



USL Board Set to Vote on Youth Rules

Passage at September meeting a key step to 2012 implementation

By Paul Krome

The Stars Gold (Va.)-Yellow Jackets (N.Y.) gold medal game at the 2011 US Lacrosse Girls' Under-15 National Championship in July included everything you might expect: great effort, terrific individual plays, and a worthy champion, the Yellow Jackets, crowned by a 10-3 victory.

But it also included some confusion.

Yellow Jacket goalie Julia Michaels relieved starter Samantha Giacalone, but the sub didn't occur through the box as prescribed by USL rules. It ultimately proved inconsequential, but led to an in-game discussion between the coaches about differences in rules of play.

And it illustrates why the US Lacrosse Board of Directors voted

in January to make the research and development of age-appropriate, national playing rules for youth boys' lacrosse and youth girls' lacrosse a priority for the 2012 season. The process takes a crucial step this month, as the board will vote at its Sept. 10-11 meeting to adopt the national youth rules as recommended by men's and women's game committees.

"We wanted to take a look at rules and best practices nationally to make the game safer and more fun," said Jenn Eames, a longtime umpire and chair of the US Lacrosse Women's Game Committee. "This is our sport. Let's do it right for these kids."

Doing it right meant an exhaustive process. US Lacrosse surveyed in the spring 53 youth lacrosse leagues across 29 states, representing some 168,000 players. Over the spring and summer, the respective men's and women's rules subcommittees examined the results, gathered input from the US Lacrosse

US Lacrosse has made it the organization's top priority to establish age-appropriate, national standards for youth lacrosse play.

Sports Science and Safety Committee and issued a second round of surveys.

"US Lacrosse has been very forward thinking in understanding the importance of doing this from a medical point of view," said Dr. Paige Perriello, who became a pediatrician in Charlottesville, Va., after playing and coaching Division I lacrosse. Perriello, also a former umpire, is a member of the US Lacrosse Sports Science and Safety Committee. "Kids are not just little adults. You can't take adult philosophies, gear and strategies and apply them to 9-, 11- or 13-year-olds."

Perriello, whose late father Vito chaired the Sports Science and Safety Committee, co-authored a position paper on the youth rules initiative with Dr. Richard Ginsburg, co-director of the Paces Institute for Sport Psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and a member of the committee since 2008.

US Lacrosse also received input from its membership on the project, issuing several drafts of the youth rules before passing them along. Leaders voted in late August to pass the rules onto the Board of Directors for formal adoption.

"The surveys and all the data that US Lacrosse has collected has been nothing less than phenomenal," said Bob Russell, chair of the Men's Game Committee. "This initiative was driven as result of a glaring need to nationalize around the country a format for youth rules."

Current plans call for the printing and distribution of a new youth lacrosse rules and best practices guidebook before next spring. The new boys' rules would continue to be published in the back of the NFHS book, and the new girls' rules would continue to be published in the NFHS-endorsed US Lacrosse Official Rules for Girls' and Women's Lacrosse book. The youth guidebook would be a free benefit of membership in US Lacrosse for youth coaches, officials and parents, and it will be available for free download at www.uslacrosse.org. **LM**