

November 3, 2010

Dear NYSPHSAA Section Chair/ Athletic Director:

As a concerned public high school women's lacrosse coach in NY, I am writing to urge you to oppose the proposed NYSPHSAA vote to mandate all women's lacrosse players wear men's lacrosse helmets starting in 2012. We understand that there has been concerns about safety in the game of women's lacrosse, but I can assure you that US Lacrosse, the umpires and coaches who teach and enforce the rules of the women's game are doing all they can to ensure the safety of its players.

We are most concerned that NYS administrators have not considered the serious risks or unintended consequences of requiring girls to wear hard shell men's helmets. A vote in favor of this proposal would be irresponsible and would ultimately place girls in NY in a very dangerous and vulnerable situation. **The following reasons below demonstrate why NYS should not require girls wear men's lacrosse helmets:**

- 1) Women and Men's lacrosse are two versions of the same game, with very different rules. Sport science and safety research tells us that the incidence and mechanism of head injury are very different for the each game.**
- 2) Hard helmets have only been approved by NOCSAE for men's lacrosse and women's lacrosse goalies. They have not been approved for field players in women's lacrosse.**
- 3) No helmet prevents against concussion. Men's lacrosse helmets were developed and designed to prevent against catastrophic head injuries and skull fractures. These two injuries have never occurred in women's lacrosse.**
- 4) US Lacrosse/ NFHS Women's rules DO allow for soft head protection.**
- 5) US Lacrosse made unprecedented changes to the women's game in 2010 to significantly increase penalties associated with dangerous play.**
- 6) US Lacrosse is pursuing the development of a women's lacrosse-specific protective headgear specification which, once developed and reproduced, would allow players to wear additional head protection designed uniquely for women's lacrosse players.**
- 7) US Lacrosse is leading efforts to fund a study looking at the impact and forces of stick-to-head contact.**
- 8) US Lacrosse is NOT OPPOSED to head protection for women's lacrosse players, but we believe it would be unilaterally IRRESPONSIBLE to mandate that girls wear a piece of equipment on their heads that has been approved for a completely different game, men's lacrosse, without ANY CONSIDERATION of the rules, mechanism of injury and unintended consequences to player safety.**

US Lacrosse is continuing to study lacrosse injuries through its Sports Science and Safety committee, specifically concussions and head injuries sustained by men and women at the high school and youth level. Attached is a poster presentation of video analysis work studying the different mechanism of injury associated with concussions in both the men and women's game. US Lacrosse has also increased its efforts to provide affordable and accessible education and training to thousands of coaches and umpires across the country. (See the attached NYS scorecard to see how many coaches and umpires serving high school and youth play have received women's lacrosse training).

Women's Lacrosse is a fast growing sport in NY and across the country, and we take our role as coaches seriously to teach our players to play within the rules and make safety a top priority. Please do not vote for men's helmets and take away the opportunity for our NY girls to play the women's game that all other girls in the country are playing, and leave us to deal with all of the injuries that will occur, as a result of wearing equipment not designed to protect them. Please vote NO on this issue and work with those in the sport to increase awareness of concussions and the importance of playing safe and enforcing the rules.

Please let me know if you would like me, or US Lacrosse staff and members of its Sport Science & Safety Committee <http://www.uslacrosse.org/UtilityNav/AboutTheSport/SportsScienceandSafety/CommitteeMembers.aspx> to speak via phone or attend any safety or section meetings occurring in November, to answer questions or reiterate our position on the question of requiring men's lacrosse helmets for women's lacrosse players before the vote on December 2.

On behalf of those who love the sport of women's lacrosse, we thank you for considering all of this information, and hope that you vote to preserve the safety and integrity of the women's game by saying no to men's lacrosse helmets.

Best regards,

Cc: Ann Carpenetti, Women's Division Director, US Lacrosse

Jacqueline Gow, Women's Lacrosse Chair, NYSPHSAA