

Californian building lacrosse program

LC's Hyer self-made coach

By DARRELL LAURANT

Although Mike Hyer didn't witness his first lacrosse game until he was 21 years old, the sight obviously made a big impression on him.

For since that time, like some modern Johnny Appleseed, the 34-year-old Californian has been planting collegiate programs from one coast to the other.

"I watched the San Francisco Lacrosse Club play a game," recalls Hyer, now in charge of Lynchburg College's club lacrosse program, "and something about it really appealed to me. Afterwards, I went down and asked if they needed players."

With no formal training in the sport, Hyer taught himself as he went along.

"I tried to guard the toughest guy I could find," he says, "because that's one good way to learn the hard way. I went to every camp and clinic I could, and I read every book on lacrosse I could get my hands on."

Before long, Hyer was directing a club team at the University of California in Berkeley, teaching the sport at public schools in the San Francisco area, and serving as director of



**LC's Mike Hyer
Johnny Appleseed?**

a local amateur league.

"In 1976," he remembers, "I looked through the NCAA Lacrosse Guide, found the schools with the worst records, and wrote to them asking for a coaching job. I sent out 70 letters, and got 55 replies."

His persistence finally paid off in a head coaching position at New England College in Henniker, N.H., which hired him—sight unseen—on the basis of a telephone interview.

"They were 2-11 the year before I came," Hyer says of New England, "and we had two 8-5 seasons while I was there. The problem, from my point of view, was that I was only part-time, so I applied for an assistant's job at the University of Maryland."

With characteristic optimism, Hyer loaded his worldly belongings on a truck and headed for the Promised Land in College Park. Halfway there, he made a precautionary phone call to make sure the job was indeed his. It wasn't.

"At the last minute, a guy they had offered it to before changed his mind and accepted it," says Hyer, "and there I was with everything I owned in this rented truck. Bad news."

But good news was forthcoming from Lynchburg College, which offered him the dual post of lacrosse coach and sports information director.

"I wasn't sure what to expect here," he admits, "but the administration has been very receptive to lacrosse."

This spring, Hyer's Hornets are officially a club team—a designation which affects funding more than anything else.

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★ LC's Hyer

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"Our stats count, as far as the NCAA is concerned," he explains, "and our games count on other teams' records. The big difference is that we have to dig into our pockets some for uniforms, trips, etc. We raise most of our own budget."

The Hornets played an abbreviated fall schedule last year, and have a 14-game slate this spring. Next year, lacrosse will become LC's 19th varsity sport.

For now, however, Hyer has a major building job on his hands. Only eight of the current 34-man Hornet squad played lacrosse regularly in high school, and goalie Paul Corrie had never tried that position before. In their opener, the Hornets lost 16-4 to Hampden-Sydney.

"It's going to take some time," Hyer admits, "but we've got great enthusiasm. It's a democratic sort of setup—we decide what's best for the team as a group—and the guys who have played before are helping me show the others what to do."

"I'm trying to stress fundamentals, while the more reestablished programs are already into running their offenses, so we're a little behind. It's like basketball—you have to know what to do without the ball."

Yet Mike Hyer is doing what he's always wanted to do. And he has a place for his furniture, to boot.

Joe Gminski feels good about Mike's success