

Fireside Chat With Turkey Lacrosse

[Staff](#) | February 18, 2011 | [0 Comments](#)

***Editor's Note:** Connor Wilson was fortunate enough to speak at length with Patrick Dougherty of [Turkey Lacrosse](#) recently. Patrick delivered the inside scoop on all things lax in Turkey and really went above and beyond in his answers. The international lacrosse scene is booming right now and not just for field lacrosse! These guys are working on box lacrosse in Europe as well!*

First off, let me start by saying how very excited we are to hear that people are trying to start a lacrosse team in Turkey!!!!

Thank you, but it is more than just a team. We are starting the entire federation and hopefully a revolution!!

Who started Turkey Lacrosse and why?



Turkish Lacrosse had to start somewhere!

I started lacrosse in Turkey for a couple of reasons. 1) I wanted to play and researched prior to moving to Istanbul and noticed there wasn't lacrosse being played. 2) This is my opportunity to spread the sport I love into a virgin country and watch it grow.

Tell us a little bit about who you are, where you learned lacrosse and why you want to start a team in Turkey.

I am originally from Endwell, NY which is in Upstate in the Binghamton area. I started playing lacrosse when I was 12 and, as you know from up there, I was already a few years behind everyone else. Lacrosse has been in my blood ever since I picked up my friend's (Corey Bryant) stick at his house. I truly enjoy watching players develop from not knowing how to handle a stick to eventually becoming well established players. Not to mention, it is pretty cool starting a sport in a country.

What has the experience been like so far?



Practice makes for perfection!

The experience is great. We run into some issues every day or week but we work through it and rise to the occasion. Getting people familiar with a new sport is not always easy and I have invested in a lot of DVDs showing what the sport is.

Have you held clinics or practices in Turkey?



More practice! Very important....

Yes, we practice every Sunday for the Istanbul Sultans and every week for the Mercedes-Benz Turk Lacrosse team. We are working on having our first clinics this spring and summer to help us prepare for our first tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria in late August.

What has the response been so far?



Practice wherever you can get space!

I am overwhelmed by the positive response we are receiving. We have roughly 50 men and 10 women playing right now with 1-3 new players a month and sometimes more. I am surprised at how many Turks have played in the US on an exchange program while in high school. We now have universities showing interest and other sport clubs.

Do you have any Americans or Canadians helping you out? If yes, Why? If not, why?



The Sultans get some instruction...

We do have some Americans coming out this week and later this month who just contacted me that want to play and help teach our players. We recently had a German, Tanju Celik, come and help us out while he was here doing his internship and he is the one who organized the Mercedes-Benz team while interning there. Another German just arrived, Lorenz Lehmhaus, who has played in 2 World Championships and in 1 European Lacrosse Championships. We have support from all over the world which is fantastic and we truly appreciate everyone's efforts. Our team is almost 100% Turkish which is necessary to sustain the growth of our sport.

What are the goals for Turkey Lacrosse?

Our goal is to spread the creator's game to every corner of the Republic of Turkey and begin a youth program in hopes some will be able to garner scholarships to top universities in the US and beyond. We are currently working on becoming a true federation and plan on having teams in every city, university and high/grammar schools.

Where do you see this team going?



Future International Lacrosse Star? Perhaps!

I see our team playing in the Worlds in 2014 and Euros in 2012. Furthermore, I see lacrosse being played throughout all of Turkey. Understand there are 72 million people living within Turkey with 50% under the age of 30.

Can the sport be popular in Turkey?

With the right marketing and training, yes, I see lacrosse being popular but not as popular as soccer or basketball here. Lacrosse is suited for the Turkish mentality and culture.

What are the favorite games of the Turkish people?

Soccer, basketball, volleyball, weightlifting and many other sports.

Of course soccer is big, with clubs like Galatassary and others... Are there other big sports in Turkey we might not know about?

Well, like I just said, basketball is big; Allen Iverson plays here in Istanbul for Besiktas now for the next 2 years and the Turkish National Basketball team just placed 2nd in the Worlds which were held in Istanbul last year. Volleyball is big and the women's team for Fennerbache just won the Euros. Fennerbache is the rival soccer club of Galatassary and both play in Istanbul. The Soccer clubs here encompass multiple sports not just soccer and have professional teams.

And could lacrosse be the next big thing?

Turkey is a sports driven society and with the right timing and marketing, yes, I believe lacrosse could be the next big thing. How big, only time will tell but I, and we, won't stop until lacrosse is being played all over Turkey.

Have you worked with the National Sporting body of Turkey to become an official national team?

We are currently working with the Sports Government on becoming a federation and also establishing stand alone lacrosse clubs. We have already met with the Sports Minister himself and he is fully behind what we are doing and has stated that the Sports Government will help us in every way. We are also setting a meeting with the Mayor of Istanbul to discuss plans about lacrosse and how we can incorporate the sport in 2012 since Istanbul is the 2012 European Sports Capitol. In the Turkish constitution it states that if the Sports government recognizes a sport as a nationally played and it has a proper federation they must provide funding for the development of said sport. The founder of modern day Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, believed strongly that sport brings people, culture and nations together and I strongly agree.

How hard is it to get equipment in Turkey?

Luckily, we haven't had much of an issue getting equipment into Turkey. The biggest obstacle is the shipping costs and I usually bring equipment back with me from the US, like I just did when I went to the US lacrosse convention. As for direct shipments, we have been lucky so far since I know other sports like baseball, American football and such have issues all the time getting their equipment into Turkey.

Do you work with any companies or retailers right now?

Yes, we work with harrow, STX, pro-tekt mouthguards, Bell-Horn, Bamshaft and some others. I am disappointed with Cascade and Brine/Warrior since neither company returns my emails or phone calls about establishing a relationship for the Republic of Turkey. But for the most part, every company I speak with has been more than willing to work with us on one level or another. We are truly thankful and happy for those companies that see that spreading the game and helping those who are just starting out, benefits everyone in the long run. Luckily, I can dictate what brands or equipment is allowed or will not be allowed in Turkey.

Where are you doing most of your recruiting for new players?

At this point it is word of mouth. We are planning a major marketing campaign here in the near future but we need to establish our federation first and foremost. Also through Facebook and our website. I have been on national Turkish TV showing the game to millions of

viewers. We have national newspapers writing articles about us that also reach an international audience.

Will you form a Youth league to get kids playing? And how do you see that going?

That is the ultimate plan. We do have one 10 year old playing for us right now who is an American and played in the US. Now we just need to build around him which will take some time. The kids are the key to the success and growth of our sport here. Every child we have shown the game to has loved it. We have no doubt that this will take off rapidly once we establish our youth system.

What is the biggest barrier to having a good national team in Turkey?

The level of skill. Most everyone is new to the sport but picking it up quickly so it will take a few years of weekly practices to become a contender in the International playing field.

What is the biggest opportunity?

We strongly believe once we establish our youth program that Turkey will be one of the top lacrosse countries within 10 years. Again, 50% of the population is under the age of 30. Our sport falls just right into the culture here and once Turkey loves a sport they LOVE the sport. Also, we will only go up from here. We truly are less than a year old and we already have made a lot of progress. I do have to say that I am thankful for all my players and we wouldn't be anywhere without them and I am so proud of the progress that each of them are making. They are part of something special and I thank them for allowing me to be a part.