



Georgetown's **Trevor Casey** scored three goals to help the Hoyas knock off John Wright and defending champion Syracuse, 10-7.

CLOSE YOUR EYES. SHUT THEM TIGHT and think about the city of Los Angeles. What images does your brain conjure? Movie starlets, smog, sunny weather, Rodeo Drive and O.J. are probably some of the things that popped into your mind's eye. Now answer this question honestly: was lacrosse in there?

Don't worry, we know you love lacrosse, but in the past L.A. and lax have gone together like the *Los Angeles Daily News* and Pulitzer Prizes. There is a burgeoning lacrosse community in San Diego, around the Bay Area and in some enclaves surrounding the metro L.A. area, but nothing nearing the growth the sport has enjoyed in other parts of the country.

The City of Angels was nonetheless chosen for the site of the inaugural First 4 lacrosse event, featuring four traditional lax powers – North Carolina, Notre Dame, Georgetown and Syracuse – capping off a day-long schedule featuring the most successful high school programs in the state and the top two ranked US Lacrosse Intercollegiate Associate (IA) teams.

How does an event like this wind up 3,000 miles away from the lacrosse powerbases? Well, it takes vision, daring, marketing and, perhaps most importantly, a love of the sport.

The First 4 concept is the brainchild of Kent Atherton and Jim Sperry, president and vice president, respectively, of Pantheon International, a sports marketing and management firm based out of Westport, Conn., specializing in large-venue sports productions. They developed The Wooden Classic and

The Wooden Tradition into two of the most notable mid-season college basketball events over the past decade. Atherton and Sperry grew up playing lacrosse, have children playing, and have coached the sport, so they always batted around the idea of applying the Wooden principles to lacrosse.

Formulating a lacrosse event found its genesis three or four years ago, as Atherton remembers it, when he and his family were traveling across Virginia while on vacation. Stopping into the UVA men's lacrosse office to see a friend, Atherton bumped into Cavalier head coach Dom Starsia.

"I sat down in Dom's office for about an hour and he really encouraged me to proceed," said Atherton. "And I leaned on him when we were getting organized."

What developed directly from that meeting was the Algonquin Cup, a fall-ball tourney which originated at Harvard and has since moved to Stony Brook.

"It was a chance for us to get into the lacrosse event business without too much risk," said Atherton. "Teams are always looking for games in the fall."

Making the leap to a lacrosse event during the regular season was where the risk lay, especially if the venue was to be outside traditional lax circles. But when Atherton and Sperry crunched the numbers and plotted the marketing possibilities, the upside was apparent and potentially profitable.

"We would have never done the First 4 if we didn't think it would grow with brand recognition," said Atherton. "Forget