

GREAT FALLS



LACROSSE

**Parent's Guide to
Girls Lacrosse**

The Role of Parents

YOU, the parent, are equally as important to your child's positive lacrosse experience as the coach of the team. In order for your child to get the most out of playing lacrosse, it is important that you do the following:

One:

Be supportive of your child by giving encouragement and showing an interest in his or her team. Positive reinforcement encourages learning and fun. Research has shown that a ratio of five positive statements (compliments, positive recognition) for each negative statement (criticisms, corrections) is ideal for helping young athletes do their best. Try to maintain a 5:1 ratio in your comments to your child.

Two:

Attend games whenever possible. If you cannot attend, ask about your child's experience, not whether the team won or lost. Some questions that you might ask before asking about the final score include: "Did you try as hard as you could? Did you have fun? Did you learn anything today that might make you a better player in the future?"

Three:

Be a positive role model by displaying good sportsmanship at all times to coaches, officials, opponents and your child's teammates. "Honoring the Game" is an important part of what US Lacrosse represents. Help us by honoring the game in your behavior as a spectator.

Four:

Let your child set his own goals and play the game for himself, herself. Be your child's "home court advantage" by giving him or her your unconditional support regardless of how well he or she performs.

Five:

Let the coach coach. Refrain from giving your child advice when he or she is playing. Use positive reinforcement with your child's coach. Let the coach know when he or she is doing a good job.

Six:

Respect the decisions of the referee or umpire. This is an important part of honoring the game. Your child will pay more attention to how you act than to what you say.

Seven:

Read the rulebook. A full understanding of the rules will help you enjoy the game and educate others.

Eight:

Get to know who is in charge. Meet with the leadership of the program, whether it's school sponsored or recreational, to discuss topics such as cost, practice and game scheduling, insurance coverage, emergency procedures, etc.

Nine:

Get involved! A great way to support your child's lacrosse experience is by becoming a volunteer for the program. Some of the ways you can get involved: keep the scorebook, run the clock, line the fields, manage equipment, chaperone trips, raise funds, organize clinics and team social events, update the team web site, photograph players and organize carpooling.

Ten:

Sit back and enjoy the game. Remember, lacrosse is played for FUN.

The Role of the Coach

US Lacrosse is committed to the principles of "Honoring the Game" and works in partnership with Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) to provide tools and resources to the lacrosse community for this purpose. PCA is a national non-profit organization based at Stanford University with a mission to "transform youth sports so sports can transform youth."

US Lacrosse wants all players to enjoy their experience with the sport of lacrosse and to learn positive character lessons that will help them in every aspect of their life. Coaches are expected to embody the principles of the Positive Coaching Alliance, including the following:

One:

A Positive Coach is a positive motivator and refuses to motivate through fear, intimidation or shame. He establishes order and discipline in a positive manner.

Two:

A Positive Coach works to remain positive even through losing streaks. She recognizes that it is often when things go wrong that a coach can have the most positive impact and teach the most important lessons. Regardless of the adversity involved, she refuses to demean herself or her players by resorting to fear, intimidation or shame. She always treats athletes with respect regardless of how well they perform.

Three:

A Positive Coach coaches for mastery rather than victory, which he sees as a by-product of the pursuit of excellence. He focuses on effort rather than outcome, learning rather than comparison to others.

Four:

A Positive Coach recognizes that mistakes are an important and inevitable part of learning and encourages an environment in which players are willing to risk making a mistake.

Five:

A Positive Coach sets standards of continuous learning and improvement for herself and her players. She encourages and inspires her players, whatever their level of mastery, to strive to get better without threatening them. She is committed to becoming the best coach she can be and continually seeks to improve her own effectiveness.

Six:

A Positive Coach "Honors the Game." He feels an obligation to the sport he coaches. He loves his sport and shares his love and enjoyment with his players. He feels privileged to be able to take part in his sport.

Seven:

A Positive Coach respects her opponents, recognizing that a worthy opponent will push her and her team to do their best.

Eight:

A Positive Coach understands the important role that officials play and strives to show them respect even when he disagrees with their decisions.

Nine:

A Positive Coach values the rich tradition of her sport and works to honor the spirit as well as the letter of its rules.

Ten:

A Positive Coach demonstrates personal integrity and would rather lose than win by dishonoring the game. Dishonoring the game is worse than defeat.

A History of Lacrosse

By Thomas Vennum Jr. - Author of *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War*

Lacrosse was one of many varieties of indigenous stickball games being played by American Indians at the time of European contact. Almost exclusively a male team sport, it is distinguished from the others, such as field hockey or shinny, by the use of a netted racquet with which to pick the ball off the ground, throw, catch and convey it into or past a goal to score a point. The cardinal rule in all varieties of lacrosse was that the ball, with few exceptions, must not be touched with the hands.

Early data on lacrosse, from missionaries such as French Jesuits in Huron country in the 1630s and English explorers, such as Jonathan Carver in the mid-eighteenth century Great Lakes area, are scant and often conflicting. They inform us mostly about team size, equipment used, the duration of games and length of playing fields but tell us almost nothing about stick handling, game strategy, or the rules of play. The oldest surviving sticks date only from the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and the first detailed reports on Indian lacrosse are even later. George Beers provided good information on Mohawk playing techniques in his *Lacrosse* (1869), while James Mooney in the *American Anthropologist* (1890) described in detail the "[Eastern] Cherokee Ball-Play," including its legendary basis, elaborate rituals, and the rules and manner of play.

Given the paucity of early data, we shall probably never be able to reconstruct the history of the sport. Attempts to connect it to the rubber-ball games of Meso-America or to a perhaps older game using a single post surmounted by some animal effigy and played together by men and women remain speculative. As can best be determined, the distribution of lacrosse shows it to have been played throughout the eastern half of North America, mostly by tribes in the southeast, around the western Great Lakes, and in the St. Lawrence Valley area. Its presence today in Oklahoma and other states west of the Mississippi reflects tribal removals to those areas in the nineteenth century. Although isolated reports exist of some form of lacrosse among northern California and British Columbia tribes, their late date brings into question any widespread diffusion of the sport on the west coast.

On the basis of the equipment, the type of goal used and the stick-handling techniques, it is possible to discern three basic forms of lacrosse—the southeastern, Great Lakes, and Iroquoian. Among southeastern tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole, Yuchi and others), a double-stick version of the game is still practiced. A two-and-a half foot stick is held in each hand, and the soft, small deerskin ball is retrieved and cupped between them. Great Lakes players (Ojibwe, Menominee, Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, Miami, Winnebago, Santee Dakota and others) used a single three-foot stick. It terminates in a round, closed pocket about three to four inches in diameter, scarcely larger than the ball, which was usually made of wood, charred and scraped to shape. The northeastern stick, found among Iroquoian and New England tribes, is the progenitor of all present-day sticks, both in box as well as field lacrosse. The longest of the three—usually more than three feet—it was characterized by its shaft ending in a sort of

crook and a large, flat triangular surface of webbing extending as much as two-thirds the length of the stick. Where the outermost string meets the shaft, it forms the pocket of the stick.

Lacrosse was given its name by early French settlers, using the generic term for any game played with a curved stick (*crosse*) and a ball. Native terminology, however, tends to describe more the technique (cf. Onondaga DEHUNTSHIGWA'ES, "men hit a rounded object") or, especially in the southeast, to underscore the game's aspects of war surrogacy ("little brother of war"). There is no evidence of non-Indians taking up the game until the mid-nineteenth century, when English-speaking

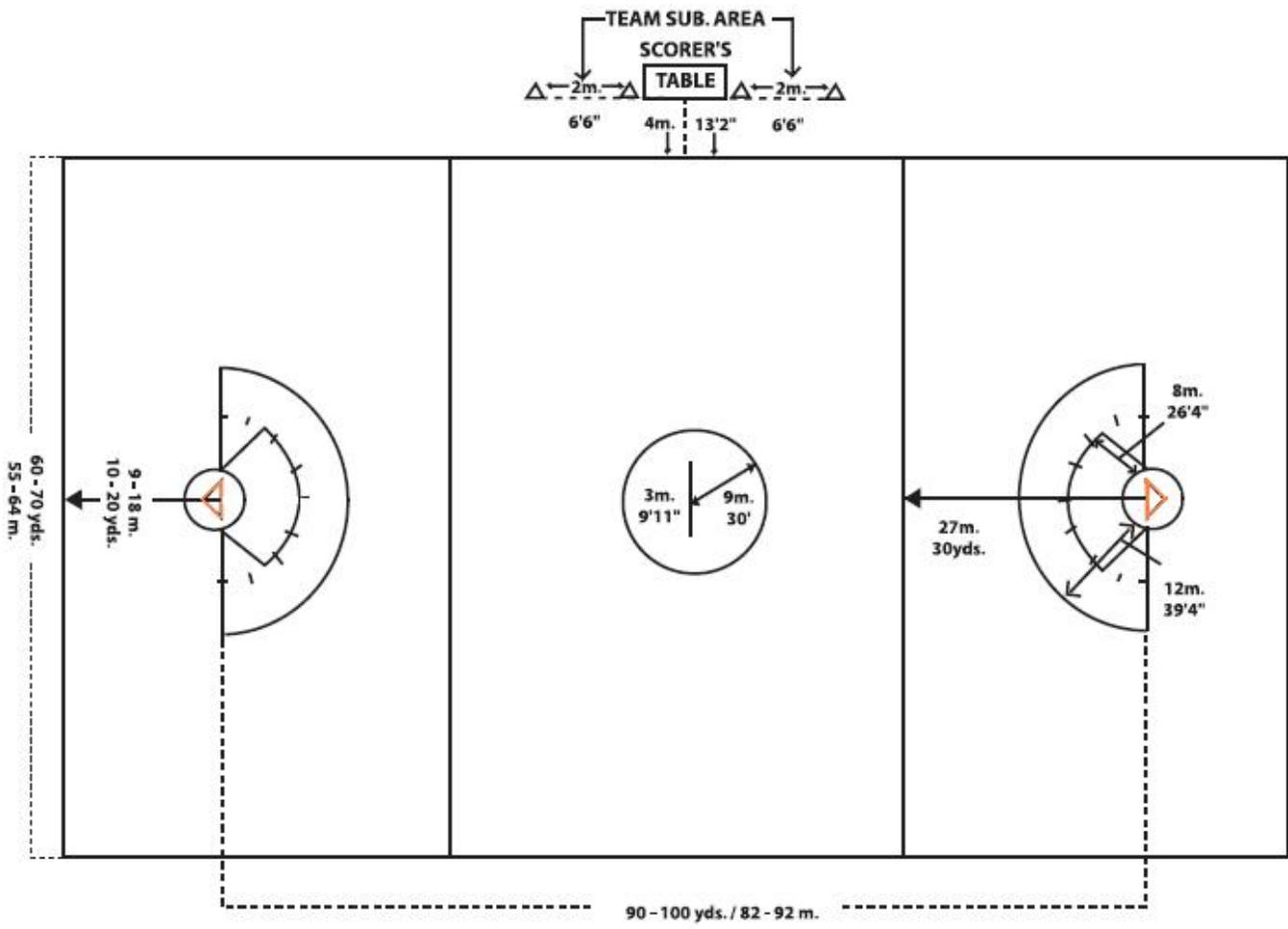
Montrealers adopted the Mohawk game they were familiar with from Caughnawauga and Akwesasne, attempted to "civilize" the sport with a new set of rules and organize into amateur clubs. Once the game quickly grew in popularity in Canada, it began to be exported throughout the Commonwealth, as non-native teams traveled to Europe for exhibition matches against Iroquois players. Ironically, because Indians had to charge money in order to travel, they were excluded as "professionals" from international competition for more than a century. Only with the formation of the Iroquois Nationals in the 1980s did they successfully break this barrier and become eligible to compete in World Games.

Apart from its recreational function, lacrosse traditionally played a more serious role in Indian culture. Its origins are rooted in legend, and the game continues to be used for curative purposes and surrounded with ceremony. Game equipment and players are still ritually prepared by conjurers, and team selection and victory are often considered supernaturally controlled. In the past, lacrosse also served to vent aggression, and territorial disputes between tribes were sometimes settled with a game, although not always amicably. A Creek versus Choctaw game around 1790 to determine rights over a beaver pond broke out into a violent battle when the Creeks were declared winners. Still, while the majority of the games ended peaceably, much of the ceremonialism surrounding their preparations and the rituals required of the players were identical to those practiced before departing on the warpath.

A number of factors led to the demise of lacrosse in many areas by the late nineteenth century. Wagering on games had always been integral to an Indian community's involvement, but when betting and violence saw an increase as traditional Indian culture was eroding, it sparked opposition to lacrosse from government officials and missionaries. The games were felt to interfere with church attendance and the wagering to have an impoverishing effect on the Indians. When Oklahoma Choctaw began to attach lead weights to their sticks around 1900 to use them as skull-crackers, the game was outright banned.

Meanwhile, the spread of nonnative lacrosse from the Montreal area eventually led to its position today worldwide as one of the fastest growing sports (more than half a million players), controlled by official regulations and played with manufactured rather than hand-made equipment—the aluminum shafted stick with its plastic head, for example. While the Great Lakes traditional game died out by 1950, the Iroquois and southeastern tribes continue to play their own forms of lacrosse. Ironically, the field lacrosse game of nonnative women today most closely resembles the Indian game of the past, retaining the wooden stick, lacking the protective gear and demarcated sidelines of the men's game, and tending towards mass attack rather than field positions and offsides.

Understanding the Field



Girls Lacrosse Overview

Girls' lacrosse is a non-contact game played by 12 players: a goalkeeper, five attackers and six defenders. Seven field players may cross the restraining line and four stay behind. The object of the game is to shoot the ball into the opponent's goal. The team scoring the most goals wins.

Girls' and women's lacrosse begins with a draw, which is taken by the center position. The ball is placed between two horizontally held crosses (sticks), placed back-to-back, at the center of the field. At the sound of the whistle, the ball is flung into the air as the crosses are pulled up and away. The sticks must come up over the players' head. A draw is used to start each half and after each goal, and it takes place at the center of the field. Only five players from each team are permitted between restraining lines at the time of the draw. Once the signal for the draw occurs, the players behind each restraining line may cross over.

The collegiate game is 60 minutes long, with each half being 30 minutes. The high school girls' game is 50 minutes long, with each half being 25 minutes. In both collegiate and high school play, teams are allowed two timeouts per game, only after a goal.

The restraining line, a solid line 30 yards up field from each goal, extends across the width of the field. Solid/hard boundaries were added to the game in 2006. Total length can be from 110 to 140 yards, while total width can be from 60 to 70 yards. There must always be at least 10 yards of space between the goal line and the end line at each end of the field. There is a circle in the center of the field where the draw occurs. Two arcs are marked from the center of the goal line. The eight meter arc with hash marks four meters away from each other bisects the arc. The 12-meter fan runs out from the goal line extended. Substitution area, used by both teams, is in front of the scorer's table and is indicated by two hash marks placed 5 yards on either side of the midfield line.

Seven attacking players only are allowed over the restraining line in their offensive end and only eight defenders are allowed over the line in their defensive end. The additional defender is the goalkeeper. Players may exchange places during play, but the player should have both feet over the line before the teammate enters.

When a whistle blows, all players must stop in place. Rough checks, and contact to the body with the crosse or body, are not allowed, however, incidental body contact may occur.

Field players may pass, catch or run with the ball in their crosse. A player may gain possession of the ball by dislodging it from an opponent's crosse with a check. A controlled check (crosse to crosse contact) is an attempt to knock the ball free. No player may reach across an opponent's body to check the handle of a crosse when she is even with or behind that opponent. A player may not protect the ball in her crosse by cradling so close to her body or face so as to make a legal, safe check impossible for the opponent. All legal checks must be directed away from the player with the ball and cannot come within a 7" sphere of the head.

No player is allowed to touch the ball with her hands except the goalkeeper when she is within the goal circle. A change of possession may occur if a player gains a distinct advantage by playing the ball off her body.

Fouls are categorized as major or minor, and the penalty for fouls is a "free position." For major fouls, the offending player is placed four meters behind the player taking the free position. For a minor foul, the

offending player is placed four meters off, in the direction from which she approached her opponent before committing the foul, and play is resumed.

When a minor foul is committed in the 12-meter fan, the player with the ball has an indirect free position, in which case the player must pass first or be checked by an opponent before the team may shoot.

A slow whistle occurs when the offense has entered the critical scoring area and is on a scoring play and the defense has committed a major foul. A flag is displayed in the air but no whistle is sounded so that the offense has an opportunity to score a goal. If the offense is capable of getting a shot off, the flag is withdrawn.

A whistle is blown when a goal is scored or the scoring opportunity is over. An immediate whistle is blown when a major foul, obstruction or shooting space occurs, which jeopardizes the safety of a player. Field

Positions

THE ATTACK:

First Home: The first home's responsibility is to score. Located in front of the goal, the first home must continually cut toward the goal for a shot, or cut away from the goal to make room for another player. She should have excellent stickwork.

Second Home: The second home is considered the playmaker. She should be able to shoot well from every angle and distance from the goal.

Third Home: The third home's responsibility is to transition the ball from defense to attack. She should be able to feed the ball to other players and fill in wing areas.

Attack Wings: The wings are also responsible for transitioning the ball from defense to attack. Wings should have speed and endurance and be ready to receive the ball from the defense and run or pass the ball.

THE DEFENSE:

Point: The point's responsibility is to mark first home. She should be able to stick check and look to intercept passes.

Coverpoint: The coverpoint's responsibility is to mark second home. She should be able to receive clears, run fast and have good footwork.

Third Man: The third man's responsibility is to mark third home. She should be able to intercept passes, clear the ball, run fast and have good footwork.

Center: The center's responsibility is to control the draw and play both defense and attack. She should have speed and endurance.

Defense Wing: The wings are responsible for marking the attack wings and bringing the ball into the attack area. Wings should have speed and endurance.

Goalkeeper: The goalkeeper's responsibility is to protect the goal. She should have good stickwork, courage and confidence.

Equipment for Girls' and Women's Lacrosse

The Crosse: The crosse (lacrosse stick) is made of wood, laminated wood, or synthetic material, with a shaped net pocket at the end. A girl's crosse must be an overall length of 35.5 - 43.25 inches. The head of the crosse must be seven to nine inches wide. The pocket of the stick must be strung traditionally; no mesh is allowed. The top of the ball when dropped in the pocket must remain above the side walls.* The goalkeeper's crosse may be 35.5- 48 inches long. The head of the crosse may be mesh and up to 12 inches wide.

* Modified Pocket allowed in girls youth rules

The Mouthpiece: All players must wear mouthguards.

Protective Equipment: Close-fitting gloves, nose guards and soft head gear are optional and may be worn by all players. All field players must properly wear eye protection that meets ASTM specification standard F803 for women's adult/ youth lacrosse for the appropriate level of play.

The Goalkeeper's Equipment: The goalkeeper must wear a helmet with face mask (NOCSAE approved), separate throat protector, padded gloves, mouth piece, and chest protector. The goalkeeper may wear padding on arms, legs, and shoulders which does not excessively increase the size of those body parts. High school level and below must wear padding on thighs and shins. Youth level must wear some form of abdominal and pelvic protection. Goalies are required to wear padded gloves.



Fouls & Penalties

Major Fouls:

- Fouls involving the stick:

- Players may not use their stick in a dangerous and/or intimidating manner, for example:
 - A defender may not make a sweeping check from behind that contacts the opponent's body; she may not swing her stick toward the body or head of her opponent nor may she hold her opponents' stick or body.
 - A defender may not directly poke or wave the crosse near an opponent's face.
 - A player with the ball may not hold the ball in her stick with her hand or cradle the ball in front of her face.
 - A player may not lower the head of the crosse below shoulder level and initiate crosse to body contact.

- Fouls involving the body:

- A defender may not restrain or hold an opponent with her stick or body by blocking, detaining, or pushing.
- A player in possession of the ball may not charge, or lean in with her shoulder or back into an opponent.
- A defender may not reach around her opponent to check the stick.

- Fouls within the critical scoring area:

- Three-second violation (only for a player defending her goal)
 - No defender may stand in the 8-meter arc for more than 3 seconds without being within a stick's length of the attacker she is marking.
- Obstruction of shooting space
 - For an attacker with the ball who is in the critical scoring area or within the 8-meter arc, no defender may stand in the attacker's free space towards the goal. This foul is called "shooting space."
 - A defender may pass through this free space when:
 - the player with the ball is not looking to shoot
 - the ball is on the ground or if it is being passed in the air
 - she is within a stick's length of her opponent.
- Dangerous play (by an attacker shooting on the goal)
 - The attacker assumes the responsibility to control her shot and her stick after releasing the ball. A shot may not be directed at a field player or the goalkeeper's body, especially her head or neck. This does not apply if a player moves into the path of the ball. Any shot taken without regard to the positioning of other players is dangerous.

Penalties for committing a major foul:

- Outside of the 8-meter arc:
 - The opposing team gets a free position at the location of the foul. The person who committed the foul stands 4 meters behind the fouled player. The rest of the players on the field must move 4 meters away from the ball.
- If the defense fouls within the 8-meter arc:

- The offense gets a free position from the closest hash mark on the 8-meter arc.
- The player who committed the foul goes 4 meters behind the fouled player.
- All players (offense and defense) must clear out of the 8-meter arc.
- If the offense fouls within the 8-meter arc:
 - The defense gets the ball on the 8-meter arc and the attacker who committed the foul must go 4 meters behind.

Minor Fouls:

Minor fouls in girls' lacrosse are less severe and less disruptive of play. They include:

- Empty stick checking - A player may not check her opponent's stick when the opponent does not have the ball in her pocket.
- Covering or guarding a ground ball with the stick or body - A player may not cover the ball with the pocket of her stick, step on the ball or cover the ball with any other part of her body thereby obstructing the ball from other players.
- Using one's hands or body to gain an advantage over one's opponent - A player may not "push off" her opponent with her hand or body to gain positional advantage.
- Using an illegal stick or not wearing mouth guard - A player must play with a stick of legal length and pocket depth, and must wear a mouth guard in her mouth at all times on the field.
- Jewelry - A player may not wear any jewelry at any time during a game. (Medical Alerts that cannot be removed may be taped down with athletic tape.)
- Illegal substitution - A player may not enter the field before her teammate leaves the field, and must enter the field through the substitution box.
- Delay of game - A player or team may not intentionally delay the game by either failing to stand when the whistle is blown, failing to move 4 meters away from a player on a free position, failing to wear a mouth guard, or behaving in any other way which in the umpire's opinion amounts to a delay.
- Illegal draw - A player may be cited for an illegal draw if she draws too soon, does not move her stick up and away, moves before the whistle after the draw is set up, or if the ball does not go above the heads of the players taking the draw.
- Intentionally putting the ball out of bounds - A player may not kick, run, pass or throw the ball intentionally out of bounds.
- Body Ball - a player may not allow any part of her body to deliberately impede, accelerate or change the direction of the ball. However, if the goalkeeper blatantly attempts to stop a shot on goal by plauing the ball off her bdy while outside the goal circle, it shall be called a major foul.

Penalties for committing a minor foul:

- Outside of the 8-meter arc:
 - Umpire awards a free position and moves the fouling player 4 meters away in the direction from which the fouling player came.
- Within the 12-meter fan:

- Indirect free position on the nearest spot of the 12-meter fan. On an indirect call, the player with the ball may not shoot - the ball must be played by a teammate before a shot is taken.

Rules for play around the crease:

- A field player (an attacker or defender) must not enter or have any part of her body or stick crossing the plane of the crease at any time, unless she is deputizing for the goalkeeper.
- The goalkeeper or her deputy must not allow the ball to remain in the crease longer than 10 seconds, and may not re-enter the crease with the ball after leaving the crease with the ball unless the ball has been played by another player.
- With both feet inside the crease, the goalie may reach with her stick outside the crease to reach the ball, but she may not cover the ball or draw it into her crease.

Penalties for committing a foul around the crease:

- If the defense crosses the line or plane of the crease, she commits a minor foul, and the attacker gets an indirect free position at the 12-meter fan.
- If the attacker crosses the line or plane of the crease, the goalie gets the ball and all of the players on the field must move 4 meters away from the crease.

Midfield Play:

- A restraining line is located 30 yards from each goal area. A team is "off sides" if more than 8 defenders (including the goalie) or more than 7 attackers are over the line at any time. Players may exchange places during play, but a player should cross the restraining line fully before her teammate can enter. Players may reach over the restraining line with their stick to play the ball, as long as no part of their foot is over the line.

Glossary

Blocking:

Takes place when a player moves into the path of a player with the ball without giving that player a chance to stop or change direction causing contact. When a player is running to receive the ball, a "blind side" defense player must give her enough time and/or space to change her direction.

Body Checking:

Is a technique whereby a defender moves with an opponent without body contact occurring, following each movement of the opponent's body or crosse with her body and causing her to slow down, change direction, or pass off.

Charging:

Takes place when the player with the ball pushes into, shoulders, or backs into and makes bodily contact with her opponent who has already established her position (though not necessarily stationary).

Clear:

Any action taken by a player within the goal circle to pass or carry the ball out of the goal circle.

Clear Space:

Indicates the space between the players which is free of crosses or parts of the body.

Coaching Area:

Is the area on the bench/table side of the field extending from their side of the substitution area to their end line, and up to the sideline.

Critical Scoring Area:

An area 15 meters in front of and to each side of the goal and nine meters behind the goal. An eight-meter arc and 12 meter fan are marked in the area.

Crosse (Stick):

The equipment used to throw, catch, check and carry the ball.

Crosse Checking:

Stick to stick contact consisting of a series of controlled taps in an attempt to dislodge the ball from the crosse.

Deputy:

A player who enters the goal circle when the goalie is out of the goal circle and her team is in possession of the ball.

Draw:

A technique to start or resume play by which a ball is placed in between the sticks of two standing players and drawn up and away.

Eight-Meter Arc:

A semi-circular area in front of the goal used for the administration of major fouls. A defender may not remain in this area for more than three seconds unless she is within a stick's length of her opponent.

Free Position:

An opportunity awarded to the offense when a major or minor foul is committed by the defense. All players must move four meters away from the player with the ball. When the whistle sounds to resume play, the player may run, pass or shoot the ball.

Free Space To Goal:

A cone-shaped path extending from each side of the goal circle to the attack player with the ball. A defense player may not, for safety reasons, stand alone in this area without closely marking an opponent.

Goal Circle:

The circle around the goal with a radius of 2.6 meters (8.5 feet). No player's stick or body may "break" the cylinder of the goal circle.

Grounded:

Refers to any part of the goalkeeper's or deputy's body touching the ground for support outside of the goal circle when she attempts to play the ball from inside the goal circle.

Indirect Free Position:

Is the penalty awarded for a minor field foul by the defense inside the 12 meter fan. The player taking the free position may run or pass but may not shoot until another player has the ball.

Marking:

Being within a stick's length of an opponent.

Penalty Lane:

The path to the goal that is cleared when a free position is awarded to the attacking team.

Scoring Play:

A continuous effort by the attacking team to move the ball toward the goal and to complete a shot on goal.

Stand:

All players, except the goalkeeper in her goal circle, must remain stationary following the sound of any whistle.

Slashing:

Is the swinging of a crosse at an opponent's crosse or body with deliberate viciousness or recklessness, whether or not the opponent's crosse or body has been struck.

Sphere:

An imaginary area, approximately 18 cm (seven inches) which surrounds a player's head. No stick checks toward the head are allowed to break the sphere.

12 Meter Fan:

A semi-circle in front of the goal used for the administration of minor fouls.

Warning Cards: A yellow card presented by an umpire to a player is a warning which indicates that is playing dangerously and/or conducting herself in an unsportsmanlike manner. That player must leave the field for 3 minutes of elapsed playing time. A player who receives a second yellow card will be suspended from participation in that game. A green card is presented by an umpire to the team captain indicating a team caution for delay of game. A red card is used to suspend a player, coach or team follower from the game. Within a Stick's Length: This is when any part of the opponent's body is inside a crosses length. It is the distance a player must be to her opponent to be actively marking this opponent.

Honor the Game

(Compiler's NOTE: This is a product of the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). The Lake Tapps Lacrosse Club is committed to the Honoring the Game program to encourage and reinforce good sportsmanship. Although this section is the last part of this guide, it is among the most important. All players and parents, as well as coaches, must be familiar with the sportsmanship expectations of the club)

Many people talk about "sportsmanship," or what it means to be a "good sport." What does it mean to you to be a good sport? Answers to this question vary widely. Sadly, PCA has even heard stories of coaches telling their teams that if they win the Sportsmanship Award at a tournament, they will spend the entire following week conditioning! Why might a coach say this? Unfortunately, many coaches equate being a good sport with being soft or weak.

PCA believes the time has come to unite behind a powerful new term, "Honoring the Game." Coaches, parents, and athletes need to realize that an Honoring the Game perspective needs to replace the common win-at-all-cost perspective. If a coach and his or her team have to dishonor the game to win it, what is this victory really worth, and what sort of message is this sending young athletes?

If Honoring the Game is to become the youth sports standard, it needs a clear definition. At PCA we say that Honoring the Game goes to the "ROOTS" of positive play. Each letter in ROOTS stands for an important part of the game that we must respect. The R stands for Rules. The first O is for Opponents. The next O is for Officials. T is for Teammates, and the S is for Self.

R is for Rules

Rules allow us to keep the game fair. If we win by ignoring or violating the rules, what is the value of our victory? PCA believes that honoring the letter *AND* the spirit of the rule is important.

O is for Opponents

Without an opponent, there would be no competition. Rather than demeaning a strong opponent, we need to honor strong opponents because they challenge us to do our best. Athletes can be both fierce and friendly during the same competition (in one moment giving everything to get to a loose ball, and in the next moment helping an opponent up). Coaches showing respect for opposing coaches and players sets the tone for the rest of the team.

O is for Officials

Respecting officials, even when we disagree with their calls, may be the toughest part of Honoring the Game. We must remember that officials are not perfect (just like coaches, athletes and parents!). Take time to think about how to best approach an official when you want to discuss a call. What strategies do you have to keep yourself in control when you start to "get upset with officials" calls? We must remember that the loss of

officials (and finding enough in the first place) is a major problem in most youth sports organizations, and we can confront this problem by consistently respecting officials.

T is for Teammates

It's easy for young athletes to think solely about their own performance, but we want athletes to realize that being part of a team requires thinking about and respecting one's teammates. This respect needs to carry beyond the field/gym/track/pool into the classroom and social settings. Athletes need to be reminded that their conduct away from practices and games will reflect back on their teammates and the league, club, or school.

S is for Self

Athletes should be encouraged to live up to their own highest personal standard of Honoring the Game, even when their opponents are not. Athletes' respect for themselves and their own standards must come first.

Having this definition of Honoring the Game (HTG) is a start. To make Honoring the Game the youth sports standard, coaches, leaders, and parents need to discuss HTG with their athletes. Coaches need to practice it with their athletes (i.e. have players officiate at practice). And perhaps most importantly, all adults in the youth sports setting (coaches, leaders, parents, officials, and fans) need to model it. If these adults Honor the Game, the athletes will too.