



Teaching tactics to develop smarter players

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I *coach* writing and calculus and I *teach* lacrosse. In my experience, it is very difficult to teach someone to write if they don't read. Experience with others use of language is essential to our own use of it. Lacrosse is no different.

The game is too fluid, too spontaneous, too creative to have every movement prescribed. The experience gained by watching the game played at a high level is essential to learning how to take your game to the next level. With as much top flight lacrosse as there is on television, this has become relatively easy to do, though even the advantages of extensive replay with a televised game cannot replace the sense and feel of watching a live game.

Last week, I was astonished when I asked more than 80 kids at a youth clinic how many of them had watched the Virginia-Hopkins game on ESPNU the day before and only about 10 raised their hands. A huge learning opportunity had been lost.

Growing up, the time I spent watching games at Homewood Field, Byrd Stadium, Navy-Marine Corps Stadium and Mount Washington was essential to my development as a player and, later, a coach. The skills, tactics and artistry of the game were all on display to be mimicked, copied and incorporated into my game.

As a high school coach, I ask my guys to watch as much lacrosse as they can, and watch with a critical eye. I have the same conversation with my lacrosse players about their homework that I have with my calculus students about theirs. Some questions I ask are:

- What questions do you have?
- What did you learn?
- What do you need to get better?
- What did you see, read or hear that could help you get better?

I quiz my players the same way I quiz my students. Though the nature of their responses is different, the process is the same and designed to develop smart, competent and confident young men and women, no matter the arena.

The U.S. Men's National Under-19 Team will travel to Turku, Finland July 12-21, 2012, to defend its gold medal at the FIL World Championships. Get the latest Team USA news at www.laxmagazine.com. Want to help fuel their journey? [Click here](#) to support the U.S. Men's National Under-19 Team.