



**At your local source  
for local jobs.**

**chicagojobs.com**  
get it **together.**

St. Charles, IL  
[Find Your Town](#)

Weather

61°

High: 72°  
Low: 53°  
[Full Forecast](#)

Tools

[Subscriber Services](#)

[Newsletter:](#)

[Go!](#)

Google  
Search:

[Go!](#)

[Home](#) [News](#) **[Sports](#)** [Obituaries](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [Opinions](#) [Classifieds](#) [Real Estate](#) [Jobs](#) [Autos](#)

Web St. Charles, IL

## Crosse-ing Over: Athletes discovering lacrosse at younger ages



Photo by Steve Bittinger  
C.J. Nemecek of St. Charles heads up the field against Neuqua Valley in St. Charles recently.

RELATED PHOTOS

By Sherri Dauskurdas  
GateHouse News Service  
Fri May 25, 2007, 12:41 PM CDT

Story Tools: [Email This](#) | [Print This](#)

St. Charles, IL When Eric Nuss was graduating from high school, he happened to catch a lacrosse game on television.

He was intrigued, and stayed that way, until finally playing with a team in Hawaii, where he had a teaching job.

Now back in the Chicago area, Nuss played for Windy City Lacrosse, and currently coaches the boys team at Lyons Township High School.

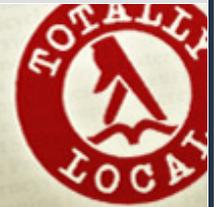
"When someone sees lacrosse they usually think the sport is a little weird, but after about 5-10 minutes they realize how fun it is," Nuss said.

Without doubt, lacrosse is not the sport of choice in the Midwest. But every season, more and more youngsters and their families are discovering the competitive and exhilarating nature of one of our nation's oldest athletic games.

Lacrosse, often considered to be our nation's first sport, has its roots in Native American culture.

## Yellow Pages

Find whatever you're looking for with the Totally Local Yellow Pages:



in

[Search](#)

Search provided by Premier Guide

Popular Searches:

[Attorneys](#) [Auto](#) [Auto Parts](#)  
[Beauty](#) [Dealers](#) [Restaurants](#)  
[Salons](#) [Pizza](#)

[Featured Businesses](#)

## Post Your St. Charles Classifieds

Need to sell something in St. Charles locally? Sell it easy, with [EZ-Ad](#).

[Begin creating your ad now.](#)



ADVERTISEMENT

## SnapShots

Snapshots is a collection of local photos taken throughout the year by our award-winning photographers.

- [Register / Login](#)
- [Albums](#)
- [My Album](#)
- [Shopping Cart](#)
- [FAQs](#)



**snapshots**



### Starting young

Today, lacrosse is growing in programs and park districts across the country, and is the fastest growing sport at the

NCAA level. There are 400 college and 1,200 high school men's lacrosse teams in the United States.

And it's bringing out the youngsters in droves. All across the western suburbs, classes, camps and leagues are sprouting up for youngsters in middle school and high school.

Private coaching companies schedule programs, often in tandem with local park districts, or the recreation departments offer them on their own.

"Lacrosse has grown to the point where it breaks down something like this," said Andy Thompson, the coach of the St. Charles Lacrosse Club, which combines players from both St. Charles East and North high schools.

"Spring is time for you to play for your school team, summer is often for camps (local or across the country), fall is usually a time for a small leagues or tournaments, winter is the time for indoor leagues and tournaments."

And then the cycle repeats.

"In the western suburbs, kids are now starting to play in the third or fourth grade," said Mike Waldron, varsity lacrosse coach at Hinsdale Central . "But we have a number of players on Hinsdale Central's varsity that didn't start playing until high school."

Nuss added that his sophomore recruitment is typically much stronger than his freshman numbers.

"We have a lot of freshman boys who are tentative because they've never seen or played the game," he said.

"Then they watch a game or two because their friends are on the team and they are hooked and come out sophomore year.

"It is easier to pick up than you might think," he added. "If the kids have been playing football, basketball, hockey or soccer they will love lacrosse. Our summer camp is a great way to see if you like the game and we supply all the equipment they need."

Thompson agreed that early exposure, which is now becoming much more accessible, is the most important.

"At St. Charles, we have certainly seen the benefits of getting players started as early as possible. The youth program provided by Lacrosse America has been a tremendous asset to our club," Thompson said.

And now, even Lacrosse America is not alone, with professional coaching organizations adding the sport to its selections and national lacrosse agencies bringing clubs and leagues to the Chicago area.

### Need for speed

And while there are a few individuals and organizations that have been key advocates of lacrosse in Illinois, such as Lacrosse America, Waldron attributes the growth in popularity to the sport itself.

"The physicality, fast pace, and high scoring make the sport very appealing," Waldron said. "Kids pick it up for the first time and fall in love immediately. I've seen a very positive response to lacrosse in Illinois, and the sport isn't

going away.”

Nuss agreed.

“Lacrosse is a fast-paced game,” he said, “but it also has physical contact and the skill of being able to catch and throw with a lacrosse stick. These elements combine to form an exciting game.”

### **Parents and pros**

Another reason it's growing is a strong network of support from parents and fans, said Thompson.

“I give a lot of credit of the growing interest of lacrosse to so many dads, coaches, and other lacrosse enthusiasts that get out and volunteer their time to promoting and teaching the sport,” he said.

Chicago also has two professional lacrosse teams: an indoor team, the Chicago Shamrox, and an outdoor team, the Chicago Machine.

“I think having your own professional athletes to root for will foster more interest in the sport,” said Waldron. “I’d encourage folks to get out to a game ... it doesn’t matter what level.

“My two biggest fans in high school and college hardly knew anything about lacrosse ... I thought they came to my games because they were being loving parents, but I catch my Dad still going to games even after I’ve graduated.”

### **A league of their own**

It’s not just for boys either.

Growth in lacrosse among girls has been huge, and there are now many organizations that offer strictly girls lacrosse or co-ed leagues.

Michelle Sebastian, who coaches the girls team at Hinsdale Central, also helps run Lakeshore Lacrosse, a professional coaching organization devoted to developing the sport with young girls.

“No one had ever played before or knew what lacrosse was, unless they had a brother that played.” Sebastian said. “This year, I had 118 girls sign up at Hinsdale Central, and that is 10 percent of the female population at the school. No other girls sport can say that.”

Sebastian attributes the popularity to a greater opportunity for girls to play. It is a sport that is gaining popularity among the already large number of girls soccer players.

“We know that if they have played both lacrosse and soccer that a majority would end up preferring lacrosse,” she said. “That is not a knock on soccer. I was on the first-ever Hurricane travel team and played varsity soccer at Hinsdale Central. But I picked up lacrosse when I got to college and ended up being a scholarship Division I athlete by my senior year.”

### **Girls must choose**

In Illinois, however, girls soccer and lacrosse play in the same high school season, making it necessary for

players to make a choice.

“Having played both, lacrosse is by far the more enjoyable,” Sebastian said. “Your upper body is what is doing all of the ball finesse, so you are free to be as blazing fast and have all the footwork while you are carrying the ball.

“Plus, a typical lacrosse game can have five to 20 goals per side, so a bunch of different kids get that wonderful feeling of putting a point up on the board,” Sebastian said. “Parents appreciate the pace and seeing their kids so happy to score.”

Girls can get started as young as first grade for Lakeshore Lacrosse camps. However, the IGLA (Illinois Girls Lacrosse Association) has spring and fall league play for third-eighth grade girls.

“We just started the program this spring and got over 220 girls signed up,” Sebastian said. “We have four pilot programs in Hinsdale, La Grange, Oak Park, and Northbrook, but are expanding heavily in the western and northern suburbs. This league is so important because girls are trying it out and from what we have heard, are loving it.”

### **First step**

As for young players interested in the game, Thompson’s advice is this:

“Find a friend, grab two sticks, a ball, and ask someone who knows the game to give you a quick lesson on scooping, passing and catching. Get these concepts down and you will start having some fun.”

### **Local Lacrosse Camp Resource**

#### **Lacrosse America**

(630) 437-5550, [lacrosseamerica.com](http://lacrosseamerica.com)

Offers programs, camps and leagues across the Chicago area for boys and girls.

#### **Ante-up Lacrosse**

(708) 606-0177, [anteuplacrosse.com](http://anteuplacrosse.com)

Offers June day camp for youngsters and a recruitment camp for teens looking to play at the collegiate level.

#### **Gamebreaker Lacrosse**

(800) 944-7112, [Laxcamps.com](http://Laxcamps.com)

Offers day and overnight camps for players Grade 3 through high school. Camps include private instruction.

#### **Midwest Lacrosse**

(630) 904-1245, [midwestlax.com](http://midwestlax.com)

Offers leagues for players in Grades 3 through adult. Also private classes and training for youth coaches and referees.

#### **Lakeshore Lacrosse**

(773) 456-3362, [lakeshorelacrosse.com](http://lakeshorelacrosse.com)

Specializing in girls lacrosse, offers camps, clinics, leagues and private instruction throughout the western suburbs.

Park districts offering youth lacrosse classes and camps this summer: Carol Stream, Clarendon Hills, Downers Grove, Geneva, Hinsdale, La Grange, La Grange Park, Lisle, Naperville, Oak Brook, St. Charles, Warrenville, West Chicago, Western Springs, Woodridge

Some towns have not updated their summer 2007 offerings. Check with your hometown park district office for information.



[Contact Us](#) | [Advertiser Info](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Yellow Pages](#)  
Copyright © 2006–2007 [GateHouse Media, Inc.](#) Some Rights Reserved.  
[XHTML](#) | [508](#)

Original content available for non-commercial use  
under a [Creative Commons](#) license,  
except where noted.

