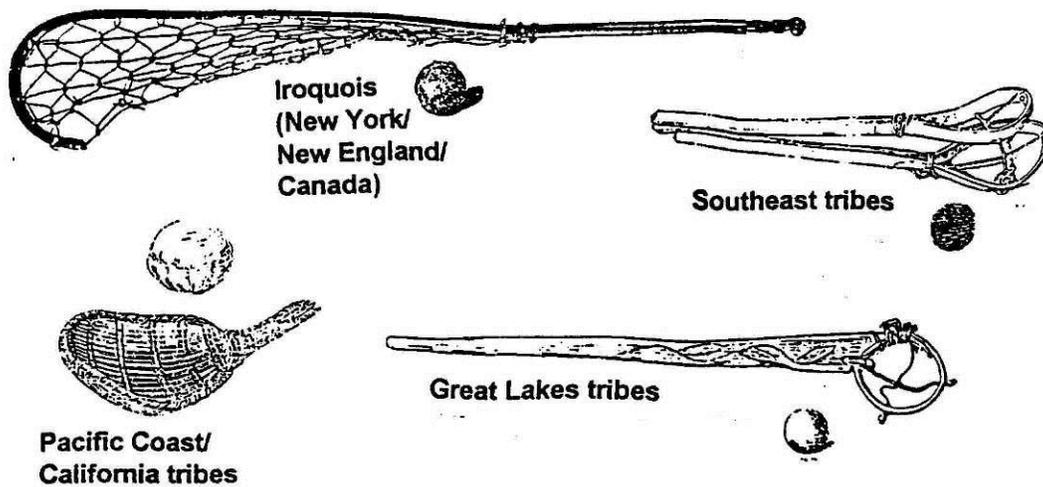


# Minnesota Lacrosse History

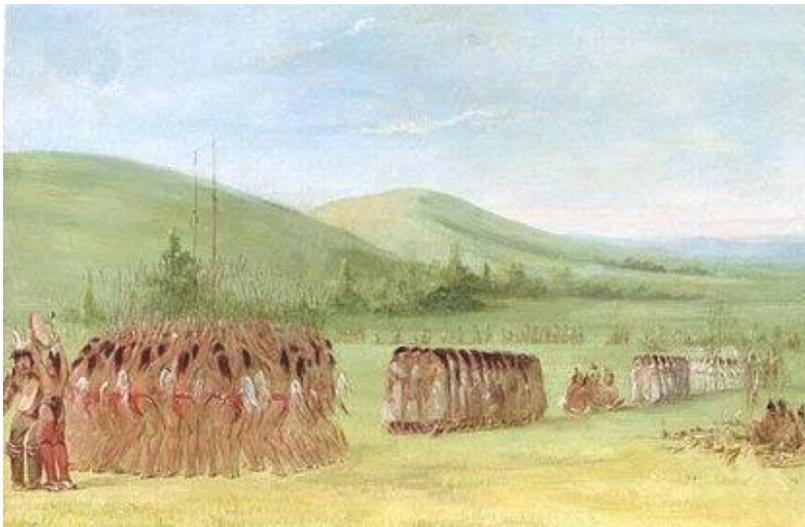
## Native Lacrosse Tradition

Lacrosse is considered the most widely played team sport in North America before European settlement, with regional variations played with either one or two sticks of differing types.

***NORTH AMERICA'S FIRST SPORT***  
***The Creator's Game..The Original National Pastime..The Fastest Game On Two Feet***



In all its forms, the native game was an athletic contest of great skill and pride. The first nations believed the game was given to them by the Creator for his enjoyment. There was also a unique spiritual component to the game, as it was used to celebrate good times, used as a healing ritual and to honor the dead and even settle territorial and other disputes. The toss-up face-off used at



the start of the game included the teams yelling the name of the Creator with sticks raised to the sky. This was to wake up the Creator and let him know his people were playing the game. The tradition of raised sticks in a huddle and yelling out your team's name is still a part of the modern game.

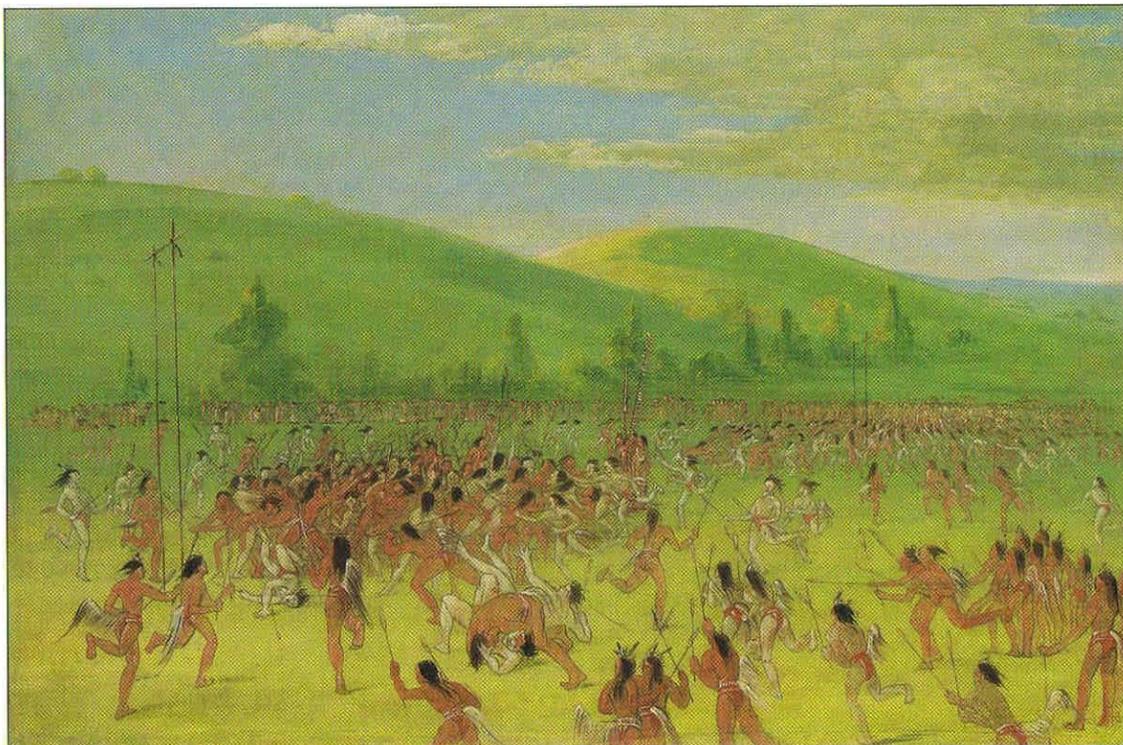
*Choctaw Ball Play Dance*  
*by George Catlin*

The name la crosse, “the stick” in French, was given to the game by the French Jesuit missionaries who thought the stick used to play the game by the Huron, Iroquois Confederacy (Seneca, Tuscarora, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga and Oneida) and other eastern tribes looked like the bishop’s crosier (bent stick) used in religious ceremonies. The French fur traders also called it la crosse because similar sports like tennis and croquet played in France with a curved racquet were called jouer à la crosse.

In the Ojibwe language the game is called Baa-gaa-do-we. The Dakota word for lacrosse is Ta-ka-psi-ca-pi, meaning “ball game.” The Cherokee call it Is-tap-o-li, while the Mohawk named it Ta-war-a-thon, which means “Little Brother of War.” This was an accurate description because the physical skills and stamina it took to play really did to prepare braves for war. Today, the yearly honor for the best college men’s and women’s lacrosse player is called the Tewaaraton Award.



Tribal elders were the officials, keeping the rules, wisdom and what was wrong and right. In the George Catlin painting below of a Choctaw ball game you see the elders (grandmothers) lined up along the side of the field. They would run on the field to break up fights and smack the offending players with hickory sticks. Players didn’t want to do anything to dishonor their grandmother, family, or tribe. In this game you can see the goal posts that the players had to carry or shoot the ball through.



## How Lacrosse Helped Capture a British Fort

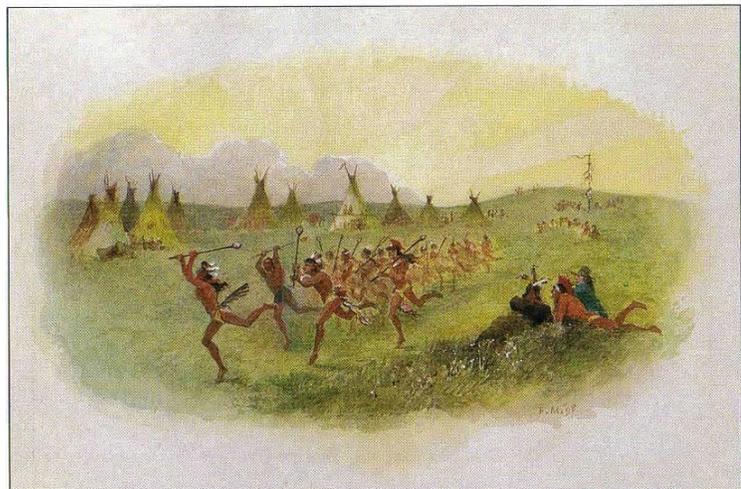
There is one great story every lacrosse player should know about how a game between the Sauk and Ojibwe was used to plan a surprise attack and capture the British held Fort Michilimackinac (near Mackinac City, MI) in 1763. The British (American colonies) were at war with the French, who were allied to various native tribes. The tribes from the area were not happy with the British and the trading terms they offered for furs. They preferred the way the French had traded with them, and decided it would be a good gesture to take the fort from the British and give it to the French. So, they devised a plan to use a lacrosse game to distract the British soldiers so they could take the fort. The date of the game was set to coincide with the English king's birthday when the soldiers would be free from their duties and ready to be entertained by the public wagering on the game. On the day of the game, the plan had the women of both tribes line up along the wall in front of the main gate with tomahawks, knives and war clubs under their shawls and blankets. As the game moved closer to the main gate, the ball was thrown inside the fort. The players dropped their sticks and grabbed the weapons from the women and stormed the unsuspecting British, capturing the fort and all the goods inside.

## The Native Game in Minnesota

The version of lacrosse played in the Great Lakes region consisted of a stick, made from ash or willow, with circular, dream catcher-like webbing on the end that held the ball. The round ball was made of wood, rock or clay with deer hide wrapped and sewn around it. The stick shape and rules were different from the larger stick used by the eastern tribes (Huron and Iroquois tribes) and the two-stick game played by southern tribes. (Cherokee, Seminole, Choctaw, et al.) The Midwest version of the game usually pitted village against village with sometimes 100 players on each side. The two dominant tribes in Minnesota were the Ojibwe (Chippewa) in the north and Sioux (Dakota, Nakota and Lakota) in the south. Other local tribes that played included the Winnebago, Menominee, Fox, and Sauk. The town of Ball Club near Bemidji was named by the Ojibwe because the sandy beaches offered a great place to play the game. Likewise, La Crosse, Wisconsin is also named after the game because fur traders witnessed the Winnebago, Menominee and other local tribes playing the game there during fur trader rendezvous, and named it "the prairie of lacrosse." It was eventually shorted to La Crosse.

## A Game of Celebration

This watercolor by Francis Meyers depicts the Sisseton tribe of the Sioux playing a ball game to celebrate the 1851 Traverse des Sioux treaty signing in St. Peter, Minnesota. You can see the one goal post with all the ribbons on it on the upper right.



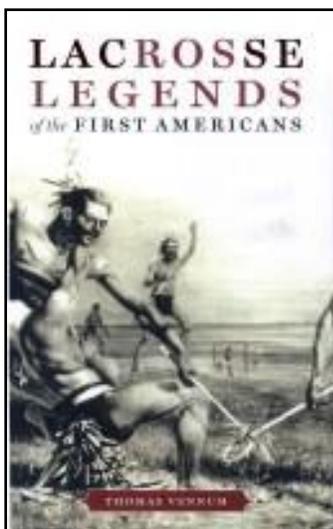
## Native Rules of the Game

The rules of the native game were simple. The hand cannot touch the ball at any time. At the start of the game and after every goal a face-off happens at the center of the field where the ball is tossed up among a circle of opposing players. To score, the ball (made of wood or sewn hide wrapped around clay or animal hair) is carried (cradled) and passed to teammates down the field and eventually shot at the goal so the ball passes through the goal posts or hits the goal post. Traditionally, the field was up to three miles long with no boundaries and body and stick checking were allowed. In the Great Lakes region version of the game played in Minnesota, the object was to score a goal by hitting the trunk of a tree with the ball or touching the tree with the ball in your stick. Each team had a goal tree anywhere from 1 mile to several hundred yards apart, depending on the number of players per team and terrain. Each tree was stripped of its branches so only the trunk remained, which made scoring difficult as there was not much to shoot at. Games typically lasted several hours or even days.

## A Culture Lost

The traditional ball game played by the Ojibwe and Dakota communities ended within the last 90 years due to the extensive diffusion of traditional culture through the influence of government and religious assimilation policies, gambling and harsh play. However, the two-stick version is still played by the southern tribes (Cherokee, Seminole, Choctaw, et al.) at sun festivals and tribal fairs. The Iroquois also never gave up the game and are credited with introducing it to the European settlers over 300 years ago. They have also embraced the modern box and field game and have inter-tribal box leagues, a men's field team, and an Under-19 team that represent the Iroquois nation in national and international tournaments. The game is still a tremendous source of pride for the Iroquois community.

In Minnesota, gambling is one of the major reasons that the ball game is not played today by the Great Lakes tribes. Much of their culture was lost when they were forced to move onto reservations. The government agencies and missionaries banned gambling due to the food and supplies wagered away on lacrosse and other games. There is a famous three-day game that took place in Oak Grove (now Bloomington), Minnesota in 1852 at a fur trader rendezvous. Missionary Gideon Pond recorded that four local Dakota bands (villages) came together to play a ball game to celebrate the great trading that was taking place between them and the white settlers and fur traders. Pond was impressed by the tremendous skill and stamina the players displayed, but was disheartened by the estimated \$50,000 worth of government-supplied food and other supplies that were lost by Good Iron's, Sky Man's and Grey Iron's band from Red Wing to the chief of the Little Six band from Shakopee.



There are two great books about the native history of the game: "Lacrosse Legends" and "Little Brother of War – American Indian Lacrosse" written by Edina native Thomas Vennum, Jr., a

renowned Native American lacrosse historian. The books are full of stories of how and where the native game was played, with photos of the different sticks and players. Vennum was also a consultant on the design the bronze sculpture on the Tewaaron Trophy.

## Lacrosse Evolves

In the late 1800's, the American and Canadian settlers' enthusiasm for the game gave us the rules we use today. Lacrosse was recognized as the national sport of Canada in 1880. It was primarily played on the east coast of Canada and the United States. In the 1960's there were less than 50 colleges with men's varsity lacrosse teams in the United States. Today the number of college teams exceeds 600 when you include NCAA Division I, II and III varsity teams and college club teams. Plus, there are literally thousands of boys' and girls' youth and high school teams, which are rapidly growing in numbers. With the advent of mass production, the Native-made traditional wooden stick went away in the early 1970's to make way for the plastic and metal sticks used today. However, there are still a few wooden stick makers left as the Iroquois have never stopped playing, and the wooden sticks they make are still used in some Canadian box lacrosse leagues.



## Traditions Revived

In 2003, Tim Moulton of the Minnesota Lacrosse Association partnered with the Minnesota Department of Health to sponsor a game of Baa-gaa-do-we at the National Sports Center in Blaine. The Roseville and Bloomington Jefferson high school teams played a game with traditional wooden sticks. The native community was represented by Dr. Lloyd Elm (Onondaga Nation) and Dan Ninham (Oneida Nation), who is pictured throwing up the ball to start the game.

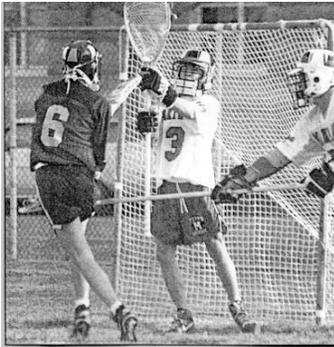
In 2013, Ninham started Minnesota Ojibwe Lacrosse and plans on bringing the Creator's Game back to native communities in Minnesota.

## Lacrosse in All Its Forms

There are four types of lacrosse being played today:

**Mini-lacrosse** (soft) is for beginners and is primarily taught in gym classes. It is an inexpensive modified non-contact version of the game that stresses the basic stick skills of dodging, catching, cradling, throwing, scooping and shooting. A soft lacrosse ball or tennis ball is used and no protective gear is required, just a plastic stick with a deep pocket that makes the game easy to play.

**Box lacrosse** (boxla or indoor) was invented in Canada by hockey rink owners that wanted to use their arenas in the summer when the ice was out. It involves many of the same rules (penalties, 6 on 6, power plays) and equipment of hockey combined with the stick skills of lacrosse. It includes the speed of lacrosse, the physical demands of hockey (boarding, checking) and the strategies of basketball (picks, offensive and defensive schemes). The MN Swarm professional box lacrosse club was an expansion team of the National Lacrosse League in 2004. The Swarm plays in the Xcel Center during the regular season from January to April.



**Men's field lacrosse** is played 10 on 10 on a 60 by 110 yard field in the spring and is closer than box lacrosse to the traditional Native American version of the game with the exception of the equipment. Helmets, gloves, shoulder and elbow pads are required, along with a stick and mouth guard. The stick can be between 56"-72" long for the defensive players and 40-42" long for the offensive players. The goalies have a stick that has a wide and deep net on it and also wear a large chest and throat protector. The strategy is similar to box lacrosse but the game is more spread out with a larger field, different rules and positions and more fast breaks.

**Women's field lacrosse** is also played on a soccer-sized field 12 on 12 but with different stick checking rules and without the body checking of the men's game. It is highly skilled and fast-paced without the need for protective equipment other than eye goggles and a mouth guard. The goalie is the only player with a helmet and protective gear and the stick with a larger pocket. The sticks do not have the deep pocket used by the men, which makes cradling more difficult. The rules are also different from the men's as there are no time-serving penalties, instead fouled players are given a positional advantage to the goal. The women's game resembles more closely the traditional Native American game than any other version played today.



## **Men's & College Club Lacrosse**

The Twin Cities Lacrosse Club (TCLC) was started in the summer of 1976, when a small club organized at the U of M by Jules Santé joined forces with a small group of players that Dave White located through a newspaper want ad. Original TCLC members included Tommy Oaster (former Oberlin College player), Tom Oaster Sr. (Tommy's nearly 50-year old father who played with a traditional Native American stick), Billy Oaster (Tommy's teen-aged brother), Paul and Peter Koller (the latter in HS), and goalie Joe Lepley (Notre Dame '74).

TCLC played its first game in 1977 against Iowa State on a field near Lake of the Isles, wearing jerseys that consisted of numbers taped on surgical scrubs that a physician team member, Steve Hill, borrowed from a local hospital. The team was a mix of experienced players and enthusiastic newcomers, but the caliber of play took a distinctive upturn when Dale Miquelle (Yale '76) joined the team while in graduate school at the U of M.

In the early years, the TCLC played against other teams in the Great Plains Lacrosse Association. The closest competition was at least 4 hours away in North Dakota, Wisconsin, Illinois or Iowa. The team later went through several name changes due to sponsorship deals, until in 2003 the team changed its name to the Minnesota Lakers.

The Minneapolis Lacrosse Club (MLC) was started in 1988 by two Carleton grads, Keith Burke and Ed Foley, who didn't want to play with TCLC. The Uptown Lacrosse Club was founded by Mike Livingston, Darren Shavor and Scott Bloedow. The Premium Lacrosse Club was established in 2010 by Casey Mithun, a UMD graduate. The two current Men's club teams, the MN Lakers and Minneapolis LC, play in the Midwest City Lacrosse Conference (MCLC). The Lakers won the MCLC Championship in 2014 and 2015.

On the college level, Carleton was the first program started in 1981 by Bruce Wall. Both the St. Thomas program, founded by Chris Larson, and the St. John's program, founded by Karl Koller, were started in 1985 and first competed in 1986.



*Rob Graff coaching UMD*

The Upper Midwest Lacrosse Conference (UMLC) was started in 1991. UMLC founders included Stan Shei, Rob Graff and Chris Larson. Gustavus Adolphus College won the first championship in 1993. The UMLC is a member of the Men's Collegiate Lacrosse Association (MCLA), which includes ten conferences around the nation competing in two divisions, DI and DII. The University of St. Thomas won the MCLA DII National Championship in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2016. Only one other team has more than one championship since the MCLA started in 2005. In 2016, three DI schools moved to DII, leaving only the University of Minnesota and Iowa State in DI.

The Great Lakes Lacrosse League (GLLL), an independent college club league started in 2004, currently includes nine Minnesota teams in its North Central and West Divisions.

### **Men's college team formation timeline and current conference**

- 1981 – Carleton (GLLL)
- 1985 – St. John's (MCLA DII) and St. Thomas (DII)
- 1991 – U of M-Twin Cities (MCLA DI), MSU-Mankato (DII), Gustavus (GLLL)
- 1993 – U of M-Duluth (DII), St. Cloud State (DII), St. Mary's (GLLL)
- 1996 – Bethel (GLLL), St. Olaf (DII), MSU-Moorhead (GLLL)
- 2004 – Winona State (DII)
- 2007 – Augsburg (GLLL)
- 2011 – Concordia College (GLLL)
- 2013 – Hamline (GLLL)
- 2015 – St. Scholastica (GLLL)

## Women's College Club Lacrosse

The Upper Midwest region formed their own league in 2005 to administer and govern women's college club lacrosse teams in the area. The league today is known as the North Central Women's Lacrosse League (NCWLL) and it falls under the auspices of the Women's Collegiate Lacrosse Associates (WCLA) and US Lacrosse. The WCLA coordinates 8 other similar leagues across the country with over 200 teams. The NCWLL is comprised of three conferences of college club teams and receives an automatic qualifier to the Division II WCLA National Tournament each season.

### Minnesota NCWLL teams

College of St. Benedict (2010, 2015)  
Gustavus Adolphus College  
University of St. Thomas (2015)  
Bethel University  
St. Cloud State University  
Augsburg College  
Hamline University  
U of M-Duluth (2005, 2006, 2011)

Carleton College  
Concordia  
MSU-Mankato  
MSU-Moorhead  
St. Mary's University  
Macalester College  
Winona State University  
St. Olaf College

Year in parentheses indicates the years that team participated in the WCLA National Tournament.

The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities competed in the NCWLL from 2005 through 2013, earning a trip to the National Tournament from 2007 to 2013. In 2014, the U of M joined the Women's Collegiate Lacrosse League.

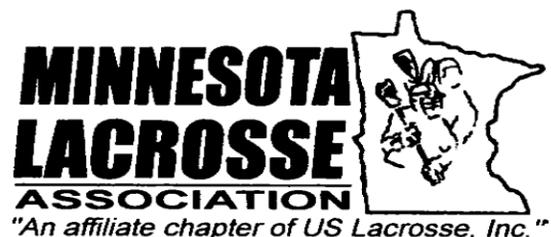
The Augsburg College women's program became the first NCAA lacrosse team in Minnesota, entering Division III in 2014 as an independent. Hamline University will join Augsburg in the DIII ranks in 2016.

## The formation of the Minnesota Lacrosse Association

In 1992, Mark Hellenack moved to Minnesota for a job transfer and took his experience from running the Lacrosse Foundation NJ Chapter to start the Minnesota Lacrosse Association, which is the local chapter of the national governing body, US Lacrosse. The first step was pulling together like-minded individuals that wanted to see the game promoted and grow in the land of 10,000 lakes. From there the first seeds of youth and high school lacrosse were planted.

### Some of the MLA's early board members

Art Ayers – Vice President / President  
Matt Dempsey – Officials / President  
Chris Duca – Women's Representative



Rob Graff – Men’s Club Representative  
 Mark Hellenack – President / Executive Director  
 Janet Holdsworth – Women’s Representative / Girls’ High School  
 Mary Scott Hunter – Women’s Representative / Web  
 Mike Livingston – Webmaster  
 Chris Larson – Men’s College Representative  
 Howard Rogers – Treasure / President  
 Dave Rundquist – Officials  
 Debra Wood – Girls’ High School / Umpires

**Events, clinics, camps and tournaments**

- 1993 – MLA Indoor Box League formed at the Hopkins Pavilion  
 MLA Stick Loaner program
- 1994 – MLA Indoor Box League formed at Hayes Arena  
 MLA Four Winds School “Baggatawawin” Clinic and Club Exhibition Game  
 Travers Des Sioux Tournament & native game re-enactment in St. Peter, MN
- 1995 – River Rendezvous Tournament at Pond Dakota Mission Park in Bloomington, MN  
 First MLA high school boys’ and girls’ field lacrosse games are played
- 1996 – MN Summer Boys Lacrosse Camp & League  
 First MLA Men’s & Boys’ Lacrosse Coaches Clinic at Hayes Arena  
 First MLA Women’s & Girls’ Lacrosse Coaches Clinic at Bethel College  
 First boys’ HS league is formed and sponsored by Grow Biz (Play It Again Sports)  
 MN U13 and U16 Native lacrosse teams formed by Dan Ninham  
 of Bemidji for the Indigenous Games played at NSC in Blaine  
 The first MN Chill Boys’ HS select team competes in at the Vail  
 Shootout in Colorado
- 1997 – Inner City Native American youth box team formed at Little  
 Earth in Minneapolis
- 1998 – MN Chill U14 & U12 trip to National Jr. Lacrosse Association Tournament & World  
 Games in Baltimore
- 1999 – MN Chill U15 trip to STX Youth Festival in Albany, New York  
 First MLA MN Chill/Brine girls’ & boys’ camp at Holy Angels  
 MLA Boys’ Youth Summer League at Eisenhower Elem. School in Hopkins  
 MLA Boys’ & Girls’ HS All-Star Game at Holy Angels  
 Northcentral Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association formed
- 2001 – MLA Face-off Fund Raiser Banquet at Edinburgh Golf Club in Brooklyn Park
- 2002 – Youth Lacrosse Minnesota formed
- 2003 – Minnesota Boys Scholastic Lacrosse Association formed
- 2004 – Hot-Dish Classic Tournament Fund Raiser for the American Cancer Society at Noble  
 Sports Park in Brooklyn Park
- 2005 – Men’s College Club Championships at the National Sports Center  
 First MLA LAXtravaganza All-Star Game at Holy Angels
- 2008 – Notre Dame vs. Army fall ball game at the National Sports Center
- 2016 – Major League Lacrosse Semifinal Game at the National Sports Center



## Box Started it All

Mark Hellenack started boys' high school and youth with box lacrosse due to the fact that initially fields were not available and turf-covered hockey arenas were. In the spring of 1993, Hellenack arranged for indoor time at the Hopkins Pavilion and started promoting lacrosse with a series of introductory clinics at local schools during gym classes. Field lacrosse would follow, but in the first attempt to grow the sport, he felt it was better to play box because you only needed 6 players and it was similar to hockey. Arenas were great because they had goals, lockers and the ball almost never went out of bounds. The first league was at the Hopkins Pavilion in 1993 and the second started in 1994 at Hayes Arena in Apple Valley. The games started with lots of hitting because of the hockey background of many kids, but then lacrosse skills and a sense for the game started to take over. Leagues have expanded to include younger players and have continued to operate as the high school game moved outdoors.



## Boys' High School

The first three boys' high school field lacrosse teams were started in 1995. They consisted of the "Valley" team with players from Burnsville, Apple Valley, Eagan and Eastview, the "Tonka" team with players from Minnetonka, Hopkins, Eden Prairie, St. Louis Park, Minneapolis and Plymouth, and the Breck team which was the first school-based high school team in Minnesota. Hellenack and John Thiel, then the athletic director at Breck who had played lacrosse in college at Amherst, discussed scheduling and splitting the cost of goals between the three teams. Thiel was one of the first athletic directors behind making lacrosse a varsity sport in Minnesota.

The boys' high school club teams continued to grow each year as more and more kids wanted to have teams at their school. The first official Boys' High School State Championship was held in Mankato in 1997 with Breck, Hopkins, Orono, Mankato, Richfield, Robbinsdale Cooper, and Roseville. The Minnesota Boys' Scholastic Lacrosse Association (MBSLA) was formed in 2003 by the high school league coaches. Mark Hellenack was president for the first few years, followed by Scott Cater of Bloomington Jefferson, Tim Moulton of Eden Prairie, Hank Marotske of Blake, Tim Roche of Eastview, Kevin Reed of St. Louis Park, and now Damon Kocina of Delano.

After several years of trying, Howard Rogers, the President of the Minnesota Lacrosse Association, with help from parents and coaches, was able to get the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) to elevate boys' lacrosse to sanctioned varsity status in 2007. The MSHSL State Tournament grew to eight sections in 2013. In the spring of 2015, there were 72 MSHSL (sanctioned) and 14 MBSLA (club) varsity teams.

### **Boys' high school team formation timeline**

- 1995 – Breck, Tonka (Western suburbs), Valley (Southern Suburbs)
- 1996 – Robbinsdale Cooper, Hopkins
- 1997 – Mankato, Minnetonka, Orono, Roseville
- 1998 – Bloomington Jefferson, Eden Prairie
- 1999 – Academy of Holy Angels, Edina
- 2000 – Bloomington Kennedy, Hastings, Lakeville, Mounds View, RAVE (Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan-Eastview), Shattuck-St. Mary's, Totino-Grace
- 2001 – Blake, Mahtomedi, Riverlax (St. Paul Academy and Minnehaha Academy), Wayzata
- 2002 – Benilde-St. Margaret's, Buffalo, Irondale, Minneapolis, Prior Lake, St. Cloud Tech-Cathedral, St. Thomas Academy
- 2003 – Chaska-Chanhassen, Duluth, Eagan, Eastview, Hill-Murray, Osseo-Park Center, Rochester, St. Paul
- 2004 – Anoka, Apple Valley, Maple Grove, Monticello, Robbinsdale Armstrong
- 2005 – Andover, Blaine, Centennial, Mound-Westonka, Owatonna, White Bear Lake, Woodbury
- 2006 – Champlin Park, Coon Rapids, Stillwater
- 2007 – Elk River-Zimmerman, Rochester Century-John Marshall, Rochester Mayo-Lourdes, Rosemount, St. Louis Park, Simley
- 2008 – Burnsville, Forest Lake, Holy Family Catholic, Spring Lake Park
- 2009 – Farmington, Henry Sibley, Lakeville North, Lakeville South, Rochester Mayo, Rochester John Marshall-Lourdes, Rochester Century, St. Cloud North
- 2010 – Brainerd, Delano, East Ridge, Grand Rapids, North St. Paul, Shakopee, Tartan, Trinity School
- 2011 – Hudson (WI), Red River Valley (Fargo, ND)
- 2012 – Becker, Cretin-Derham Hall, Grand Cities (East Grand Forks, MN and Grand Forks, ND), Northfield, Park of Cottage Grove, Proctor, Providence Academy, Rogers, St. Michael-Albertville, Waconia
- 2013 – None
- 2014 – Chanhassen, Chaska
- 2015 – Hutchinson, TriMAC (Minnehaha Academy, De LaSalle, St. Paul Academy, Concordia Academy, St. Croix Lutheran, and St. Agnes), St. Paul Central, Winona
- 2016 – ROCORI

The MBSLA also runs a spring 9th/10th grade league. Youth Lacrosse Minnesota (YLM) was formed as a summer boys' league in 2002. It currently runs leagues for U9, U11, U13, and U15 teams. The Great Northern Lacrosse League (GNLL) started in 2015. The GNLL took over the MBSLA youth season for U9 through U15 teams in 2016.

## **Girls' High School**

Girls' high school lacrosse began at The Blake School with Sarah Hemmingway, a student who had moved from Connecticut, and Debra Wood, a teacher who had relocated from Pittsburgh. They often spoke about the game they missed as the student played lacrosse back east. Wood was a former college umpire and high school lacrosse coach in the Ohio / Western PA areas. Together they decided to recruit girls to go out on a field after school and throw a ball around. It was 1994 and their goal cages they used were made out of PVC piping. The following year

parents donated goal cages and the Blake team scrimmaged the local Twin Cities post-collegiate team - the Hoydens - founded by Mary-Scott Hunter, Holly Souza and Chris Duca, and a group of young women at Carleton College.

Soon, a joint team of Hopkins, Eden Prairie and St. Louis Park girls formed that was coached by Holly Souza. It was popular enough that each school quickly split off to form their own club teams. Janet Holdsworth coached the Hopkins Royals, Judy Baxter and Holly Souza coached the Eden Prairie Eagles and a student-coach, Arianna Gavzy led the St. Louis Park squad. More teams developed and fell under the auspices of the MLA, which supported the initial club teams by running the state championships. The other early teams were Holy Angels, Cooper, and Bloomington Jefferson.



*Hopkins HS team coached by Janet Holdsworth*

In 1998, Debra Wood (Blake) and Janet Holdsworth (Hopkins) co-founded the Northcentral Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association (NSLA) to administer, organize and govern the development and play of girls' lacrosse in Minnesota. In 2001- 2002, Janet Holdsworth (former President of the MLA and co-founder of the NSLA) led the effort for girls' lacrosse to become a state sanctioned sport in Minnesota with the support of the Athletics Directors from Prior Lake, Benilde-St. Margaret's, Mahtomedi, Roseville and Eden

Prairie. Girls' lacrosse passed the MSHSL sanctioning process with the promise that 7 NSLA teams were poised to move immediately to varsity status. This vote was historic because no other sport in recent times was sanctioned the first time brought forward for a vote before the MSHSL Board.

The growth of girls' lacrosse exploded after sanctioning. In 2013, there are 63 teams competing in the MSHSL and an additional 8 club teams in the NSLA.

### **Girls' high school team formation timeline**

1994 – Blake (2002)

1995 – Eden Prairie (2002), Hopkins (2002)

1997 – Academy of Holy Angels (2006), Robbinsdale Cooper (2006)

1998 – Bloomington Jefferson (2006)

1999 – Bloomington Kennedy (2006), Mahtomedi (2002), Mankato, St. Louis Park (2003)

2000 – Benilde-St. Margaret's (2002), Hastings (2012), Minnehaha Academy (2002), North Suburban (2006), Orono (2009), Roseville (2004), Totino-Grace (2002)

2001 – Anoka (2009), Edina (2006), Lakeville (2007), Prior Lake (2002), Robbinsdale Armstrong (2006), Shattuck-St. Mary's (2002)

2002 – Chaska-Chanhassen (2006), St. Cloud Tech-Apollo (2007), Stillwater (2008)

- 2003 – Breck (2005), Centennial (2007), Minnetonka (2005), Mound-Westonka (2010), Osseo-Park Center (2008), RAVE (2007), Visitation (2005)
- 2004 – Andover (2008), Duluth, Maple Grove (2008), White Bear Lake (2009)
- 2005 – Cretin-Derham Hall (2007), Hill-Murray (2007), Monticello, South Washington County (2007), Wayzata (2006)
- 2006 – Becker (2010), Buffalo (2011), Elk River (2008), Irondale (North Suburban), Minneapolis (2007), Mounds View (North Suburban), Owatonna (2008), Rochester (2009)
- 2007 – Burnsville (2008), Champlin Park (2009), East Valley (RAVE), Holy Family Catholic (2009), Wild Irish (RAVE)
- 2008 – Blaine (2009), Forest Lake (2010), Spring Lake Park (2010)
- 2009 – Apple Valley (East Valley), Coon Rapids (Andover), Eastview (East Valley), Farmington (2010), Rochester Century (Rochester), Rochester Marshall-Lourdes (Rochester), Rochester Mayo (Rochester), St. Paul Academy
- 2010 – Columbia Heights (MSHSL), Grand Rapids, Lakeville North (Lakeville), Park (South Washington County), St. Michael-Albertville, Shakopee
- 2011 – Delano, Lakeville South (Lakeville)
- 2012 – Eagan (Wild Irish), East Ridge (South Washington County), Rosemount (Wild Irish), Woodbury (South Washington County)

Year in parentheses represents when that team gained MSHSL status. Team in parentheses indicates the year the high school formed an independent team to join MSHSL and which team it emerged from.

## Girls' Youth

The Middle School Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association (MSSLax) was founded in 2002 by Sharon Hawkins. With the help of Dave Holdsworth and Deb Wood, Sharon rounded up 6 teams of 7th, 8th and 9th grade players for an inaugural season in 2003. Leah Rued helped with administration. First year teams included Breck, Benilde-St. Margaret's, Totino-Grace, Shattuck-St. Mary's, Lakeville and Edina. The first MSSLax Play Day was held on the Shattuck-St. Mary's campus on May 3, 2003.

In 2004, Sharon Hawkins stayed on as President, aided by Lindsay Eichenlaub and Phil Becker (Breck coach since the first season). Teams of 6th/7th/8th graders included Benilde-St. Margaret's, Blake, Bloomington, Breck, Edina, and Lakeville. Lindsay Eichenlaub set up the first website, Jim Vincent joined the board and Phil Becker became treasurer. The 2nd Play Day was held at Blake Lower School on May 15, 2004. BSM, Blake, Breck and Edina competed. Alex Christianson (Edina) joined the MSSLax board for 2004/2005 seasons. Other board members in the early years were Rick Reidt (Stillwater), Jenni Lorsung (Dakota), Krista Dean (Wayzata).

In the spring of 2005, MSSLax had two divisions, for 5th/6th grades and 7th/8th grades. By 2006, MSSLax had 13 7th/8th grade teams and 9 5th/6th. Alex Christianson was elected President of MSSLax for the 2008 season and Maria Slusser (Minnetonka) joined the board. Also in 2008, MSSLax implemented a summer youth girls' lacrosse season for 4th/5th/6th

graders and 6th/7th/8th graders. The first summer Play Days were held in Minnetonka, Eden Prairie, and Lakeville before moving to the National Sports Center in Blaine for 2011. A new website, MSSLax.com, went online in 2010, thanks largely to the efforts of Joni Caney and Hannah Hutner. Joni Caney (Lakeville) joined the MSSLax board. Hannah helped with administration for four seasons. By the end of the 2011 season, MSSLax had grown to 65 7th/8th grade teams and 42 5th/6th grade teams. In the summer of 2011, 9 3rd/4th grade teams played in the summer season.

During the fall of 2011, the MSSLax board was restructured to include regional directors and a director of coaches/player development. Sharon Hawkins retired from the board in 2011. Joni Caney was elected President for the 2012 season, Alex Christianson, Past President; Julie Carlson joined the board as VP, Maria Slusser, secretary. Phil Becker, treasurer, became the longest serving board member. Other additions to the board included Heather Brick, Sean Bateman, Erin Larson and Anne Moelk.

MSSLax continues to work towards its goals of:

1. Promote development and appreciation of girls' lacrosse in Minnesota
2. Encourage the growth of youth girls' lacrosse in Minnesota;
3. Organize and administer safe and fair middle school spring competition; and
4. Develop sportsmanship and goodwill among participating players and teams.

## Minnesotans Who Helped Get Lacrosse Started

**Colin Achenbach** – Started Homegrown Lacrosse in 2003 along with Aron and Daniel Lipkin. Minnesota's first high school All-American at RAVE in 2002 and college All-American at CW Post in 2006. Played for the MN Swarm for three seasons - 2008 to 2010. Third year coaching at both Eastview HS and St. Thomas.

**Art Ayers** – Helped start lacrosse in Mankato, coached Mankato East HS & MSU-Mankato and served on the MLA board. Also coached and ran the MN Chill All-Star teams sent to Vail to represent Minnesota from 1999-2002.

**Judy Baxter** – Former Lehigh women's lax coach who took the Eden Prairie girls' HS team to several championships and started some of the first women's lax coaching and player clinics and camps.

**Harold Buck** – Former high-school player from the Philadelphia area who started officiating in 1998 and quickly became a high-school and youth assigner. Played a major role in organizing, improving, and administrating programs for officials training and assigning and for high school and youth lacrosse through the UMLOA, MBSLA, and through US Lacrosse as a member of the Board of Governors and the Training Committee for men's officials.

**Scott Cater** – First coached at Breck in 1997, started the program at Bloomington Jefferson in 1998 and won state titles in 2000 and 2003. As President of the "coaches association" in 2003 co-authored the original MBSLA bylaws with Matt Dunbar and Tim Moulton. Instrumental in getting many school districts to add boys' lacrosse as a varsity sport, longest tenured high school coach in the state, finishing his 15th consecutive season as head coach at Bloomington Jefferson.

- Matt Dempsey** – Played for the first team at St. Thomas and then at St. Mary’s. Helped found the MSU-Mankato program. Helped run the officials’ organization and served as MLA President.
- Ian Flam** – Started Northstar Lacrosse, the first lacrosse-only store in Hopkins in the late 1990’s. Responsible for bringing high profile college Div. I coaches to the successful Lacrosse Academy camps he runs. Helps run the MN Elite travel teams that represent Minnesota at recruiting showcases throughout the country.
- Rob Graff** – Played at Harvard, assistant coached at Temple and was the longtime coach at powerhouse U of M-Duluth. Helped start the Upper Midwest Lacrosse League. Played for and ran the Twin Cities LC, served on the first MLA board and coached the MN Chill college All-Star team.
- Mark Hellenack** – Coached at Hopkins HS from 1995-2002 and won state titles in 1997 and 1998. Coached at St. John’s from 2003 to 2008 (6 seasons) with a record of 70-23, 4 UMLC titles and two 2nd place finishes at the MCLA National Championships. Executive Director of the MLA from its inception in 1993 to 2004 and was the driving force in the growth of the game in MN. Member of the NJ Lacrosse Hall of Fame for starting the US Lacrosse / Lacrosse Foundation NJ Chapter in 1984.
- Dave Holdsworth** – Served on the first MLA board, former President of the Northcentral Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association, former President of the North Central Women's Lacrosse League (college), and current Chair of the US Lacrosse / WCLA (governing body for women's club lacrosse in US). Administrator of the first off-season leagues for girls players.
- Dr. Janet Holdsworth** – Served on the first MLA Board, a former MLA President, and co-founder of the Northcentral Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association. Fought for state sanctioning of girls’ lacrosse, coached Hopkins HS to four consecutive championship games, and the current head coach of the University of Minnesota women's lacrosse team. First lacrosse coach and woman in country to receive Positive Coaching Alliance's Double Goal Golden Whistle award. Founded the first girls’ lacrosse club program - MN Lakers Select, coached the first MN girls’ lacrosse team internationally.
- Mary Scott Hunter** – Served on the first MLA board, helped start and promote girls’ high school and women’s college lacrosse. Founder of the first-ever post-collegiate women's team in the Twin Cities, Hoydens. Served as an officer for the Northcentral Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association. Co-founder of the Umpires board with Holly Souza.
- Tom Klein** – Helped form the first Minnesota Lacrosse Officials Association the 90’s.

- Chris Larson** – Founded St. Thomas team in 1985 with Pat Litchy and Roman Stepchuk. Played with Twin Cities LC after college. Started the Minnesota Collegiate Lacrosse Conference (now UMLC) with Rob Graf and Stan Shei in 1991. Coached for the U of M for 12 years as well as many MN Chill College All-Star teams. Served on the first MLA board, has been an officer of UMLC since inception, served as the USLIA/USL-MDIA/MCLA Secretary for 8 years. Presently a HS and college official, UMLOA Board member, General Manager of Team Minnesota, and coach of 3/4 boys' lacrosse in St Paul.
- Tom Lauer, Ray Moles & John Wolff** – Started the YLM summer outdoor field lacrosse league for boys' and girls' youth in 2002.
- Daniel & Aron Lipkin** – Started Homegrown Lacrosse in 2003 along with Colin Achenbach. Have taken on the task of promoting and developing lacrosse in Minneapolis and running clinics, camps and leagues throughout Minnesota.
- Hank Marotske** – Served as the MBSLA President for two terms and started the boys' HS programs at Holy Angels, Irondale-Mounds View and Blake. Presently the head coach at Breck. Played at St. Thomas and for the Minneapolis LC. Started the MN Elite travel team with Justin Hoban, the head coach of Totino-Grace, and Blake parent Shay Johnson.
- Ben Mooney** – Cretin-Derham Hall graduate who played on the first MN Chill team at Vail in 1996. Started the St. Paul program in 1997 and is still coaching there. All-American attackman and captain at the U of M in 2001. Coached at the U of M from 2008 to 2010.
- Tim Moulton** – Served as the MBSLA President for one term, was the head coach at Eden Prairie HS and started the Eden Prairie Quick Stix youth travel team.
- Kevin Reed** – Current MBSLA president and St. Louis Park HS coach, won two MBSLA Championships, in 2008 and 2010. Under his leadership the spring youth leagues have flourished and the high school club league continues to promote the growth of lacrosse by adding new teams each year.
- Howard Rogers** – Served as the MLA president for several terms and almost single-handedly got boys' HS lacrosse as a MSHSL sanctioned sport in 2002.
- Brad Scibak** – Official from Winnipeg who helped organize, assign and train college officials. Officiated in three World Lacrosse Championships: 1998, 2002 and 2006, including the gold medal game in the latter two. Has officiated lacrosse for 39 years.
- Sean Watts** – Started the Minnetonka program in 1997 and was the first head coach at Benilde-St. Margaret's in 2001. President of MN Lakers since 2003 and UMLOA official since 2004. Played at U of M from 1997 to 2000 and was a captain.
- Dave White** – Helped start the Twin Cities Lacrosse Club and is one of Minnesota's first officials, officials' assigner, trainer and mentor to others.
- Debra Wood** – Founded and coached the first MN girls' lacrosse team at The Blake School. Co-founder of the Northcentral Schoolgirls Lacrosse Association and served as President. Ran some of Minnesota's first clinics, camps and leagues. Fought for state sanctioning of girls' lacrosse and helped many girls' lacrosse programs get off the ground.
- Daron Yates** – First UMLC assigner and a nationally recognized official.

Last updated – July 8, 2016