

Baseline run – background

A baseline run in field hockey is similar to your typical backdoor play. Instead of approaching the goal from the back, though, you attack it from the sides. The main objective of doing a baseline run is to force the goalie to guard the near post, leaving the remaining side of the goal *wide open*. You'll then be able to pass the ball to a teammate waiting near the penalty spot, and she will have a clear, easy shot on open net. This guide will cover *what* a baseline run is, *how* to do it, and when to complete it.

A Baseline Run

As mentioned in the introduction, a baseline run is a strategy used to pull the goalie away from one of the posts. The ball will be played down one side of the field, which will commit the defensive players and the goalie to that side of the shooting circle. Preoccupied with the ball, the other side of the goal will be left wide open. A quick pass from the sideline to the center will result in an easy opportunity to score.

The right or left forward generally completes a baseline run. The ball is dribbled along the end line and toward the goal. When the dribbler is within about one or two yards away of the goal, she will make a quick push to the stroke mark. A player – generally the center forward – will be positioned at the stroke mark, ready to shoot.

Attacking from the Right

Baseline runs from the right are common because you can use your strong stick to dribble and pass. This is a good strategy to use when your forward line is coming in from deep in the attacking zone because by completing a baseline run, you open up space in front of the goal. When you attack from the front,

the defensive team will generally flock to the middle of the goal to block the angles. But when you attack from the sides, you shift the players away from the front of the goal to the sidelines. Therefore, by using the baseline run, you've essentially opened up the middle, giving your teammates a space to play the ball.

Hot Tip: Avoid Obstruction

Be careful not to get an *obstruction* call against you during this play. You want to keep the ball between your body and the end line for control, but the ball must always be *playable* by the other team. You cannot use your body to block your opponent from tackling the ball. The easiest way to avoid an obstruction call is to play the ball out and in front of your body, while still keeping it lined up between you and the end line.

To complete a baseline run from the right (as the right forward), follow the steps below:

1. Start about one yard from the end line.
2. Tight dribble (keep the ball on your stick as you dribble) the ball towards the goal, while moving along the end line. Keep the ball to the right and in front of your body, between you and the end line.
3. Shuffle sideways or run towards the goal along the end line, while dribbling the ball off your right side. If your opponent places her stick on the ground to block you or tackle the ball, gently kick (nudge) her stick out of the way with your front foot as you're moving toward the goal, or dribble around her. You can also try to draw her into being called for stick interference (hacking) by continuing your dribble as she's trying to tackle the ball.
4. When you come within about three yards of the goal *do not* shoot. Instead, open up your stance by stepping your left foot out toward the stoke mark, and then push the ball. The center forward should be aware of the play and

positioned at the stroke mark ready for the shot.

A common mistake beginners make is shooting the ball while they are *still* on the end line. The chances of scoring a goal at that angle are very slim – if not non-existent. You have to play the ball from the best shooting angle – directly in front of the goal, not along the side of it.

Check out iSport's guide, *Shooting Tactics for Field Hockey*, for more information on shooting angles and strategies.

Attacking from the Left

Baseline runs from the left are less common because they require a stronger skill set. The same principles apply, but the main difference is that you have to use your *reverse stick* for the majority of the play.

To complete a baseline run from the left, follow the steps below:

1. Tight dribble the ball in front of you and along the end line with your reverse stick. Protect the ball but be careful of obstructing. Of course, you can also try to draw her into being called for hacking.
2. Once you are within about three yards of the goal, center the ball to the stroke mark. There are two ways you can do this:
 - **Reverse pass:** Keep the ball on your stick and pull it to pass it to the stroke mark. The advantage of this is that you get a quick, clean pass. The disadvantage is that you have limited vision of the target.
 - **Pull right to center:** Pull the ball to your right side and gain control of it on your strong stick. Then push the ball to a teammate. The advantage of this is that you can see your target and you get a stronger pass. The disadvantage is that the

defender and goalie now have more time to tackle or readjust to the new angle.

When in Doubt, Baseline Run

The beauty of the baseline run is that you have possession and control of the ball the entire time in the circle. If you keep the ball on your stick, it is very hard for the other team to tackle without hacking. And if the other team does hack, it will result in a short corner for your team!

So when in doubt, dribble the ball into the circle along the end line for a quick pass and shot on goal. If executed properly, it will work every time!

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