

Season Preparations for the High School Player and Coach

By Joe Seivold

All over the lacrosse-playing country, at this glorious time of year, enthusiasts turn their thoughts in earnest to the upcoming season. Though February will bring its fair share of cold and wet, its arrival signals to all lovers of the game that spring is almost here. However, the best players and coaches at the high school level will have been focused on what is to come well before Feb 1. In fact, pre-season approach on the part of both players and coaches will in large part measure how well the season goes, long before it starts.

Pre-season preparations for high school players should focus on three things: conditioning, strength training, and stick skills. Let's take a look at some ways to gain ground on the competition in each of these areas, long before the first whistle blows.

Conditioning

Building a solid cardio-vascular fitness base is essential for success in season.

Coaches hate using inordinate amounts of practice "conditioning" their squads, so coming to the first day of practice in shape is key. It will also allow

the coach to focus on tactics and strategy, and the team will be better as a result. Players should start by building a good base through distance running eight weeks before the start of practice. Runs of two or more miles four times per week will build such a base. The goal should be to be able to run two miles in under 12 minutes and 30 seconds three weeks before the season begins.

After building a good foundation, conditioning should shift to the field.

After all, lacrosse is not played on pavement! Players should run series of sprints four times per week in the last three weeks pre-season, concentrating on 100, 80 and 60 yard sprints. Bursting off the line with power and quickness, getting to full speed quickly, and flying downfield are the goals. Hard work is how one gets there.

Strength Training

A good off-season weight program is vital to in season success. Players who lift regularly and with seriousness will be more durable, have harder shots, and be better dodgers and defenders than their non-lifting counterparts. Lifts should target the arms, chest, legs and back. Three sets of 10 reps at the maximum weight that the player can lift that many times is advisable. The key here is regular participation, and slowly increasing the amount of weight.

Stick Skills

All the conditioning in the world won't get a player on the field if that player can't pass and catch. Working hard on one's stick skills is vital in the pre-season. A ball, a wall, and a stick are all one needs. Ten minutes righty, ten minutes lefty per day is all it takes to get the rust off and get to the next level. Also, shoot the ball. When shooting, shoot on the run. Make sure you have lots of balls, and put the goal against something solid, so missing becomes no big deal. Nothing inhibits a shooter more than fear of having to chase a miss. But again, this stickwork can't be done sporadically and be effective; players have got to be consistent in their pre-season preparations.

Coaches have a ton to do pre season (I'm getting depressed about how behind I am just writing this!) A partial list includes:

- 1) Make sure the equipment is in order and ready for distribution.
- 2) Order needed equipment.
- 3) Go to the US Lacrosse coaches' convention.
- 4) Sketch out a calendar of all practices up until the first game. Make sure you carve out ample time in these plans to teach all that goes into lining up for the first time.
- 5) Get with assistant coaches to confirm philosophy of approach and ensure consistency of presentation.
- 6) Meet with seniors/captains to discuss goals and expectations for the coming season.
- 7) Meet with JV and ms coaches to discuss implementation of 'whole program' philosophy.
- 8) Decide on the offensive, defensive, riding and clearing schemes to be taught in the early part of the season.

And so on. Most importantly, coaches should get themselves in an excited, upbeat frame of mind, so that they come into the season ready to transmit the beauty and intensity of lacrosse to a group of eager players. Good luck to all!