

Dear Robbie,

What a pleasure to connect with you in regard to your special stick. Coach Scott has shared with me a little bit about your journey with Red Hawk and Captain Lewis. I am a bit jealous! I am John Kaestner from the University of Maryland. I received the Turnbull Award in 1972—so that is where you and I become connected.

I played at a very interesting time in the game's history in that by my junior year in college the plastic stick was beginning to become common. Believe me, the new technology made a world of difference in my game. I had grown up with a wooden stick and not until my freshman year in college did I become proficient with both hands. The plastic stick was easy to “break in” and was balanced unlike the wooden ones. In fact, the week before the Hopkins game my senior year I broke both my game sticks and that week I got two new sticks which I broke in in two days. On that Saturday at Hopkins on their homecoming against the number one team in the country, I had the day I had dreamed of as a ten-year-old fourth grader. The plastic stick enabled me to go from a two-time All-American to the Turnbull Award winner!

To say I grew up in a lacrosse family would be an understatement. My dad, Bud Kaestner, played at Johns Hopkins in the early forties and knew Jack Turnbull. He was selected to the national Hall of Fame as was my brother Hank, who also attended JHU, and was the first defender to receive the Schmeisser Award for the best defenseman in college twice! My other brother Reed was a two-time All-American and captain of my Maryland team in 1970. I have three children all of whom played Division I lacrosse. My oldest, Ashby, was a three-time All-American at Georgetown University and played on the US team for three years. My other daughter, Christie, started for four years at Duke University and was a First-Team All-American in her senior year. My son John played at JHU and had some great moments on the field and made friends for life with his teammates. All three love and honor the game all have been involved with passing on their skills and love of lacrosse to young players like you.

I started playing in the fourth grade at The Friends School in Baltimore and my dad showed me a diagram of a field before my first game on the Friends midget team comprised of fifth and sixth graders. He told me to call for the ball from my teammates and the go to the goal and score. I did that four times in that first game and boy was I hooked! I continued playing at Friends and made varsity my freshman year where the great Joe Cowan helped me get better. He was my hero then and this was before he was a Turnbull Award winner himself at JHU. I also remember watching my big brother, Hank, play against Captain Lewis, my other hero. My dad stood behind the goal and took home movies of two of the all-time greats in Jimmy and Hank! What a thrill to have heroes like Jim Lewis and Joe Cowan and to be mentioned in their company as a fellow Turnbull winner is truly a great honor and one I am humbled to have.

As I have said, my kids all played at the highest level of lacrosse and had great success. You can have a similar experience if you follow their plan. They realized that if they were great students, great players, and great people, they would have an opportunity to go to the college of their choice. To their credit, they all three achieved their goals, and you can too. Dreams do come true with hard work and dedication.

Remember that the inscription on the Turnbull Memorial Trophy reads:

*John G. Kaestner*

*Has been selected the outstanding collegiate attackman during the 1972 Lacrosse season.*

*The recipient of this award best emulated the example of Jack Turnbull in good sportsmanship, fair play, field leadership, ability to both feed and score, and also to ride the defense.*

As you can see, Jack Turnbull was most of all an honorable man, a good sport, a team leader, and a fine player. Robbie, I think you will find that those qualities will serve you well in life as they have for all the Turnbull winners and me. Do not be afraid to be great, be a good teammate, play hard, have fun, and let the special stick lead you to whatever you want to be.

I have been associated with lacrosse for 55 years, and one thing that I have found is that all lacrosse players have a special bond. My dad, Jack Turnbull, my brothers, my kids, and all who play today and came before us are at a certain level the same guy. We all honor those who came before and we all are obligated to pass down those values that we all share.

A book that you might like is *Wooden* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison—I think it is a good guide for life.

Robbie, all the best with your special stick and I look forward to watching you on the field someday.

Yours in sports,

John Kaestner

University of Maryland  
Turnbull Award 1972