Field Hockey Positions and Roles

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There are no specific positions in field hockey, as there are in baseball or basketball. Generally, hockey teams follow a basic formation strategy similar to the game of soccer, wherein players play in strategic formations, such as 4-3-3 or 3-3-4. In these formations the first line comprises of the attackers, the second line of the midfielders and the third line comprises of the defenders. Given below are the details of each of these field hockey positions, and what they do.  
  
**Forwards: Attacking Positions in Field Hockey**  
In most of the cases, three players play in the attacking position - the right wing, center forward and the left wing. Their main responsibility is to convert the opportunities created by fellow players into goals. At the same time, these players are also expected to work as a unit in order to create opportunities for each other. Other than being agile, the players playing in these positions need to be well versed with the basics of the game, such as receiving and deflecting. There is no off-side in hockey, and thus the onus is on the forwards to make the most of the opportunities created during the counter-attack. These players also double up as the team's first line of defense, when the opposition has the ball possession.  
  
**Midfielders: Midfield Positions in Field Hockey**  
Generally, teams field three players in this position - the inner right, center half and the inner left. The players playing in these positions require great stamina, as they are expected to support the attackers during the teams attack, and fall back to support the defenders during the teams defense. When it comes to midfielders, the ability of these players to pass the ball is the most crucial aspect, as it helps in creating scoring opportunities for the forwards. For instance, the player playing at the inner right can take the ball along the side line towards the opponents goal, and pass it to the player playing as the right wing who makes himself available in a scoring position in the 'D' area.  
  
**Defenders: Defending Positions in Field Hockey**  
Defense is indeed one of the most important attribute of any sport. Add to it the fact that there is no provision for an off-side in [field hockey rules](http://www.buzzle.com/articles/field-hockey-rules.html) and regulations, and defense becomes one of the most crucial aspect of the game. Most of the teams prefer fielding four players in the defense line - the right half, right back, left back and the left half. The primary responsibility of the defense is to ensure that the opposition team can't create any scoring opportunities for their attackers. These players need to be well versed with the concept of man-to man marking. During the teams attack, they are expected to run up to the center line to support the forwards and midfielders. During the teams defense, however, they are expected to fall back in order to support the goalkeeper. In this formation, while three players execute the man-to-man marking strategy, the fourth player can play as the sweeper, clearing the ball at the first opportunity he gets.  
  
**Goalkeeper**  
This is one of the most important field hockey positions when it comes to formation of good defense against the oppositions attack. A good goalkeeper doesn't just restrict to saving the shots taken at the goal, but also leads the four defenders in order to foil the opponents bid of attack. The goalkeeper can use his body to save goals, which invariably means he has to be fast and agile. He should be good with both his hands, to stop the shots taken at the goal, as well as his feet, to clear the ball in the 'D' area. It is very important for the goalkeeper to coordinate with the defenders, in order to create a strong defense for the team.