



US Lacrosse and the Charlottesville Lacrosse Community have noted an overall decline in youth lacrosse participation in the area, and some parties attribute that decline to the multitude of lacrosse organizations, and assume that decreasing the number of organizations offering lacrosse would somehow rectify this decline.

Here, we offer that the decline is perhaps related to other issues, to include a focus in our community that lacked player development delivered by high quality coaching. Active player recruitment and retention could also be sources of the issue. Through addressing these “root problems,” the Bolts and their partnership with 434 Lacrosse have seen initial promising results.

**What the Charlottesville Bolts and 434 Lacrosse offer the Charlottesville lacrosse community:**

1. We have changed our focus from a high-end travel-only program to a developmental program that also offers travel lacrosse. This change was in response to the current state of player conditions in Charlottesville, to include:

- The general lack of player participation in the sport of lacrosse and the resulting lack of talent development at all levels in our community. Not only are the U9 and U11 players particularly lacking in skills, but players at these levels are not being actively recruited in our area relative to that of other sports. To fill our ranks, we have been forced to develop our own talent pool since players with decent skills do not robustly exist.
- The lack of qualified coaches. We define “qualified” as coaches who can grow teams and individuals simultaneously, who have a positive orientation toward players and families, and who have demonstrated experience coaching lacrosse in this manner.

2. The Charlottesville Bolts and 434 Lacrosse partnered together to address and rectify the two major issues noted above. Together with 434 Lacrosse, we will do this through a commitment to:

- Designing an out of season u9 through high school developmental program designed to recruit, retain, and cultivate local talent.
- Creating an avenue for coaches to continue to be trained and developed. Our first-rate coaches **mentor a select group of talented new assistant**

**coaches** who both excel at the sport and demonstrate potential for positive and professional coaching. Thus, we have developed our own in-house model for coaches' training.

- Creating a framework for the future of all Charlottesville travel lacrosse to include both boys and girls.

3. We intend to enter to the girls' marketplace within the next year by implementing the same developmental/travel model to local girls lacrosse players, coaches, and families. We feel the current Charlottesville girls travel and development system is:

- Weaker and more disjointed than the boys' game.
- Losing even more talent to surrounding areas than the boys' game.
- Needs a new offering and/or partnership to reverse the current situation and to grow/strengthen the girls' game of lacrosse in the local area.

**The following constitutes the intended yearly programmatic offering of Charlottesville Bolts and 434 Lacrosse:**

- Fall - Academy style format focusing on player recruitment and development of fundamentals (optional 2 practices per week, conditioning sessions, specialty clinics, 2 tournaments, 2 game sets). As evidenced by the breakdown, the emphasis is on practice (ie. development) rather than travel.
- Winter - Box style indoor format focusing on player development and fundamentals. (1 practice per week, conditioning sessions, specialty clinics).
- Spring - Academy style format focusing on player development and fundamentals. Our spring offering is intended to complement all players' league play while encouraging further development. (One practice per week to allow all players to play for their local league, club, and/or school).
- Summer - Academy style format focusing on player development and fundamentals. (2-3 practice a week, conditioning sessions, specialty clinics, 3 tournaments, 2 game sets).

**We share the following evidence that the Charlottesville Bolts have contributed to growing the sport of lacrosse in Charlottesville:**

- We have robust off-season teams at the u9, u11, u13 and u15 levels with a focus on player and team development.
- We currently serve over 70 players and their families (our highest enrollment ever).

- We have the only u9 fall program in Charlottesville (70% of the players are new to the sport; of the 30% not new to the sport most are new to Charlottesville).
- We have the largest fall U11 team in Charlottesville with a roster of 22. 23% new to the sport

### **How the Charlottesville Bolts encourage family participation and player retention:**

- **Relationships-**
  - o focus on building of community and relationships with families through constant communication and a high quality organization
  - o through our coaches, we educate parents about how to truly develop players at the youth level and set expectations for their role as positive support of their sons, and hold parents accountable for that support
- **Feedback-** seek feedback from members and...
- **Focus on improvement-** maintain the flexibility to revise/improve our programming and offerings based on that member feedback
- **High quality coaching-**
  - o insist on coaches who are positive and experts in their craft and truly derive joy from working with our players and our community of families
  - o provide compensation of these professional coaches for their time and expertise, rather than paying for administration
  - o recruit, retain, and forge partnerships with area coaches has resulted in the Bolts having **the most qualified/experienced coaches** working with our players and families. All head coaches *currently* work at the high school or college level and also have experience with youth coaching.
  - o insist on coaches who have the capacity to **develop all players** in a team format rather than provide a preference to a select few individuals
- **Player development-**
  - o limit focus on winning and privilege; instead focus on team as well as individual growth each time we step on the field

- o insist upon **age appropriate player assignment** so that we encourage players' areas of improvement to be clear, not hidden, from coaches. We feel this in the best interest of the child, so that continued development and real growth may actually occur.
- o provide high quality lacrosse-specific athletic/fitness conditioning
- **Facilities and program-**
  - o supply the highest quality fields and facilities to limit cancellations and ensure consistent practices
  - o offer a blend of practice and various competitions (our 2015 fall offering consisted of 17 practices, 7 optional conditioning sessions, 2 game sets, and 2 tournaments) for a pricing structure that promotes value to families and players alike.
- **Leadership includes parents and coaches** - constitute a Bolts Board comprised of dedicated parents from a variety of backgrounds and geographic representations as well the area's best coaches so that all facets of the program may be addressed/improved

#### **434/Bolts work ahead:**

Deepen our formal partnership with **434 Lacrosse** to expand programatic offerings, including:

- Continue to grow our u9 developmental program.
- Continue to expand our u15 program and begin integration of the U15s with 434 Lacrosse (to be completed by the end of summer 2016).
- Implement structure and development plan to continue to develop younger area coaches who are interested in improving their leadership/teaching skills.
- Continue to shape/improve our marketing/promotional/recruiting strategies for 434/Bolts.
- Prepare comprehensive 2016 spring academy offering including coaching/staffing, scheduling, facilities, budgeting, and promote/maximize league/club player participation.
- Prepare comprehensive 2016 summer travel season including coaching/staffing, facility/practice/tournament scheduling, and budgeting/pricing (potential early season regional/central VA travel league and/or game sets - late May/early June).
- Expand into girls lacrosse.

## **Conclusion:**

The Charlottesville Bolts together with 434 Lacrosse hope to be able to work with or alongside other lacrosse organizations in the area to continue to grow the game of lacrosse in the area. While we agree that the amount of organizations in the area certainly can be confusing, it creates an atmosphere requiring these organizations to create a greater standard and also reduces complacency. Forcing a unification on area lacrosse will not achieve any overall improvement in our opinions. While we feel general unification is not beneficial/realistic, we do intend to continue to be a positive influence for all players, families, coaches, and other organizations in this area. We also suggest that authentic partnering with like minded organizations is a perhaps a better option rather than a forced unification of multiple organizations that differ so greatly on fundamental philosophies about coaching and player development. In fact, we feel that competition is good and natural at all levels (including organizations).

All that said, the Bolts/434 Lacrosse support the Silo model for area lacrosse at the league/club levels. We believe that the silo model is in the best interest of Charlottesville lacrosse including 6 to 8 distinct silos that fall under the Seminole League Umbrella. As such we suggest:

- Western Albemarle – continuation of Western Albemarle Lacrosse Club
- Monticello – create Monticello Lacrosse Club
- Albemarle – create Patriot Lacrosse Club
- Charlottesville City - Seminole
- STAB
- Talon – create Covenant/CCS Lacrosse Club
- Fluvanna/Louisa - Thunder Lax?
- Madison/Culpeper – Culpeper Lacrosse Club
- 434/Bolts will continue to operate as a general provider of lacrosse development as well as out of season travel lacrosse.

We feel it is essential to strengthen and/or rebuild both the middle school leagues and the K-5 leagues in the Charlottesville area. We believe the silo method through healthy competition is essential in achieving the goal of growing the game of lacrosse in Charlottesville through development of a comprehensive player pipeline. The silo method is how we recommend unifying Charlottesville lacrosse at a league/club level.