



COACH SCHAF'S LETTER RE: TRYOUTS FOR SPRING 2017

Dear Player,

I think I can speak for all of the coaches in saying, "We are very excited to see you all back on the field with us." At times it may not always seem that way, but understand we are under a lot of pressure, too. We are responsible for setting this team up for success. We have to be strict at times and we have to push you. If we don't, we won't get your absolute best. I can tell you with certainty that the more work you put in during the offseason, the more fun we will have during the season.

At tryouts, you were probably worried about a lot of little things like:

"Did the coach see me miss that pass?"

"Did the coach see me score that goal?"

"I have a conflict that I can't get out of – will I be penalized for it?"

"I saw coach write something down after that play, was he marking something about me?"

We know you want to make varsity and we know your parents want you to make varsity, but why are you playing lacrosse? Do you play just so you can say you are on varsity? Or, do you play because you love the game? And if your reason for playing isn't because you love it, it may be time to re-evaluate. Stop worrying about what team you are on, and start focusing on the love of the game – your anxiety will go away and you will be a better player and teammate.

The decisions for what team you initially make is a result of us coaches analyzing your athletic ability, your lacrosse ability, and your attitude. No joke, we witnessed a couple players yelling and blaming teammates for their own mistakes during tryouts. Those players, who have the ability to be on Varsity have been assigned to the JV team. Additionally, we saw players getting sick because of a few intense sprints. Obviously conditioning is a problem, and although talented, some of those players were assigned to the JV team. And we saw players that the speed of the game was a bit fast for them. Understandable if those players just played at an 8th grade speed a few months ago and are now playing alongside Varsity players. These players have the talent to play at a higher level but were assigned to the Soph team to ensure a successful transition.

Before we move on I want to address the sometimes negative stigma overheard with being assigned to the Soph team after tryouts. I don't understand it. First, we should be celebrating the fact that we have better depth this year (more good players) and thus a better program from top to bottom than I have seen at Brighton. That means players that could start on Varsity at other programs are on the JV team at Brighton. My goal as head coach is that every team is great, not just Varsity. I want every player to be excited to wear the Brighton jersey no matter what team they are on. I want all players to have good coaching and a fun experience playing lacrosse. Second, I'd like to point out that there are players that

were assigned to the Soph team that I can see making Varsity next year. These players just need to adjust to the speed of the game and learn the schemes that we run at the high school programs at Brighton. So by starting on the Soph team I am hoping for a more successful transition. Third, all three teams (Varsity, JV, & Soph) will practice together for at least the first few weeks of practice – maybe longer. This will give you the players, regardless of what team you are on, access to great coaching. Additionally, this format will allow the coaches to continue to evaluate the players to see if the team assignment is correct. If you earn it, we will move you up to another team. Oh, and by the way, there are at least three Varsity players this year that started on the Soph team. So there you go.

After Tuesday's tryout, it was clear from the data that our team has a plethora of great athletes. But after Friday's tryout I saw that we lack depth of great lacrosse players. When analyzing what team you should be on, please do not confuse athletic ability with lacrosse ability. They are separate. And one of the most important traits to me is your attitude. Do you work hard? Are you lifting up your teammates? Do you never give up? These qualities are more important to me than ability. My belief is that great lacrosse players are made, not born. Be coachable. Listen to feedback and work on your skills.

We notice who has put in the work. To be completely frank with you, we could tell in the first 10 minutes of the first tryout who was prepared and who wasn't. What you do behind the scenes and in the off-season is BLATANTLY apparent come day 1 of tryouts. If you are an underclassman – notice how the seniors put their game face on when it comes time to step inside the lines? You will get there – you just haven't had your butt kicked out on the field yet.

To the seniors –this is your team. How are you going to leave your mark and legacy? How are you going to motivate and inspire your teammates to achieve team goals? Know that you can make an impact far beyond any trophy at the end of the season. I am looking forward to working with all of you on the field and away from the field (morning waffles).

Freshman and new players – please understand that judging your ability within a couple of hours and placing you on the correct team is a tough task. Many of us coaches haven't been around you very much and are still getting to know you. Thus when faced with a tough decision, we always place you on the lower team. That is because we want to see how you are going to react. We want to see you prove us wrong. How you handle that situation is going to be a key factor in your future moving forward. Do you pout and hang your head? Or, do you work hard and become better at practice every day? It's your choice, and there is a correct answer.

Know that you are all constantly being evaluated. One thing you do or do not do isn't the deciding factor on if you make the team, how much playing time you get, etc. Please give us coaches more credit than that. We have a big picture approach and are going to do our best to put you in a position to be successful. We want you to be successful. Your individual success helps us achieve team success. You may not understand why at the time, but if you are the guy who takes on your role and does it to the best of your ability, you will see countless rewards both on the field and off of it. But again, that is a choice you have to make. All we ask is that you come to lacrosse every day and give your best effort both mentally and physically. That means you need to get your act together off the field so you can be focused on the field.

I've told you all before, "forget about the last play. Forget about the mistake. And make the next play." The same approach can be said about tryouts. Leave them behind and now focus on reaching your lacrosse goals. We have over 5 months till the end of the season. Lots can change in that time. You can change in that time. But along the journey, remember to enjoy yourself, love the game, love your teammates, and leave everything you have out on the field. In the end, what you put into your lacrosse career will give back exponentially after it is over – and it will be over someday – so, make the most of it!

Players and parents, I am making a window available from today till Tuesday, December 20th to email me any questions you have regarding tryout decisions. After that, I ask that we all move forward. I need a break to enjoy the holidays with family and the players need to focus on putting in hard work starting January.

Sincerely,

Coach Schaf

Band of Brothers