

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
MEN'S FIELD LACROSSE, WOMEN'S FIELD LACROSSE
CANADA EAST, CANADA WEST



INTRODUCTION:

With lacrosse being included in the 2028 Olympics, it has experienced remarkable growth. As its popularity surges, it has become increasingly imperative to foster a structured pathway for talent development and national representation for our young, up and coming athletes.

During the imperative years of development, lacrosse should have the opportunity to focus on excellence and high effort. By establishing a cohesive network of eastern and western training programs and talent scouting initiatives, we aim to cast a wide net in search of the most promising young athletes, ensuring inclusivity and diversity within our program. Lacrosse Canada aims to enrich the athlete experience, focusing on the importance of building camaraderie amongst the players stretched across multiple provinces, supporting their aspirations, and instilling the pride that comes with wearing and representing the Maple Leaf.

By investing in the development of our future generation of lacrosse players, we take steps forward in securing a future of success within Lacrosse Canada.

Therefore, Lacrosse Canada is beginning a National Development Program (NDP) for both for men and women at the U19/U17/U15 levels across the country representing Canada East and Canada West in the late summer/fall of 2024. Information on tryouts and events will be released shortly.

PURPOSE:

The National Development Program (NDP) has the ultimate goal to produce skilled, well-rounded athletes capable of competing at the highest levels of the sport while also fostering personal growth, character development, and a lifelong passion for lacrosse.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Development of Officials/Coaching Pools/Mentoring

- a. Education and Training- develop comprehensive training programs, covering rules, techniques, safety protocols, game management strategies
 - i. Offer workshops, seminars, online resources to remain up-to-date
- b. Mentorship Program- Invite experienced officials and coaches who can guide and support provincial high-performance personnel
 - i. Pair International level officials and coaches with Provincial and local-level officials and coaches to improve skill and navigate challenges
 - ii. This unique opportunity will expose coaches to both international and NCAA coaching experiences as well as providing these coaches new knowledge to share with their home member association coaches
- c. Resource Library- create and contribute to a centralized online location to provide consistent education amongst officials and coaches, further contributing to a network of cohesiveness across Eastern and Western Canada
- d. Partnerships and Collaboration
 - i. We can create more exposure and develop long lasting relationships amongst different levels of staff (i.e. community, collegiate, professional, national)

2. Talent Identification and Development:

- a. Identifying promising athletes- U15, U17 and U19 ages- with the goal of providing them with specialized training and development opportunities to reach their full potential as elite lacrosse players
- b. Starting at the U15 level allows us to begin training and teaching systems for those athletes that would be part of the next World Championships (the two ways)

3. Skill Development:

- a. Focus on improving and maintaining technical skills through structured training sessions tailored to elite-level performance
- b. Allow for high level positional training: faceoffs, goalies and defense

4. Tactical and Strategic Development:

- a. Teach advanced lacrosse concepts, game strategies, offensive and defensive formations, situational awareness, and decision-making skills, contributing to the development of an exceptional lacrosse IQ at the elite level
- b. Optimize positional and sport specific skills to improve as a lacrosse player in a competitive setting

5. Physical Conditioning:

- a. Implement strength and conditioning programs designed to enhance players' overall athleticism, ensuring they are physically prepared for the demands of elite-level competition

6. Mental Preparation:

- a. Nurture and support the athlete's mental health; develop a safe and supportive network to support and understand both the internal and external challenges, obstacles, etc. that athletes may experience
- b. Provide mental skills training to help players develop resilience, focus, confidence, composure, and effective goal-setting techniques, enabling the athletes to perform their best under pressure
 - i. Provide guidance on developing these skills for life long use both on the field and off the field

7. Character Development:

- a. Emphasize the importance of instilling values that contribute to personal growth and positive contributions in society (sportsmanship, teamwork, leadership, integrity, and respect both on and off the field)

8. Injury prevention and Recovery:

- a. Educate athletes on injury prevention protocols to minimize the risk of injuries and support players' overall health and well-being throughout their athletic development
- b. Access to Lacrosse Canada medical staff, doctors, surgeons and therapists

9. Competition Exposure:

- a. Provide scheduled opportunities to compete against elite competition, allowing the athletes to gain valuable experience and exposure to high level competition
- b. This will provide experiences and opportunities on the international stage before reaching the U20 and Senior Team Canada levels of competition at World Championships

10. College Recruitment Support:

- a. Provide assistance/guidance to players navigating the college recruitment process- academic requirements, athletic scholarships, NCAA eligibility, recruitment timelines, and showcasing opportunities
- b. Exposure to National Team coaches who come from the NCAA and Pro levels

11. Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD):

- a. Establish a clear and structured program curriculum, ensuring the NDP incorporates continuity as well as opportunities for gradual advancement

PLAYER RECRUITMENT:

Recruiting players for the NDP requires a strategic approach to attract talented athletes who have the potential to excel at the elite level. Approaching the recruitment processes through different avenues will help to ensure that athletes aren't missed in the identification process. Recruitment will contribute to the program's overall success, allowing it to develop a reputation of excellence and prestige. Implementing recruitment strategies will allow the NDP the opportunity to recruit elite, top-tier athletes who will build competitive rosters to represent both Eastern and Western Canada at international competitions.

1. Talent Identification Events:

- a. Organize tryouts, combines, or talent identification camps. Advertise these events through local clubs, leagues, schools, social media, and community outreach to attract talented athletes from diverse backgrounds

2. Scouting Networks:

- a. Establish a network of scouts (Provincial High-Performance coaches, talent evaluators, etc.) who can identify athletes through local leagues, tournaments, etc.

3. National Team Coaches, NCAA Coaches

- a. Utilize the current National Team Coaches and their connections with NCAA recruiting personnel to increase exposure of the athletes
- b. Appoint a National Team Coach to mentor West and East Head Coaches
 - i. Creates cohesive coaching techniques; creates pathway for Head Coaches to develop and meet National Team Standards; Increases overall Coaching Pool and quality of coaching nationwide

4. Player Referrals:

- a. Encourage current players, coaches, and alumni of the current programs to refer talented athletes they believe have the potential to succeed in the NDP

5. Digital Marketing and Social Media:

- a. Utilize digital marketing strategies- targeted online advertisements, email campaigns, social media promotions- to reach potential players and their families
- b. Create engaging content, highlight success stories, showcase program's unique selling points to generate interest and engagement
- c. Provide opportunities for companies to engage in sponsorship

6. Community Effect:

- a. The NDP will hopefully generate interest at the grassroots level, therefore growing the game and increasing overall participation numbers
- b. Build relationships with youth lacrosse organizations, recreational leagues and promote lacrosse within communities
- c. Create Regional Events/Invitational style to bring USA/International based teams to Canada

7. Alumni Involvement:

- a. Utilize support from current and former Canada alumni, NCAA alumni
 - i. influence and inspire the younger athletes with alumni achievements and success.
 - ii. Encourage mentorship of alumni to younger athletes in the program, become ambassadors for the program
- b. Reinforce the program's goal/objective of striving for excellence in reputation

CONCLUSION:

National Team Athlete Development Programs exist in many different sporting organizations such as Rugby Canada, USA Hockey and have shown great success in the development of elite athletes for future international competitions. By adopting this initiative, Lacrosse Canada can develop athletes in the U15, U17, and U19 age groups, further preparing them for future international events. The fall training offered through the National Development Program will teach athletes the expectations and overall culture of Lacrosse Canada. 2028 is going to be an explosive year for lacrosse and by being proactive and developing our athletes through a National Development Program, we can prepare both the East and the West coast athletes for elite-level competition, therefore spearheading a cohesive training push towards closing the gap between Lacrosse Canada and the overall lead internationally.

