LACROSSE INJURIES

Lacrosse is a high speed contact sport. An NCAA survey done 10 years ago found that lacrosse players have an injury rate of over 50 percent but also have a low incidence of severe injury. The most common areas injured are the shoulder, knee, ankle and upper leg.

Parents should be aware lightweight shoulder pads, elbow and forearm padding. The lower extremity has no protective equipment which leaves the area open for many injuries.

Two types of injuries may occur in lacrosse: non-contact and contact. Any sport which requires acceleration, deceleration or sudden changes in direction may see non-contact injuries such as ankle sprains, ligamentous or meniscal (cartilage) injuries to the knee.

Muscular strains of the hamstrings, groin or Achilles tendon are seen especially early in the season when the player may not be in shape. Running on a hard field early in the spring when the ground is still frozen or uneven ground can produce tendonitis or sprains to the ankle or leg. Injury to the shoulder especially the acromioclavicular (A-C) joint, or elbow are seen when the player may suddenly fall without sustaining some sort of direct contact.

Contact injuries may be caused from another player, the stick or ball. Soft tissue injuries such as contusions, lacerations or abrasions are the most common type of injury. Concern must be given to care of soft tissue injuries since they are often overlooked and produce more severe type injury such as infection or myositis ossificans which is calcification of the muscle following a severe contusion. This is most commonly seen in the quadriceps (thigh) and bicep muscles.

Since body contact is allowed in lacrosse you can see injuries from blocking or high velocity contact. Head, neck and shoulder injuries are commonly seen; when high velocity contact occurs the resulting injury is usually severe in nature. Injuries such as anterior cruciate and/or medial collateral ligament tears, sometimes requiring surgical repair can occur. Injuries sustained from stick contact are many times facial contusions, lacerations and sometimes fractures. Fractures of the shoulder and clavicle are seen from illegal checks. Fractures of the forearm can be from legal checks. Contusions are also very common from stick contact and also ball contact. The hard rubber composition of the ball can be the cause of frequent injury.

The midfielders suffer the greatest and most severe injuries. This is due to the fact they are involved in more full speed and open field situations. Defense and attack players have equal number of injuries. The goalie has the least due to the greater amount of protective equipment. Prevention of injury must be emphasized in lacrosse. Lack of protective equipment and the potential for high velocity contact in the sport leaves the athlete very vulnerable for injury.

Lois Cloud – Malenczak, P. T.
Director of Sports Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation
Long Island Sports & Rehabilitation Center 2008