

# A Lacrosse Coach's Manual for More Productive Practices



Coaching lacrosse is a great way to become involved in shaping the athletic development of young people. However, getting started can be as challenging as a behind-the-back pass. For coaches at any level of lacrosse, our manual has tips and tricks to improve your squad's next practice.



## Team Meeting



Coaches should start the day off on the right foot with a quick team pep talk. They can revisit and reinforce the lessons learned in the last practice as well as introduce the priorities for the day. A coach is charged with setting the tone of the practices at its outset. Remember, enthusiasm and excitement are contagious in sports.

## Warm Up

Before they start running up and down the field, players benefit from setting aside a few minutes to warm up their muscles. A five to ten minute warm up that includes a short jog, stretching and calisthenics is recommended.



# Drill the Basics

Success in lacrosse is driven by a solid foundation in the fundamentals of the game. Every practice should have a 15 to 20 minute segment that reinforces these core skills:

- **Scooping**
- **Catching**
- **Throwing**
- **Shooting**
- **Dodging**

# Teach Technique

In addition to fundamental drills, coaches should teach player technique. Pick a basic skill, like shooting, and demonstrate the proper way to perform it. Then, let players take turns shooting the right way while coaches critique their form.

# Situational Play

As a coach, you likely realize lacrosse players are itching to play games more than anything else. You can quickly become a popular coach by penciling in situational play in every practice.

At your next practice, try this shortened field game. . .



- 1** Move the cages towards midfield to create a shorter field.
- 2** Break up your squad into four-man teams with a substitute or two on each side. You should be able to field at least four teams.
- 3** The teams could include three short sticks and a pole, two

shorties and two poles or other combinations of defensemen and offensive players as long as the sides are even.

- 4** Play three or four-minute games.
- 5** Switch the matches and rotate in substitutes.

If you let your athletes play for 20 minutes, they get the chance to play four or five games. This activity is known to improve lacrosse players' transition skills, because the ball moves quickly up and down the shortened field.



## Wind Down

Your practices should never end abruptly. Give your players the opportunity to wind down, including 10 to 15 minutes of conditioning, calisthenics and stretching.

## Keep Practice Fun and Positive

Kids ultimately choose to play lacrosse, because it's fun. If you want your players to keep coming back, you should aim to run fun and positive practices.

Coaches are there to teach, but they should also offer words of encouragement. Although critiquing performance helps athletes improve, coaches should refrain from negativity. Instead, coaches should offer positive feedback that is helpful, not hurtful. Remember, a coach's enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm in their players.



# Be Age-Appropriate

From age group to age group and team to team, there is no one practice alike. The age of the athletes is a major determining factor in how coaches should run their practices. Coaches should consider qualities like physical, psychological and cognitive abilities of their players when they develop practice plans.

Coaches, who can shape their players' success on the lacrosse field, should keep their expectations age-appropriate.



# Teach Sportsmanship

Coaches should teach their players sportsmanship early and often. They should model good behavior while instilling the values of integrity, respect and compassion. Good sportsmanship translates into success both on and off the field.

While planning a practice can be daunting at first, coaching youth lacrosse at any level is an opportunity for both athletes and coaches to grow together.

