

Andrew Colannino

Mr. Limbu

WRA 130-003

March 1st, 2014

Lacrosse and It's Popularity in Today's Society

Introduction

I started playing lacrosse in sixth grade. I never considered participating in the sport until I moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the fourth grade. I always played baseball because that was the popular sport in my hometown, but when I moved to Philadelphia there were many more programs for lacrosse that all my new friends were apart of. This was when I first realized the cultural difference of lacrosse in the east coast, mainly the mid-atlantic area. Lacrosse was heavily funded with indoor training facilities and huge turf¹ fields. Whereas, in other parts of the country beginners have to play on poorly kept fields with mediocre, at best, equipment. I enjoyed the comforts of these fundings for lacrosse and played throughout high school. I played defense and captained my team, senior year, to the third round of playoffs. My coach until my junior year of high school now coaches the Denver Outlaws, a professional Major League Lacrosse team. Clearly, I am a huge fan of the sport and have a lot of experience playing and interacting with the lacrosse community.

¹ A sports playing field that has fake grass

Background

Lacrosse² is one of the oldest games in the world. It is debatebly the oldest game in America. The game was created by Native Americans that may have been played as early as AD 1100. The first games were played in St. Lawrence Valley, which is in the very north part of what is now New York. The Native Americans played with wooden sticks and a rope mesh. They had carved wooden balls and the goals were usually a tree or big rock. The goals could be anywhere from five-hundred yards to a mile apart. Around one-hundred to one-hundred-thousand players could be on the field at once. The object of the game is to pass the ball to other players on your team, through the air with a stick and a basket-like head to the stick, and eventually shoot the ball into the goal. The game can be very physical, especially back when the Native Americans played. This game was played by the Native Americans for many reasons. One of the reasons was to prepare and toughen up young men to become warriors. The other was for religious purposes, Native Americans would paint their bodies and do rituals on game day. Canadians were the first to take interest in the exciting game. Native American games were recorded and published in newspapers. Which lead to the creation of Montreal Lacrosse Club in 1856 and by 1860 lacrosse was Canada's national sport. ("Origins & History of Lacrosse"). And from there on the game has evolved greatly into what it is today.

How Has Lacrosse Changed?

Even though the overall object of lacrosse is the same as it was when the Native Americans

² A game which two teams are on the field and one team tries to get the ball into the opponents net. This is done by passing a small rubber ball around with sticks and a net and eventually shooting the ball into the goal.

created the game, much has changed. For starters, there are only twenty people on the field at one time, ten for each team. The playing field is only one-hundred-and-ten yards long and sixty yards wide. The ball used is a rubber ball that is around the same size as a tennis ball. The sticks are aluminum and the head of the stick is plastic with a soft rope mesh (Figure 1). The goals are structured with metal poles and are six feet tall, six feet wide, and seven feet deep. Native Americans used very little to no protective gear at all. Now, helmets, shoulder pads, mouth guards, elbow pads, and gloves are all mandatory. Lacrosse is now a very organized sport, it is still a violent sport but nothing compared to what it was when Native Americans started the game.



Figure 1: Modern Lacrosse Stick

How Popular is Lacrosse in America?

Lacrosse is one of the fastest growing sports in America. It is clear, however, that lacrosse dominates in the east coast of America. From middle school to college, on the east coast, lacrosse is an

essential sport in school and is heavily funded. It is the only sport that competes with football for the largest student section. Dating back to 1971, colleges on the east coast have always won the national championship (“DI Men’s Lacrosse”). This clearly shows the domination of east coast schools with lacrosse. As you move west, sports like hockey and basketball take over the schools and children looking to participate in athletics are very limited in their choices. Professional lacrosse is almost nonexistent, the games are rarely televised and the players get paid almost nothing, they purely do it because they love the sport. I believe the reason for this lack of popularity in other parts of the country is the poor funding from communities and schools, somewhat due to lack of demand from the student athletes. This lack of demand is due to the fact that lacrosse is never televised or dramatized as much as football, baseball, basketball or hockey. This happens because of the little interest most Americans have about the sport. So it is a vicious cycle that if it does not get broken by someone or something, lacrosse will stay the same as a second tier sport across America forever.

How Popular is Lacrosse in the World?

Lacrosse is played around the world. However, it is not necessarily very popular around the world. Many countries in Europe and Africa, all the children want to play soccer. Which makes sense because the sport is very televised and the players get paid so much. Lacrosse was an olympic sport until 1908. It was dropped from the Olympic games because there were not enough countries that had teams to compete (“Why Is Lacrosse Not an Olympic”). This dramatically reduces the ability of people to learn about the sport and for the sport to grow. The people around the world that play are usually well off financially because equipment for the sport can be very expensive, especially since most schools do not pay for the equipment like in football.

How Can Lacrosse Become More Popular?

The development of lacrosse depends on the younger athletes of the new generation. There needs to be more leagues for children that want to start playing. This will get more people interested in the sport. For this to happen, counties need more financial support for this sport. The Major League Lacrosse needs to get more involved in the lacrosse community by advertising more or holding more lacrosse camps and fundraisers. This will create interest in the younger crowd, therefore, hopefully having the counties show more support for lacrosse. Also, lacrosse is very close to becoming an Olympic sport again. Currently, there are thirty six countries that have a national team that could compete. In order to be considered for an Olympic sport, there must be forty countries that could participate (“Why Is Lacrosse Not an Olympic”). So clearly, with even a small increase in advertising and funding around the world lacrosse could become an Olympic sport again and this would greatly increase interest, awareness and popularity of the sport around the globe.

Works Cited

"DI Men's Lacrosse." *NCAA.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2014.

"Origin & History of Lacrosse | FIL." *Origin & History of Lacrosse | FIL*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2014.

"Why Is Lacrosse Not an Olympic Game?" *WikiAnswers*. Answers Corporation, n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2014