

## Lacrosse: More than a Game

## Lacrosse: More than a Game

Lacrosse is a sport long popular in Maryland, Five Maryland institutions (The University of Maryland, Loyola, The Naval Academy, Johns Hopkins and St Johns College in Annapolis) have all won the Collegiate National Championship. We will explore the game concentrating upon its origin, history, equipment, techniques, traditions, people and expansion from the St Lawrence and Mohawk River Valleys to a game play throughout the world.

**Day 1. History.** Lacrosse is a game given to us by woodland Native Americans. Its history is intertwined with that of North America east of the Mississippi. We will start with viewing some moments of the “fastest game on two feet.” Next we will investigate the creation myth associated with the sport that comes from the Eastern Six Nation tribes that lived around Lakes Erie and Ontario. From there we will follow the history of the game starting with its introduction to European-Americans in Ontario and Quebec. The game is then transported to New York City and the East Coast before coming to Maryland where it blossomed with the growth of the college game in Baltimore, Annapolis and College Park. Eventually the game gained a foothold on Long Island as well as in the schools of the land that was once the Six Nations confederacy. In Canada the game is played on fields and indoor hockey rinks. Today, the game is played throughout the United States and Canada as well as in many countries. The biggest problem is to find a way for the Six Nations Confederacy to participate in World Championships.

**Day 2. Description of the Game and Technological Evolution.** Over the years the game has changed. Originally it was played with hundreds per team on a field that could stretch for miles. **Men’s game:** The current field is 110 yards long by 60 yards wide with the goals 80 yards apart. Six-foot by six-foot (HxW) goals are placed in the middle of the field (width) 15 yards infield (length) from each end line. The game is played with nets (sticks) of various sizes. (goalie sticks, long pole sticks and short sticks). Rosters currently hover around 50 with less than 25 getting on the field in close games. There are 10 players per team on the field at a time ( 1 goalie, 3 attack, 3 defenders and 3 midfielders. At the start of each period and after each goal the game is restarted by a face-off. Traditionally, asymmetrical lacrosse sticks were made from trees and animal gut. They are now synthetic with plastic heads having a two-fold axis of symmetry and lightweight, super-strong shafts. The game has evolved to replace generalists with specialists. There are offensive and defensive midfielders as well as face-off specialists, Goalies, attackers and most midfielders play with short sticks while defenders and a minority of midfielders wield longer sticks. The game is 1 hour in length, divided into four quarters. In case of a tie, sudden death overtime follows. **Women’s game:** This is a less physical version that precludes many aspects of checking. The pocket of women’s sticks are shallower. Face-off and penalty procedures are quite different.

**Day 3. Coaches, Players, People and Mythologies.** We will focus upon a unique role played by Johns Hopkins in growing the game. Johns Hopkins has long been the most bitter rival of Navy, Maryland, Towson, Loyola, North Carolina, Virginia, Princeton and Syracuse. It is traditional that as each new power arises, it finds its way onto the Hopkins schedule. It has also served as an ambassador spreading the game to the South, the West and even to Japan. It is incongruous to have a Division 1 sport as the centerpiece of a school that receives more Federal funding for research than any other academic institution. It is equivalent to splicing the Notre Dame football program onto MIT or CalTech. There are songs, chants and pranks that stretch back over 100 years. These will be reviewed.