

DANNY Briere

By Ronald Sklar

French Canadian and Philadelphia Flyer Daniel Briere may be diminutive in size, but not in stature and status. In 2007, the Flyers signed him to a hefty eight-year contract. And despite his relatively small frame, the Flyers deem him so worthy that they had attached to the contract a no-movement clause. Not moving is a tall order for a guy who actually moves like lightning, and whose height ordinarily would have easily stood in the way of his pro-hockey success.

However, despite of – or even because of – this seemingly impossible roadblock, he had come up scruffy and scrappy, always trying harder because he simply had no choice in the matter, in order to survive the heat on the ice with the “big guys.” To overcome the size issue, Briere went straight to the top to seek help. He strength-trained with Hugo Girard, who is no less than the Canadian World’s Strongest Man (this odd couple hails from the same home town in French Canada).

Briere’s focused determination and smooth moves were rewarded with the title of MVP at the 2007 NHL All-Star Game, after scoring a game high of five points (one goal and four assists). He scored his first hat trick in 2006, against the Tampa Bay Lightning’s goaltender, Marc Denis. Much sweeter, though, was his second hat trick, on January 30, 2007, in front of a home-town crowd at the HSBC Arena. Here, Briere chats with us regarding what it takes to make it against all odds. And no doubt that he takes a wicked snapshot to the naysayers.

PF: How have the Philly fans been treating you?

DB: “So far it has been great. We have had great success at home and have shown our fans that we are a very good hockey team and we really appreciate their support. I have been very impressed in the short period of time I’ve been here.”

PF: You got the nickname “Cookie Monster” in Buffalo. Does this nickname still stand as a nickname?

DB: “No, it really is not my nickname. Our announcer in Buffalo started saying it after I scored a couple of goals. When guys would shoot high and score top shelf, he would yell, “Top-shelf where momma hides the cookies.” One night I had two top-shelf goals and he screamed, “Tonight Danny is a cookie monster.” That’s where it came from. A few people have repeated it but it is not my nickname.”

PF: Has your size ever been an issue?

DB: “It has been an issue in the sense that being smaller is probably been the best thing that has ever happened to me. It gave me that extra motivation to prove people wrong. Every single year when I was growing up people would tell me that I was too small and that I would never make it to the next level and I kept proving them wrong. That kept me pushing harder than ever and gave me that extra edge.”

PF: What was it like to score your first hat trick?

DB: “It was pretty neat. It took me over 450 some games to get my first one but it was well worth it. I had two last season and it is pretty cool. It’s one of those things that you hope will happen one day and it did for me. But, let’s not forget, the most important part of hockey is



not scoring a hat trick, but rather helping your team win the game.”

PF: When you had your abdominal injury, what exercise(s) did you do for rehab?

DB: “I did a lot of strengthening and core exercises to make the abdominal area stronger. Everything we do in hockey - skating, shooting and fighting for pucks in the corners - starts from your core. I have been getting help from [Philadelphia Flyers Athletic Trainer/Strength and Conditioning Coach] Jim McCrossin. We have been working in that area to make sure it gets stronger and to make sure it does not happen again.”

PF: What do you do in the off-season?

DB: “Working out is a big part of my off-season along with spending quality time with my family. We have such a hectic schedule during hockey season. My wife and I have three young boys and we try to spend as much free time as we can with them. I’ve introduced them to golf, a sport that I can play without too many risks of injury. I really

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look forward to the day when I can go out and play a round of golf with them when they get older.”

PF: What was it like to work with Hugo Girard, the world’s strongest man?

DB: “That was cool. We did a lot of exercises that were different from the exercises I do in the gym. We were working out in this huge warehouse. It was a break in the routine for me. Instead of doing the same exercises over and over again like I do in the gym, I was doing other things like trying to flip tires, roll rocks and pick up cars and stuff like that. I had a great time working out with Hugo. He was about twice my size.”

PF: What do you find as the most effective workouts to stay in shape?

DB: “We do a lot of cardio on the ice. What we do during the season is maintenance work, just keeping the body in shape. Hockey season is long and the demands on your body are great. We play almost every second night so it takes a toll on your body. On average, when the season is over, I take three to four weeks off to let my body heal. It breaks the routine.

Then I go back to working out about three hours a day about five to six times a week. Hockey is a tough sport. Your cardio, strength and agility all have to be in top shape. You have to work out your entire body, not just lower body or upper body.

The sport is a combination of many different skills and I try to exercise every part of my body.”



Here is Danny Briere with Kyle Lograsso. He is a local five-year-old local golf prodigy who lost his eye to cancer. You can get more info on Kyle if you go to www.kylelograsso.org He has been featured nationally, most recently on HBO Real Sports.

PF: What advice would you give to a youngster hoping to play professional sports?

DB: “Always believe in yourself. Anything is possible if you believe it is possible.”

PF: You mentioned that you have three sons. Do you emphasize fitness and nutrition to them?

DB: “Fitness, not yet. They are still a little too young for that. My wife and I want them to enjoy being kids and to enjoy whatever sports they are playing. They should not have to worry about fitness because that comes natural when they are competing in sports. But we are starting to make them realize more and more about nutrition and what to eat the night before games and after games. We don’t want to get into nutrition too much but slowly we are trying to teach them a little bit about it.”

Birthplace: Gatineau, Quebec

Favorite Healthy Food: Chicken

Favorite “junk” Food: Ice Cream

Favorite Way to Exercise: Doing circuits

Least Favorite Exercise: Chin-ups

Favorite Way to Relax: Golfing

Favorite Movie: “Good Will Hunting”

Favorite Musicians: U2, Counting Crows

Favorite TV Show: Right now, it is “Prison Break”

Favorite Season: Spring

Pets: Two dogs. A Boston Terrier named Zora and a bulldog named Zoey

Zodiac Symbol: Libra

Favorite Motto: I said it earlier: “Anything is possible as long as you believe it is.”



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