

## Girls, boys lacrosse moves from an emerging sport to fully sanctioned by IHSA

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The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) added boys and girls lacrosse as an official high school sport starting in the 2018-19 school year, and the inaugural state finals tournament will be hosted at Hinsdale Central High School from May 31 to June 2. The excitement is mounting as this sport has been growing in popularity in recent years. According to the IHSA, the sport had been on their “radar” for a number of years but it was more a matter of schools being able to grant field space for practice and games without overcrowding the existing spring sports. There also was the issue of cost.



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During the first season under IHSA sanctioning, there will be 78 boys teams and 59 girls teams competing. Although the sport has become increasingly popular during the past 10 years in the Midwest, the sport actually dates back in America to around 1636 when a Jesuit missionary first documented the game. However, other documentation on the rules or strategy is nonexistent. Historians agree, though, the sport got its name from French settlers when they used the name for “a curved stick.” Native Americans reportedly called the game “little brother of war” as it was played only by men. It wasn’t until 1890 when girls in Scotland were introduced to the game. Eventually, it made its way back to the United States in 1926 where women learned to play in school. Since then, participation by both women and men has continued to grow along with affiliations to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the International Federation of Women’s Lacrosse Association (IFWLA), the International Lacrosse Federation (IFL) and the Olympics. According to USA Lacrosse, more than 750,000 people in the United States played lacrosse last year.

Because the rules for boys and girls lacrosse differ, each has its own unique demands and can put stress on different parts of the body accordingly. Boys play with considerably more contact than girls. Because of this, they wear shoulder pads and full helmets and the game can look very similar to ice hockey. This increase in contact leads to a different set of likely injuries. In the boys game, the primary mechanism of injury is contact between two players and the primary injuries generally occur to the lower body and head. The most common injuries are ankle

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sprains and concussions, respectively. The most common fracture location is to hands or forearm due to stick-to-body contact. It is important to note that in recent years there has been a decrease in injuries. Some attribute injury rate decline to improvements in equipment and changes in rules.

The most significant difference between boys and girls lacrosse is that there is no physical contact allowed in girls lacrosse. Consequently, there is considerably less safety equipment with only an eye guard and mouth guard required. Although contact rules differ, knee and ankle sprains are common to both and also result in a longer recovery time. The most well-known knee sprain is an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tear which typically requires surgery and a minimum of four to six months rehabilitation. Proper training has been proven to reduce the incidence of ACL sprains (tears). Additionally, thorough warm-ups with good strength and conditioning can significantly reduce the risk for muscular strains that also can occur.

Dr. Steven Chudik gives a shout-out to all the lacrosse high school athletes and their opportunity to participate in this newly IHSA-recognized sport. In response, he and the Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine Teaching and Research Foundation (OTRF) have developed an in-season conditioning program for lacrosse to help improve performance and prevent injuries. Visit the OTRF website and download the program at <http://www.otrfund.org/sports-performance-programs/>.



Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, “Young Canadians” lacrosse team circa 1885.