

JDF Lacrosse Tryout FAQ's

Why is JDF switching from assessments to a formal tryout process?

Assessments are something JDF has only used for the past few years, and while they were well-intentioned, they often created challenges. Having such a wide range of skill levels on the floor at the same time made it difficult for evaluators to get an accurate sense of each player, and many families felt the results didn't reflect their child's true ability. The process also became extremely time-consuming and difficult for the Board to manage.

By introducing a formal tryout process, we can reduce the number of players on the floor at once and create a more organized, consistent evaluation environment. Not every player wants to try out for an A team, and by allowing families to make that choice upfront, we can separate groups early and make the remaining evaluations much more effective.

This shift gives us the ability to properly assess all athletes and place them on teams where they will be most successful, ultimately improving the fairness, accuracy, and overall experience for everyone involved.

What exactly is the difference between an assessment and a tryout?

Tryouts are for players who *choose* to compete for a spot on one of our A teams. These sessions are more competitive and are designed to identify athletes who are ready for the highest level of play within their age division.

Assessments, on the other hand, are for the remaining players who are not trying out for an A team. The purpose of assessments is to evaluate each player's skill level, confidence, and understanding of the game so we can place them on the team that best suits their development. Assessments are not about competing for an A-team spot—they're about ensuring every athlete is placed where they will have the most success and enjoyment.

Together, the two processes allow us to better support all athletes, regardless of their goals or experience level.

How many evaluators will be present?

The number of evaluators will depend on the size of each group, which is determined by registration numbers in that division. In most cases, families can expect 2–4 evaluators or assessors at both tryouts and assessments. This ensures we have enough trained eyes on the floor to provide fair, consistent, and balanced evaluations for all players.

What if a player cannot attend one or more tryout sessions due to illness, vacation, or another conflict?

We understand that conflicts and unexpected situations can happen. Each case will be reviewed individually by the Board, and decisions will be made based on the specific circumstances. That said,

tryouts are highly competitive, and missing a session may impact a player's ability to be fully evaluated. For that reason, we strongly encourage players to make every effort to attend all tryout sessions whenever possible.

How is fairness ensured in the tryout process?

Fairness is a top priority in our tryout process. To support this, all evaluators are paid, neutral professionals who have no ties to the players participating. Their role is to provide an unbiased assessment of each athlete's performance.

After every tryout session, evaluators meet with the coaching staff to review what they observed. They provide detailed feedback and make recommendations on which players should move forward and which players should be released from the tryout group. This collaborative approach—using neutral evaluators and structured discussions—helps ensure that decisions are consistent, transparent, and based solely on player performance.

What criteria will players be evaluated on?

We use a combination of technical skills, game understanding, and character qualities to evaluate players and get a clear picture of their overall abilities. This includes:

Stick Skills: Passing, catching, cradling, and shooting.

Offensive Skills: On- and off-ball movement, use of picks, decision-making, floor vision, and loose-ball ability.

Defensive Skills: Communication, floor awareness, positioning, decision-making, physicality, and ability to transition effectively.

In addition to on-floor skills, evaluators will also consider important character and team-culture qualities such as attitude, coachability, sportsmanship, composure, work ethic, and discipline.

Using these criteria ensures we assess the whole player, not just their technical abilities, and place athletes in environments where they can thrive.

Will we receive our child's evaluation scores?

Tryout and assessment scores are designed to give evaluators and coaches an overall picture of the entire group and how each player compares within it. An individual score on its own wouldn't provide meaningful insight without seeing all group scores—which we do not share.

For that reason, individual player scores will not be released. However, we are always happy to provide player-specific feedback if requested. This type of feedback is far more useful and constructive, as it focuses on how your child can continue to grow and develop in the sport.

Will coaches have any say in final team selections?

Yes, coaches will have input in final team selections. All coaches go through a thorough evaluation and selection process each year, which includes reviewing past feedback, looking at coaching history and statistics, and completing an annual interview. Because of this rigorous process, JDF has confidence in our coaches' ability to make thoughtful, informed decisions.

Each coach may approach team-building differently. Some may prioritize speed, others size, others defensive strength, or overall team balance. JDF supports coaches in shaping their teams based on their coaching philosophy and what they believe will create the best environment for success.

That said, if any selections appear to fall outside the expectations set by tryout results or player performance, coaches may be asked to explain their decisions to the Board to ensure consistency and fairness across all teams.

Are families allowed to attend tryouts to watch?

No, families are not permitted to watch tryouts. We introduced this change last year, and it worked very well for everyone involved. Eagle Ridge has a very small viewing area, and allowing spectators creates congestion and disrupts the flow of the sessions.

Most importantly, keeping the stands clear allows players, coaches, and evaluators to stay fully focused. We want athletes to feel confident and comfortable without the added pressure or distraction of parents or friends watching. It also helps ensure that coaches and evaluators can do their job without interruptions or sideline conversations.

This approach supports a fair, calm, and professional evaluation environment for all players.

Why change something that wasn't broken?

While our past assessment process has worked, it hasn't been perfect. Over the years, we've heard consistent feedback from families and coaches about areas that could be improved, including clarity, fairness, and overall organization. Our goal is to continually strengthen the experience for players and families, and moving to a formal tryout process is one way we can do that.

This change allows us to streamline evaluations, reduce group sizes, and ensure players are being assessed in the environment that best fits their goals. It's not about fixing something that was "broken", it's about making a good process even better for everyone involved.

When will teams be formed?

Our goal is to have all U13–U17 teams formed by early February. While A-team tryouts may conclude first, A-team rosters will not be announced until B and C team rosters have also been finalized.

Announcing all rosters at the same time allows every team to begin practices and team-building activities together and ensures no group is placed at an advantage simply because their process finished earlier. This approach supports fairness and creates a strong start to the season for all teams.