



Celebrating Community-based Youth Lacrosse in Massachusetts

Q: How do we get more boys & girls playing & enjoying youth lacrosse in your community?

The growth and enjoyment of Community-based Youth Lacrosse in every town, city, neighborhood across Massachusetts is the core objective of Mass Bay Youth Lacrosse League. Your league and your town program continue to be focused on this goal each spring season. So how do we do that? Simple answer: By remembering, supporting and celebrating why community-based youth lacrosse matters. Focusing on a shared mission (to teach, grow, and honor the game), coaching education, and player-family-fan enjoyment during what is a short 12-week spring season March to June has been key to our collective success in the youth lacrosse world.

The impact, importance and opportunity for community-based youth lacrosse cannot be overstated. Your town program leaders and coaches take great pride in delivering a fun spring season experience for all players—and certainly a majority of parents around the state appreciate the result. I was reminded of this fact after attending a recent DIII college game between Babson College vs. The Coast Guard Academy. The mom of one of Coast Guard's captains and a former MBYLL youth player, recalled to me after the game how her son was a very nervous, yet very determined, young boy doing his best to learn the game when he started playing in 2nd grade—yet he almost quit the sport at that very young age if it wasn't for his coach's ongoing encouragement throughout the season. His coaches made a difference in ensuring this youth player wanted to come back and play again and again each spring by making the experience fun. Watching this now-graduated college senior score what was the winning goal against Babson a few weeks ago, and thinking about where he started 12 years ago in his youth program, reminded me of the life-changing experiences our sport can offer and why we must continue to feed and focus on improving the community-based youth lacrosse experience in all communities so more players & families can share in that enjoyment.

Yet make no mistake: community-based youth lacrosse's very existence is also under attack, and this fact was reinforced when I also recently learned that the community-based youth program in Maryland that produced Paul Rabil, arguably the most recognized player in professional lacrosse, folded a few short years ago due to many factors but mostly due, in my opinion, to what I call the 'elite-ification' of youth sports in general as well as in combination with the lack of support for the character-building value community-based youth lacrosse programs can provide in all communities. The volunteer leaders in your town and in MBYLL will continue to do our best to make sure this doesn't happen to our community-based youth programs in Massachusetts. We welcome and encourage your support as we Celebrate Community-based Youth Lacrosse this spring season and for many seasons to come across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Yours in lacrosse,

Tom

T.M. Spangenberg
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