

GREAT FALLS



LACROSSE

**Parent's Guide to
Boys 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.

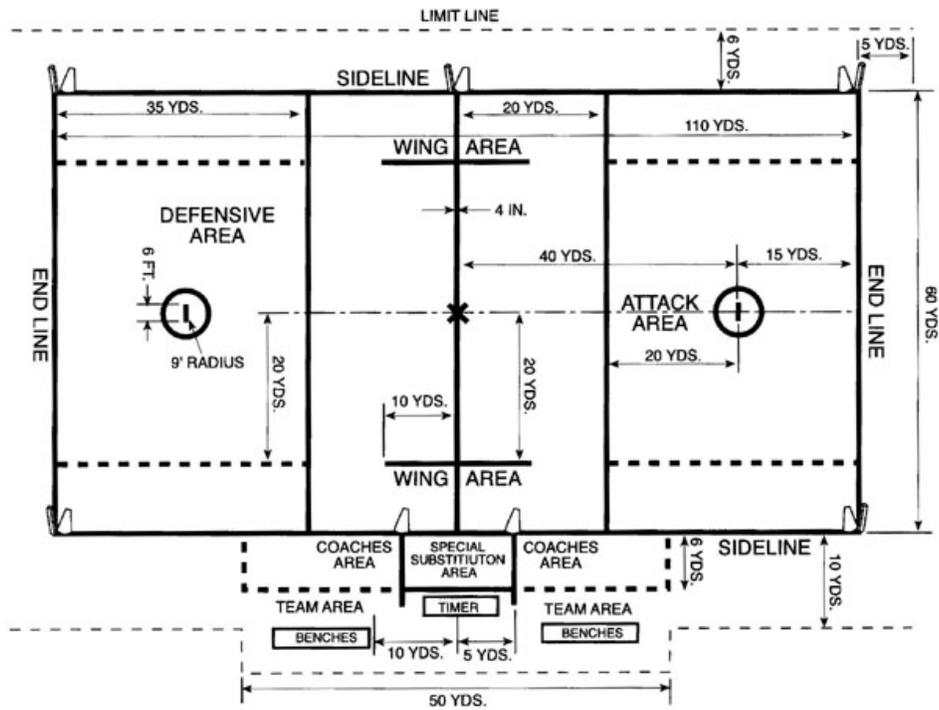
Apart from its recreational function, lacrosse traditionally played a more serious role in Indian culture. Its origins are rooted in legend, and the game continues to be used for curative purposes and surrounded with ceremony. Game equipment and players are still ritually prepared by conjurers, and team 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.

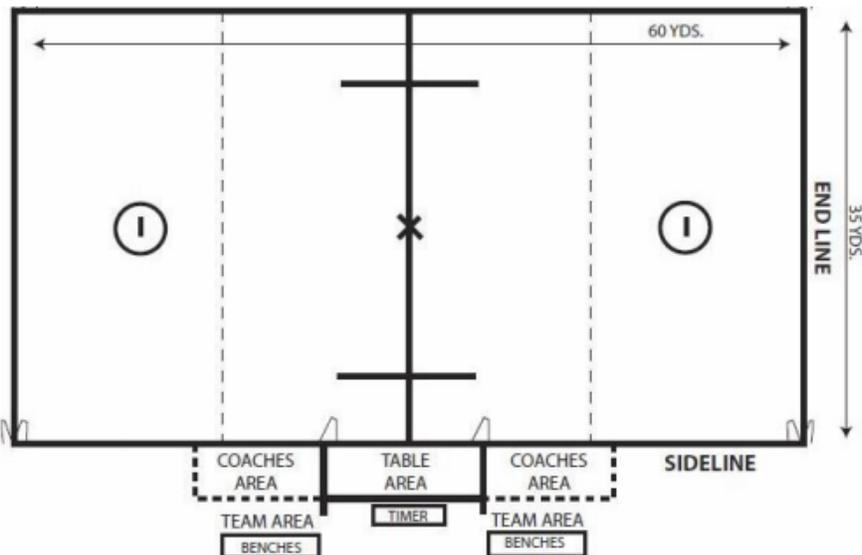
Meanwhile, the spread of nonnative lacrosse from the Montreal area eventually led to its position today worldwide as one of the fastest growing sports (more than half a million players), controlled by official regulations and played with manufactured rather than hand-made equipment—the aluminum shafted 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

High School and youth field size



U11 & U9 field size (played 7 vs7)



Boys Lacrosse Overview

Boys' lacrosse is a contact game played by ten players: a goalie, three defensemen, three midfielders and three attackmen. The object of the game is to shoot the ball into the opponent's goal and to keep the other team from scoring. The team scoring the most goals wins.

Each team must keep at least four players, including the goalie, in its defensive half of the field and three in its offensive half. Three players (midfielders) may roam the entire field.

Collegiate games are 60 minutes long, with 15-minute quarters. Generally, high school games are 48 minutes long, with 12-minute quarters. Youth games vary by level; please refer to the Boys' Youth Rules section from the main index. Each team is given a two-minute break between the first and second quarters, and the third and fourth quarters. Halftime is 10 minutes long.

Teams change sides between periods. Each team is permitted two timeouts each half. The team winning the coin toss chooses the end of the field it wants to defend first.

The players take their positions on the field: four in the defensive clearing area, one at the center, two in the wing areas and three in their attack goal area.

Men's/boys' lacrosse begins with a face-off. The ball is placed between the sticks of two squatting players at the center of the field. The official blows the whistle to begin play. Each face-off player tries to control the ball. The players in the wing areas can run after the ball when the whistle sounds. The other players must wait until one player has gained possession of the ball, or the ball has crossed a goal area line, before they can release.

Center face-offs are also used at the start of each quarter and after a goal is scored. Field players must use their crosses to pass, catch and run with the ball. Only the goalkeeper may touch the ball with his hands. A player may gain possession of the ball by dislodging it from an opponent's crosse with a stick check. A stick check is the controlled poking and slapping of the stick and gloved hands of the player in possession of the ball.

Body checking is permitted if the opponent has the ball or is within five yards of a loose ball. All body contact must occur from the front or side, above the waist and below the shoulders, and with both hands on the stick. An opponent's crosse may also be stick checked if it is within five yards of a loose ball or ball in the air. Aggressive body checking is discouraged.

If the ball or a player in possession of the ball goes out of bounds, the other team is awarded possession. If the ball goes out of bounds after an unsuccessful shot, the player nearest to the ball when and where it goes out of bounds is awarded possession. An attacking player cannot enter the crease around the goal, but may reach in with his stick to scoop a loose ball.

A referee, umpire and field judge supervise field play. A chief bench official, timekeepers and scorers assist. There are personal fouls and technical fouls in boys' lacrosse. The penalty for a personal foul results in a one-to-three minute suspension from play and possession to the team that was fouled. Players with five personal fouls are ejected from the game. The penalty for a technical foul is a 30-second suspension if a team is in possession of the ball when the foul is committed, or possession of the ball to the team that was fouled if there was no possession when the foul was committed.

The US Lacrosse Youth Council has adopted modified rules for play by youth ages 15 and under. The official rules can be found by following the rules link on the main index. The rules are provided as modifications to the National Federation of State High School Associations rule book, which governs high school play. College play is governed by the NCAA rulebook. To order these rulebooks, please visit the US Lacrosse online store.

Field Positions

Attack:

The attackman's responsibility is to score goals and help his teammates score goals by passing the ball. The attackman generally restricts his play to the offensive end of the field. A good attackman demonstrates excellent stick work with both hands and has quick feet to maneuver around the goal. Each team has three attackmen on the field during play.

Midfield:

The midfielder's responsibility is to cover the entire field, playing both offense and defense. The midfielder is a key to the transition game, and is often called upon to clear the ball from defense to offense. A good midfielder demonstrates good stick work including throwing, catching and scooping. Speed and stamina are essential. Each team has three midfielders on the field.

Defense:

The defenseman's responsibility is to defend the goal. The defenseman generally restricts his play to the defensive end of the field. A good defenseman should be able to react quickly in game situations. Agility and aggressiveness are necessary, but great stick work is more essential to attack. Each team has three defensemen on the field.

Goal:

The goalie's responsibility is to protect the goal and stop the opposing team from scoring. A good goalie also leads the defense by reading the situation and directing the defensemen to react. A good goalie should have excellent hand/eye coordination and a strong voice.

Quickness, agility, confidence and the ability to concentrate are also essential. Each team has one goalie in the goal during play.

Equipment for Boys' and Men'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. The crosse must be an overall length of 40 - 42 inches for attackmen and midfielders, or 52 - 72 inches for defensemen. The head of the crosse must be 6.5 - 10 inches wide, except a goalie's crosse which may be 10 - 12 inches wide. The pocket of a crosse shall be deemed illegal if the top surface of a lacrosse ball, when placed in the head of the crosse, is below the bottom edge of the side wall.

The Ball:

The ball must be made of solid rubber and can be white, yellow or orange. The ball is 7.75 - 8 inches in circumference and 5 - 5.25 ounces.

The Helmet:

A protective helmet, equipped with face mask, chin pad and a cupped four point chin strap fastened to all four hookups, must be worn by all players. All helmets and face masks should be NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) approved.

The Mouthpiece:

The mouthpiece must be a highly visible color and is mandatory.

The Glove:

All players are required to wear protective gloves. The cutting or altering of gloves is prohibited.

Other Protective Equipment:

All players, with the exception of the goalkeeper, must wear shoulder pads. Arm pads are required and rib pads are strongly recommended, and often required, as are athletic supporters and protective cups for all players.

The goalkeeper is required to wear a throat protector and chest protector, in addition to a helmet, mouthpiece, gloves and a protective cup.



Age Group	Helmet	Gloves	Shoulder	Elbow	Shorts	Jersey	Mouth Guard	Cup	Crosse
High School	Club Specified	Club Specified	Required	Black	Club Specified	Club Specified	Required	Required	NFHS Certified
U15	Club Specified	Club Specified	Required	Required	Club Specified	Club Specified	Required	Required	NFHS Certified
U13	Club Specified	Black w/ White Trim	Required	Required	Black no trim	Club Specified	Required	Required	NFHS Certified
U11	NOCSAE Approved	Required	Required	Required	Black no trim	Club Specified	Required	Required	NFHS Certified
U9	NOCSAE Approved	Required	Required	Required	Black no trim	Club Specified	Required	Required	NFHS Certified

*See Team store on the website for club specified equipment.

Fouls & Penalties

Personal Fouls

Slashing:

Occurs when a player's stick viciously contacts an opponent in any area other than the stick or gloved hand on the stick.

Tripping:

Occurs when a player obstructs his opponent at or below the waist with the crosse, hands, arms, feet or legs.

Cross Checking:

Occurs when a player uses the handle of his crosse between his hands to make contact with an opponent.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct:

Occurs when any player or coach commits an act which is considered unsportsmanlike by an official, including taunting, arguing, or obscene language or gestures.

Unnecessary Roughness:

Occurs when a player strikes an opponent with his stick or body using excessive or violent force.

Illegal Body Checking:

Occurs when any of the following actions takes place:

- A. body checking an opponent who is not in possession of the ball or within five yards of a loose ball;
- B. avoidable body check of an opponent after he has passed or shot the ball;
- C. body checking an opponent from the rear or at or below the waist;
- D. body checking an opponent above the shoulders. A body check must be below the shoulders and above the waist, and both hands of the player applying the body check must remain contact with his crosse.

Illegal Crosse:

Occurs when a player uses a crosse that does not conform to required specifications. A crosse may be found illegal if the pocket is too deep or if any other part of the crosse was altered to gain an advantage.

Illegal Gloves:

Occurs when a player uses gloves that do not conform to required specifications. A glove will be found illegal if the fingers and palms are cut out of the gloves, or if the glove has been altered in a way that compromises its protective features.

Technical Fouls

Crease Violation:

Occurs when an offensive player deliberately, through his own momentum, enters the opponent's goal crease or a defensive player, including the goalkeeper, with the ball in his possession, enters from the surrounding playing field into his own goal-crease.

Holding:

Illegally impedes the movement of an opponent with the ball.

Illegal Offensive Screening:

Occurs when an offensive player, through moving contact of his body or equipment, blocks a defensive player from the man he is playing, or impedes his normal movements of playing defense.

Interference:

Occurs when a player interferes in any manner with the free movement of an opponent, except when that opponent has possession of the ball, the ball is in flight and within five yards of the player, or both players are within five yards of a loose ball.

Offsides:

Occurs when a team does not have at least four players on its defensive side of the midfield line or at least three players on its offensive side of the midfield line.

Pushing:

Occurs when a player thrusts or shoves a player from behind.

Stalling:

Occurs when a team intentionally holds the ball, without conducting normal offensive play, with the intent of running time off the clock.

Warding Off:

Occurs when a player in possession of the ball uses his free hand or arm to hold, push or control the direction of an opponent's stick check.

Withholding the Ball from Play:

Occurs when a player clamps a loose ball against the ground more than momentarily or clamps the ball against his body to prevent it from being dislodged.

2016 US Lacrosse Rules Exceptions - Quick Reference Guide

	U-9	U-11	U-13	U-15
Crosse Lengths				
Short	37" - 42"	37" - 42"	40" - 42" (NFHS)	40" - 42" (NFHS)
Long	None	47" - 54"	52" - 72" (NFHS)	52" - 72" (NFHS)
Goalie	37" - 72"	37" - 72"	40" - 72" (NFHS)	40" - 72" (NFHS)
# of Long Crosses	None	4 (NFHS)	4 (NFHS)	4 (NFHS)
Arm Pads/Cup	<===== Required for all (including Goalies) =====>			
NOCSAE Game Balls	No NOCSAE Ball = NO GAME -or- GAME SUSPENDED - record score and report to sponsoring authority			
Game Lengths	4 x 12 mins running (or 8 stop)	4 x 8 mins stop (or 12 running)	4 x 10 mins stop	4 x 10 mins stop
Overtime	Ties stand, unless winner required; then NFHS		2 OTs unless winner required; then NFHS	NFHS
Final 2 Minutes	n/a	n/a	"Get it In/Keep it In"	
Advancing the Ball (20- & 10-Sec. Counts)	n/a-See Stalling below	n/a-See Stalling below	20-second and 10-second counts enforced	
Stalling	"advance the ball"/ 5-second count		All NFHS stalling/advance the ball rules in effect.	
Face-off Mercy Rule	6 or more goal differential at any time - award to trailing team unless coach waives		NFHS	NFHS
Substitution Procedure	NFHS (unless league adopts horn sub option)		NFHS	
Stick Checks/Slashing	<===== No one-handed checks (USL) =====>			
3-Yard Rule	All legal checks, holds, or pushes must be on a player with possession or within 3 yards of a loose ball.			
Body Checking	Not permitted	Not permitted	NFHS —STRESS defenseless player and excessively violent collisions	
Penalty Enforcement	Player serves penalty, but is replaced; no EMO.	NFHS	NFHS	NFHS

References: NFHS 2016 Boys Lacrosse Rules Book modified by US Lacrosse - 2016 Rules for Boys Youth Lacrosse

If a rule is not modified by US Lacrosse Boys Youth Rules...then follow NFHS.

Glossary

Attack Goal Area:

The area around the goal defined by the end line, the Goal Area Line and the two broken lines located 20 yards on either side of the goal. Once the offensive team crosses the midfield line, it has 10 seconds to move the ball into its attack goal area.

Body Check:

Contact with an opponent from the front - between the shoulders and waist - when the opponent has the ball or is within five yards of a loose ball. At no time should a player initiate or receive body contact with his head.

Box:

An area between the two team benches used to hold players who have been served with penalties, and through which substitutions "on the fly" are permitted directly from the sideline onto the field.

Check-Up:

A call given by the goalie to tell each defender to find his man and call out his number.

Clamp:

A face-off maneuver executed by quickly pushing the back of the stick on top of the ball.

Clearing:

Running or passing the ball from the defensive half of the field to the offensive half of the field.

Crease:

A circle around the goal with a radius of nine feet into which only defensive players may enter. Defensive players may not take the ball into the crease.

Crosse (stick):

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

Defensive Clearing Area:

The area defined by a line drawn sideline to sideline 20 yards from the face of the goal. Once the defensive team gains possession of the ball in this area, it has 10 seconds to move the ball beyond the Goal Area Line. Once beyond the Goal Area Line, the defensive team may not pass or run the ball back into the Defensive Clearing Area.

Extra Man Offense (EMO):

A man advantage that results from a timeserving penalty by the other team.

Face-off:

A technique used to put the ball in play at the start of each quarter, or after a goal is scored. The players squat down and the ball is placed between their crosses.

Fast-Break:

A transition scoring opportunity in which the offense has at least a one-man advantage.

Ground Ball:

A loose ball on the playing field.

Handle (shaft):

An aluminum, wooden or composite pole connected to the head of the crosse.

Head:

The plastic or wood part of the stick connected to the handle used to catch, throw and shoot.

Man Down Defense (MDD):

The situation that results from a timeserving penalty which causes the defense to play with at least a one man disadvantage.

Midfield Line:

The line which bisects the field of play.

On-The-Fly Substitution:

A substitution made during play.

Pick:

An offensive maneuver in which a stationary player attempts to block the path of a defender guarding another offensive player.

Play On:

If a player commits a loose-ball technical foul or crease violation and an offended player may be disadvantaged by the immediate suspension of play, the official shall visually and verbally signal "play on" and withhold the whistle until such time as the situation of advantage, gained or lost, has been completed.

Pocket:

The strung part of the head of the stick which holds the ball.

Rake:

A face-off move in which a player sweeps the ball to the side.

Riding:

The act of trying to prevent a team from clearing the ball from the offensive half to defensive half of the field.

Release:

The term used by an official to notify a penalized player in the box that he may re-enter the game occurs at the conclusion of a time-serving penalty.

Unsettled Situation:

Any situation in which the defense is not positioned correctly, usually due to a loose ball or broken clear.

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.