

Saint Albans Lacrosse



Lacrosse – 101

A Primer for Parents

01 March 2008

Disclaimer

- **Material in this presentation has not been endorsed by anybody except the author (for whatever that is worth); don't hassle the NCAA, IAC, St. Albans School, or our coaches over any mistakes!**
- ***The author appreciates readers calling to his attention mistakes, information that could benefit from clarification, or additional topics that should be addressed***
- **With warm regards, Craig Crumley, 01 March 2008**

Why This Course?

- Learn the true meaning of play calls by the coaches? (We'd have to kill you if you found out ...)
- Help the Baseball parents figure out why center and right field at the stadium always look like a herd of Rhinos have passed through?
- Get credit towards Lax Swami certification?
- **The more you know the better you can understand and appreciate what your son is taking on, be that much more supportive of him and our program, and enjoy the play and strategy that goes into our games!**
- We've posted this presentation on-line so you can read and refer to it at you leisure; our hope is that the course is self-explanatory, but questions are very welcome
- ***Major rule changes for 2008 are summarized in the first section of this briefing; for those who want more information, the complete course follows in the second section.***

Short Course

What's Different in 2008 (1): Face-Offs

- **Face-Offs:** NCAA rules committee felt that teams were crossing the line of fairness as they tried to gain an advantage on face-offs – there are too many instances of “jumping the gun” (false-starts), while rumors of players “shaving the rules” while setting up to face off (cheating if you want to be direct about it) continued to surface.
- Rationale is to make jumping the gun (and trying to gain an unfair advantage) on face-offs more painful than it is worth (we already have strong penalties for doctoring a stick to gain an unfair advantage).
- **How it works:** a Face-Off player called for not being set; taking an illegal position with his body, hands, or stick; or who moves before the whistle starts play (an illegal procedure penalty) must leave the field immediately
 - Other team immediately starts with possession
 - Difference from last year is not simply that possession is awarded to the other team, but that the offending team now faces a brief Man-Down situation until a relief for the face-off man can get back into play
 - A Wing player called for crossing the wing line early (also an illegal procedure) ends with same result; Face-Off player must leave field immediately, and a brief Man-Down situation ensues

What's Different in 2008 (2): Pace of Play

- **Possession:** NCAA Rules Committee felt that the pace of play should be intensified, a trend that has been seen in rule changes over the past few years. An area that was open for change was how the 10-second rule is enforced for play outside the attack box.
- Rationale is to make it harder to keep offensive possession following a good defensive check, or a bad pass.
- How it works:
 - Once ball leaves attack box for any reason 10-second count starts the moment the ball lands on the ground outside the box
 - Difference from last year is that 10-second count used to begin once a team took possession; with new rule, offense is under more pressure to regain possession and return to the box
 - For example, once ball is on the ground outside the box, and an offensive player is 4-seconds away from it, he essentially has only 6-seconds to get it back in the box or face turning it over to the defensive team
 - For consistency, rules for Clearing have also been changed; once a ball crosses midfield not in possession because of a bad pass or being checked out of a stick, offensive team has only 10-seconds from moment the ball hits the ground to get it into the box. (The 20-second count to get to midfield isn't changed).

Long Course

Governing Rules

- Depending upon the conference, High Schools play under rules set by one of two governing bodies: the NCAA, or state High School leagues
- Both sets of rules are very similar, and emphasize quality of play and competitiveness; as our sons move into college, the real difference they find is the level of play, not the rules
- St Albans, as with major private/parochial school conferences in the Washington-Baltimore area, uses NCAA rules, modified with shorter quarters (12-minute rather than 15-minute):
 - This has the advantage of getting our players used to college rules
 - Games against IAC, MIAA, and WCAC schools will be governed by NCAA rules
- Public schools and some independents are governed by state league rules:
 - Very close to the modified NCAA rules, but generally lag a couple of years in picking-up the most recent rule changes
 - Away-games against non-IAC/MIAA/WCAC independents, Virginia and Maryland public schools normally follow the governing body for that state
 - *This is usually something that only the coaches worry about.*
- Out of season leagues used to follow state rules; however, most leagues – especially during summer play – now follow NCAA rules
- International play (including US Lacrosse national teams) is conducted under a slightly different set of rules, which won't be covered in this briefing

Zebras and Related Animals

- Rules call for three uniformed officials: referee, umpire, and field judge; games can be played with only two of the three present
- You won't see much of a difference in how the officials work the field; all three officials are capable of competently calling any penalty; if there's a dispute, the referee's decisions over-rule those of umpire and field-judge
- Two other officials are covered in the rules: time-keeper, and scorer:
 - Home school normally provides these individuals
 - Responsible for keeping game time and penalty time, running the horn (substitutions and period end), and tabulating penalties on individual players (5 personal fouls in a game, and you're out)
 - Don't officiate as such, but are responsible for calling early re-entry by penalized players and illegal substitutions to attention of officials.
- St. Albans sets high standards for sportsmanship; parents should follow our sons' example:
 - *Don't ride the refs!* Almost are former collegiate and club players; more than a few were All-Americans; many still play and are ranked Grand-Masters; they know the game, cold; they are NOT prejudiced against our sons
 - *Don't mess with the timekeeper or scorer!* These folks aren't professionals; it isn't easy to maintain the focus to do these jobs right each and every time

The Well-Equipped Player

- **Our boys don't go on the field without the right protective equipment:**
 - **Helmet (“Casque”) with mouth-guard**
 - **Gloves, arm-pads, and shoulder-pads; some players also wear rib-pads**
 - **Something for a young man's most sensitive area (parents are always amazed when their son comes off the field in a heap, and they find out he “forgot” to wear a box)**
 - **Goalies get a bye on the arm-pads and shoulder-pads, but wear a chest pad and a gorge (throat protection) because of the threat from shots**
 - **Penalties are imposed for not using a mouth-guard, or for altering gear (cutting down pads or gloves)**
- **Every player should have a spare stick for games (broken-in with similar “feel” to his normal stick)**
- **Team must wear equipment that conforms to rules for dominant colors (StA's are navy blue and white; gray is allowed for sweats); “wild” colors for thermals, under-armour, sweats, and shoes is normally discouraged (ask captains or coaches if there is a question of style)**
- **Word to the wise: keep an eye on the condition of your son's helmet:**
 - **While St. Albans issues helmets, many boys buy their own so they can play in school colors out of season**
 - **Any helmet should be refurbished at least once every three years**
 - **Buying a new helmet every other year makes sure that the dings, dents, and worn pads don't turn a minor injury into something major**

Team Composition

- High School Team Strength is normally around 35-40 players (for comparison, college teams often field 50 or more players)
- Four primary positions:
 - Attack: offensive, generally plays on opponent's half of field
 - Midfield ("Middies"): offensive & defensive, plays entire length of field
 - Defense ("Poles"): defensive, generally plays on own half of field
 - Goal ("Tender"): defensive, plays on own half of field
- Three specialty midfield positions:
 - Face-off Specialist ("FOG" or "FOGO" – the face-off guy): midfielder who takes face-offs at start of each half and following goals
 - Long-stick Midfielder ("LSM"): uses defense-sized stick, takes face-offs from wings, and provides a fourth long-stick on defense
 - Short-stick Defenseman ("Rope-Middie or SSD"): Midfielder specializing in defensive play
- Full strength is ten men on the field: three Attackmen, three Midfielders, three Defensemen, and a Goalie; a fully equipped Goalie must always be on the field regardless of the penalty situation

Team Composition (continued)

- **Midfield imposes the greatest demands for conditioning, and these players are substituted more frequently than other positions; Midfielders usually play in “lines” of three players who practice together and provide balanced capabilities (ball handling, shooting, defense)**
- **Specialist players (FOG, LSM, SSD) substitute for Midfielders as needed.**
- **Almost all teams have specialist teams for Man-Up and Man-Down play; these will normally be the hottest sticks for offensive work, and the gnarliest poles and SSDs for defensive work**
- **Rules prescribe three stick types: short (Attackmen / Midfielders); long (Defenders / LSM); goal (Goalies); maximum of four long sticks on field; goal stick must be on field at all times**
- **Rules mandate that all players must be fully equipped when on the field (basic equipment, except stick length, is the same for all players except the Goalie)**

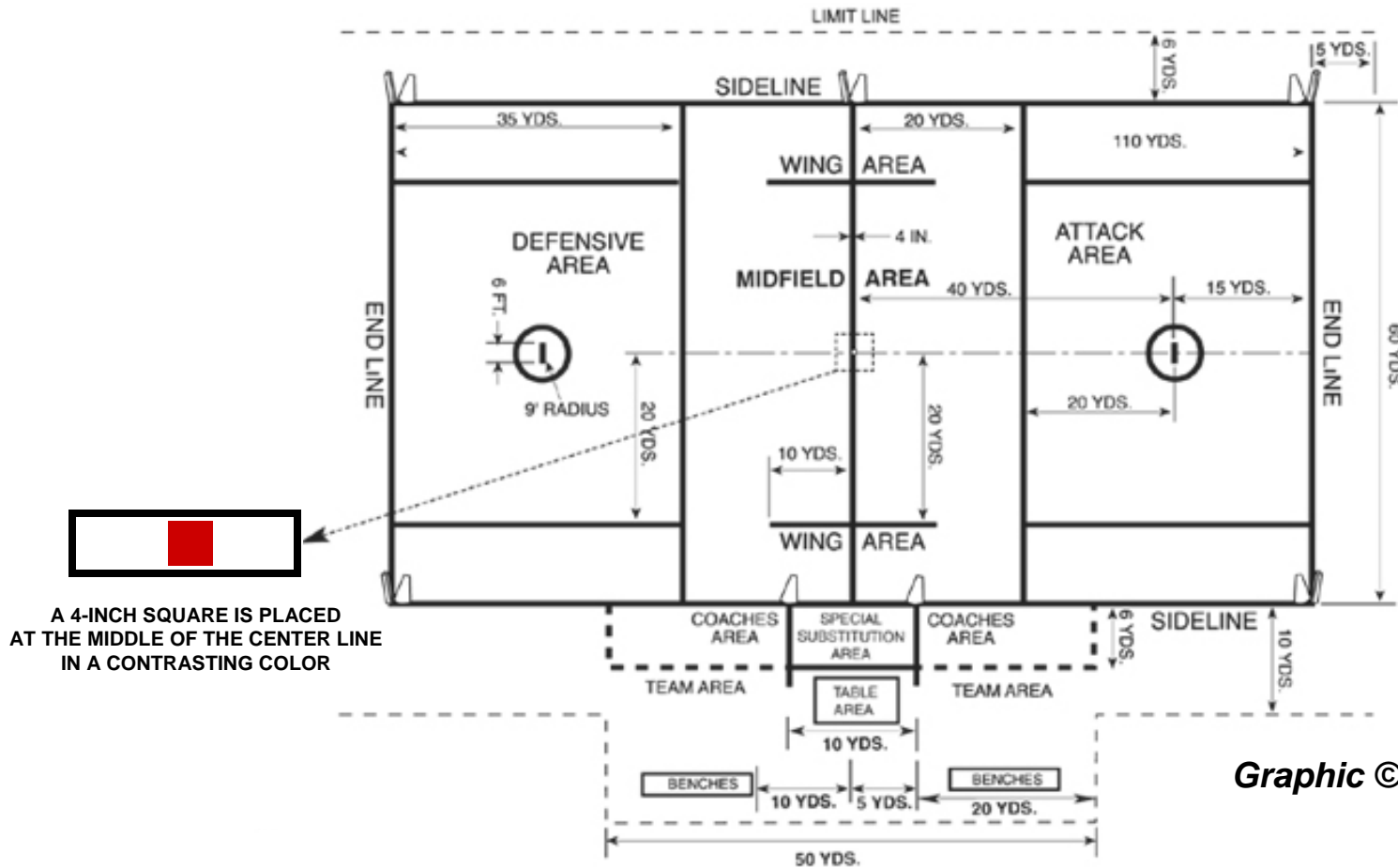
Basic Play

- **Ball is advanced by carrying in stick (“cradling”), passing, or kicking**
- **Use of hands to propel or control ball is prohibited**
- **Stick checks are made to stick or hands (not to body) when within 5-yards of the ball (“hands” usually is interpreted as including the lower part of the forearm); note that a player doesn’t have to be in possession of the ball to be checked**
- **Body checks are made to front of player, from shoulders to waist, without leaving the feet, when within 5-yards of the ball**
- **When player is more than 5-yards from the ball, equal and opposite pressure is permitted; pushing or bullying is a no-no**
- **Think basketball for screens and picks – stationary is good, moving is bad**
- **No play allowed if you have dropped or broken your stick**

Scoring and Stats

- Goal is scored when the *entire* ball crosses the plane of the goal; a ball that strikes the white line in front of the goal but doesn't completely cross the plane of the goal does not count as a score. And, the issue of who gave impetus to the ball doesn't matter – own-goals do happen
- Shot is called by the officials when player attempts a goal (doesn't include a pass that goes near the goal); Shot on Goal is a statistic for a an accurate shot that should be in the cage were it not for the goalie
- A Goalie is credited with a save if he stops or deflects a shot (wide shots – not on goal – aren't credited)
- Every team keeps reams of stats; six are especially important:
 - Goals (ours) / Shots (ours): higher the ratio, the better; **OFFENSIVE POWER**
 - Points: a player gets one point for a goal; if another player directly assists the score with a feed, he also gets a point; **OFFENSIVE POWER**
 - Face-offs: credit is given when a team gains possession of the ball from a face-off (any player, not just the FOG); **CONTROL OF PLAY**
 - Ground Balls: basically, a player gets credit for a ground ball when he picks up a loose ball; **CONTROL OF PLAY**
 - Turnovers: when a player causes the ball carrier to “cough-up” a ball, or intercepts a pass, so that his team gains control; **DEFENSIVE POWER**
 - Saves (ours) / Shots on Goal (theirs): higher ratio, the better; **DEFENSIVE POWER**
- **Lacrosse is a game of percentages – dominance of the basics strongly indicates propensity for winning**

NCAA Field of Play



Graphic © NCAA 2005

Game Time

- **Four 12-minute periods (quarters)**
 - **2-minute intermission between 1st-2nd and 3rd-4th periods**
 - **10-minute intermission between halves**
- **Teams swap goals after each period**
- **Clock runs except when play is suspended:**
 - **Following goals, while players re-set for face-off**
 - **Following an out-of-bounds pass, play, or shot**
 - **During general substitutions following an out of bounds along the sidelines (the “horn”)**
 - **While penalties are enforced**
 - **When play is stopped for injuries**
- **Each team gets two time-outs per half; these can only be taken when the team has possession of the ball in their attack zone**

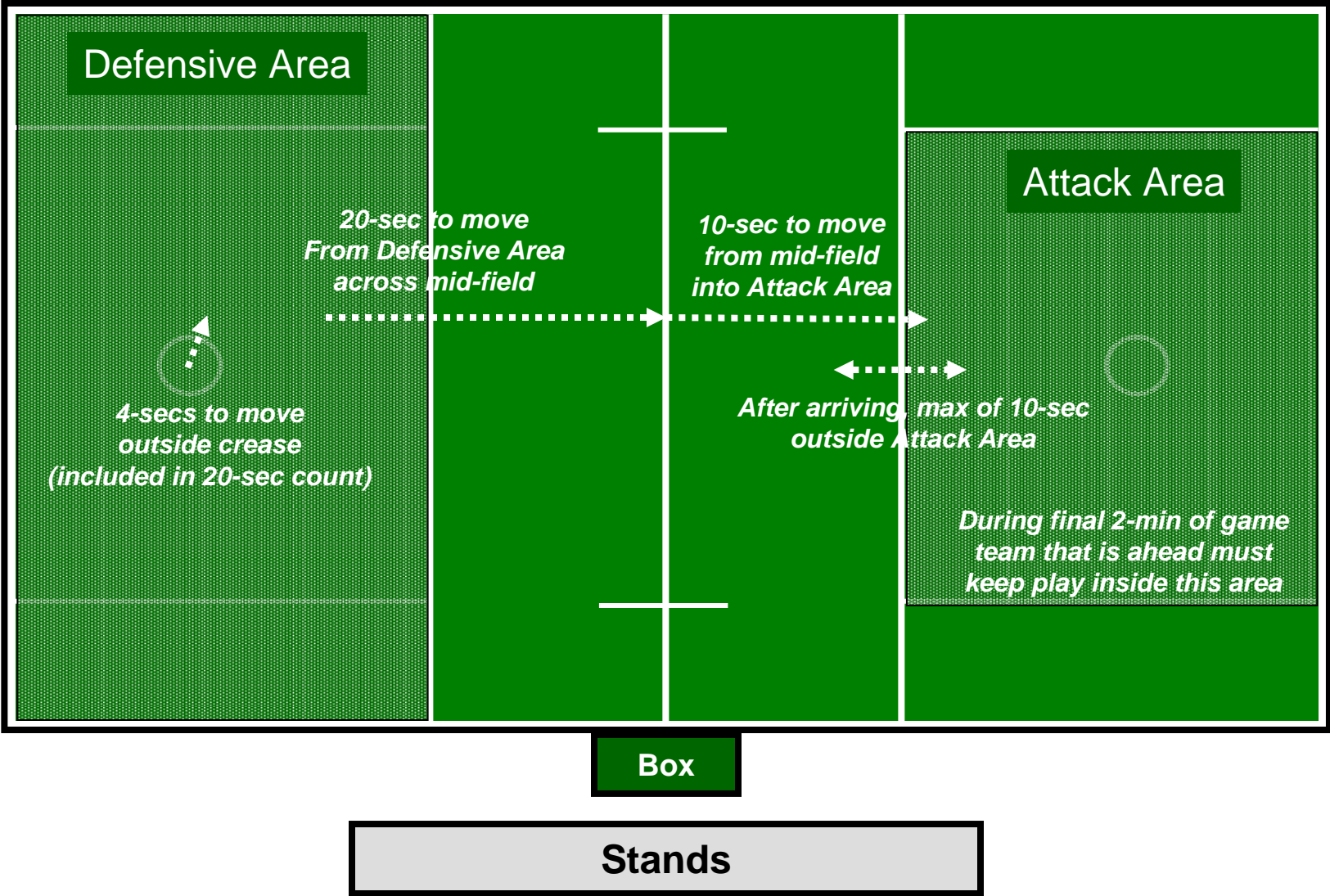
Overtime

- If score is tied at end of regulation play, game enters “sudden victory” overtime (the NCAA’s preferred term to “sudden death”)
- 4-minute overtime periods are played until a goal is scored
 - Play stops with this goal, and scoring team is declared the winner
 - 2-minute intermission between end of regulation play and between each succeeding overtime period
- Teams swap goals after each overtime period
- All normal playing rules remain in effect
- Each team gets one time-out per over-time period; as with normal play, these can only be taken when the team has possession of the ball in their attack zone

Playing Time

- **A goalie can not hold the ball for more than 4-seconds within the crease (this is counted as part of the defensive zone time discussed below)**
- **Teams have to move the ball from their defensive end of the field across the midfield line within 20-seconds, then into the attack area within 10-seconds**
- **Once in the attack area, the ball can never be outside for more than 10-seconds (even if it goes out due to a bad pass or a defensive check)**
- **During the last two minutes of play in the game, the team that is ahead must keep the ball inside the attack area once they gain it; if the ball goes outside for any reason other than a shot or deflected pass, possession is lost**
- **If the referees believe a team is withholding the ball from play (stalling) when within the attack area, they can order that the team to keep it “in the box” (i.e., in the attack area); if the ball goes outside for any reason other than a shot or deflected pass, possession is lost**

Clock – Field Interaction

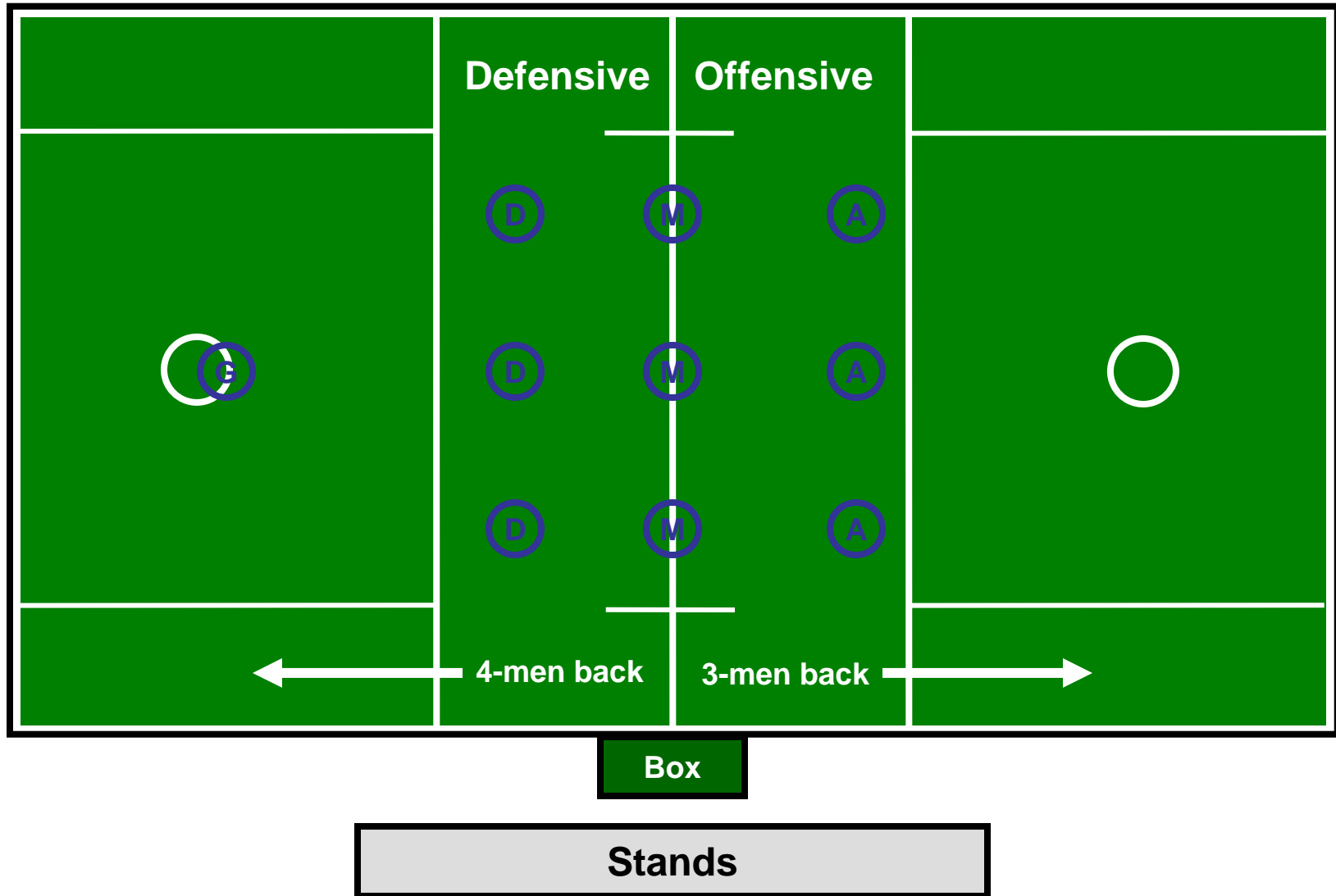


On-Sides, Off-Sides, and Out of Bounds

- Each team must keep four men in the defensive half of the field at all times
- Each team must keep three men in the offensive half of the field at all times
- Anyone is allowed to roam the field, so long as the correct number of men are kept back
- If you are one of the players held back, touching the other side of the field with your stick is OK, but you can't lean over and put your hand or arm on the turf; touching the mid-field line with any part of your body counts as an off-side
- Going out of bounds (so long as you aren't carrying the ball or trying to play it) is all right so long as you immediately return back in bounds
- Out of bounds is called when a player in possession steps on or crosses the field boundaries:
 - His stick can be outside the boundaries so long as he is inside
 - But if it touches the ground outside the boundaries, out-of-bounds is called
- Out of bounds results in loss of possession

Side Positioning

Any player can roam field so long as numbers on-side are maintained



Pre-Game Activities

- **Officials report 20-minutes before game to inspect the field and meet with coaches**
- **5-minutes before game start, team captains meet officials for a coin toss**
 - **Visiting team's captain calls the toss**
 - **Winner gets choice of goal they will start play in, or the first alternate possession; Loser gets the other**
 - **Goal choice is an important issue for late-afternoon games (sun in eyes)**
 - **Alternate possession rules how the ball is awarded when the officials can't judge which team should otherwise have possession (good example is an out-of-bounds ball when officials don't know who last touched it); teams take turns getting possession; alternate possession is an infrequent occurrence**
- **Just before the game, starting players from each team are drawn up in lines at midfield, with the goal they will defend to their left; officials explain any special concerns for that game (field limits, field conditions, etc.)**
- **First sudden-victory overtime period is preceded with a coin-toss and choice of goal / alternate possession like before the regulation game**

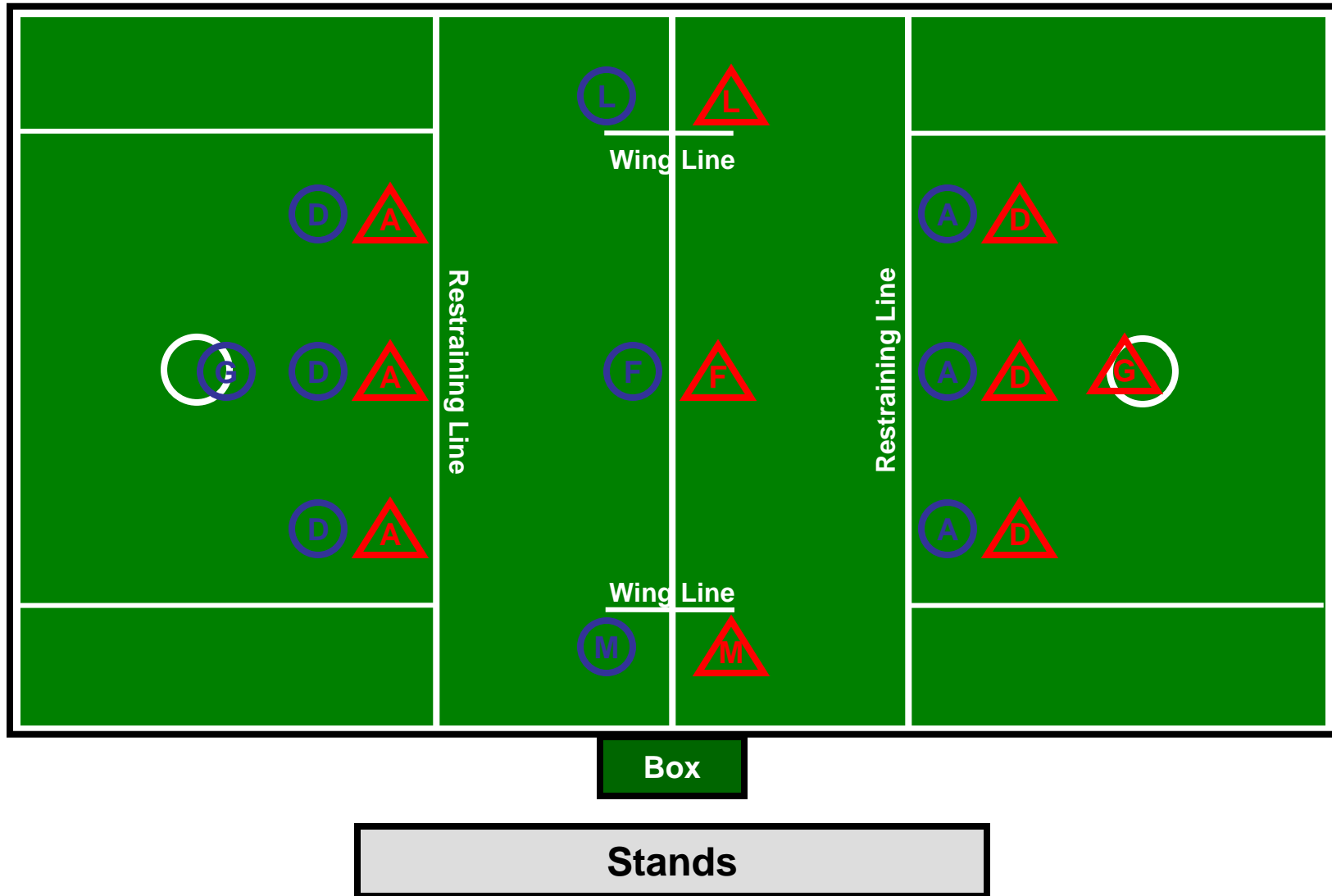
Face-Offs

- **Start play for each period, and follow each goal; exception is if the previous period finished with a time-serving penalty or flag-down – next period starts from the same possession and place on the field**
- **Initial play is made by Center Midfielders (usually specialist “FOGs”, the Face-Off Guy) who face one another over the ball across the mid-field line; “FOGs” have to be quick, strong, and a tad sneaky (face-off skill is an art)**
- **Initial play is supported by Wing Midfielders (normally including a LSM from each team) who start from behind wing lines, but who can move to the ball as soon as play starts**
- **Attackmen and Defenseemen/Goalie are restrained behind lines at about one-third of the field on each end, and can not join play until:**
 - Possession is gained by one of the midfield players
 - Loose ball moves beyond the restraining lines
- **If ball goes out-of-bounds, possession is awarded to team who wasn't the last to touch it; if officials can't decide which team last touched it:**
 - Out-of-bounds occurs in mid-field zone: re-face
 - Out-of-bounds occurs beyond restraining lines: alternate possession

Face-Off Positioning

Note presence of specialty players (FOG and LSM)

Wings restrained until whistle, Attack/Defense restrained until possession or ball passing over line

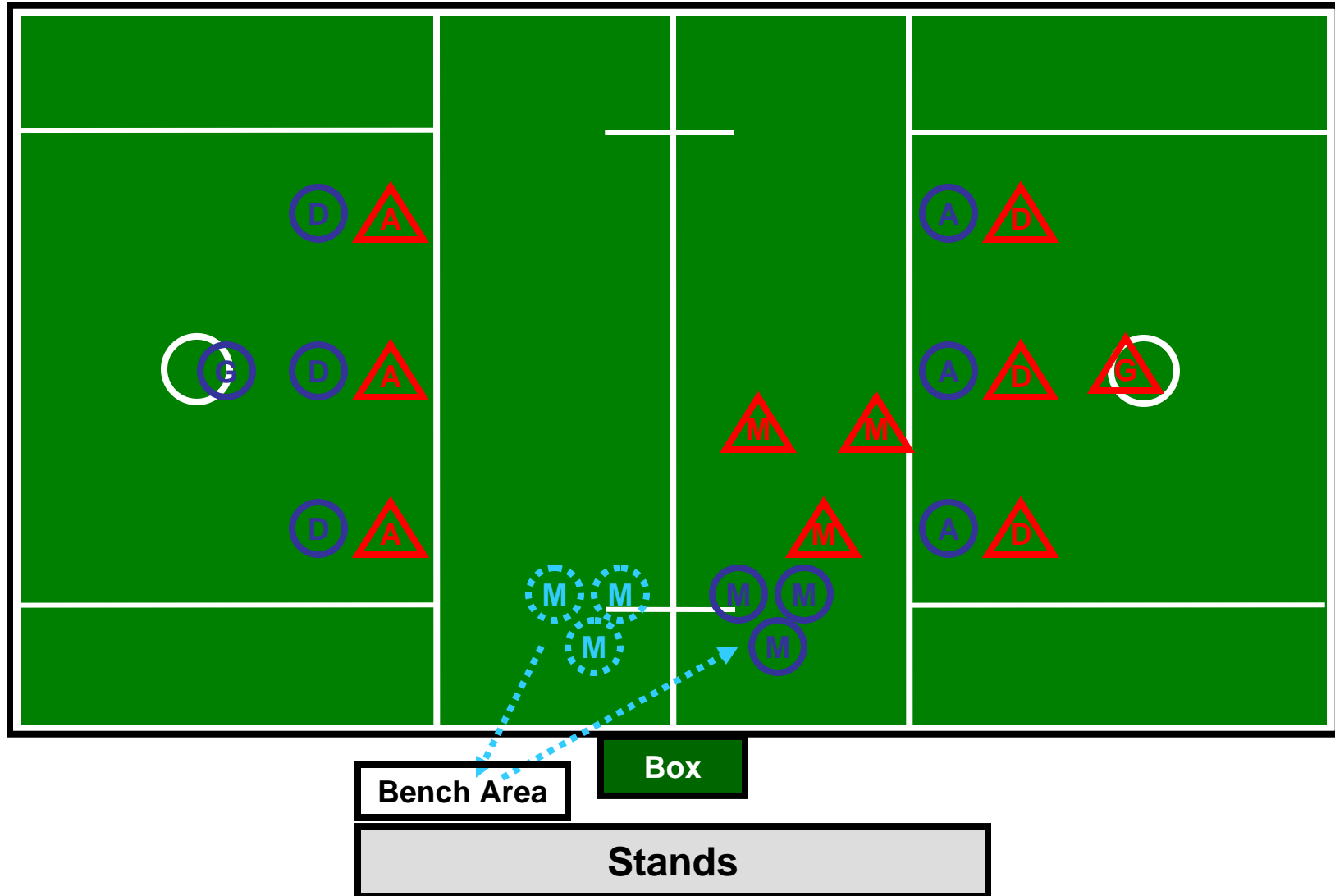


Substitutions and Swaps

- **Rules for substitutions cover movement of players on and off the field during play; Substitutions come in two flavors:**
 - **Regular substitution: multiple players exchanged**
 - Allowed when play has been suspended following goals, time-serving penalties, and when ball goes over the side lines (never over the end lines)
 - If a coach wants to substitute following a side line ball, he asks for a short blast from the timekeeper's horn ("horn") to alert the officials that he intends a general substitution (most officials anticipate this before it is requested – you'll see them hold both arms in the air to show they are ready)
 - Players don't have to enter/exit through the substitution box
 - Used to exchange Middie lines, special units (Man-Up / Man-Down), and allow a general relief of players
 - **Special substitution: single players exchanged**
 - Allowed anytime when play is underway
 - Player waits in the substitution box until the man he relieves leaves the field through the box, then immediately enters the field
 - Must maintain on-sides
 - Used to swap-out specialty players (FOGO, LSM, SSD), and to relieve individual players
- **Substitution rules are not enforced during time-outs or after a period is over**
- **"Swaps" are exchanges of players between the offensive and defensive sides of the field:**
 - Team have to be careful to avoid an inadvertent off-sides penalty
 - Often involve special substitutions to bring fresh or specialty players on the field
 - Can be used as a ruse to set up a momentary man-up advantage for the offensive team

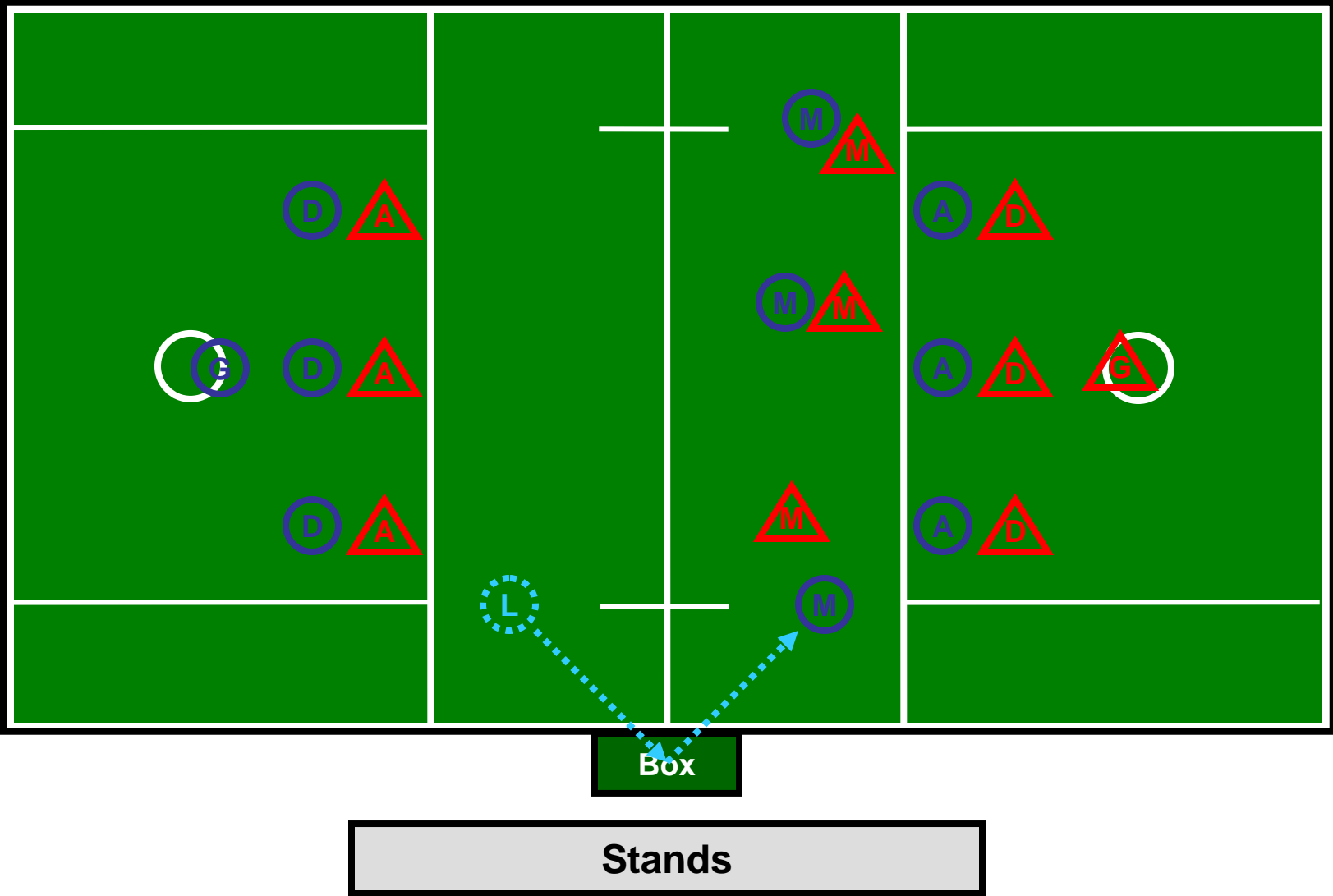
Regular Substitution

*Play/time suspended (horn); multiple substitutions allowed
Allows exchange of midfield lines and specialty units (Man-up/Down)*



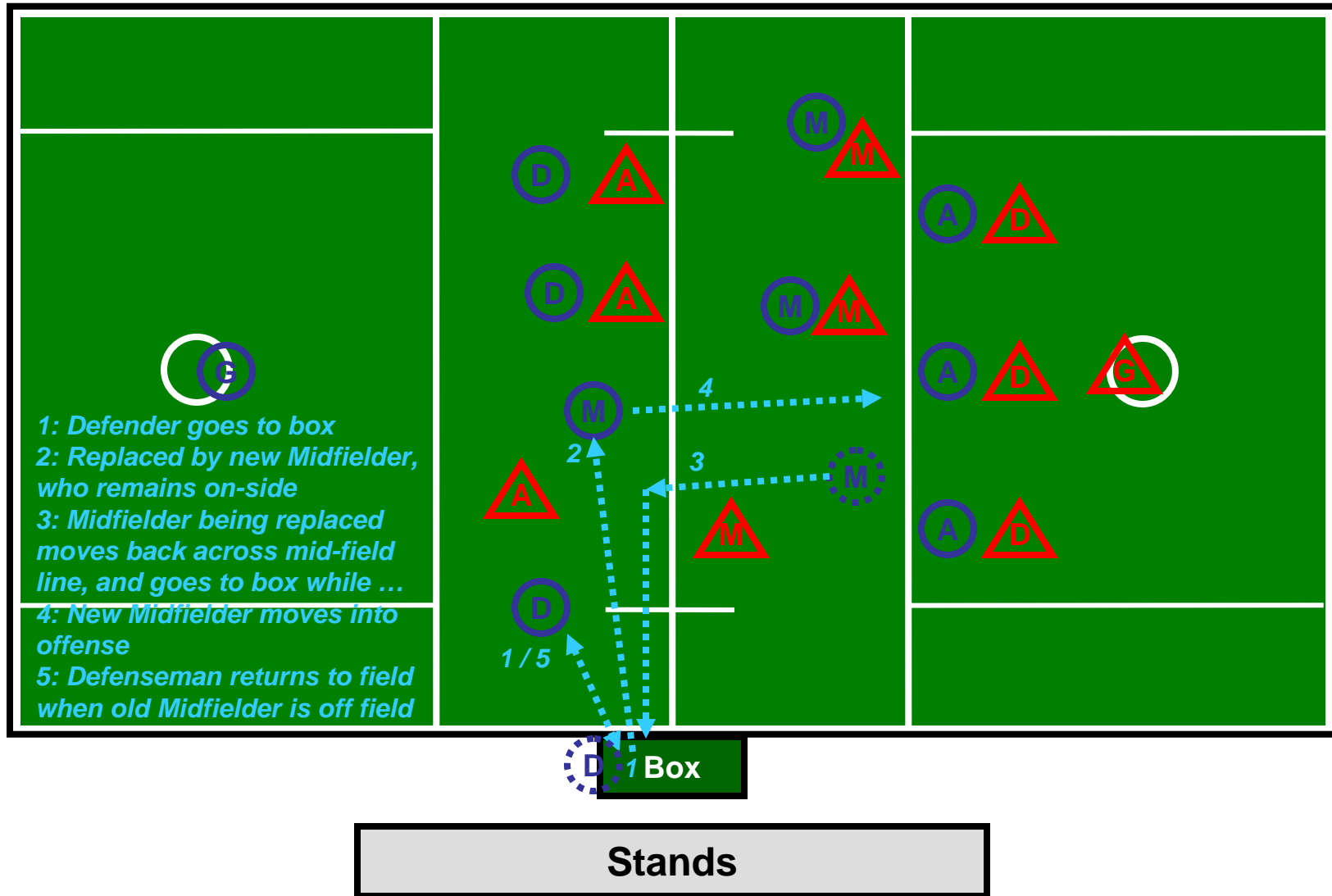
Special Substitution

*Play/time continues; one substitution at a time allowed
Allows exchange of specialty players and individuals who need relief*



Swap

*Play/time continues; not substitution per-se, but involves special substitutions
Allows exchange of specialty players while potentially developing an advantage situation*

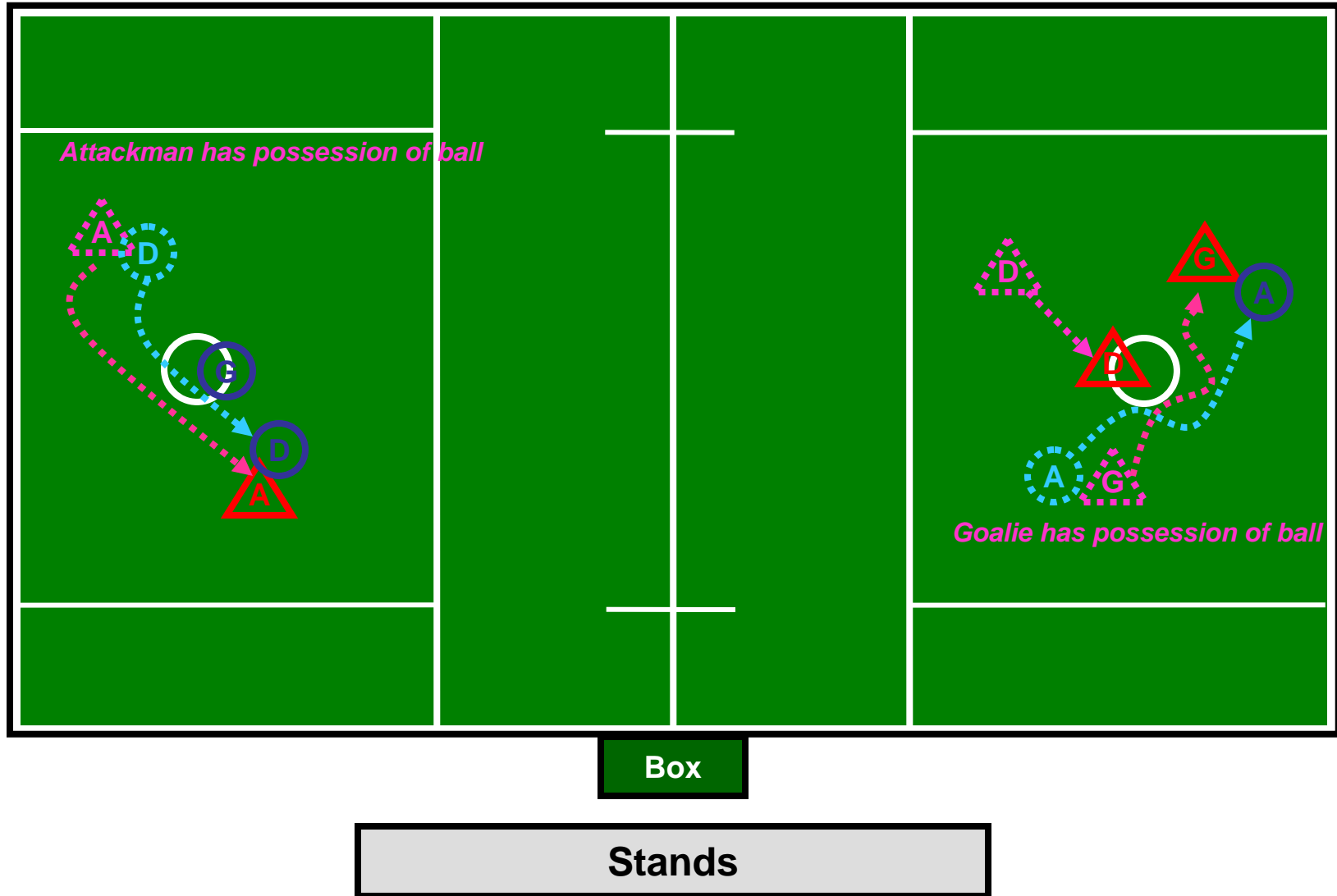


Goalie and Crease

- **Goal face is 6-feet wide by 6-feet high; crease is a 9-foot radius cylinder (with the base shown as a circle around the goal); crease protects the goalie and controls play immediately next to the goal**
- **No offensive player is allowed inside the crease while play is underway; defensive players can move through the crease anytime they don't have possession**
 - **An offensive player can step into the crease immediately after a goal (time is stopped)**
 - **But, a “diving” shot (the shooter leaves his feet then lands in the crease after goal is scored) is prohibited because of the danger of injury**
 - **Offensive player legally checked into the crease during play is penalized for entering**
- **Goalie has special privileges:**
 - **can not be interfered with when in the crease (just touching him or his stick counts as interference)**
 - **once completely outside, he is treated the same as any other player**
 - **if the goalie does not have possession, and puts his stick outside the crease, the stick can be checked**
 - **however, if the goalie has possession and remains inside the crease, his stick can't be checked even if it is outside the crease cylinder**
- **Offensive and Defensive players can play a loose ball by reaching into the crease, but offensive players can not interfere with the goalie**
- **Goalie is allowed 4-seconds to exit the crease after he gains possession of the ball through stopping a shot, receiving a pass, or being given the ball by one of his own players; once out, he can't re-enter with the ball in possession**

Crease Privileges

*Defense can move through crease so long as individual doesn't have possession of the ball
Goalie with possession of the ball can't re-enter*

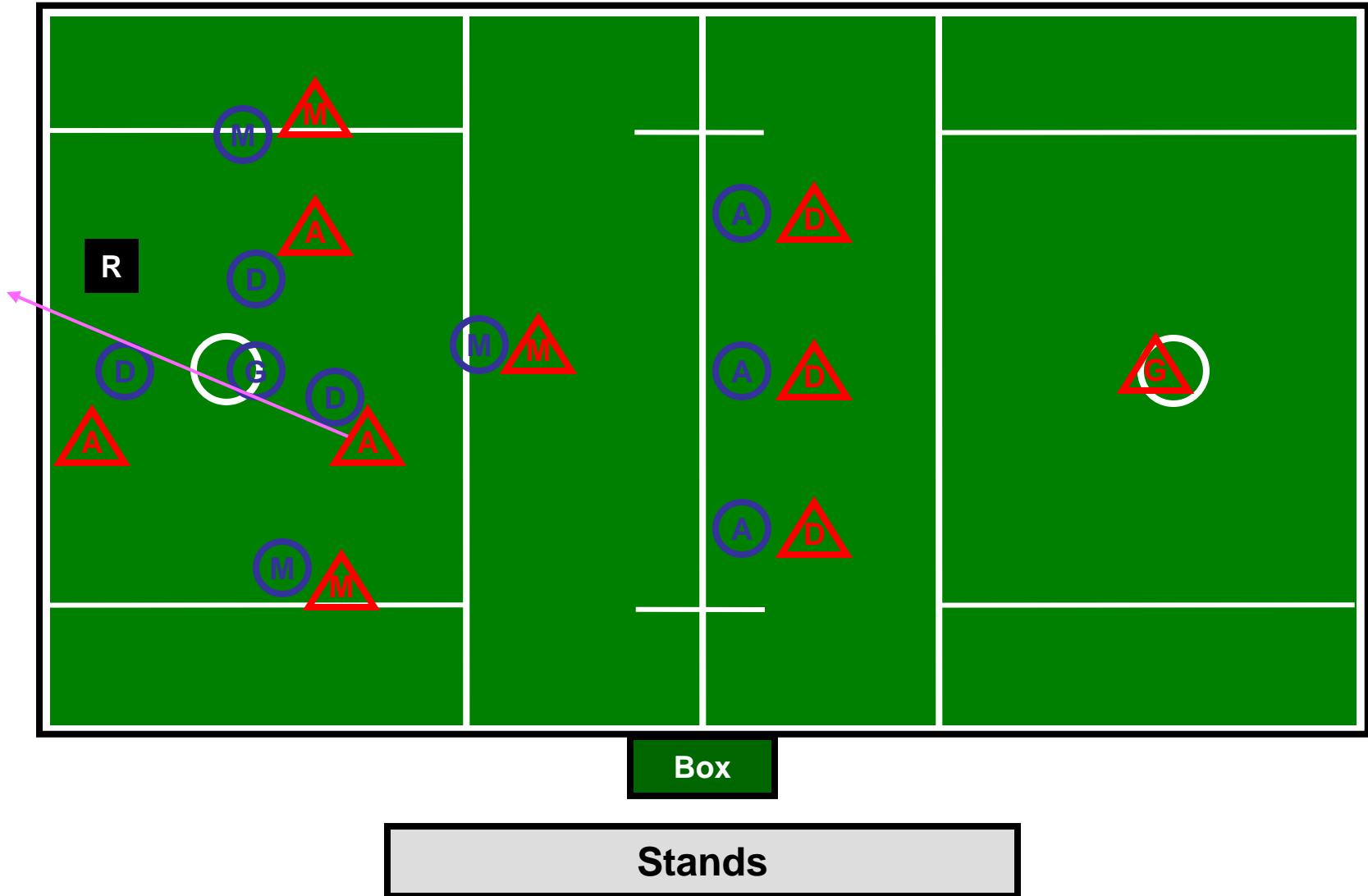


Shots and Clears

- If a shot misses or is deflected and goes out of bounds, the player closest to the ball *when it goes out of bounds* gets possession
- You'll often see players sprinting to the back line following a shot to gain the closest position
- Clears are the movement of the ball from the defensive end towards the opponents goal
 - Goalie has to leave crease within 4-seconds if he has possession
 - If the clear starts outside the crease, the Goalie in the crease can be passed or given the ball by his team-mates, but once the ball is in the crease the 4-second rule takes over
 - No one with ball can enter/re-enter the crease
 - The goalie gives his team an extra man advantage (7-men to 6-men) over opponents on his half of the field
 - Goalie is usually looking for pass to Midfielders as first choice (leading to a fast break), and to his own Defensemen as second choice
 - Opposing Attackmen and Midfielders “ride” the clear to force a turn-over
 - Once outside the crease the Goalie is just another player
 - Time is the biggest worry – the ball has to be over the midfield line within 20-seconds
 - In extremis against the 20-second clock, the ball can be thrown “long and deep” to create a loose ball at the other end of the field, and avoid a turnover

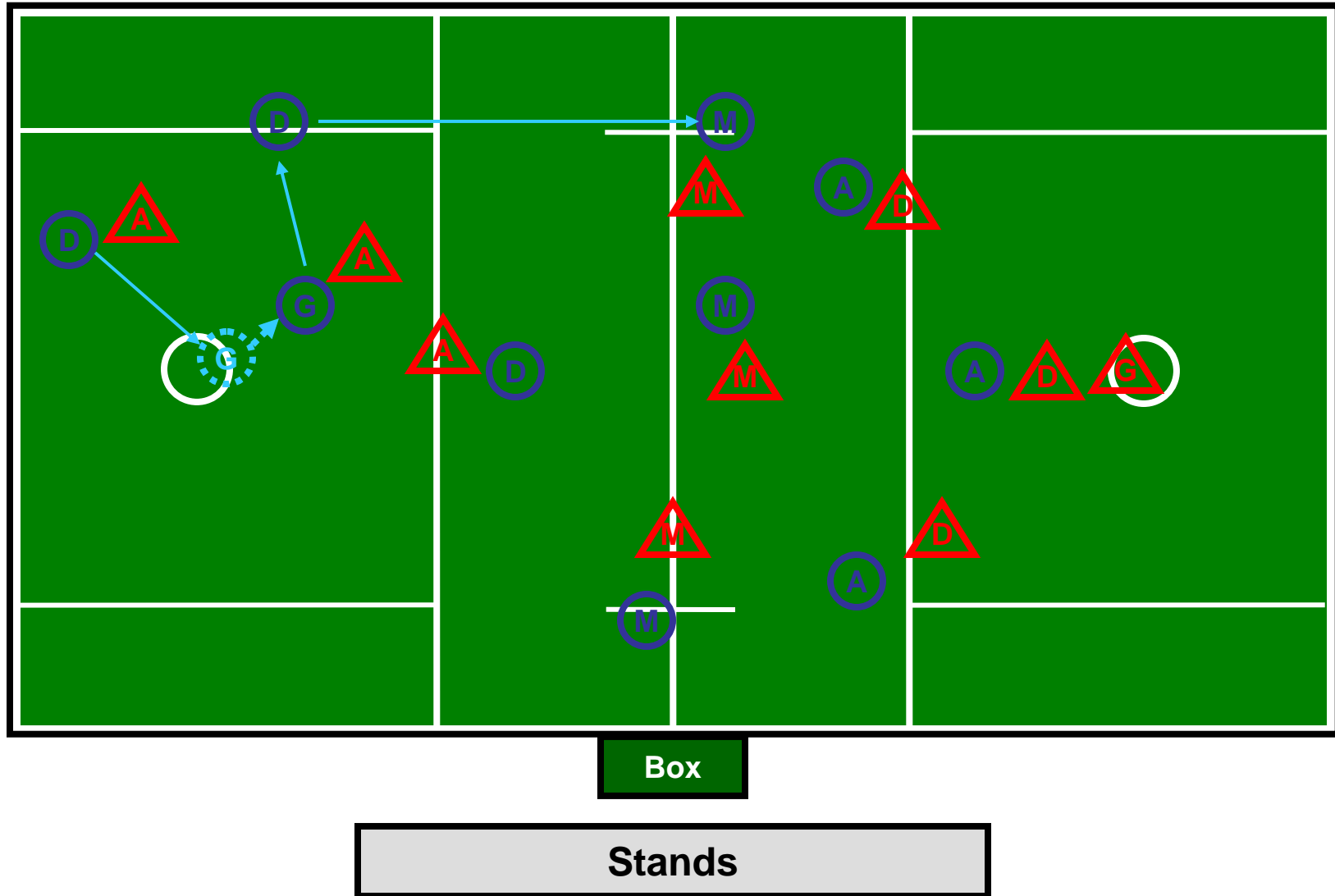
Chasing Shots

*Possession goes to man closest to ball when it goes out-of-bounds
Your angle of vision from the stands may be deceiving ... Blue Defenseman gets the ball*



Clears

*Defense enjoys a one-man advantage over the offense
The clock is ticking ...*



Penalties – Concepts

- Focus is to protect players and maintain high standards of play
- Two basic types of penalties:
 - Technical (procedural) – less serious infractions that impede play
 - Personal – more serious offenses that threaten safety or conduct of the game
- Penalties provide offensive opportunity to the offended team:
 - Enforcement of the penalty may be delayed or waived to allow offended team the opportunity to gain possession of a loose ball, or attempt to score
 - Possession is lost if the offending team is on offense (has control of ball)
 - Players will be lost if the offending team is on defense (does not have control of ball)
 - If the foul is serious (personal), players are lost regardless of possession, and the offending team will give up the ball if on offense
- Time-serving penalties are spent in the penalty box, adjacent to the scorer's table

Penalties – Concepts (continued)

- **Penalty clock stops with time-outs and dead-balls; penalty time extends across periods and half-time**
- **Officials have some latitude in standards (inconsequential versus significant) and selecting severity of punishment (happenstance versus intentional misconduct)**
 - **“No-calls” for Slashing or Pushing are the most common differences of opinion between coaches/fans and the officials**
 - **For example, incidental contact of a stick with an opponents helmet when following through with a shot or pass, or if the opponent suddenly ducks into the stick while running, isn’t slashing**
 - **Similarly, if an opponent turns around just before being body checked and is hit from the side rather than the front, officials shouldn’t call an illegal check**
 - **Officials can call “unnecessary roughness” on a dangerous, but otherwise legal, body check; fans often get upset with this, but the focus is to keep the game safe (even if we do knock each other around a bit)**

Penalties – Violations

- **Technical fouls (“misdemeanors”): loss of possession *or* time-served**
 - Crease violation / Goalkeeper Interference
 - Holding / Interference / Pushing / Warding / With-holding Ball from Play
 - Illegal Procedure / Off-Side / Stalling
 - **30-second time served, releasable**
- **Personal fouls (“class-B felonies”): loss of possession *and* time-served**
 - Cross-check / Illegal Body Check / Unnecessary Roughness (not egregious)
 - Slashing / Tripping
 - Illegal Equipment / Illegal Crosse (inadvertent – pocket happens to be too deep)
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct (“mouthing off”)
 - **60-second time served, releasable**
- **Personal fouls (“class-A felonies”): loss of possession *and* time-served**
 - Unnecessary Roughness (reckless or intentional)
 - Illegal Crosse (intentional – “doctoring” a stick to get unfair advantage)
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Taunting, Baiting, Abusive Behavior)
 - **120/180-second time served, non-releasable, with potential for multiple charges**
- **Expulsion fouls (“capital crimes”): loss of possession *and* time-served**
 - Fighting / Flagrant Misconduct / Tobacco Use (during contest)
 - **180-second time served, non-releasable, ejection, and suspension from next game**

Penalties - Enforcement and Play

- Penalties can be assessed any time during a contest, including dead-balls, time-outs, period intermissions, or half-time
- Core concept is that officials should not disadvantage the offended team; two procedures are used:
 - Flag-down / Slow Whistle: for technical or personal fouls, if offended team is on offense, flag is dropped (flag-down) when foul noted, but play not stopped (slow whistle) until the play has been completed with a shot or score, out of bounds, loss of possession, move out of the attack area, or a foul by the offense
 - Play-on: if loose-ball foul or crease violation is noted, and the offended team may gain possession or complete a clear, flag and whistle are with-held unless the offended team fails to gain possession or does not complete their clear (this means successfully clearing the ball from the crease, or successfully making the first pass)
- If a goal is scored during a Flag-down / Slow Whistle situation, technical fouls are considered wiped out; personal fouls will still be enforced
- The rules cover complex situations such as simultaneous fouls by the opposing teams, sequential fouls by the same player, and fouls when the culprit can't be determined with certainty; this briefing doesn't go into such nuances (ask Craig to explain these concepts if you want to understand them better)

Penalties - Enforcement and Play (continued)

- **Releasable penalties are considered served if the opposing team scores a goal before the penalty time is completed; non-releasable penalties are served for their full time, regardless of how many goals are scored by the opposing team**
- **Officials watch closely for illegal sticks and illegal or missing equipment (especially mouthguards); they must check sticks at random at least once each half, but can check anytime during a dead-ball, and normally do following a goal**
- **Coaches can call for an Equipment Check during dead-balls if they believe an opposing player is using illegal stick or gear; if a penalty is given, this doesn't cost the coach (and may disallow a goal by the opposing team); if equipment is OK, the first check is "free", but subsequent checks cost a time-out or technical foul (if the team has no more time outs remaining)**
- **Similarly, a coach can call for a check for too many long sticks on the field (a long stick is technically 52-72 inches long, so a stick could be long but not a "pole" the way we normally think of them)**
- **It is possible to foul-out of a game, though this is almost never seen: five personal fouls result in a player not being eligible to finish play in that game**

Basic Offense

- **Offense does mean scoring, but it also implies ball control and the ability to eat time off the clock so that the other team has less of an opportunity to get goals**
- **Focus is to develop a momentary advantage over the other team – a shooter who gets open one-on-one with the goalie for a second, or blasts through the defense with an unexpected shot**
- **Ball movement that deceives or over-loads a defense is key to obtaining this advantage**
- **Every team has a variety of set offenses, but in the end most rely on a combination of rapid passing, picks and screens, and unexpected or defensively uncontrollable movement by attacking players; offenses extemporize on basic play sets to take advantage of defensive weaknesses or mistakes**
- **Terms you'll hear:**
 - **“Iso” (isolate): a player with ball moves out from goal area while team sets up a play to overwhelm defense weakness, then initiates play with strong run back towards goal**
 - **“Feeder”:** offensive player who is good at setting-up plays and getting ball to shooters
 - **“X”:** imaginary reference point behind goal; players move ball through this point to look for cuts or feeds, while keeping pressure on defense near goal

Basic Defense

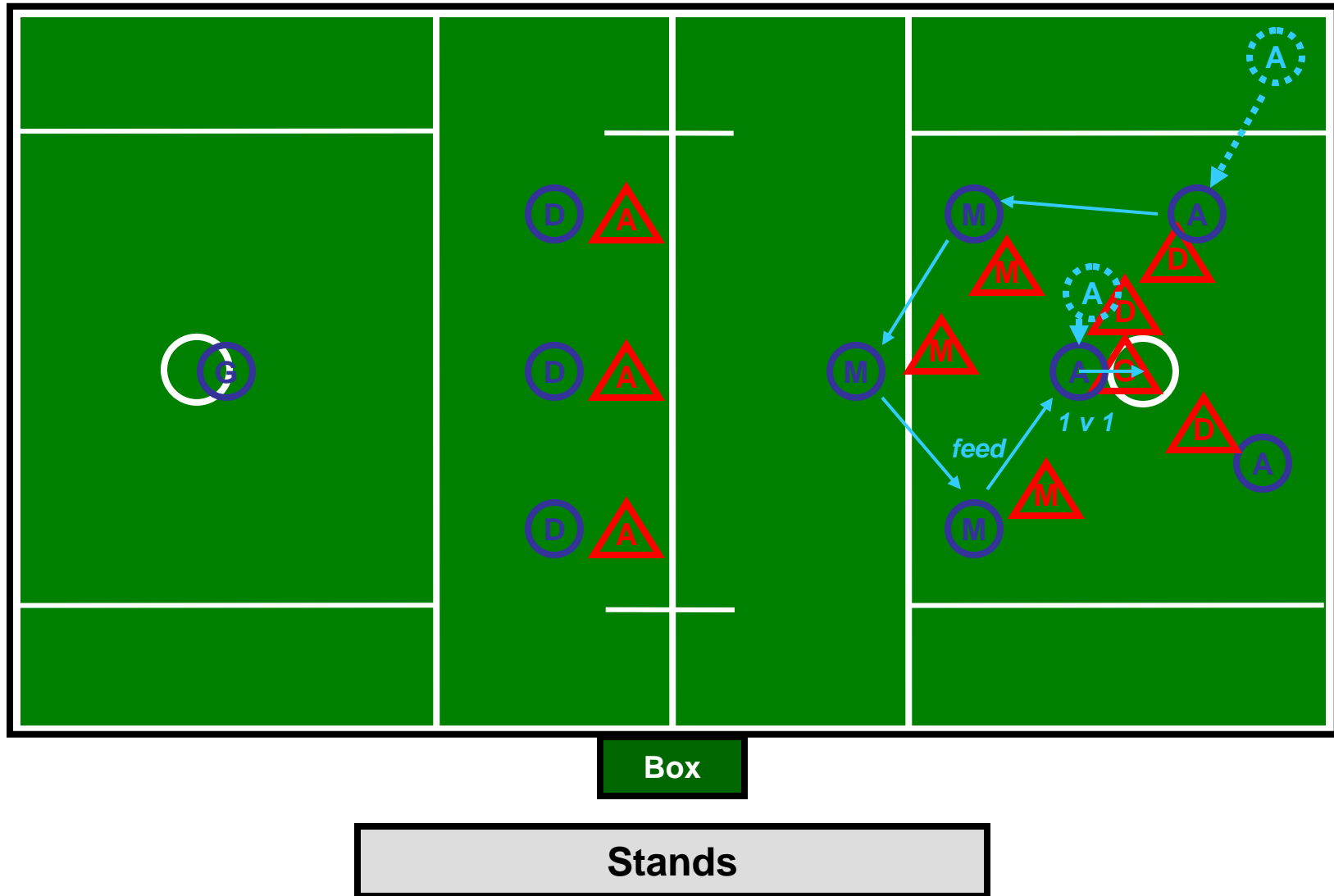
- Defense's ultimate expression is denial of scoring opportunity, not limited to simply stopping shots; implies ability to take possession back from the other team and return to offense, while negating the other team's control of the game clock
- Good Defense is highly skilled and not merely physical
- Every team has a variety of set defenses, but in the end almost all are based on basic man-to-man or zone play; adept defenses move between these two types to keep the offense off-guard, neutralize key scorers/feeders, take advantage of offensive weaknesses, and recover from defensive mistakes
- Communication is an absolute necessity for successful defense
- Terms you'll hear:
 - Double-team: two defensemen on one offensive player; usually opportunistic, and usually of very brief duration
 - GLE (goal line extended): an imaginary line extending across the goal face; players behind it represent no immediate scoring threat, and defenders can choose whether to aggressively engage, or stand-off to provide back-up to play out in front
 - Slide: defenders identify themselves to provide immediate (1st slide) and back-up (2nd slide) coverage if another player can't cover or drops position on his man

Advantage Play

- **Fast-Breaks give offense a brief one or two man advantage over defenders:**
 - Offense wants to press this advantage to get one-on-one with the goalie if possible; balanced by recognizing when advantage is lost, and slowing the play to allow their team-mates to move into a set offense (don't want to take a bad or weak shot)
 - Defense has to immediately recognize threat and reorganize themselves to cover the ball carrier and players who can be threats if fed; this is perhaps the defense's most difficult challenge, as close engagement of a threat has to be made at exactly the right moment – too soon allows a pass to an uncovered Attackman, and too late means an uncontested shot on goal
- **Man-Up / Man-Down reflects impact of players lost to time-serving penalties**
 - Offense will put in their strongest players, and usually attempt to control the ball so that they make their scoring play towards the end of the penalty period (eats the clock if the offense is ahead)
 - Defense will also put in their strongest players (recognizing that one of them may be in the penalty box), and use four long-stick defenders and one short-stick specialist; aim is to deny offense the opportunity for an uncontested shot and kill penalty period so that they can go back to an even team
 - Multiple penalties can dig the defense a deeper hole, limiting them to four (and rarely only three) players
 - Three-men down is the maximum; if a team has more than three players in trouble, they take turns (i.e., the fourth man goes out as the first man returns to play)

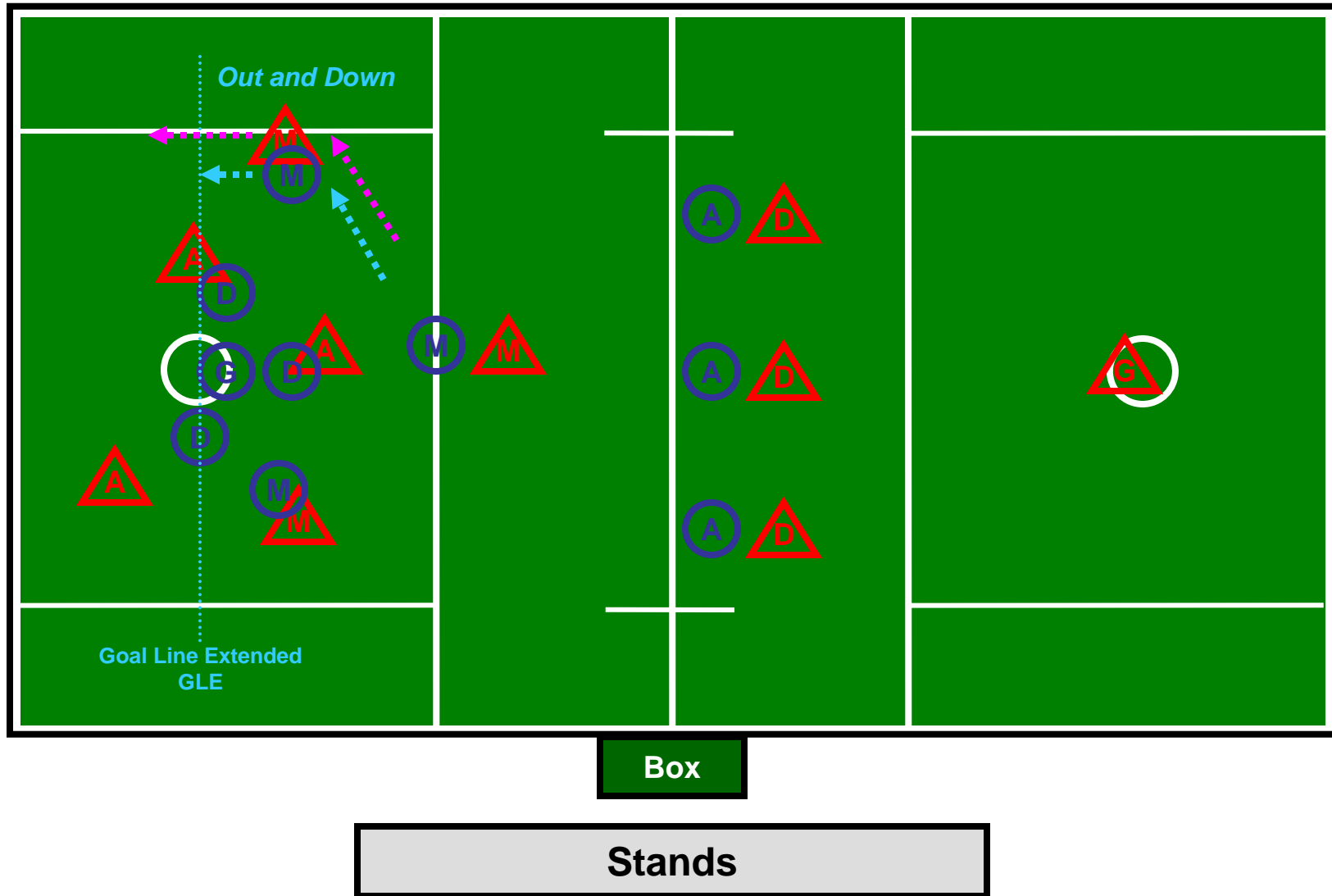
Generic Offense (3-1-2)

Play rotates ball to feed crease Attackman, who rolls around defender for one-on-one with Goalie



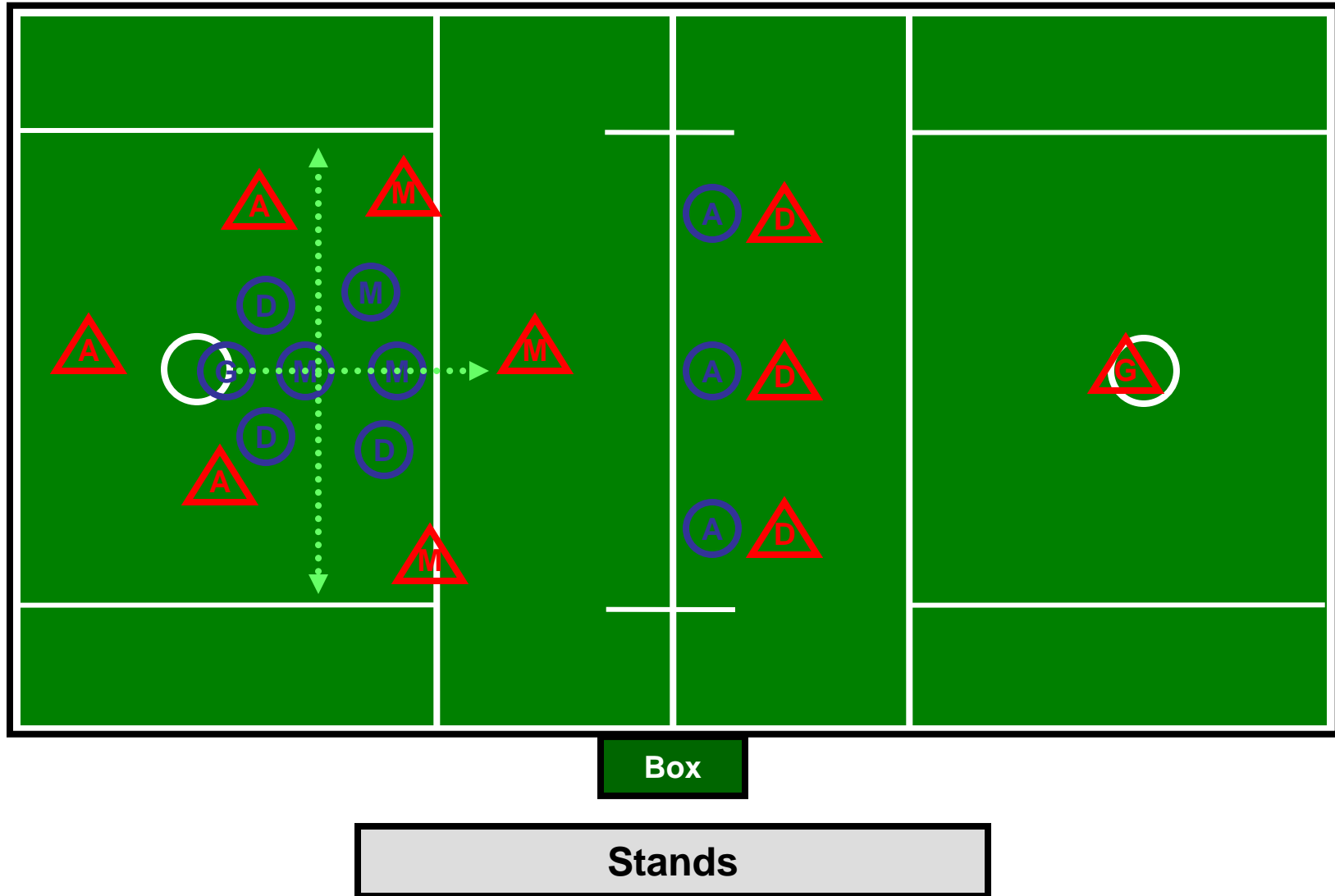
Generic Man-to-Man Defense

6-verses-6; every man covered; closer-in more tightly, farther-out and behind GLE more loosely
Good defensive practice is to move threats "out and down"



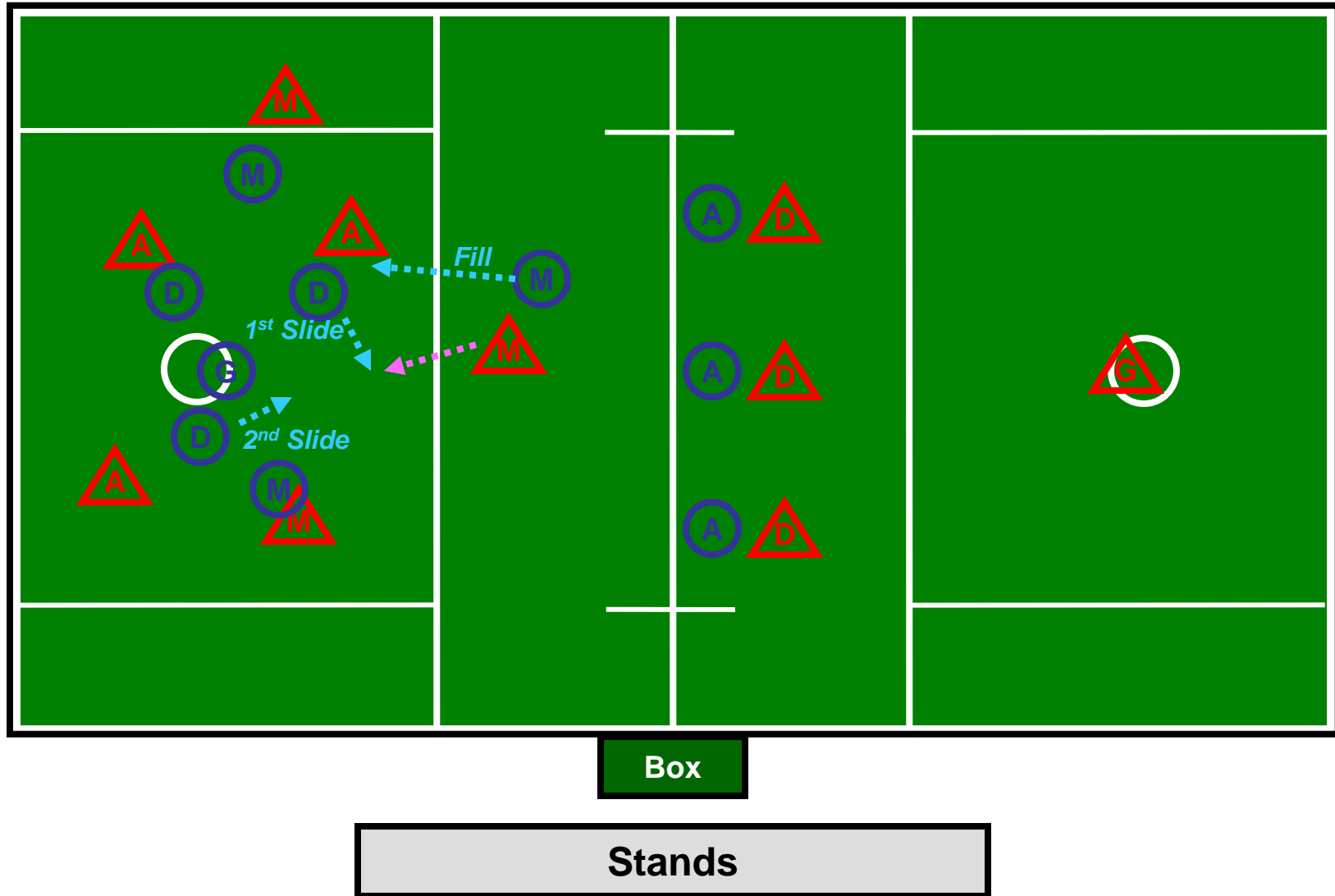
Generic Zone Defense

*6-verses-6; Defenders cover angle/area rather than being assigned to a particular man
Defenders can challenge outside and double-team*



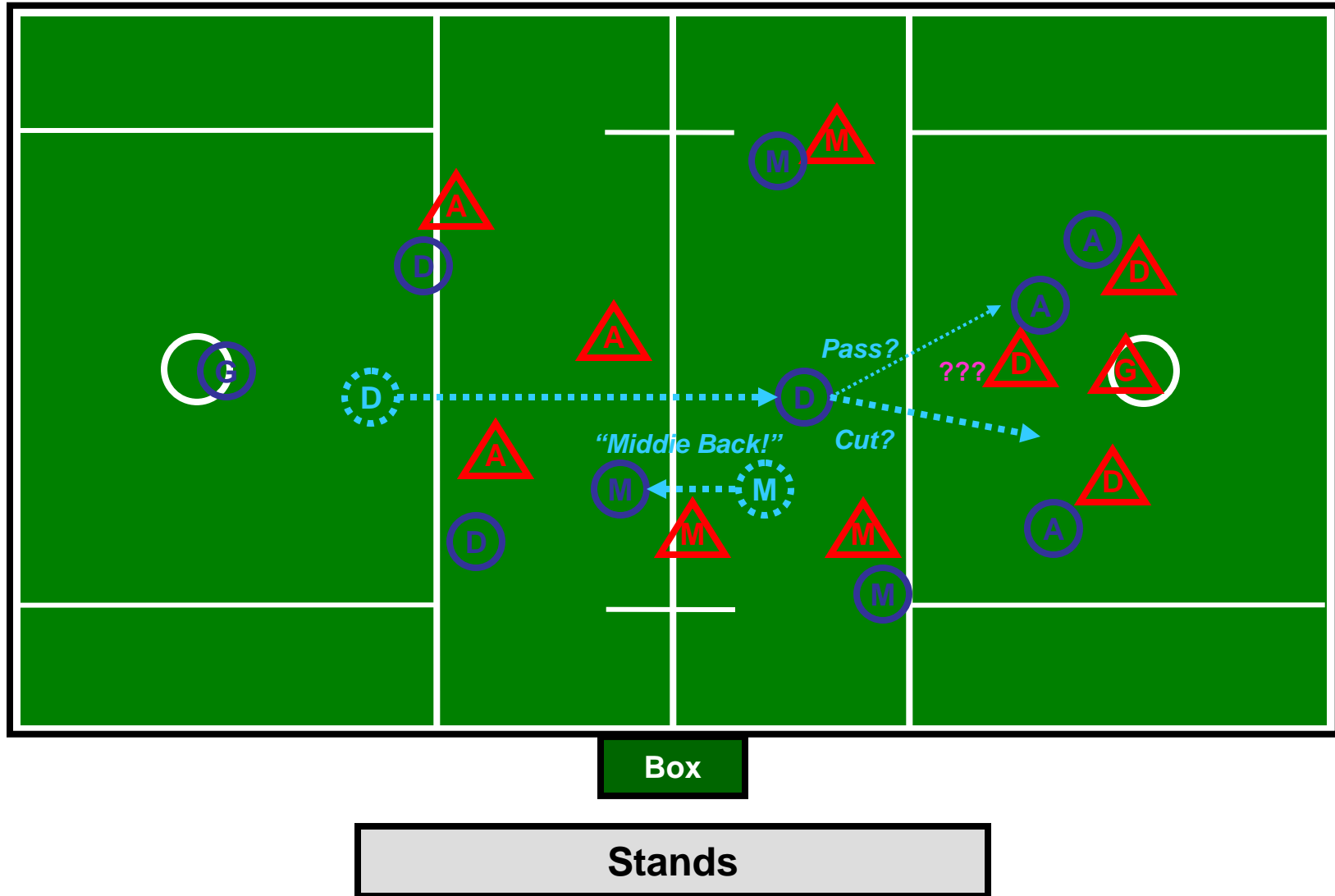
Slides and Fills

Defenders call 1st and 2nd slides; beaten Middie moves to fill



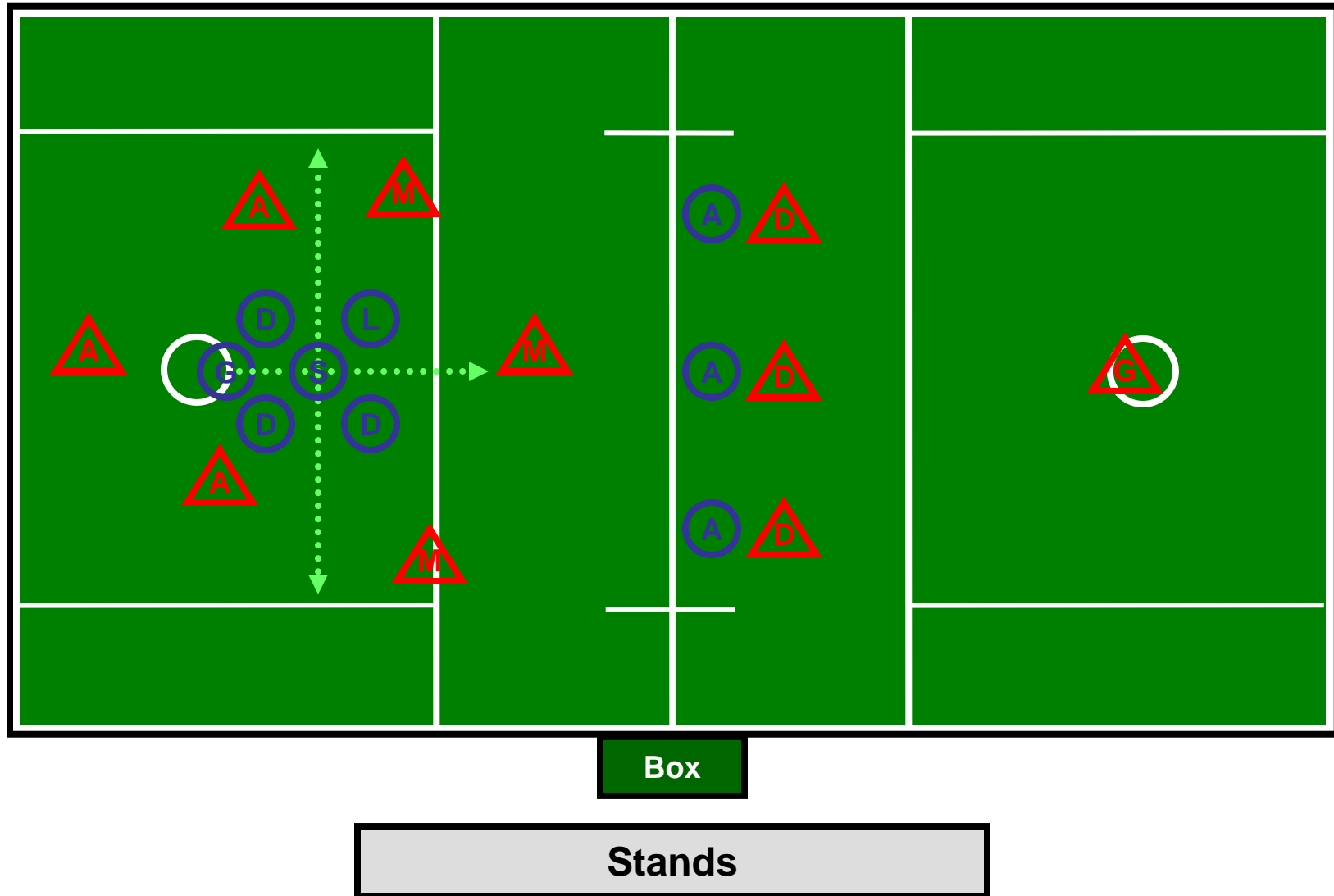
Generic Fast Break

*Middie moves back as Defensemen goes forward to maintain on-sides
2-on-1 advantage; crease defenseman is in a quandary on when to slide*



Generic Man-Up / Man-Down Play

*6-verses-5; Offense has advantage, and will normally work ball around perimeter to find an opening
Defensive zone is tightly packed; defenders less likely to challenge outside*



Significant 2007 Rule Changes

- **Play stopped as soon as officials realize that a Goalie's equipment is broken**
 - Continues emphasis on protection
 - Leaves team in possession with ball after goalie is ready for play (removing any reason for goalie to cover-up a problem for fear of losing possession)
 - Directs Goalie to alert officials to a problem that the officials aren't aware of
 - Rationale is to increase margin of safety for the goalie
- **Time-outs can only be taken when in possession and in attack area**
 - Clarifies rule so that player with one foot in the attack area allows a coach to request a time out
 - Series of new rules over the past four years have constrained how a coach can call time outs to avoid loss of possession
 - Rationale is to pick-up pace of the game
- **A player on the field who adjusts the strings or mesh on a crosse in anticipation of an inspection by officials will be subject to an automatic 60-second non-releasable penalty**
 - Puts the "stick doctors" on notice that they won't get away with a quick-fix to an illegal stick
 - Rationale is to make cheating more difficult, and attempts to gain an unfair advantage more pain than worth

Significant 2008 Rule Changes

- **Face-Offs**

- Face-Off player called for not being set or moving before the whistle starts play (an illegal procedure penalty) must leave the field immediately
- Wing player called for crossing the wing line early (also an illegal procedure) ends with same result; Face-Off player leaves field immediately
- Other team immediately starts with possession; offending team now faces a brief man-down situation until a relief for the face-off man can get into play
- Rationale is to make jumping the gun (and trying to gain an unfair advantage) on face-offs more painful than it is worth

- **Offensive Possession**

- Once ball leaves attack box for any reason 10-second count starts the moment the ball lands on the ground outside the box; difference from last year is that 10-second count used to begin once a team took possession
- For example, once ball is on the ground outside the box, and the offensive player is 4-seconds away from it, he essentially has only 6-seconds to get it back in the box or have to turn it over to the defensive team
- Clearing has also been changed to follow the new rule; once a ball crosses midfield, even if a bad pass or checked out of a stick, offensive team has only 10-seconds from moment the ball hits the ground to get it into the box
- Rationale is to pick-up pace of the game

- **Head Stringing**

- Strings and leathers are limited to 2-inches hanging length
- Rationale is to make life difficult for the “stick doctors” to adjust an illegal stick

On the Horizon

- **Crosse design**
 - General agreement amongst coaches and officials that the revolution in stick head design since the late 1990s has made it very difficult to check the ball out; result is unfair advantage to offensive players, with defenders having to more often “muscle” their man to free the ball rather than simply checking his stick
 - To put in perspective, wooden crosses (used before the early 70s) and older plastic crosses (mid 70s through the 90s) were wider and shallower than today’s sticks; think how it would be to check the ball out of a woman’s stick if they played under men’s rules. (Not that play back in the dark ages was easy – ask any player from the days of iron men and wooden sticks what it was like ...)
 - With the 2007 rules, the NCAA widened top of head, width of throat, and shortened depth of sidewalls, to become effective in 2009
 - Equipment manufacturers were big-time upset (one even brought a law suit challenging the decision)
 - With the 2008 rules, NCAA gave manufactures another year to comply, and made some slight changes to the width at the top of head; but, no significant difference in their intent
 - Virtually all sticks in use today will not meet the new specifications (but don’t sell your stock in STX, Brine, or Warrior; they’ll reconfigure designs for the new rules)

Questions

<i>Contact Craig Crumley: Home phone: 703-716-7243 / Home e-mail: eccrumley@cox.net</i>			
<i>Resources:</i>			
<i>NCAA web site http://www.ncaa.org/library/rules/2008/2008_m_lacrosse_rules.pdf</i>			
<i>On-line discussions of rules and officiating can be found at: Inside Lacrosse web site: http://www.insidelacrosse.com LaxPower web site: http://www.laxpower.com E-Lacrosse web site: http://www.e-lacrosse.com</i>			
<i>Or pick up a copy of the NCAA rules from any of our local lacrosse vendors</i>			

Box

Stands