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Players, fans flock to tourney

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ST. CHARLES -- On and off the field, Rocco Clark and his grandmother, Nancy Arenson, have come a long way in two years when it comes to **lacrosse**.

For 18-year-old Clark, West Chicago **Lacrosse** Club's varsity goalie, it has been an education filled with bumps and bruises from protecting the net.

On the sidelines, Arenson has supported her grandson by trying to learn what she can from watching the sport that at times can look like football, hockey and soccer combined.

"I've learned more this weekend," Arenson said as she watched Clark play goal in West Chicago's sixth game of the second annual Rocks on the Fox **Lacrosse** Tournament. "He loves it."

Hosted by the St. Charles Boys **Lacrosse** Club and the West Chicago **Lacrosse** Club, the tournament drew 25 teams from Illinois and Wisconsin to what organizers described as a competitive and well-attended event.

"The competition has been very good," St. Charles **lacrosse** President Kevin Leary said.

Saturday's 36 games featured two overtime games, including one that went through five extra periods, Leary added.

Teams played in varsity, junior varsity and "new team" levels at East High, St. Charles' East Side Sports Complex and in West Chicago on Saturday and Sunday.

In Sunday's varsity championship game, 2004 champion Neuqua Valley knocked off St. Charles 4-2 to claim the 2005 title. Earlier Sunday, St. Charles defeated Clark's West Chicago squad.

On the junior varsity level, Barrington won the title game over Sandburg 6-1.

According to Leary, the event's growth from 14 teams in

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2004 to 25 teams -- and to an estimated attendance of 3,000 people -- over the weekend is indicative of **lacrosse's** rising popularity in the Midwest.

"It's a very dominating sport on the East Coast," Leary said, adding that more club teams are appearing in Illinois.

Lacrosse is not sanctioned by the Illinois High School Association, meaning clubs such as St. Charles must support themselves "100 percent on our own" financially and in other ways, Leary said.

"You have to have a tremendous amount of parental support," he said.

West Chicago coach Dave Libby, who previously coached St. Charles, said **lacrosse** and the tournament itself "made fans out of many people who were introduced to **lacrosse** for the first time through the tournament."

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