



TECHNIQUES



USA Water Polo Director of Olympic Development Guy Baker will be a regular contributor to *Skip Shot* in the Techniques section. This installment focuses on Offensive Press Attacks for all perimeter players

Offense: Press Attack

Perimeter Players

Game Strategy: Perimeter Players

- The first priority is to get the ball to the center.
- The second priority is to earn something positive from the attempt to get the ball to the center.

Position Responsibilities

- Perimeter
 - Must be a threat to drive.
 - If no drive, the threat still needs to exist.
 - The threat can create opportunities:
 - clear understanding of switching from a press defense to a zone defense.
 - Earn something positive from the threat to drive.
 - Defensive player drops hips into a vertical to semi-vertical position.
 - Defensive player plays farther away
 - Get the ball to the center.
 - Center-entry passes are wet and directly on the center's hand.
- Center
 - Gain and maintain ball-side position.

Important Perimeter Press Attack Fundamentals

- Pressure Passing
 - Center-base position
 - Sitting on a swivel chair.
 - Shoulders slightly out of the water.
 - Back slightly hunched.
 - Chin pointing toward chest.
 - Elbows raised to shoulder level.
 - Hands sculling at chest level.
 - Snap to the ball
 - Right-handed players snap to the ball with the left shoulder snapping into the defensive player's chest and the right hand moving to the ball.
 - Left-handed players snap with the right shoulder and left hand moving to the ball.
 - Snap to the ball with the palm of the hand facing the ball.
 - ¼ turn away from the defensive player
 - It's very important that body and ball go together when turning.
 - Create open passing lane and separation from the defensive player.
 - Rotate onto back into a semi-horizontal position
 - It's very important to follow the ball when rotating into a semi-horizontal position.
 - Rotate into a semi-horizontal position by following the direction of the ball after the ¼ turn (not the direction of the snap to the ball).
 - Complete rotation with a breast kick to separate from the defensive player.
 - Maintain open passing lane and separation from the defensive player.
 - Ball over head away from the defensive player
 - Elbow slightly bent.
 - Off hand sculling.
 - Shoulders square and out of the water.
 - Use breast kicks to maintain separation from the defensive player.

– A breast kick is more powerful than an eggbeater kick and will create a greater separation from the defensive player.

Pressure Pass Base Position

Semi-horizontal position and the ball overhead using a breast kick with the elbow slightly bent, off hand sculling and the shoulders square and out of the water.

- Drawing a Foul: Same steps as Pressure Passing except on ¼ turn the defensive player fouls.
 - Center-base position.
 - Snap to the ball.
 - ¼ turn away from the defensive player.
 - Body and ball go together.
 - Draw foul and absorb the contact.
 - Keep head and shoulders out of the water.
 - Keep legs pumping.
 - Rise up quickly with the ball.
- Cross Over Release: An effective release when the perimeter press defense is grabbing.
 - Start with 2-3 quick, choppy strokes.
 - Strokes will release the defensive player's grab.
 - Next (ball to the right) grab the defensive player's left elbow with your right hand and pull.
 - Ball to the left, pull with left hand.
 - Next, with your left arm, use a Cross Over stroke to the defensive player's left shoulder.
 - Cross over stroke up and over the defensive player's head.
 - Pull and cross over until your right hand is in your left armpit.
 - Release defensive player's elbow and move into center-base position.
 - Snap to the ball when receiving the pass.
 - Either pressure pass or draw foul.
 - Either next perimeter pass or center-entry pass.

Master the Fundamentals

It's important to practice these three fundamentals as much as possible. Also, go through each of the steps; don't rush through or miss a step. We practice for hours on these three fundamentals; we still slow down and go through each step, so that in a game we'll be able to execute when the time comes. Each of these fundamentals is broken down into steps or building blocks; start with each step and slowly add the next step. That's the best way to learn and ultimately master the skill. For example, pressure passing: Start by learning the center-base position, then add the snap to the ball, then add the ¼ turn, then add rotating onto a semi-horizontal with a breast kick and the ball over head position by following the direction of the ball, and then add more breast kicks to maintain separation. From there you can start to do laps, start the center-base position, go simultaneously through all the pressure-passing steps, and add one to three breast kicks in the pressure-pass base position; then reset to center-base position and repeat for the rest of the lap. From there add a defensive player.

Threat to Drive

When playing against a press defense, the threat to drive has to exist. The press defense becomes more effective when the offense isn't a threat to drive. Drives can create opportunities to release, pass, shoot, and earn exclusions. Remember the role of the perimeter players against a press defense is to get the ball to center. All drives must have a purpose. For example, a drive can create an open space for another perimeter player to release for a possible center-entry pass or another perimeter pass to get the ball in position for a center-entry pass. All our drives start with cutting off the defensive player (gaining inside water). By cutting off the defensive player, the offensive player gains an offensive advantage, and the defensive player is forced to react. The defensive player started with an advantage, and now the offensive player has the advantage. From this advantage many positive situations can occur for the offense. The threat to drive can create the same situations.