

## Saanich Novice Lacrosse Rule Changes

In January 2019, the Vancouver Island Minor Lacrosse Commission voted to change the structure of Novice Lacrosse in two significant ways:

1. They removed tiering
2. Play by CLA Novice Rules Option "A".

This is a brief summary of why these changes were implemented.

The purpose of these changes was a desire to grow the sport at the development level. Associations across Canada and BC have seen lacrosse registration numbers on the decline. Although there are arguments for and against these changes, the majority of Vancouver Island associations voted in favour of these changes.

The rationale for these changes was as follows:

Regarding the removal of tiering, that is the dividing of players into A Teams, B Teams and House Teams, was specifically brought about in order to keep Novice as a Development Level. Novice is a division that sees a fairly large range of skill levels, from the first stage beginner up to the player who "sleeps with their stick". In moving to a model of balanced teams instead of tiered, the intention is that player development will improve as the new player will have someone who can actually throw the ball to their stick (as they will be playing with better players) and the Associations will benefit as they will be able to spread their more experienced coaches amongst the division. The Associations have committed to creating balanced teams and should an Association not follow through on this the division commissioner can suspend league play until this has occurred.

Will the better players suffer? There maybe frustration by the lack of skill of the newer player, but that's where the adults, parents, and coaches need to step in and encourage the better players to be leaders and be part of the development process. This sport is about the kids, all the kids, and as an association we need to be developing all the players.

Regarding the removal of contact, the Island Commission chose to adopt "Option A" of the CLA Novice Rules as they relate to contact. They are as follows:

### **Contact**

- a) Defensive players may place their stick on the ball-carrier and push them away.
- b) Any offensive player (including the ball-carrier) who deliberately charged directly at a defensive player may be assessed a charging penalty
- c) There is to be no body-checking
- d) A defensive player may check an offensive player by placing their stick head on an opposing player's stick head

This does not mean that all contact will be removed from the game. What it will do is move the game at this development level to one where the coaches can teach the fundamentals of the game without the players having to also be concerned about protecting themselves from an aggressive hit. Part (a) of these rules is what is call “place and push” and that teaching the players at this level to “place and push” instead of “hit” will lead to less back-checking penalties, safer play and players who play better positionally. They will have to move their feet to get into position instead of relying on a cross-check to regain possession. The other advantage to this change is it will enable the referees (who are often less experienced at the Novice level) to better control the game as there will be fewer questions about whether a check was “clean” or not. The draw-backs to this change come in two forms, first when our Novice players travel to the Mainland for tournaments and secondly when second year Novice players move up to Pee wee. Regarding tournament play, the solution the Association is considering is to make up a tournament team and have an extra practice for them with a cross-checking component in those practices. This will enable the players to properly learn how to perform a clean cross-check as well as how to protect themselves when they are being checked. The Association will endeavour to hold cross-checking clinics near the end of the season for the second year players and then starting the Pee wee season with refresher for all the players.

The Saanich Lacrosse Executive recognizes that these are major changes to the Novice Division, however the Executive is committed to implementing the changes as members of the Vancouver Island Minor Lacrosse Commission.