 1984 and 1988 our Olympic team had one of the best percentages in the Olympic tournament during our 5 on 6 defense. I believe our 5 man defense was one of the big reasons why we won medals in both Olympic games. As I watched tapes from the 2004 Olympic Games, I believe that the Hungarians won the gold medal because they had the best 5 man defense in the tournament.

**Here are some tips on playing great 5 man defense.**

- Always think about legs and lanes!
- Get yourself into passing lanes whenever possible
- Always know where your legs are – your legs will determine where you can jump
- When your man on the perimeter does not have the ball you are in a head in (towards the post) feet out position, so that when your man receives the ball or even as the ball is in the air towards your man you are jumping out towards him/her (in the shooting lane) over your legs.
- Avoid too much swimming – use your legs to jump
- Avoid getting into a vertical position – even when shot blocking you should be ready (one leg behind you) so you can explode back over your legs and return to the post.
- Focus on shot blocking – funnel the ball towards the center of the cage.
- Good shot blocking means staying on balance on your legs.
- 5 on 6 takes great team work move in tandem one player releases another – never leave the post open. Do not allow any goals form the post.



### Basic 5 on 6 Defense

- X1 and X3 MUST take away nearside shot. Jump to near side lane and get yourself on balance. Depending on how far you have to jump you may have to go with your near side arm. X1 use right arm first and X3 uses left arm first. This will help you be balanced after you jump out. Then if possible you can switch to matching arms.
- Bottom line use whichever arm you are comfortable with but make sure that we do not get scored on near side.
- If anything give up a little more room to the 5 man on the perimeter. Make him/her shoot through at least two sets of shot blockers arms and a goalie.
- X1, X2, X3 (back line) needs to communicate any shifts or rotations
- Center defender be careful not to sit in front of the goalie.
- Look to move and knock down when possible, however, do not get pulled out of the shot blocking zone you are responsible for.
- Watch the eyes of the perimeter players they will usually tell you where the next pass is going. Very few players throw a look away pass on the 6 on 5

Your energy level and awareness needs to increase during the 5 man defense. Some teams/players get frustrated when they get kicked out and instead of focusing on the task at hand (playing great 5 man defense) they get frustrated and pout about the call or argue with one another. Usually, this team will get scored on while they are down. Other teams/players welcome the challenge of being down a man. They realize that getting kicked out is a part of the game and they know if they can stop the opposing team while a man down the other team will more than likely get frustrated and it will become even harder for them to score.

**Welcome the challenge!** Get excited about playing 5 man defense. If you and your team can win the battle of 5 on 6 vs. 6 on 5 you will win the big games.