

Hockey is Life

I was always the last pick for the Liskeard- Looe lions. In the tryout for the first team my overall performance was inept. I have always enjoyed every aspect of hockey and all I ever wanted was to play in the men's first team. I felt ashamed for playing so badly in one of the most important chapters in my hockey career so far. Hockey is my life and after my last performance in the tryout, I thought I might have ruined any chances I may have had on furthering my hockey career.

I promised myself that from now on I would train twice as hard at every session to make sure that if another opportunity arose I did not fail again. So at the next training session I put in 110% effort. The intended recipient received every pass I made. In the practice match I received the ball in the middle of the pitch and ran straight towards the goal. Unfortunately for me Dale (club captain) was playing at sweeper so I was unsure whether to pass or keep going. Leon was playing right wing and was shouting for the ball, I looked up as if I were going to pass the ball to Leon but turned back inside with Dale just standing there. I dribbled the ball into the D, looked at the goalkeeper's position and took a shot. The ball started off low with not much power then started to rise and the next thing I know the ball had crept in the top corner. I didn't celebrate because I wanted to show the team that I was serious about playing in the team.

On Friday night I received a phone call from Dale asking me to play the next morning in the first game of the season against Truro. When I was at the training session I remember everyone seeming really up for it this game. So I asked Dale whether it was an important game? To which he replied, "Yes as you know it's against Truro who have been our rivals since I can remember, they beat us in the last game of the season 3 years ago to grab promotion". He also told me that I should remember that I'm only going to the match as a substitute so don't get too upset if I don't come on for long or don't even play. My enthusiasm dampened a touch but I was still pleased they had asked me to go. I was hoping that someone would cancel at last minute especially an attacker because that is my favoured position.

The next morning I was exhausted but excited. I didn't get much sleep last night because I kept dreaming about the game. I knew that if I had a good performance the team would give me the chance to play week in week out. I sat down to eat my breakfast and turned the television on. There was an advert on about 'Weetabix' there was a woman running up a hill with a tracksuit on and when she reached the top of the hill leaned up against a tree to stretch. As she changed from right leg to leg the tree fell over onto the road. So I went to the cupboard and thought I could probably

do with a bit of that extra strength. Just as I had finished my breakfast the doorbell rang.

It was Gash the team's centre-back and my means of transport. In the car he told me not to be nervous and just play exactly like I did at the last training session. When we arrived at the Astro-Turf there was no other team members present. So we got a ball and passed to each other while running around the pitch. We were half way through our second lap when the rest of the team arrived we went over to where our team had setup to talk about tactics and formations etc. As everyone got kitted up the umpire came over to tell us that the match would be starting in fifteen minutes. Dale had a quick count up and found out that Neil who plays up front had not shown. He came over to where I and the four other substitutes were standing and asked if any of us play up front. That is my favoured position but it is also Robin's who has played in the first team before. So Dale said that one of us play in the first half and the other play in the second. I didn't really mind what half I played in as long as I played. So I said to Robin you go on first. I thought that if I go on in the second half then if the team is losing or if it's a draw if we win I would have played a part in the victory.

The players from both teams got into their positions and the umpire blew the whistle. The game started off very scrappy with both teams giving the ball away far too easily. But in the twenty-fifth minute Robin who I was replacing at half time broke into their D made a good one-two with Leon and let off a fierce shot towards the bottom right hand corner. It looked like a certain goal until right at the last minute it veered off to the right and went out for a sixteen yard hit. Robin's shot was the only piece of action in the half that separated either team. The umpire blew his whistle for the end of the first half. In the break I asked Dale whether he wanted me to play on the right or left upfront. He looked at me and said, "Robin is playing well you'll have to wait your turn, remember there will be other games". I was really annoyed because Dale gave me his word and if you can't trust your captain who can you trust. So I put my coat back on and sat back down with the other substitutes. The whistle blew for the second half and Truro looked extremely eager to get going and that's just what they did, they had the push back and with good maneuvering of the ball they scored a well deserved goal. As the players were getting back into their positions I was quite thirsty so I was on my way over to the leisure centre when I heard a tremendous roar. It was Gary our other attacker he had pulled his hamstring. Two of our players carried him off. When Gary was being seen to Dale shouted over to me to put a shirt on. There was ten minutes left when I stepped onto the pitch. Play had to be stopped so the umpire called it Liskeard Ball. Mark slapped it down the wing to Robin who made a bad first touch but managed to whip a beautifully timed ball

into the D. Stuart controlled and ran to the left of the keeper it looked like a certain goal until a defender took his legs out. The umpire pointed straight to the spot and with no argument so did Nick who was having a brilliant game so far. Nick put his stick next to the ball took one look at the keeper and placed the ball sweetly into the top corner. When the match restarted there was three minutes remaining on the clock. Both teams were playing for the draw when their number 10 broke into our D and pushed a lovely shot heading straight towards the bottom corner. Some of the players from Truro were walking back into their half because they thought it was a goal. Well so did I to be honest but Gash didn't and made a lovely block on the line he ran the ball out to the right looked up and rocketed a ball down towards me. I knew that there was a defender behind me so I disguised my movement as if I were going to stop the ball then changed it at the last minute and flicked the ball over his stick. That usually works about one in ten tries so I knew I was clean through on goal. I reached the top of the D and the keeper was already charging out at me I knew that if I tried a shot from here he would absolutely annihilate me. So as he dived down to obtain the ball I flicked it over him and straight into the back of the net. The whistle sounded and I couldn't believe it. I had won the game. It was like a rite of passage My dream had come true.