

Iowa Lacrosse Association

Annual Report

2019-2020



Introduction

The Iowa Lacrosse Association (ILAX) has recently completed its second year. Looking back over the past 2019-20 season, our organization and member clubs faced a number of challenges. These challenges culminated with the historic coronavirus pandemic that has radically altered all our plans and efforts, and clouded the immediate future.

Despite the pandemic essentially wiping out the entire spring season, we are happy to report that your Association with your support has had some successes this past year. Guided by our mission to grow the game, we helped clubs with coach training, officials training, and getting lacrosse started in the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids area.

What follows is a brief summary of the “state of the game” in Iowa, some details about the Association’s efforts over the past year, and some preliminary thoughts on what ILAX plans to focus on in the near future.

State of the game

ILAX membership remains at six of the seven organized clubs in the state (Ames, Ankeny, Meskwaki Settlement, Quad Cities, Waukee and West Des Moines), and we hope some day to include the seventh organization.

Besides the seven, there are two other youth lacrosse groups in Iowa that offer lacrosse on a limited basis (Adel Youth Girls and Roosevelt HS Girls). Overall, these nine groups had a total of 556 players registered this past spring before the season was cancelled.

Here’s a quick breakdown of spring 2020 registrations for all Iowa programs by total player counts:

Adel (youth girls)	17
Ames (boys only)	19
Ankeny	123
Dubuque (boys only)	27
Meskwaki Settlement	56
Quad Cities	50
Roosevelt High School (girls only)	20
Waukee (boys only)	116
West Des Moines	131
Total Statewide	556

Despite the pandemic cutting short the season and each club’s registration periods, the number of players registering this past season in Iowa went up 10% — 556 players versus 506 a year ago. We believe the collective numbers would have grown significantly had the season and each club’s registration period played out.

However, these numbers are not the full extent of lacrosse participation in Iowa. There have been several fledgling parks & rec programs offered in the past year with several other cities planning to offer them as early as this past spring and summer. More commentary on these programs will follow later.

The number of college lacrosse programs in Iowa has grown to include 11 men's and/or women's programs including Clark University, Cornell College, Dordt College (club), Iowa State University (club), University of Iowa (club), Loras College, Morningside College, St. Ambrose University, University of Dubuque, Upper Iowa University, Wartburg College, and William Penn University. ILAX hopes to develop closer relationships with these programs in the future as increasing numbers of Iowa high school seniors are making their way onto college rosters.

ILAX goals & progress

The Association had success in pursuit of several goals this past year:

Support coach development — Due to the growth of the sport, new coaches are sorely needed, and the number of experienced youth lacrosse coaches in the state is very limited. Clubs often rely on parents to assume that role and find training support very helpful. This past January ILAX sponsored Level 1 & 2 US Lacrosse coaching clinics in Des Moines. The clinics saw an outstanding turnout with 71 registrations including several coaches taking both levels. ILAX again thanks the clubs and US Lacrosse for their support. We hope to offer these clinics again in the future.



Level 1 US Lacrosse Coaching Development Clinic participants last January in Des Moines.

Recruit and train officials — Due to a shortage of Iowa-based officials, ILAX has been helping recruit and train new officials. Local official Kevin Hawn of Des Moines has led the effort for the men's game, and ILAX board member and West Des Moines coach, Meghan Gruver, has spear-headed the women's game effort.

ILAX has helped get the word out about this critical need and then plays a role in supporting the training. Kevin and the Association have found that the best mens game candidates come from existing officials of other sports like football, basketball, and hockey. Working with Kevin and Chris Brescia, Regional Officials Coordinator with US Lacrosse, arrangements were made for classroom training in Des Moines in February with on-field training to follow.



US Lacrosse Officials Development training at WDM Valley High School on March 6.

The goal was to get a handful of local officials certified to do high school games at the JV level to start. Kent Holm, an officials trainer from Omaha, provided the classroom training, and ILAX worked with central Iowa clubs to arrange for high school boys scrimmages in early March which provided the on-field observation and evaluation component.

On the women's side, Meghan worked with Rena Whitehouse, a US Lacrosse official from Omaha to make arrangements for training. Candidates involved interested parents and high school players. Classroom training was provided in West Des Moines in February, and a few candidates were able to get on-field training at some indoor lacrosse games in Lincoln, NE a couple weeks later. While both efforts represent a good start, we still need more officials and will continue to work towards that end.



US Lacrosse Officials Development training for women's game in February.

Grow the game in Iowa City/Cedar Rapids area — ILAX was formed principally to grow the game in the state, and since its inception has targeted this part of Iowa to get youth lacrosse started. We started with approaching city parks & rec departments in the area and encouraging them to offer lacrosse as part of their youth recreation programs.

The number of cities doing so has grown primarily due to three things: ILAX board member Jeff Kueter and his efforts; equipment grant support from US Lacrosse; and ILAX's relationship with the Iowa Parks & Recreation Association (IAPRA). Jeff lives in Iowa City and has been working with the participating communities of Iowa City, Coralville, Center Point, Mt. Vernon, and Solon to help coordinate their efforts. This includes applying for US Lacrosse equipment grants and finding coaches and players to run their clinics and programs.

Also, our association conducted a fall IAPRA workshop in Ames helping cities with ideas and available resources. The workshop generated some leads which are leading to beginning lacrosse programs being considered elsewhere.

Expand communications within important stakeholders — ILAX has developed relationships with all youth lacrosse organizations in the state. As mentioned earlier, all but one organized club are now members of the Association and are represented on the Board of Directors. Several others in the Iowa lacrosse community have contacted ILAX, and many have attended ILAX board meetings in the past.

We have also developed a strong relationship with US Lacrosse. An ILAX article about lacrosse in Iowa appeared in the national organization's magazine last summer. USL representative Shawn Maloney visited the Association last fall shortly after assignment to our state, and has developed a regular dialogue with ILAX. Shawn has helped with several of our initiatives including the approval of a number of equipment grants to Iowa-based groups.



Shawn Maloney of US Lacrosse (center) meets with local lacrosse leaders in West Des Moines.

As mentioned earlier, ILAX has a solid relationship with IAPRA and we hope to do more with this state organization going forward including attending their annual convention. Our Association also met with Tom Keating, executive director of the Iowa High School Athletic Association, to introduce ourselves and bring the boys association up to speed on the growth of lacrosse and our hopes to develop better relations with schools and athletic directors around the state. ILAX also plans to meet with the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union.

Expand youth competitive league — In the spring of 2019 ILAX helped form a competitive league for U14 and U12 boys. Our league administrator, ILAX board member Sean Mahoney, worked with the managers from seven clubs in the state to schedule games in either a league format or as part of multi-game jamborees on a couple of college fields around the state.



Place-winning U14 teams at the Iowa Games in Ankeny last June

League play culminated with the championship playoffs as part of the Iowa Games in Ankeny in early June. Before this past season was cut short by the pandemic, the Association was working toward offering a similar league structure in 2020 with the hope of expanding to 10U if enough clubs fielded teams. There was also some discussion about helping MS/Youth Girls teams with some scheduling.

Future ILAX efforts

Here's a brief summary of what the board will focus on in the next year:

Response to the pandemic — At the time of this writing, it remains unclear when youth sports including lacrosse will resume play, and what that resumption would look like when it happens. ILAX is acting as platform for club leaders to exchange ideas on how to deal with many of the issues involved. US Lacrosse has recently provided safety guidelines on how to resume play. The CDC, federal, state and local governments, school districts, and state high school athletic associations are all weighing in with requirements and guidance which each club will need to consider when making plans to return to the field.

We recently held a Zoom meeting with central Iowa club leaders where ideas were shared and resources identified. Those clubs are planning for youth lacrosse in some form resuming this fall assuming schools are open and sports are allowed, and they hope to coordinate their efforts to make that happen. ILAX is hopeful that in addition to helping clubs react to the pandemic challenge, it can continue its efforts with most of the goals established last year as they will take time to accomplish. It also will tackle a couple of additional goals in the coming year.

Continue to recruit/train officials — After our inaugural effort this past winter, ILAX needs to continue to attract new officials and offer training. We will continue to rely on US Lacrosse for training assistance. Please spread the word about this great opportunity to become a lacrosse official for little or no cost, and offering competitive fees and flexible scheduling.

Support Iowa City/Cedar Rapids efforts — The Association has a nice start getting lacrosse established in this part of the state. Jeff Kueter has begun to identify individuals in the area willing to help organize an established, ongoing lacrosse program that provides a “pathway to play” which is emerging as parks & rec programs are getting kids interested in playing the

sport. In addition to Jeff's leadership, ILAX will help with any other aspects needed to make that happen.

Support league play — Assuming conditions permit, we plan to offer a 14U/12U/10U Boys League next spring. As before ILAX will handle the coordination and scheduling of games, and make arrangements for officials. Again, a girls middle school/youth division might start if there's enough interest and participation. We also hope to make ILAX involvement more visible at the larger jamboree or play day events during the season.

Expand visibility around the state — ILAX members are trying to develop relationships with their area school districts. Schools are key to gaining field space, access to students, and recognition in their communities. Athletic directors are important contacts to have. ILAX had planned to have a booth at the Iowa High School Athletic Directors Association convention in Coralville this past March, but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. We plan to attend in March 2021. The Association also hopes to connect with the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union.

Develop relationships with college programs — To date ILAX has had limited contact with most college programs in Iowa. The board feels it's important to work with all Iowa collegiate programs to grow the game and strengthen relationships with member clubs. We hope to schedule on-campus visits with college coaches around the state to assess their interest in working with the Association and possible membership at some point.

Solicit more help — As ILAX takes on more initiatives and responsibilities for the benefit of its members, we will need more manpower from member clubs. We definitely need your help with future initiatives. ILAX is considering creating new support roles as well as committees within the Association and will look to member clubs to fill them. Let us know if you can help.

Financial Status

As of this writing, ILAX has \$4,871.53 in its checking account. Last August the Association approached member clubs and requested \$5,539 in annual fees to cover its 2019-20 budget. This worked out to be about \$12.60 per registered player for each member club. ILAX had planned to collect additional fees for the spring league to cover officials and trainer fees, but the season was cancelled and no collection was made. With the season cancelled and the cancellation of a couple of conventions where ILAX planned to promote the sport, we did not spend what we thought we would spend resulting in extra funds at this juncture. This surplus will be factored into future membership fee requests.

Conclusion

Despite an unprecedented set-back from the COVID19 pandemic, your Association had a successful second year. ILAX will continue to focus on bringing the Iowa lacrosse community together to support each other, and look for opportunities to promote lacrosse and introduce the game to under-served parts of the state. We greatly appreciate the support of our member clubs.

This report is submitted by the board of directors of the Iowa Lacrosse Association:

Beech Turner, President, West Des Moines
Dave Hankins, Vice President, Ankeny
Meghan Gruver, Secretary, West Des Moines
Bruce Maxwell, Treasurer, Ames
Rich Jespersen, Ankeny
Jeff Kueter, Iowa City
Sean Mahoney, Waukee
Vince McGee, Quad Cities
Britt Mitchell, Meskwaki Settlement
Tim Mohrfeld, Waukee
Marc Shulman, Ames



“Helping grow the game”