

A&M lacrosse: a sport not for the faint of heart

By Anthony Wilson
Reporter

They don't receive scholarships. They pay \$40 dollars a year to play. They don't play for capacity crowds. Their crowds usually number 12 to 20 people. They don't even have a coach.

But the Texas A&M Lacrosse Club members take their sport very seriously.

Lacrosse came to A&M in 1972 as an intramural sport. In 1975, it became a club sport when the Southwest Lacrosse Association was formed.

The only other club in the association at the time was the San Antonio Lacrosse Club. Now the association consists of 12 college club teams. Independent club teams are no longer allowed in the association.

Lacrosse was devised in New York by the Iroquois Indians. Teams often consisted of up to 1,000 players, and goals were several miles apart. Games often lasted as long as three days.

The object of the game then was to injure as many opponents as possible. Scoring goals was secondary. The Cherokee Indians used lacrosse to train for war.

Today, the game is a bit more civilized. It is a combination of several sports. It uses several offensive strategies which are similar to basketball. It requires the knowledge of stick handling as in hockey, and it has the contact of football.

The field is now 60 yards wide and 110 yards long. The six-foot square goals are 80 yards apart. Ten players on each team advance a small rubber ball up the field by passing or running with it while using a stick.

The stick has a small net on the end. The ball is passed from and caught in the net. While running with the ball, the stick is spun in the hands to keep the ball in it with centrifugal force.

A player may touch the ball with any part of his body except his hands. Only goalies can touch the ball with their hands.

Players can use their sticks to hit opposing players' sticks. Players may also use their bodies to hit opposing players. Hitting a player with a stick is forbidden unless it is inadvertent. The only protective equipment a player wears is a helmet, gloves, arm pads and a cup.



Junior Wallace Kahn (right) of the A&M lacrosse team attempts a shot on goal as sophomore Chris

Grayson applies defensive pressure during a practice session on the Simpson Drill Field.

Photo by John Kaspar

Charlie Grau, a senior industrial distribution major and four-year player, said, "I've seen some pretty hairy injuries. Broken clavicles, ribs, knees. Stuff like that."

Although lacrosse would seem to be a difficult sport to master, Grau insists this isn't true.

"Most of the people we get have never even picked up a stick until they get here," he said. "You say lacrosse to the majority of them and they say 'Isn't that in Wisconsin?'"

"It's not a game that you really need to play all your life to be good at. Most of the people we get, we'll teach them how to handle the stick and some of the basic strategy of the game. In two weeks, they can handle the stick and are out on the field."

Grau also said using the stick to catch and pass the ball is not as difficult as people might think.

"It's no more difficult than catching a ball with a baseball glove," he said. "It becomes an extension of your hand."

"Generally you're going to choke up on the stick, and the net will be right on the end of your hand. It's almost like using your hand."

The 40 members of the club practice every weekday and some Saturdays from 4 to 6 p.m. on the Simpson Drill Field.

The seniors and more experienced players run practices and devise strategies and training techniques. The team has not had a coach since 1983.

"We had a coach up until '83," Grau said. "Then he kinda got married and had to look for a regular job."

During the fall, the team plays

about seven scrimmage games. A&M also sponsors an annual fall tournament.

The conference schedule begins in the spring semester. Each team plays the other four teams in its division twice. The A&M club has beaten Rice University and Southwestern University and lost to the University of Texas so far this year. Following the season, the top two teams from each division will participate in the Southwest Lacrosse Association playoffs in Waco. A&M has been in the championship game the past two years and has lost to Texas Tech both times.

"We're the Minnesota Vikings of lacrosse in Texas," club president Chris Menzel said. "We're always in the championships but we never win it. But we're consistent."

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