

# Lacrosse,

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BY DAN. WHITE.

Lacrosse, which has for very many years been the established national game of the Dominion of Canada, was originated by the wild Red Indian of that country. Though the game, as now played, under up-to-date rules and regulations, and with modern implements, is scarcely recognisable with the contests amongst the North American natives of the early days, it is nevertheless a fact that the ideas from which this magnificent game has been built up were obtained from the Red Indian. Lacrosse contests (then described by characteristic native names) were frequently the forerunner of bitter and bloodthirsty encounters between hostile tribes, whilst, under the pretence of friendship, entertaining the soldiers with exhibitions of their dexterous feats at this fascinating pastime, some of the most treacherous attacks were made upon the garrisons of the British at the time when Canada was first taken over by England. The white settlers in Canada were quick to discover in this crude form of amusement of their uneducated brethren, the rudiments of a very fine outdoor pastime, and the game as now played is, perhaps, the prettiest and most scientific and certainly is one of the best of all field sports.

Each player is equipped with a crosse, otherwise a hickory stick about 4 ft. long, with a crook at one end, and netted somewhat after the fashion of a tennis racquet from the crooked end for about two-thirds of its length. There are twelve players on each side, who are allotted positions on defence, centre, attacks, &c., much the same as the backs, forwards, &c., of the football field. The playing arena is exactly the same as that for football. The object, as in football, is to score goals, and this is done by throwing the ball between posts which stand only 6 ft. high and 6 ft. apart. The ball used is only a small India-rubber one, and to facilitate the duties of the goal umpires in deciding when a goal has been thrown, a net is used in connection with the goal posts, and is so fastened that when the ball is thrown between the uprights it is safely held in the goal net. To be a good lacrosse player one has, first and foremost, to be a good athlete; stamina, speed, and ready action are the first essentials, and these are of little avail unless combined with sound judgment and a clever handling of the crosse. The latter is more or less natural to some players, but constant practice will work wonders upon the least skillful. At lacrosse the ball must not be kicked nor handled; picking up, catching, throwing, in fact everything, must be done with the crosse.

To watch the grace and ease with which the experienced player picks up the ball, catches or throws it, one is apt to consider the use of the crosse a very simple matter indeed. This is not so, however, even the picking up of the ball when the player is running is an art. Catching and throwing are extremely difficult; whilst the ball is allowed to bounce from the crosse of the novice catcher, the expert, with a simple twist of the wrist, has complete control of the rubber immediately it touches the netting. With but little practice, the average player can throw a ball, but to send it in the desired direction, and to the exact distance intended, is one of the arts acquired, only by studious practice. A champion lacrosse team requires not only expert individuals, but a perfect system of combined action must prevail amongst the whole of the players. The long throw of the early days, by which the ball could be transferred from one end of the field to the other, has of late years been discarded for the smart interchanges from man to man at short range; whereas the long thrower may just as readily place an opponent in possession of the ball as one of his comrades, the short distance exchanges keep the play amongst your own men, and one recognised authority on the game has well said: "If you can keep the ball amongst your own players, even if you are not scoring, the other chaps are not being allowed to do much."

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