

# It's a smash in St. Paul



Michael Kilby, left, of the Minnesota Swarm upended Chris Panos of the Colorado Mammoth during Friday's exhibition at the Xcel Energy Center. Jim Gehrz/Star Tribune

## On-field action goes a long way to build interest in the Twin Cities' newest team.

By Richard Meryhew  
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Taylor VanLokeren was in a bit of a pickle.

As a 15-year-old sports fan who's hooked on lacrosse, he couldn't wait to get to St. Paul's Xcel Energy Center on Friday night to peek in on the debut of Minnesota's newest professional sports franchise — the Minnesota Swarm.

But VanLokeren, of Andover, plays hockey, too, and Friday night was practice.

So what's a boy to do?

VanLokeren dumped the puck.

"He did talk to the coach, and he was OK with it," said Jim VanLokeren, Taylor's father. "Our philosophy is, when it's hockey season, you play hockey. But it's the very first game, and he really wanted to go see it."

Taylor wasn't alone.

More than 14,000 fans, many of whom knew little or nothing about lacrosse, showed up at the Xcel Center to see the Swarm get pummeled 16-6 in its exhibition opener against the Colorado Mammoth.

For more than two hours, they cheered and groaned and roared with delight as players donning helmets, masks and carrying sticks raced around the arena floor playing a game that mixes the toughness of football with the skills and strategy of basketball and hockey.

And a little pro wrestling to boot as the game had nearly 10 fights — four slugfests in one sequence during the fourth period — as the fans ate it up.

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— Sports fans happy to be at Xcel Energy Center.

## LACROSSE BASICS

### What is lacrosse?

A combination of basketball, soccer and hockey.

### What are its origins?

North American Indians played the game, which was named by the French. Lacrosse is considered to be America's first sport.

### How is it played?

Players use a stick, the crosse, to throw, catch and scoop the ball. Indoor lacrosse is played in four 15-minute quarters. A 30-second shot clock is used to keep play moving.

### Is there more than one North American professional league?

Yes. The National Lacrosse League plays the sport indoors. Major League Lacrosse is played outside.

### How many players are on an NLL team? 23.

17 of whom will be chosen to play in a game. Of the 17 players, 15 are runners (forwards or defenders) and two are goaltenders.