2026 Great Northern Lacrosse League Boys Season Overview + Operations Meeting

Wednesday November 5, 2025



Agenda

- Introductions
 - Jing Peng Director of Leagues and Events
 - o Matt Burke- USA Lacrosse Midwest Regional Manager
 - Damon Kocina- NLOA President
 - Ben MacLean- Homegrown Lacrosse Executive Director
- Attendance Form
- USA Lacrosse Updates- Matt Burke
- Boys Officials Rules Review & Updates-Damon Kocina
- Homegrown Initiatives-Ben MacLean
- Glance at the 2025 Season & History of GNLL/Homegrown
- Overview of GNLL Spring League
- Overview of GNLL Summer League
- Operating Policy & General Updates
- Resources for Program Leaders
- Resources for Coaches
- Challenges
- Questions/Discussions



Program Leader Functions

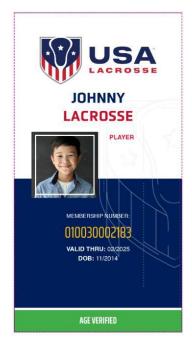








Player Age Verification



Member Program Compliance

- Submit a Member organization agreement (MOA) each calendar year.
- Request a Certificate of Insurance (COI) using the link received after submitting the above agreement
- Verify membership per the 100% guidelines via the USAL Roster Management tool roster uploads (players and coaches) are required for claims to be approved.
- For introductory types of clinics (where not all player participants will be members) you'll submit a separate form directly to WTW. (Non-member event form)

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESS

Here's what Program Leaders can do to ensure YOUR program thrives



The better the training, the better the experience Retention is less operous than

- Retention is less onerous than recruiting new players
- Ensure a succession plan is in place



USA Lacrosse Questions?

MIDWEST REGION CONTACTS



MATT BURKE

Regional Manager

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Boy's Officials Review & Update

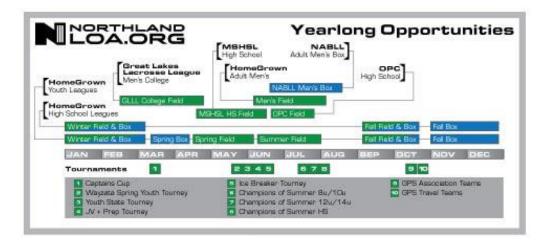


Northland LOA - Who are We?

Damon Kocina - President







Boy's Officials Review & Update - 2026 Points of Emphasis



Teams ready to play at game time: There is generally no time allotted for on-field warmups. Coaches should be prepared to meet with the officials and should know their in-home and nominated defender numbers. Teams should be getting into position so the game can start at the scheduled time. The clock starts running even if teams are not ready.

Coaches policing players before game: Coaches certify that players are legally equipped before the game. This means they must ensure: (1) all players have legal mouth guards and know to wear them properly (2) all players have removed all jewelry (including piercings, rings, bracelets, necklaces) (3) eye black, if worn, is limited to a single stroke inside the eye socket (not on the cheeks/nose or beyond the eye socket).

Body checking: There are no takeout checks (checks with the force and intent to put the opponent on the ground) permitted at any youth level. There is some legal pushing allowed, and at 14U, completely upright non-takeout checks are legal if not violent.

Boy's Officials Review & Update - 2026 Points of Emphasis



Communication with officials: Many officials working youth games are newer and will not make every call correctly nor will they have a firm grip on every technical rule. It's critical that coaches understand this. All officials should absolutely be able to throw a flag whenever there is violent contact. If the rules about such contact are not being enforced, it is appropriate for a coach to calmly and politely speak to the officials to remind them to call violations of the stick-checking and body-checking rules for that level of play on both teams.

Violent contact: Officials must call penalties for violent contact early in the game and to elevate the length of penalties for excessively violent contact after the first offense by a team. In particular, a second "take-out" or "excessive" body check by the same player should generally be a 3:00 NR penalty or an ejection foul. *Targeting* is **always** an ejection in youth games.

Restarts: Goalies no longer get 5 seconds to return to the crease. For 12U/14U, play restarts even if a defender is within 5 yards and that player is subject to penalty if he doesn't give up the path to the goal or defends the player in possession in any manner.

Boy's Officials Review & Update - 2026 Points of Emphasis



Legal stick checking for 8U and 10U: The only legal checks for 8U/10U are a poke below shoulder height, a lift below shoulder height, and a check down starting below shoulder height for the shorter player. All checks toward the body are illegal; this does not mean every such check will be called a slash—there could be a warning, or two, first—but if it has any force and hits the body or if it dislodges the ball, it should always be called a slash. Any check above shoulder height is a slash. This means many checks considered "clean" at higher levels will result in a 1-minute (or longer) penalty.

8U one-pass rule and restarts after goals: The 8U one-pass rule has changed and will be enforced by officials exactly as written. No modifications can be made to this rule, and coaches who complain about the rule or attempt to force the officials to modify the rule are subject to penalty. Also, restarts after goals will now be at midfield.

All 2025-26 Points of Emphasis are listed in the 2025-26 GNLL Boy's Youth Rules Document

Key NFHS rule changes affecting youth games for 2025–2026



NFHS boys lacrosse rules are the base rule set for GNLL youth lacrosse. The following 2026 NFHS rule changes will be enforced for youth (and high school) fall lacrosse starting in September 2025:

- The goalie no longer gets 5 seconds to get back to the crease if out of the crease when play stops.
- There is now an immediate 1-minute NR penalty for a non-goalkeeper entering the crease for the purpose of acting as a goalkeeper or blocking shots. (As in prior years, play is stopped immediately if the ball is loose or in possession, but a shot in flight will be allowed to come to its natural conclusion before play is stopped).
- If a player's helmet comes off during play, it is a technical foul (unless it is clear the helmet came off as a result of a foul; however, the player whose helmet came off must still leave the game until the next dead ball)

Boy's Officials Review & Update - 8U & 10U Pass Rules



Goal scored: When a goal is scored, both teams will have up to 20 seconds to substitute, and the scored-upon team will start with a player in possession outside the crease anywhere along the goal-line extended. The other players, including the defense, may line up anywhere on the field as long as there is no player within 5 yards of the player in possession. The one-pass rule will apply on the restart. Note: there is no rule requiring the defensive team to wait on the other side of midfield after a goal.

One-pass rule: In any situation in which a face-off would normally be held in a higher-level game (see above), the team awarded possession must attempt one pass before they are allowed to shoot at the goal. That pass attempt must originate in the offensive end. A player with any part of their body on or over the midline is considered in the offensive end. Note: This rule does not apply on every possession, only in situations where there would normally have been a face-off in a higher-level game.

Boy's Officials Review & Update - 8U & 10U Pass Rules



PLEASE enforce this as written!

We want standardization so players, coaches, officials, and spectators all know what to expect in every game.

We are asking coaches to follow the rules as written so that we can create this standardization and have a better footing for any possible adjustments in the future.

Rule Change Review deadline for 2026-27: July 31, 2026



Boy's Officials Review & Update - Ejections and Unsportsmanlike Conducts

Ejection Review

After any ejection, the crew chief will submit an ejection report to Northland LOA and the GNLL.

After the game, the association may decide to request a review. A form will be made available.

Representatives of both Northland and GNLL will investigate the ejection and can choose to confirm, alter, or waive the normal automatic suspension due to specific factors.

Response will be as quick as possible, difficult mid-tournament.

Cumulative USCs

Officials will report all Unsportsmanlike Conducts given to coaches to Northland LOA and the GNLL. This is regardless of when the infraction occurs (before, during, or after the game).

If an individual receives 3 USCs in a single season, they will be assessed an automatic 1 game suspension. Further violations may produce larger penalties.

Meant to encourage more positive communication and allow for tools for officials to manage matters of conduct.

Boy's Officials Review & Update - Passing Along Feedback



WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!!

Harold Buck (Assigner): haroldbuck@yourassignment.net

Damon Kocina (Pres.): DamonKocina@gmail.com

Matt Ripley (VP): mwripley@mac.com Northland LOA has a mindset of getting better every time we step on the field. Please let us know if:

- You had a great or negative experience with an official (Officials Evaluation Form)
- Questions about interpretation consistency
- Potential rule changes
- Assigning quirks

If you have game footage, please include. We have an established process for reviewing game film.

Homegrown Initiatives



Grow the game! Get more players.

- School Of Lax is a fun, hands-on PE unit that introduces 3rd-6th
 graders to the sport of lacrosse. We bring all the necessary equipment,
 professional coaching staff, and a ready-to-use curriculum to meet the
 kids where they are at.
- Homegrown Academy is the logical next step for players looking to get some on-field experience during the winter months to show up prepared for the spring season.
- <u>TryLax</u> clinics in late winter / early spring is where it all comes together
 and gets players to sign up for their association and play on a real team.

Homegrown Staff



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Glance at the 2025 Season By the Numbers & History of Homegrown Lacrosse

The Great Northern Lacrosse League (GNLL) represents the League and Events division of Homegrown Lacrosse, a Twin Cities-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2003. Guided by three dedicated full-time directors, GNLL currently administers 14 leagues and 12 tournaments, catering to a wide spectrum of participants, including youth associations, high school teams, club lacrosse programs, and adult teams within the scope of our 2024-2025 fiscal year (September to August).

MN Youth Association List

2021-2025 Program Chart



2026 GNLL Boys Spring League (Mid April-Early June)

GNLL Boys Spring Field League

League Dates:

Spring Regular Season: Saturday April 11-Sunday May 31, 2026

No Games May 23-24, 2026

Spring Youth State Tournament: Friday-Sunday June

6-8, 2025

Administrative Dates:

Association Registration Open/Close: Wednesday

January 1-Friday February 13, 2026

Team Registration Deadline: Sunday March 1, 2026 **Spring Scheduling Meeting:** Sunday March 1, 2026

League Fees:

	6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
Team Fee	Free	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
Game Fee	Free, no officials	\$5/game admin, no officials	\$55/game	\$95/game	\$95/game

Out of Metro Known Hosting Dates:

- Grand Rapids (Boys and Girls on Separate Days-April 25-26
- Rochester (Boys and Girls Jamboree)- May 9-10
- Superior (Boys)- Sunday May 10
- Duluth (Boys and Girls Jamboree)- May 9-10 or May 16-17th, TBD

West	NW	N/NE	South	Out of State
ACYLA	Andover	Arrowhead	C3	Hudson
Buffalo	Anoka Ramsey	Blaine	Farmington	La Crosse
Delano	Becker	Cambridge-Isanti	Mankato	Grand Forks
HopkinsPark	Big Lake	CDH	New Prague	Red River Valley
Hutchinson	Champlin Park	Centennial	Owatonna	Superior
Maple Grove	Elk River	Chisago Lakes	Rochester	
Minneapolis	Monticello	Cloquet Esko Carleton	Rosemount	
Minnetonka	Rocori	Duluth	Valley	
Orono	Rogers-Otsego	Forest Lake	Woodbury	
Waconia	Sartell Sauk Rapids	Grand Rapids		
Wayzata	St. Cloud	Mahtomedi	ΔF	11
	STMA	Mounds View Irondale		
		Pioneers	10	
		Tri-Mac		
		White Bear Lake	30	

2022: 41 Associations; 173 Teams 2023: 45 Associations; 200 Teams 2024: 48 Associations; 247 Teams 2025: 53 Associations; 272 Teams

2026 GNLL Boys Summer League (Mid June-End of July)

Boys Summer Field League

League Dates:

Summer Regular Season: Monday June 8-Wednesday July 22 2026 (Wednesday July 15 for 6/8/10U)

No games on Fridays or July 2.

Summer 6U-8U Jamboree (Saturday Only) & 10U Tournament: Saturday & Sunday July 18-19, 2026

Summer 12/14U State Tournament: Saturday & Sunday July 26-27, 2025

Administrative Dates:

Association Registration Open/Close: Thursday January 1-Friday February 13, 2026

Host Availability/Scheduling Form: Sunday April 19, 2026 Team Registration: Monday March 2- Sunday April 26, 2026

League Fees (Includes Summer State Tournament/End of Season Jamboree):

	6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
Team Fee	\$0	\$750 (6 Games)	\$1175 (8 Games)	\$1200 (8 Games)	
	53	300	\$975 (6 Games)	\$1000 (6	Games)

West	NW	N/NE	
ACYLA	Andover	Blaine	
Buffalo	Becker	Cambridge-Isanti	
Delano	Big Lake	Centennial	
Hopkins	Elk River	Champlin Park	
Maple Grove	Monticello	Chisago Lakes	
Minneapolis	Rocori	Forest Lake	
Orono Rogers		Mahtomedi	
St. Louis Park	Sartell-Sauk Rapids	Mounds View Irondale	
Waconia	St. Cloud	Roseville	
Westonka		White Bear Lake	

2022 (Year 1): 25 Associations; 114 Teams(Doesn't include 6U)

2023: 24 Associations; 108 Teams(Doesn't include 6U)

2024: 29 Associations; 120 Teams(Doesn't include 6U)

2025: 31 Associations; 134 Teams (Doesn't include 6U)

2026 Boys Operating Policy and League Updates

10U Novice & Experienced Divisions

- Our goal is to place teams in the division that gives them the best opportunity to develop and play in competitive games- not blowouts **without implementing tryouts.** Programs with a single team should use the rubric below to place their team. Programs with multiple teams should either split by grade if possible, or some other "random i.e grouping by elementary school etc" metric and then use the rubric to place their teams.
- Host sites for the scheduling meeting will be labeled as well, or for host sites with plenty of time/space, slots will be allotted for at least 3 teams for each division. We will do our best to keep divisions separate if numbers allow, but there may need to be some cross division play.

10U Division Tiering Rubric				
Factor	Criteria	Points		
Returning Players	6+ players with 2+ years	+2		
Mostly 4th Graders	75% of the roster or more	+1		
Coach Assessment	Experienced (Mixed skill with some game awareness or strong skill, understands game flows, can clear)	+1		
Requested "Novice" Division	NA	-1		
New Program/ Mostly Beginners	50% or more of the team is new to lacrosse	-2		

Total Score ≥ 2 → Experienced

Total Score $\leq 0 \rightarrow Novice$

Score = 1 → League Judgment Call

2026 Boys Operating Policy and League Updates

Optional Changes to # 10-14U Summer League Games

- GNLL will offer 10U-14U teams the option of 6 or 8 games to improve the practice-to-game ratio to allow better skill development, team play/strategy, minimize burnout and injury, along with building confidence.
 - Costs will be prorated accordingly
- Still working on keeping 8/10U to M/W when possible and 12/14U to Tues/Thur

Game Day Roster Enforcements (12U & 14U Only)

- Coaches have the option to bring a physical printed roster to games, or else, rosters must be visible on their program website with name and jersey number.
- Players who have been approved to play down or across teams must be marked with an asterisk or other symbol on the roster
- Main goal is to improve fairness, consistency and accountability across programs, but also understand need to support reasonable flexibility for developmental and logistical situations when done transparently.
- Boys 12/14U Roster Concern Form
 - Must be submitted within 24 hours of a game
 - Violation Process for unrostered or ineligible players
 - First Offense: Warning & Removal from Game
 - Second Offense: Game Forfeiture and 2 Game Coach Suspension
 - Third Offense: Game Forfeiture and Potential Indefinite Coach Suspension

2026 Boys Operating Policy and League Updates **ADDED AFTER MEETING**

Update to the Score Report Process

- To streamline the process and timeline of getting scores reported for league games, we will be enabling the "Allow Public to Post Scores" feature. This will allow scores to be entered immediately after the completion of games. While we ask that both teams input the score, the first person to post the score will be accepted. Should an error be made on the score of a game, please email myself or KK to make the correction as the public cannot change scores once submitted.
- This will take the place of the Game Score Report Form.

2026 Boys Operating Policy and League Updates **ADDED AFTER MEETING**

2027 & 2028 Jersey Requirements

- Beginning in 2027, jersey numbers must be at least 8 inches high on the back and 5 inches high on the front and must contrast the rest of the jersey to make them easily visible.
- Beginning in 2028, jerseys must be a single solid color (exceptions: up to 2" of contrasting trim is allowed on the collar, at the end of the sleeves, and on the waistband; quarter-inch piping is allowed; a team name and/or player name is allowed).
- You can find more information on this on page 4 of the GNLL Boys Youth Rules

2026 Boys League Points of Emphasis

12/14U Guidelines for Team Placement

Purpos

Our goal is to is to provide an environment where players grow as athletes, teammates, and people. We believe that **player development and a positive experience are the highest priorities** — when young athletes enjoy the sport, they are more likely to stay engaged, improve, and build lifelong connections.

At the same time, we recognize that **challenge** is **essential to growth**. Facing strong competition helps players develop resilience, sharpen skills, and expand their understanding of the game. The most impactful development happens when athletes are placed in the "challenge zone" — where the game is competitive enough to stretch their abilities, but not so mismatched that it discourages participation.

Philosophy

- Player development and a positive experience are the highest priorities but keep in mind that challenging games can also bring a lot of positive growth such as resilience and adaptability
- Competitive balance benefits both stronger and developing players.
- Placement decisions should consider team as a whole, not only individual standouts.
- Flexibility is built in: every association has unique roster sizes, skill distributions, and program structures.

Guideline Examples

- A Level ("Advanced"): Typically includes a majority of players with 3+ years of experience and/or a majority of second year players in that division (i.e. 6th/8th graders). Several may also participate in club or off-season lacrosse. Teams at this level demonstrate strong stick skills, faster pace, and higher game awareness.
- B1 Level ("Intermediate"): Often a mix of newer players and those with 1-2 years of experience. Some may have exposure to extra lacrosse opportunities outside the season. Teams are developing stick skills and game understanding, and are ready for a moderate challenge.
- B Level ("Developing/Beginner"): Frequently includes many players in their first year, or with limited prior experience. Few, if any, participate outside the community program. Teams are still building fundamentals, confidence, and game awareness.

Additional Notes

- These categories are meant to describe general team profiles, not hard thresholds.
- Associations with smaller player pools may need to place teams outside these guidelines due to roster realities.
- If possible, programs are encouraged to revisit placements after the first few games to ensure competitive fit.

2026 Points of Emphasis Continued

When is "playing up" permitted?

- Allowed when:
 - The player's skill, speed, and game awareness exceed their current level.
 - The association lacks enough players to field a full team in the player's age division.
 - The player's parents and coaches agree it benefits development and safety.
- Not allowed When:
 - It's to form a "super team" for competitive advantage.
 - It skips multiple age divisions (e.g. 10U -> 14U)

When is "playing down" permitted?

- In order for players to play down, a <u>Player Age Division Waiver Request</u> must be submitted AND approved ahead of the season and must be re-approved annually.
- Allowed when:
 - There is a medical, safety, or developmental need (e.g. late physical growth, first year experience).
 - The player's skill or physical maturity level makes their participation in their true age group unsafe.
- Not allowed when:
 - For competitive reasons or to dominate a lower level
 - o To maintain a large roster at a weaker division

2026 Points of Emphasis Continued

Support of Out-Of-Metro Associations

- The growth of lacrosse associations in all communities should be important to all of us but we want to emphasize support for out-of-metro associations due to their increased time and cost commitments among other barriers. We already do this through some financial means but here are additional ways for associations to support.
 - Support through travel during Spring host days
 - Working to have back to back days in northern areas to allow teams to make a weekend team bonding trip
 - Associations are asked to self select travel at this time and are asked to travel once every three seasons
 to ensure out-of-metro teams get at least one home date. Records are shared in January for planning
 purposes.

Sharing of Players - best practices if more than one team at an age level

- Operating Policies II. H. Team Structure 9.
- 9. In most circumstances, players can only play on one team in any given season. It is illegal for a player to participate for two different GNLL teams during the same season without GNLL Director approval unless it is in the case of programs with A & B teams at 12 and 14U. B team players may be pulled up to the A team roster as substitutes if needed. If an association has two even 12/14U teams or 10U and under and will not have enough players for one of the teams to play a game, it is illegal to have players from the other team "fill in" in order to have enough players to play, without GNLL Director approval. The team will have to forfeit the game, and then a scrimmage can be held provided it can be done safely.

2026 Points of Emphasis Continued

Associations Should Focus on Creating the Proper Environment for Athletes

- Focus on fun-this doesn't necessarily mean "games" and less structure
 - Athlete Improvement
 - Having coaches who believe in them
 - Being a part of a team that supports each other
- Praising controllables like effort, hustle, and growth, not just talent or wins
- If kids enjoy the process, they stay. Staying creates growth, and growth doesn't just make your program bigger, it makes it stronger too.

RESOURCES FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

USA Lacrosse

- **Grant Options**

 - Equipment Grants Player Clinic Grants
 - Financial Support
- Certificates of Insurance
 - Liability protection for facility rentals and events
 - Medical coverage for player injuries during organized lacrosse activities
 New coverage starting January 1, more info to come
 Midwest Regional Manager Support from Matt Burke
- - mburke@usalacrosse.com
- Online Lacrosse Team Management System
- League Standards and Best Practice Guidelines
- Flex 6
- Hardship Memberships
 - Contact mburke@usalacrosse.com

Homegrown Lacrosse

- Private Clinics
 - Contact hailev@homegrownlacrosse.org

Great Northern Lacrosse Leagues

- Operating Policies
- Association Grant Applications
- TryLax Support
- Equipment and Volunteer Coaches
- Clinic Support
 - Equipment and Volunteer Coaches

OFFICIALS' RECRUITMENT

USA Lacrosse

• <u>USA Lacrosse Officials Resources</u>

Boys Officials in Minnesota

- Northland Lacrosse Officials Association (NLOA)
- <u>Upper Midwest Lacrosse Officials Association</u> (UMLOA)





RESOURCES FOR COACHES

Great Northern Lacrosse Leagues

- On-Field Coaches Clinic Saturday February 28, 2026 9-11:30AM at Concordia Seafoam Stadium (more information to be sent by Jan 1)
- Virtual Preseason Coaches Meetings
 - Spring Season Wednesday April 1, 2026 7PM
 - Summer Season Wednesday May 27, 2026 7PM
- Virtual Coaching Series
 - Sessions focused on both coaching and administrative duties for directors
 - https://www.youtube.com/@GreatNorthernLacrosseLeague





RESOURCES FOR COACHES

USA Lacrosse

- Coaching Resources
 - Mobile Coach
 - Rule Changes
 - USA Lacrosse Academy -
 - Denver, CO December 6 & 7, 2025
 - Fairfield, CT January 17 & 18, 2026

Homegrown Lacrosse

- Shadow Homegrown Academy Sessions

 Contact hailey@homegrownlacrosse.org if interested

Great Northern Lacrosse Leagues Boys Drill Compilation & Coaching Resources Girls Drill Compilation & Coaching Resources





2026 Association Spring/Summer Tournaments

- May 2-3 <u>Kirk Watson Memorial Shootout</u>
- May 15-17 Wayzata Invitational
- May 16-17 <u>Moorhead Spud Spring Showdown</u>
- May 29-31 GNLL Girls Spring State Tournament
- June 5-7 <u>Shakopee River Valley Rumble</u>
- June 5-7 GNLL Boys Spring State Tournament
- June 20-21 <u>Champlin Park Icebreaker</u> (Boys Only)
- June 26-28 Prior Lake Lax by the Lake
- June 26-28 Woodbury Black & Blue
- July 10-12 <u>Centennial Sizzle</u> (Tentative Date)
- July 28-19 GNLL Boys & Girls 6U-10U Jamboree & Summer State Tournament
- July 24-26 GNLL Boys & Girls 12U-14U Summer State Tournament

Questions/Challenges/Discussion



