

# A Southerner's guide to a Northern game

For those of you, particularly you freshmen from Momeyer, N.C., who think that a crease is something in your pants, or that a long-stick middle is a well-endowed Naval Academy grad, or that "Gilman" is the nickname of the creature from the Black Lagoon, I am here to teach you about some of the finer points of the game of lacrosse.

**Southerner to Southerner.**

Now, lacrosse is a sport kind of like hockey, and we Southerners know as much about hockey as we do about snow tires. We just don't see the need to put a couple of Gillette Ultras on our feet and go out to bust our butts on very cold ice.

But lacrosse isn't played on ice, and you don't have to strap razor blades to your feet to chase around a flat black rubber thing. Lacrosse is a spring sport, played outdoors, preferably in the sun, and the South has plenty of spring sun.

If you are new to the sport of lacrosse, and most native North Carolinians are, it's high time you got to know a little about the game known as the "King of the Spring." That way, when the weather's nice you can mosey down to Kenan Stadium (or Fetzer Field or Astroturf Field or wherever they're playing this week) and try to figure out what the hell's going on.

Here are a few simple pointers:

**Lacrosse is played by Northerners** — That's Yankees to you and me. Most lacrosse players come from way up above the Mason-Dixon line, where they talk real fast and obnoxiously.

**Technically, the heart of lacrosse is in the South** — Baltimore, Md. However, I personally don't consider Baltimore Southern because it's way too close to that bastion of french-fry-head Yankeedom, Philadelphia.

**Long Island, N.Y., is the other heart of lacrosse** — Yankee. Nuff said.

**So why don't Southerners play?** — A reliable source tells me it's because we don't have any "lacrosse groupies" down here, which is apparently the only reason those Yankee boys pick up sticks in the first place.

**To a Southerner, lacrosse looks like a bunch of guys going to catch killer butterflies** — Yep, they carry around sticks that resemble butterfly nets, particularly the goalie stick, which looks like it could snag Mothra. And they wear a lot of padding, which looks like they expect the butterflies to be carrying Louisville Sluggers.

**Lacrosse is a very skilled game** — They just make it look easy, but in reality, it's one of the toughest games to learn. Don't believe me? Just pick up a stick one day and try to throw

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with it. You'll look like a fisherman who's hooked himself in the seat of his pants while trying to cast. And the ball will go straight down, no matter how much you try to aim up. Trust me.

**Lacrosse is a little like soccer, too** — In both sports, the players wear shorts, they run around a field chasing a ball, they score goals, they have goalies, but in lacrosse, they have weapons.

**About those weapons . . .** — Lacrosse sticks range in length from 30 inches for a normal attack stick to around 60 for a defense stick. They are made out of either aluminum, graphite or wood. Wooden defense sticks weigh about as much as the defensemen themselves. Graphite attack sticks weigh about .27 ounces.

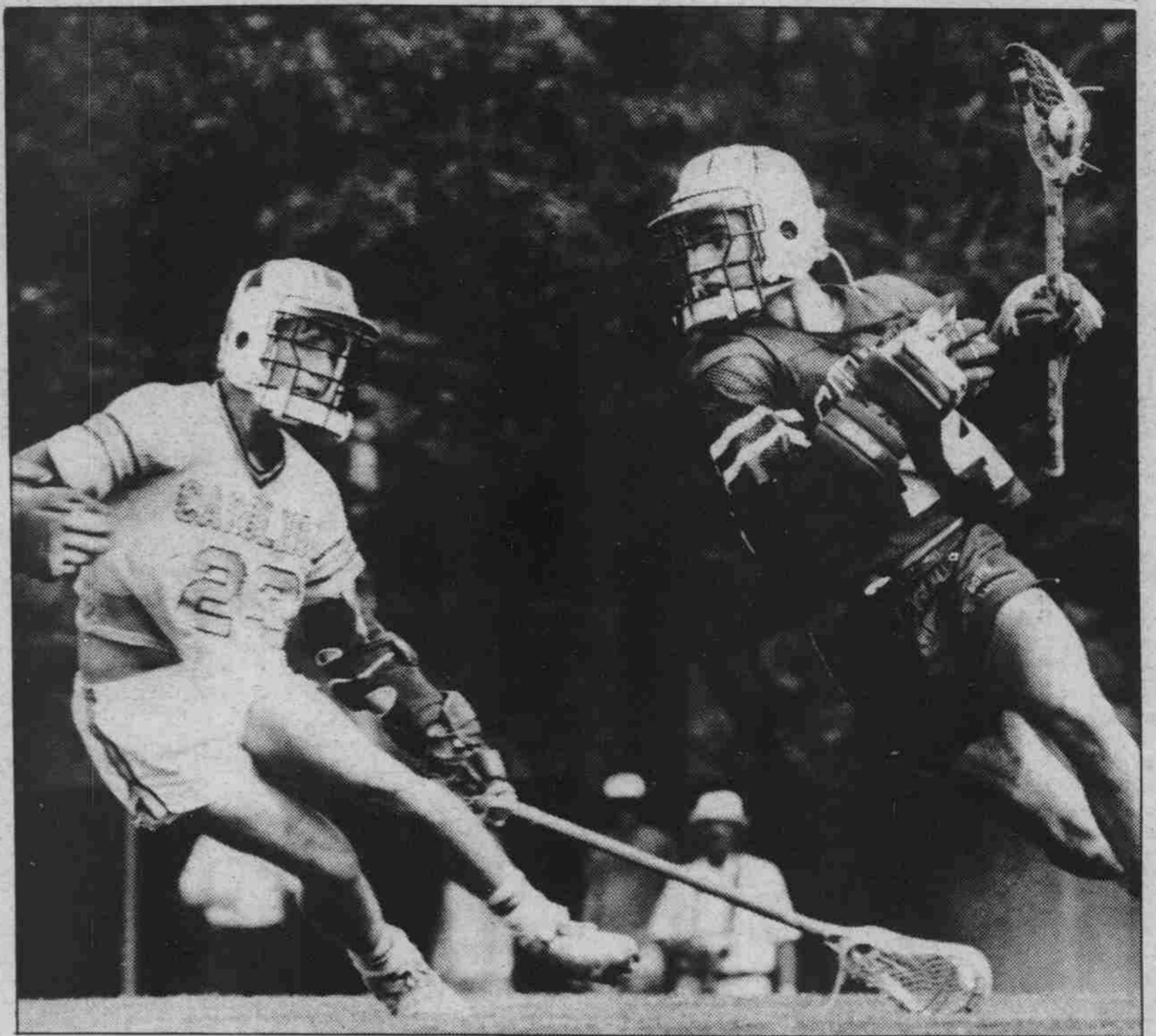
With these sticks, players can beat the hell out of each other. They're supposed to be aiming for each other's sticks, but, well, sometimes they miss. Most of the time they miss.

**They use the sticks for other things, though** — They carry a ball with them, throw with them, catch with them, scoop with them and score goals with them. They throw over-the-shoulder, sidearm, underhand. And those shots come in fast. Jim Brown, the football legend who played lacrosse on the side while at Syracuse, could score goals with one hand from midfield.

**Those sticks ain't the only weapons** — As in football, bodies can also be used to beat the living pulp out of one another. A general rule is—that a player can hit another player within five yards of the ball. This means that a 6-6 defenseman can turn a 5-6 attackman into something flatter than a Del Taco tortilla when they're both going for a ground ball. Yeah, I know, and life ain't fair either.

**However, Ninja warriors or pro wrestlers need not apply** — As in hockey, players who get a little, shall we say, *overenthusiastic* with their weapons are penalized anywhere from 30 seconds to a minute and a half.

**What do they protect themselves with?** — A whole lotta foam rubber. Players wear a helmet, which looks like a cross between a batting helmet and a chicken-wire fence; arm pads, which protect the elbows and forearms; gloves, which look like a pair of Isotoners that got in a fight with helium; and shoulder pads, which prevent players from chopping off each other's arms.



DTH/David Minton

Lacrosse is a game which provides its participants the unique opportunity to brandish long sticks

**"This ain't no Dixie cup, and you sure don't want to be drinking out of it . . ."** — In lacrosse, shots can travel up to around 110 mph from a couple of yards out. Therefore, goalies are either crazy or stupid. The only additional pieces of equipment they wear are a foam rubber chest protector and a cup. Or two.

**Lacrosse goalies are paranoid** — As in hockey, the playing area extends behind the goal.

**What are those things I mentioned at the top of this story?** — Let's see, the crease is the circle around the goal. No offensive player can enter it. A "long stick middle" is a midfielder who uses a defense stick, primarily in penalty situations. A "Gilman" is a goalie clear, named after the Gilman School in Baltimore (where most lax players come from), in which the goalie hurls the ball all the way down the field, usually shouting "Gilman!" at the top of his lungs.

**Lacrosse is the fastest game on foot** — Which is another reason it hasn't caught on down here. We Southerners tend to like our sports a little slower, like golf, or baseball, or tractor pulls. "But what about basketball?" you ask. Hell, if the NCAA hadn't put in the 45-second shot clock, Dean would still be using the Four Corners, and we all know how

slow that was.

Another reason lacrosse might not catch on down here is because we would have to admit that we actually like doing something Yankees do.

Think about this: If it wasn't for lacrosse, there probably wouldn't be any Yankees on this campus. Oh, well, I guess some things are worth bearing.

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