

Iowa Lacrosse Association

Annual Report

2021-2022



Introduction

The Iowa Lacrosse Association (ILAX) is completing its fourth year in June. The past 2021-22 season has been a nice pivot toward more normalcy for the Association and its member clubs. A year ago we were still dealing with the spike in the Omicron variant, but thankfully schools were able to be fully open and sports and other extra-curricular activities returned.

The same situation played out with youth lacrosse clubs in the state. Most clubs held fall practices with some taking part in competitions. This past spring most clubs saw their participation numbers increase as parents became more comfortable getting their kids involved in sports and with the general attraction of the game.



We are happy to report that your Association with your support continued to help clubs in a number of ways this past year. What follows is a brief summary of the “state of the game” in Iowa, along with some details about the Association’s efforts over the past year, and a few preliminary thoughts on what ILAX might focus on in the coming year.

State of the game

We now have 7 clubs belonging to ILAX with the addition of the Kingfisher Lacrosse Club this past year. Kingfisher is completing its second year and serves the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids area. This would mean seven of eight youth lacrosse organizations in Iowa are ILAX members.

During the 2021 spring season, Iowa clubs had a total of 554 players registered. We’re pleased to share that the participation numbers have grown to 638 this past spring, a 15% increase. Here’s a quick breakdown of spring 2022 registrations for all Iowa programs by total player counts:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Ames (boys only) | 16 |
| Ankeny | 145 |
| Dubuque | 23 |
| Kingfisher (IC-CR area) | 68 |
| Meskwaki Settlement | 61 |
| Quad Cities | 57 |
| Waukee (boys only) | 115 |
| West Des Moines | 153 |
| Total Statewide | 638 |

However, these numbers are not the full extent of lacrosse participation in Iowa. Several of our clubs and area parks & rec departments have offered beginners clinics throughout the year. We expect more clinics will continue to be offered in the future as ILAX members pursue more of these partnerships.

Also, there are 12 men's and/or women's college programs operating in Iowa 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 wants to develop closer relationships with these programs in the future as increasing numbers of Iowa high school seniors are making their way onto college lacrosse rosters.

Member clubs in the past have had college coaching staff help with youth clinics around the state. This past February, the West Des Moines Lacrosse Club sponsored a men's lacrosse game between William Penn and Cornell, and a youth clinic that followed which is believed to be the first event of its kind in the state. The game was held at the new MidAmerican Energy RecPlex facility with both boys and girls clinics following. Over 500 parents and players attended, and ILAX and the West Des Moines club appreciates the support we got from William Penn coaches and players. Hopefully, this can be an annual event.



Recap of ILAX efforts

A year ago the Association outlined several goals for 2021-2022: help clubs respond to the pandemic; support coach development; recruit and train new officials; support the growth of lacrosse in eastern Iowa; offer youth league competition when possible; expand visibility within the state; and attract more volunteer support for the ILAX organization. Progress was made in many of those goals.

Response to the pandemic — While the pandemic has had a waning impact on member clubs this past year, ILAX continued to be a forum where club leaders could discuss their local COVID situations and learn how others were responding.

ILAX Committees — Responding to the need for more support, the Association recruited volunteers from member clubs to address a couple important issues that members face. A *Competition Committee* was formed to support Youth competition which included game scheduling and taking the first steps in creating rules and regulations for league play.

An *Officials Committee* was also formed and charged with helping recruit and train new officials which the game in Iowa desperately needs. More details to follow on what both committees have done to date.

Recruit and train officials — As previously mentioned, youth clubs in Iowa are still needing more local officials. ILAX struggles to get enough officials for boys league games, and for the most part, our clubs have to import out-of-state officials for girls games.

ILAX continues to work on helping recruit and train new officials. The new *Officials Committee* has met several times to identify possible candidates, and then follow up with them to encourage them to get trained.



This past February we connected our men's game candidates with USA Lacrosse (USAL) Level 1 training offered by Omaha-based officials. The training consisted of several nights of virtual classroom and an on-field evaluation in Lincoln, NE. A few Iowa-based candidates took advantage of the series of virtual offerings, but didn't make the trip to Lincoln. It became abundantly clear we needed to arrange for more local, Iowa-based training later in 2022 with the hope we could get more new officials certified and available for the 2023 season.

It's been an even bigger challenge to attract women's game officials. The Committee is trying to identify possible candidates and help arrange for training. USAL also offered Level 1 women's game training this past February with trainers out of Kansas City. We had three new candidates get involved in the training. Again, ILAX is arranging Iowa-based training later this year in concert with new men's game candidates.

TryLax Clinic — With the help of a USAL grant, the Association offered a two-night beginners clinic for boys and girls on September 14 & 16 in West Des Moines.

63 boys and girls registered and received a free lacrosse stick as part of the grant. Participants worked on developing some fundamental lacrosse skills. A shout-out goes to the local ILAX member clubs who helped run the event. Many of the clinic's players went on to join those clubs in the fall and spring.



Coach Development — ILAX promoted the USAL virtual coach development training prior to this past spring season, but more effort went into recruiting and training officials as the need was more pressing.

LAXCON Convention — ILAX board members Jeff Kueter and Beech Turner attended the annual USA Lacrosse convention in Baltimore on January 14-16. Both were able to attend a Program Leaders Workshop hosted by USAL with 30 lacrosse leaders from around the country.



They were able to exchange ideas on how to address common challenges and grow the sport as well as give feedback to USAL on how they might provide additional support. We learned that the

hurdles we face in Iowa are shared around the country, but that ultimately those hurdles are overcome by grassroots efforts.

Growth in eastern Iowa — Lacrosse continued to grow in the eastern side of Iowa during 2022. The Kingfisher club representing the greater Cedar Rapids – Iowa City region took another step forward in its second year by fielding boys teams across all age levels – from high school to 10U. The Kingfisher girls played jointly with girls from the Quad Cities Lacrosse Association. Also new in 2022 was a 12U girls team out of Dubuque. The Dubuque girls made their debut at the St. Ambrose Jamboree in May.

Kingfisher, Quad Cities, Dubuque and a combined squad from Ames & Meskwaki formed the Eastern Iowa Lacrosse Conference to support high school play this past spring. The four teams played a round robin schedule supplemented by games against other Iowa and Illinois programs. The inaugural conference championship was won by the Quad Cities Lacrosse Association. Congratulations to all the teams involved!

Parks & Rec events — The Iowa Parks & Rec Association invited ILAX to take part in their Fall Workshop this past October 6 in Burlington. Board member Bruce Maxwell made a presentation to several city recreation leaders about the steps needed to offer lacrosse to their youth, and how ILAX and its members could help with that. He also introduced the new Flex 6 version of lacrosse which can be co-ed and makes the game a lot easier to play by eliminating the need for much of the lacrosse equipment and requiring smaller field space.



Athletic Directors Convention — ILAX attended the Iowa HS Athletic Directors Association annual event in Coralville on March 27. Our Association was attending for the first time in an effort to network with athletic directors and expose them to the growing sport of lacrosse. ILAX purchased booth space in the exhibit hall and made a few contacts with athletic directors. We accomplished our goal of showing that lacrosse was alive and well, and increasingly on the radar of school sports leaders.



Youth competitive league — ILAX has just completed the 2022 spring season where games were offered to 14U/12U/10U boys teams from around the state. The competition included multi-game jamborees on weekends at a couple of locations around the state. The boys competition culminated with a round-robin tournament as part of the Iowa Games on June 4 in Ankeny.

ILAX extends a big “thank you” to the participating clubs and their volunteers for making the boys league happen again, and the plan is to arrange for girls youth competition next spring.

Future ILAX efforts

While the ILAX board is still discussing areas of support to focus on in the coming year, here are some of the most likely front-runners.

Girls game support — About 25% of player registrations with Iowa clubs are girls. ILAX wants to encourage and help clubs with little or no girls participation to position themselves to attract

and support girls players going forward. This will most likely involved increased dialogue with those clubs to see where ILAX can help in that effort. A girls competition committee is also being formed to arrange for girls competition next spring.

Officials training — ILAX plans to continue to work with USAL to offer new officials training this fall in the Des Moines area for both the mens' and women's games. The training will provide participants with Level 1 certification which allows new candidates to officiate both Youth and HS competition. The recruitment and training efforts will continue until such time as Iowa clubs have an adequate number of officials available for their competitions which will probably take several years.

Growing the game elsewhere — While focusing support on existing youth programs is a priority, ILAX will continue to support efforts to introduce the game in other parts of the state. There are a number of Parks & Rec departments in Iowa that offer beginner lacrosse clinics or programs, and ILAX continues to encourage and support them. We hope to continue to appear at the Iowa Parks & Rec Association (IPRA) fall workshop in October to help interested cities offer lacrosse to area youth.

We also plan to work with member clubs to increase visibility of the sport with area schools and develop more relationships with school athletic leaders. We continue to look for ways to forge stronger relationships with other youth sports organizations especially youth hockey as that sport has become a strong feeder of new players.

Support league play — We plan to offer a boys youth league again next spring. With a committee dedicated to supporting that competition we plan to again create a game schedule on a timely basis and address any issues involving play. As mentioned earlier, ILAX is also forming a committee that will create a girls youth schedule and support their play.

More committee work — We will be recruiting more parents, coaches and club leaders to volunteer some time to the work of ILAX. We plan to form additional committees in the future including an Executive Committee comprised of member club board presidents as well as a Strategic Planning & External Relations Committee and a Fundraising Committee. Again, ILAX asks that you support these new ventures with volunteers.



Financial Status

The pandemic and the resulting shut-down of lacrosse activities in March 2020 naturally curtailed our activities and related expenses for the 2020-21 budget year. The Association subsequently had a funding surplus and didn't collect membership fees for that year.

With the resumption of play and club activities this past fall and current spring, the Association collected fees for the 2021-2022 budget year. Fee collection totaled \$7115. As always, ILAX appreciates its members' support.

Currently ILAX has \$6606.52 in its checking account with most of the Association's financial activity for the past budget year taking place in recent months as the youth boys spring league

got underway. Like last year, ILAX estimated and then collected officials fee estimates from participating clubs. Some of those fees have been paid out, and the Association plans to do a final accounting to determine the actual costs and will share the results with member clubs.

Conclusion

Your Association's leadership has spent the past year working to recruit more help from member clubs to address the sport's major needs which includes finding and training officials, and providing a competitive platform for youth teams in the state. For ILAX to move the "growth" needle in a big way going forward, we'll definitely need the help of more volunteers. So let us know of your interest and we'll find a role for you.

Finally, we greatly appreciate the support of our member clubs, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Iowa lacrosse community to grow the game.

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
Vince McGee, Secretary, Quad Cities
Bruce Maxwell, Treasurer, Ames
Meghan Gruver, West Des Moines
Jeff Kueter, Iowa City
Sean Mahoney, Waukee
Britt Mitchell, Meskwaki Settlement
Tim Mohrfeld, Waukee
Marc Shulman, Ames





“Helping you grow the game”