

Objectives of a U13 thru U15 Lacrosse Practice

- **Safety**- At all times this should be our number one concern. The players must understand the importance of every piece of equipment, as well as always wear the required equipment. No players should be involved in a lacrosse activity without proper equipment (*for boys: a helmet, mouth guard, shoulder pads, arm pads, gloves, and protective cup*) and (*for Girls: mouth guard and protective goggles*). All activities should be supervised by a board designated coach that has had a criminal history and child abuse check performed and on file with the board.
- **Fun** – The U13-U15 levels of lacrosse starts to be much more competitive. The fun should be within the games and scrimmage situations. Practices should still be enjoyable for the players, but they also should be working harder than they are accustomed to in terms of drilling and conditioning.
- **Positive Environment** – Players should constantly be praised for any successes they achieve. For example, every goal should be congratulated by the coach with a handshake and “nice shot.” Even if it was not the ideal shot you want the player to take. There should never be any negativity, unless it is in direct response to a measure that requires a player be disciplined. Any displays of sportsmanship should be positively reinforced. Bottom Line; let the kids know everything they are doing right and you will more often than not see them doing everything right. If you focus on the negative, than the kids will also dwell on the negative. This only leads to more failures. Remember.....“Enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm” which ultimately leads to success on the field.
- **Advanced Skill Development**- The players are now playing to win games. Their skills need to be more advanced than they were at the U9-U11 levels. Shooting should be regularly instructed, so that kids are using correct form. Passing and catching should be fluent with either hand. The players also now need to learn how to maintain possession of the ball to run set plays. These plays include EMO, Clears, Rides, and Even Strength. Defensively, the players need to know the basic concepts of man to man, zone defense, slide and recover, man down formations and rotations. This is not to say that they need to be perfect at them, but need to know what they are and able to run them on some level. Selected mid-fielders also need to know the fundamental concepts of facing off/draw techniques, with an emphasis on techniques for winning consistently.
- **Rules Knowledge** – All players at this level should know, understand, and follow all rules of the game. This includes the understanding of things like what a slash is, what is and isn't a legal stick, off-sides, failure to advance, illegal screens, warding off, loose ball pushes, shooting space, checks, etc...
- **Sportsmanship**- At no point should winning or losing ruin the traditions of the game. The game of lacrosse was built on traditions and beliefs of the Native American people. US Lacrosse uses an acronym to carry a similar message to all of its' members. **R.O.O.T.S.**

Respect for the...

R ules	O pponents	O fficials	T eam	S elf
"We refuse to bend the rules to win."	"A worthy opponent is a gift that brings our our best."	"We act with respect even when we disagree."	"Our conduct does not embarrass ourselves or our teammates"	"We live up to our own standards, even when others don't."

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- **Participation/Winning Games** – At this age group, the players should all be participating at every practice. Coaches should stress to their teams that all members of the team are valuable assets, but in certain situations the coach is going to rely on certain players to accomplish what is best for the entire team, not just one player. Keeping this in mind, the coaches should play every player in every game, assuming that player is in good standing with the team policies.
- **Player Discipline** – The middle school team needs to be much more disciplined than the previous levels. Coaches should establish policies consistent with the Varsity team, regarding attendance, academics and school discipline. Practice is now a 5 day per week requirement. Don't be afraid to use your authority as a coach to keep the players meeting expectations. This also applies to on the field play. Players need to be executing what their coaches are calling, there is no room for players to make their own decisions as to whether or not they run a play called by the coach.
- **Skill Development**- In order for your HS program to ultimately be successful, you need to start developing good fundamental skills right from the very start. Some drills will work on more than one skill. This is a big plus when planning your practices for the most effective use of time. Communication between the players is imperative throughout the drills. All players should use the first name of their teammate when calling for the ball, helping on defense, etc...

Game Planning

- **Game Scheduling** – One of the best ways to keep kids involved is to have them play games. At this age, the kids are often involved in numerous activities. Therefore, one or two games a week typically on Wednesdays and Saturdays is the best practice. More than that and the kids may become fatigued or lose fundamental skills. Also, try and schedule teams that you know you can be competitive with. It is never fun to be on the losing end of a blowout game for either team involved.

Game Planning

- **Blowout Games** - If you find yourself in this situation, remember is it worth running all of your best players into the ground to try and catch up? Make sure all of the kids get in. Let them try different positions and see how they do. It is a great time to teach them about overcoming adversity and playing their hardest no matter the situation. On the same token, if you are winning in this type of game, “call off the dogs.” Try not to be patronizing to your opponents, but rather work with them. Many other youth coaches would be open to discussion about how to handle this situation given the individual game circumstances. Just remember “It’s not all about winning!”
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