

Sticking with it on a big stage

Gold Coast Lacrosse Shootout brings together top youth athletes from around the state



PHOTOS BY GARY CURRERI

Above, Broward Barracudas player Athan Miller, left, goes on the attack as Blue Devil Elite's (Jupiter) Brendan Halleran gives chase during a Boys 15-Under Division game during the recent Gold Coast Lacrosse Shootout in Plantation. Bottom left, Jonah Lieberman, of the Barracudas, gets past Blue Devil Elite defender Devon Scritto at the height of the action. Bottom right, Max Brown plans his next move while rushing into the open field for the Barracudas.



BY GARY CURRERI
Special Correspondent

Sunrise's Jonah Lieberman likes the challenge that lacrosse provides.

The 15-year-old, who has been playing the sport the past four years, said lacrosse offers something for everyone.

"There are positions for everybody," said Lieberman, a member of the Broward Barracudas 15-Under Division boys' lacrosse team. "If you are a little guy, you might be perfect for the attack. You can get underneath the defense when you are shooting the ball. If you are really tall, you might be a great defender because you can come down on a player and take away his space."

Lieberman's team recently won the annual Gold Coast Lacrosse Shootout at Plantation's Central Park. The event featured more than 80 teams in 12 divisions from around the state.

The divisions ranged from Under-9 to High School Elite for

boys, as well as middle- and high school-age categories for girls. There was also a "Braveheart" mini tournament (2-on-2).

"I love the running and the hitting. The people are great. It is like a family thing," said Lieberman, a sophomore at Western High School in Davie. "You know everybody out here on the team, and it seems like everyone who plays lacrosse is outgoing, and it is more fun to play with people like that."

Teammate Michael Grehl, 15, of Davie, also has been involved in the sport for four years.

"I love the speed of the game," said Grehl, a freshman at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale.

Teammate Max Brown also isn't one to shy away from contact. The 14-year-old from Hollywood has played lacrosse since age 8.

"It's fun and the speed of the game is good," said Brown, a freshman at Nova High School in Davie. "I like how you can get better every day you play it. I think the hardest part of the sport is when you are

getting hit and you have to think under pressure."

The Broward Barracudas program has teams in two-year increments starting at under-9 and continuing through under-13. Players on the rosters are primarily from Davie, Weston, Plantation and Hollywood. There are 100 boys competing in the fall season.

The Barracudas are an offshoot of the Davie Broncos recreational program that plays in the South Florida Youth Lacrosse League in the spring.

The Gold Coast Lacrosse Shootout, which debuted last year, experienced a surge in popularity the second time around.

"There were more than double the teams we had in last year's tournament," said Pete Dunne, who along with Shaun Bamforth served as co-tournament directors. "The overwhelming feedback we received (from those involved) was that it was the best-run tournament they have ever attended."

Dunne co-founded the Davie Broncos program in 2006 and has

coached with many programs in the area, including South Florida Select, Florida Xtreme, Team Florida and in the Lacrossewear Fall League. He was inducted into the U.S. Lacrosse Hall of Fame (South Florida Chapter) in 2009.

Dunne, 54, played lacrosse at the University of Virginia and still plays with a Grand Masters team.

"Lacrosse is a great sport for kids of all ages," he said.

One of Dunne's original Davie Broncos athletes, St. Thomas Aquinas junior Joe Dorn, recently committed to Providence.

Dunne hopes to continue to grow the Shootout event and, if field availability permits, would like to welcome more than 100 teams next year.

"We wanted to provide a quality venue for teams across the state and (expand the interest) to where teams for the traditional northeast (markets) make their way down to sunny Florida," said Dunne, whose recreational program has grown from 90 athletes to 350 in the past six years. "It is still the fastest-grow-

ing youth sport in the country," Dunne said one of the attractions of lacrosse is the fast-paced, end-to-end action.

"There is lots of scoring and great work on agility and hand-eye coordination for the kids," Dunne said. "It also serves as a great complement to football for the endurance and speed aspects."

Dunne said most lacrosse players are very dedicated to the sport and do extra stick work off the field.

"Work off the field easily translates to success on the field," Dunne said. "Our rec program ... introduces the kids to the sport. There are 13 recreational programs from Miami to Vero Beach, and this tournament provided the next level of competition. You see players from all walks of life playing the sport. You don't have to be a certain kind of athlete to play lacrosse. There are positions and roles for everyone."

For tournament results, visit www.goldcoastshootout.com

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