DISRUPTING THE MODEL OF YOUTH SPORTS

There is a disturbing trend in youth sports: only 27% of children ages 6-12 now play sports, down 8% from 2007. Lacrosse is not immune from this trend; the increase in the number of players participating in lacrosse has fallen below 10% in four of the last five years.

In an effort to buck the trend, increase participation and make lacrosse more fun for kids, US Lacrosse is championing a new Lacrosse Athlete Development Model (LADM) created to accomplish two goals:

- Create better players: increase engagement and enjoyment at the youth level through kid-centered training methods which lead to more improvement and more fun for players
- Keep more people playing the game longer: develop confident, competent athletes and increase opportunities for all to continue playing

Players First

Providing every athlete the opportunity to enter, enjoy and excel by learning and playing lacrosse in a way that’s best for each stage of growth and development is critical.

The current youth sports development model rushes to identify the best players at early ages, and leaves potential players behind with limited opportunities to play. The LADM aims to square the pyramid to keep more players engaged longer, allowing the best players to emerge as they reach physical maturity while still offering opportunities for others. (See pages 4-5 on Squaring the Pyramid.)

US Lacrosse has developed materials for youth leagues to implement so that players learn in a way that is physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially appropriate. We believe this increases both learning and fun for young athletes, which helps them reach their long term potential.

Thinking Small

Smaller players on smaller fields is the name of the game to keep kids engaged, developing their skills and getting more touches. Evidence-based small-sided competition guidelines have been created, identifying the best way to develop players through competition at each level, starting with 3 v 3 and progressing up to full-field. Our pilot programs have seen better skill development, more enjoyment, and are anticipating increased retention rates by letting the kids play the right way.

Developing Athletes, Not Lacrosse Players

A core element is multi-sport participation. US Lacrosse has long advocated that young athletes play multiple sports to learn different skills and game situations, prevent overuse injury and avoid burnout. The model guides the lacrosse community to allow for sport sampling until developmentally the timing is right to focus on one or two sports.

Developing Elite Athletes

This is not just a youth-focused initiative for beginning players. When athletes reach the stage where competition is important, we want them to have the skills to be successful. This model allows the best to emerge as they reach physical maturity. Working with leaders at the elite levels, US Lacrosse is building programming and driving opportunities beyond the youth level so everyone can be part of the game for a lifetime.

To learn more about the Lacrosse Athlete Development Model, please visit uslacrosse.org/ladm. For information about implementing the model in your area, please contact cep@uslacrosse.org.
CHAIRMAN’S PERSPECTIVE
Reverse the Trend
Gordon Cooney, Chairman, US Lacrosse Foundation

As I watch players rise through the ranks in lacrosse – from youth leagues to JV and varsity in high school, to college and then to elite club lacrosse – the pool of talent grows better but smaller.

In my own experience, as exciting as it was to face new competition, it was disappointing to see friends and teammates give up our unique game when it can be played and enjoyed well beyond college years.

Some time ago, my US Lacrosse colleagues shared with me a statistic that, frankly, I found disturbing: according to a survey of all sports in the United States, 75% of athletes participating in team sports drop out by age 13.

Think about that. Right at the moment when adolescents can most benefit from the physical, mental and social benefits of team sports, three quarters of them opt out. Or do not opt in, in the case of those whose first opportunity to play lacrosse might have come in high school.

Now, I have always strongly believed that lacrosse offers something for athletes of every ability and age, so I’m proud to report some good news that could reverse this trend. After extensive research and consultation with other national sports organizations, the staff at US Lacrosse has created a comprehensive Athlete Development Model (LADM) for parents, coaches, officials and administrators.

The aim of LADM is to turn the pyramid model – in which the sport starts with a large base of youth athletes which becomes narrower as the players get older – into a square, where anyone who wants to play has a place to play in an age-appropriate setting so that they can be successful.

You’ll find an introduction to LADM on pages 4, 5 and 5 of this newsletter, and there’s much more information online at uslacrosse.org/ladm.

LADM provides a great model to make lacrosse what it is meant to be – and what it has been for me – a transformative sport for a lifetime.

IS TEAM USA USA REALLY WORTH THE INVESTMENT?

Each year, a select group of men and women earn the privilege of representing Team USA on the international stage. While the playing experience is reserved for a chosen few, the potential impact they have on many is an investment worth making. There are five Team USA programs in all: Women’s National Team, Men’s National Team, Men’s Indoor, Men’s Under-19 and Women’s Under-19. These are our lacrosse standard-bearers, our Olympic athletes.

The responsibility to represent Team USA with unwavering character as fierce competitors with humble hearts is laid on the shoulders of 25 young men or women each year. In July, our Men’s U19 team will compete for their eighth consecutive gold at the 2016 FIL World Championship in Coquitlam, British Columbia. But, their performance on the field is only half the job; fostering relationships with those who want to be them someday is their greatest responsibility and their biggest impact. This is the real investment: stewarding a proud lacrosse culture among the younger generation.

Attend a clinic or a meet-and-greet between the players and their fans, and you know that the U.S. National Teams – and the outstanding athletes who are part of it – is an asset worth backing. The sharing of knowledge is inspiring, the interactions are playful, the smiles are genuine and the experience is enriching... for young players and parents, as well as the Team USA players themselves.

WORTH THE INVESTMENT?

It is on the shoulders of Team USA alumni, donors and partners that US Lacrosse funds five national teams to be fierce competitors, inspirational leaders, humble role models and international ambassadors for lacrosse.

Team USA coaches and players donate their time and expertise, assist in fundraising, and juggle it all with their commitments to school, teams, jobs and families. They do it for the love of the game. They do it for the players who came before them. And, they do it for the pursuit of the gold. But, most importantly, they do it to keep lacrosse authentic for your kids. They are paying it forward, as someone did for them.

“All of our Team USA athletes work hard to represent and embody the best in our sport, on and off the field,” said Susie Chace, Vice President, Philanthropy and Partnerships. “US Lacrosse is focused on elevating the National Teams platform overall to have the most impact, year after year. We want to give our Team USA athletes and coaches the very best so that they can give that back to you as ambassadors of our sport.”

US Lacrosse is grateful for all of our corporate partners and individual supporters of Team USA, and we hope you will consider a gift to further empower our Team USA athletes. The Stars & Stripes Elite Club celebrates our donors and partners who make a threshold gift of $10,000. Please contact Kira Muller at kmuller@uslacrosse.org or 410-235-6882 ext. #105 for more information.
The current sports pyramid dictates that athletes move up or get out as they get older. We’re disrupting that model of diminishing opportunity and creating a model of participation that squares the pyramid, providing opportunity for all, for life.
When Summit (NJ) High boys varsity assistant coach Kyle Kirst died unexpectedly at age 47 last June, the local lacrosse community leapt into action to support his wife, Michelle, and five young sons. Praised for his ability to make everyone he came in contact with feel vibrant and valued, all remembered Kyle as a transcendent human being who was a spectacular husband, father, coach, teacher, role model and friend. He forged lasting relationships built on humor, encouragement, trust and love.

In a fitting tribute to a well-loved mentor who embodied the spirit of lacrosse, Bob Sheridan and Harriett Donnelly of the New Jersey Lacrosse Foundation, along with Summit High School varsity head coach Jim Davidson, organized a coaches clinic to raise money while putting Kyle’s passion into action.

Former Team USA U-19 coaches Chuck Apel and Tim Flynn, Harvard Coach Chris Wojzik and Reanoke Coach Bill Pilat were clinicians for more than 100 coaches. Rutgers Coach Brian Brecht showed up with his team to assist with field presentations. Nearly $7,500 was raised for the Kirst Children’s Educational Foundation.

“Kyle had a heart as big as home plate,” said Sheridan. “Everything he did was for the love of lacrosse, family and friends.”

“He cared about every kid, not just our athletes,” said Jim Davidson. “He was the ultimate competitor, but kept a great balance, always focusing on the goal to create great young men.”

Coach Kirst’s incredible spirit will live on and continue to touch lives through the annual Kyle Kirst Coaches Clinic, being held this year on Saturday, October 29, at GoodSports in Wall, N.J.

THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WE PEACEFULLY FIGHT TO ENHANCE THE LIVES OF.

KYLE KIRST

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH LACROSSE

JOHN STAHL

The US Lacrosse college history tribute—brick pillars honoring some of the country’s most iconic programs—has brought hundreds of donors to the National Campaign, none more passionate than University of North Carolina alumnus John Stahl.

Stahl, who co-captained the 1986 National Champion Tar Heels his senior year, volunteered to lead the fundraising. “I wanted our program to be part of the tribute, and knew many Heels would support it,” said Stahl. With a committee of teammates and alums from other eras, and help from UNC Head Coach Joe Breschi, more than $60,000 was raised from nearly 70 donors.

“Stahler did an amazing job,” said Chuck Breschi, ’81. “His kind nature made it impossible to not be involved. Our success speaks volumes about his leadership and what all Tar Heels think of him.”

Stahl, who was the recipient of a sportsmanship award while at UNC, added countless personal phone calls and emails to the outreach, always signing off “Go Heels!”

“His passion for the growth of lacrosse and love for Carolina was apparent in all of his efforts,” says Kara Cannizzaro ’13, John Webster ’93 credits Stahl’s “persistence coupled with a proud alumni base on both the Men’s and Women’s sides” with the campaign’s success. “It was awesome to connect with so many alums and to see US Lacrosse and UNC tied together in such a positive spirit,” says Stahl. “It’s great to be a Heel.”

THeresa Sherry

The selection of Pleasanton, California’s Jackie Gilbert to the 2015 Women’s U-19 National Team was a proud moment for many fans on the west coast. Theresa Sherry, a former U-19 player and a volunteer for the 2015 squad, has a mission to foster many more such proud moments.

A standout on Princeton’s 2002 and 2003 NCAA title teams and a former University of California, Berkeley coach, Sherry is founder and CEO of the Tenacity Project. Begun with a handful of players in 2007, Tenacity has expanded into a 50-team, multi-state initiative to grow the sport in the west while giving talented players the chance to sharpen their skills against one another, and gain notice from colleges.

“Our organization has risen organically out of what we’ve seen at the demand,” Sherry says. “We’ve listened to the families in the areas where we work.”

Acutely aware of the expense involved in participating (she’s covered the costs of several players herself) and hoping to draw players from diverse communities such as Oakland, Sherry recently sought and received IRS non-profit status.

“In 2015, Tenacity supported 60 players and their families with more than $60,000 in aid. This year, we’re shooting to raise $80,000 and help 80 kids. Then, $100,000 and 100 kids.”

Having recently lured former U-19 and Bryn Mawr (Md.) coach Wendy Kridel to serve as Tenacity’s national director, there’s little doubt she’ll achieve that goal.

Learn more at tenacityproject.com

Dr. Larry Feldman

Dr. Larry Feldman is a rocket scientist who is crazy for lacrosse.

From his University of Pennsylvania playing days throughout his 30 plus years of aerospace engineering and computer science, Larry’s passion for lacrosse has only increased. In 1997, Larry combined his knowledge of the game with his brilliance in computer science and developed Laxpower.com, the one stop shop for statistics, ratings and blogging on your favorite players and teams. His latest, laxbytes.com, rates each player’s impact throughout the season.

Larry has furthered his love of the game through a long-standing relationship with US Lacrosse. “Larry is a terrific friend to US Lacrosse. He embraces his role as a partner in helping to grow the game, always with an eye on positively impacting our sport,” said Susie Chase, Vice President, Philanthropy and Partnerships. “He is thoughtful about his investments in our mission. He recognized that planned giving was a tool that would allow him to make an impactful gift to The National Campaign for Lacrosse during his lifetime.”

“We were honored when Larry chose to establish a CRUT (Charitable Remainder Unitrust),” commented US Lacrosse CEO, Steve Stenersen. “Larry has been a leader on so many fronts in the world of lacrosse, and his thoughtful investing with us is another example of his leadership.”

“It was my way of helping US Lacrosse while also helping myself,” said Dr. Feldman. “Through the CRUT, I have established an income stream for life and can provide for US Lacrosse at the same time. It was a win for me and the sport I love.

We couldn’t agree more. Should you have interest or questions about making a planned gift, please call the US Lacrosse Foundation, (410) 235-6882 ext. #124.
To make a secure gift today, go to uslacrosse.org/donate.