**Speaker-1**

I Britton Marshall, thanks for agreeing to take part in the interview I really do appreciate it, I have no worries because the questions will last about 40 to 45 minutes. Feel free to say anything you want if along the way you think of anything else that I might not have asked you the way to say it as well. Yeah.

**Speaker-2**

Yep

**Speaker-1**

So just tell me, tell me about yourself tell me how you got into how you going to your school. And also tell me how you managed to make it to an elite level.

**Speaker-2**

Kind of a strange story really I've never obviously, I play football now but in my sort of early days, I never actually liked football I was more into hockey. So, I kind of played and played hockey probably for about say six till about nine and I was actually really good at that I got called out for England etc, etc. but then one summer being a kid I was bored there was no hockey camps going on, so one of my mates not so nice to play football and kind of my story went on from there. Basically, I started off at Lucian youth and then I ended up at a team called moon shot and then I got signed to me a wall so I did, I did quite well a moon shot but then I was a striker and I think I scored like 25 goals in like six games or something. So I got a sign from here we'll add an update for me or I think from when I was 11 to live out 15 but then my time at mill was really strange because I started off as a striker. I then ended up as a defender. So I never really, I didn't enjoy that transition, because I always enjoyed the scoring the goals and etc, etc. and then someone got injured in our team and because I was quite tall they put me at center back and I think I really fell out of love with the game at that stage. Which is quite strange because people at academies you'd think you'd be so loving it but I sort of fell out of it.

So and then maybe we'll change from an academy to a center of excellence because I think we had a lot of money issues. So then I actually stopped playing football for about a year or so I stopped from say 15 to just before say I was 16, so just under a year and then I ended up like just playing a game somewhere and someone saw me play and just sort of said to me like why are you not sort of playing for anyone etc, etc. and then ended up I remember it was Danny's Hamlet. They wanted me we have over there and then I actually didn't turn up for preseason. So the first two preseason games I never turned up and then they was badgering me badgering me, badgering me and then I ended up going and then I stayed there for a year and a half and then the world sort of went a bit crazy and I ended up getting bought by Crystal Palace and then I was at palace for five years and then I dropped down a few levels and stayed professional went to well in and then ended up back at knowledge again. And then two years ago now then I signed for Wrexham and Welsh professional again and then COVID happened and then my missus fell pregnant and obviously I was living in Wales. She was still living in our house in London. So it's kind of a lame COVID and I so I kind of ended up moving back to London and sign up for someone down in London just because it made more sense to sort of geographically to me to be a little bit closer to home.

**Speaker-1**

Of course well what a story thanks for that. So tell me about your life as an athlete. So what was your life like before you were injured and around the time when you got injured as well.

**Speaker-2**

Went out It was strange when I was younger, I never really got injured. It was only I think, as I probably started to do my height and as I was growing, you've got to say just before I got cyber palace, I had shin splints. So I'm not sure if you're not sure it's been slightly sensitive, like your shin bone or muscle they bless pull away from each other. So I had that I assigned to the palace and then I feel like it was all with the fact that I wouldn't be training twice a week of college to training every day with palace. I just another thing my body was quite ready for it. So I really struggled to stay fit the whole time I was there. I think they like I used to joke about it when I was there. I think I was there five years and I think I spent three years injured like three years either injured or rehabilitating. So I spend like a long period there when I was a kid, it wasn't just like one thing it was like it was one thing then it was something else it was something else and it was it was obviously very frustrating because I obviously feel that like if my time spent there I didn't have as many injuries I feel like I would have made more of that situation. I also felt like while I was there I probably could have worked harder while I was fit. I think sometimes when you're in that environment, I think you take for granted all the things that are in front of you and all the opportunities you have. So I feel that there is there's a part of both of them to play into or my story

**Speaker-1**

And just carried on from that so what it was like during the time you were injured.

**Speaker-2**

It’s so difficult to print this is like extremely frustrating and every day is very like mundane and sort of the same many slight, very oppressive, repetitive sorry and I think I found myself like during the periods of it just becoming ever increasingly frustrated like, say like someone would come in into a room after me and they'd be back before me and it'd be like just that repetitive cycle and as soon as I got fit, I'd play a few games, I'd get injured again. So it was kind of in terms of mentally it was sort of a real struggle. So nothing when you do eventually get yourself fit. I think it then takes you that amount of time to really wrap your head around the fact that you're fit and I think some injuries are definitely not mental but I think sometimes if meant mentally you are weak, sometimes injuries can affect you a lot more in taking a lot longer to come back from. So I think there were stages in my injury that were taking a lot longer because I don't think mentally I was like in the right mindset to sort of to really push for it and I found myself getting injured and then when I was rehabilitating I was getting injured again, kind of thing. So it was kind of it was an extremely, extremely frustrating phase in my career.

**Speaker-1**

Sure, so that's really interesting. You talk about the mental side of things but what else is interesting? So just you're so if we go to what your last injury was your initial thoughts and emotions and your feelings after finding out that you were injured? So you find out about your injury, what was kind of going through your mind, how are you feeling about it?

**Speaker-2**

I think my last long term injury was when I was at palace I think it was a random injury. It was a last preseason game before was about to star season and I tackled someone sort of on the wrong side and I tore my meniscus in my knee and then I tore free ligaments my ankle in the same tackle and at the time I never realized how bad it was because I tried to stand up and run on like carry on playing, and I just fell over and then it was I never thought it was that bad because I've never really had big injuries. Up until that stage, they've only been like tiny little things. I've taken the kid command corner kind of remember I came to the training ground and you have all the scans and the x rays and it was quite daunting for me because he took me to like a room with just mean him and that was kind of like a surreal experience and kind of the look on his face was kind of like you're not going to enjoy this kind of thing and he had like a picture of like a skeleton foot with him and a skeleton knee or something and I think at that point my face sort of like changed and it sort of dropped and I was that this kind of seems serious and then it was an emotion I'd probably I'd probably never felt before essentially your heart just sort of sinks and I've not long been at palace and things were going really well for me and it was kind of like it was just a massive kick in the teeth and at that stage you can't really see the light at the end of the tunnel, you kind of just in that moment you just feel so disheartened and so down and so disappointed into sort of theirs loads of like if buts or maybes if I did make that tackle if I didn't do this, if this happened if that happened and I think you start to sort of go through all them things and all the emotions in your head and just in a sense, wondering why me.

**Speaker-1**

Well, for what has been the most challenging aspects about being injured.

**Speaker-2**

I think he's definitely getting over that initial phase, I think it's definitely accepting the fact in a sense that you are injured that there is like a rehabilitation process to it and in a sense the thing that you'll have to do you're not going to be able to do for sort of a certain length of time, I think is the hardest bit and I think it always is that depending on how long you're out for if it's only like a couple of days and you're not obviously you probably take the rest but obviously if it's an extended injury then it is just that first initial stage of getting over the fact that you are injured in that innocence getting your head around the injury and how long it can take you. How long do your patients undertaking etc. I think it's just that initial phase. Once you get over that I think you do sort of get yourself into a routine of right you know you're coming in you're getting treatment you're doing rehabilitation you're doing your exercise you're doing whatever and I think the time does start to pass but I think it is also that feeling of that specially certain stage when I was injured, I felt like I was ahead of a lot of people and I think I was going out for five months and then people start to catch up and you start to lose obviously your sharpness and then when you come back people are potentially ahead of you and then you have them more catching up to do so then it's kind of the initial of both phases. So when you actually get injured getting your head around it and then when you actually come back again your head around the fact that you are back and potentially there's a chance that people have caught up with you and you're not at the same pace that you was at before you got injured and just getting back up to speed.

**Speaker-1**

And so tell me how did you cope with all that? What Kind of strategies, or what did you do to cope with coping been injured and going through the

**Speaker-2**

I think it was quite difficult for me at the stage because I had a lot going on in terms of my family. So my family life wasn't ideal. So football was kind of my getaway in a sense. So when that obviously took a knock and I wasn't able to do that probably hit me the hardest but in terms of like strategies I have I would just try and keep myself busy I would try and I used to go and see like a private physio so I would sort of try and speed up the process in that sense and I think I had a good group of friends around me at the time and they sort of they kept my mind focused and they kept me sort of like single minded in terms of what my goals were etc. and sort of just helped me along with that process and I also love the cinema that's really strange but I find cinema really I don't know the word for it I find it really relaxing. I kind of like sort of like the darkened just watching something and just sitting there and just it's kind of like away from the world for a little bit. You're just in there for a couple of hours and there's no like phones there's no nothing it's just you kind of do film in a sense. So I kind of did actually find myself in a cinema a lot and I found myself going alone a lot which I actually enjoyed.

**Speaker-1**

Super. So, we're talking about I'm going to just talk about behavior, so the way they behave so describe me some specific methods or techniques do you use to manage your to manage your injury? So what was it you were doing from a behavioral sense to manage your injuries?

**Speaker-2**

When you say behavior, what do you mean like to display sign up? To me a little bit?

**Speaker-1**

So what are the kinds of things that you're doing that would help you manage of injury through that time?

**Speaker-2**

When you say like, things that I was doing, he talking about your rehabilitation stuff, or just talking about stuff giving me personal,

**Speaker-1**

You know stuff within you within your head to kind of help you get through that.

**Speaker-2**

Okay, so at a time, I was actually seeing like a sports therapist and I kind of he spoke to me quite sort of in depth about or other players that have had injuries and in essence, some of the techniques that they have used. So I think there were certain times where I was coming like extremely frustrated and it was kind of in a sense or taking time away and having a step back and sort of focus in on sort of like he's talking about like meditating and breathing and etc, etc. So that was sort of something that I did quite a lot, I sort of took a step back from certain things and sort of really realigned my focus and focused on that my breathing and just sort of was sort of related to sort of the cinema which is kind of like a real calm sort of state here. So I kind of I would often revert to that just sort of like a quiet space and just sit there and just sort of relax in a sense and I think that kind of helped me in sort of a lot of the moments where I am where I was sort of, I was struggling and becoming extremely frustrated.

**Speaker-1**

Yeah. Okay. So when you spoken about this a little bit but when you got injured, where did you turn to for support?

**Speaker-2**

When I actually got injured, I think the best person that I had was probably my physio at the time and he I actually looked him up the other day, and he's actually the physio arsenal now the head physio and he was amazing. I think he is like sort of obviously I guess he he'd see seen loads of injuries before. He's seen long term things. So I think the way in a sense he dealt with me was kind of exactly what I needed at the time. I think he knew when to push me he knew when I needed like a down day and he knew when I saw I needed sort of like a gearing up you needed when I just needed like a word in my I think he was kind of because I had a lot going on at home which I was also dealing with it was the kind of the two things were so separate at the time, I never took my football home, I never tried to take my home life to football. So when I was at football he was the person that if I need someone to speak to about things, or if I needed help with certain things, he was kind of the person that I would that I would go to. So he was extremely helpful during that face.

**Speaker-1**

And your experience of that helped him that support from him. What did that do for you?

**Speaker-2**

I think it was amazing. I think he sort of helped me through obviously an extremely true key phase and he never, he never actually had to do it. I guess that's not necessarily a part of his job. In a sense his job was in a sense, just to get me back fit and I think it's something that has lived long in the memory and I think is something now that when I see sort of people that are younger than me with these long term injury is something potentially that I try and so I try and do for them. So I'm sort of passing the baton on in a sense if only he did for me, I'm trying to sort now pass on to other people, if I can.

**Speaker-1**

And the stuff that he helped you with was there anything specifically or in particular, that helped you through your injury phase.

**Speaker-2**

There wasn't anything like there wasn't like say one specific detail it was kind of like a combination of quite a few things. It was just as I said just to be in there to know when to push to know when to sort of in a sense to drop off of me a little bit he was kind of a combination of all of those things together, I just sort of just made this all the atmosphere a lot more conducive to me sort of getting back on a pitch and made it a lot easier for me.

**Speaker-1**

Along the same lines was there anything specifically that you think maybe hindered your progress or hindered your recovery?

**Speaker-2**

I think mentally I probably wasn't in the best place. As I said, I had a lot of stuff going on at home. So I think there was times where I should have been say resting and relaxing at home but I was maybe out of my mates messing about or I was going to a club or etc, etc. So I think at that stage, I wasn't sort of aligned and focused on just getting back fit and doing everything that I possibly could do to get back fit, which probably ties in with the frustration of me being injured because I was frustrated, maybe I was finding myself go into clubs and go into this and doing that and probably stuff that I probably shouldn't have been doing, which probably hindered me because I think I remember one time I i was just coming back from my injury and I went out like clubbing or something and then I had training the next train like a couple of days later or something I ended up doing the same injury again. So it doesn't necessarily mean that the two things were aligned but there's a good chance they probably worse, I think, mentally I wasn't in the best place probably and I probably was making some decisions or probably hindering the injuries that I did have and probably making them worse necessarily helping me get back on the pitch.

**Speaker-1**

Okay, well, thanks and so thinking about getting back to playing and returning to play. What did you miss most about participating in your sport?

**Speaker-2**

Think it is it's a lot to do about the camaraderie and I think it's just competition. I think every day you go out there and you just want to compete, you just want to play you just want to I think is that is that competitive edge and just being around that your teammates the camaraderie you have the jokes, you have the laughter the sort of the bond that you create with these boys that you're with for a number of years, I think seeing a lot in the future but and you see them out there competing and sort of fighting against each other. This is a very difficult thing to kind of explain nothing. You're saying that. When you play sport, you kind of understand that thing. That's any sport, if you're a swimmer, or if you're an athlete or wherever it's just that, that competing against someone and sort of showing someone that you're better at this or they're better at that and just that every single day that grind in a sense to get better and better. If you miss that when you're when you're injured and you sort of you go into like a lull, where you're not, you're not doing that.

**Speaker-1**

And what was kind of what were your thoughts and feelings about returning to play. So after you got over injury, what was kind of going through your mind about returning to play?

**Speaker-2**

I think when I first got back, I think it I was quite nervous because I didn't want it to happen again and at that stage it was kind of it was about me sort of trusting my body again and trusting that it wouldn't break down and trusting I would be able to do the things that I did before I got injured. So I think that taught me a little while I think that took me a couple of weeks to like to really get used to in a sense, even just kicking the ball again, because I've done my ankle quite severely was kind of it was quite weak for a long time. So being able to feel like I could strike up all properly without sort of going again, and just building that confidence back up within myself and within my body to be able to compete at the level that I was competing, that was probably the hardest and the biggest thing about the wholesale we probably took it took quite a long time to get there.

**Speaker-1**

Okay, and you've spoken about your mental state previously, but just give me an idea about how you can use some of the experiences you went through when you're injured, either on the playing field or in life, you know some of the things that you've maybe learned?

**Speaker-2**

Yeah, I think I think even though it was it was an amazing experience. I'll see it as I said, at Crystal Palace, I learned I learned modes, and I think being injured I think it is I think as I've got older, I've found ways to sort of, to separate like football was my life and it still is a massive part of my life. But I think I've found now things outside of football that I can solve that I can do and I think it's extremely important for any young player or any player in general when they're playing the game. I think you have to have a life outside of the game because I think what tends tended to happen to me is because I was injured and that was all that I had at the time. It was kind of that was my soul focus, all I thought about was my injury all I in essence, did was my injury now as an adult still playing. If I get injured, I can come home, I've got my son, I've got other ventures that I'm working on, so kind of all them sort of things, I think take your mind off of the fact you're injured and I think it just creates a bit of mentality for when you're there and I think I kind of got that from a first team player at the time because me and him were injured kind of together for a long time and I think we had sort of long conversations and he was speaking about how he was injured, I think for longer than me he got his ACL in his name he was just sort of saying that he has so much going on outside of football that football is still his main focus and that is his thing but when he's away from here, he does what he needs to do with football but then he also has his other things and that really helps him sort of stay focused and align. So when he's here he can give it his all, rather than some days where he where I got there and I was sort of drained because all I was thinking about was when I was at home when I was here football was the injury was this and I think he would always come in quite fresh because he had a life outside of it. So I think at the time that was one of the biggest things, for me was sort of finding things outside of football helps me so much within football which sounds really strange but

**Speaker-1**

Now that makes it makes complete and actually moving on to kind of my penultimate question was how is it made you view professional sport and life after school?

**Speaker-2**

Professionals, I think it's amazing, I think at the height of it's amazing nothing. As I said before, I wish I'd probably taken the chance that I was given a lot better than I did. Inhindsight by also fitness loads of theirs loads of things that go goes on in the game that I don't like I think I loved the game where it was just going out there playing football and the best player kind of plays but I think sometimes the higher you get up, there's a lot more that goes into getting onto the pitch than just play in and I think it becomes quite complicated which is the side of the game that I don't like, which is why even now I still love going to goals with my mates and playing because it just feels free. It just feels very like natural, it doesn't feel forced, it doesn't feel sort of any of those things. So I still enjoy that and I think, yeah, I think life after football is something that I've I've started to think about a lot more in the last couple of years and I think football has a lot, I just turned 27 or formulas play to their fe 45 to 36 Maybe if they're lucky and they've looked after themselves. So I think in recent years, I've definitely started to sort of try and put things in place and I'm still putting things in place to sort of to secure my future and my family's future after I finished playing. I'm not going to go into what they are just yet but hopefully in a few years. So you might have a different conversation.

**Speaker-1**

And that's the perfect, I hope so and best of luck with all of that. So just my final question, really is there anything specifically that the we haven't gone over the you do you want to mention that you're thinking about to do with you, either before you're injured, when you're injured or returning to sport that you don't think you've got a chance to cover?

**Speaker-2**

Potentially, one or two things, I think it was like, I wish that the time that when I was in that professional setup there was kind of there was more support. I think when you are injured in that sort of environment, not to say that you're toss that aside but kind of because you're not playing you're not a priority to them anymore and I think that getting your head around that was quite hard to deal with and sort of went in phases where Sarah had stuff going on at home and what I got injured at the time, I think having someone there, whether that be a psychologist or someone that you could go to and just speak to resolve air out your problems, I think would have been something that not just I would have benefited from laughing. I think many people that have benefited from and I think they would have sort of all the players would have done better for it if they got injured. So I think having that sort of set up in an environment like that, I think would be would be an amazing thing but here with a lot of this stuff, I guess it comes down to money. If you're not going to want to pay to sort of employ someone to do it then it's kind of difficult and I think at the time when I was there, it was kind of money was kind of on a shoestring sort of thing. So I guess that wasn't probably a priority same way that when you're injured you're not necessarily a priority to them. I think that was probably one of the things that I would have loved to have been there when I sort of needed it was to have that sort of support.

**Speaker-1**

Okay. I think that's Yeah, that's brilliant Well Michael thanks very much. I appreciate that. You've given me all the answers I need and give me a lot of information. So I appreciate it. I've got until the end of world till the end of August, early September to get this done. So I'm on schedule. So, what I'll do is I'll just share the final I'll share my final dissertation with you. As I said, it will all be anonymized so you'll probably be elite athletes three or something?

I don't know yet but yeah, I'll share the information with you and if there's anything between now and then that you think was should have mentioned that all you've thought of anything else and just drop me just drop me a line?

**Speaker-2**

Yeah. Perfect. I will do. Alright,

**Speaker-1**

I'm going to stop the recording now.