

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN O’SULLIVAN:

(BOB MCKEOWN WALKS UP TO JOHN O’SULLIVAN – INTRODUCES SELF)
If I talk to someone, they want to write negative ****. I’m not interested in that.

WELL, WE’VE BEEN SPEAKING TO PATRICK AND TO HIS MOM.
Right.

AND TO A NUMBER OF OTHER PEOPLE WHO WERE INVOLVED, FROM MOE
MANTHA, WHO COACHED HIM IN ANN ARBOR, TO DON CHERRY.
Everyone’s exaggerated and it’s all horse**, bud.

WELL, YOU SAY EXAGGERATED, IN WHAT SENSE?
Well now we’re interviewing. Let’s just –

WELL, WE WOULD LIKE AN INTERVIEW WITH YOU.
Let’s just say that I wish Patrick all the best and what’s been said in the papers and in interviews,
because my wife and I went through a divorce and exaggerated greatly.

IT’S NICE TO MEET YOU.
I’ll sit down –

ONE QUESTION.
With my son, I’ll sit down and interview with you, but not alone. Because all these, the writers
and everyone writes whatever they feel like. They want to put a spin on it, any way you want.

WELL THIS IS TELEVISION.
And every time I’ve talked to anyone, I’m telling you, every time I’ve talked to someone; they’ve
put down what they thought they want to write anyways.

THIS IS TELEVISION, MR. O’SULLIVAN, AND THE WORDS THAT COME OUT OF
PATRICK’S MOUTH ARE HIS WORDS, NOT ANYONE ELSE’S.
Well, if he wants to sit down and do an interview with me at the same time, that would be fine.
That way I can rebut.

TO BE QUITE HONEST, PATRICK HAS EXPRESSED NO DESIRE TO –
Well that’s – well that’s his choice. That’s his choice then, so I guess we won’t be doing an
interview.

IN YOUR LETTER TO HIM, YOU SAID BASICALLY THAT YOU WERE WILLING TO PAY ANY PRICE – ANY PRICE FOR HIM TO BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD. DO YOU THINK THAT’S AN APPROPRIATE DEAL TO MAKE, ANY PRICE FOR HOCKEY SUCCESS?

Well, look at it this way. I’ve lost everything that’s mattered to me, so I think I have. I lost my wife and my kids and... So I think I have.

YEAH. I DON’T THINK ANYONE WOULD DEBATE THAT. I GUESS THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THAT WAS THE RIGHT DEAL FOR PATRICK TO PAY ANY PRICE FOR SUCCESS.

Well, that’s just the way it worked out, you know. That’s just the way it worked out, really. That’s just the way it worked out. I wanted – I wanted him to be a great player, and he will be. But obviously I went overboard, you know.

YOU WOULD ADMIT THAT YOU WENT OVER THE LINE.

Oh of course I do.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT WAS? I MEAN I’M TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT. I’VE GOT KIDS –

You’re doing your interview now.

WELL YEAH, I AM, AS A MATTER OF FACT. I’VE GOT KIDS –

You aren’t recording this, are you?

YES, WE ARE.

If you play all of it, then that’s fine and dandy. But I’ve talked to all kinds of reporters and they only – they only want to write about one, one certain aspect of it, and that’s me fighting with Patrick, you know. And they exaggerate it every time. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve read, you know, that I... on the front lawn of my parents. I kicked him in the ass twice, you know. I got kicked in the ass a dozen times when I was growing up and I deserved it every time. I kicked him in the ass after a game up from Ottawa. I brought him back to Toronto. I was at my parents’. And they charged me, you know. And I got what I deserved and I learned a lot, I went to anger management.

DID YOU?

Yes, I did.

CATHY’S NOT CONVINCED YOU ACTUALLY FOLLOWED THROUGH ON THAT.

Oh I don’t give a shit about Cathy. Cathy – Cathy, I was married to Cathy and Cathy’s decided that she wanted to divorce me, and of course every push-up, every workout he’s ever had now was abuse. It’s a bunch of bullshit. If anyone’s wanted to be a player, it’s Patrick, and I want him to be a player too and he will be. And I wish him all the luck.

HE IS A PRETTY GREAT PLAYER.

Oh he's great and he'll get better. And he'd be even better if he did what I told him.

YOU SAY YOU THINK YOU WENT OVER THE LINE.

Yeah.

DO YOU THINK NOW THAT YOU WOULD DO IT DIFFERENTLY?

If I would?

YEAH. WOULD YOU DIFFERENTLY? HOW?

I would have – I would have made a point of telling my son which hat I was wearing at the time. I was his father, his best buddy. I used to hang with him. We used to do everything together. And also I was his coach and I didn't – I crossed a line, across a line.

YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME THAT THE KICKING AND THE PUNCHING WERE APPROPRIATE FOR EITHER, RIGHT?

Oh, we were arguing. He was doing all kinds of shit. He wasn't – he wasn't pulling his end. He was living with my brother and he wasn't helping out. He said he was doing the washing and cooking for himself. See, he wasn't doing anything. He's got a superstar mentality and he was driving without a license. And his agent didn't want to correct it, you know. All's he would say is all we're dealing with is hockey here.

BUT IS THERE ANY REASON IN THERE THAT YOU'VE GIVEN ME THAT WOULD JUSTIFY PHYSICAL VIOLENCE?

I know that you can't lay your hands on anyone now. So I know that now. But if you would have told me that two and a half years ago, I would have thought maybe you'd like to fight, you know. That's just the way I thought, you know. I grew up playing hockey and I was physical and my son's not that type of player, you know. And that's the way it goes. He's a skill boy, you know.

DID YOU WATCH HIM IN THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP?

I saw, yeah, I saw it on satellite, yeah.

WHEN THAT GAME WAS OVER AND THEY WERE THERE WITH THE MEDALS, LISTENING TO THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER, WHAT WENT THROUGH YOUR MIND?

About time. They've had a real good group of kids that have played in the national development program down in Ann Arbor, and there's about a dozen on that team that have played together since they were – well Patrick's about 16, 15 in fact. He was 15 when he played on the under 17 team. And I knew they were good. They won the under 17, they won the under 18, and they were due this year. They were a little lucky to win it. Not – if you listen to the telecast from TSN, which was - as the satellite picked it up, they were, you know, they were... of course. But –

I WOULD ACTUALLY EXPECT ANY CANADIAN BROADCAST TO HAVE TAKEN THAT POINT OF VIEW.

Oh they did. I mean I've watched it. In fact, the last thing I sent to Patrick was a letter and a tape of the semi-final and final on it, and I watched it a dozen times.

I GUESS MY QUESTION WAS REALLY, AS HIS DAD, AND GIVEN ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, WHEN YOU SAW HIM THERE AND YOU SAW THAT LOOK ON HIS FACE, WHAT DID YOU GO THROUGH INSIDE?

I was proud of him. I'm glad. I knew he wanted to win it. Obviously he was up, you know, you could see he was – he was happy, he had happy tears going. He'd been through a lot and I expect him to do well, you know.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE WAS –

That five years from now, he'll win a Stanley Cup and hopefully no one's putting a microphone in his face to ask him, how is your bad dad, you know. It's all horse** but – it's all horse**. I wish him the best.

WHEN YOU SAW HIM THERE THAT DAY, DID YOU BELIEVE HE WAS THERE IN PART BECAUSE OF YOU?

No, no, no. Don't – don't ever even suggest that. I was just a minor leaguer. Patrick was born to be a player. He was born to be a player. He skated here when he was two years of age and I knew right away. I mean he'd stickhandle. He loved hockey. The first hockey game he ever watched was in 87, the Stanley Cup final. And after that, that was it. He's always had a stick in his hand and as much as I pushed him, he also wanted it. He would skate - he would drive me nuts. He'd shoot pucks for 4 or 5 hours in the rain. He'd play 4 or 5 games in a day because in the summer, they're allowed to play on multiple teams. He'd wear me out. And we'd come home and I'd sit in my chair and want to watch TV, and he'd lean a little mini-stick up against my chair and want to play, you know, mini-sticks. Yeah, the kid loves hockey.

YOU KNOW WHAT MOE MANTHA SAID TO US, HE SAID I WAS AFRAID THAT FOR ALL OF THAT, ALL OF THE GOD-GIVEN TALENT YOU JUST DESCRIBED, AND YOU KNOW AS WELL OR BETTER THAN ANYBODY ELSE –

No, there's no such thing as God-given talent. Believe me, Wayne Gretzky's a great player because he skated on the backyard, and if there was a little register on every kid's helmet that, that registered how much time they put into the game – and I'm not talking just playing hockey. I'm talking about thinking about it, practicing, working on your different skills. Patrick would stickhandle for hours on end, listening to music in the basement - cause he loves it, he loves it. He wanted to be a great stick handler and he is.

DON CHERRY SAID ..YOU KNOW, MAYBE IF JOHN HADN'T PUSHED PATRICK SO HARD, HE WOULDN'T BE WHERE HE IS TODAY. HE WOULDN'T BE THE PLAYER HE IS TODAY.

Oh I don't know.

AND MY QUESTION TO HIM WAS, DO YOU THINK THAT'S A DEAL THAT PATRICK WOULD HAVE WILLINGLY MADE?

I really don't know about that.

DO YOU THINK THAT PATRICK.....

I've never thought of that you know.

DO YOU THINK THAT HE WOULD RATHER NOT BE WHERE HE IS TODAY BUT HAVE HAD A DIFFERENT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU?

He knows that I – listen. I know my son loves me, I know. I talked to him the summer after our altercation that put me in jail, and we came to terms. And whether he says it or not, we reconciled then. You can go down the street and talk to the father-in-law. He watched us. But the problems I have with him now are strictly through Cathy. Cathy's influenced, delayed, deceived in allowing me to see my children and she's alienated myself from my children. And so any problems I have with them now, I really do blame Cathy because I haven't had any problems with him in two and a half years. And I wish him the best. I hope he does well. And I know he'll do well.

MOE MANTHA SAID TO US THAT HIS FEAR WAS THAT YOU KNOW HOWEVER GREAT THE GOD-GIVEN ABILITY, HOWEVER HARD THE WORK, THAT BECAUSE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU AND THE PRESSURE THAT HE FELT BECAUSE OF THAT HE'D WALK –

He never felt – that's a bunch of bull**.

MOE MANTHA, MOE MANTHA BELIEVES HE DID AND MOE SAYS THAT HE WAS AFRAID THAT HE WAS GOING TO QUIT HOCKEY.

On not at all. He loves hockey. He loves hockey. That's why he's still playing.

BUT JOHN, THAT WASN'T HIS POINT. HIS POINT WAS THAT HE DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY YOU WERE PUSHING HIM.

Bull**, bull**. And it wasn't pushing. It was encouraging sometimes. There's certain rules of thumb when you play hockey and if you want to be the beset, you can't be like anyone else. You want to be the best? He wants to be the best. He trained all the time and when he's hurt or sick, you have to use your discretion. I know that. And so did he. I mean he wouldn't be as good as he is and he wouldn't be a great student.

WHEN YOU SAY YOU WENT –

Came from a good mother and a good father and that's why he's going to do well. And that's why my daughters are doing well.

HE IS AN IMPRESSIVE KID.

He's great, very mature for his age, very smart. Always been an A student, always been an overachiever, a lot better than myself. And that was my wife and my own goal for our children were to be better than us, and they are. So I'm happy. I just don't have a wife and kids anymore.

SO WHEN YOU SAY YOU CROSSED THE LINE, GIVEN WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER PARENTS WHO MIGHT HAVE THE SAME KIND OF CHILD?

I would say don't make the mistake I did. Make sure you tell your children, when you're talking to them, who you are, whether you're a father, a coach or a friend. And that's what I did. I, I crossed the line and didn't tell him at times how I was speaking to him, what hat I was wearing.

YES.

And furthermore, I really believe you really shouldn't coach your kid. I think it would save a lot of stress if you just went out and try and find good coaching. But there's not a lot of great coaches either, I don't think. I really don't think.

SO YOU WOULDN'T SAY LOOK, MAYBE THE BEST LESSON HERE IS, FIRST OF ALL, NO VIOLENCE. SECONDLY –

Oh of course.

NO VERBAL ABUSE, AND THIRDLY, JUST LET THE KIDS HAVE FUN.

When I look back at it now, you know, all the winning, all the trophies and that, it's all a waste of time. They're sitting in the closet, collecting dust. It really didn't matter whether he won tournaments or anything like that. What mattered is if he had fun, and he had a lot of fun. And he always did well and he won a lot of tournaments and he always was the leading scorer on his team and that, and that was his game. He wants to be a scorer. That's what he'll be in the NHL. But yeah, looking back in retrospect, you know, how serious we took it as parents and coaches. And I'm talking about others that coached and were parents with my son's teams. I think it was a lot of worry over nothing, really, you know.

SO GETTING BACK TO THAT LETTER TO PATRICK AND THE LINE - WILLING TO PAY ANY PRICE – ANY PRICE, YOU UNDERLINED IT.

Right. Yeah, yeah.

DO YOU THINK- MAYBE THAT'S NOT THE WAY TO GO?

Well it's just that's what I've done. I've, I've – I've paid the biggest price you could and that's my family because they're the most important to me. I don't care about money, work or anything else. Well, I do care about it, but my priorities are my wife still, my ex-wife now, and my children would come first before anything, you know.

AND I KNOW THAT WHAT HAPPENS IN MARRIAGES IS INTRINSIC TO THOSE MARRIAGES AND NO ONE ELSE CAN REALLY UNDERSTAND. BUT YOU'RE SAYING WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU IS THEM.

Yes.

THEY'RE SAYING TO US THAT THAT'S NOT THE WAY YOU ACTED.

Well, if they took it that way, then that's, that's their problem. You know, that's –

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND HOW PATRICK AND CATHIE MIGHT HAVE?

I can understand. I can acknowledge that I made some mistakes. But I can, I, I swear on my children's lives, I had nothing but the right intentions in everything we ever did. And furthermore, the ex is copping out if she says that she didn't agree with everything. Because Mama was waiting there with dinner at 3:30 – 4:00 o'clock before hockey. She was right there with me, every step of the way – every step of the way. But of course they see counselors now and every workout he ever did, you know, was abuse, and it's a bunch of bull**. If he didn't work out, he wouldn't be as good as he is. I know that. And he knows that. It's as simple as that.

ALL RIGHT. WELL I APPRECIATE YOU SPENDING SOME TIME.

Okay. I hope you play it all and not some of it, like all these other reporters. Your name again, sir?

BOB MCKEOWN. LET ME GIVE YOU MY CARD.

I've heard of your name, Bob.

End