



LACROSSE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

The right lacrosse at the right time:
Helping kids learn the sport better, love the sport more, and play the sport longer.



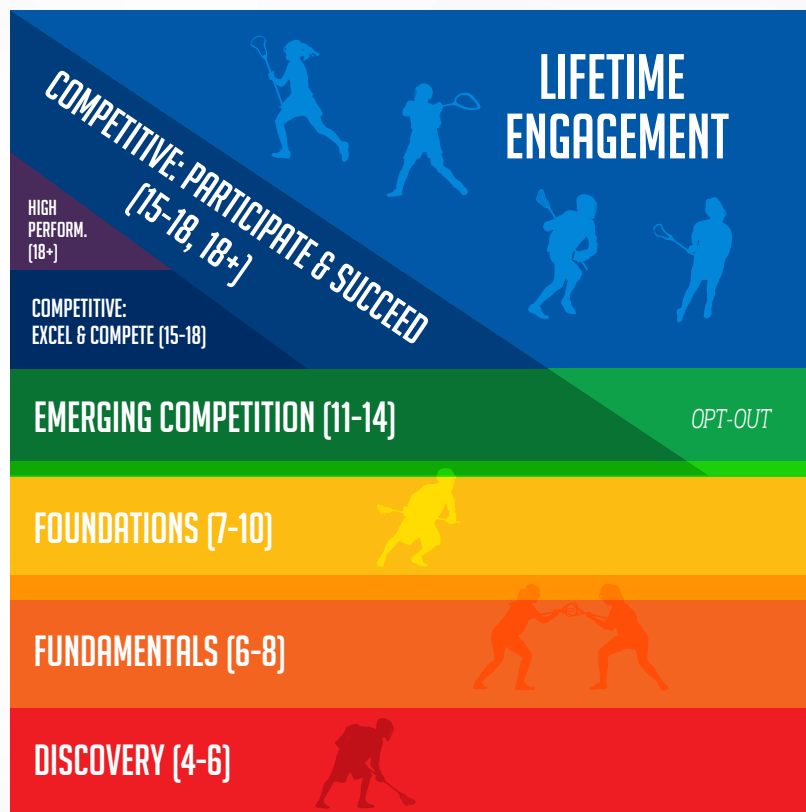
WHAT IS THE LACROSSE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL?

The LADM is an organizing framework to help coaches, and parents and program leaders provide what kids need developmentally in order to grow as both athletes and people through their lacrosse experience and ideally participate in the sport for life. It is about focusing on the athlete first. It is based on what we know about our sport specifically and on the findings and research put forth about general long-term athlete development first explored by internationally renowned coach educator Istvan Balyi.

It is the roadmap for how the sport of lacrosse should structure itself in order that all lacrosse participants are able to realize their full athletic potential and utilize lacrosse as a means to an active and healthy lifestyle. It is how we will provide meaningful lacrosse experiences for all.

In this guide you will find the hallmarks of child development from ages 4-18 and specific recommendations by developmental stage for applying this information to the lacrosse experience.

LACROSSE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL



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“It is our hope that parents and coaches can use this information as a guide and standard when making decisions about how best to encourage a young athlete’s participation and development in lacrosse. In changing times, we want to ensure that future generations will enjoy the game as much as we all have in our lifetime.”

–Dom Starsia, 4x NCAA championship coach, National Hall of Fame member

STAGE 1: DISCOVERY

4-6 YEARS OLD

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Fundamental Movement Skills

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To develop basic movement skills - body management, locomotor and object control - that build ability, confidence and desire to play lacrosse. Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Fun, constant active engagement, relaxed, inclusive and positive with frequent changes of activity. Predictable routines. Games that build basic movement skills in the context of lacrosse. Lots of praise and reinforcement from coach and parents.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Running, jumping, hopping, twisting, turning, stopping, starting, static balance, catching a ball with two hands.

Technical (Skills) Development

Introducing running with the ball, scooping, throwing, exposure to all skills, experimentation, terminology.

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Experimentation with body, stick and ball in a defined space containing "special" areas (ie goal). Stopping, starting, changing pace, running to open space.

Psychological Development - working to support athletes in these areas...

Trying new challenges, effort, following simple instructions.

Social-Behavioral Development - we know that at this age athletes are...

Learning to share; learning to say thank you; like to be with friends; are the center of their worlds; parents are central for praise and approval; need balance and variety of new and familiar activities in short doses.

Cognitive Development

Slower processing speed (time and amount of info) - must use repetition, be clear and concise, and use cue words. Can't filter out relevant and irrelevant information from the environment.

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

Competition is embedded in activity sessions.

Primary Objective of Training

To develop physical literacy and basic movement skills in the context of lacrosse. Achieved through stations, games and activities; 1:1 ball to player ratio. Include self-directed play.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

8:1

Length of Training Sessions

30-45 minutes

Frequency

1x a week, 8-10 weeks

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Physical activity every day - lacrosse can be one of those activities; Gymnastics and movement education highly recommended.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Girls: 3v3 (no goalie); Boys: 3v3 (no goalie)

Field Size

Cross-field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, learning to follow simple rules, sportsmanship.



STAGE 2: FUNDAMENTALS

6-8 YEARS OLD

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Fundamental Athletic Skills

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To develop agility, balance and coordination and speed for success in learning fundamental technical lacrosse skills. Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Fun, constant active engagement (kid+ball=fun), relaxed, inclusive, positive with and emphasis on learning new skills. Lots of enjoyable games that reinforce skill learning. Predictable routines. Focus on effort and trying your best. Activities are designed for success.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Agility, dynamic balance, bilateral coordination, skipping, hopping, throwing/tossing and catching away from body with either hand, flexibility, strength.

Technical (Skills) Development

Proficient at stick grip and scooping, Exploring and developing other fundamental lacrosse skills--catching, passing, shooting, cradling, dodging.

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Developing 1v1 and 2v2 offense and defensive concepts, exploring 2v1 offensive and defensive concepts.

Psychological Development - working to support athletes in these areas...

Concentration, teachability, learning to make choices, respect, understanding rules, how to cope with winning and losing, learning to solve problems.

Social-Behavioral Development - we know that at this age athletes are...

Learning to cooperate with and help other children. Learning to consider other people. Learning through familiar activities. Want to do their best. Can show responsibility through completing simple tasks and requests.

Cognitive Development

Better able to follow instructions; concentration is increasing; can introduce basic rules and fair play; learning the concept of winning and losing. Still may have difficulty with abstract concepts (i.e. complex plays, multiple choices of options etc.)

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

Competition is embedded in activity sessions or 70:30

Primary Objective of Training

To develop physical literacy and introduce fundamental sport and lacrosse skills. Achieved through stations, games and activities, 1:1 ball to player ratio with 2:1 activities also factoring in. Include free play.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

10:1

Length of Training Sessions

45-60 minutes

Frequency

2x a week during 8-12 week season

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Sport-specific training twice a week during one specific season; participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times a week. Gymnastics and movement education highly recommended. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Girls: 4v4 (no goalie); Boys: 3v3 (goalie optional as additional player)

Field Size

Cross-field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, introducing basic lacrosse concepts, exploring competing in lacrosse and basic rules, sportsmanship.



STAGE 3: FOUNDATIONS

7-10 YEARS OLD

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Fundamental Technical Skills

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To develop a technically sound set of lacrosse skills and athletic movement skills necessary in lacrosse (agility, quickness, change of direction). Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Fun, inclusive engaging, and positive; appeals to this age-group's desire for fun, improvement and teamwork through the progressive development of existing and new skill base. Focus on trying your best. Growth mindset.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Agility, footwork dynamic balance, complex coordination, linear speed, speed of coordination, strength, flexibility.

Technical (Skills) Development

Proficient at most basic technical skills, developing dodge variations and exploring shooting/passing and cradling variations. Developing individual defense skills-body, footwork, stick positioning.

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Proficient with 1v1, 2v1 and 2v2 concepts, exploring and developing 3v3, 4v4, 4v3 variations and transition offense and defense.

Psychological Development-working to support athletes in these areas...

Love of the sport, coachability, concentration, problem solving, becoming confident, making good choices, learning fairness, taking responsibility.

Social-Behavioral Development--we know that at this age athletes are...

Learning to compete against other players. Learning the values of lacrosse. Learning independence and also how to work together as a team. Developing self-awareness, they start to be aware of what they don't know or what they can't do. Like to help others and the coach. Able to listen to the coach.

Cognitive Development

By age 9 or 10 developing the ability to think in advance of ball (anticipation); recall memory significantly improves; can follow more complex instructions; stay on task and focus longer; can understand where to move with and without the ball; can think in sequential thought and actions.

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

70:30

Primary Objective of Training

To develop a lacrosse-confident athlete with solid fundamental skills and a general understanding of basic game play and strategy through small-sided play. Include free play.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

12:1

Length of Training Sessions

60 minutes

Frequency

Up to 3x a week during an 8-12 week season

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Sport-specific training up to 3x a week (for one specific season), participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times a week. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Girls: 7v7 field players plus goalies; Boys: 5v5 field players plus goalies

Field Size

Cross-field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, trying new skills in a team setting, learning and exploring overall play of the game, sportsmanship.

STAGE 3-4: FOUNDATIONS/EMERGING

9-12 YEARS OLD

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Honing Technical Skills/Fundamental Tactical Skills

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To reinforce technical skills while learning and practicing tactical application in a progressive system. Getting as many touches with the ball as possible.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Fun, inclusive, accepting, engaging and positive. Focus on improvement and effort rather than outcome. Reinforce new and existing skills while learning to apply to tactics through small sided and engaging play and enjoyable practice. Opportunities to try new things. Growth mindset.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, complex coordination, multi-directional speed, strength, core strength, flexibility.

Technical (Skills) Development

Consolidating and mastering all technical skills, exploring variations-developing consistency under pressure. Mastering individual defensive skills. Beginning to develop position-specific skills.

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Developing situational understanding of play up to 7v7; developing understanding of zones, proficient with riding and clearing, player to player defense. Working on space and time.

Psychological Development - working to support athletes in these areas...

Love of the sport, focus, simple goal setting, self-motivation, confidence, learning to make decisions, developing self-reliance, understanding winning and losing. Respect.

Social-Behavioral Development - we know that at this age athletes are...

More independent, able to share, improved decision making ability. Desire independence and are building confidence. Peer group acceptance becomes important and physical competency plays a role in how one is perceived. Girls tend to form "cliques," boys have more broad team relationships.

Cognitive Development

Increases in processing speed; learning encoding strategies for long term memory; still may find it hard to tune out or self identify what's important; understand winning and losing, may still need help coping.

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

70:30 Boys/60:40 Girls

Primary Objective of Training

To reinforce basic technical skills and introduce tactical components of the game through progressions and small-sided play practice/teaching games for understanding. Include free play.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

12:1

Length of Sessions

60-75 minutes

Frequency

Up to 3x a week during an 8-12 week season

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Sport-specific training up to 3x a week (for one specific season), participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times a week. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Girls 9v9 field players plus goalies, transitioning to 11v11 plus goalies; Boys: 6v6 plus goalies

Field Size

Modified field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, honing technical skills in game situations, exploring and applying new tactical skills.

STAGE 4: EMERGING

11-14 YEARS OLD

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Technical and Tactical Refinement

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To combine technical skills with tactical understanding to develop as a well-rounded lacrosse player, while also improving physically and psychologically in preparation for more competitive settings.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Fun, accepting, meaningful, safe and positive. Rewards improvement and effort, develops healthy peer relationships. Appeals to players' sense of need to belong yet also develop a positive personal identity through team dynamics. Recognizes individual strengths and potential. Growth mindset. Mastery environment is evident.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, speed, multi-directional speed, core strength, lower extremity strength (for injury prevention), endurance (at growth spurt), plyometric/power, flexibility.

Technical (Skills) Development

Consistently demonstrates and can execute fundamental skills under pressure. Developing stick checking and body checking ability as allowable within the rules. Developing proficiency of position-specific skills

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Exploring extra-player defense and offense, Mastering numbers situations and tactical play. Developing transition, riding and clearing skills for transition to full-sided play. Developing awareness and anticipation.

Psychological Development - working to support athletes in these areas...

Autonomy, choosing one's activities, setting more complex and long-term goals, seeing long-term benefits to hard work, developing good peer relationships and teamwork, self-motivation. Respect for the game, teammates, opponents, coach, officials, and self.

Social-Behavioral Development - we know that at this age athletes are...

Going through a time of rapid change physically, are very aware of body and differences in maturity. Self-identity is being formed. Participation in sport is largely dependent upon friends. Can understand full scope of rules of the game and consequences of one's actions.

Cognitive Development

Starting to really understand tactical concepts; recall memory is as good as an adult by this age; can follow complex instructions; analytical thought; performance in competition can be inconsistent; able to run, cradle and think. Idea of covering field space with passes makes sense, eager to learn but still want to play.

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

60:40

Primary Objective of Training

To refine technical skills and develop tactical proficiency. Practices include regular competitive situations in progressions, include competitive games that reinforce understanding, and high-repetition game-like drills. Include free play.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

15:1

Length of Sessions

90 minutes

Frequency*

Up to 3x a week during an 8-14 week season

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Athlete may decide to start focusing more on 1-2 key sports. If lacrosse rises to the top in motivation and desire, suggest picking another sport that is complimentary during another season. Such as field hockey, soccer, ice hockey, football, basketball etc.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Full-Field Game (can also stay with modified play early in stage depending on development)

Field Size

Modified field/Full Field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, using technical proficiency to further expand tactical decision-making and develop situational understanding.

STAGE 5: COMPETITIVE

15-18 YEARS OLD

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Technical and Tactical Development for Competition

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To optimize fitness preparation and individual, position and sport-specific skills to improve as a lacrosse player in a competitive setting. Develop mental aspects of performance, situational understanding/decision making, flexibility, and leadership skills.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Fun, rewards hard work, and improvement, values everyone's contribution to the team. Focus on individual planning and goal setting based on strengths and weakness for personal ability realization. Prepares the athlete for future success both on the field and off. Encourages autonomy, acceptance of responsibility and life lessons learned through lacrosse.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, strength, endurance, speed, plyometric/power, flexibility.

Technical (Skills) Development

Repetition of fundamental skills, curbing bad habits, innovating, tweaking, fine tuning. Mastering position specific skills and defensive skills.

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Extending tactical understanding of the game to a variety of situations in full-field settings. Developing decision-making skills, identifying patterns, make adjustments. Proficient at judging space and time, anticipating.

Psychological Development - working to support athletes in these areas...

Self-defined enjoyment and participation in the sport. Willingness to be flexible and try new things, accepting responsibility, respect, making good choices, leadership skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, mental toughness. Long-term goal setting and incremental steps to get there.

Social-Behavioral Development - we know that at this age athletes are...

Seeking independence without needing to ask permission all the time. Developing logical and deductive reasoning. Self-image is stabilizing but peers are very influential. Opportunity to explore and experiment within sport activity is important. Healthy adult/mentor relationships are beneficial.

Cognitive Development

Processing speed developed; able to select what they want to attend to. Can use abstract and logical thinking to make sense of the environment. Can problem solve systematically. Can learn complex plays and also find creative solutions. Can think abstractly.

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

40:60

Primary Objective of Training

To hone technical and tactical skills in a competitive environment. Model competitions in training, use progressions, embed conditioning, make all practice activities as game-like and intense as possible while reinforcing technical and tactical skills. Include player-led play and choice.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

18:1

Length of Sessions

Up to 120 minutes

Frequency*

Up to 4x a week during an 8-14 week season; periodization and full training plans begin to factor in.

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Some athletes will begin specializing in one sport at this stage. What is important is the broad base of diversified physical activity that is supportive of the athlete's goals and desires. Many athletes will still choose to compete in a variety of sports. Two sports is entirely appropriate. Periodization is important to ensure proper rest and recovery.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Full Field Game

Field Size

Full Field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, using technical proficiency to add creativity to game situations and further develop tactical decision-making. Learning to improve performance in a competitive setting.

STAGE 6: HIGH PERFORMANCE/COMPETE TO WIN

18 YEARS OLD +

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

Focus - Where we spend most of our time

Competing to Win-High Performance or Participation

Goals for this stage of development - What we are trying to achieve

To be in peak condition to perform on demand--mentally, physiologically, technically and tactically. To be an outstanding member of a team working toward the common goal of winning.

Player-centered environment - what it should look like

Enjoyable, focus on excellence and high effort. Character, leadership, contribution, qualities as a teammate as well as ability are valued. Coachability, flexibility, team over self, are valued. Pride in one's achievements.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Athletic Development

Agility, footwork, dynamic balance, strength, endurance, speed, flexibility.

Technical (Skills) Development

Full mastery of technical skills; developing ability to teach others. Focused on role-specific skills that benefit team as a whole.

Tactical (Strategy) Development

Working within a defined system. Extending understanding of the game and applying it to variety of contexts, rapid ability to make tactical decisions.

Psychological Development - working to support athletes in these areas...

Completely understands and accepts need for rules, regulation, planning and structure. Also sees long-term pay off of hard work and goal setting.

Social-Behavioral Development - we know that at this age athletes are...

Self-actualization and self-expression are important. Major decisions about life are of significant importance during this time. At this age there is also a high need to be self-directed and independent.

Cognitive Development

With fully developed cognition at this stage, coaches and players should include deliberate practice that exercises situational thinking and awareness.

TRAINING

Ratio of Training (Technical and Tactical Skill Development) to Competition + Competition Specific Preparation

30:70

Primary Objective of Training

To be fully prepared for the next competition.

Max Recommended Ratio (coach:player)

Determined by resources and level of program.

Length of Sessions

Determined by training/competition cycles and periodization planning.

Frequency*

Determined by training /competition cycles and periodization planning.

Multi-Sport Participation/Sport and physical activity diversification/Other sports and activities

Athletes at this stage have committed to lacrosse is their primary sport. However, balanced training, periodization and participation in complementary physical activity can be beneficial from a performance and mental standpoint. Athletes who have benefited from a long-term athlete development focused sport system will have a strong athletic base to carry them through life, even if their focus at this point is high performance lacrosse.

COMPETITION

Competition Structure

Full-Field Game

Field Size

Full Field

Developmental Purpose of Competition

FUN, achieving the best possible competitive outcome through fair and rigorous play.