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An announced crowd of 14,084 turned out to watch Friday night's lacrosse exhibition game between the Minnesota Swarm and the Colorado Mammoth at the Xcel Energy Center. There was no admission charge.

## Bob Sansevere

(continued)

The playing field was condensed over time, and a Frenchman named George Beers wrote rules in 1867 that were a template for the game being played today.

The outdoor game, that is.

There also is indoor lacrosse, which is sort of the Cliffs Notes version of the outdoor game.

That is the game played Friday night at the Xcel. That is the game that brought out Seefeldt and his family and more than 14,000 others who paid not a cent to watch.

The owners of the Swarm, who also happen to be the owners of the National Hockey League's Minnesota Wild, did a savvy thing. They flung open the doors at Xcel and said, "Come on in and watch for free."

The team's hope is, many from the announced crowd of 14,084 will get hooked on this sport that has been described as a blend of hockey, basketball and soccer and decide to become paying customers.

"It's wild," Bruce Eyton of Lakeville said. "It's crazy."

Eyton, who was with his 11-year-old daughter Kitiara watching the Swarm lose their first-ever game 16-6 to the Mammoth, added he plans to buy two season tickets.

"Pretty cool sport," said Mike Egan of Burnsville. "A lot of action. A lot of hitting. Maybe more hitting than hockey."

Egan was at the game with his sons Connor, 9, and Cullen, 6, and

their friend, Will Hellen, 7. Egan already has purchased four season tickets to the Swarm's eight regular-season home games.

"I thought it'd be a good experience for the kids," Egan said. "I've never been to a lacrosse game or match or whatever they call it."

They call it a game, and it tilts more toward hockey than it does basketball or soccer. Indoor lacrosse is played on artificial turf laid over the ice. There are boards and glass to get slammed into, and a penalty box, too — just like in hockey.

"I've never watched a lacrosse game in my life," said Bob Redmond of Lakeville. "I'm kind of lost. I don't know the rules. But I do think it's wild."

The crowd was a mix of people who understand lacrosse and those who don't. "This is awesome that it's finally here in Minnesota," said Jim Carey of Richfield, who follows the sport.

"He watches indoor lacrosse on cable," said Tammy Herman, Carey's girlfriend.

"I'm going to buy tickets," Carey said. "I played hockey in high school. We didn't have lacrosse or I would have played it."

There's no telling how many of their 16 regular-season games they will win, but the Swarm have the makings of an entertaining team. They have what many fans, particularly hockey fans, want: Players not afraid to mix it up.

There were 10 penalties for fighting Friday night, with five players from each team cited. With 6:36 left in the game, three separate fights broke out on the field.

Though he wasn't penalized for fighting Friday night, nobody has been known to mix it up more often than Swarm defenseman Neil Doddridge, who holds the all-time record for penalty minutes in the National Lacrosse League. (That's the league the Swarm and Mammoth play in with nine other teams.)

Doddridge recently was voted the league's biggest trash talker and second-most hated player in a poll of NLL players taken by a lacrosse publication. That second-place ranking randles Doddridge.

"I'm definitely the most hated," said the 13-year NLL veteran.

To make his point, Doddridge mentions he will not play in the regular-season opener Jan. 1 because he will be serving a one-game suspension for something he did in the final game of last season.

"I knocked a ref out," he said.

It was the ref's fault, Doddridge will tell you.

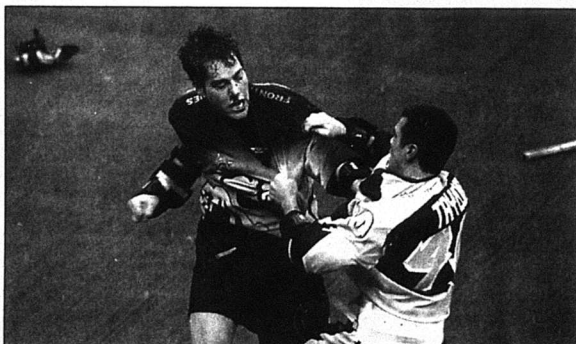
"I was fighting with another player and the ref stepped into my elbow," Doddridge said.

He has fan favorite written all over him, and it just might be written with the blood of an opposing player. Doddridge once whipped a ball at the face of an opponent, fracturing the guy's jaw and causing it to be wired shut.

"I'm aggressive," Doddridge said. "Hockey fans appreciate that."

Those folks at Xcel seemed to appreciate a lot of what they saw Friday night.

Bob Sansevere can be reached at [bsansevere@pioneerpress.com](mailto:bsansevere@pioneerpress.com).



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**The Swarm's Jamie Taylor,** right, dukes it out with Colorado's Tom Ethington in one of the many fights that broke out during Friday night's exhibition game at Xcel Energy Center.