A dynamic action shot from a lacrosse game. A player in a white jersey with "DENVER" and the number "12" is in the center, holding a lacrosse stick. He is being defended by a player in a red jersey with "MARYLAND" and the number "17". Both players are wearing helmets and are in a physical struggle for the ball. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators.

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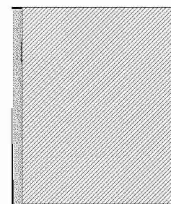
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**LACROSSE:
THE GAME CHANGER**

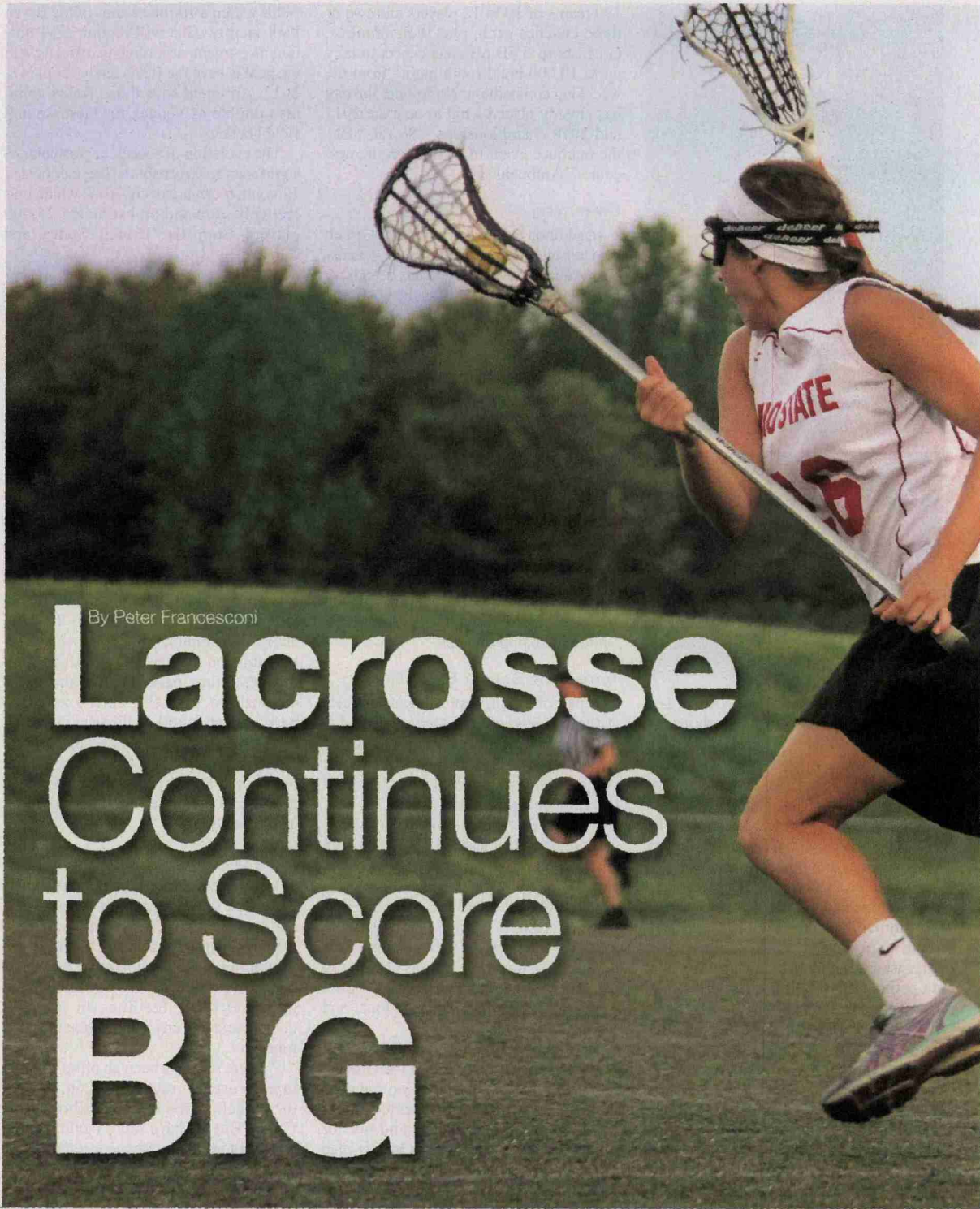
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SPORTS FACILITIES / LACROSSE



By Peter Francesconi

Lacrosse Continues to Score **BIG**

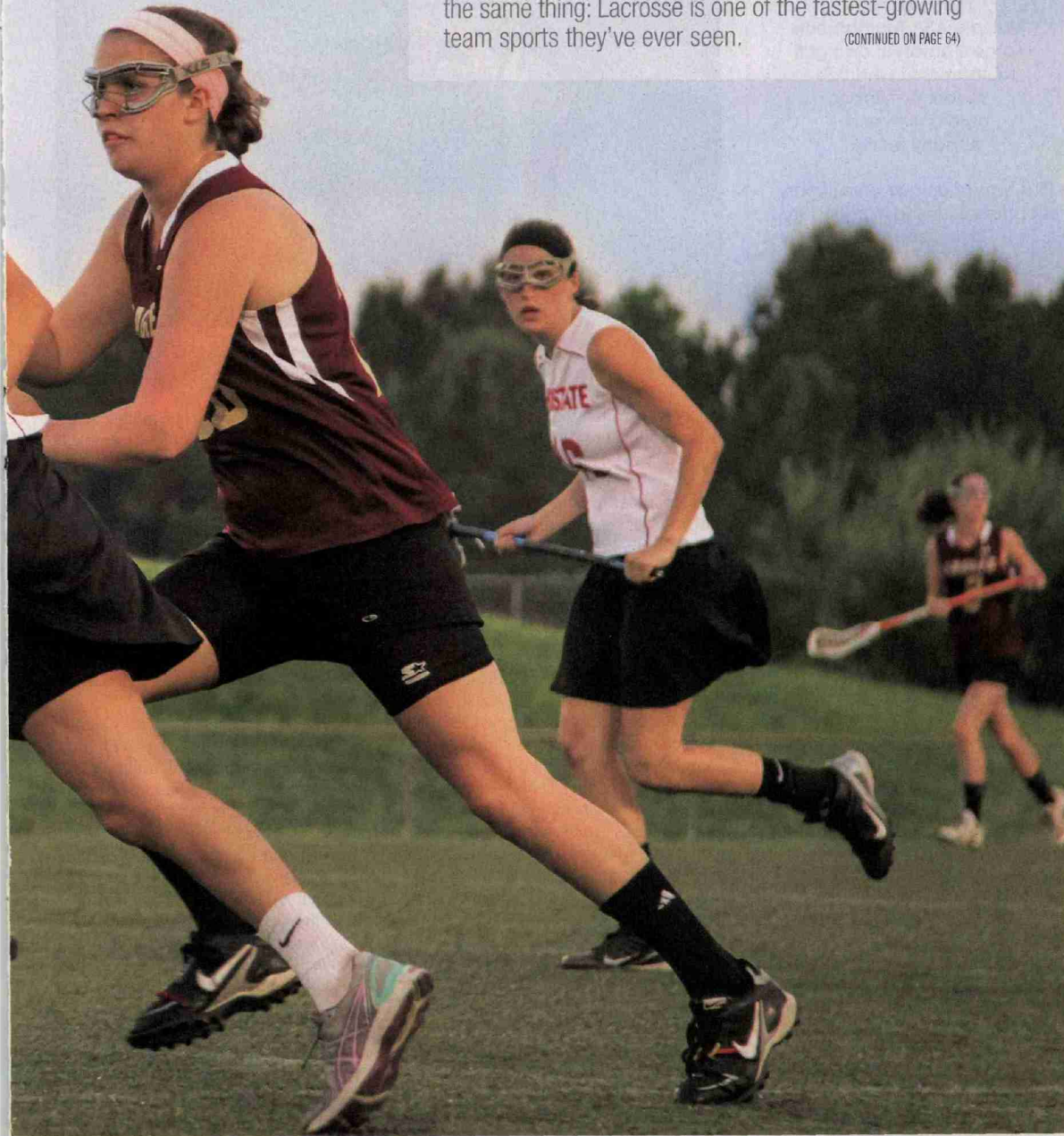
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Photo courtesy of Virginia Beach CVB

TALK ABOUT LACROSSE to pretty much any local sports commission or CVB staffer, and you'll hear the same thing: Lacrosse is one of the fastest-growing team sports they've ever seen.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 64)



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SPORTS FACILITIES / LACROSSE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63)

In fact, in the recently released list of the top 15 growth sports and activities in the U.S., compiled by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association for its 2015 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Participation Report, lacrosse is right near the top of the list in terms of both percentage growth and number of new participants. Over the past two years, lacrosse increased 12.3 percent, to 1.03 million people who play it multiple times a year.

What's more, lacrosse tops the list in terms of team sports; the handful of sports and activities that have a higher percentage growth and more new participants are all individual endeavors. And for a sport that started out in the Northeast, it has taken the country by storm; evidence of this seismic shift was the University of Denver's victory over the University of Maryland in the 2015 NCAA Division I Men's Lacrosse Championships.

All of this is great news for communities nationwide with fields to offer, as lacrosse easily utilizes space also available to soccer, rugby, field hockey and others.

Butler County, Ohio

"Lacrosse is definitely a growing sport in Butler County," says Tracy Kocher, the director of marketing for the Butler County Visitors Bureau. "We have a variety of venues around the county that are great for lacrosse and all field sports. As sports organizations are looking to extend their reach into the Midwest, we're finding that we're nicely positioned to accommodate them."

The premier sports venue in the county is the Voice of America Athletic Complex, located in the community of West Chester, which opened last fall and offers 20 grass and two turf fields. "It's an awesome addition to our venues here," Kocher says. Plus, it's close by to many hotels and restaurants, along with a hospital. Upcoming events include the 2015 Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association deBeer Midwest Cup in late June, which attracts nearly 80 teams, and the Top of the Bay Midwest Challenge Lacrosse Tournament in July, with 54 teams expected.

Other large venues in Butler County with fields suitable for lacrosse include Joyce Park in Hamilton and Smith Park in

Middletown. "We have a variety of facilities around the county that are great for lacrosse," Kocher says.

Butler County is in the southwest part of Ohio, between Dayton and Cincinnati and within a day's drive of about 60 percent of the U.S. population, Kocher says. "Along with easy access by car and air, we're nicely positioned in an area that's full of growth, and we capitalize on that as much as possible. Additionally, our CVB's level of service sets us apart. We tailor our services to each group and see ourselves as a partner, facilitating their event and their organization."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 66)

Columbia, South Carolina

Like Kocher in Butler County, S. Scott Powers, the executive director of the Columbia, South Carolina, Regional Sports Council, sees more and more lacrosse players coming through his city. "The past couple of years in South Carolina, lacrosse has really exploded," he says. "In both the state and here in Columbia, it's the fastest-growing team sport there is. We're finding time on our soccer schedules for lacrosse, and getting more into hosting large-scale lacrosse events."

In fact, the Carolinas Open Lacrosse Championships will debut this year and be an annual event at the end of June for the Columbia area. The tournament will be at the Lexington Soccer Complex, which is owned and operated by Lexington County and offers 13 fields that can be configured in various sizes. "We're really excited about this tournament," says Powers, who adds the Sports Council is hoping this inaugural year will attract 60 teams, for boys ages nine to 18.

Other facilities that Powers says can be pressed into service for lacrosse events include the six lighted soccer fields at Polo Road Park in Columbia. A new complex of six championship sports fields is expected to be completed this fall at Saluda Shoals Park in nearby Irmo.

Daytona Beach, Florida

"I'd love to do more lacrosse," says Tara Hamburger, the sales and sports marketing manager for the Daytona Beach Area CVB. The main facility for field sports, including lacrosse, in the Daytona Beach

area is the Ormond Beach Sports Complex & Fields, which has nine full-size soccer fields and three multi-purpose fields and has hosted professional, national, regional, college and high school competitive and recreational events. The complex also has a premier stadium field, pavilion area, picnic area and playground.

The New Smyrna Beach Sports Complex offers four fields with lights, while Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University has two turf fields. The Daytona Beach Municipal Stadium, with 10,000 seats, is suitable for a large championship game.

Of course, with excellent weather year-round (average 81 degrees in summer, 62 degrees in winter), Volusia County offers so much for visitors that when not on the field, players and their families will find plenty to do. Situated on the east coast of central Florida, the area offers 47 miles of Atlantic Ocean beaches.

Loudoun, Virginia

Torye Hurst, the national sports sales manager for Visit Loudoun, is very optimistic about lacrosse in Loudoun County, which is located just west of Washington, D.C. (in fact, Washington Dulles Airport is in Loudoun County). "Lacrosse is growing by leaps and bounds in Northern Virginia," Hurst says. "I met with a lot of lacrosse groups at the recent NASC Symposium, and it's something we hope to capitalize on more in the near future. We've had soccer fields for quite a while, and lacrosse fields are slightly smaller than full-size soccer fields, so we can fit in more lacrosse fields. Even if we added more to our inventory, we wouldn't have any trouble filling them."

Some of the larger facilities in Loudoun County include Morven Park, which can accommodate 10 grass lacrosse fields, and Hurst says the park has (CONTINUED ON PAGE 68) plans to add two or three fields, possibly turf, in the next few years.

The Evergreen Sportsplex, which has been open for about a year, has four lighted turf fields, including a championship field that can seat about 2,000 fans and has a press box facility and meeting rooms. The championship field also has rooftop seating. And when not competing, the Sportsplex offers a zip line and a rope course. In the next two years, the Sportsplex is

looking to add four more fields, too.

Loudoun Sports Park offers two turf fields, and nearby is Phillip Bolin Memorial Park, a public facility that offers six grass soccer fields. "We also have turf facilities at all of our high schools, a total of close to 15 fields," Hurst says.

Morgan Hill, California

With 28 acres of grass fields available, the Morgan Hill Outdoor Sports Center property, which also has two synthetic turf fields with lights, can be configured for any type of lacrosse event. "We have a lot of fields in one location," says Jeff Dixon, chairman and executive director of the Morgan Hill Youth Sports Alliance.

The Sports Center has worked with a number of lacrosse event organizers, including the U.S. Lacrosse Association (which has brought its Western Regional Championship to the facility the last two years) and has been steadily adding more lacrosse events to its calendar. Dixon says the Sports Complex "can easily handle lacrosse tournaments with up to 130 teams."

Morgan Hill itself is ideally located, about half an hour from the San Jose airport and about an hour (CONTINUED ON PAGE 70)

away from San Francisco, in a beautiful valley nestled between two mountain ranges. With its rural feel and quaint downtown, Morgan Hill is a surprising setting for a sports Mecca. But the professional staff at the sports center offers full turn-key service for event owners and managers, and right across the street are 500 hotel rooms.

Salem, Virginia

"Lacrosse right now is one of our fastest-growing recreational sports," says Carey Harvey Cutter, the director of tourism for the city of Salem. "We started 16 years ago with club lacrosse on the boys' side, then added girls' lacrosse 13 years ago. Then the schools picked it up, and Roanoke College here in Salem has strong men's and women's lacrosse programs."

The area has hosted regional youth lacrosse tournaments, and recently, the NCAA Division II national championships were played at Roanoke College. In the city of Salem itself, there are turf fields at Roanoke College and the high school, both

with spectator seating, lights and locker rooms; there are also three lighted grass fields in the city. But the largest facility Harveycutter partners with, just to the west in Roanoke County, is Greenhill Park, which has 12 grass fields.

Virginia Beach, Virginia

One of the biggest lacrosse events in the country takes place in the Virginia Beach area—on the sand alongside the Atlantic Ocean. The North American Sand Lacrosse Championships, which is a fundraiser for the Hampton Roads Soccer Complex, brings in more than 900 teams from the U.S. and internationally, and takes up the entire waterfront, says Nancy Helman, director of sports marketing for the Virginia Beach CVB.

The Hampton Roads Soccer Complex, with its 75 acres of fields, is also a key venue for lacrosse in the area. Adjacent to the HRSC is the Virginia Beach Sportsplex, with a three-level stadium built primarily for soccer but used also for lacrosse. The Virginia Beach Sportsplex has a state-of-the-art turf surface, along with lights.

The Virginia Beach area also has the Princess Anne Athletic Complex, which includes seven multi-purpose fields, two with lights, along with two full-service concession stands. The Princess Anne facility has hosted the U.S. Lacrosse Women's Collegiate Championships for the past two years, among other events. "We're very experienced at hosting lacrosse," Helman says.

"Lacrosse is played at a great time of year for Virginia Beach," she adds. "Teams, their families and fans can come and enjoy the area, combining competition with vacation time." Virginia Beach is packed with attractions for players and fans of all ages. "To say that our community appreciates and respects participatory sports is an understatement," Helman says. "It's really part of our culture. So having hotels, restaurants and business that welcome sports participants is a real plus, for sure."

Wildwood, New Jersey

A truly unique lacrosse event takes place in Wildwood, New Jersey, each year, drawing thousands of participants. The Beach Lacrosse Tournament this year will be held July 18-19, giving lacrosse players of all

ages a chance to enjoy the game in a new and exciting way. Taking place since 2012, teams from the East Coast and beyond compete in the 5 v. 5 event, held on the expansive beaches at Morey's Piers.

"With any sporting event we run, we always include complimentary wrist bands for team members that allow them access to the piers and water park for the time they're competing," says Jason Merola of Morey's Piers and Beachfront Water Parks.

All the attractions in the area make Wildwood unique. Considered the third-largest seaside amusement park in the world, the area features 2.5 miles of boardwalk with more rides than Disneyland, says Ben Rose, director of marketing for the Greater Wildwoods Tourism Improvement and Development Authority.

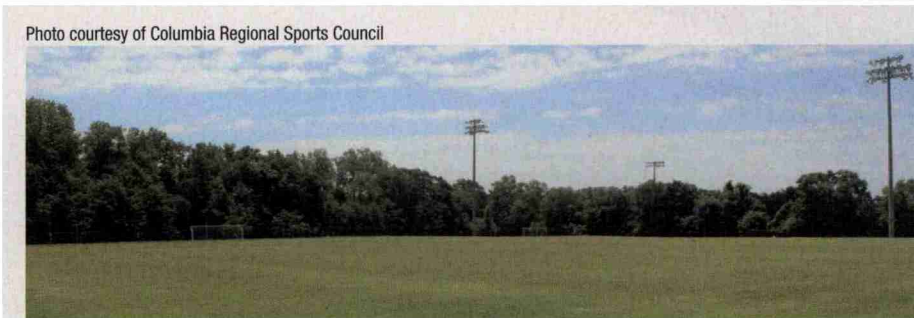
As far as lacrosse away from the beach, "It's probably the largest growing sport in the whole region," Rose says. "Every high school in the area is into lacrosse. There are fields everywhere." **SDM**

Photo courtesy of Daytona Beach Area CVB

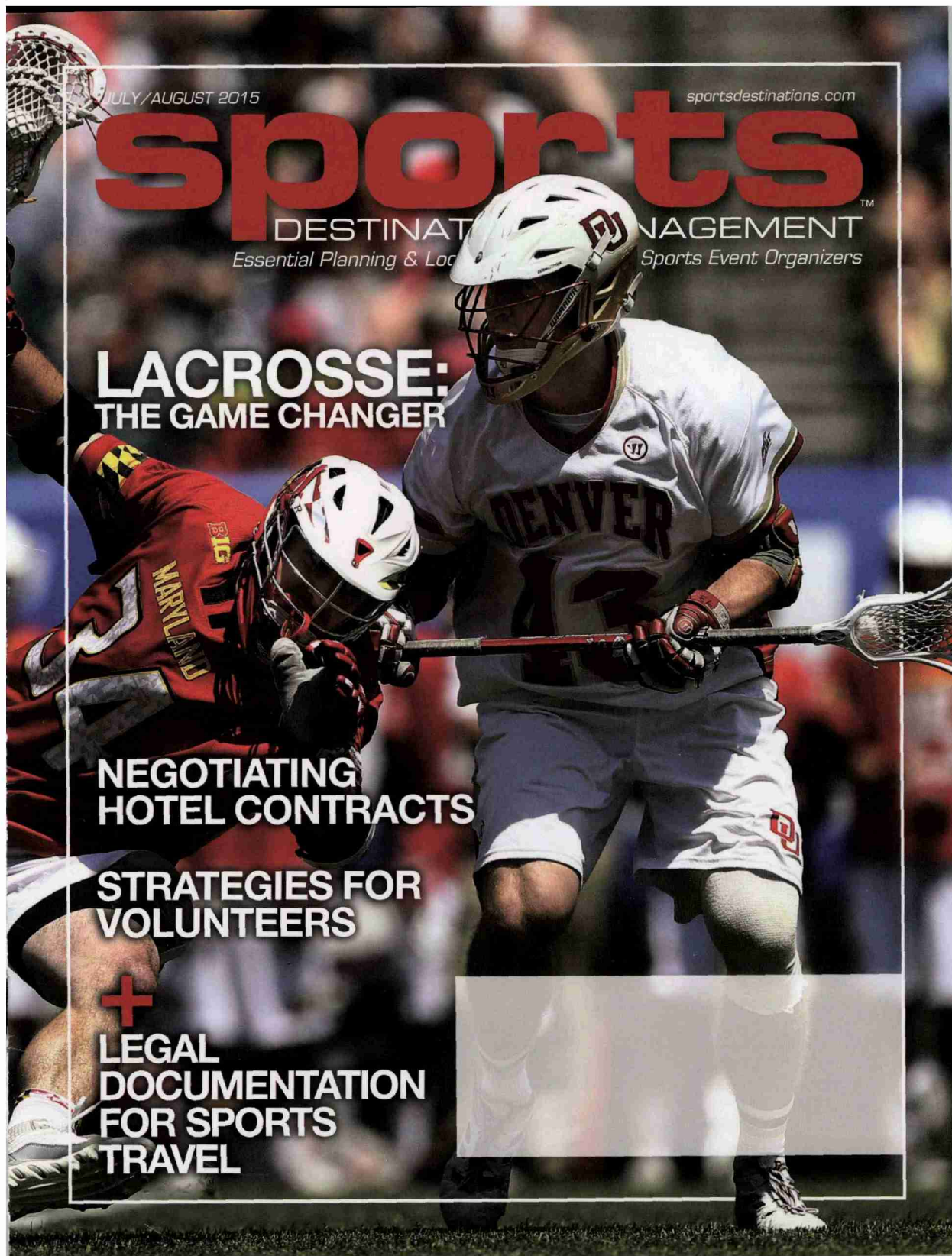


Photo courtesy of Morey's Piers and Beachfront Water Parks







A dynamic action shot from a lacrosse game. A player in a white jersey with "DENVER" and the number "12" is in the center, holding a lacrosse stick. He is being defended by a player in a red jersey with "MARIETTA" and the number "17". Both players are wearing helmets and are in a physical struggle for the stick. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators.

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