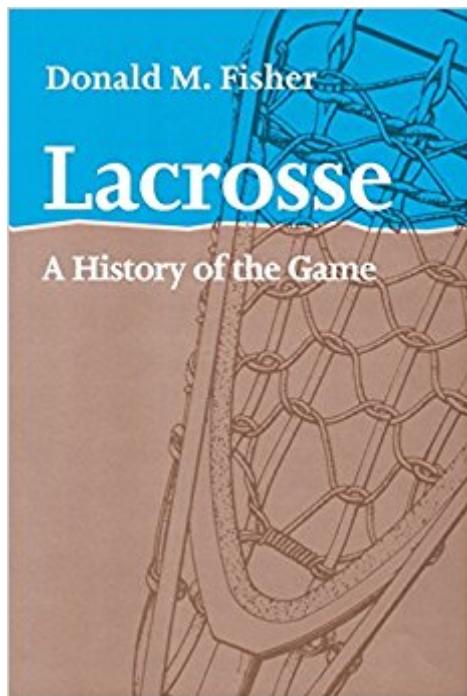


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# Lacrosse: A History Of The Game



## Synopsis

North America's Indian peoples have always viewed competitive sport as something more than a pastime. The northeastern Indians' ball-and-stick game that would become lacrosse served both symbolic and practical functions—preparing young men for war, providing an arena for tribes to strengthen alliances or settle disputes, and reinforcing religious beliefs and cultural cohesion. Today a multimillion-dollar industry, lacrosse is played by colleges and high schools, amateur clubs, and two professional leagues. In *Lacrosse: A History of the Game*, Donald M. Fisher traces the evolution of the sport from the pre-colonial era to the founding in 2001 of a professional outdoor league—Major League Lacrosse—told through the stories of the people behind each step in lacrosse's development: Canadian dentist George Beers, the father of the modern game; Rosabelle Sinclair, who played a large role in the 1950s reinforcing the feminine qualities of the women's game; "Father Bill" Schmeisser, the Johns Hopkins University coach who worked tirelessly to popularize lacrosse in Baltimore; Syracuse coach Laurie Cox, who was to lacrosse what Yale's Walter Camp was to football; 1960s Indian star Gaylord Powless, who endured racist taunts both on and off the field; Oren Lyons and Wes Patterson, who founded the inter-reservation Iroquois Nationals in 1983; and Gary and Paul Gait, the Canadian twins who were All-Americans at Syracuse University and have dominated the sport for the past decade. Throughout, Fisher focuses on lacrosse as contested ground. Competing cultural interests, he explains, have clashed since English settlers in mid-nineteenth-century Canada first appropriated and transformed the "primitive" Mohawk game of tewaarathon, eventually turning it into a respectable "gentleman's" sport. Drawing on extensive primary research, he shows how amateurs and professionals, elite collegians and working-class athletes, field- and box-lacrosse players, Canadians and Americans, men and women, and Indians and whites have assigned multiple and often conflicting meanings to North America's first—and fastest growing—team sport.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Highlighting cultural and social developments, this volume offers a sweeping history of the game. Fisher (history, Niagara Cty. Community Coll.) traces the emergence of modern lacrosse in both Canada and the United States, pointing out that the sport's early Mohawk roots precluded early mass popularity. However, its appeal during the close of the 19th century, at institutions like Johns Hopkins University, enabled lacrosse to strike a chord with elite young men. Then, in the first half of the ensuing century, the American version of the game spread throughout the Northeast. Through the 1960s, lacrosse's devotees still lauded its amateurism while contending that the players harkened back to "noble savages." By the 1970s, the "old Indian game" became part of popular culture in America and elsewhere, and organizers increasingly argued that lacrosse required greater professionalization and financial support. The proliferation of "middle-class lacrosse" threatened "the elite aura" that had long characterized the sport. Fisher presents his story competently, if methodically. Another history might have dwelled more on tales about the sport's brightest stars, including the legendary Jim Brown. Still, this is a useful volume about a sport that has not received much coverage. Recommended for public libraries. R.C. Cottrell, California State Univ., Chico

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"A sweeping history of the game. Fisher traces the emergence of modern lacrosse in both Canada and the United States." (Library Journal)"A thoroughly researched, clearly written, handsomely designed, very comprehensive history of North American lacrosse since the mid-nineteenth century... this is one of the most informative histories of any sport that I have ever read." (Morris Mott The Beaver)"This book will long serve as the standard history of lacrosse." (Benjamin G. Rader Journal of American History)"Rather than provide a narrative of great players, which has been the tendency in some of the earlier writings in sports history, Fisher situates the history of lacrosse in North America its broader social and cultural context. Thus, the book is an important contribution to our understanding of how sport emerged as a professional, commercial spectacle in modern North America." (Christina Burr Canadian Historical Review)"[A] Definitive history of Lacrosse... Will be enjoyed by sports fans and referenced by social historians." (Bruce Todman Montreal Gazette)"This

is the most complete history of the sport of lacrosse to date." (Ronald A. Smith, Pennsylvania State University, author of *Play-by-Play: Radio, Television, and Big-Time College Sport*)

My grandson loved it.

Got this for my son; he chose this as the source material for a Social Studies/history term paper. The history is all there. This book is full of detail; it's good in that respect. But the writing style is ponderous and makes for a slow read. Recommended for serious students of the game's history, perhaps those who are die-hard fans undertaking a master's degree in history.

I played lacrosse for 5 years, including 1 at the varsity level. It is the fastest game on two feet, a combination of power, speed, agility, and skill unmatched by any modern sport. And it's American, North American that is, through and through. I don't read much for pleasure but when I do, I like to read books like Fisher's. I've read it several times; my only regret is not having reviewed it earlier. There is some serious intellectual meat in here but the book is engagingly written, the research is impeccable, and the balance is perfect. (I noticed an earlier reviewer had some odd things to say about Fisher's leftward bias. Fisher does use terms like class but a close reading shows that he is not using the term in a Marxist sense at all. In fact, I'd wager Fisher is slightly right-of-center if anything but I wouldn't put too much money down because, again, the balance is beautiful.) The best aspect of the book, imho, is that it is an example of the history of sport, a subfield of history that places sports into a wide cultural context. The context that Fisher provides improved my understanding of, and love for, the game. I think every lacrosse player, certainly at the high school, collegiate, and professional levels, should read this book carefully and thoughtfully. Were I coaching, I'd get at least one copy for my players to read and then give them an age-appropriate quiz to make sure they got the main points. I bet most would as this is one of the best histories of sport, any sport, I've ever seen or heard about.

There are a few good books out there on lacrosse, but this one should be regarded as the Bible of the sport. If you have a serious passion for lax, you have to read this book from cover to cover. It's thoroughly researched, well-written, thought-provoking and enlightening. The book talks about both field lacrosse in the US and the indoor box game in Canada. It covers lacrosse on Indian reservations and even in the Olympics!! It's a very rich and complex history that really makes you think. It's hard to summarize 150+ years of lacrosse history in this review, so you have to read it for

yourself. The book also includes a bunch of neat photos.

Anyone with an interest in the game of LaCrosse will find Don Fisher's volume most helpful. Don provides a very concise look into the history of the sport, taking the reader where most writers have not yet ventured. Although the author never played LaCrosse in any professional capacity, the knowledge that he offers herein shines throughout this book. I recommend Don's book to everyone out there. Jeffrey Bryan White Oak, NC

Don Fisher has provided Lacrosse enthusiasts with some valuable, and refreshing facts. His book is packed with lots of interesting insight into the game and its history. His knowledge on the subject comes from his experiences of playing Lacrosse in college in Upstate New York. I highly recommend Don's book for anyone with an interest about the subject of Lacrosse. You will definitely find his knowledge intriguing and helpful. Thanks for the book, Don!

I was torn between giving this book two or three stars. I wanted to give it a positive review because it is obvious that the man did amazing research and he was very thorough. In that sense, he did a great job. On the other hand, I disliked it because it was dry and because he projects too much of his own political anxiety and agenda onto the game. I could have overlooked the dryness and given it a positive rating. But I can't overlook the leftist politics that simply get in the way of what would have been a good history of a great game.

A great work that provides a phenomenal amount of historical content. A good book about a great game.

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