

# **A HISTORY OF THE LAWS OF MEN'S LACROSSE IN AUSTRALIA**

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## **THE INTRODUCTION OF LAW AND ORDER!**

Rules are defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as “Principle to which action or procedure conforms or is bound or intended to conform, dominant custom, canon, test, standard, normal state of things”. Our society is governed by rules or laws in everything we do in our society. Rules or laws cover us from birth to death, from our education to work, and for socializing and the playing of sport.

What rules did our North American native forebears have? Were they in writing or were they passed from generation to generation? The native game was random, fluid and wide open when it came to rules and playing fields. Lacrosse as it was first played was more about culture and spiritual pastime rather than structure, perhaps it is more about why they played rather than how they played.

In the earliest times of American Indian lacrosse, the game appears to have had few rules, if any. Lacrosse was played to “amuse” the creator, to train young men for war, and to settle disputes between tribes. Lacrosse games could last for days, stopping at sunset and starting again the next day at sunrise. The fields had no boundaries, and goals were usually 500 yards to half a mile apart, though sometimes they were several miles apart. The goals were usually marked by a single tree or a large rock, and points were scored by hitting it with the ball. There were no limitations on the number of players in a team, and often there could be as many as 1,000 players in a lacrosse game at the same time.

So how did the original lacrosse players settle disputes or agree on the fundamentals of how the match was to be played? This must have been an issue given that nations often used completely different types of crosse.



In 1869 W.G. Beers published a book on the game of lacrosse and how it was to be played, and included the laws of lacrosse in Canada in 1867, as revised and updated in 1868. The National Amateur Lacrosse Association of Canada was formed in 1867.

In the preface to the book he wrote "Until the appearance of my brochure, published in 1860, there had never been any attempt to reduce the game to rule. I feel in duty bound to own to the parentage, while apologizing for the publication of the little book referred to, which was issued, without any revision, during my absence from the city. Notwithstanding the fact that it was extensively plagiarized, I trust it will be regarded, by any who had the misfortune to buy it, as one of those productions of youth, which, in maturity, we would fain disown." Thus it would appear that the first laws or rules of lacrosse were published in Canada in 1860 by W. G. Beers in what he refers to as his "brochure".

Beers went on to write "The difficulty of writing about Lacrosse was then, as it is now, that there had never been anything practical written on the subject."

The laws of lacrosse that appear as the Appendix to the book are

## **LAWS OF LACROSSE**

**Revised & Adopted September 25 & 26<sup>th</sup>, 1868, by the National Lacrosse Association of Canada.**

What is most interesting about this rule book, which we have a copy of, is the structure of the rules, which were as follows:-

Rule I – The crosse

Rule II – The ball – must be 8-9 inches in circumference, but weight is not mentioned, nor is bounce.

Rule III – The goals – the goals may be placed at any distance from each other, and are to be 6' high, including an "ornamental bar" (Top bar) and 6' apart. It would appear that netting was not used initially and the goals were not enclosed.

Rule IV – The goal crease – there shall be a goal crease drawn in front of each goal, 6' from the flag-poles, within which no opponent must stand unless the ball has passed cover point. What is the intention of this rule?

Rule V – Umpires – it would appear that umpires are also goal umpires, and given there wasn't any netting or cage, they were essential to adjudicate on scoring. One umpire was required from each team for each goal, who must stand behind the flags. Before a match begins they must draw the players up in a line and see that the regulations regarding the crosse, spiked soles, etc are complied with. "They must know before the commencement of a match, the number of games to be played". From this we understand what a match is, but it would appear that a "game" is the scoring of a goal. Thus if the match is to be 5 games, it will be first team to throw 3 goals is the winner, but in any event the game would continue until the fifth goal is scored. Umpires also had the authority to suspend players from the match.

Here is an interesting rule that has some relevance in 2017 – "No umpire shall, directly or indirectly, be interested in any bet upon the result of the match. No person shall be allowed to speak to the umpires, or in any way distract their attention, when the ball is near or nearing the goal." It's a pity this rule wasn't retained in modern day Australian lacrosse!

When a foul has been called the umpires must leave their posts and call "Time", and from that time the ball may not be touched by any player, nor can any player move from that position, until such time as an umpire calls "Play".

It would appear that the umpires effectively conducted the match and the referee was merely there to settle disputes where umpires do not agree.

Rule VI – Referee – the referee must be on the ground at the commencement and during the match, but must not be between the two goals during the match. The umpires shall appoint a referee to whom all disputed games and points, whereupon they are a tie. He shall take the evidence of the players particularly interested and the respective opinions of the disputing umpires and if necessary the opinions and offers of the

captains. His decision shall be final, and any side rejecting his decision by refusing to continue a match shall be declared the losers.

Rule VII – Captains – captains, to superintend the play, may be appointed by each team prior to the commencement of a match. They may or may not be players in a match, if not playing they must not carry a crosse nor wear a uniform. They shall select umpires, toss up for choice of goal and they shall report any infringement of the laws during a match to the nearest umpire.

Clearly umpires, referees and captains have completely different roles in 2017 to what they had 140 years ago.

Rule VIII – Names of players

Rule IX – Miscellaneous

- 12 players shall constitute a full team
- A match shall be decided by winning 3 games out of 5. The meaning of game meaning goal it would appear.
- Each team may claim a rest of 5-10 minutes after each game
- No Indian shall play in a match for a white club unless previously agreed upon – what is the purpose of this rule?

Two reasons: The first reason is simply racial prejudice of the day and many whites back then looked down on the native population, so social relations were kept apart – perhaps no different to the situation that was happening in Australia and South Africa with the white communities. Secondly, native players often were seen as adding an ‘advantage’ as it was sometimes believed (rightly and wrongly) the native players had some sort of natural, inherent bred advantage due to their race and their race’s heritage links to the origins of the sport.

- After each game (Goal) each team must change sides or ends

Rule X – Spiked soles – no player may wear spiked soles? Are we to assume this means running spikes or boots with studs?

Rule XI – Touching ball with hand

Rule XII – Goalkeeper

Rule XIII – Ball in an inaccessible place

Rules XIV – Ball out of bounds – the laws do not appear to define the length and width of the field, but if a ball is out of bounds or inaccessible it must be faced off by two opposing players.

Rule XV – Throwing the crosse – no player shall throw his crosse at a player or the ball under any circumstances.

Rules XVI – Accidental games – should the defending team accidentally put the ball through the goal it is a game for the attacking team.

Rule XVII – Ball catching in netting – should a ball be caught up in the crosse, the crosse must immediately be struck on the ground to dislodge the ball.

Rule XVIII – Rough play – seems to include what today we would call personal and technical fouls eg holding an opponent's crosse in his hands, under his arm or between his legs; striking, pushing, holding off, jumping at to shoulder an opponent, etc. No penalties or suspensions are prescribed for such indiscretions.

Rule XIX – Threatening to strike – any player raising his fists to strike another shall immediately be ruled out of the match.

Rule XX – Foul play – any player considering himself purposely injured during play, must report to his captain, who must report to the umpires, who shall warn the player complained of. If fouling is persistent the umpires can award the match to the offended team or require the offending team to suspend the offending player and compel that team to play the remainder of the match short-handed.

Rule XXI – Interrupted matches

Rule XXII – Amendments – any amendment or alteration of the laws shall be made only at the annual conference of the National Association, and by a three-fourths vote of the members present.

The laws of lacrosse as published in the book of W. G. Beers in 1867 was 6 pages only.

## **THE FIRST LAWS OF LACROSSE IN AUSTRALIA**

The earliest written or published rules or laws of lacrosse that we have found in Australia are the Laws of Lacrosse of the Montreal Lacrosse Club 1883 which were adopted at the reorganization of the National Amateur Lacrosse Association of Canada at Toronto on 4 May 1876, and amended in Montreal on 3 August 1877, Toronto 7 June 1878, Montreal 6 June 1879, Toronto 4 June 1880, Montreal 3 June 1881, Toronto 3 June 1882 and Montreal 13 April 1883.

The laws of lacrosse of 1883 were only 32 pages and included the following additional clauses to the 1867 laws of lacrosse:-

Rule XX – Deliberate charging - no player shall charge into another player after he has thrown the ball

Rule XXI – Crosse check – this is a new rule, which one would think would have been there from the outset.

Rule XXII – Interfering

Rule XXV – “Claiming games”- when the game is “claimed” by the team attacking the goal the referee or umpire shall immediately call “time”. The umpire shall then proceed to make his decision. Until then no movement is allowed.

Rule XXVI – Settlement of disputes – In the settlement of any dispute, it must be clearly understood that the captains, with one player to be selected by each of them, shall have the right to speak on behalf of their respective clubs, and any proposition or facts that any player may wish brought before the referee must come through the captains or the player selected by them.

Rule XXVII – Flag pole down – in the event of a flag pole being knocked down during a match, and the ball put through what would be the goal if the flag pole were standing, it shall count as a game for the attacking side.

Rule XXVIII – Challenges

Rule XXIV –Championship rules

Rule XXX – Local championships

Thus it would appear that the origins of the Australian laws of lacrosse are Canadian, and probably remained that way until Canada moved from playing field lacrosse to the new game of box lacrosse in the late 1930s, which was played on ice hockey rinks during the summer or warmer months. What we don't know and will seek out is what were the causes of, or influences on, the various law changes from 1869 until today, and perhaps see what rules remain.

Shortly before April 1876 the founder of lacrosse in Australia, a Canadian by the name of Lambton Mount "had sent a request to Canada for 40 lacrosse sticks and the rules of the game".

The following notice appeared in "The Australasian" of 24 June 1876:

"The first practice game of the newly formed La Crosse Club took place on last Saturday afternoon, in Albert Park. The unfavourable nature of the weather mitigated against the attendance of members, of whom 15-20 put in an appearance. There was, however, a fair attendance of the public present, who were anxious to see and learn the mysteries of the new game. **Owing to the rules of the game not being understood there was an amount of awkwardness exhibited by some of the players which will not be noticeable when further practice is indulged in.** One or two of the players attempted to strike the ball with the crosse, which resulted in that instrument of warfare coming to a "smash". They should remember that the ball must be slung out of the network attached to the stick, not propelled by means of a blow."

In 1879 two delegates from each club in Victoria were appointed, to form an association, under whose auspices all matches that season will be



played. His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, kindly consented to become its patron. Very shortly rules were passed and printed, and the programme of matches drawn out.

This appears to be the first time that rules, other than those received by Lambton Mount in 1876 were printed or published in Australia. So how were the rules conveyed or shared from 1876 until 1879, particularly given that computers and photocopiers did not exist at that time? Surely the only way that rules could be communicated and shared would be for them to be typed, printed, handwritten or via a newspaper?

The game of lacrosse was expanding rapidly and given that a match was to be played in Bendigo, in regional Victoria, the local newspaper, the Bendigo Advertiser printed a lengthy summary of the rules of lacrosse on Saturday 6 June 1883. The writer opened with "Given the game of lacrosse is likely to become popular in this city, we hereunder publish the laws of the game for the benefit of those intending to join". How fascinating that a game just growing in the state, let alone regional Victoria, which was still in the midst of the gold rush, would have a summary of its rules published in the local newspaper, the equivalent of 5 A4 pages or 1735 words. The summary published was very similar to the original rules as set out above in the Laws of the Montreal Lacrosse Club as amended from 1876 -1883. Perhaps what was published in the local newspaper was only meant to be a summary but it does not include several rule changes assumed in 1881 by the Montreal Lacrosse Club, including crosse checking, interfering or deliberate charging.

Given that shortly after 1876 South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland started playing lacrosse, Western Australia in 1896 and Tasmania some time later, we assume they adopted the Victorian laws of lacrosse but that is not certain and we do not appear to have any laws of lacrosse from any of those states.

1900-1905 saw the biggest, initial change to the game in Canada, which radically changed the structure of the sport from a first-to-4-goals, open time limit game (like baseball) to one played with a time-limit of 80 minutes.

In 1890, in British Columbia at least, a match was given a two-hour time limit – diverging from the original Beers rules (No knowledge as to what rules Eastern Canada teams were using in 1890).

According to the BCALA 1899 rulebook “The time allowed for playing a match shall be two hours, starting punctually at 3 p.m. The match shall be awarded to the club having won the majority of the games at the expiration of the time. If, at the expiration of the time, each club shall have won an equal number of games, then the referee shall order the match to continue, and if within thirty minutes either club scores, it shall be declared the winner; otherwise, the match shall be declared a draw, in which event the match shall be played off on the grounds of the visiting team, not later than two weeks after the close of the season's schedule”.

So, basically, in modern terms a match was two-hours long and after every goal or game, teams changed ends.

Starting in 1905, the system we use today of aggregate goals within match time winning the match (modern game) was adopted by the Canadian Lacrosse Association, i.e. teams changing sides every quarter or 20-minute period – not after every goal.

We have a copy of the laws of lacrosse for 1906 but we cannot say with any certainty if there were any further laws added or amended between 1879 and 1906.

The laws of lacrosse and fixtures for **1906** do not mention an Australian state or states but given they were published by the Melbourne Sports Depot, which was a sporting goods icon in Melbourne for many years, we may assume that these laws relate to Victoria only, although there is reference in the laws to the intercolonial conference. There is no mention in this publication of any other state or of a national body. The laws are very similar to the laws published in the Bendigo Advertiser in 1883 with the following additions or changes:-

- The concept of boundaries is introduced with the length of the field between the goals being 150 yards and the width being 100 yards, with the goal crease at each end being 18 foot wide and 12 foot deep, with the goal being 6 foot from the front and equidistant in the width ie 6 foot from each side
- Nets shall be attached to each goal and extend 6 feet behind each goal. Obviously this rule was introduced to ensure that when a goal is scored the ball will remain in the nets and evidence the fact that a

goal has been scored, whereas judgement of goal umpires was required previously as netting or otherwise was not allowed for

- 12 players shall constitute a team
- A timekeeper is to be provided
- A match shall be determined by the greatest number of goals obtained during the time the captains have agreed to play rather than the first team to throw 3 goals.
- The match shall be divided into 4 quarters, the first two to be 25 minutes each, the second two to be 20 minutes each, with an interval of 10 minutes between the second and third quarters.

What was the catalyst for these changes? As we can see below the Canadians appear to not be using boundaries as stipulated above but the general confines of a baseball diamond, or rugby/soccer field, or cricket oval – all of which were used for playing grounds in Canada. There never seemed to have been a playing field used in Canada first and foremost as specifically a ‘lacrosse’ playing field. Playing fields often had to suffice for multiple athletic uses. Boundaries used by lacrosse teams often relied on the boundaries of the playing field in question. Some multiple-use parks had a running or horse-racing track around the outside of the playing field, so the track itself would form the boundaries of the field. There really does not seem to be any serious concerns about the dimensions of the playing surface in Canada until 1915 when field sizes were reduced (to what dimensions, unknown) as teams went from 12 men to 10.



The above photo is of a professional lacrosse game in Vancouver in 1915 (Courtesy of the Vancouver City Archives) being played in the confines of a baseball diamond. This demonstrates that as late as 1915 there were still no defined boundaries and the only line markings appear to be the goal crease and centre line.

The laws of lacrosse of 1920 were adopted by South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria at a conference held in Sydney in August 1920. Why wasn't Western Australia a party to these rules, and clearly a national body did not exist at that time?

The key changes from the laws of lacrosse of 1906 to the laws of 1920 were:-

- A circle with a diameter of 6 yards shall be marked in the centre of the ground. "No player other than the centre men shall be allowed in the circle until the ball has been played clear of it"
- The weight of the ball was increased from 4.25 -4.5 ounces to 5 - 5.5 ounces. And "it shall be white".
- The concept of "free position" is extended so that whenever the referee blows his whistle for cessation of play, for whatever reason, no player shall move until the ball is again in play. In the previous laws "free position" only came into play when the referee has called a "foul". This rule continued until the 1960s.
- The Association may disqualify any umpire, who in its opinion, who shall have knowingly given an unjust decision, and should an umpire not be appointed such duties will be discharged by the referee.

A national body was not formed until 1929, thus each state may well have had their own rules, or several states may have adopted the same or similar rules, and would have to agree at carnivals as to the laws to be applied for inter-colonial or interstate matches.

From circa 1919 until the adoption of box lacrosse in Canada in 1931-32, the rules for field lacrosse in Australia began to diverge somewhat between what was played in Canada and the game in the United States. Changes from 80 minutes (4 quarters x 20 mins) to 60 minutes (3 x 20 periods) and 12-man lacrosse vs 10-man lacrosse, as well as reduction of field sizes in Canada, whereas the Americans adopted offside rules, which Canada did not, and Canada stayed with the 4x15 minutes format for quarters.

After field lacrosse completely died off in Canada by the end of the 1930s, the American rule changes are what dominated the sport and are what the current, modern game is based on - and haven't changed since 1947 when positional names were dropped - unless you include things like shot-clocks and multi-point goals as used in the professional Major League Lacrosse league. When field lacrosse was slowly revived in Canada in the 1960s, it was the American rules that were used.

**1935** – Perhaps the catalyst for the 1935 laws of lacrosse may have been that the Australian Lacrosse Council was formed in 1931 and a uniform code was required for all states rather than most. As we noted earlier Western Australia was not a party to the 1920 laws of lacrosse adopted by the other mainland states.

- Captain of each team shall be playing member of that team
- Minor change to “equalizing” an injured player, which effectively paired the opposing player with the injured player. For example if the goalkeeper was injured the opposing goalkeeper was equalized and had to leave the field. Substitute players could be brought on to replace the injured and paired players.
- In the event either team not being prepared to commence the match at the call of the referee, the referee may start or re-start by bouncing the ball and calling “play”.
- If the referee believes a player deliberately strikes an opponent with his crosse he shall be ordered from the ground for the remainder of the match and reported to the Association.
- No player shall “jab check” an opponent in the face or body with his extended crosse.
- Any player using “Profane or ungentlemanly” language on the ground or in the dressing room shall be cautioned for the first offence and ordered off the ground for the second offence. Any official using such language is to be reported to the Association!! How society has changed.

As can be seen there has been very little change in the rules from 1920 to 1935 and perhaps the reason for the 1935 publication is to bring the laws of lacrosse under one body, the Australian Lacrosse Council, which meant a uniform code throughout Australia.

The first thing to note about the rules adopted on **14 November 1952** and issued by the Australian Lacrosse Council in February 1953 is that they were issued by I. J. Taylor, then Secretary of the ALC, a man who became a life member of WALA, VALA, and ALC. He was a member of the 1907 Australian team that played Canada when they toured, and was a founding

member of the Perth Lacrosse Club. He was the father of L. W. (Bill) Taylor, who became among other things a Fellow of the ALC.

This book was now owned by ALC rather than the states, and included the constitution and the laws of lacrosse. The members of ALC at that time were Victoria, South Australia, N.S.W., Queensland and Western Australia. The by-laws note that the Garland McHarg Cup is the property of the ALC. The by-laws also stipulated that the Council would arrange a series of matches between teams representing the members at intervals of 3 years, which shall be known as the Australian Lacrosse Carnival, and the carnival shall rotate between the members at capital cities.

The notable changes from previous rules are:-

- The playing ground between the goals was reduced from 110 yards to 80 yards
- The centre circle was increased from a diameter of 6 yards to 10 yards
- The boundary beyond the goals was decreased from no more than 50 yards beyond the goal to 25 yards
- The referee shall enforce the provisions of the laws regarding “Free position”

The tour of the combined American team of Washington & Lee University and University of Virginia in Australia in 1959 was the first tour of an American team and only the second tour by another lacrosse nation, the first being the Canadian tour of Australia of 1907. Clearly one of the key issues, which neither team was ready for, was that their rules were quite different in word and action. The American game borne of the universities and colleges was based on players with significantly more protective equipment than the Australians wore, the main reason being that their rules were far more relaxed or lenient with regard to stick checking.

The Test match was the final game of the tour in Melbourne, resulting in a win to Australia 8 goals to 5. The referee for the match was Clive Carr (South Australia). Apparently the Americans did not like Clive Carr's style as he was continually expelling American players a week earlier in the

South Australian matches and objected to him refereeing in the test match, but the ALC felt otherwise and he was selected.

No doubt in those days, given the difference in rules and interpretations between the U.S. and Australia, there would have been a lot of frustration on both sides as the Americans were not allowed to do the things that they did in U.S. competitions, which were far more relaxed when it came to brushing or slapping as they would say, as they had far more protective equipment than the Australian players.

In conceding rules to both American and Australian styles of lacrosse, it is a matter of personal amazement to several observers of the games that more confusion did not exist and from the standard of the games seen it speaks realms for the quick and clever adaption by the American players, and the intelligence of players on both sides.

### **FIRST OVERSEAS TOUR BRINGS MAJOR CHANGES TO OUR RULES**

The 1962 Australian team soon found that the game of lacrosse as played in America was very different from that played in Australia. "After a study of the rules and actually playing in the U.S.A our Australian touring party agreed lightheartedly that the only similarities between our game and theirs were the ball, the racquet and the goals. The rules were so far apart that basically the games are entirely different". (Coach's Report 1962. p.3)

An extract from the coach's report from the 1962 tour of the U.S.A. and England indicates that the differences in the rules were not the only conditions with which the Australians had to contend. Many of the rules were deemed beneficial to the game and worth incorporating in the Australian code. The American teams were much bigger than the Australian team. As the team secretary, Mr H. E. Sterck wrote in his report: "It was not unusual to find several American footballers playing lacrosse. Compared with Australian lacrosse players (average height 5'8" and 10 stone) they appeared giants (6 to 7 feet tall and weighing 16 stone)." This discrepancy in size must be considered together with the greater degree of physical contact permitted in the American rules.

The American commentator Doug Gould, of the Diamond Back Sports, Maryland University, wrote: "The Australians are small as lacrosse teams go but make up for their lack of size with speed and aggressiveness such



as is little seen in American lacrosse.” The cumulative effects of physical weight began to tell on the touring team with a heavy schedule of matches.

Another situation new to Australians was the deployment of substitutes as practiced in America. This no doubt reflected the conditions of American football, but it seems that substitutes could be introduced at any time, for any reason and in any number.

English rules were similar to the Australian rules, and the Australian team felt more at home in England than they did in America.

From an International point of view the tour of the Australian team was timely. The rules of the game in the various countries playing lacrosse had diverged widely; and the population from which lacrosse drew its followers had widely diverged.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the rules varied from what would have been accepted in Australia. “Our forwards were confused with the umpires interpretation of the rules, as he did not give them the protection that the rules obviously allowed, with the result that a few nasty incidents occurred.” (Coach’s report, p10).

Though the discrepancies seem to have been minor, it becomes clear that, before lacrosse could be played internationally, unified specification and application of the rules was necessary.

After experiencing the American rules, the touring party agreed that the Australian game would benefit if some of the American rules were adopted.

The majority of players favoured:

- a. Field marking
- b. Ten-a-side, with substitutes limited to four, changeable at quarter, half and three quarter time only, or for an injured player.
- c. Out-of bounds rule
- d. Off-side
- e. Offensive screening
- f. Body clashes from side when ball is loose and opponent is 10 feet from the ball. When a player has the ball our existing body check should apply.

- g. Penalty box, with established penalty for personal, expulsion and technical fouls.

As the coach of the touring team pointed out, it was one thing to see the rules on paper and another to experience them in action. To fulfil this need an organisation came into being in Victoria under the title of the "Green Ball" Club. This consisted of a group of players, most of whom had experienced the American game, who staged exhibition matches to demonstrate the game as it would be under the revised rules. This is first mentioned in the minutes of the VALA General Committee meeting held on 3 September 1962. At this meeting attention was drawn to the exhibition match, which the "Green Ball" Club would stage at Caulfield on 9 September. Mr C. Weatherill, coach of the Australian touring team, was invited to address the meeting. He gave the background to the formation of the "Green Ball" Club, and the origin of the name. He also gave an outline of the playing rules of the match.

The "Green Ball" club considered that certain aspects of the American game should not be incorporated in the Australian code of rules. Among them were the "Poke check", the "Lip-check", charging or "Free Arm" rules.

At this special executive meeting it was evident that the Victorian Amateur Lacrosse Association supported the propositions of the "Green Ball" club. It was suggested that the "Green Ball" club should hold a round table conference in Adelaide at the conclusion of the exhibition match to be staged there in the near future, so that a second member association of the Australian Lacrosse Council should understand the possible new rules to be presented for the consideration of the Council. The "Green Ball" club considered it essential that the standard of lacrosse in Australia must improve, particularly in refereeing, if Australia was to compete successfully in international matches, and if the game was to grow locally.

At the general committee (26 November 1962) of the VALA it was resolved that the "Green Ball" club be recommended to the Australian Lacrosse Council.

In conclusion, it was to be noted that Australia was in a peculiarly effective position to influence the formulation of the international rules of lacrosse. It must be remembered that there were thousands of American service men who had visited Australia during World War II. Though there are happier occasions for making international acquaintances, the 1962 Australian

team was received everywhere with the greatest cordiality. Their discussions of lacrosse with American administrators had been frank, full, and harmonious. The Australians on the 1962 international tour knew what the Americans were ready to concede in the interests of establishing an International code, and what they would retain with stubborn determination. The Australian members of the overseas tour appreciated that many of the divergences evident in American lacrosse improved the game.

As a result of the rather hastily improvised "World Series" of 1962 it was clear that an international code was necessary. The Australian contingent had the opportunity of playing the game according to American, Canadian, English and Australian rules. Their representatives were in an excellent position to arbitrate between the various points of view. What would be the outcome of international deliberations lay concealed in the future, but Australia by its international contacts, and by its internationally acclaimed prowess, was in a favourable position to exert leadership.

No doubt the constituent states of the Australian Lacrosse Council needed to analyse the benefits against the difficulties of international competition. The states which had supported the 1962 tour with reluctance now had the opportunity to reconsider their views. The conclusion of the 1962 season opened the way for Australia to become a leader in an old and traditional game. Whether the men actually involved would rise to their opportunity remained to be seen.

In 1966 the Australian Lacrosse Council revised the laws of lacrosse for a period of 3 years. Why they were revised for a 3 year period is not clear, but one would suspect that with lacrosse growing rapidly in the U.S.A., and field lacrosse virtually not played in Canada since the 1930s, the influence or any changes to laws or interpretations would be coming from the U.S.A. It should be noted that the first tour of Australia by an American team was in 1959, which was a combined team from Washington & Lee University and University of Virginia, which was followed by the first Australian touring team, which toured the U.S. and Canada in 1962. These were perhaps the most significant changes to our laws in nearly 90 years. The key changes to the laws from 1952 were:-

- Each team had a maximum of 15 players, with only 10 players on the field at any time

- The playing field was reduced from 80 yards between goals to a total length of 110 yards by 70 yards wide.
- The centre area was replaced with a cross marking the centre, end restraining lines introduced 20 yards from the centre line, and side restraining lines introduced, being 20 yards from the centre and extending 10 yards on each side of the centre line.
- The goal crease line shall be 40 yards from the centre, and therefore 15 yards from the end line. Further, a goal crease or circle with a 9 foot radius was marked at each end. The size of the goal did not change. Penalty shot areas were established to the side of each goal as well as bench areas, substitution areas and penalty areas off the field from the centre line.
- Lines were also to be marked to clearly delineate the areas and flags placed at the four corners of the field as well as the centre line and end restraining lines.
- The goals were required to be encased by netting or wire.
- The ball was virtually the same but it had to bounce between 34-36 inches if dropped from 46 inches, and the home team had to provide the balls.
- The crosse can now be made from wood (Hickory), laminated wood or plastic, and the netting of gut, raw hide, leather, clock cord or cord. The “fence” was also still defined and from this we can assume that the plastic stick as we know it today was not invented or used in 1966. The crosse could have a length of 36-72 inches, and the maximum width of the head between 6-12 inches, with only the goalkeeper allowed a crosse of 12 inches wide. A pocket could not be deep enough for daylight to be seen above the ball when it is in the pocket.
- Protective equipment is mentioned and defined for the first time, being head gear, face masks and gloves. Goalkeepers could also wear a chest pad, shoulder and chest pads but cricket pads and baseball leg guards were prohibited.
- The role of the captain had changed where the captain could only approach a referee during a halt in play and the privilege to act as

spokesman for his team does not grant him the right to enter into an argument or criticise any decisions of an official.

- The referee became responsible for the conduct of a match and to inflict penalties and make decisions. Umpires were also provided for, who reported to the referee. A goal umpire was required at each end to adjudicate on goals scored and crease infringements. Offside umpires and ball boys were also provided for but I don't recall seeing them!
- The duration of each quarter became 25 minutes and "time off" incurred was to be added to each quarter. Teams changed ends after each quarter, and the referee was to signal 2 minutes warning prior to the commencement of the game. The administration of the game was now very detailed and exhaustive, and we assume this came from the American game.
- When a face-off was to take place at the centre the midfielders had to be beyond the side restraining lines and the attack and defensive players had to be beyond the end restraining lines until the referee had blown his whistle
- The concept of "Free play" was removed and players could move when the ball went out of bounds or a penalty called
- If a ball goes out of bounds from a shot the ball is awarded to the player nearest the ball when it went out of bounds. In other cases the ball is awarded to the team that did not propel the ball out of bounds.
- The concept of "offside" is introduced, principally restraining 3 attack and 4 defensive players in their half of the ground.
- Substitution is introduced, allowing players to substitute when the ball is in play, after a goal is scored or during quarter breaks.
- Prohibitions are introduced in relation to the goal crease, contacting the goalkeeper in the crease, etc.
- The goalkeeper now had 4 seconds from taking possession in the goal crease to clear the ball out of the goal crease.
- The "play on" concept is introduced where a player is fouled and still in possession of the ball.

- Unsportsmanlike conduct is introduced which includes arguing with a field official or using profane or obscene language.
- Technical and personal (Minor) infringements and personal fouls and expulsion fouls are introduced. Technical infringements include moving after the referee has sounded his whistle, touching the ball with a hand, ball wedged in the crosse, withholding ball from play, throwing crosse, taking part in a match without a crosse, confinement to restraining areas at centre face-off, free arm, delaying the game, illegal action by player or official and illegal equipment. Personal infringements include hitting an opponent while throwing, grasping an opponent's stick, tripping, shepherding or obstructing, checking infringement, warding off, etc. Personal fouls – no player shall hit another player with his crosse. A "Brush" is defined for the first time as being "Not a definite blow". Other personal fouls include crosse-checking, swinging or throwing a crosse, intimidation, illegal body checking, foul checking, up checking, jab checking, square or crosse-checking, horizontal checking, the all encompassing unsportsmanlike conduct, etc. Expulsion fouls include deliberately striking an opponent with a crosse, continued committing of personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct. Technical penalties were 30 seconds or loss of ball, personal penalties could be 1 – 3 minutes. Expulsion fouls were 5 minutes penalty, expulsion from the game and reporting to the association.
- Definitions are greatly expanded.

As can be seen the 1966 laws of lacrosse would be the most dramatic change in rules since the game commenced in Australia in 1876, were significantly more detailed and complicated, and the layout of the ground, benches, etc were very detailed and necessitated a lot more work than the previously laws required. It would be unlikely that most players would not have a detailed appreciation of the laws and penalties and this was a substantial change for lacrosse in Australia. But what was the cause or reason for these significant changes?

Important as all these things were the season of 1966 was to lay the foundations of even greater things. Negotiations had been under

consideration for further international tours for some time. The Canadian Lacrosse Association had sent an invitation to the Australian Lacrosse Council to send a team to play in Canada in 1967. It was hoped that a 4 nation series - Australia, Canada, England and the United States, could be arranged. It was hoped that the Australian team would play matches on the Pacific seaboard of the United States, at Vancouver, Baltimore, Toronto, England and Hong Kong. If such a concept could be carried out it would be a great step forward in the development of lacrosse.

The practical difficulties having been overcome, a decision must be reached as to the code of rules under which the games must be played. **It is worth noting that in Australia, 1966 was the first season during which all states had observed the same rules.** The task of formulating a code acceptable to four different national bodies, each with a different code, was formidable, particularly as there was no efficient or effective international body.

## **THE BIRTH OF AN INTERNATIONAL LACROSSE BODY**

There was indeed a body called the International Amateur Lacrosse Association. This seemed to be the sort of authority that was needed to control the game at international levels, but little seemed to be known about it. The Australian Lacrosse Council at its meeting in South Australia in 1966 directed its Hon. Secretary to write to the secretary of the International Amateur Lacrosse Association seeking details of memberships and a copy of its constitution and rules. It was some time before a reply was received.

In 1967 The Australian Lacrosse Council pressed for an efficient federation of international lacrosse. There was such a body, but it seemed to have little standing or effectiveness. Mr Noel Jeffrey, the International Lacrosse Liaison Officer for the Australian Lacrosse Council was requested to represent Australia at any meetings the International Lacrosse Federation might hold, and report back to the Australian Lacrosse Council. The Hon. Secretary of the Council was directed to write to Mr C. L. Coppard (England), the Secretary of the International Federation, indicating that there appeared to be no copy in existence of the original constitution. Australia therefore proposed that the federation of international lacrosse take steps to formulate a constitution, set of rules and the objects of the federation. The Australian Lacrosse Council offered to formulate the suggested constitution, rules and objects to be a basis for comment. The

Australian Lacrosse Council suggested that the secretary of the international federation notify constituent members that a meeting would be held in Toronto in time for the World Series so that a constitution might be considered. One item for decision proposed by the Council was that three years notice should be given to the Council of any overseas, international or World Series events.

By 1966 there seemed little doubt that Australia was the driving force in unifying international lacrosse, and in trying to unify the approach to the game as a truly international sport. We must wait for 1967 and later to see the effect of the Australian Lacrosse Council's endeavours.

The big event of 1967 was certainly the world tournament held in Toronto in May of that year. At this meeting lacrosse became a world sport. There had been international matches before this, but on this occasion teams and their official representatives were able to gather together, and at least begin to devise rules and conditions which would apply universally. On 1 July 1867 the federation of four states gave rise to the Dominion of Canada. Thus this year was an important centenary for all Canadians, and it was fitting that this centenary should be observed and celebrated with the world gathering of the Canadian game.

The Canadian interpretation of the game differed widely from that of Australia and of the United States. It would be no easy task to form a code of rules acceptable to all the lacrosse playing countries.

Rules in England appear to have been similar to those generally observed in the Australian states before the 1962 tour of America. English administrators were wary of change. The Australian 1967 touring team made no adverse criticism of rules or refereeing during their tour of England in 1967.

There is little doubt that the Australian tour of 1967 indicated wide divergences, not only in the codes of rules but also in their interpretation. If the Australian influence could bring about an effective international federation, capable of resolving the differences between the various countries, and thus achieving a unanimous code of laws and conduct, the value of the tour would be incalculable.

To remedy variations in the interpretation of rules the Australian Lacrosse Referees' Association (ALRA) was formed in 1970. So that there might be uniformity among referees in all states, the ALRA was given representation



on the Australian Lacrosse Council, though with the qualification that it should have equal voting rights only on matters affecting playing rules. One immediate effect was that the ALRA was asked to establish a national grading of referees, based upon visual and oral examinations. It was asked to co-relate the systems of training and accrediting referees in the three playing states. It was also invited to index a set of 35mm slides, with rule interpretations to be used as the basis for the referee's examination. ALRA also urged each member state to appoint a referees' coach.

It is evident that the Australian Lacrosse Council was aware of the difficulties in gaining uniformity of interpretation, and that it acted constructively to meet the situation. It would be unrealistic to expect them to furnish instant solutions, but it was hoped that before the ambitious program of international visits began the rules would be adequately standardized, and that such standardization would be recognized in all countries where the sport was played.

The 1970 Australian season heralded great things. It was the beginning of a new epoch in the development of world lacrosse. The period of regular international competition followed the initiatives that brought the Lancer's Club of Baltimore, USA to visit Australia. This eminently successful visit demonstrated that modern air transport made possible world tours by teams from lacrosse playing countries to visit one another. The aeroplane had solved the time problem.

In spite of some coolness on part of member associations, the Council had encouraged every invitation for promoting Lacrosse at an international level.

With this in view, it will be remembered that the Australian Lacrosse Council had revised, if not revolutionized, the rules of the game as played in Australia. Following their experiences from the American tour, they tried to contrive a code which would be acceptable to lacrosseurs in both England and America, as well as in Australia. Their endeavours were largely successful; at any rate successful enough to make international competition feasible. Wisdom and patience are needed for these things. The supporters of the new rules did not find it easy at first, even among the

lacrosse playing states, to depart from old tradition and accept new concepts in the game. They had, however, worked out a compromise that was acceptable to the influential supporters of the game centred in Baltimore. The Lancer's accepted the rules as proposed by the Australian Lacrosse Council, with minor reservations such as the employment of substitutes. The problem of international rules had been overcome, even if further consideration needed to be given to them at an international conference.

The next change in the laws of lacrosse of Australia happened in 1971. I note in tracking through for changes that the 1971 laws have an error on page 6, where the length of the crosse may be between 36 inches and 12 inches!! That should be 72 inches not 12 inches!!

The changes are minimal from 1966 but the book is denoted as reprinted. The key changes were:-

- Slow whistle technique was introduced – a very logical rule that allowed the referee to call a foul and allow the player fouled to continue attacking if he had possession, and after the play was concluded the player fouling would be penalized.
- The law penalizing players for moving after the whistle was blown was removed. I must admit in my early days I found this a farcical law to enforce when there was only one referee, as soon as he turned his back on half the field those players would cleverly move into a better position!!!
- The personal infringement of hitting an opponent whilst throwing the ball was removed
- The concept of slashing, which was defined as swinging a crosse at an opponent's crosse with deliberate viciousness or reckless abandon. While it could be applied even if no contact was made the main intent was to penalize players who hit their opponent's body with their crosse, and was not a "brush". The previous rule of horizontal checking was removed.

Overall the 1971 reprint was, apart from a few well considered changes, nothing more than that, a reprint. One significant rule that was introduced was the “Play on and slow whistle technique”, which at the discretion of the referee, if the offended player was in his attacking half and the referee felt that a scoring play was imminent, the referee would waive or throw his flag and call “foul” and play would continue until such time as a goal was scored or the continuous play finishes. This was a clever rule and meant the attacking team was not penalized if a scoring play was imminent and could attack the goal, and the referee still retained the right to penalize the offending defender, depending of course on the circumstances.

Then there was the question as to the rules under which the international contests should be conducted. There is no need for a game to be played in exactly the same way everywhere, but when two teams contest against one another they must abide by the same rules. We all know that there are rules for rugby union and rugby league, but no matches are played where one team plays according to one code and the other according to another in the same match. This may also be seen in Australian rules. The Association rules vary from the Australian Football League rules. But the games are recognizably the same. In lacrosse the game had evolved from a primitive, rule-less pastime to an organized game played under strict rules in different parts of the world and around different social sub-sections. Thus we see that in the USA the rules evolved because of the position lacrosse held in the environment of universities. The players were already grown men, and the equipment was provided by the universities, as was that influential element, the spectator body.

In Canada the game had developed on club lines, involved attracting young boys to the game and then holding them in early manhood, so that local associations were formed. However, the game grew so popular that it became ripe for entrepreneurship. Canadian lacrosse became strongly professional, and professional games attracted spectators to night activities and limited the area on which the game might most profitably be played in some sort of stadium or place of entertainment. The Canadian rules developed into six-a-side contests with little direct connection to the rules and tactics played elsewhere. Lacrosse being essentially a Canadian

game, Canadian administrators were keen to support it internationally. Traditional Canadian lacrosse travelled to England, but as an amateur game. There was soon therefore little connection between amateur Englishmen and professional Canadians or Americans.

Although the game developed in Victoria through Canadian enterprise, it was through the enthusiasm of the Mount family. Dr Mount had come to Australia to practice at the Ballarat goldfields. When his son Lambton came to Melbourne in connection with his work, he interested some of his friends, many of whom, like himself, were members of the Melbourne Cricket Club, in the game. Mount's knowledge of the game would have developed during the amateur period in Canada, and the rules adopted were similar to those in use in England. Lacrosse came to South Australia through the influence of university staff recruited from England. The game was introduced into Western Australia by Victorians employed within the mines or developing business enterprises. Though there were minor differences there was a certain homogeneity in the game as played in the various Australian states. Since the contact with America, many important changes were introduced into the Australian game, but there were also differences that seemed irreconcilable.

To bring into effect a worldwide competition, this matter of rules must be brought to some consensus. The university supported game in America was much the stronger of the various codes both numerically and financially. It was at first decided that the World Series should be conducted according to the American code. It is doubtful if English lacrosse players would agree to play under American rules, particularly those concerning body contact, and the freedom for a player to strike his opponent with his crosse. The American rules concerning the use of reserve or substitute players would be opposed by English and Australian players. Although the Australian Lacrosse Council at first intended to conduct the contests under American rules, there was a lively opposition from the constituent states. The position was discussed in detail in a letter from Mr Doug Fox, an experienced player, and the secretary of the Victorian Amateur Lacrosse Association (VALA). He eloquently made the following points: "My thesis is that the USILA rules are particularly suited to

the American lacrosse situation, but they are inappropriate to our Australian situation.....

Firstly consider the adoption of the poke check with the hands regarded as part of the lacrosse stick. This must involve expense! There is no worry in my mind that the poke check is dangerous, unless each player is fully equipped. The addition of making gloves part of the racquet, however, adds a virtual compulsion for all players to wear two gloves and possibly arm guards. Without these the effects of the American poke check are injurious. Therefore the cost involved in equipping players must increase under American rules. At the present time most VALA clubs and I suspect WALA and SALA clubs assist junior players in equipping themselves with racquets.....

Financial worries become the prime element of most clubs, even with only the burden of purchasing racquets. At a minimum the American rules would require an extra \$12-\$15 per pair of gloves for each player. This represents a doubling of the minimum requirement of equipping a junior player and a considerable financial burden on clubs.”

Amendments to Australian rules had already been made upon principles adopted from the American game, but these amendments had greatly increased the number of officials required to administer the game; and the state bodies and clubs were already at some difficulty to provide enough referees and umpires.

At the ALC meeting of 23 July 1973 the Australian point of view had crystallized sufficiently for a motion that passed stating “that the rules for the 1974 World Series be as set out in Appendix I of these minutes, and that the WALA delegate be instructed to press for complete adoption of these rules during his forthcoming overseas tour”. The matter had evidently not reached a conclusion by the end of 1973, though no doubt discussions at a vital stage had clarified the diverse points of view, and a written acceptance would follow. This all meant that the time available for acquainting referees, umpires and officials with new conceptions and interpretations was diminishing with every passing week.

## **WORLD SERIES BRINGS RULES UNIFICATION**

In 1974, prior to the World Series, ALRA was requested to arrange the appointment of all Australian field officials, and, in doing so, should seek nominations from all member branches of their association. The appointments were to be notified to the World Series sub-committee by 30 April 1974.

Two referees would be invited from each country to attend the World Series, subject to their ability being of sufficient standard.

Apparently small matters also creep into the proceedings of 1973. At the ALC annual general meeting a significant paragraph appears in the section "Alterations to playing rules" It reads: "That rule no. 10.12 – Face-Off – be amended by the insertion of the words "plastic or wooden" in lieu of the word "wooden" in the fourth and seventh lines."

When we remember the immense difficulties experienced in getting suitable lacrosse sticks in the post-war years, and how the shortage nearly caused the extinction of the game, we will recall the unsuccessful attempts to substitute plastic for wood.

The early difficulties with plastic must have been overcome, and a new and revolutionary crosse or stick emerged. This plastic implement is commonplace now. There appears available documentation concerning the development and acceptance of this new racquet. However, the paragraph referred to makes it clear that the plastic racquet now received universal acceptance, and it no doubt played an important part in the 1974 World Series.

Former U.S.A. coach and administrator Tom Hayes recalls issues arising at the inaugural World Series in Melbourne in 1974 the night before the first game. Canada was allowed to use their wooden sticks with no restrictions on depth of pocket, the body check rule was tightened up, stick checks on the gloves and lower arm were allowed and the U.S. was allowed an expanded team number. The basis of many of the rules were taken from

the 1972 NCAA rule book with changes in restarts, running time, and full time served penalties.

The first evidence we have of interpretations, which became very important as the rules became more complex, was “Official U.S.I.L.A. Approved Lacrosse Rulings”, written by Joseph “Frenchy” Julien, Chief Referee of the U.S.I.L.A. This case book contained the official lacrosse rules interpretations, which supplemented the official rule book. It stated that “No official or groups of officials are to deviate from these rulings, whenever U.S.I.L.A teams are involved”.

The 1976 rules of lacrosse adopted by ALC were the first rules to be adopted since the inaugural World Series held in Melbourne in 1974.

What is also interesting about the 1976 book is that the structure is nothing like the previous edition of 1971. What was the reason for this change and why did we move to metric when the U.S. would have been imperial? There doesn't seem to be a significant change in the rules but it is only 2 years since the first World Series.

What is interesting regarding the 1976 edition adopted by ALC is that it is no longer referred to as the Laws of Lacrosse but the Rules of Lacrosse. We assume that this wording is aligning with the American rule book. What is also noticeable is that we have moved from imperial measurement (110 x 70 Yards) to metric (100 x 55 metres). While the length of the ground is about the same the width has narrowed by about 8 metres. The goal crease changes from 9 foot radius to 3 metres – slightly bigger crease. While it is still 10 players on the field for each team the number of substitutes increases from 5 to 6. The 1976 rules book also includes diagrams for penalties.

The key changes from 1971 to 1976 were:-

- In 1976 the various lines and measurements are shown in a diagram at the end of the book whereas in 1971 there is no such diagram and the dimensions are shown in the text. All measurements are in metric.

- The playing field has changed from 110yards long by 70 yards wide to 100 metres by 55 metres, virtually the same length but about 8 metres narrower.
- In terms of protective equipment we went from players should wear protective headgear and gloves to must wear such equipment. The goalkeeper can now wear track pants.
- The number of substitutes has increased from 5 to 6.
- Goal umpires are no longer designated or required.
- A 3 minute interval between the first and second quarters is introduced.
- The “Possession” rule is introduced which means that attacking and defensive players are restricted to their end zones or goal areas until possession has been gained, the ball goes out of bounds or the ball crosses into either goal area.
- An injured goalkeeper is no longer paired with the opposing goalkeeper, the injured goalkeeper is merely replaced.
- Substitution on the “fly” can now occur, meaning a player leaving the field on the defensive half may be replaced by a player entering the attacking half.
- Each team is permitted two time outs per half, maximum duration of 2 minutes for each time out.
- Stalling is introduced, applicable to both the attack and defensive halves. The stalling rule was a great rule, it ensured that the attacking team could not retain or take the ball outside the attack area once the referee called “stall”, and therefore there was pressure on the attacking team as a minimum to keep the ball in a confined area rather than wasting time throwing the ball wide around the attack half.
- Officials’ signals are now displayed in the rule book
- An interesting new rule included for 1976, which would rarely if ever occur in Australia, is if thunder or electrical storms develop during a game, the official should suspend play until such time as it is safe for all concerned to resume play.



I have just come across another version of the 1976 Australian rules book, which was provided by former international referee/assessor, Don Reyment. Don's version has a blue cover whereas the other version is brown and they are exactly the same except that the brown version has as its last 4 pages a diagram of the field with markings, officials' signals and an index. Why would we have 2 versions of the rules in one year? Don's version has been photocopied and has been hole punched and spiral bound whereas the brown version is original print and has been stapled together by the printer.

The major changes from 1976 to 1986 were:-

- Note that there appears to be a typographical error in the 1976 rule book – the minimum length of a crosse in 1976 is incorrectly shown as 1.16 metres whereas it is shown as 1.016 metres (40") in 1986.
- The number of officials permitted increases from 2 to 3, designating a referee, umpire and field judge.
- In the event of a tied game 2 x 4 minute overtime periods will be played. If the match remains tied after the overtime periods "sudden death" periods of 4 minutes are played until one team scores.
- Reporting of players and officials is introduced with the option of expulsion.

Given there appear to be few changes between 1976 and 1986, none of any great significance, which indicates that most lacrosseurs must have been relatively satisfied with the rules in Australia at least.

During the 1980s the Australian Lacrosse Referees Association (ALRA) introduced interpretations manuals to assist with the interpretation of rules, which in some cases were not clear.

The key changes from 1986 to 1989 were:-

- The coach's area is defined in the bench area
- The circumference of the ball is reduced from 20.3 – 20.9cm to 19.69 - 20.32cm, the weight changed from 149-156gms to 5-5.25oz! We

have moved backwards in measurement of weight only from metric to imperial! The bounce height has changed from 1.2 metres to 72" or 6' (1.83 metres) and the bounce has moved from 86-91cms compared to 114.3-124.6cms. Why would you change the bounce height?

- The fingers of a players' gloves cannot be cut out and the fingers must be encased in the gloves. A player may cut the palms out of his gloves.
- Additional Rulings (ARs) were introduced to the rule book after each rule, to assist with the interpretation and clarification under various scenarios.
- Substitutes were increased from 6 to 13 although state by-laws reduced the number of substitutes for home and away games to 6.
- The responsibilities and role of the CBO are significantly expanded.
- The interval between the third and fourth quarters is reduced from 5 minutes to 3 minutes.
- In the event of an extra man situation at the conclusion of a quarter the team with the ball at the end of the quarter shall start the next quarter with the ball in the relative position on the field as they concluded the previous quarter.
- Once the referee has placed the ball between the sticks at a face-off the players are "set" and any movement by a player or his gloves will result in the ball being awarded to the offended team.
- When the two face-off players are still down contesting the face-off no other player may make contact with a face-off player or his stick. Any face-off player backing out or standing up shall automatically lose the ball to his opponent.
- Pushing is introduced as a technical foul

Interesting to note that there are not a lot of changes from 1986 to 1989 but the structure or set-up of the rule book is quite different.

1991 saw the change to what was deemed the "slapping or brushing" interpretation in Australia. Following the 1990 World Series there was a feeling in Australia by some that a major hurdle to winning a World Series

was the fact that we were only subjected to the liberal slapping or brush rule that was used in the U.S. and Canada every four years, and that Australian players were not used to this interpretation nor prepared for it as they never applied it in their domestic competitions. Accordingly the interpretation of slapping or brushing an opponent on the upper or lower arm was acceptable as long as it was not deemed a slash!! The first year in particular was difficult for players, officials and coaches to get used to and what was deemed as acceptable perhaps in the U.S. was not acceptable in Australia, and of course the attack player being “slapped” had a different sensation to that of the defender who was applying the “slap”!! This often led to retaliation but it seemed to settle down within the first 2 years but was very difficult to interpret when the “slapper” and the “slappee” had different views as to the extent of the hitting that was applied, and no doubt hearing “brush” every time you felt like you were being slashed didn’t help the attack players mindset and control. There were several fiery meetings of referees, with many against the new interpretation. Nevertheless it was adopted and over 20 years later you wouldn’t suspect it was ever an issue.

1993 was the next year of rule changes by ALC and were reasonably significant given they had not changed since 1989 and FIL rules were still not adopted in Australia.

- During the last three minutes of the fourth quarter, and during any overtime period, the game-clock and, if applicable, the penalty clock(s) shall stop whenever the ball becomes dead, and they shall restart whenever play is restarted. This shall apply for all stoppages, including the scoring of a goal.
- There shall be no pre-game stick-checks or equipment checks.
- At a faceoff the left foot and the handle of the crosse may not cross the centre line.
- With regard to body checking contact is made from the front or side, not below the hip, and below the neck.
- If the clock has to be stopped to allow an injured player to be treated then, unless a team uses one of its time-outs, the injured player must leave the field before the start of the next play, and he may not return before the next dead ball.

- A team's head coach may request the inspection of any crosse of the opposing team. Where a referee feels that a team in possession of the ball inside their attack goal area is not making a reasonable attempt to attack its opponents goal, then he shall ask that team to "Keep it in"; the team must then keep it in the attack goal area. If the ball subsequently leaves the stalling area (the attack goal area) before the defending team has had possession of the ball, except as a result of a foul by the defending team or a deflection by the defending team or a shot, then the team which has been asked to "Keep it in" shall lose possession to their opponents.
- Where a player commits a loose ball technical foul, and the offended team may be disadvantaged by the immediate suspension of play, then the referee shall visually and verbally signal "Play-on", and he shall with-hold his whistle until such time as the situation involving the potential advantage has been completed.
- During the last 3 minutes of the last quarter of a match all clocks will stop when the ball becomes dead.

The FIL adopted a new set of rules on 1 September 1996 which would have come into effect in Australia for season 1997, but we do not appear to have a book as such published by the ALA. Interestingly the 1996 rule changes are not underlined or shown in italics as they were in 1993. This appears to be the first time that Lacrosse Australia has adopted the FIL rules.

The key changes from 1993 to 1996 are:-

- Sticks now must be between 40-42" (102-107cm) (Short crosse) or 52-72" (132-183cm) (Long crosse). Each team may only have 4 long crosses, excluding the goalkeeper, at any time while the ball is live.
- The match is reduced in time from 4 x 25 minute quarters to 4 x 20 minute quarters.
- The head coach can request a stick check of long sticks on the field.
- Where a fight occurs during a game the benches are "frozen" and any player entering the field or a third player into the fight shall be expelled from the game.

## **AUSTRALIA ADOPTS FIL RULES**

In May 2002 Lacrosse Australia adopted the Rules of Lacrosse that were adopted by the Federation of International Lacrosse (“FIL”) in 1996 except for the 10 second rule being retained (Rule 85) and the time of the match as defined in rule 29.1. Accordingly all states adopted these rules as amended.

### **10 SECOND CLEAR RULE**

Why was the 10 second clear rule adopted and why wasn't it in use by the FIL? How did it come about?

The concept of the 10 second clear rule was developed by the Victorian senior coaches who felt that domestic Australian lacrosse teams, unlike their American counterparts, were slow in advancing the ball from the defensive half to the attack half and that this approach was having a negative impact on the game from both playing and spectator perspectives. This rule change was supported by the committee of management and adopted in Victoria in 2001. When Victoria adopted the rule the subsequent difference in competition with other states was noticeable. The other states followed suit soon after a senior national championship where the Victorian team demonstrated the value of the rule. As the way of playing (i.e., advancing the ball quickly) became commonplace, the rule became less relevant and was eventually discontinued circa 2012.

The 10 second clear rule is as follows:-

A defensive team with the ball in their possession in the area bounded by the two sidelines, the end line and the defensive restraining line have ten (10) seconds to advance the ball beyond the defensive restraining line. Once the defensive team has cleared the ball over the defensive restraining line they shall not be permitted to cause the ball to move back into their defensive quarter. After crossing the defensive restraining line in possession of the ball there is no restriction on time taken to clear the ball from the area bounded by the defensive restraining line, the two sidelines

and the centre line. Once the defensive team has cleared the ball over the centre line they shall not be permitted to cause the ball to move back into their defensive half. To cause the ball to move back is defined as carrying, passing or deliberately kicking the ball back into a prohibited area.

A clearing team with the ball in their possession in the area bounded by the two side lines, the centre line and the forward restraining line have ten (10) seconds to advance the ball beyond the offensive restraining line. Once the ball is carried or passed from this area it may be returned to this area and a further 10 second count will commence during which the ball must again be passed or carried over the offensive restraining line. Carrying the ball to such an area will include a player legally manoeuvred or bumped, whilst in possession of the ball, into that area by an opponent. Loss of possession by the clearing team cancels any 10 second count. Should the clearing team regain the ball they will not be confined by the ten (10) second rule until they have again passed forward over either the defensive restraining or centre lines. In this situation it must be clear that the offensive team has lost possession and a loose ball situation has occurred. Merely dropping the ball whether deliberately or accidentally does not constitute loss of possession in the application of this rule. Should the ball be jarred or checked from a player's crosse by the legal action of an opponent and move back into one of the restricted areas, no offence will have occurred as the ball was caused to re-enter the area by his opponent's action.

This was a positive rule in that it forced the team with the ball to progress the ball and made the game more entertaining perhaps.

In March 2003 Lacrosse Australia adopted the Rules of Lacrosse that were adopted by the Federation of International Lacrosse ("FIL") in 1996 except for the retention of the 10 second clear rule (Rule 85) and the time of the match as defined in rule 29.1, along with rule 84.8 which clarifies the authority of an official to report a player or team official.

In March 2004 Lacrosse Australia adopted a further set of rules.

In 2008 ALA adopted the FIL rules of lacrosse as amended except for the 10 second rule being retained (Rule 85) and the inclusion of rule 84.8 (In lieu of rule 77.4 in the FIL rules) which clarifies the authority of an official to report a player or team official. These amendments were also applied to the FIL rules adopted in 2012.

The only major change of 2008 related to the ball being stuck in a stick. This major change, along with 6 minor changes, clarifications and corrections were listed and detailed at the end of the book.

The FIL Rules from 2008 were adopted by ALA, together with previous revisions for 'Stick Check Cheating' per Rules 45.5 & 75.3, from season 2009 onwards.

These rules are the same as the Federation of International Lacrosse rules with the exception of the Ten Second Rule as defined in Rule 85 and the inclusion of Rule 84.8 (in lieu of Rule 77.4 in the FIL Rules) which clarifies the authority of an official to report a player or team official has also been added.

In December 2010 the ALA adopted changes to the FIL rules for inclusion for season 2012, and again apart from the amendments noted for 2008 were exactly the same as the FIL rules adopted. It would appear that the FIL makes major changes to the rules every four years in line with the men's world championships and make minor changes/corrections in the intervening 3 years. There were 24 changes from the 2008 rules, mainly minor changes but a few changes noted as major. Looking at the changes there does not seem to be anything really significant, more nuance than substantial change.

The 2013/14 rules were adopted in Amsterdam, The Netherlands in 2012. We suspect this is about the time the 10 second clear rule, which was an Australian rule only, was removed.

The only significant rule change noted was that all players had to wear a mouth guard.

The rules adopted in Denver Colorado in 2014 were for application in 2015/2016 and there do not appear to be any significant changes, with the following minor changes noted:-

- The referee's attire was changed to black and white vertical stripe shirts with black shorts, black belt, white socks with black banding and black cap with white piping. Black trousers are permissible in cold weather!!
- Dimensions and markings are specified in metric rather than imperial measurements
- All changes to the prior rules are shown in italics and underlined for ease of reference.

The rules adopted in July 2016 at Coquitlam, Canada were for application in 2017/18 and the changes do not appear to be significant but there are many.

In August 2018 the FIL adopted further rule changes to come into effect in 2020, with Australia adopting them for ALA competition from 2019. The key changes are:-

- The game will be divided into four periods of 15 minutes duration each
- During the last 30 seconds of the first, second and third quarters and the last 2 minutes of the fourth quarter and during any overtime periods, the game clocks and where applicable penalty clocks shall stop whenever the ball is dead and restart when play restarts
- The interval between the first and second quarters and third and fourth quarters shall be 2 minutes and the half time interval shall be 10 minutes
- In the event of scores being tied at the end of the game, play shall continue after a 2 minute intermission with sudden victory overtime. In sudden victory overtime teams shall play 4 minute periods until a goal is scored, thus determining the winner.
- Once the referee has signalled that the ball is ready for play, the restart shall occur in the same relative position where the ball was



when play was stopped. The official shall resume play as quickly as possible. If an opposing player is within five yards of the player that has been awarded the ball, and the official blows the whistle to restart play, the opposing player is not allowed to defend the ball until he reaches a distance of five yards from the opponent. A violation will be a flag down (slow whistle) for delay of game.

- Once the ball has been cleared into the goal area, the ball shall not return to the defensive half of the field through actions of the offensive team. If this occurs, it is an over and back violation. The result is an immediate turnover and a quick restart for the offended team.
- Where a flag is thrown mistakenly, when the whistle subsequently blows to stop the play, the ball shall be awarded to the team that has possession. When an official inadvertently blows the whistle, the ball shall be awarded to the team that has possession. If neither team has possession, then the ball shall be faced. It doesn't seem to make sense that the ball is awarded to the team in possession when the referee whistles to stop play, rather than awarding it to the team in possession at the time of mistakenly throwing a flag. As at December 2018 clarification was being sought from FIL as the current wording doesn't appear to be reasonable or logical.

Interesting to note that in 1860 when the codification of the game was first put into writing the specifications for the ball were merely circumference – it had to be 8-9 inches in circumference. In 2018 the specifications are that it must be 7.75 - 8 inches (19.69 – 20.32 centimetres) in circumference and shall weigh between 5 – 5.25 ounces (no equivalent in grams provided) and when dropped on a hard wooden floor from 72 inches (1.83 metres) it shall bounce to a height of 45 – 49 inches (114.3 – 124.46 centimetres). Clearly FIL is still predominantly imperial in measurement and probably only the Australians and English spelling metres, rather than meters as they do in North America.

Since 1860 the size of the field, number of players in a team and on the field have changed significantly as have the markings and areas designated on the field.

Clearly there has been a lot of change to the rules or laws of our great game since 1876!