

Will the KHSAA Ever Sanction Lacrosse?

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Will the KHSAA ever sanction lacrosse? The short answer to this question is yes, lacrosse will one day be sanctioned by the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA). The real question that everyone is always asking is how soon will the KHSAA make the decision to sanction lacrosse?

Currently there are 38 boy's and 33 girl's teams at the high school

level. On the boy's side there are at least four teams that are true club teams and not associated with any school. So only about 34 schools actually sponsor high school lacrosse in Kentucky, on the boy's side. The same is true on the girls side as there are a handful of club teams as well. There are also two different leagues on both the boy's and girl's sides as well.

Looking at sheer numbers it seems as if there are enough schools for the KHSAA to sanction the sport of lacrosse, but it is much deeper than that. While many of these schools sponsor lacrosse only about 20 or so of them treat them like they are an actual sports team. That means they are literally called the lacrosse club and receive minimal support, if any, from the athletic department. This is a big issue that I personally have a problem with.

The KHSAA sends out surveys to all the schools around the state for various sports each year just any other athletic association or league. The KHSAA has sent out multiple surveys regarding the addition of lacrosse as a KHSAA sport over the years. They actually send one about adding new sports every two years and this past year was one of those years. [Josh Moore](#) of the Lexington Herald Leader reported back in September that KHSAA commissioner Julian Tackett said 7 schools that sponsor lacrosse and file rosters with the KHSAA voted "NO" to sanctioning lacrosse as a KHSAA sport. That vote by those seven schools, who will not be named, raised some questions as to how close or far we are from seeing KHSAA lacrosse actually become a thing.

There are a lot of sides to this whole thing and really a lot of valid points and arguments to be made either way. The biggest question is why would a school vote no to sanctioning lacrosse? Well, that is a

very long winded answer. First off I would like to clear up a very big misconception. It is not about territorialism like many have suggested it is.

Lacrosse in KY is very top heavy and certain schools are way more talented and advanced than some other schools. This is mostly due to how lacrosse is still very much a growing sport in Kentucky and across the country and globe. The best schools would likely vote no because they don't have much competition at all. Also, it wouldn't be fair to anyone if there were just a few teams killing everyone else all the time. We see this at the end of the year when teams get into their district schedules for their respective league, KSSL or Commonwealth.

Because of the lack of competition the best schools in the state usually play a lot of out of state teams to actually give them competition that is on their level or better. We see this every year when a few teams play schools like Culver (IN), Montgomery Bell (TN), or travel to states like Georgia and Maryland. I have been told by many coaches that if the KHSAA were to sanction lacrosse that they wouldn't be able to play as many out of state teams and would have to play more in state teams. Again, that goes back to the fairness factor. It wouldn't be fair to any team under those circumstances. Also, if the KHSAA were to add lacrosse none of the club teams could play and those kids deserve a chance to play lacrosse too.

Another question is why would you vote yes? You would vote yes because you want lacrosse to be unified again in the state. The KHSAA sanctioning lacrosse would help the sport grow more than it already is. Many schools in areas that have lacrosse won't add lacrosse because

it's not sanctioned. That could potentially solve the issue of club teams not being able to play because those schools in that area would likely add lacrosse. Certain programs would also gain more validation if the KHSAA were to sanction lacrosse.

Now those answers are compiled from my personal knowledge and my views given the conversations I have had with many people, including coaches, about this topic. I think many would agree with me that we want the KHSAA to add lacrosse but it may be too soon and the sport needs a few more years.

I really wanted to hear what people inside and outside the sport thought about this topic so over the course of the past few months I have been compiling answers from many people about this topic. I have talked to athletic directors from schools that do and don't have lacrosse on the boy's and girl's side. I have also talked to many boy's and girl's high school coaches as well.

Looking at the current class system for football from 1A to 6A I sent emails to athletic directors at various schools in each class that don't have lacrosse. To keep things as broad as I could I included at least one school from the Eastern, Central, and Western part of the state in each class. The questions I asked these athletic directors are as follows:

1. Have you ever though about adding boy's or girl's lacrosse?
2. If the KHSAA were to sanction lacrosse would that intrigue you to the prospect of adding boy's or girl's lacrosse?
3. Besides lack of knowledge of the game, what is the biggest draw

back for schools like yours to not add lacrosse?

Most every athletic director responded to my emails and was willing to answer any questions that I had to ask. First off, thank you to every athletic director that willingly responded to me and answered my questions.

The answers to those questions above were very interesting and honestly varied more than I initially thought they would. Some of the answers that I got from various athletic directors were surprising for that particular school.

The most common answers that I got to the first question was that they had considered adding lacrosse at their respective school but they didn't feel that the interest was there to be able to field a full team. Many schools said that they had sent out surveys to the students asking if they would want to play lacrosse and that the results just didn't show enough interest to move forward with the idea for now. The other two most common answers to question one were either they hadn't thought about adding lacrosse yet but had researched about the sport or that they had been approached at one time or another by a coach from Louisville or Lexington about possibly adding lacrosse.

This second question had an even more diverse pool of answers. The most common answer that I got was yes, but we would most likely add only girls or girls first because of Title IX. That makes complete sense and I don't think anyone is surprised by that since we have seen it at the NCAA level. Another common answer that I received to that

second question was yes because it's easier to add a KHSAA sanctioned sport, but again we would need the interest. I also received a few answer that were just straight up no because of the size of the school, location, or other reason.

This last question garnered the most common answer out of all three questions I asked these various athletic directors. The biggest answer was MONEY. The biggest obstacle to a school adding lacrosse in Kentucky, and frankly the rest of the country, is money. Lacrosse can be an expensive sport. I say can be because what these athletic directors and school administrators may not know is that there are ways around spending lots of money. US Lacrosse has grants they can give to help programs as well as various other organizations. Still money is perhaps the biggest obstacle for any school, especially public schools, in terms of adding a new sport like lacrosse.

While I can't release which athletic directors said what I can tell you what region had the most positive answers. It's no shocker that the most positive answers came from Louisville and the central part of the state. That is where lacrosse is most prominent at the moment. I did get some great answers from athletic directors in the western part of the state as well as a few in the eastern part too.

I personally see some big takeaways from these answers that various athletic directors around the state have give me in regards to lacrosse. The first takeaway is how far lacrosse still has to go. I truly believe that every high school in this state could, and should, have a boy's and girl's high school lacrosse team. With that said, that is not the case and won't be the case for a long time. There is still work to be done in

the inner cities and in the country in terms of growing the game. I am glad to see these initiatives being tackled by guys like Bellarmine's head coach Jim Mitchell and others. Coach Mitchell had some of his players at Bellarmine teach lacrosse to a PE class at Wellington Elementary which is in the Lake Dreamland neighborhood of Louisville. These are the steps that need to be taken and are currently underway.

Will the KHSAA sanctioning lacrosse help the overall growth in the state? Probably, depending on what part of the state you live in. Overall, it would be a good thing for the game as a whole. One thing is for sure, the lacrosse community want's to see the KHSAA sanction lacrosse but we aren't exactly sure how far or close we are from that happening. Personally, I believe we are 5-10 years out at the most. In the mean time all we can do is commit as much as we can to help give this game that we all love more growth in a state where I believe we have just barley started to scratched the surface.