

GRASSROOTS

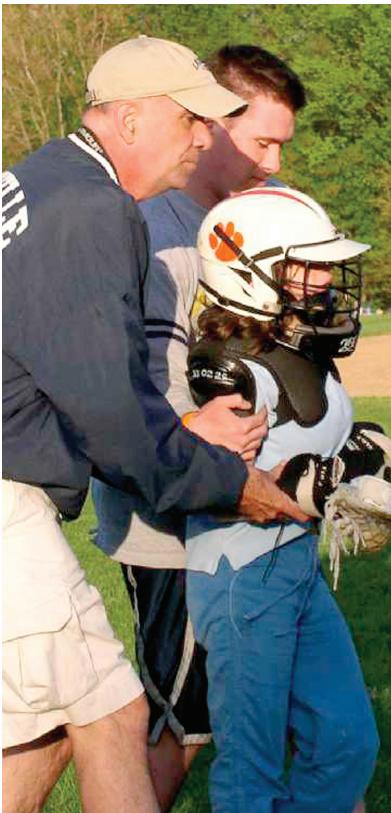
Lacrosse is growing fast, we're just trying to keep up



INITIATIVES

Adaptive Lacrosse

Maryland program helps special needs children play the game



For 10 years, Maryland-based Adaptive Lacrosse has allowed children with special needs to participate in the game of lacrosse. Through their dedication, this program has proven that anyone can play the fastest growing sport in the U.S.

The idea for Adaptive Lacrosse began in 2001 as Martin Delaney watched his son participate in a gymnastics program for children with special needs. His son Patrick has aphasia, a developmental disorder that affects his language and speech. As a former lacrosse player at Towson University, Delaney wondered how he could adapt the game of lacrosse so that his son could be able to play. At the time, he was coaching a recreational lacrosse team, and recruited several coaches to help him set up the program. Ten years later, it's still going strong.

Since the creation of Adaptive

Lacrosse, similar programs have been set up around Maryland. Three years ago, the Davidsonville (Md.) Lacrosse Association started its own adaptive lacrosse program. Last October, Davidsonville and Adaptive Lacrosse played in the first game for both squads with the match ending in a 3-3 tie.

"For me the most rewarding part is watching the players grow and overcoming their challenges to be successful," Delaney says. "The coaches have been very touched by this."

The participants are what have made Adaptive Lacrosse truly unique, says Delaney. Last season, 17 lacrosse players ages 5 to 22 participated in the program. Delaney and his staff have been able to modify everything from lacrosse sticks to helmets to fit each of their players' special needs.

Most lacrosse sticks are too long for players in a wheelchair to hold, so Delaney has adapted techniques to adjust shafts to fit specifically for his players. He has also been able to modify the lacrosse helmet so it's able to fit a hearing aid.

The local lacrosse community has been very involved with this program. Many of the coaches are volunteers, with parents or grandparents taking on a coaching role. The CCBC-Essex men's lacrosse team is also involved with Adaptive Lacrosse, helping out the participants in last fall's game.

Adaptive Lacrosse is set to play Davidsonville again in the spring, most likely in May.

—COURTNEY HAUPT

For more Information on Adaptive Lacrosse visit leaguelineup.com/adaptive lacrosse

The Count



COKER COLLEGE

Where: Hartsville, S.C.

Affiliation: DII

When: 2011

Coker College recently announced that it will field a men's lacrosse team beginning in the fall of 2011. Tony Smith, an assistant coach and defensive coordinator at Belmont Abbey since 2007, has been chosen as the program's first head coach. An experienced recruiter, Smith says he is looking forward to building the Cobras into a Conference Carolinas powerhouse.

ALMA COLLEGE

Where: Alma, Mich.

Affiliation: DIII

When: 2011

Starting in the fall of 2011, Alma College will add both men's and women's lacrosse to their list of 18 intercollegiate sports. With the increasing popularity of lacrosse in the Michigan area, Alma's athletic director John Leister is excited about the opportunity to bring the sport to the college level. A head coach has not yet been announced, but the search is underway.



CANTON HIGH SCHOOL

Where: Canton, Conn.

Affiliation: High School

When: 2011

Canton High School recently announced the addition of a boys' varsity lacrosse team. After two years of waiting, the Board of Education approved a proposal from Canton Youth Lacrosse to bring the sport to the high school level. The team is expected to begin play in the spring of 2011, though a head coach has not yet been chosen.

—C.H.