

Lacrosse - Overview

Lacrosse is a competitive sport in which two teams have to hit a small rubber ball into the opposing team's goal with the use of stick-like equipment called a **crosse**. A crosse is a stick with a mesh at the end which is used to carry or catch the ball.

The prime objective is to get the ball into the crosse and toss the ball into the goal while dodging the opposing players and their goalie.



A Brief History of Lacrosse

Lacrosse was invented in the 1100 AD and the sport was established in the name of **The Creator's Game** in the 17th century in Canada. Back then, each team consisted of approximately 100 to 1000 men on a large field that extended from about 500m to 3km in length.

Considering the number of players and their passion altogether, each match lasted for about two to three days straight from sunrise to sunset! They used a light wooden ball which was about 3 inches in diameter and the stick was a strong staff which was about 5ft long with a hoop at the end which was used to catch and pass on the ball.

Lacrosse was perceived as a sport of deep spiritual involvement as the sport befitted the spirit of combat in the players. That is why the sport played a distinctive role in their tribal community for many years.



The participants filled in for the role of warriors in the sport and winning meant that they had brought glory and honor to their community. They played it for their creator, hence the name The Creator's Game.

Popularity of Lacrosse

The sport was spread to other countries when French Jesuit missionary Jean de Brebeuf saw the Iroquois tribesmen play the sport during 1637 in the place which later on was civilized and named as New York. He named it La crosse, hence the name **lacrosse** was coined.

The first lacrosse club, **Montreal Lacrosse Club**, was founded by a Canadian dentist William George Beers in 1855. He codified the sport in 1867 by shortening the duration of the match and fixed the number of 12 players in each team.

In the same year, after establishment of the modern lacrosse, the first match played was between the Montreal Lacrosse Club and the Toronto Cricket Club and Beers' team lost to the latter by a score of 1-3.

Lacrosse in Olympics

The sport was included in the 1904 and 1908 Olympics with teams all over from Canada, the United States, and the Great Britain. It was again contested as a demonstration sport in the 1928 and 1932 Olympics.

Each time, a playoff was held in the US to decide which team would participate in the Olympics and each time the playoffs were won by the John Hopkins Blue Jays from the University of Baltimore, Maryland.

In 2001, a professional field lacrosse league for men, called as **Major League Lacrosse**, was established in the US. Starting with three teams, the Major League Lacrosse has grown to a total of nine clubs now, located all over the major metropolitan areas of the US.

Participating countries

In the World Championships, the teams compete according to different divisions. According to the 2014 World Lacrosse Champions, the following nations participated in the 2014 Federation of International Lacrosse World Championship –

- **Blue Division**

- Australia
- Canada
- England
- Iroquois Nationals
- Japan
- United States

- **Green Division**

- China
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway

- **Grey Division**

- Costa Rica
- Czech Republic
- Poland
- Turkey

- **Orange Division**

- Israel
- Republic of Korea
- Slovakia
- Sweden

- **Plum Division**

- Argentina
- New Zealand
- Russia
- Wales
- **Red Division**
 - Austria
 - Belgium
 - Germany
 - Hong Kong
- **Turquoise Division**
 - Colombia
 - Finland
 - Mexico
 - Spain
- **White Division**
 - Latvia
 - Scotland
 - Switzerland
 - Thailand
- **Yellow Division**
 - Bermuda
 - France
 - Ireland
 - Uganda

These were 38 nations that participated in the 2014 World Championship.

Lacrosse - Equipment

The long crosse and the crosse for a goalkeeper

Players can carry a long crosse (also called the **d-pole**) which is 52 inches to 72 inches in length. These long crosse are used typically by defenders and midfielders. For the players, the head part of the crosse must be 6.5 inches at its broadest point and the throat part of the crosse must be at least 3 inches wide.

The goalkeeper has to use a crosse which is 42 inches to 72 inches in length and the head can be up to 12 inches which is larger than the ones used by the other players, mainly to catch the ball and/or defend it.



The Lacrosse Sticks and Stick heads

Basically, there are 3 parts in every lacrosse stick head – the scoop, sidewall and the pocket. The scoop of a crosse is the top of the stick that helps in picking up the balls from the ground and passing and/or shooting the ball.

The scoop can either be of a **flat shape** for easier pick up or more of a **U shape** for better control of the ball while fast movements.

Both of these have their advantages and disadvantages, where a flatter scoop helps in picking up the ball from the ground but makes it difficult to keep it on the head while a U shaped scoop makes it difficult to pick up the ball but helps in keeping the ball with accuracy.

The sidewall is the side part of the head that makes its depth and stiffness. Stiffer sidewalls and heads are better used for defending in order to throw better checks. Flexible sidewalls are better to be used for groundballs, face-offs and faster movements.

The pocket of the head is the mesh including the width of the head at the basal part. A wider pocket helps in catching the ball but reduces the control over the ball. A narrower pocket makes catching difficult but increases control of the ball and accuracy.

Types of Shafts

Shaft is another part of the lacrosse stick which is of various types. Attackers use lighter shaft to move the ball quickly whereas the defenders use the heavy shaft to prevent the throws made by the attacker. The different types of shafts are as follows

- **Aluminum alloy shafts** – These shafts are strong, lightweight, and good for developing players.
- **Composite shafts** – These are stronger and lighter than aluminum ones with solid grip. These are good for intermediate and elite players.
- **Titanium shafts** – These are strong and light and are good for both receiving and delivering checks.
- **Scandium shafts** – These have the highest strength-weight ratio out of all the sticks and are much more durable.
- **Wooden shafts** – These are strong, but heavy and tough to bend. These are good for delivering hard checks.
- **Bamboo shafts** – These are heavy and can be easily broken. These are good for delivering painful checks.

Protective Equipment

All the players on the field have to wear a uniform with a number that is unique to them and the shorts should be matching to the players of the same team. The number on the uniform can be any single digit number or any two-digit number between 1 and 99.



We have already discussed about the crosse and the ball. So let's get into detail about the protective equipment. The protective equipment is standardized for all the players except the goalkeepers. The standard equipment for the players is as follows –

- A helmet with mouth guard and chin strap
- Shoulder pads
- Arm pads
- Gloves

Goalkeeper's Equipment

The goalkeepers need to have the following equipment –

- Helmet with mouth guard, a chin strap and throat guard which covers the neck.
- Chest protector
- Gloves

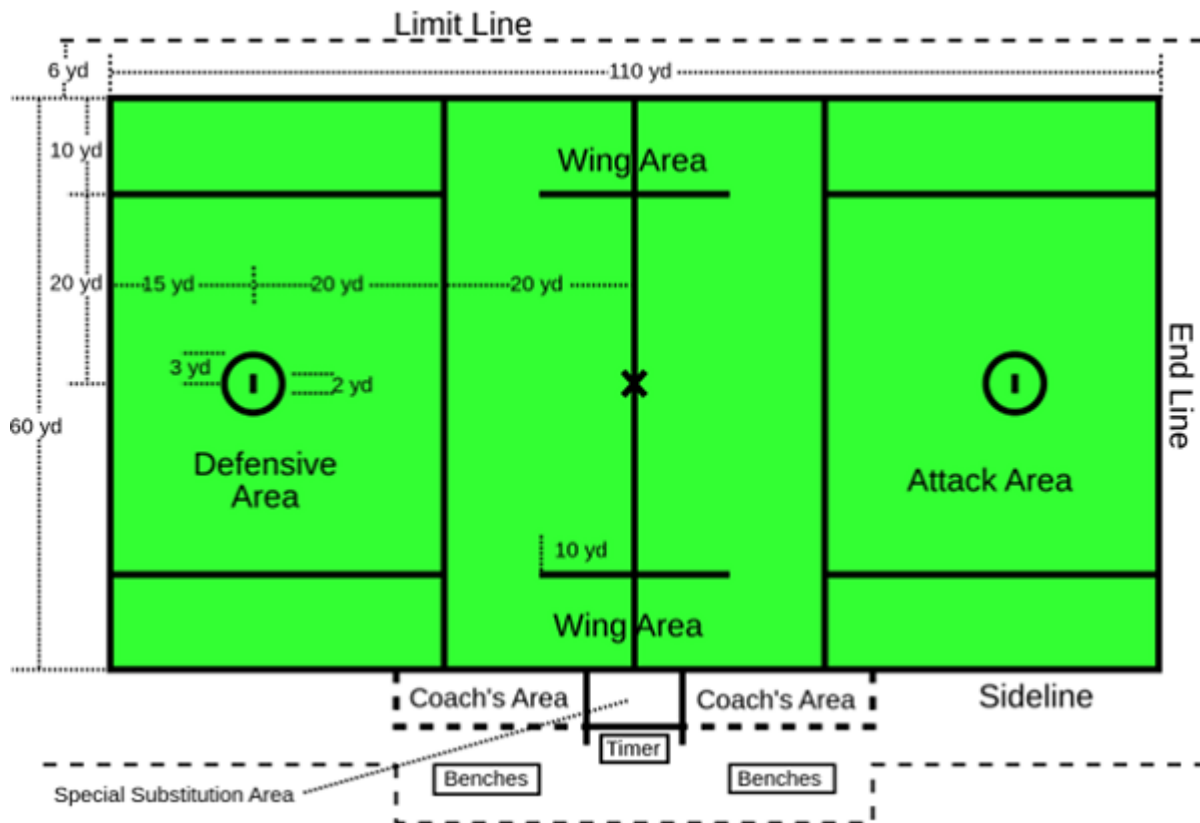
Goalkeepers can wear pants; other players need to wear shorts. Although it's not technically required, but a protective cup for the crotch is highly recommended for all the players regardless of the position.

Lacrosse - Playing Environment

The playing environment of the variants of lacrosse differ in various aspects. Let's discuss the field environment of each variant.

Lacrosse Field

A lacrosse field is 100 metres in length and 55 metres in width. The goal sites are 6ft by 6ft on either ends of the field. There is a circle called **crease**, which is 18ft in diameter and the goal post is located inside the crease. Both the defensive and the offensive sides are surrounded by a **restraining box**.



Box Lacrosse

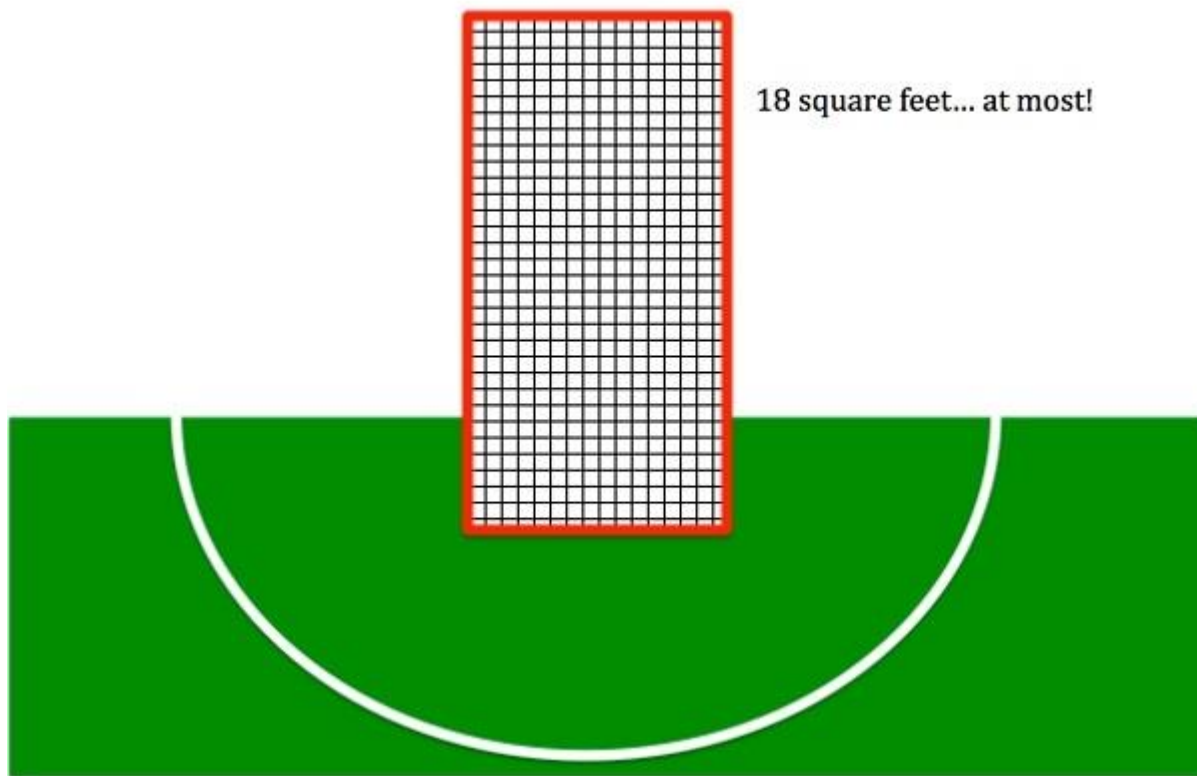
In box lacrosse, the field and the goal posts are smaller than that of field lacrosse. The field is like a box and the goal posts have the dimensions of 4ft by 4ft. The length of the field is 55m to 61m and the width is 24m to 27m.

Women Lacrosse

The field differs with respect to the age group of players. The under 15 and under 13 players play on a regular size field while the under 11 play on a regular size field with different markings. The under 9 players play in a field having the length of 60 to 70 yards and width of 30 to 40 yards.

Two-point Line

The two-point line is an arc that extends out from the center of the goal with a radius of 16 yards. Just like the three-point line in basketball, a shot that goes from beyond the two-point line, counts for two points on the scoreboard instead of one. The player must have both feet completely beyond the line at the release of the ball.



Lacrosse - How to Play?

Teams

In each team, there are ten players, out of which three are attackers, three are mid-fielders, three are defenders, and one is a goalkeeper or goalie. Each player has to carry a crosse (a lacrosse stick) which measures from 40 inches to 42 inches in length.

Starting the Match

Once the referee blows the whistle, the players have to use their sticks and body to try to gain possession of the ball. The face-off specialists try various techniques for getting the ball, like sweeps, clamps, pushes, and plunger moves. Plunger is a move where the player uses the back of the stick to push the ball forward.

Face-off

In the beginning, after each quarter, and after each goal scored, the match is started/resumed with a face-off.



In a face-off, one player each of both the teams place their stick horizontally next to the ball, the head of the stick is very close to the ball and one of them clamps the ball into the head and flicks it off to his teammates.

During a face-off, only the midfielders are allowed to move around in the field to try to secure the ball. The attackers and defenders have to stay inside their restraining boxes unless someone picks up the ball and referee calls **possession**.

If the ball enters the restraining box before referee calls possession, the attackers and defenders are allowed to pick it up, but they still can't leave until they possess the ball. Except the goalkeeper, no other player can intentionally touch the ball with their hands. Kicking the ball is also allowed to some extent (to score a goal).

The attackers and the defenders cannot cross the restraining line unless a player from the midfield gets the ball or the ball itself crosses the restraining line. If a player touches the ball and the ball goes out of the field, then the play is resumed by giving to ball to the opposing team and letting them continue the play.

Substitution

During the match, if any player has to be substituted, they can do it freely by letting the player out and the substitute in. This substitution has to be done in a designated area called **the box** according to the rules.

Duration

A lacrosse match is divided up by four quarters of equal time. Professional and collegiate matches are of 60 minutes in total which means they get 15 minutes per quarter of the match. Most of the scholastic-level matches last for 48 minutes giving 12 minutes to each quarter.

Tie

If a match ends in a tie at the end of the four quarters, it can be finalized with a **sudden death**, which are five-minute overtime sessions where a match is played until one of the teams scores a goal and wins the match. All the overtimes begin with a face-off as well.



Penalty

If a player commits a foul, he is sent to the **penalty box**, located between each team's bench. The match is continued without this player for the time designated by the referee after the foul. Most of the penalties are **releasable** which means that the penalty is ended once the other team scores a goal.

A 30-second penalty is forced if a player commits technical fouls like offside or holding the ball. A one minute penalty is forced if the player commits a personal foul. If a player uses a stick which cannot be considered as a crosse, he will be forced upon with a non-releasable penalty of 3 minutes.

Lacrosse - Variants

Lacrosse has many variants each having slight or major different rules. In this chapter we will discuss about various variants lacrosse.

Box Lacrosse

Generally lacrosse was played on large fields until the 1930s. Then the owners of Canadian Ice Hockey arenas created a reduced-size version of lacrosse called the box lacrosse, so that they can make more profits from their arenas.

Box lacrosse has two teams of six players each. It is played on an ice hockey field where the ice is removed or replaced by an artificial turf. It can also be played in an indoor lacrosse field. The playing area is enclosed in a box-shaped line, instead of an open field like in field lacrosse. Here the goal markings are smaller than those of field lacrosse, which are 4ft by 4ft at either ends of the box.



As there is more action on a smaller playing area, the goalkeeper has to wear more protective padding which includes a chest protector and armguards called the **uppers**, large shin guards called **leg pads** and an ice-hockey style mask or helmets specifically made for lacrosse.

A match of box lacrosse is swift and quick. After getting the ball, the attacking team tries to shoot a goal within 30 seconds. If the ball is on the defensive side, the players have to get the ball across the midfield line within 10 seconds.

In case there is an offence, the player is sent to the penalty box and the match continues without him for two minutes (5 minutes major penalty in case if it is assessed). Differentiating from field lacrosse, a player cannot be ejected from playing if he gets involved in a fight.

Women's Lacrosse

There are very different rules of women's lacrosse than of the men's. The equipment and the allowance of physical contact are the most significant ones.



This mode of the sport allows no physical contact mainly because the player's only protective equipment worn are mouth and face guards. The face guards are optional across the globe except in the US, where they are mandatory. There is stick checking here as well as body checking.

A typical women's lacrosse match is initiated with two players placing their crosses in the air in front of them above the hips and the ball is placed in between the heads of the crosses.

College Lacrosse

In the US, lacrosse is played in both the club and sanctioned teams at the college level. Currently, there are 88 NCAA sanctioned Division I men lacrosse teams, 46 Division II lacrosse teams and 208 Division III lacrosse teams. For women, there are currently 91 Division I women lacrosse teams, 57 Division II women lacrosse team, and 201 Division III women lacrosse team.



There are 209 men teams that compete at the Men's Collegiate Lacrosse Association (MCLA) level where most of the major universities of the US are participants. Another 107 of schools have club teams in the National College Lacrosse League (NCLL).

Field Lacrosse

Field lacrosse is played all over the world in which there are ten players in each team. The team is divided into attackers, midfielders, and defenders.

- **Attackers** – The attackers are not allowed to cross the mid field. They can only do so if they are replaced by a midfielder.
- **Midfielders** – The midfielders can move in any part of the field who also help in preventing the other team to score a goal. Mainly, the midfielders pass the ball between attackers and defenders of their team.
- **Defenders** – Defenders are the main ones to prevent the opponents to score a goal. The sticks of the defenders are longer than the attackers and midfielders.

Major League Lacrosse

Major League Lacrosse was launched in 1999 in US. Several standard rules are followed but there are some exceptions also. In 1999, 56 matches were played from April to August. In 2001, six teams participated whereas in 2015, eight teams participated.

A **shot clock** in the Major League Lacrosse is a 60-second timer that begins when a team gets possession of the ball in its offensive half of the field. The team playing the offense has 60 seconds to take a shot at the goal. The shot must go into the net or at least get in contact with the goal or goalkeeper in any manner. If the shot clock exhausts during an offensive possession, the opposing team gets the possession of the ball at the midfield and resumes with a face-off.

Lacrosse - Rules

There are several rules that are to be followed by each team playing the match. The rules may vary as per the variant but there are some common rules followed in all the variants. Here we will discuss about the rules of different variants of lacrosse.

Rules of Field Lacrosse

- Both teams have ten players each divided into three attackers, three midfielders, three defenders, and one goalkeeper.
- The stick of attackers and midfielders have length of 40 inches whereas the stick of defenders are 60 inches long.
- The dimension of the field is 100m x 55m and the dimension of the goal posts is 6ft by 6ft.
- Attackers and defenders are not allowed to cross their restraining line until a midfielder possesses the ball.
- If ball reaches outside the field by a team member, the ball is possessed by the opponent team.
- Substitution of players can be done in the designated exchange area called box.
- The offending player is sent to a penalty box in case the player has committed a foul.
- If the non-offending team scores a goal, the penalty for offending team is released.
- The diameter of crease is 18ft by 18ft.

Rules of Box Lacrosse

- Both teams have six players each.
- A match is divided in four quarters of 14 minutes each.
- The attacking team has to shoot the ball within 30 seconds after possession whereas the defenders have to shoot the ball within ten seconds.
- The lacrosse stick is either 40 or 46 inches long.

- A goalkeeper is not allowed to enter the crease whereas rest of the players can enter.
- The diameter of the crease is 9ft by 9 ft.
- The goalkeeper loses all the privileges if he comes out of crease.

Rules of Women Lacrosse

- The women wear only mouth guard, thin gloves, and face guard as safety equipment. Face guard is optional in international tournaments but compulsory in US.
- The women's face-offs is known as draws.
- None of the players are allowed to enter the goal circle unless the goalkeeper comes out.
- A defender cannot stand in 8m fan for more than three seconds.
- If a defender is following an offender or passing the ball the she will not be called after three seconds.



Rules of Major League Lacrosse

- Each season starts in April and ends in August.
- The shot clock is of 60 seconds.
- There is a two-point goal line of 16 yards.
- There are four defenders in a team.

Lacrosse - Championships

Many championships of lacrosse are organized around the world. Some of them are as follows –

Major League Lacrosse



The Major League Lacrosse or MLL is a professional lacrosse league founded in 1999 in the United States that showcases the world's best lacrosse players. Every season consists of 56 matches running from April to August.

The MLL uses the regular lacrosse rules and regulations with some exceptions, such as a 16yard 2-point line and a 60-second shot clock.

The regular season play started in 2001 where 6 teams participated in MLL and they had plans to extend up to 19 teams.

MLL has 8 teams at present. They are Annapolis, Boston, Columbus, Charlotte, Denver, New York City, Palm Beach County, and Rochester.

Federation of International Lacrosse



There were two separate governing bodies for the men and women versions of the sport and this was one obstacle to the international development. Men lacrosse was governed by ILF and the women version by IFWLA.

In August, 2008, after four years of negotiation, the two bodies merged into one and a single body, the Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL) was formed. All championships previously operated under the ILF and IFWLA were taken over by the FIL.

The 2014 World Lacrosse Championship were held by the FIL in Denver, United States. The World Lacrosse Championships are held in every four years and are sponsored by the FIL itself. However, only eight nations have competed so far – Canada, the Iroquois Nationals and the US have top three places in these events.

European Lacrosse Federation



The next largest competition internationally held is the European Lacrosse Championship by the European Lacrosse Federation (ELF), held for both men and women teams. Since 1995, the ELF has been running all the European Championships.

Till 2001, they held these championships every year, then they changed the format to every four years between World Championships.

Till 2004, only 7 nations had participated in EIL, but from then a record number of countries participated with 12 men's teams and 6 women's teams making it the largest international lacrosse event of the year.

In the 2012 ELF Championship, England was victorious over Ireland, and the third place was taken by Sweden. In the 2014 championships, 32 nations competed in the ELF Championships.

International Lacrosse

Lacrosse has always been played for the most part in Canada and in the United States. Although there haven't been a lot of communities of lacrosse but they surely are dedicated. However, recently lacrosse has been flourishing at an international level with teams established most particularly in Europe and East Asia.

Lacrosse, not having been an official Olympic sport as since 1908, the pinnacle of international lacrosse competitions consisting the World Championships held every four years begun in 1968. The championships began as a four-team invitational tournament sponsored by the International Lacrosse Federation.

Until 1986, the lacrosse world championships had been contested only by four countries, US, Canada, England, and Australia. Scotland and Wales competed in the women's version. Now these are held at many levels like senior men, senior women, under19 men, under-19 women, etc.

After the expansion of the sport internationally, the 2006 Men's World Championship was filled in by 21 countries and the Iroquois Nationals, representing six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. They are the only Native (one of the first nations) American team to compete internationally.

In 2003, the first World Indoor Lacrosse Championship (WILC) was played by six nations at four different sites in Ontario. Canada won the championship in the final match against the Iroquois Nationals with a score of 21 – 4. The 2007 WILC was held in Halifax, from May 14 – May 20, and again won by Canada.