

Lacrosse Summer Teams A Springboard for Players

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Thursday, August 4, 2005; Page LZ10

As lacrosse grows in popularity throughout Loudoun County, so does the demand for summer teams on which area players can improve their skills, compete against top-tier opponents and, perhaps most important, gain notice from college scouts.

NoVa West Lacrosse has filled that need for many high school players who live in the western portions of Northern Virginia. The team includes players from high schools in the Dulles District as well as from private schools Notre Dame, Highland and Wakefield School.

"The idea is to give student-athletes with collegiate aspirations a chance to get exposure," said NoVa West Coach Rob Horne, who coaches Notre Dame Academy during the spring.

Such was the case when the team participated in a pair of two-day tournaments in July. The first of those was the Hot Shots tournament at Parkside High School in Salisbury, Md. NoVa West played teams from Maryland, Virginia and New York, finishing with a 2-4 record.



One week later, NoVa West played in a tournament at South River High School in Edgewater, Md., just outside of Annapolis. Opponents included teams from South River, St. Mary's-Annapolis and Lake Braddock high schools. According to NoVa West founder Matt Pinkston, scouts from Salisbury University and the University of Maryland Baltimore County attended the tournament in which NoVa West went 3-3.

Most players on the team agreed the opportunity to compete against opponents from regions where lacrosse is a dominant sport and to play in front of college coaches were the biggest rewards.

"I joined NoVa West because I wanted to get exposure to college coaches because I'd like to play lacrosse at a higher level," said Devin Pinkston (Notre Dame Academy), son of Matt Pinkston and the summer team's leader in goals (29), assists (24) and points (53).

Pinkston was named to the all-tournament team in the Hot Shots tournament. He was the only member of a team seeded lower than second to make the all-tournament team.

Among the challenges for coaches of NoVa West was preparing the players for a higher caliber of competition than they face in Loudoun County.

"It was interesting to see that some of these kids were lacking basic fundamentals. A lot of them were great athletes, playing off of sheer athleticism," said NoVa West assistant coach Joseph Trigiani, who also works as an assistant at Notre Dame Academy.

"We knew they knew the basics, and we figured we could help them learn a little more because of that. It was great being able to coach them and watch the light bulb go off once we were able to teach them more technique."