



Print Page

Gaining popularity: St. Charles lacrosse sending trio through college ranks

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Comments (0)

ST. CHARLES – Since the St. Charles boys lacrosse club team was founded in 1995, no players have gone on to play in college.

After this season, that all will change.

Three seniors, all St. Charles North students in a program that also features players from St. Charles East, are committed to play in college next season. Thomas Feicco is committed to NCAA Division II Mercyhurst while C.J. Nemeec (Virginia Wesleyan) and Dylan Ward (Endicott College) will play Division III lacrosse.

“What’s cool about that is now I can point that out to the young guys, ‘See how hard they work? Now they’re going to play in college,’ ” first-year coach and 1999 St. Charles lacrosse alumnus Andy Thompson said. “It kind of motivates the younger guys to follow their footsteps.”

Before the trio heads off to college, however, there is unfinished business to accomplish in St. Charles. The team never has won a state playoff game. Coming off a 12-6 season that saw St. Charles tie for the DuPage 11 Conference title with Neuqua Valley, this could be the year.

“I personally think so, because we did well last year,” said Feicco, a New York native who took up lacrosse in the spring after playing hockey in the winter. “People saw us last year. We lost a bunch of good guys last year, but we’re returning a bunch of starters. We’re all getting along well and working hard.”

The team bonding should hit a new level starting today when the team embarks on a week-long trip to North Carolina to play over spring break, mostly in the Charlotte area. It is the second straight year the team has made the trip.

The team’s Illinois opener is against Oak Park-River Forest on April 3. St. Charles splits its home games between East’s Norris Stadium and the East Side Sports Complex off Kirk Road.

“Personally, I just want to go [to North Carolina] and have a good time, have our offense look good, have our defense look good,” Thompson said. “My concern is in-state. If it meant us going 0-4 in North Carolina and dominating our state, so be it. I’ll take that. I want to get respect from the state.”

The amount of teams for St. Charles to gain that respect from continues to increase. Thompson estimates there were about 20 high school lacrosse programs when he played for St. Charles.

But now, there are more than 50 schools, including new DuPage 11 member Wheaton North. With increases every year, lacrosse could be on the verge of trying to become an IHSA sport within the next few years, which is the hottest debate going on within the sport. Currently, lacrosse has its own association, the Illinois High School Lacrosse Association.

“That’s a big topic – when do we make that transition,” Thompson said. “Right now, we’re considered an emerging sport, but I look at it like we get four or five new teams every year, so it’s only a matter of time. I know some coaches



St. Charles lacrosse players Thomas Feicco (left) and Steve Lavigne practice Friday at Cranston Meadows Park. Feicco will play lacrosse at Division II Mercyhurst, while teammates C.J. Nemeec and Dylan Ward also will compete at the college level. (Bob Gerrard photo)

that are happy with the way things are. I go back and forth on it.”

Making that transition, along with advancing some kids on to college, could finally earn the players some recognition.

“We want to get it known around the school that we’re actually a real sport, and we want to get kids to come out and watch,” Ward said. “It’s getting a lot bigger.”

COMMENTS

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