

# SPORTS FEATURE

## York lacrosse lobbies for OUAA status

By JAMES HOGGETT

*If asked the question, "What is Canada's national sport?" most Canadians would probably reply, "Hockey." As logical as this answer may sound, the truth is that Canada's national sport is the little-known game of lacrosse.*

Lacrosse is one of the oldest games in North America. Developed from the Canadian Indian game of baggaway, it was played for centuries before the white settlers of Canada adopted and standardized the game.

In later years, when French Canadians adapted this Indian sport, they referred to it as *la crosse*, because the netted stick used by the Indians

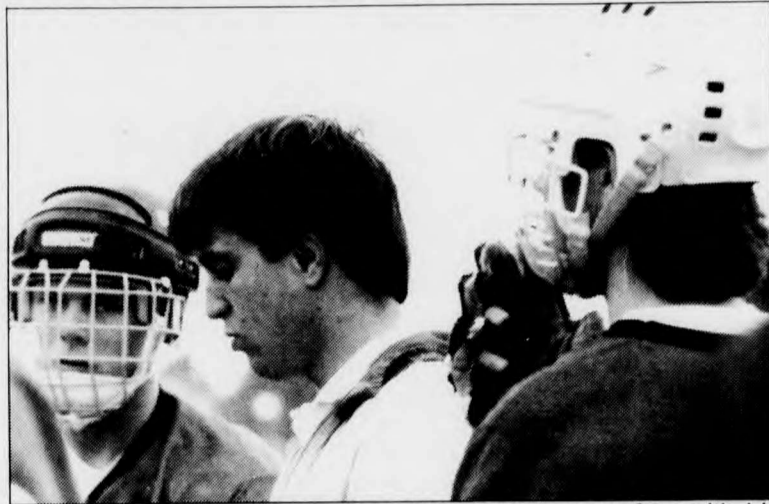
resembled a bishop's crosier.

Just as most Canadians don't know the truth about their national sport, most students at York are unaware that this university has been fielding a lacrosse team for over three years.

York, in fact, hosted the first university lacrosse tournament three years ago. At that time, there were only three teams participating: York, Toronto, and Western. Western emerged the champions of that first tournament, defeating U of T in the finals. Though poorly organized, the tournament did accomplish what it set out to do—introduce lacrosse at the university level.

At that time there were no official rules for the newly-formed lacrosse league. Instead, the league elected to adopt the same general rules as were applied by other Ontario leagues.

This decision presented some problems, as most of the players had participated previously in box lacrosse rather than field lacrosse leagues. Box lacrosse is the same as field lacrosse, except that it is played on a hockey rink and allows more physical contact (for instance,



**YORK POW-WOW:** Player/coach Dennis Kehoe confers with his team on the sidelines. Kehoe has been involved with lacrosse since grade 12.

cross-checking). Field lacrosse is considered more of a "gentleman's game" and is quite popular in many Ivy League schools in the United States.

Currently at York, lacrosse is known simply as a club, as the league has not yet been sanctioned by the Ontario University Athletic Association (OUAA). Last spring the OUAA denied lacrosse varsity status, saying that there wasn't enough money at the time to fund the league properly.

With its expansion to eight teams this year, the league has been divided into east and west divisions. The east consists of York, Toronto, Carleton, and Queen's, while Waterloo, McMaster, Brock and Western are in the west.

"Right now we're charging our own players a \$20 player fee," says Dennis Kehoe, the York lacrosse team's player/coach. "This fee goes to pay for referees, tournament fees and field rentals."

Clubs at the other Universities are in a similar position, with the exception of Queen's, which held a student referendum last year and managed to get about 20 cents out of each student activity fee.

"Players at York usually have to supply their own equipment," says Kehoe. "We're going to be holding some dances once the season is over to raise money for next year. The money that we earn from this will go to cover our costs on road trips. In the past guys have had to pay for gas out of their own pockets." Part of the money will go to the purchasing of proper equipment.

"A lot of the guys use the same equipment as they use in hockey, the only difference (being) the stick. The elbow pads, gloves, helmets are all basically the same, but we would eventually like to see only one type of equipment used," says Kehoe. A third year Economics major from Oshawa, Kehoe has played lacrosse since grade 12.

"I played a few other sports in high school but lacrosse emerged as the sport that I was best at," he says. "When I got to University I tried out for the varsity basketball team but I just wasn't good enough, and so I

was basically left without a sport. Then I found out there was a lacrosse team starting up. I came out the next day and played in a tournament."

"We don't have a real high profile on campus," says Kehoe, "but we're trying to raise that, especially this year."

Part of the problem last year, when the league was denied sanctioning, was that many of the schools just didn't have enough money to support a new team.

"The reason for turning us down," says Kehoe, "was that if we

"The biggest problem facing the league right now is funding," says Rakosy. "We have an upcoming trip to Ottawa where we play Queen's on Saturday, then we have to drive to Ottawa that night, stay overnight in a hotel that we have to pay for out of our own pockets, then play Carleton the next morning."

"The whole trip could cost each athlete over \$100," says Rakosy. "It makes it hard for the players to play lacrosse because it's costing them so much out of their pockets, as well as their time."

The York team is undefeated this year with a record of 1-0-2, putting them second in the league with a game in hand on the rest of the division.

This weekend the league is holding its second All Ontario Championship Tournament at the University of Toronto's Erindale College campus. Brock University is the defending champion.

"We were scheduled to play at Lamport Stadium," says Rakosy, "but that was cancelled because the league didn't have the funds for the stadium rental. We had to be rescheduled to play at Erindale, which is out in the middle of nowhere."

"Just think about the other teams coming in from Queen's, Carleton, Western or Brock. What are they going to do?" says Rakosy. "It's not

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did make lacrosse a varsity sport they (wanted) to do it right—have the proper equipment, have the teams travelling in buses and give us some publicity."

"I think the game and the league definitely has a future," says Kehoe's teammate Rick Rakosy, a fourth-year History major and former eight-year veteran of box lacrosse who has played field lacrosse for York veteran of box lacrosse who has played field lacrosse for York for two years.

like downtown Toronto, where they would have everything close by."

Kehoe is hoping that once things get rolling in the right direction things will work out a little better.

"Once we get a little support from the universities then people might take us more seriously," she says. "And once people start taking us more seriously and getting more committed, then the people at the OUAA will take us seriously, see that our athletes are committed, and hopefully give us a chance."



**LEARNING TO CRAWL:** York lacrosse player Shaun Clements is temporarily down and out, but ready to spring into action. Lacrosse currently only has club status but is hoping to be sanctioned for next season.



**ON THE PROWL:** York lacrosse player Rob McMalsky eyes an oncoming opponent. This weekend they travel to Erindale to compete in the all Ontario championships.

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