

## **English version**

### **How long have you been playing hockey, and how did you begin playing hockey ?**

Joe: I have been playing hockey for 20 years. I visited a store in Wellington that sold inline hockey and skateboarding equipment and met Matt Chan who is now a very close team mate, coach and brother to myself and my family. He suggested that I give inline hockey a try. This is a meeting I am extremely grateful for.

Harriet: In July 2009 my family and I watched the Mighty Ducks trilogy. I have always been passionate about sport and children in New Zealand are encouraged to play many. Although I had enjoyed several sports, inline hockey and ice hockey pulled me in immediately like no other sport had. My love for hockey grew instantly and my brothers and I began our hockey journey the moment these films concluded. The support of my parents is a massive reason why I have been able to enjoy this beautiful game for so long. I am extremely thankful for them.

### **Harriet, you also play ice hockey. Would you say inline and ice are complementary?**

I started playing ice hockey in 2017. I do believe these sports complement each other nicely. Inline is an accessible and cheaper option. This means that you can often get more rink time. Ice hockey provides wonderful opportunities as it has such a large following. I personally found ice skating quite difficult after playing inline for 8 years. The game play is obviously quite different as well with the offside rule heavily influencing game strategy. Many inline hockey players in New Zealand play both sports and are encouraged to do so. Overall, I am very grateful for the experiences ice hockey has given me and I think that the more often the inline and ice hockey communities can collaborate and work together, the better off both games will be for everyone.

### **How are you involved in inline hockey in New Zealand? What are your best memories?**

Joe: My involvement in inline in New Zealand extends to playing, coaching, digital design, managing a KIHHL team and sitting on the committee of our home club. I have a passion for coaching and playing and my best memories stem from both.

It is difficult to choose my favourite memories as this sport has given so much to me. In 2008 my home club won the U18 national championships in Tauranga, NZ. This was a special moment for me as it was my first national title. A favourite coaching memory of mine was in 2017 where I was given the opportunity to coach my first NZ national team.

Harriet: Within the NZ hockey community I have coached our junior club teams for 6 years. This sport has given me so many opportunities that shaped my childhood and young adult years and I feel that it is extremely important to give back and allow other junior players to have these opportunities too. I was extremely lucky to have many great coaches growing up in Wellington. They inspired me to give back and contribute to my home club as well. My favourite memories include playing at the World Roller Games in Nanjing, China in 2017 and at NARCH in Irvine, California in 2019. Both of these experiences taught me so about hockey and I got to see some incredible players.

### **Harriet, In NZ, you were playing with the boys : is it easy for women players to fit in men's teams ?**

Harriet: From my first season playing hockey, I have been encouraged and welcomed to play with men in New Zealand. The Wellington hockey community have always allowed my female friends and I to play with and against men. I am so thankful for this as without it I know that I would not have had as many opportunities. Playing hockey with men has given me so much confidence and I have been pushed harder. My weaknesses are also highlighted playing at this level which is necessary to get better.

I strongly believe that to be a good as you can you need to play with both men and women. In saying this, for women's hockey to develop, it is important to keep playing in this division if possible. Unfortunately, the New Zealand Inline Hockey federation have introduced some new rules in recent years that do not allow women to play in both the men's division and women's division. I personally find this extremely sad. Playing inline hockey in France was an incredible experience for several reasons but a main reason for me was being able to play in both the men's and women's championship.



**What are the differences between inline hockey in NZ and in France ?**

Harriet : Both inline hockey in New Zealand and France have passionate and excited communities. A significant difference is that the French hockey community is much bigger allowing for there to be more teams, divisions, and rinks around the country. I really enjoyed taking part in the Coupe De France. We don't really have anything like this in NZ. The first thing we noticed was how fast players were. This was a bit of a shock to us as the games at home are slower. The games in France are also longer. In NZ we usually play 18-minute halves with no stop time. We have been very fortunate to see the French national teams play at various world championships. The talent in these teams and within the various divisions in France is incredible and we feel really inspired by it. It really was a privilege to play hockey in one of the leading hockey countries in the world.

**What brought you to french inline hockey ? Why in France ?**

We have seen the French national men's and Women's national teams play at a few world championships. We were really blown away by the level of hockey they played and the standard they set. When the opportunity presented itself to play in France, we knew there was a lot that we could learn.

**What do you think of the level of inline hockey in France ? Has it been easy, or difficult, to adjust to the French championship ?**

The level of hockey in France is very high. We could see quickly that the level was high in the lower divisions as well.

Joe: The speed of the players in France was difficult to adjust to. Some of the rules are tougher than they are in NZ, which meant I did receive a few penalties.

Harriet: I found the women's league really fun to play in and didn't experience any difficulties in joining this division. I did find the speed of the men's division difficult to adjust to. I had to find a way make decisions faster than I would at home.

### Are there any major differences ?

A major difference between hockey in France and New Zealand is the number of rinks and clubs. The NZ hockey community is much smaller. Some clubs may only have 1 or 2 teams. Development is something we are working on and we look to have many more players in future years. Another major difference is that New Zealand is quite far removed from most hockey playing nations. This means that if we want to play internationally, we must travel a long way. Whereas in France, it is more accessible to play foreign teams.



### What can you say about french women championship, compared to NZ women championship?

The French women's championship is a little bit different to the women's competition in NZ. France has the N1 championship and N2. New Zealand just has one division. I think that both structures are great. I enjoyed playing Saint-Médard as they are obviously a very strong team and challenged us a lot. Personally, I think this was our best game. France and New Zealand both have really strong female players and the future of women's hockey around the world is really exciting. The biggest difference is that France has more female players.

### If you were to give advices to any foreign player looking to play in France, what would they be ?

The best advice that we can give is that buying in and being a part of the team and community is more important than just being a good hockey player. Respecting the cultural differences and people is significant and an important part of the experience. Being a good athlete isn't very helpful to a team if you aren't a good person.

### Can you tell us about your stay in France? and in Europe ? How was it to live in Charleville ?

Europe is a very long way from New Zealand. It took over 48 to travel from Charleville to Wellington. We had a lot of time to discuss our experience and our favourite moments. We agreed that [this](#) trip has been our favourite adventure ever.

The people in Charleville were so kind and welcoming to both of us and we are so grateful for that. We were so far from home but it really felt as if Charleville had become our home in France. We were very lucky to visit Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Czech Republic and England. We had a wonderful experience in all of these countries.

It is really hard to put into words how thankful we are for everything that the hockey community in Charleville did for us. We are so grateful for Marc who organised our whole experience and shared his love for hockey with us. We admire Marc's care and passion for hockey and the whole community.

We are very thankful for Arnaud who is one of the kindest and most genuine people we have ever met. Arnaud is so humble and also welcomed us to France without hesitation. We are also very thankful for Amaury, Nico and Eloise. Amaury coached our men's team and taught us so much about strategy and hockey in France. Nico and Eloise were extremely kind and welcoming and never hesitated to help us out. All of our team mates and members of the club showed remarkable hospitality and really taught us what it looks like when every single person contributes to the success of a community.

Charleville is a small place with a massive heart. We were very fortunate to see and be a part of some incredible experiences during our 3 months in Europe but our favourite days were the ones spent at the Charleville rink with our new team mates and friends.

We are forever grateful to this community for the opportunity to be a part of their club.

