

Dear Robbie,

I hear you are the owner of a very special lacrosse stick. Learning the story of your stick reminds me of how I started playing lacrosse myself. A hockey teammate, named Drew Bucktooth, invited me to try out for the lacrosse team on his Indian reservation. Drew lived on the Onondaga reservation in Syracuse. The Onondaga people are a part of the Iroquois Nation. His family had been playing lacrosse for a long time. His father, Freeman "Boss" Bucktooth, was the team's coach and he had played at Syracuse University. On that team we played box lacrosse, which was 5 on 5 and played within a hockey rink (no ice of course) with a much smaller net. Needless to say, it was great to learn the sport amongst those whose forefathers invented it.

Lacrosse brought me to a lot of places both literally and figuratively. With the Onondaga team, I would spend the summers traveling all over Canada to play in various tournaments. Thanks to the skills I developed on the reservation, I had the opportunity to attend a boarding school in New Hampshire, Phillips Exeter Academy. New Hampshire was a place I had never been, but more importantly, at Exeter I received an unparalleled education. On the lacrosse field, I was proud to be a member of a team that went from having three wins my first season to 15 my senior year. Thanks to my success on the Exeter lacrosse team, I then went on to play for Middlebury College. Not only was Middlebury a great academic institution, but its lacrosse team had just won its first National Championship before I arrived and would go on to win two more during my tenure.

Most importantly, lacrosse introduced me to many influential people. Looking back on my lacrosse career the thing that I value the most are the relationships that I formed with my teammates and my coaches and the lessons they taught me.

Analogies between sports and life are made so frequently they can sound cliché. But clichés are often true. My college coach, Erin Quinn, used to often say that the success of the season wasn't defined by the final score, it was the locker room, the stretching, the practices, the bus rides and the way we played: The Journey. I believe that holds true in life Robbie. Enjoy the ride.

Michael Saraceni

Turnbull Award Recipient  
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