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Coaches, athletes are ambassadors for lacrosse

By Jim Oskola
Post-Crescent staff writer

NEENAH — Given the way people like Bay Port coach Amanda Brooker and players Chris Severson of Waunakee and James Mataczynski of Wausau feel about lacrosse, we may all want to head to a bookstore and pick up a copy of "Lacrosse for Dummies."

Yes, the book exists.

"It's a really fun sport to play," said Severson, after scoring three goals and leading the Waunakee Warriors to a 7-5 win over the Arrowhead Warhawks in the state boys' high school championship at Rocket Stadium on Saturday. "Not many sports incorporate so many sports like lacrosse does. It incorporates basketball, soccer, football and hockey, so it's really fun to play."

For Mataczynski, baseball pushed him into lacrosse.

"I was on a bad baseball team and it wasn't fun anymore," Mataczynski said. "I went into the high school commons my freshman year to sign up for some classes, and coaches (Mark) Lacrosse and (Matt) Roth were there and they called me over. They said, 'You look like a big strapping young man. You want to play lacrosse?' I had seen it on TV a couple of times and it looked like a lot of fun, with all the contact."

There are 30 high school teams playing lacrosse, with some at the club level, like Neenah, Appleton and Menasha, while others are recognized as varsity sports by their schools.

Those 30 teams play in three leagues: the Bay-Valley Conference, the Milwaukee Area Youth Lacrosse Association and the Madison Area Lacrosse Association.

The sport, however, is not sanctioned by the WIAA.



ARROWHEAD'S DANIEL DIGIACOMO (left) takes a shot on goal as Joe Henry of Waunakee defends at Rocket Stadium in Neenah on Saturday.

According to Doug Chickering, the outgoing WIAA executive director, not enough schools are offering the sport.

"For the WIAA to regulate a sport and provide a tournament series, 10 per-

cent of the member schools (51) must offer that sport during the same season and seek WIAA recognition," Chickering said via e-mail. "We've had a handful of inquires from parents and officials about the status of

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Photos: See more images from the state boys' lacrosse championship at Rocket Stadium in Neenah.

lacrosse, but absolutely nothing from our membership."

Brooker, whose Pirates lost to Wausau 6-3 in the consolation game, wants to see the sport expand.

"That's my dream, for it to be a sanctioned sport," Brooker said. "When I moved to Green Bay, there was no lacrosse. So we started a youth program. It was something I really missed. My high school (West Genesee, N.Y.) is where lacrosse is bigger than football. I managed the men's team at the University of Maryland. It's always been a part of my life and it gets under your skin."

Then came the move to Green Bay, where lacrosse was a city on the west side of the state and not a sport.

"When I moved here and there wasn't any lacrosse, I realized that we needed to start it up and we did," Brooker said.

Brooker sees WIAA-sanctioning as a goal, but paying for the sport in these days of tight budgets is a challenge.

The Neenah school district, for example, recognizes lacrosse as a club sport but the team doesn't get a penny from the school, according to Neenah Lacrosse Club president Cary Wilder.

"It's completely self-funded," Wilder said. "Coaches, busing, equipment, uniforms, whatever we need, we just have to earn the money and make it up somehow."

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