***What it Takes to be a Real Lacrosse Player*** by Bill Sardella

1. Stick Skills = wall ball = catching, throwing, dodging and shooting with both hands. You should have equal skill in your left and right in 7th grade, if not, you are already behind, it’s not panic time, it’s work on it time, so work on it, now! This does not happen magically, it’s focused daily repetition, the desire to master stick handling.

*The stick, body and mind must become one to really be able to play the game.*

1. Use of the left and right hand at the proper times, i.e. protecting the stick, when catching and cutting & passing under pressure. Your body is between the stick and the defender & positioned for quick release shooting.
2. A love for the ground ball. This is an attitude, a never say give up mentality, unyielding determination and effort…….. I will win this GB if it kills me.
3. After a ground ball win, move the ball as the opponent is probably out of position, time to run and gun with your teammates…………by passing.
4. Everybody is a defender, EVERYBODY! Get over the “I have to score to please myself or my parents” myth. Great defenders and goal keepers are the back bone of the team; in the ride, through transition and on defense.
5. Great Defenders control the space & the ball carrier. They have fast feet and quickness. They can’t beat you if you are standing in front of them and controlling the interior space. No check is required if you play Defense with great footwork.
6. Move the ball, it’s a passing game. Move the ball in the air, every phase of the game, you must pass and move the ball - that is the beauty of lacrosse.
7. Move without the ball. Off ball movement, in any phase (offense, clearing, transition) of the game, is the key to success. Are you ready to catch and shoot and score, do you create space and are ready for the next pass, do you move to open space, are you balanced in a clearing lane, are you in a midfield transition ready for the next connection. Move with a purpose, work with off ball teammates, anticipate turnovers and back up positions, and occupy your defender so she cannot back up the on ball defender.
8. Move to the ball when catching. It can be big or small, but move into it is usually by filling open space, feeling a defender behind you……don’t wait for it, move to it.
9. Stick Protection, play upright in the ready position and use your body to shield your stick to the non-defender side, not in front of your body and not laid out flat…..whatever you do in picking up a ball, carrying the ball, passing or catching the ball, switching hands, get your stick protected immediately, if you do, you can quickly pass, dodge or shoot.
10. Know your stick…….a player is responsible to have her stick legal at all times, and adjusted properly, taped properly (not the strings, where you place your hands), capped properly. (your back up stick is always ready for action too)
11. Develop a quick release, no more than one cradle, no cradle, or a quick stick. Feel the ball, move the ball. This can only happen from the ready position and with tons of wall ball work with a small finesse cradle.
12. Hit the White Net. (or shoot it where the goalie ain’t!) When shooting, know the hand of the GK, pump fake, and think past the GK’s body with a deceptive hard shot.
13. Communicate in everything you do, offense, defense, off ball movement, transition, ride, clear, talking to each other is the key to success. Eye contact is communicating too.
14. Run All Day! Just as the game is played in the air as a passing game, the body plays the game by running in every direction and for short and long periods of time, so you are in the right place at the right time. So you have to know how to start and stop and sprint and stride, change direction, change speeds……..it’s a running game for the athlete (and that means running without the ball).
15. Intangibles. Mental Toughness, Superior Effort, Will to Compete and Win, Team 1st Attitude