



Inside Lacrosse October Issue: Jiloty — Canadian Influence

John Jiloty | September 22nd, 2011

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(Photo: Martin Allinson)

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It has certainly *seemed* like more and more Canadians are playing NCAA lacrosse every year.



The first sign was the more consistent presence among the USILA All-American lists. From 2000-2004, a Canadian earned at least third-team All-American honors just four times (Gavin Prout twice, Jeff Zywicki and Brodie Merrill). Then from 2005-2011, Canadians appeared in those top three groups 19 times, including a record four in 2011 (first-teamer Kevin Crowley, second-teamers Stephen Keogh and Mark Matthews and third-teamer Jordan McBride).

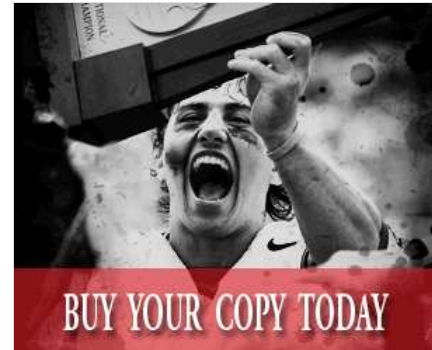
Second was a Canadian diaspora among NCAA rosters. In the past, Canadians seemed to funnel into a select few schools — Delaware, Cornell, Duke, Syracuse, Albany, Denver, Ohio State, Stony Brook, Virginia, Hofstra — because of

geography, coaches' connections and/or player lineage. Yet the last few years have seen every top DI coach recruiting in Canada.

Third was the 2006 establishment of the Hill Academy in Ontario. With Brodie heading up lacrosse, the Merrill family founded this school in part to help better prepare Canadian box players for NCAA field ball. EDGE in Ontario, Elev8 in Alberta and Burnaby Mountain Selects in British Columbia complement Hill as summer-time recruiting teams for Canadians — making it easier for players and coaches to connect.

Oh yeah, and Team Canada's first gold medal since 1978 at the 2006 World Championships in London, Ont.,

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was big too.

Still, I didn't fully grasp the entire impact until I saw some numbers that Team Canada's Jason Donville posted in a story on iLlndoor.com last spring. By his estimates, less than 40 Canadians were playing NCAA lacrosse (DI, DII and DIII) in 2001. That number blew up to 250 last season, which was a 27% increase over the 197 in 2010.

Obviously, those numbers aren't huge (that's less than one Canadian per roster when you consider there were 282 NCAA men's lacrosse teams in 2011), but as with everything in lacrosse, it's the growth trajectory that's so important.

That's also happened hand in hand with a growing number of Americans starring in the National Lacrosse League after college. Casey Powell became the first American to win NLL MVP honors in 2010, and he followed that up with an MVP outing at the World Indoor Lacrosse Championships this May in Prague. Guys like Paul Rabil, Kevin Buchanan, Drew Westervelt, Brendan Mundorf, Ryan Boyle, Max Seibald and Brian Langtry have all more than held their own in the NLL, with little to no prior box lacrosse experience.

Maybe more telling: more than half of the Boston Cannons MLL 2011 Championship Game roster plays in the NLL.

Former NLL commissioner Jim Jennings recently helped start the North American Lacrosse League, a developmental pro circuit set up in part to help adapt more Americans to the indoor game, and Canadian Hall of Famer Johnny Mouradian has set up American Indoor Lacrosse to run youth box leagues throughout the U.S.

Conversely, Major League Lacrosse's Nationals franchise has won two titles and been to three of the last four Championship Games with a largely Canadian roster playing a hybrid box/field style. And Princeton coach Chris Bates is using a Canadian-influenced pairs offense in the Ivy League.

Even former NCAA stars like Grant Catalino and Joel White spent time during college in the Canadian Jr. A summer box leagues to help hone their games. And 2011 All-MLL middle Joe Walters did double-time this summer with the Sr. A Brampton Excelsiors, who made the Mann Cup finals.



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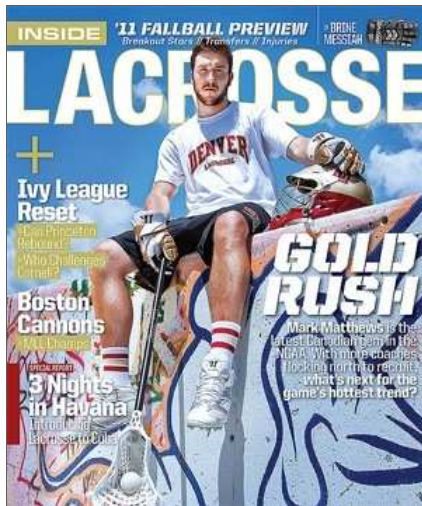
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So, while there are more Canadians playing field lacrosse, Americans are returning the favor by increasingly trying out the box game — so the gap that used to exist between the two sports is all but gone.

That's good for everyone, because Canadians will be getting more athletic, fit and two-handed to compete in field lacrosse, and Americans will boost their stick skills, finishing acumen and groundball play indoors.

A host of big-name Canadians graduated from the NCAA last spring, so there will be some room for a guy like our cover boy Mark Matthews to step up and make an even bigger impact in 2012. Many fans were shocked Matthews wasn't a Tewaaron Trophy finalist last year after he helped take Denver to the Final Four, and he'll be No. 3 in the 2012 Player of the Year race behind Rob Pannell and Steele Stanwick.

Matthews has gotten better every season with the Pioneers, and he returned to Denver this fall coming off a Minto Cup win with Whitby, starring alongside fellow NCAA studs Mark Cockerton (Virginia), Shayne Jackson (Limestone), Adrian Sorichetti (Hofstra), Ryan Serville (Delaware) and Zach Palmer (Johns Hopkins).

With all that Denver returns, they'll likely start the '12 preseason in the Top 5. Who else will be up there? We'll find out in October during what seems to be a more spread-out fallball schedule.

Be sure to check InsideLacrosse.com for the latest fallball news, highlights and analysis. We'll be back in print form in December, after we polish off the 2012 Face-Off Yearbook, our 12th since taking over for the great Bob Vlahakis. Enjoy the fall.

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