

LEVELED Book • S

# Lacrosse

Written by Stanley Hollis

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## Focus Question

How is lacrosse similar to and different from other popular sports?

# Words to Know

acrobatic  
ancient  
athletic  
cradle  
exceed

goalie  
humanitarian  
popularity  
reservation

Front cover: A professional player from Boston runs with the ball during a match with a Canadian team.

Back cover: Women reach for the ball during a college competition.

Title page: High school players face off in a match in New Mexico.

Page 3: High school players scramble for the ball in a match in Oregon.

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Spectacular Sports  
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A Cornell University player runs with the ball in a lacrosse match against Syracuse University.

## A Spectacular Game

The teamwork of basketball, the excitement of World Cup soccer, and the speed of ice hockey are all part of the exciting sport of lacrosse. Fans agree that watching or playing lacrosse is an amazing experience, and there are teams popping up everywhere. The sport's growing **popularity** shows us that the **ancient** game of lacrosse is still here and will be around for a long time.

## Where Does Lacrosse Come From?

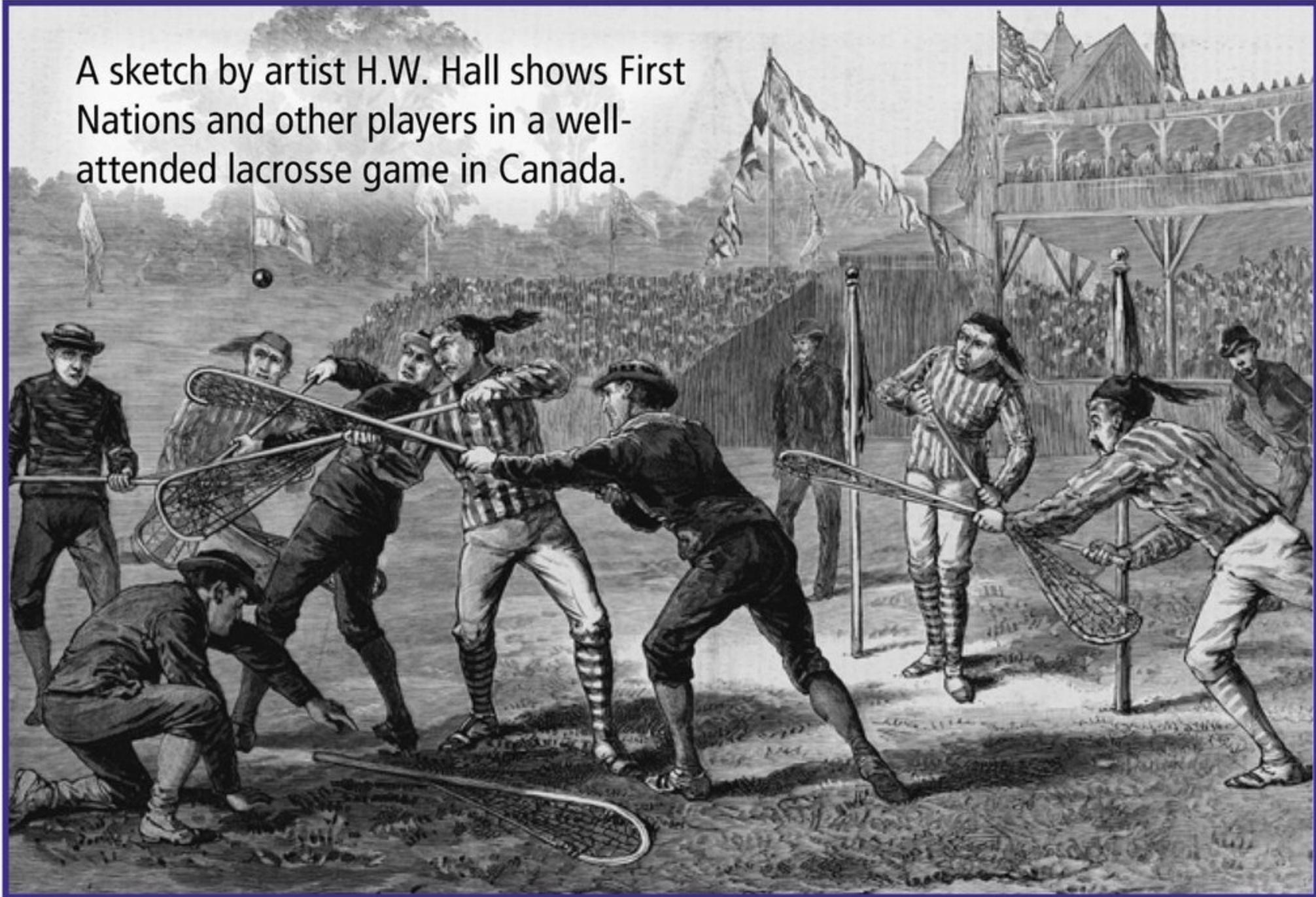
Lacrosse started in the St. Lawrence River Valley in present-day Canada. It was played by First Nations (Native) people in the region. Over time, the game spread to tribes to the west and south. Different people called the game different names.

The game was very different from modern lacrosse. The sides would rarely have fewer than one hundred players and could have as many as one thousand! The “field,” or the area they played in, could cover miles. The way they played, however, was almost the same. Most tribes used curved sticks that were 3 to 4 feet (0.9–1.2 m) long, with nets attached to pass, carry, and shoot a ball.

Early lacrosse competitions were huge and could last up to three days.



A sketch by artist H.W. Hall shows First Nations and other players in a well-attended lacrosse game in Canada.

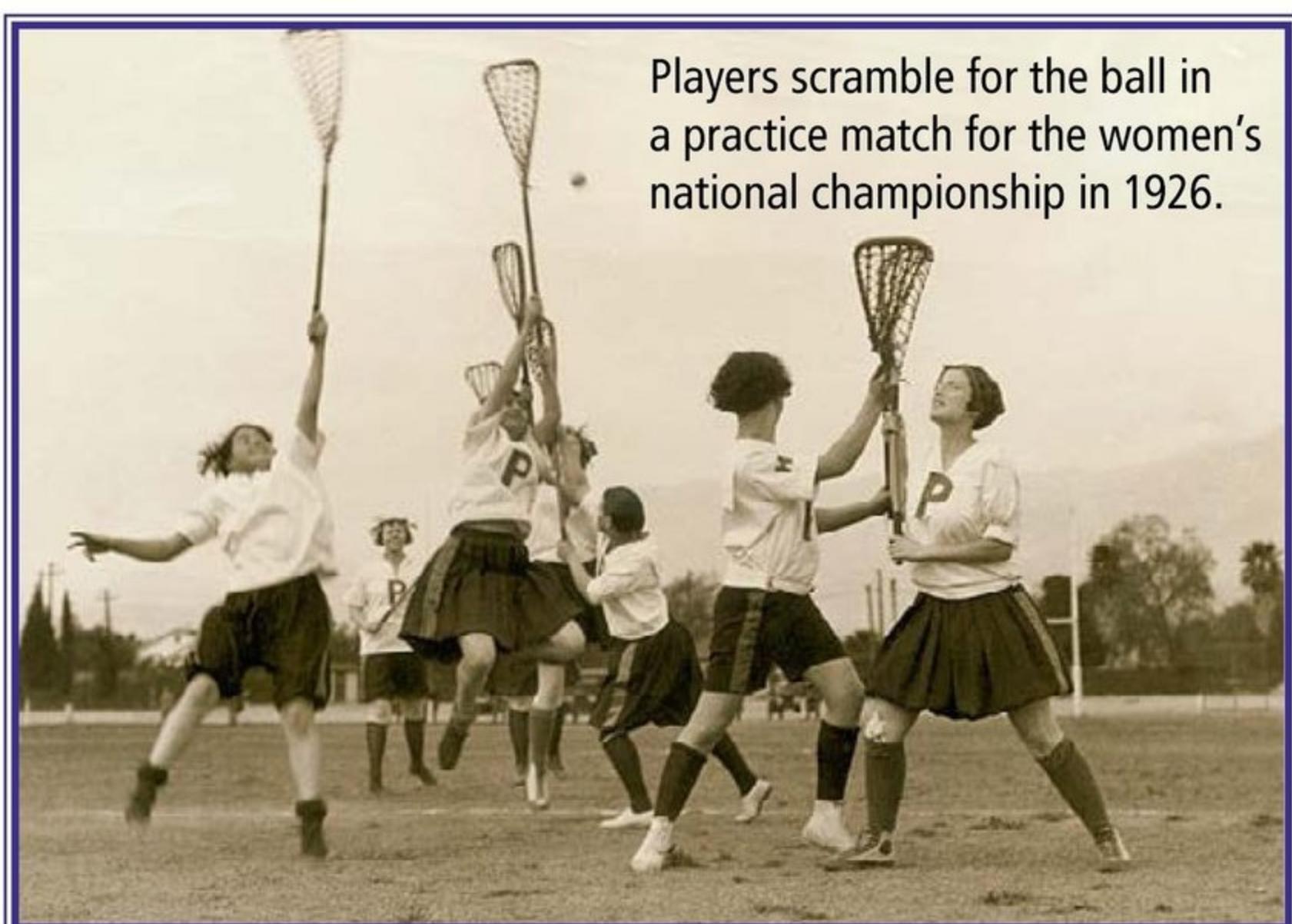


Lacrosse was important to First Nations people. They believed the game pleased their creator. In fact, many tribes called it *the Creator's game*. Lacrosse made young men brave and strong. Sometimes, they played to settle arguments or to celebrate friendships.

French people who settled in present-day Canada watched First Nations people play lacrosse. Soon, there were both white and First Nations lacrosse clubs in Canada. In 1860, a man named George Beers wrote down the rules of the game. Because the game we play today is based on his rules, Beers is called the “father of modern lacrosse.”

Schools in the United States began playing lacrosse in the 1870s. Students mostly played lacrosse in private schools and colleges in the Northeast. People considered it a gentleman's sport that was played for the love of the game. As a result, many athletes who might have been great at lacrosse had no interest in it. They wanted to play sports where they could achieve fame and fortune.

Another reason lacrosse wasn't popular in the United States was a lack of sticks, known as crosses. Until the 1970s, lacrosse sticks were handmade only by certain First Nations tribes. When cheaper sticks made of lightweight metal hit the market, lacrosse started to take off.



## Global Lacrosse



### Lacrosse for Everyone

Today, people all over the world enjoy lacrosse. Teams typically play outdoor lacrosse games in football stadiums. There is also a version of the game called *box lacrosse* that is played indoors.

The Federation of International Lacrosse holds men's and women's World Championship games every four years. There are two leagues in North America. Major League Lacrosse is for outdoor lacrosse, and the National Lacrosse League is for box lacrosse. Both men's and women's teams play lacrosse in colleges throughout the United States and Canada.

In North America, lacrosse is growing most rapidly at the youth, junior high school, and high school levels. As more young athletes discover the game, its popularity at the college and national levels will certainly increase.

In the past, there were small lacrosse-playing areas outside of North America, in Australia and England. Over the last thirty years, though, lacrosse has been growing in popularity throughout Europe and Asia, and all over the globe. Lacrosse may one day become the next huge international sport.



Lacrosse was included in the Summer Olympics twice, in 1904 and 1908. This photo shows the Canadian winners in 1908.

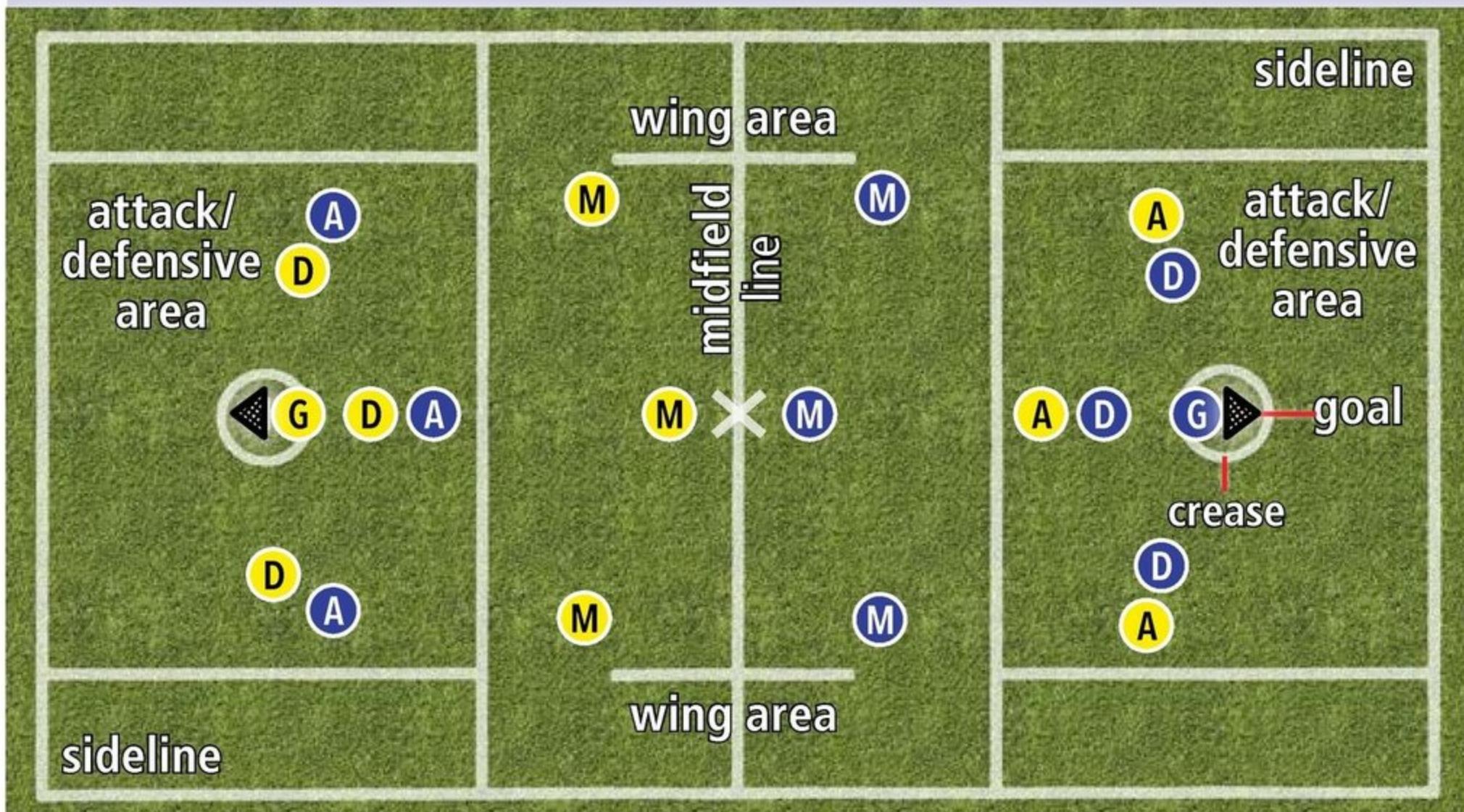
## Some Rules of the Game

The most special thing about lacrosse is the crosse itself—the stick every player uses to **cradle**, catch, pass, and shoot the lacrosse ball. *Cradling* is the back-and-forth motion of a crosse head that keeps the ball in place while a player runs. No one but the **goalie** may touch the ball with his or her hands (just like soccer). The shaft of a crosse is between 2 and 5 feet (0.6–1.5 m) long, and at the top is a curved head that is fitted with a net.



Goalkeepers also wear throat protectors and more chest protection.

## Men's Lacrosse Field



(A) attacker   (D) defender   (G) goalkeeper   (M) midfielder

Women's lacrosse fields have fewer markings. There are ten players on men's teams and twelve on women's.

A lacrosse field is about the size of an American football field. In men's lacrosse, there is an X in the center of the field. This is where opposing players face off at the beginning of every period of the game and after a goal is scored. Each men's team has ten players on the field. Three attackers stay on the opposing team's half of the field. Three defenders stay on their side of the field. Three players called *midfielders* cover the entire field. Finally, each team has a goalkeeper.



Goalies have to be fast and brave to stop powerful shots. Their crosses have bigger heads than those of the rest of the team.

A team wins the game by scoring the most goals—shooting the ball into the other team's net. Games last one hour. Men's lacrosse has four fifteen-minute quarters; the women's game is separated into two halves. Another difference is that in women's lacrosse, each side has twelve players on the field instead of ten.

The most exciting thing about any game of lacrosse is speed. The fast running and complex teamwork of the players is amazing. Goal shots can easily **exceed** 100 miles (161 km) per hour. Watch out!

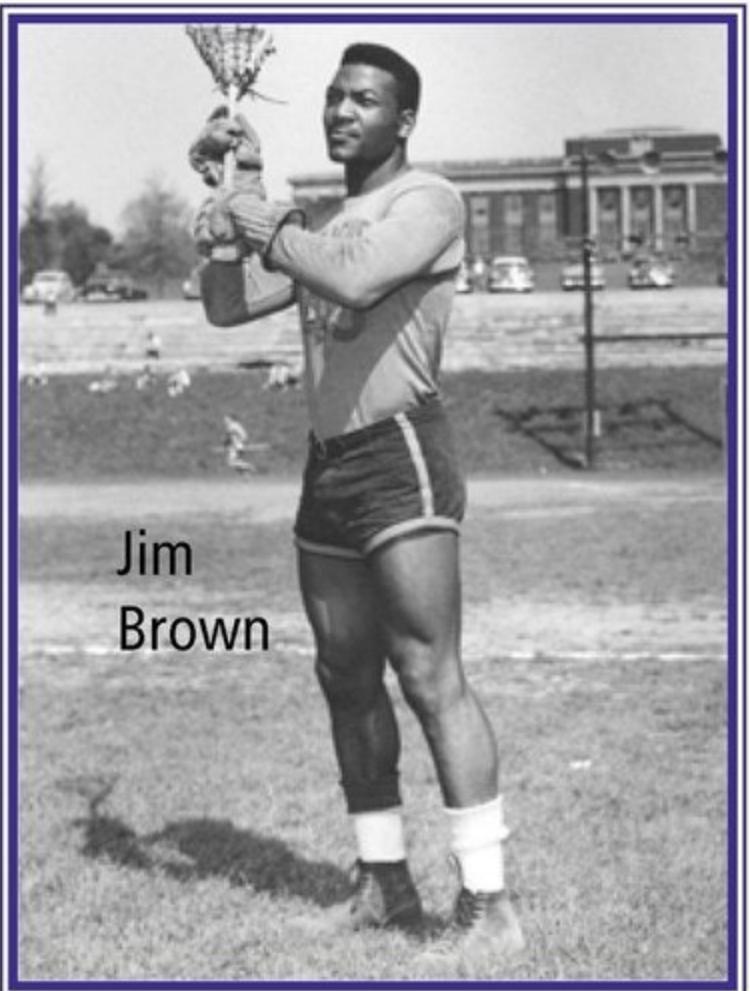
## Famous Players

Oren Lyons, who grew up on a **reservation**, was a goalkeeper for Syracuse University and an All-American athlete. However, it was after his sporting career that he went on to do his most important work. Oren is a great **humanitarian** who helps to lead organizations that represent people everywhere.



Oren  
Lyons

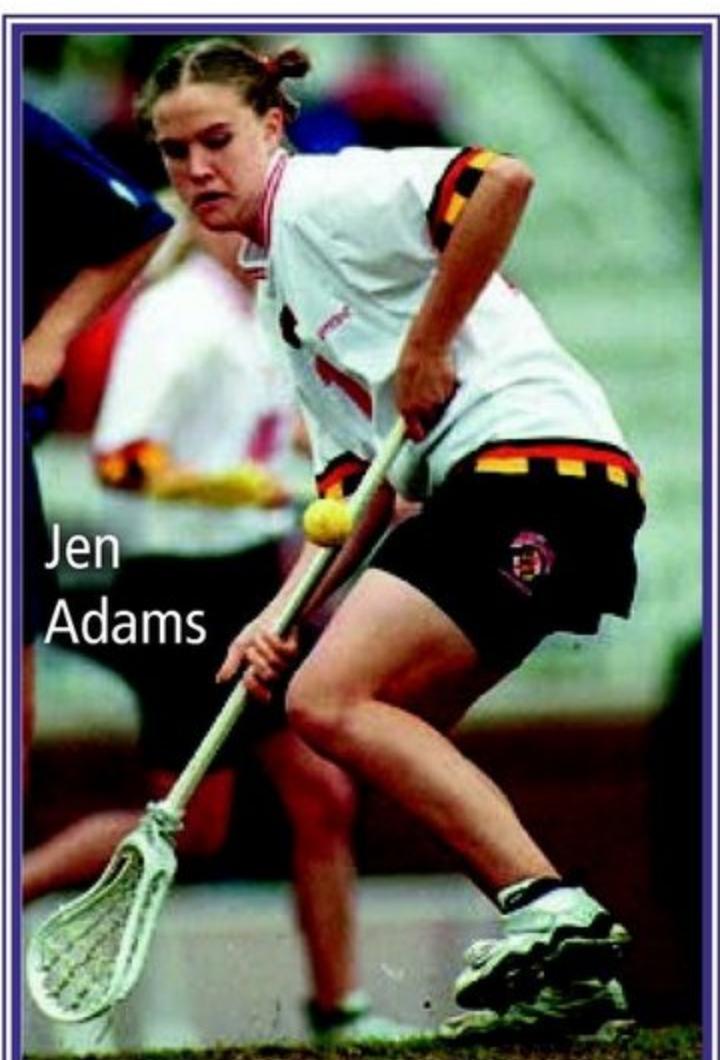
Oren Lyons was recently asked to throw the ball before a game began at Syracuse University.



Jim  
Brown

Many people have heard of Jim Brown, an American football legend who won many awards during his career. What most people don't know is that Jim's first love was lacrosse. He is considered by many to be America's greatest lacrosse player ever. Jim believed the game was the best one for his great **athletic** talents, and over the years, he told people that lacrosse was his favorite sport.

Jen Adams is an Australian who came to America and played college lacrosse. She broke many records and many people think she is the greatest female lacrosse player ever. She was fast on the field, a good sport, and a great teammate. Jen is a college lacrosse coach today, and as recently as 2009, she played for the Australian team at the Women's Lacrosse World Cup.



Jen  
Adams

## A Game for All Times

More than ever in the long history of lacrosse, the game is catching fire—especially as a youth sport. The pace, excitement, and rich history of the game make it appealing to young athletes today.

Some sports fans love the speed of hockey or the complicated teamwork and ball passing of soccer. Others love watching the **acrobatic** plays in basketball. In the future, fans may discover all of those things in the single spectacular sport of lacrosse.



High school teams compete in a match in the Oregon High School Lacrosse Association. The sport is more popular now than ever.

## Glossary

<b>acrobatic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	demonstrating or involving leaping, tumbling, or other physical skills (p. 15)
<b>ancient</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	from a very long time ago (p. 4)
<b>athletic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to speed, strength, and skill or sports (p. 14)
<b>cradle</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to gently hold or support someone or something (p. 10)
<b>exceed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to go beyond (p. 12)
<b>goalie</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a defensive player whose job is to keep the ball or puck from entering his or her team's goal (p. 10)
<b>humanitarian</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who helps people, especially by eliminating their pain and suffering (p. 13)
<b>popularity</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the state of being liked and supported by many people (p. 4)
<b>reservation</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	land set aside by government for Native Americans (p. 13)

# Lacrosse

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,084

## Connections

### Writing

What do you think are the three most important characteristics that successful lacrosse players need to have? Write a paper defending your choices. Be sure to include facts from the book.

### Social Studies

Conduct further research on the early form of lacrosse that many Native Americans called *the Creator's game*. Using a Venn diagram, compare modern lacrosse and early lacrosse.

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