***Now, this is not about judging anyone, anything or any aspect in particular, within the lax bro culture.*** If you want to grow a mullet or "flow", good for you. I've had a mohawk or two throughout my life. If you want to wear lacrosse shorts that look like an amateur designer vomited color and clip-art all over them, then I'm not going to stop you. Trust me, I have made some questionable decisions over the course of my life considering fashion. You should know that I grew up in a time where we "tight-rolled" plaid cotton pants for a year or two so that we could look like MC Hammer. I also have pictures of my 11 year-old self wearing acid washed jeans with cargo pockets along with Jordans. I have absolutely no room to talk (although a conversation with my parents is in order about how they let me out of the house looking like that). Furthermore, everyone has the right to behave and choose however they damn well please. So, this isn't about that.

***Where I do believe that I have the right to say something about this topic, is from a place of caring about a sport that I grew up with.*** I was born into a family where lacrosse meant the world to us. Literally. My father's dedication and success in the game as a coach put food on our table. I looked up to and respected his colleagues and players more than anyone else in the world. My goal was to be the best that I could possibly be in the game and I worked my entire boyhood life to try and reach that goal. Along the way, I learned invaluable lessons about myself and others through the hours and hours that I poured into the game. My world and life was shaped by a simple game with a stick and ball.

Furthermore, the growth of the game that I have witnessed throughout my life has been nothing short of extraordinary. When I was young from six to nine years old, I grew up in the epicenter of lacrosse, in Baltimore, MD. My father was then hired at Princeton University in 1988 and we packed up our things and moved to New Jersey. When we got there, I was so disappointed to find little going on in the way of other kids playing lacrosse. Most of my school mates barely knew what the game was. My father and some other great men in our community started the Hopewell Valley lacrosse league. The first year it was about 20 players, ranging in age from 8 to 15 and we just went out on the field. Today, that league is one of the biggest youth and high school lacrosse associations in the country!

Since moving out to Colorado in 2001, I have witnessed the game continue to grow in the same manner throughout the western United States. When I travel to California, Texas, Oregon, Utah or Arizona and see a kid with a lacrosse t-shirt on or carrying his stick down the street, it brings me so much pride and happiness. I know that the game is touching countless lives throughout our country and world and I hope that it brings as much to everyone as it did to my own life.

Now, my point in this little history lesson is to illustrate that this game is truly great! It is great in the way that it should be highly respected by anyone that participates in it, in whatever role they play. To relegate this sacred game to some style or immature attitude, as the lax bro way of being seems to point towards, shows a complete disrespect and ignorance of what it is truly all about.
 ***Furthermore, it is important to understand where this idea of "lax bro" was created.*** I started seeing this culture in its infancy when I was in college (although I am open to the possibility that it started long before that). I started to notice that due to the fact that there was no professional lacrosse at the time, that some players looked at the game as a joke and not as a real way of making a living. There was an attitude that pervaded some players and teams that I came across, that it was not cool to care.

This is exactly how Professor Wampole described hipsters in her article :
"The ironic frame functions as a shield against criticism. The same goes for ironic living. Irony is the most self-defensive mode, as it allows a person to dodge responsibility for his or her choices, aesthetic and otherwise. To live ironically is to hide in public. It is flagrantly indirect, a form of subterfuge, which means etymologically to “secretly flee” (subter + fuge). Somehow, directness has become unbearable to us."

In the same way, lax bros take on the lifestyle and attitude that proclaims, "I am way too cool to care about a stupid sport like lacrosse…how juvenile." The haircuts, the dress, the laid-back attitude and most importantly, the lifestyle decisions, all scream to the world, "I'm way too cool to care about being a great athlete, a great ambassador, a great example for the game of lacrosse." The ironic aspect of this standpoint is that these same people want to use our game as a way to look cool to outsiders. So, a lax bro is someone who is too cool to care about the game, but will use it for their own gain.

For me to say that this all points towards the fact that these people are all scared of failure, or scared of success for that matter, would be a bit presumptuous and over-simplified. My point is that, for whatever reason, lax bros do not want to be seen as people who strive for greatness. If they are in fact talented enough to reach the pinnacles of the sport, while still maintaining their lax bro image, then they can contend that they never really cared, and they were just that good. In either case, they are phonies because they are inauthentic in the highest sense of the word. Even worse, their projection of our game to the outside world is a bastardized version that holds no true meaning of what lacrosse is really all about.

***Here's the deal if you really want to be a lacrosse player, and not just some lax bro.*** When you sign up to play lacrosse for the first time, you are signing up to play a very tough and brutal sport. I have seen teammates and friends severely injured for life playing this sport. I still deal with the scars that I incurred from playing on a daily basis.

You are signing up to play a game that has been played for hundreds of years by the native people of the continent that we now inhabit. This is a game that those people played for their God or Creator, their spirit, their own training and their own joy. It is important for us to have a deep respect for those people that created the game that we now get to enjoy.

You are choosing to play a game that has been grown by people all over the world, that have dedicated their own time and energy, to grow the sport so that people like you, could have a chance to play it. There is a long history of great players who have helped evolve this game to what it is today. It is humbling to see that each one of us is just a very small, but important part of that growth and evolution.

***So, if you are going to choose to play this game, then play it and practice it with the most intensity and passion that you possibly can.*** Realize that no piece of equipment, no pair of shorts, no socks, no new stick, no haircut, no uniform, nor custom helmet, will ever make you a true lacrosse player.

The only way you can truly become a lacrosse player is by pouring your heart and soul into it and trying to be the best at it that you possibly can be. Maybe you won't play pro lacrosse or in a NCAA Final Four. Maybe you won't even choose to play in high school. But, as long as you are going to do something in life, then do it to the best of your ability and truly care about it.

This in itself, is the most important point of examining this issue. We are only here in this world for a very short time when you think about it. I know when I was in high school and college, I just figured that life lasted forever and I could just let my limitless days waste away in one way or another. That changes quickly as you grow into adulthood and the years seem to pass by faster and faster.

***This lesson, that lacrosse or any sport for that matter, can teach us is to live fully and authentically each and every day.*** One thing I notice as a coach of youth and high school lacrosse teams is there seems to be a sudden closing down and self-consciousness, once a young man reaches high school. The teams that I work with in which the players are under 15 years old seem to have fun and truly care about the game. They laugh and joke with each other and the coaches. They are intensely caring and friendly to everyone. Then high school hits and the pursuit of cool seems to be the only thing on everyone's mind.

Quite certainly, this is a part of adolescence and development in self-discovery, but there is a healthier, less egoistic way of doing things. Wampole suggested :

"Nonironic models include very young children, elderly people, deeply religious people, people with severe mental or physical disabilities, people who have suffered, and those from economically or politically challenged places where seriousness is the governing state of mind. My friend Robert Pogue Harrison put it this way in a recent conversation: 'Wherever the real imposes itself, it tends to dissipate the fogs of irony.'"
 ***Anyone can be a lax bro, just like anyone can be a hipster.*** But the "reality" of lacrosse hits hard when you step on the field on game day. Have you prepared yourself to be your best on that day and compete at your highest level possibly along with your opponent? Have you cared more about throwing against the wall and improving your skills or more about your sock color? Have you cared more about making yourself a great athlete through running and lifting or more about your popularity in school as a lax bro?

This is about calling out the companies and people that are assigning this style, this name, this reputation to a sport that many of us have loved for so long. This is a reminder that you cannot just get a haircut and go out and buy the most outlandish "lacrosse" shorts and socks and pretend that you are a great lacrosse player. If you want to be a real lacrosse player and not some ignorant and mislead lax bro, then you are going to have to care about the game in the same way that many before you have done so.

The great thing about sports is that they tend to separate the real warriors from the posers, the contenders from the pretenders, the men from the boys. So, I won't judge you, but the outcome will when the final whistle blows on game day.

Finally, if you really don't care about the game enough to not truly "live" it and reach your highest potential and excellence through your participation in it, then don't play! If you care more about your image and being cool and not caring, then just go be a hipster. Our game does not need or want this image anymore. There is too much history and love and sacrifice in lacrosse for it to be reduced to that.

***Our game is special, treat it with respect.*** If anyone ever calls you a lax bro, tell them, "No, I am a lacrosse player," and then walk the walk.