

Lacrosse, a rock-'em, sock-'em game that looks like hockey and plays like basketball, makes its professional debut in St. Paul tonight.



PHOTOS BY SHERRI LAROSE, PIONEER PRESS

Ryan Cousins, right, collides with Michael Kilby as they scramble for the ball during a Swarm practice at the Xcel Energy Center on Wednesday. Swarm is the latest addition to the 11-team National Lacrosse League.

IF YOU GO TONIGHT

A limited number of free tickets will be available at the Xcel Energy Center box office before faceoff at 7:30 p.m.

LACROSSE 101

A thumbnail look at Minnesota's newest professional sport:

The game: Lacrosse often is compared to hockey because of personnel and equipment. Players use sticks with webbed pockets at the tip to pass and shoot a solid rubber ball toward nets. But the game's strategy most resembles basketball. There is frequent scoring, plus use of a shot clock (30 seconds). Teams on offense usually spread the floor and pass with the frequency of a basketball attack.

The history: First played by American Indians as recreation and to settle disputes between tribes instead of going to war.

The league: National Lacrosse League, founded 1987. Eleven teams play a 16-game schedule between January and April.

The format: Five runners and a goaltender per team play at one time. There are four, 15-minute quarters with a 12-minute halftime.

Source: National Lacrosse League

A NEW GAME IN TOWN

BY BRIAN MURPHY

Pioneer Press

There's a new kid in town, and he's bringing goal scoring, crosschecking and slashing back to the Xcel Energy Center.

Professional lacrosse debuts tonight in Minnesota when the expansion Swarm play the Colorado Mammoth in a free exhibition game that is expected to draw at least 10,000 people to downtown St. Paul.

But this venture could be a referendum on the marketing power of the Wild, who own the franchise and are betting \$3 million that a league with no local ties and a team with no history can succeed in a sport where other dreamers have failed.

The same folks who reached out into the hockey community to make the Wild an expansion marvel now have the challenge of bringing a relatively obscure sport into an 18,000-seat arena and convincing people

**Swarm's
Michael
Kilby**

