

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK O'SULLIVAN:

DO YOU HAVE MEMORIES OF SKATING WITH YOUR DAD?

Yeah.

AT 6, 7.

Yeah.

SHOWING YOU HOW TO SHOOT, SHOWING YOU HOW TO PASS.

I do.

WAS HE A GOOD COACH?

There's a lot of what ifs I guess with me but you know –

HONESTLY THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE. MAYBE THERE ARE WHAT IFS, BUT YOU ADDRESS THEM AND IT WOULD SEEM THAT YOU FIGURED OUT A WAY TO RISE ABOVE THEM.

Yeah, for sure. That's something I was able to do and ah, you know, I guess it's just in my personality to – to be able to overcome stuff and to, to adjust quickly and get over things faster than a lot of people. Cause people talk to me and they say, they don't really understand how I can, you know, be okay with everything so fast. I guess that's just something, something I have inside of me.

DO YOU THINK THERE'S A LINK ... WITH YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, YOUR FAMILY LIFE AND THE WAY YOU DEAL WITH HOCKEY? THE WAY YOU PERSEVERED IN YOUR CHOSEN FIELD.

I think so. I think ah – I've had to persevere in ah, you know, in my personal life and in my hockey life too. You know, I was growing up I was either too small or too slow. I had a crazy hockey parent that was going to prevent me from ever going you know, really far in hockey. And ah, so I had to, I had to listen to a lot of naysayers and lot of people that said I wouldn't make it, including my father. So ah, I've always, always been able to put the bad stuff aside and you know, I've always believed in myself. I think that helped me a lot.

I'VE GOT FOUR SONS ... IT'S FAIR THAT TO SAY THAT IN EVERY FAMILY THERE ARE RELATIONSHIPS THAT FOR AT LEAST A PERIOD OF TIME GO AWRY, GO SOMEWHERE YOU WISH THEY HADN'T. WHAT WAS THE POINT AT WHICH YOU REALIZED THAT YOUR FATHER WAS NOT THE WAY YOU PERHAPS THOUGHT HE WAS?

Probably when I was 13, 14 I was finally at the age where I realized that ah, you know, the way I was being treated and brought up wasn't – wasn't normal I guess. At a young age you don't really know because how would you know any better till you're old enough to finally realize yourself that ah you know, you see people in their house and the way they're brought up and it's different. And you say, hey you know, what's going on here? So –

HOW WAS IT DIFFERENT?

Oh, I was, my mom, you know, brought me up extremely well I think. She –

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT OUR MOM.

Yeah I think my mom did a good job of dealing with everything she had to go through too. It wasn't easy for her and she did a good job, you know, raising me and that.

SO HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU REALIZED EVERYTHING WASN'T QUITE RIGHT WITHIN THE FAMILY ?

I started realizing when I was probably 13, 14, I was old enough to, you know, to see what was going on. And I saw that ah you know, my mom and dad's relationship wasn't the best. You know it was difficult for me then because it all kind of hit me at once the fact that you know, I was being mistreated and my sisters and my mom and I saw that their relationship wasn't good.

YOU SAY YOU WERE BEING MISTREATED. WHAT DO YOU MEAN, VERBALLY? DO YOU MEAN –

Verbally, physically, you know, that was pretty much the only two ways –

WELL BE SPECIFIC. WHEN YOU SAY PHYSICALLY –

Yeah I was, Yeah like I was physically abused...My dad would hit me .

FOR WHAT REASONS?

Pretty much any reason he could. A lot of it was hockey related –

YOU'RE HIS SON, YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY TALENTED AT HIS GAME. HOW WOULD THAT BE THE FORUM FOR PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION?

I don't know. That's something I've never really been able to figure out. I don't know personally I would never treat my son like that. But you know, I guess he thought by treating me like that it was going to make me a better hockey player which you know, definitely is not true and you know I wish it could have been different.

SO GIVE ME – I DON'T WANT TO PRESS TOO HARD HERE AND IF I'M GETTING INTO AN AREA THAT YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH, LET ME KNOW. HOW WAS –

Oh it would be ah –

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?

After games, it would just be him telling me that ah you know, that I wasn't playing well, I wasn't good enough. And it would usually come to physical confrontation and the older I got the worse it got. And you know, finally when I was 16 I couldn't handle it anymore and I was old enough to do something about it and put an end to everything.

NOW I'M PRESUMING HERE THAT AT THE AGE WHEN IT STARTED YOU WERE A PRETTY DARN GOOD HOCKEY PLAYER. SO YOUR DAD'S TELLING YOU SPECIFICALLY THIS IS, OR SIMPLY THAT YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT.

Yeah. He was – you know he, I guess he saw that I was good when I was little and he thought that if he pushed me the way he did that it would help me become a better player when in actuality it probably hurt me. And you know, I would love to, you know, to see how good I would have been if ah I would have maybe had a different childhood in respect of the way he treated me. Not my mom or anything like that. But you know I've always said deep down I know I don't want to change anything. I wouldn't want to change the way I was brought up and I think everything I went through and my whole family went through ah you know, made me a better person and made me the person I am today. So you know, I wouldn't want to change that. But at the same time, you know, you always wonder what it would have been like, you know, in general I think. When people go through hard times they always wonder how it would be on the other side of the coin, so to speak. And you know, like I said I would, I would be interested to know that. But at the same time, I wouldn't want to change anything.

IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION.

Yeah. Exactly, exactly. There's no answer and ah you know, if you really think about it too long you start to go crazy and that's something I was able to see early on is that you know, although I was going through hard times or something, that you know, I couldn't really change and I just had to deal with it until I was old enough to do something about it.

YOU SAY UNTIL YOU WERE OLD ENOUGH TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. THIS CAME TO A HEAD REALLY ALMOST EXACTLY TWO YEARS AGO.

Yeah. Two years ago and it's funny that ah, that day of that Gold Medal game was almost, I think it was to the day two years when everything kind of took place and you know, ended. So I think that's kind of ironic .

WHERE WERE YOU THAT DAY?

Well , I had a game in Ottawa. My parents had dropped my sisters off at my grandparents' house in Toronto and ah you know, they were gonna come watch me play. And that whole, my whole first year in the Ontario Hockey League ah you know, it really got bad. It was pretty much fist fights after every game. And you know, (overlap) he was saying that for whatever reason in his mind I wasn't, I wasn't playing well. And you know, I was. I was having a good year. I was leading my team in scoring and I really was having a good year. And that whole time I couldn't really figure out what he was talking about. You know maybe he wasn't – wasn't all there and he was starting to lose it. I think he really was. But yeah, so it was getting worse and worse that whole year and finally that game in Ottawa. And during that game he came down to like right behind the bench. Kind of leaned over and said that I was going home after the game. And you know, right then I'm like, this guy, I don't know what it was, he just – maybe he just lost it right there and –

YOU MEAN HE WAS PULLING YOU OFF THE –

Yeah pretty much is what he was saying. So whatever, after the game. I had a fairly good game too that night. So ah after the game he wouldn't let me get on the bus so I had to go home with him and my mom in his van and ah that was needless to say that was an extremely bad car ride. You know, – my mom and I were upset and there was a lot of yelling and stuff.

DID HE TALK ABOUT WHAT HE HAD IN MIND? WHY HE WAS MAKING (OVERLAP)...

Yeah his whole thing was ah I was too soft. I wasn't tough enough to make it or that. You know, and when I would hear that I would think of the way he played the game wasn't the way I play the game and maybe he was, maybe he wanted me to be more like him. And you know, who knows. There's a number of things, I could go into that and –

THE OBVIOUS QUESTION IS DO YOU THINK HE WAS TRYING TO LIVE THROUGH YOU AT THAT POINT?

Yeah I think he was. You know, he might not have been but ah you know, I think everyone seems to come to that general conclusion that he ah – you know, he was trying to live through me because he was never good enough to make it and he was never as good as I was when I was 14 years old. So you know, who knows but ah so anyway that night I – so we finally got back to my grandparents' house to pick up my sisters to take – I guess we were going home apparently. So we got there and I, you know, I got out of the car and I said that I wasn't, you know, I wasn't going home. You know, it was ridiculous to think that ah I wasn't going to play hockey anymore. And he was saying that I was gonna ah, you know, gonna get a job at McDonalds or something. So really it just wasn't making sense and you know, when I told him that I wasn't going home, that pretty much set him off and you know, pretty much a fight right there in front of his parents' house.

A PHYSICAL FIGHT BETWEEN YOU AND HIM.

Yeah so finally that got broken up and my mom and I said we're not going anywhere with you and so he just basically, I don't know, he panicked and got in the car and drove away. And the next, the next day I called the police, filed a report and all that and you know we ended up getting a restraining order and all kinds of things to prevent him from seeing me or my family.

SO YOU WERE 16, ALMOST 17 WHEN THAT HAPPENED.

Yeah.

WHAT DOES THAT DO TO YOU EMOTIONALLY - HAVING THAT KIND OF CONFRONTATION WITH A PARENT ?

It's hard but I think from that day forward it was always better than the day before. And I think that was kind of a point where I turned the corner and, and finally decided that I was going to take control of my own life I think. That was the last time I was going to let that happen to me or my family. So – you know, I felt extremely good after that, after that point. You know, there was obviously a lot of time to heal and stuff. You can't snap your fingers. It's not automatic. You know, I definitely went through a lot over the last you know, two years, but I've come a long way and I'm extremely glad that I did what I did when I did it and everything's really worked out well since then.

IT'S – WHEN FAMILIES BREAK UP, WHEN MARRIAGES SPLIT, IT'S SAID IT'S ALWAYS HARDEST ON THE KIDS... HOW DO YOU – HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THAT WHEN YOU DECIDED THAT'S IT, WHEN IT HAPPENED?

Well it was, it was a good thing that everything happened like it did. You know, a lot of times people go through divorce and it's – it's hard on the kids and they don't understand why and you know, a lot of times they think it is their fault. But you know in this situation it was for the best, you know, by far in everyone's mind, in my mother's mind, my sisters' mind and – you know, we all knew that that was the right thing to do and I finally had enough confidence and I was finally old enough to, to do something about it at that point.

AND DO YOU THINK YOU'RE A DIFFERENT PERSON BECAUSE YOU DID THAT, TODAY?

Yeah absolutely. I think, you know, going through that was, you know, kind of – it made me a man I think a lot faster than some kids. You know, I had to grow up faster than a lot of people, you know, for numerous reasons. But I took control of my life and my family at 16 and you know, I'm thankful every day that I was able to have the strength to do that.

(skating and hockey sequence - continuation of interview)

WHAT'S YOUR FIRST HOCKEY MEMORY?

I don't know. I, you know, it's funny. I was probably 3 or 4 years old but I was watching the Stanley Cup play offs on TV and I saw Boston and Edmonton play ... you know, that's pretty much my first hockey memory at all.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FIRST MEMORY ON THE ICE?

I remember skating with a chair when I was 4, 5 years old and you know, I still remember that rink that was by my house.

DID YOUR DAD EVER TALK TO YOU ABOUT HIS CAREER?

Not really. A little bit. Most of it was not about the hockey. It was more about the stories away from the ice and that.

HE DIDN'T TALK ABOUT HIS LOVE FOR THE GAME ?

Not really. We really had a pretty strange relationship. We didn't talk - I didn't really talk to him much at all about anything – other than hockey. So it was weird.

THE IMPRESSION I GET IS THAT YOUR MOM'S YOUR PAL. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK TO HER?

Once every two days probably. I always call her after games. She always wants to know if I'm alive, as she would say. Ah – we have a really good relationship and I'm happy about that. Ah you know, the fact that I have no relationship with my father you know, makes it that much better that I'm so close with my mom.

DO YOU HEAR FROM HIM AT ALL THESE DAYS?

No. Not at all.

IS THAT PART OF THE RESTRAINING ORDER?

Yeah he's not allowed to write or do anything like that so –

AND DO YOU EVER FORESEE A CIRCUMSTANCE WHERE YOU WOULD WANT TO HEAR FROM HIM OR YOU'D WANT TO SEE HIM?

No, definitely not. To your question though I mean some people might, you know, might want to do that. It depends on the circumstances, but not me. I have no desire to ever even talk to him again. That wouldn't bother me one bit.

YOU DON'T THINK PEOPLE CAN CHANGE THAT MUCH?

No not that much. You know, it's – I don't know, I just –

IF I MET YOUR DAD WHAT WOULD I THINK OF HIM, JUST FACE TO FACE, NO PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIM, ABOUT YOU.

I don't know. I guess it would depend on how he wants to be seen I guess. He's not a stupid guy. He knows how to manipulate people and that, but you know, probably just talk to him for the first time probably think he's a pretty good guy.

WHAT DOES HE DO FOR A LIVING?

I don't know. He used to have his own maintenance business.... I don't even know what he does. I don't know where he lives now. To be quite honest with you, I don't really care so -

ARE YOU GOING TO BE THE BEST DAMN FATHER YOU'VE EVER SEEN?

Absolutely. And I think you know, the older I get the more I'll mature and learn about that stuff. That's something I don't really want to think about right now. But you know, becoming a father is not really on my – my list of things to do. But you know, I know I'm going to be a good father and do anything I can to help my kids.

THERE PROBABLY ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO MIGHT GO THROUGH SOMETHING LIKE YOU'VE GONE THROUGH WHO WOULD SAY, YOU KNOW WHAT, I'M NOT HAVING KIDS. THAT'S IT FOR ME. I'VE HAD ENOUGH EXPERIENCE WITH PARENTHOOD, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Yeah I mean just – just because I, you know, had a tough time when I was a little kid doesn't mean that you know, I don't want to have kids or that my kids are gonna, you know, do the same thing. I'm gonna break that cycle and everything is going to work out fine. I'm not worried about me becoming my father in any way. I'm a completely different person. I have a totally different personality so I'm not worried about that either.

YOU KNOW WHAT, THAT'S GREAT TO HEAR. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I THINK PEOPLE WHO MAY HAVE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES NEED TO HEAR.

Yeah, I agree completely.