

CROATAN MENS LACROSSE



2026-27 REFERENCE HANDBOOK

Version 27.4

*Pay attention to versions. This is a living document that will be updated from time to time.

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1. Coach Benson Welcome

First, I want to welcome all of our new freshmen and first year families to the program. It is my sincere hope that both parents and athletes feel immediately welcome and accepted. Our priorities are culture, leadership, and winning. We take pride in doing things differently and we want the best experience for our athletes during the four short years they wear a chrome gold helmet. I will explain our culture at the annual Black and Gold Day in February, but let me share a few “up front” points of emphasis for new players and families:

1. We only have one rule on our team – Everybody Love Everybody. Get used to hearing and saying it – “ELE” is our core belief that we value the people in our program more than anything else. It is the only way championship runs have any worth or meaning.
2. What most consider “rules,” we capture as “standards.” We want athletes whose lives are driven by achieving standards more than abiding by rules.
3. Freshmen have no “rite of passage.” They are immediately accepted and elevated as important members of our program.
4. Underclassmen follow examples, not words. Captains and upper classmen are the first to clean buses, set up the field, ball hunt, and otherwise commence the myriad responsibilities of our program. Teammates should be inspired to act, more than told.
5. It’s not “if” we win a championship, it’s “how” we win a championship.
6. Assisted goals > unassisted goals... especially off the lacrosse field.
7. Self-worth = (elevating others + (confidence - ego) + positive attitude + discipline) x effort
8. Self-worth ≠ play time + game stats + personal awards + personal recognition
9. Leave the jersey in a better place than when you accepted it. Grow the program; contribute to the legacy. Players are defined and remembered for what they add, not what they take.

This publication is a quick reference guide for all parents and student-athletes. It can be confusing and difficult to navigate high school athletics, so if anything is unclear or unanswered after reading through this, please do not hesitate to reach out to the coaching staff. This publication is designed to get you started. More information will come out as we get closer to the season. While we will try to provide information that is both player and parent accessible, some information, particularly when we start daily work, will be passed through your athlete. Please recognize one important standard we emphasize to our student-athletes – be young men, not boys. Athletes, not parents, are responsible for remembering, planning, informing others, arriving on time, and preparing. Help us hold this standard. If your son is asking you when practice is or if their uniform is cleaned, they’re still in a youth mindset!

We are very proud of our program and the legacy we have created over the past twelve seasons. This thirteenth season of 2027 has real potential for a state championship run!

ELE!

Coach Benson

2. 2026-27 Staff Contact Information

George Benson	Head Coach	croatanlacrosse@gmail.com	252-342-2906
Jon Bradley	Assistant Coach	jibradley.0202@gmail.com	606-541-2775
David Glenn	JV Coach	hurricaneGlenn@gmail.com	910-352-7968
Bobby DeGeorge	JV Assistant	bobbydegeorge77@gmail.com	443-472-0916
Matt Stolzenberg	JV Assistant	matt.stolzenberg@gmail.com	202-517-3812
Krystal Phillips	Volunteer Coordinator	krystalrphillips@gmail.com	910-459-7985
Rebecca Warren	School Trainer	rebecca.warren@carteretk12.org	910-385-4499
Sofia Schwartz	Team Store	Sofia.schwartz@gmail.com	
Melissa Glenn	Booster Rep	melissabglenn@gmail.com	
Laura Jordan	Booster Rep	laura.b.jordan@gmail.com	

3. Apps and Communication Plan

SportsEngine

All team communication occurs on *SportsEngine* – a team management app that combines chat messaging, calendar visibility, and event RSVPs in one location. If you are a player, parent, or just interested in trying out lacrosse during preseason activities, you need to create a SportsEngine account. Email Coach Benson or Coach Bradley and they will get an invitation link sent to you.



Once you receive the link from coach, you can create your login for the team's SportsEngine account. The calendar will show you the times for all events and any cancellations as well. There is also a group chat to ask questions and get immediate updates from coaches regarding any changes to planned events like postponements and rain delays.

QwikCut

QwikCut is our film repository. All athletes will have a QwikCut account and there is an expectation that each athlete will do personal film study before team film study. We do not always get the time to study each game as a team since there are often three games in one week. It is, however, expected that each athlete will review film on their own. Team film days will always occur after losses and close games. As we get closer to the season, Coach Benson and Bradley will send out invitation links for those athletes that do not have accounts.



Dragonfly

DragonFly Max helps the school manage coach certifications, athlete registrations, eligibility, health records, scheduling of games and officials. It centralizes paperwork, medical documentation, rosters, and game schedules into one digital system.



It is within Dragonfly that you will need to sign most of the paperwork for your son. For this year, **the following Dragonfly documents must be completed/signed by a parent before athletes can participate in any preseason or in-season activities:**

- ✓ NCHSAA Eligibility, Consent to Participate, Acknowledgment of Risk, Liability Waiver and Release Form 2026-27 (sign and upload or electronically sign).
- ✓ NCHSAA – PPE – Medical Eligibility Form
- ✓ NCHSAA Gfeller-Waller Student-Athlete and Parent/Legal Custodian Concussion Information Sheet
- ✓ NCHSAA – PPE – Physical Examination Form
- ✓ MCHSAA – PPE – Health History Form
- ✓ CCPS Proof of Insurance
- ✓ Acknowledgment of the Croatan High School Athletic Handbook
- ✓ Student Athlete's Parent Pledge
 - ✓ Consent to Treat Form

<https://www.dragonflymax.com/academy/parents/getstarted-mobile>

4. Preseason Schedule

Organized preseason activities are governed by NCHSAA rules. There are three sports seasons each year – fall, winter, and spring. Lacrosse is a spring sport. Thus, “in season” activities do not officially begin until 15 February. Everything prior to that is preseason. Throughout the year, there are dead periods that prohibit out-of-season sports from conducting any activities. The first three weeks of November are a dead period, and with this leading into Thanksgiving week, we typically can't accomplish much until December.

Additionally, we have many athletes that play fall or winter sports. Student-athletes are prohibited from participating in out-of-season sports unless approval is given by the head coach of the in-season sport. We also have many lacrosse athletes that play club lacrosse in the summer and fall. Combined, we have traditionally not benefitted greatly from organized activities in the brief time between the start of school and 1 November. Immediately after Thanksgiving, however, everything changes. This is when we begin our preseason work.

All preseason activities are voluntary, available to all student-athletes, and prohibited from exceeding 1.5 hours per athlete each day. The following are the NCHSAA-approved activities that comprise our preseason activities:

- **Skill Development:** These will occur on our practice field from 3:15 to 4:45pm. Student-athletes must arrive with all required gear listed in section 8 of this reference. These sessions are designed to build skill, teach our Croatan systems, and allow athletes to become familiar with our drills and practice culture. If an athlete has an interest in lacrosse, they are encouraged to participate. We have limited “loaner” equipment, however, so there may be a requirement that new players purchase or otherwise borrow equipment to participate.
- **Conditioning:** Conditioning for lacrosse is usually incorporated into the same days as skill development, but there may be times when we strictly focus on physical conditioning. These sessions also occur on the practice field from 3:15-4:45pm. On the topic of conditioning, it HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that student-athletes condition on their own. The short amount of allowable off-season time is not enough for the level of lacrosse we play. If student-athletes can take strength training, they should do so. If they can join a fitness gym develop stamina, agility, and strength, they should do so.
- **Lacrosse School:** For the first three weeks in December, we have “Lacrosse School” scheduled every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:15-4:30pm. These sessions will occur in a classroom setting at Croatan High School. These periods are designed to educate players on systems for the upcoming season – think “going over the playbook” type of activities. Each evening will cover a different part of our system – offense, defense, clears, rides, faceoff, EMO, man-down defense, etc. Coach Benson will also be repeating these sessions for youth coaches on the same evenings from 5:30-7:00pm. Parents are always welcome to these Lacrosse School sessions.
- **Friday Sevens:** During most preseason Fridays from 3:15 to 4:45pm, we conduct “Friday Sevens.” We divide into two teams, play a short field, and coaches officiate. There is usually a “winners prize” at the end. Friday Sevens allow athletes to compete, build camaraderie, and enjoy the game. Parents are welcome to watch.

In addition to these preseason team activities, there are also several “dates to remember.” Some of these are not school-related activities, but there are important activities within the greater lacrosse community:

- 2-22 Nov: NCHSAA dead period (no school organized lacrosse activities)
- 2 Dec: Preseason skill development and conditioning starts (see SportsEngine calendar for specific dates)
- 5 Dec: Barton College Play Day (more information as we get closer).
- 18 Dec – 3 Jan: Winter break. No lacrosse activities.
- 12-16 Jan: Dead period (no organized lacrosse activities)
- 23 Jan: CYLA Annual Casino Night Fundraiser (ticket sales to begin late fall – you want to attend!).
- 7 Feb: CYLA Chili Cookoff and Croatan parent social (parents only).
- 10 Feb: Spring Sports parent meeting at Croatan at 6pm (mandatory for parent)

- 15 Feb: First official practice
- 20 Feb: Carolina Shootout. Both JV and Varsity teams will be in Apex, NC all day for scrimmages. Mandatory for all athletes. Schedule will be published prior to event.
- 27 Feb: Black and Gold Day. **Most important day of the season.** Mandatory for all athletes. Parents are highly encouraged to volunteer and participate. More to follow.

Modified Spring Break: The team will have a modified spring break that starts with the rest of the student body on 26 March (no practice that Friday) but ends after 29 March. We will practice on Tuesday, 30 March. We will travel for games and stay in hotels 1-3 April. Do not plan family events during this period.

5. Preseason Checklist

- ✓ Create a SportsEngine account. Email Coach Benson or Coach Bradley if you are not on SportsEngine.
- ✓ Register your son in Dragonfly: <https://www.dragonflymax.com/> and complete all school-mandated forms located in Dragonfly by the first skill development on 2 December.
 - NCHSAA Eligibility, Consent to Participate, Acknowledgment of Risk, Liability Waiver and Release Form 2026-27 (sign and upload or electronically sign).
 - NCHSAA – PPE – Medical Eligibility Form
 - NCHSAA Gfeller-Waller Student-Athlete and Parent/Legal Custodian Concussion Information Sheet
 - NCHSAA – PPE – Physical Examination Form
 - MCHSAA – PPE – Health History Form
 - CCPS Proof of Insurance
 - Acknowledgment of the Croatan High School Athletic Handbook
 - Student Athlete's Parent Pledge
 - Consent to Treat Form
- ✓ Ensure your son's physical will be active through May 2027. Physicals are good for one year.
- ✓ Ensure equipment is serviceable and ready for practice.
- ✓ Attend pre-season events when possible. See SportsEngine for calendar of events.

6. Preseason General Information

- We will issue helmets and pennies on 2 December for those participating in preseason workouts. Athletes are responsible for all other gear requirements.
- Storing equipment during the school day. Athletes should talk to their first period teacher, or another that can accommodate, about storing their gear bag in their classroom during the school day. If there are any problems in this endeavor, please

contact a coach.

- Team apparel. There is a team store currently open at squadlocker.com. We will have additional team store opportunities with Nike in the future. Our intent is to have both sites working in time for Christmas shopping.
- Scheduling. The game schedule is still being developed. When published, it will appear in maxpreps.com.
- Picking up and dropping off. We are currently undergoing a practice field transition period. We must be prepared to practice at one of three locations: the field next to Bogue Sound Elementary, the practice field adjacent to the softball field, or the practice field behind the Cougar Stadium press box bleachers. For Bogue Sound Elementary, there are some important rules we must abide by. First, please use the designated entrance and exits when picking up or dropping off. Exit via the Croatan HS exit (traffic light side). Please recognize that we/you are a guest on their property and show respect. There is NO JUMPING OVER THE FENCES and there is no student-athlete parking in the Bogue Sound Elementary parking lot. All students must walk down from Croatan.

7. Junior Varsity and Varsity Explained

Junior Varsity: All freshmen, sophomores, and first year players start off on Junior Varsity. As the season develops, Coach Benson will make roster decisions. These roster decisions involve the following factors:

- Opponent: Some opponent teams do not have JV programs. If we feel there may be opportunities for younger athletes to get some varsity experience, we may pull up some JV players.
- Bus availability: Believe it or not, this is a real consideration. We anticipate our combined roster growing to roughly 45 athletes this year. The activity buses do not support those numbers (remember each athlete has a significant amount of gear in addition to the normal team equipment). We cannot always fit everyone into one bus, and two buses (or two drivers) are not always available.
- Ability to contribute vs. time to develop and get reps: We recognize the temptation is there to want your athlete in a varsity uniform. Please trust the process. Often, an athlete is more than capable of being on a varsity field, but he is lower on the depth chart compared to others. The result is that he will have limited or very few minutes in the game. Since NCHSAA regulates the amount of time an athlete can compete during a week and within a 24-hour period, it may be much better to have an athlete compete in the JV game rather than waste minutes on a varsity bench. Remember, self-worth cannot be dependent on some sort of team status or play time. As an example, Dain Sparks, one of the three All-Americans that have graduated our program, played a significant amount of time on JV. It is a process. Please trust coaches.

If an underclassman athlete is going to play on varsity, they will be identified prior to each game and we will release the roster for each game 48 hours prior. JV lacrosse is open to

all grades. There may be upper classmen that “get reps” on JV as well. We have had several athletes that start lacrosse later in their time at Croatan. Historically, we have had upper classmen that are first year players choose to play JV simply for the reps and opportunity. We always offer this as an option. These athletes will also be identified prior to each game.

8. Team Organization

Our entire program (Varsity and JV) will be divided into “squads.” Each squad will have an even spread of both varsity and junior varsity athletes. This is one way we keep the teams connected as one program. It is important to us that the JV athletes recognize they are critically important to our program and that they are no less important than our varsity athletes. We typically have between 4 and 6 squads depending on the size of the program and the availability of qualified captains.

Squads are led by a Captain and Assistant Captain. We take the captain position very seriously. Our captains and assistant captains go through leadership training and are selected by Coach Benson, not “voted on” by team members. We want leaders, not prom kings. We have high expectations of captains. They must be stewards to the teammates in their squads. In essence, the demands and workload is more significant for captains than any other team member. Their leadership will be by example more than verbal direction and they are responsible for the accountability and readiness of their squad members before each game and practice. Skill level has zero influence on coach’s selection for team captain. We have had several team captains that got very few minutes in games. It is about their personal example, attitude, character, and willingness to empathize and help those within their squad. In short, we want captains that shed the normal trappings of high school culture and demonstrate maturity – those that are willing to put personal social status well below the daily elevation of others. These are rare athletes.

9. Required Equipment and Supplies

We will issue a helmet and penny. For all preseason and in-season work, athletes require:

- Professionally manufactured mouthpiece that fully covers the upper teeth. Have a backup!
- Shoulder Pads. Must have a heartguard that is certified as ND200.
- Gloves. No holes in palms or fingers and not “taped over.”
- Elbow pads (defensemen) or arm guards (middie or attack).
- Cup and groin protection to support the cup. Mandatory.
- Cleats
- Lacrosse stick. They are in high school – they need a backup stick too.
- Water source for practice, skill development, and conditioning.

Always bring sneakers or shoes that facilitate conditioning (running and agility) or the ability to transition into the gymnasium.

Recommended items include:

- Spare lacrosse stick and mouth piece.
- Extra stringing kit:
 - Sidewall and top strings
 - Hockey laces
 - Preferred mesh (semi-soft)
- Spare cross retention screw
- Warming layers for after practice (during the colder periods)
- Rain gear

10. Team Store and Standards of Appearance

We have two team stores.

- Squad Locker: [Croatan Men's Lacrosse | Squadlocker](#)
- Nike: *Under construction. This is a new contract with Nike and we are currently working with the rep to build our team store. More information to follow when it is complete.*

There are two required items for players to purchase prior to the season:

- Any black polo shirt from a team store with team logo on it for game days.
- Shooter shirt (*also under construction - more information to be released by our team store rep – Sofia Schwartz*)

Please note that other items are not required but recommended. Any time we travel or when players enter a game field space, there are certain apparel requirements:

- On all game days athletes will wear their black team polo shirts during school. We will also wear black polo shirts for any team banquet, awards ceremonies, or other events that are directed by coach.
- Sweatpants, sweatshirts or any other outer layer worn must be black or only contain team colors (nothing flamboyant).
- Socks for games must be all white or all black. No stripes or designs.
- Sleeves or tights must be solid black or solid white in color.
- Any visible pads and gloves are white or black in color only.
- Hats or beanies worn off the bus or prior to games will be white, black, or school-affiliated.
- Gear bags that are brought onto sidelines or to away games must be black, white or adorned with team logo.
- Eye black will be consistent with NFHS rules – a single stroke no wider than the eye socket underneath the eye. No war paint, clown faces, or nonsense.

While not necessarily a team store, one of the more popular items over the past couple years has been the lax gear bag by Laxgear. Potentially a nice Christmas gift:



<https://laxgear.com/products/croatan>

11. Handling Injuries and Medical Cases

For parents, please recognize that your son is now a Croatan High School athlete. We have a trainer that monitors your son's health status and ability to participate in athletics. In many cases, our trainer may help expedite your son's treatment or appointments with local orthopedic practices after an injury. Regardless, the final step in your son's return to play is clearance from the trainer. No longer can you or your doctor simply "tell coach Johnny is good to go." If an athlete is injured, coach's final call is to the trainer before returning an athlete to the field. This includes **off-season injuries**. This policy is not to place the trainer over your doctor. It is simply to ensure the process is connected and that all involved entities are aware of your athlete's medical readiness and clearance for participation.

Please ensure you or your athlete informs coach and the school trainer of all injuries requiring medical attention. Subsequently, please ensure coach and the school trainer is aware of any change in status – better or worse.

For those new to the process, please ensure you read (not just sign) the Gfeller-Waller Concussion form in Dragonfly. We take head injuries very seriously. When in doubt, sit them out! If we notice an athlete has any signs of potential head injury, we will inform you. Should you notice any signs or symptoms consistent with concussion, seek medical attention for your son. Upon treatment starting, the school trainer will track an athlete's status and supervise the "return to play protocol" for the athlete.

The school trainer's contact information is located in Section 2 of this reference.

12. Conclusion

Remember to check the SportsEngine chat thread often as there will be updated and new information frequently. Additionally, please note that this is a “living document.” The versions are labeled by the year, a decimal, and then the latest version. For instance, the fourth version for the 2025 season would be noted on the bottom of the cover page as “version 25.4.” The linked online version will always be the latest and greatest. When we update this handbook, we will announce it on the SportsEngine chat and note the newest version number along with the specific changes or additions.

If you are a parent reading this, you should love having your son in our program. If you are a student-athlete reading this, you will likely not love every day, but you should one day believe these were four of the best years of your life. Remember this when it gets hard. Because it will be hard. Nobody gets stronger lifting light weight. Nobody gets faster by walking. Nobody gets smarter without thinking. And nobody gets to be a champion without failure and accountability. Dare greatly and let's go get another ring in 2027.

