

Lacrosse.

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 out-door 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 indiarubber 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 skilful. 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."

The Game in Victoria.

Lacrosse was first introduced to Victoria as far back as 1876, when Mr. L. L. Mount brought some crosses to this country from Canada. His first students were Mr. Amos Norcott (now hon. secretary of the Melbourne Football Club) and Mr. George Beech, who still takes keen interest in the progress of the game. A Melbourne Lacrosse Club was speedily formed, and the first contests were between teams designated the "reds" and the "blues" of that club. Other clubs gradually came into existence, an association was established, and in the early eighties the game had a good hold upon this community. Ballarat and Bendigo had their teams, and country trips took their place in due course. One fatal blunder was made by the players of those days. They were content to play their games on the open park lands around Melbourne, instead of securing their proper place on the leading enclosed grounds, and in a few years public interest and support had almost wholly disappeared. Mr. Beech's business took him to Sydney for a few years, from about 1881 to 1884, and in that time he was successful in getting the game well under way in the mother State, whilst a trip to Adelaide of the South Melbourne Club, organised by the Gordon brothers, helped to place the game on a good footing in South Australia about 1885.

A South Australian team came to Melbourne in 1888, and were defeated by 5 goals to 1, but they turned the tables on the representatives from this State when the visit was returned in 1889. Whilst rapid strides were being made in South Australia, the game, for want of proper management and support, was fast declining in Victoria, and though several good players undertook the journey, the team had to be completed with some absolute novices. The result was—South Australia, 9 goals; Victoria, 2 goals. For a few years from this date lacrosse almost fizzled out in Victoria, but

the visit of a South Australian team in 1892 gave a new flip to the game, and though the visitors again won by 6 goals to 3, the seed was sown for the upshooting of a new generation of lacrosse players in Melbourne.

From a mere handful of enthusiasts, the association rapidly assumed fair dimensions again; numerous clubs were formed, and in August, 1896, sixteen or seventeen players entrained for South Australia to try conclusions with what were then by far the most expert wielders of the hickory that Australia had yet produced. The little band of pilgrims were unmindful of the "drubbing" which they knew to be in store for them. Their object was the establishment, if possible, of regular inter-State contests. South Australia won easily by 13 goals to 0, but what of that? A return visit from the representatives of the City of Churches in 1897 was assured. During the same year (1896) a successful effort had been made to get the game established in the Melbourne Cricket Club, the father of all sport in this State, and the throwing open of that magnificent playing area to exponents of the Canadian game soon led to other cricket clubs seeking lacrosse patronage for their ovals.

Melbourne was the centre of a great Australian lacrosse rally in 1897. Not only did the South Australians pay us the promised visit, but a team of New South Welshmen were induced to come to this city at the same time, and matches between the three States were played, besides others between the visitors and local club teams. These contests once more proved the supremacy of the South Australians, who won all their matches, whilst the New South Wales players failed to even hold their own with a local club. As it was quite out of the question for Victoria to send a team to each adjoining State in the following year, it was agreed, with a view to the continuity of these encounters, that South Australia should again visit Melbourne in 1898, and that Victoria should send a team to Sydney. In this year Victoria supplanted South Australia as premier State by defeating the Adelaide representatives—9 goals to 5—and the New South Welshmen—16 goals to 0. Alternately since then Victoria has visited one adjoining State and received a visit from the other, whilst in 1901 the New South Wales players visited both Victoria and South Australia, and in 1902 the representatives of the latter State played matches in both Melbourne and Sydney.

Since 1898 South Australia has maintained superiority over Victoria, though games are now very evenly contested, and New South Wales has still to score the maiden victory against the other States.

Prior to 1892 no accurate records appear to have been kept of Victorian premiership contests, though it is safe to say that the South Melbourne, Collingwood, and University Clubs were amongst the strongest of the eighties. The first-named possessed some excellent exponents in the brothers Gordon (4), Henderson, Low, Knight, and others. Collingwood's best players were the Batchelors (3), Davines (2), Cole, Cattach, Furneaux, and Smith. University's strength lay with the Murrays, Goldsmith, M'Harg, Vance, and others.

In 1892, after tying with Collingwood, Caulfield won the premiership, and succeeded in keeping at the top of the tree in 1893 and 1894. One has only to run over the names of Evans, Tisdall, Brady, Handfield, Sayers, and the Murrays, who were all in their prime with that club to understand its succession of triumphs.

In 1895 University, ably captained by M. Richardson, and comprising a rare set of young athletes such as Wingrove (2), Abbott, M'Leod, Holmes, Rudd, and Ryan, carried the honours of the "Shop," as the students style their headquarters. Essendon, who were only one point behind, possessed the then champion goalkeeper, L. Search, some expert goal-throwers in the M'Call Brothers and Moulton, and excellent players in other parts of the field such as George, Vial, Francis, Fison, Gilchrist, and Potts.

That the cream of talent such as this should sooner or later rise to the top was only to be expected, and in 1896 Essendon, with only one drawn game to mar a perfect record, was hailed the premier team. This was M.C.C.'s first season, and the club supporters were justly proud of securing second place. The backbone of the new club was undoubtedly O. Murray, T. Handfield, and D. White, who had played prominent parts for other teams prior to undertaking the establishment of the game amongst the young cricketers. Amongst the beginners were two who were destined to take prominent part for the States' honour in later years, namely, E. R. Jacobs and S. M. Simson.

In 1897, owing to some trouble with the Adelaide Medical School, the University Club was fortunate in securing the services of several South Australian medical students, who were already amongst the first flight of Adelaide lacrosse players, the best of them being E. Wilson, H. Russell, F. Douglas, A. Evans, and A. Chapple. These players, together with Wingrove, Rudd, Wettenhall, House and company, formed a very powerful side, and premiership honours floated back to the University, with M.C.C. again "runners-up."

In 1898 the Melbourne Cricket Club representatives improved upon their previous efforts by placing themselves at the top of the list, thus in the first three years of the introduction of the game to the club, they had twice been second, and premiers on the third occasion. M.C.C.'s principal exponents at this period were White, Murray (4), Handfield (2), Jacobs, Sholl, and Simson. University were the runners-up on this occasion, with Hawthorn third, Pyke, Bainbridge, Walsh, Tate, Goss, Fryer, Batchelor, Bryning, Richards, and Hoskyns being the leading players of the latter team.

In 1899 University had lost the services of Wilson, Russell, Douglas, Evans, and Rudd, but had gained F. Bonnin, T. Drew, and one or two lesser lights from South Australia, and had also unearthed such gems as B. Sutherland and C. Williams. They reversed positions with M.C.C. on this occasion, and St. Kilda secured third position.

In 1900 University placed in the field one of the finest teams that has ever represented any club throughout the Commonwealth, and went through the season without losing a solitary point. Let me recall the names of that famous side:—A. House (goal), F. Bonnin (point), C. Williams (cover point), B. Sutherland (third man), H. Sutton and J. Morris (defence wings), A. Wettenhall (centre), T. Drew and B. J. Dunn (attack wings), R. Wingrove (left home), H. Formby (right home), and W. Waters (home). The students not only possessed quality, but also quantity, and in 1901 they decided to run two premiership teams, to be called "University" and "Collegians." The strong position held by the club can be understood by the fact that the Collegians secured second place to M.C.C., who were again on top in that season. Only D. White, B. Murray, R. Sholl, and C. R. Handfield, of the 1898 premier team, were still playing for the cricket club, but the inclusion of such experts as Pyke, Walsh, Bainbridge, Joynt, and Moulton made up for the severe losses sustained in other directions. St. Kilda were runners-up for the third time in succession, and early in the competition seemed to have a "mortgage" over first place, but failed badly towards the close of the season. Delves, M'Donell, Bower, Cox, Henley, Goss, Fryer, Low, and others made up an undeniably powerful team.

The Season of 1902.

1902 (last season) was one of the most interesting in the history of the game in this State. Eight clubs took part in the competition, namely, M.C.C., University, St. Kilda, Essendon, Collingwood, Auburn, Kew, and Collegians. The games between the four first-mentioned clubs were very keenly contested and at the completion of the official programme of matches, M.C.C. and University had tied for first place. A play-off match was arranged, and the cricket club representatives secured the honours, after a magnificent contest, by 6 goals to 5. As showing how evenly these teams were matched, the first game between them ended in a victory for M.C.C. by 5 goals to 4, and the second in a drawn game—4 goals apiece. University lost no points to any other club, but M.C.C. were defeated by St. Kilda—3 goals to 2—hence their having to play a "conqueror" with the students. St. Kilda finished third for the fourth season in succession, and Essendon were placed fourth. This club, which now possesses none of the 1896 premier team, must soon find its way to the top again. Some of Victoria's very best talent, to wit, A. Rudd, G. Gay, Jno. Devine, Jas. Devine, N. Fryer, and F. Dunn are to be found in their ranks.

Since 1896 "B" Section, or junior premierships competitions, have taken place regularly in this State, and the teams engaged have proved invaluable recruiting schools for the senior clubs. The struggle for supremacy amongst the junior teams is quite as keen as that amongst the seniors, and the top team has usually to earn its place. As will be seen from the appended premierships records, the honour has on two occasions only been secured in a play-off after two teams had tied for first place.

The following are the positions of the clubs for the season:—

A SECTION.				Won.	Lost.	Drawn.	Possible.	Sec ed.	%
M.C.C.	...	...	...	13	1	1	30	27	90
University	...	...	...	12	2	1	30	25	83
St. Kilda	...	...	...	9	4	1	28	19	68
Essendon	...	...	...	7	7	—	28	14	50
Auburn	...	...	...	5	9	—	28	10	35
Collingwood	...	...	...	3	10	1	28	7	25
Kew	...	...	...	3	10	1	28	7	25
Collegians	...	...	...	2	11	1	28	5	18
B SECTION.									
Williamstown	...	...	...	17	—	1	36	35	97
Essendon B	...	...	...	16	1	1	36	33	92
M.C.C.	...	...	...	13	5	—	36	26	72
Elsternwick 1st	...	...	...	11	7	—	36	22	61
Auburn	...	...	...	7	10	1	36	15	42
Essendon C	...	...	...	7	11	—	36	14	40
Elsternwick 2nd	...	...	...	6	11	1	36	13	36
St. Kilda	...	...	...	4	11	3	36	11	30
University	...	...	...	4	13	1	36	9	25

PREMIERSHIP RECORD.

A SECTION.				First.	Second.	Third.
1892	...	Caulfield...	...	Collingwood	...	Essendon
1893	...	Caulfield...	...	Collingwood	...	University
1894	...	Caulfield...	...	Essendon	...	Collingwood
1895	...	University	...	Essendon	...	South Melbourne
1896	...	Essendon	...	M.C.C.	...	South Melbourne
1897	...	University	...	M.C.C.	...	Hawthorn
1898	...	M.C.C.	...	University	...	Hawthorn
1899	...	University	...	M.C.C.	...	St. Kilda
1900	...	University	...	Essendon	...	St. Kilda
1901	...	M.C.C.	...	Collegians	...	St. Kilda
1902	...	†M.C.C.	...	†University	...	St. Kilda

B SECTION.

		First.		Second.		Third.
1896	...	Flemington	...	*Auburn	...	*Brighton
1897	...	M.C.C.	...	Moonee Ponds	...	University
1898	...	St. Kilda	...	{ *Kew *Auburn		
1899	...	†Collegians	...	†St. Kilda	...	Auburn
1900	...	†Kew	...	†St. Kilda	...	Brighton
1901	...	Auburn	...	Kew	...	Elsternwick
1902	...	Williamstown	...	Essendon B	...	M.C.C.

† Tie, won on a "play off." * Tie for second place.

Inter-State Matches, 1902.

The inter-State matches have been briefly dealt with above, but a few additional particulars may here be given regarding last year's contests. The South Australians played and defeated Victoria on the Melbourne Cricket Ground by 8 goals to 5. This match was one of the most evenly contested that has taken place between these two States. Splendid lacrosse was shown by both sides; the general play was very even, but our visitors were a little more effective in their goal-throwing; and, whilst giving Delves every credit for some excellent goal-keeping, one cannot help expressing the opinion that the winning side had an advantage with Julien Ayers as custodian of the goal net. L. Humphris was in rare form, scoring no fewer than 5 of the 8 goals, though in the usually very safe hands of Frank Bonnin, the Victorian skipper. Kell and Newland also did a tower of work forward; and Stuckey, Hughes, Jones, and Fletcher played magnificently on defence. For Victoria, M'Donell, Sutherland, and Joynt, of the defenders, and Murray and Wingrove, on the forward lines, were the most prominent players. The goal throwers were L. Humphris (3), P. Newland (2), and T. Ward (1), for South Australia; and B. Murray (2), Wingrove (1), Farneaux (1), and Gay (1), for Victoria.

The South Australians and Victorians journeyed to Sydney together, where three more inter-State contests took place, viz., South Australia v. New South Wales, South Australia v. Victoria, and New South Wales v. Victoria. In the first of this series of matches the New South Wales players became thoroughly disorganised, and the South Australian team amassed a total score of 26 goals to nil. Comment upon such a one-sided show is scarcely necessary. For a greater part of the match the Adelaide boys were attacking, consequently the brothers Newland (2), Kell, Fletcher, Humphris, and Ward were the shining lights during the afternoon.

The match between South Australia and Victoria was even closer than that played in Melbourne, our representatives again suffering defeat, though on this occasion by only 7 goals to 5. At one state of the game the Victorians led by 3 goals to 1, but during the last twelve minutes before the half-time interval the South Australians put forth a paralysing effort, and added no fewer than 5 goals, three of which were obtained by Humphris within the space of five minutes. On resuming, the Victorians gamely tackled the tough job now in front of them, and quite held their own, if, indeed, they had not a little to spare. They were scarcely equal to the task, however, and left the field beaten, though fully assured by the plaudits of the crowd that they had creditably acquitted themselves. This was the best exhibition of Canada's

national game ever witnessed by the Sydney public, and the game is likely to benefit considerably in the mother State as a consequence. Humphris (3), Ward (2), Newland (1), and Fletcher (1) were the goal-throwers for South Australia; and Moulton (2), Henley (1), Dunn (1), and Davine (1) scored for Victoria. Walsh, who played below form in the Melbourne match, had charge of Phil. Newland on this occasion, and quite redeemed his previous failure. Delves, Wettenhall, and Bower also played well for Victoria.

New South Wales showed up to much greater advantage against the Victorians than in the match with South Australia, and only lost by 9 goals to 5, after a splendid game. Much had been learned from the match between their great rivals in the matter of team play, and the forward players profited accordingly. That total disorganisation which characterised their game with South Australia was entirely absent, and the Victorians, who took the field confident of a runaway victory, received a rude awakening when they found their opponents picking out the right man, and playing together with telling effect.

The players who represented Victoria in the match against South Australia on the Melbourne Cricket Ground were F. Delves (St. Kilda), goal; T. M'Donnell (St. Kilda), point; F. Bonnin (University), cover point; B. Sutherland (University), third man; W. Walsh (M.C.C.), left defence; W. Joynt (M.C.C.), right defence; D. White (M.C.C.), centre; F. Dunn (Essendon), left attack; W. Furneaux (St. Kilda), right attack; R. Wingrove (University), left home; B. Murray (M.C.C.), right home; G. Gay (Essendon), home. Of these only Delves, Bonnin, Walsh, Joynt, Dunn, and Furneaux could get away to Sydney, and other places were filled by Rudd (Essendon), Wettenhall (University), Bower, Henley, and James (St. Kilda), Pyke and Moulton (M.C.C.), and Davine (Collingwood). Out of all the players mentioned, only three took part in the 1896 match, which led to the establishment of annual inter-State contests. These are:—R. Wingrove, W. Walsh, and D. White. Strangely enough, three only of the South Australian team of that year were participants in last year's matches, namely, P. Newland, J. Ayers, and F. Kell. Newland (South Australia) and White (Victoria) are the only two who have played in these matches every year from 1896 to date.

RECORD OF INTER-STATE MATCHES.

VICTORIA V. SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

VICTORIA V. NEW SOUTH WALES.

Won by			Year.	Won by.		
Victoria	...	5 goals to 1	1888			
South Australia	...	9 " " 2	1889			
South Australia	...	6 " " 3	1892			
South Australia	...	13 " " 0	1896			
South Australia	...	8 " " 1	1897	Victoria	...	17 goals to 0
Victoria	...	9 " " 5	1898	Victoria	...	16 " " "
South Australia	...	10 " " 3	1899	Victoria	...	10 " " 3
South Australia	...	8 " " 3	1900	Victoria	...	12 " " 2
South Australia	...	9 " " 5	1901	Victoria	...	16 " " 3
South Australia	...	8 " " 5	1902	Victoria	...	9 " " 5
South Australia	...	7 " " 5	1902			
Totals—				Totals—		
South Australia	9 wins			Victoria	...	6 wins
Victoria	...	2 " "		New South Wales	0 " "	