

HLA Coach Gordon Fogg's Boys Lax Gear Recommendations

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Lacrosse is a great sport, but there can be some sticker shock on fully outfitting your son with new gear. Here are my recommendations:

Stick: Dick's has sticks that are pretty good. My recommendation is to buy the STX Bionic with the short shaft (attack and middle stick will be about 3 ½ feet long). The long poled sticks are for defense. If your son is interested in playing defense, and has never played before, I would buy the short shaft for the fall ball and then buy a defensive shaft for the spring (he'll be able to use the same head for both positions). Learning to throw and catch with the long pole from scratch can be challenging. You want to get the "hard mesh". This will feel very stiff to the touch and hold its form. Hard mesh allows for a more consistent release since the "pocket" (low point where the ball sits) does not tend to move. I believe the Bionic runs around \$60. As you are shopping you may see that the lax sticks will either be HS or NCAA compliant. The NCAA sticks are not allowed to have the deep pinch that is still allowed on HS sticks. You can play with a NCAA compliant stick in the HS, but not all HS compliant sticks meet NCAA standards. Bottom line: get a basic, hard mesh, slightly pinched head to start off with.

Helmet: This can be a major cost with new helmets running around \$125. My advice is to go to Dick's and try on a few and figure out what size your son needs. Some helmets are adjustable and some are not. Helmets should be snug but not to the point where your son is uncomfortable. Once you figure out what size he needs, I would start hawking Ebay and Craigslist. Huntsville occasionally runs low on lax gear stock, but I routinely see stuff in Birmingham, Nashville, and Atlanta. I have been able to strike deals with people in all those cities for lacrosse gear. If you look hard you should be able to find a good serviceable helmet for <\$50.

Gloves: Gloves come in 4 main sizes: 8 inch, 10 inch, 12 inch and 13 inch. Most kids in the 5-8th grade age group wear 12 inch gloves. Most kids in HS wear the 13" gloves. Just like helmets you can break the bank on gloves, but all the major manufacturers (Warrior, STX, Brine) all make lower end gloves that work just fine. You can also find them on Ebay and Craigslist. I found gloves for a 6th grader on Ebay last year for about \$35 new. Important to ask for the condition of the palms if buying used. You can't wear gloves in games with palms that are ripped or cut out.

Arm pads: These cover from the mid forearm to mid bicep. Most middle school kids wear medium size arm pads, but you can try them on at Dick's and verify size. These run around \$45 at Dick's.

Shoulder pads: Lax shoulder pads are a lot different from football pads. They are thinner, more flexible, less protective and lighter. They do make big lax pads that get close to football pads, but lax is a game of speed and agility. It is hard to throw in those large pads so I wear thin pads that provide the necessary protection for errant stick checks and the occasional body check. I would figure out what size your son wears and then look for used shoulder pads. Most people outgrow them before the pads are worn out. Decent set of new pads will run about \$60-70 - you can probably find them used for half that.

Cleats: Any set of rubber molded cleats will work. Don't let your kids talk you into a new pair of "just for lacrosse" cleats when their soccer or football cleats still fit.

Mouthpiece: This is the one area where I do buy the high end. I recommend a Shock Doctor mouthguard (about \$15) that provides good protection to the teeth and jaw. Most people don't realize how important mouth guards are to concussion prevention. Head to head hits do sometimes occur and you want to afford your son maximum protection.

Cup: Most kids wear compression shorts with a cup pocket built in. A cup is required for all practices and games.