

# Determining A, B, and Rookie Level Players & Teams

It is imperative players be placed in the correct level of play for their age, experience, and ability. The following guidelines emphasize individual skills rather than years of experience. The following information is provided as a guide to your clubs when assessing players in order to determine the level at which they will be fielding teams. The NCJLA strongly recommends that clubs hold tryouts or assessments before the registration deadline in order to accurately determine the teams they will field. The NCJLA recommends that the person(s) assessing the players have a minimum of the following and that the evaluation process is communicated to parents and players in advance:

- prior coaching experience
- USL Level 1 Coaching Certification
- be able to demonstrate impartiality
- Agree to use the club identified evaluation procedures, rubric and/or standards

*\*Clubs are free to establish the protocols that best fit their needs.*

## I. Evaluating Skill Sets

In determining whether a player should be placed on an A, B, or Rookie team, the following guidelines provide a good rubric for teams to follow:

### **A. An A-level player has more experience or is EXCELLENT at some or all of the following:**

- Catching, throwing, scooping, and cradling with both the dominant hand and the off hand.
- Dodging at full speed. Can effectively use various dodges, knows which one to use in different situations and can perform with right or left hand.
- Demonstrating sound field sense in live situations.
- Leading transitional tactics in game situations.
- Has a good understanding of the various offensive schemes, man-up, and fast break situations.
- Passing and shooting with both right and left hands under pressure.
- Player understands and can perform at full speed cutting, feeding, driving to the goal, picking and rolling.
- Can adapt and use successfully a fast break or unsettled situation opportunity.
- Continuously exhibiting off-ball skills and tactics in settled as well as unsettled situations.
- Can play position defense, make a legal check, and mark an opponent.
- Working within various defensive schemes including man-to-man, zone, sliding and man-down situations.
- For specialized positions such as goalie, face off or center the player demonstrates understanding and mastery of the position rules, tactics and skills.
- Practicing on their own regularly and without encouragement.
- Requires only a few practices to master a new lacrosse skill.
- Has athletic ability slightly advanced than their peers.
- Has experience playing team sports that transition to lacrosse (ie basketball, soccer, ice hockey).
- Understands and can explain the majority of the rules to be followed.

### **B. B Veteran level player has some experience or is GOOD at some or all of the following:**

- Catching, throwing, scooping, and cradling with the dominant hand and *can use the off-hand occasionally in game situations.*

- Dodging at full speed and can use various dodges and knows which one to use in different situations and *can use the off hand with 1 or 2 dodges.*
- Demonstrating sound field sense in live situations.
- Understanding transitional tactics and *developing the skills to use them* comfortably in game situations.
- Has *knowledge of various offensive schemes* ( ie 2-3-1, a 1-4-1, 3-3), man-up and fast break situations.
- Player can perform majority of skills with both hands, and has athletic ability to excel in unsettled game situations.
- Exhibiting *some off-ball skills* and tactics in settled as well as unsettled situations and *could benefit from more instruction in these areas.*
- Can use individual skills to play position defense*, make a legal check, and mark an opponent.
- Working within various defensive schemes including man-to-man, zone, sliding and man-down *situations with reminders.*
- Practicing on their own regularly *with encouragement.*
- For specialized positions such as goalie, face off or center the player demonstrates understanding of the position rules, and tactics. *The players is developing the skills.*
- Has *mastered some athletic skills, can comfortably run the field without excessive breaks.*
- Has experience playing other team sports.*
- Understands and can explain the basic rules to be followed.
- Requires multiple practices to become competent at a new skill.*

#### **C. B Rookie-level player has little experience or is DEVELOPING:**

- Catching, throwing, scooping, and cradling with the dominant hand is *developing. The off hand is much weaker or has not been attempted at this point in their development.*
- Player has *knowledge of various dodges but has not yet mastered* the effective implementation of them in a game or when to use them in game play.
- Player has knowledge of basic field positions *but has not yet mastered the field sense for them.*
- Knowledge of transitional tactics but is still developing the skills to use them comfortably in game situations. *Needs reminders of when to use which tactic.*
- Has a *little experience working within various offensive schemes*, man-up and fast break situations.
- Passing and shooting primarily with the *dominant hand.*
- Player is *still developing the skills or athletic muscle control for cutting, feeding*, driving to the goal, picking/rolling and defensive marking skills.
- Exhibiting some beginner off-ball skills and tactics in settled as well as unsettled situations and *will benefit from more instruction in these areas.*
- Working within various defensive schemes including man-to-man, zone, sliding and man-down situations.
- Beginning to playing position defense*, checking, holding, clearing and riding.
- For specialized positions such as goalie, face off or center the player demonstrates understanding of the position rules, and tactics *but requires continued instruction.*
- Still learning the rules of the game and the various positions on the field.*
- Able to physically participate in a live game but has not mastered the athletic skills to compete against age level peers in a competitive environment.*
- Has *little to no experience* with team sports.
- Needs frequent feedback from coaches or officials about the rules.

#### **D. Other areas to consider when assessing players**

The NCJLA recognizes that each child develops at their own pace and has procedures in place to properly assign them to the correct level of play. If a club determines that a player should play outside of their designated age group they should review the Eligibility section of the NCJLA Operations Guide for the petition process. Only club administrators or presidents may submit a player petition.

- ❑ *Player size and physical development.* Some players may have the stick skills to play at the A or B level but based on size and physical ability they would be better suited for a lower level team. The NCJLA recommends coaches pull these players aside and interview the players to assess this further. Players who exhibit a safety concern to themselves or others may qualify for an NCJLA Player Eligibility Petition.
  
- ❑ *Social- Emotional Development.* Some players may have the stick skills, size, and maturity to play at a different level but all their friends are on a different level team. Coaches should have a conversation with these players and their parents to discuss this issue and to assist in determining the appropriate level team for the player.
  
- ❑ *Athletic Ability.* When evaluating new players, players who have obvious athletic ability and have played a couple of other sports (soccer, football, basketball, tennis) may be able to play at a higher level than their experience dictates. In these situations coaches should assess the player for speed, agility, footwork, hand-eye coordination, and coachability. New players with advanced athletic ability should not be on rookie level teams. The player may be eligible to play up an age division with an NCJLA Player Waiver, please see the NCJLA Operations Guide under the eligibility section for the procedures to apply.

## II. Determining what level teams to register

After clubs determine the playing level of each participant in an age group it is strongly recommended that the club leadership meet to discuss the level of each team that they register in the NCJLA. The NCJLA offers 3 levels for youth ages and 2 levels for HS ages.

### A. NCJLA Divisions

#### HS Level

Varsity Boys & Girls HS

JV Boys HS

#### A Level

Boys 14U, 12U, & 10U

Girls 14U, & 12U

#### B Level Veteran

Boys 14U, 12U & 10U

Girls 14U, 12U & 10U

#### B Level Rookie

Boys 14U, 12U & 10U

Girls 14U, 12U & 10U

No Level Designation (not age appropriate)

## **B. Factors to consider when determining team registration level**

1. Clubs with 3 teams should consider registering an A team based on the talent level. Clubs with 4-5 teams or more at an age level could consider 2 A teams.
2. B level teams from previous years that perform well should consider going A level the following year if 50% or more of the team is returning.
3. Consider the Rookie division if you can answer "yes" to any of the following:
  - a. Are the majority of the players new to lacrosse with less than 1 year experience or exposure to the sport?
  - b. Do the majority of the players lack experience playing team sports?
  - c. Do at least 25% of the players struggle with sustained athletic movement, or effort?
4. Consider the B veteran division if you can answer "yes" to any of the below questions:
  - a. Do you have several strong athletes? A team with 2-4 or more "A" level athletes in other sports is likely to dominate in the B Rookie division - even if they are new to lacrosse and especially at 12U and 10U.
  - b. Is 50% or more of your team at the older end of the age bracket? Note: clubs with more than one team will often put their younger players in the rookie division.
  - c. At 12U do more than 50% of your players have 1 year of playing experience or more? If they have more than 1 year, would you consider a significant number to be strong players? Then you should consider B veteran or A level.

## **C. Factors that should not be considered when determining playing levels for a team or player**

1. The opponents that the team will have to play. *The NCJLA allows teams to schedule inter-club games outside of their division to ensure a variety of competition.*
2. The amount of travel time to games. *The NCJLA has removed the travel requirement outside of the team's conference. The scheduling rules for the team can be found in the Operations Guide. Each club has agreed to support the mission of the NCJLA when they applied for admission to the league. Traveling to another club is the single best way for clubs to demonstrate their commitment to growing the game.*
3. Whether or not the team will be able to secure an NCJLA Championship. The NCJLA strives to create competitive balance so that all teams have a chance to be challenged and honor the game by playing a worthy opponent. All HS, A level and B veteran levels have the chance to compete for a division or flight championship at the NCJLA end of season events.

*For questions related to determining playing or team registration levels please contact your division commissioner or NCJLA Director. Contact information for staff and contacts is listed [HERE](#).*