



Indians on their Horses making Lacrosse Sticks at the Lally Factory at Cornwall.

MAKING OF A LACROSSE STICK

By P. J. LALLY

LACROSSE is probably the most exciting and interesting game known to the athletic world. Although only about forty-five years of age as a white man's pastime, it has nevertheless been played by the Indians for many years. In its old forms many Indians took part, and with two curious-looking sticks carried by each player the game moved fast over the red man's playground. For many years it was entirely unknown to the white man. The late Dr. W. George Beers, who is known as the father of lacrosse in Canada, took hold of the game about forty-five years ago and reduced it to the middle stages of perfection, which stamped it as the premier of outdoor games. Clubs began to spring up in Cornwall, St. Regis, Montreal, Caughnawaga and Ottawa, and these places were the pioneers in establishing the popularity of the game. Then the city of Toronto fell into line. In those days the Indian was the peer, if not the superior of the white man. Upon the visit of the Prince of Wales, late King Edward, to Canada, a lacrosse game was one of the principal sporting events on the programme in his honour, and he

thoroughly enjoyed witnessing the combat between the redskins and the palefaces, as the whites are called by the red men. Soon after this the game began to spread and became one of science, instead of one of speed and endurance, and to-day when played by members of the big leagues, it is one of the headiest and most scientific games known to athletes. Sharp, short passing and combination work has taken the place of endurance.

Strange as it may seem, while the white men have mastered the redskins at playing the game, no paleface has yet become proficient in the art of making a lacrosse stick. The Indian is naturally a born whittler and as soon as he is able to handle a knife is found at work whittling a piece of hickory.

The making of a lacrosse stick is far more difficult than a look at it would indicate. First, the greatest care is exercised in the selection of the wood, which must be of the choicest quality of second growth hickory, cut in November or December. From the time the tree is felled until the lacrosse is strung up ready for shipment requires generally about four months. In years gone by most of the lacrosse sticks were made in the redskin's huts, but as the Indian is not painstaking if not compelled to be, the sticks were turned out before they were thoroughly seasoned and generally lost their shape. The Lally Lacrosse Manufacturing Company, of Cornwall, which has always been the largest handlers of lacrosses, saw that goods turned out in this manner were hurting the trade and established a factory at Cornwall, the only one in the world, and brought the Indians under their own supervision. At first many difficulties were encountered, as the Indians were very reluctant to give up the freedom of their huts, and the "work-when-I-feel-like-it" habit that is so characteristic of the race, but when once removed from their dirty wigwams and housed in comfortable quarters by the Lally Company, they soon began to take up with the new life and now work about eight months out of the year; the other four they devote to fishing and trapping. This is almost a necessity, as the constant bending over while whittling contracts the muscles of the stomach and they are obliged to lay off for a rest. This factory now turns out about 90 per cent. of the world's lacrosse output. Only the butt or six feet of the hickory tree is used in the manufacture of lacrosse sticks, the balance being too brittle to take the sharp curves, even though thoroughly steamed. When the wood is brought to the factory it is split up into strings $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide and shaped up with a draw-knife ready for the bending forms. They are then air dried for from two to three weeks, so that the steam will penetrate the wood. When the sap is considered

to be all out of the wood it is placed in a steamer and when soft, bent over a form and wired. The stick is allowed to stand for six weeks so that it will keep its shape when the wires are removed. The process of bending is one that requires the greatest care, and can only be done by men of long experience, as, if a shape is not properly bent it is impossible to get a perfectly-formed lacrosse, no matter how much work is put on the shape. After the wires are removed, the sticks are taken to the gougers and a portion removed about the middle of the stick, so that the backs can be steamed and bent. They are again allowed to season in this manner for some weeks. The stick is then rounded about the handle sufficiently to allow it to be douled. When douled they are passed along to workmen known as backshapers, after which the inside is taken out by a draw-knife and the stick is passed along to the men who whittle the most important part of the stick, which is at the different bends. That is where the really fine points of lacrosse-making come in. At this particular part of the lacrosses there are many different curves and



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