



DEVELOPING LACROSSE PLAYERS

Building Full-Potential Athletes for Life

A program and coaching design guide

	ENTER AND EXPLORE			ENJOY AND DEVELOP			EXCEL AND ACHIEVE	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 3-4	Stage 4 (Puberty)	Stage 5	Stage 6	
	DISCOVERY	FUNDAMENTALS	FOUNDATIONS	FOUNDATIONS/EMERGING	EMERGING	COMPETITIVE	COMPETE TO WIN-HIGH PERFORMANCE OR PARTICIPATION	
General chronological age	4-6 years old	6-8 years old	7-10 years old	9-12 years old	12-14 years old	15-18 years old	18+	
KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS								
Focus-Where we spend most of our time.	Fundamental Movement Skills	Fundamental Athletic Skills	Fundamental Technical Skills	Honing Technical/ Fundamental Tactical Skills	Technical and Tactical Refinement	Technical and Tactical Development in Competition	Competing to Win-High Performance or Participation	
Goals for this stage of development -What we are trying to achieve	To develop basic movement skills--body management, locomotor and object control--that build ability, confidence and desire to play lacrosse. Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.	To develop agility, balance and coordination and speed for success in learning fundamental technical lacrosse skills. Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.	To develop a technically sound set of lacrosse skills and athletic movement skills necessary in lacrosse (agility, quickness, change of direction). Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.	To reinforce technical skills while learning and practicing tactical application in a progressive system. Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.	To combine technical skills with tactical understanding to develop as a well-rounded lacrosse player, while also improving physically and psychologically in preparation for more competitive settings.	To optimize fitness preparation and individual, position and sport-specific skills to improve as a lacrosse player in a competitive setting. Develop mental aspects of performance, situational understanding/decision making, flexibility, and leadership skills.	To be in peak condition to perform on demand--mentally, physiologically, technically and tactically. To be an outstanding member of a team working toward the common goal of winning.	
Player-centered environment-what it should look like	Fun, constant active engagement, relaxed, inclusive, positive with frequent changes of activity. Predictable routines. Games that build basic movement skills in the context of lacrosse. Lots of praise and reinforcement from coach and parents.	Fun, constant active engagement (kid+ball=fun), relaxed, inclusive, positive with and emphasis on learning new skills. Lots of enjoyable games that reinforce skill learning. Predictable routines. Focus on effort and trying your best. Activities are designed for success.	Fun, inclusive, engaging, and positive; appeals to this age-group's desire for fun, improvement and teamwork through the progressive development of existing and new skill base. Focus on trying your best. Growth mindset.	Fun, inclusive, accepting, engaging and positive. Focus on improvement and effort rather than outcome. Reinforce new and existing skills while learning to apply to tactics through small sided and engaging play and enjoyable practice. Opportunities to try new things. Growth mindset.	Fun, accepting, meaningful, safe and positive. Rewards improvement and effort, develops healthy peer relationships. Appeals to players sense of need to belong yet also develop a positive personal identity through team dynamics. Recognizes individual strengths and potential. Growth mindset. Mastery environment is evident.	Fun, rewards hard work, and improvement, values everyone's contribution to the team. Focus on individual planning and goal setting based on strengths and weaknesses for personal ability realization. Prepares the athlete for future success both on the field and off. Encourages autonomy, acceptance of responsibility and life lessons learned through lacrosse.	Enjoyable, focus on excellence and high effort. Character, leadership, contribution, qualities as a teammate as well as ability are valued. Coachability, flexibility, team over self, are valued. Pride in ones achievements.	
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT								
Athletic Development	Running, jumping, hopping, twisting, turning, stopping, starting, static balance, catching a ball with 2 hands.	Agility, dynamic balance, bilateral coordination, skipping, hopping, throwing/tossing and catching away from body with either hand, flexibility, strength.	Agility, footwork dynamic balance, complex coordination, linear speed, speed of coordination, strength, flexibility.	Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, complex coordination, multi-directional speed, strength, core strength, flexibility.	Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, speed, multi-directional speed, core strength, lower extremity strength (for injury prevention), endurance (at growth spurt), plyometric/power, flexibility.	Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, strength, endurance, speed, plyometric/power, flexibility.	Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, strength, endurance, speed, flexibility.	
Technical (Skills) Development	Introducing running with the ball, scooping, throwing, exposure to all skills, experimentation, terminology.	Proficient at stick grip and scooping, Exploring and developing other fundamental lacrosse skills--catching, passing, shooting, cradling, dodging.	Proficient at most basic technical skills, developing dodge variations and exploring shooting/passing and cradling variations. Developing individual defense skills-body, footwork, stick positioning.	Consolidating and mastering all technical skills, exploring variations--developing consistency under pressure. Mastering individual defensive skills. Beginning to develop position-specific skills.	Consistently demonstrates and can execute fundamental skills under pressure. Developing stick checking and body checking ability as allowable within the rules. Developing proficiency of position-specific skills.	Repetition of fundamental skills, curbing bad habits, innovating, tweaking, fine tuning. Mastering position specific skills and defensive skills.	Full mastery of technical skills; developing ability to teach others. Focused on role-specific skills that benefit team as a whole.	
Tactical (Strategy) Development	Experimentation with body, stick and ball in a defined space containing "special" areas (ie goal). Stopping, starting, changing pace, running to open space.	Developing 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 offense and defensive concepts, exploring 2 v 1 offensive and defensive concepts, riding and clearing.	Proficient with 1v 1, 2v1 and 2v2 concepts, exploring and developing 3v 3, 4v4, 4 v 3 variations and transition offense and defense.	Developing situational understanding of play up to 7 v 7; developing understanding of zones, proficient with riding and clearing, player to player defense. Working on space and time.	Exploring extra-player defense and offense, Mastering numbers situations and tactical play up to 7v7. Developing full field concepts, transition, riding and clearing skills for transition to full-sided play. Developing awareness and anticipation.	Extending tactical understanding of the game to a variety of situations in full-field settings. Developing decision-making skills, identifying patterns, make adjustments. Proficient at judging space and time, anticipation.	Working within a defined system. Extending understanding of the game and applying it to variety of contexts, rapid ability to make tactical decisions.	
Psychological Development-working to support athletes in these areas...	Trying new challenges, effort, following simple instructions.	Concentration, teachability, learning to make choices, respect, understanding rules, how to cope with winning and losing, learning to solve problems.	Love of the sport, coachability, concentration, problem solving, becoming confident, making good choices, learning fairness, taking responsibility.	Love of the sport, focus, simple goal setting, self-motivation, confidence, learning to make decisions, developing self-reliance, understanding winning and losing. Respect.	Autonomy, choosing ones activities, setting more complex and long-term goals, seeing long-term benefits to hard work, developing good peer relationships and teamwork, self-motivation. Respect for the game, teammates, opponents, coach, officials, and self.	Self-defined enjoyment and participation in the sport. Willingness to be flexible and try new things, accepting responsibility, respect, making good choices, leadership skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, mental toughness. Long-term goal setting and incremental steps to get there.	Completely understands and accepts need for rules, regulation, planning and structure. Also sees long-term pay off of hard work and goal setting.	
Social-Behavioral Development--we know that at this age athletes are...	Learning to share; Learning to say Thank You; Like to be with friends; are center of their worlds; Parents are central for praise and approval; need balance and variety of new and familiar activities in short doses.	Learning to cooperate with and help other children. Learning to consider other people. Learning through familiar activities. Want to do their best. Can show responsibility through completing simple tasks and requests.	Learning to compete against other players. Learning the values of lacrosse. Learning independence and also how to work together as a team. Developing self-awareness--they start to be aware of what they don't know or what they can't do. Like to help others and the coach. Able to listen to the coach.	More independent, able to share, improved decision making ability. Desire independence and are building confidence. Peer group acceptance becomes important and physical competency plays a role in how one is perceived. Girls tend to form "cliques," boys have more broad team relationships.	Going through a time of rapid change physically, are very aware of body and differences in maturity. Self-identity is being formed. Participation in sport is largely dependent upon friends. Can understand full scope of rules of the game and consequences of one's actions.	Seeking independence without needing to ask permission all the time. Developing logical and deductive reasoning. Self-image is stabilizing but peers are very influential. Opportunity to explore and experiment within sport activity is important. Healthy adult/mentor relationships are beneficial.	Self-actualization and self-expression are important. Major decisions about life are of significant importance during this time. At this age there is also a high need to be self-directed and independent.	
Cognitive Development	Slower processing speed (time and amount of info)--must use repetition, be clear and concise, and use cue words. Can't filter out relevant and irrelevant information from the environment.	Better able to follow instructions; concentration increasing; can introduce basic rules and fair play; Learning the concept of winning and losing. Still may have difficulty with abstract concepts (ie complex plays, multiple choices of options etc)	By age 9 or 10 developing the ability to think in advance of ball (anticipation); recall memory significantly improves; can follow more complex instructions; stay on task and focus longer; can understand where to move with and without the ball; can think in sequential thought and actions.	Increases in processing speed; learning encoding strategies for long term memory; still may find it hard to tune out or self identify what's important; understand winning and losing, may still need help coping.	Starting to really understand tactical concepts; recall memory is as good as an adult by this age; can follow complex instructions; analytical thought; performance in competition can be inconsistent; able to run, cradle and think. Idea of covering field space with passes makes sense, eager to learn but still want to play.	Processing speed developed; able to select what they want to attend to. Can use abstract and logical thinking to make sense of the environment. Can problem solve systematically. Can learn complex plays and also find creative solutions. Can think abstractly.	With fully developed cognition at this stage, coaches and players should include deliberate practice that exercises situational thinking and awareness	
TRAINING								
Ratio of: Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition +Competition Specific Preparation	Competition embedded in activity sessions	Competition is embedded in activity sessions or 70:30	70:30	70:30 Boys/60:40 Girls	60:40	40:60	30:70	
Primary Objective of Training	To develop physical literacy and basic movement skills in the context of lacrosse. Achieved through stations, games and activities; 1:1 ball to player ratio. Include self-directed play.	To develop physical literacy and introduce fundamental sport and lacrosse skills. Achieved through stations, games and activities, 1:1 ball to player ratio with 2:1 activities also factoring in. Include free play.	To develop a lacrosse-confident athlete with solid fundamental skills and a general understanding of basic game play and strategy through small-sided play. Include free play.	To reinforce basic technical skills and introduce tactical components of the game through progressions and small-sided play practice/ teaching games for understanding. Include free play.	To refine technical skills and develop tactical proficiency. Practices include regular competitive situations in progressions, include competitive games that reinforce understanding, and high-repetition game-like drills. Include free play.	To hone technical and tactical skills in a competitive environment. Model competitions in training, use progressions, embed conditioning, make all practice activities as game-like and intense as possible while reinforcing technical and tactical skills. Include player-led play and choice.	To be fully prepared for the next competition.	
Max Recommended Ratio (player:coach)	8:1	10:1	12:1	12:1	15:1	18:1	Determined by resources and level of program.	
Length of Sessions	30-45 minutes	45-60 minutes	60 minutes	60-75 minutes	90 minutes	Up to 120 minutes	Determined by training/competition cycles and periodization planning.	
Frequency	1x a week, 8-10 weeks	2x a week during 8-12 week season.	Up to 3x a week during an 8-12 week season.	Up to 3x a week during an 8-12 week season.	Up to 3x a week during an 8-14 week season.	Up to 4x a week during an 8-14 week season; periodization and full training plans begin to factor in.	Determined by training /competition cycles and periodization planning.	
Multi-Sport Participation-Sport and physical activity diversification-Other sports and activities	Physical activity every day-lacrosse can be one of those activities; Gymnastics and movement education highly recommended.	Sport-specific training twice a week during one specific season; participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times a week. Gymnastics and movement education highly recommended. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.	Sport-specific training up to 3x a week (for one specific season), participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times a week. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.	Sport-specific training up to 3x a week (for one specific season), participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times a week. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.	Athlete may decide to start focusing more on 1-2 key sports. If lacrosse rises to the top in motivation and desire, suggest picking another sport that is complimentary during another season such as field hockey, soccer, ice hockey, football, basketball etc.	Some athletes will begin specializing in one sport at this stage. What is important is the broad base of diversified physical activity that is supportive of the athletes goals and desires. Many athletes will still choose to compete in a variety of sports. 2 sports is entirely appropriate. Periodization is important to ensure proper rest and recovery.	Athletes at this stage have committed to lacrosse is their primary sport. However balanced training, periodization, and participation in complementary physical activity can be beneficial from a performance and mental standpoint. Athletes who have benefited from a long-term athlete development focused sport system will have a strong athletic base to carry them through life, even if their focus at this point is high performance lacrosse.	
COMPETITION								
Competition Structure	Girls: 3 v 3 (no goalie) Boys: 3 v 3 (no goalie)	Girls: 4 v 4 (no goalie) Boys: 3 v 3 (goalie optional as additional player)	Girls: 7 v 7 field players plus goalies Boys: 5 v 5 field players plus goalies	Girls 9 v 9 field players plus goalies, transitioning to 11 v 11 plus goalies. Boys: 6 v 6 plus goalies	Full-Field Game (can also stay with modified play early in stage depending on development)	Full-Field Game	Full-Field Game	
Field Size	Cross-field	Cross-field	Cross-field	Modified field	Modified field/Full Field	Full Field	Full Field	
Developmental Purpose of Competition	FUN, learning to follow simple rules, sportsmanship.	FUN, introducing basic lacrosse concepts, exploring competing in lacrosse and basic rules, sportsmanship.	FUN, trying new skills in a team setting, learning and exploring overall play of the game, sportsmanship.	FUN, honing technical skills in game situations, exploring and applying new tactical skills.	FUN, using technical proficiency to further expand tactical decision-making and develop situational understanding.	FUN, using technical proficiency to add creativity to game situations and further develop tactical decision-making. Learning to improve performance in a competitive setting.	FUN, achieving the best possible competitive outcome through fair and rigorous play.	