

EPISODE 3 - BROOKE AND DARIAN

JORDIE LESCARD:

Alright let's get started.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

OK!

(MUSIC PLAYS)

JORDIE LESCARD:

Hello and welcome to The Shine Cast, where we're starting conversations around mental health, mental illness, how we cope and how we thrive throughout our journeys. I'm Jordie Lescard.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

And Linnea Velikonja, The Shine Cast may touch on potentially triggering material. Take care of yourself while listening and know that it's OK to take a break or skip onto the next episode. Check out the episode description for full details on what we'll be talking about. We hope you enjoy the podcast (MUSIC PLAYS). We are joined with Brooke Davidson and Darian Hirst. Both are undergrad students at the university of Guelph, both are athletes and both are co-leads on these students, athletics, mental health initiative, were you guys always been into sports, like as kids. And it continued on into university`?

DARIAN HIRST:

I more of an artistic child. My entire life, I went to a regional arts program in high school. I've been a musician my entire life. I grew up playing hockey never actually made a rep hockey team, which was challenging for me because of my hometown. It was kind of like you weren't on a rep hockey team, you weren't that popular. I discovered rugby in high school and then managed against a high level off Lennox here at the university of Guelph. So this is kind of like my first boat with like serious athletics.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

Brooke, did you always like, were you always into sports growing up?

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

I was a little bit different from Darian. I was very sports focused. I would say from a young age, I always played like rap hockey and soccer and then pretty much at school played any sport I could play. So, sports have been a big part of my life.

JORDIE LESCARD:

Darian, you said you played instruments. What instruments do you play?

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DARIAN HIRST:

I've been playing drums and percussion since I was three years old. I also got the piano and the guitar as well. And my band excitingly enough just released our single on Spotify two weeks ago. It's already hit like 4,000 streams on Spotify alone. So it's pretty exciting.

JORDIE LESCARD:

Wow. Like what's your band's name?

DARIAN HIRST:

Royal G symphony.

JORDIE LESCARD:

Royal G symphony. So what type of music do you guys play?

DARIAN HIRST: We play rock music. A lot of people liking us to bands like the tragically hip and the glorious sons and rush and stuff like that.

JORDIE LESCARD:

So small bands.

DARIAN HIRST:

Yes. Yes.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I was gonna ask about what Darian was doing with the indigenous student association.

DARIAN HIRST:

I work at the indigenous student center. I'm not with the association, I'm indigenous myself. So I work with the recruiter there, Rosemary sprain. Who's fantastic. And we're working right now on building a framework to help for like wayfinding to help prospective indigenous students kind of like out what they might want to do. So we're building around a framework of like figuring out your why and then, and your how so that's kind of a project we're working on right now, but indigenous issues mean a lot to me. And as I'm learning more about like my background and my ancestry it's just driven me to learn more.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

How do you find that like balance between doing your athletics and doing your schoolwork and that kind of mix?

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BROOKE DAVIDSON:

Honestly, I've loved it. Like I think it helps me balance everything. I think this year has been tough because we've had a lot less due to COVID. We have less practices and no games. And I found it probably one of the harder semesters yet, because of that, obviously there's a lot of other changes going on as well. Just knowing that you have training every single day that you're going to get your exercise in like a little bit of an outlet and a break. You're going to see all your friends every single day. So it was something to look forward to. And then it also just kept you on track. It wasn't if I had something to do, I couldn't be like, I'll just do it later. I had practice later, so I have to do it now.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

How are athletics during the time of COVID?

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

It's definitely been different. There's no contact at our practices, but we're like really lucky. I think we're one of the only schools that's been able to practice and train as much as we have. We didn't get to compete the same. I know for Darian it's probably look a little bit different.

DARIAN HIRST:

It did. We had some different guidelines and provisions and you'd been training with less people than we usually do, but it is really nice to get out there on the field and be in an environment where the guys push each other and we all try to get better. So it has been different like Brooke said, but it's definitely been enjoyable and I'm glad it's been.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

You mentioned how playing rugby, your coaches kind of implement being fantastic rugby players, but also fine men. What is a fine men to yourself?

DARIAN HIRST:

I think it's not even just a principle related to just like meeting guide. I just think it's about being a good person and what Corey and the guys are trying to teach us. It's really just about work ethic and our character. And it's about showing up and having a winning attitude, even when we can't control the outcomes and simple things like being on time, being respectful to each other, but also like being honest and open with each other. So I don't know if there's a specific thing that just like defines what, like fine young men are individual, but I think it's just general principles for like how you should live your life and how you should treat other people. And I know that that is something I'm very happy to be a part of our training environment and our health structures.

JORDIE LESCARD:

Really seems like, like for both of you that having those sports like really gives you that scaffolding or that kind of how would you put it that kind of structure that makes it so doing your academics as a little bit easier, especially now, like, since like a lot of classes are canceled for most people, like I

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know a lot of people are struggling with not having that structure there. Has, has there been any like unique challenges for you guys in regard to your academics?

DARIAN HIRST:

Toughest thing that I've found, and from what I've heard from other people was that there was just a bit more of an increased workload. I'm not sure what first and second years are like, but I know that I don't have any exams this semester, which might be unique to my program, but they're trying to stray away from like people cheating and it's easier to do that online. So there's a lot more discussion posts and weekly essays. So they can like kind of spread that out and give you your marks over the semester, as opposed to just assigning a 40% final at the end of the year, that at the same time, like significantly increases your workload and means you have more to do every weekend. That's been, the biggest challenge for me is just like constantly having to stay on top of like new discussion posts and weekly reflections for like three classes and then like working on essays. So I found that just like that increased workload has been a real challenge. And I'm not sure if Brooke feels the same way or not.

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

I completely agree with that. It's definitely been tough because you have five courses and every single one, they added maybe like three extra assignments or tests that adds up pretty quick, same time having virtual courses. Most of mine are recorded and I know this is the same with like, most people hold you less accountable, just go back and be like well it's going to be recorded if you miss one. So I think it's easy to get behind and not stay on track. Whereas when you're in class, you were just on campus, like, what else were you going to do other than go to class?

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I think I find that too. Not having like the structured, like you have to go to class at this time. It was like, I can sleep in. This is fine. OK. To it whenever

JORDIE LESCARD:

I'm finding kind of a similar thing in my classes were like, it always seems like the next hour seems like the more optimal hour to be looking at my whatever lecture or whatever assignment like, I know me and my friends, like we struggle with like making that structure for yourself of like making sure you're actually sitting down and doing your work at the time. You say you will like it, given that, like, have you found that you've learned more on your athletics?

DARIAN HIRST:

I think that's something that like a lot of people struggle with and I know a lot of RC athletes do as well. And I personally don't because I'm a pretty structured person, pretty type a, but for us it's specifically like just saying it's something that seems like something we'll do next hour. Like we can't really do. If we have to go out to a team lift or a team event or a practice or something like we kind of don't have that luxury to just like push stuff off. And I think that can really help people who struggle to set limits for themselves and timeline (INAUDIBLE). No, I was not actually that transition kind of came when I went to high school. I think my music teacher in high school was one of the

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most influential people I've ever met. Had this kind of mentality of like, why would you ever not do a hundred percent or like not give 100%? Why not do your best? I'm a bit of a perfectionism when I stay a bit of a perfectionist, I mean, a lot of a perfectionist

JORDIE LESCARD:

Kind of like if I'm understanding you correctly, it's like you have this opportunity to kind of control your own behavior and kind of like aspire to something great. And so like, you kind of honed you into being really disciplined with your time.

DARIAN HIRST:

And I think just also expectations played a major role. I think my parents and my friends and my teammates and my band mates in my mind everyone has their own set of expectations and I want to live up to those and that's a struggle sometimes, but I also think that that played a role into it. When you feel like an underdog sometimes, like you really want to like break past some barriers and expectations. I think that probably played a role in it as well.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

Did you feel like a big underdog, like in maybe junior high before like high school?

DARIAN HIRST:

I still who I am, but not an underdog necessarily, but an outsider and especially came into athletics. I was never naturally gifted with anything and I don't think I've never, I've actually really been naturally gifted with anything, but I just worked really hard. I think that's allowed me to do a lot of the cool things that I've done, but that's definitely played a major role in like how I feel and my outlook towards things.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

That like, you need to try even harder to get like the recognition from something that like seems so natural to other students.

DARIAN HIRST:

At the start it was the recognition. But the more I was told that, like I couldn't do something the more, I kind of wanted to prove to myself that I could do it and less to others.

JORDIE LESCARD:

I have to say, that's a great attitude to add though. I kind of like that fire to succeed (COUGHS). Like I'm not a very athletic person. I've never been in a really athletic person. I'm more of an arts type person. I'm a psychology major. I sit around a lot and read a lot. That's always something that I've admired in people who pursue sports, especially at the level of sports that you too pursue is the amount of discipline and effort and work that goes into that. And for either of you, I was like, what was that transition like from like high school sports to a university sports?

DARIAN HIRST:

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It's definitely quite a transition. It is challenging because you go from playing like club soccer. And like, for me in my position, I'm a goalkeeper. So only one of them plays, but in my first year we had four goalkeepers on the team. So that was tough coming from a team in high school where I was the only goalkeeper on the team. I played every game and then coming in and having to earn my spot and kind of fight for that spot. But also still making sure that you're supporting your teammates at the same time. Initially, I think I looked at it more as all, like, I want to play like, come on. And then I realized, OK, like if my team is doing well, then like I'm happy. It's gonna make me better overall. And so, I'm really thankful for the experience to have been pushed, to improve and then get better and then get to where I am now. Because if I didn't have that competition, I'd be the same players was in high school.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

From your pre interview when I was listening to it, you mentioned something like you don't think you would have made it this far without your supportive teammates.

DARIAN HIRST:

Especially I think in my program, like I think more so academically as much as athletics are great. And just give you a good balance. Also give you a really good friend group. They support you with all of your academics. My teams always been pretty high achieving. So just being surrounded with players that have similar mindsets, just made it a lot easier to succeed myself. Everybody just wants to help, like everybody wants to do well.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

You both joined the student athletics, mental health initiative. Can you speak about what that program does and what your positions are in there?

DARIAN HIRST:

SAM or the student athlete, mental health initiative? It was the first kind of extracurricular that I joined in university outside of soccer. I saw an email come out and like my first fall semester of university and I thought, OK, right. The transition from high school was a little bit tough at the beginning. So I thought, OK, that's definitely something I want to be a part of. These are all athletes. They've all been through it, so why not go talk to them about it? So, I joined in my first year and then started as co-leads last year and my third year of school for year. Some background. What SAM is exactly. It's a group of student athletes from a variety of sports teams from across post-secondary schools in Canada. And we just all try to work to educate Canadians about the vulnerabilities of student athletes as a whole on campus, just SAM Canada in general, we aim to promote the mental wellbeing of all student athletes.

And we work to support those struggling with a mental health concern or illness on campus. In the past, we've done this through different events. We've had the annual Dodgers Sigma Dodge ball tournament. We've been in the resource fairs. We've done mental health mock-ups or we went to varsity games, just tried to educate people on mental health. And then this year due to all the restrictions with COVID-19, we thought that it was more important for us to be more of a resource in

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ourselves. We used to be more about planning, different events for other groups of people, but now we're like, OK, why don't we just support each other within this group? So we meet weekly and we do wellness check-ins we just share how we're doing during the week what's going on in our lives. And then we're just able to give and receive support from others. And we've played some other distress Buster games too, because all of us are lacking competition right now. We're all very competitive and used to that. So we've been able to get some of that back in we've played Scattergories and some other games

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

For me. I mean, I was cut from the team for my first two years here at Guelph. So my third year, so my first year on the team, and that was my first exposure to SAM I didn't actually get involved until probably the end of November right when the semester was wrapping up. I think I have someone who I was very close to in my life who was struggling with some mental health stuff and seeing them struggle. I really felt for that and for them, and it kind of made me want to get it involved in the conversation and try to see what I could do.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

So you guys both have like a very kind of different backgrounds in mental health, but pretty similar situations. When you were younger, did you ever kind of consider your own mental?

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

For me it was probably high school. I did grade 10 was not a particularly fun time for me. Just didn't feel too great about myself at that point in my life. And I struggled with a lot of things growing up just like doctrine in while getting bullied and I'm sure my parents tried to bring it up a bit more, but I'd probably just push that off when I was younger. And then it kind of hit like a weird low point when I went through my first breakup in grade 12. And then ever since then, I was kind of like that was that's not gonna happen again. So I was like, we're gonna start trying it upwards now. And I honestly, I feel very happy with my mental health nowadays.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

It was like, there was a moment where you're just like first experienced it and you're like, there has to be resources. There has to be a way to like, not feel this way.

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

I just remember my mom just being like daring. Like we need to figure this out, because this is a problem and no specifics required, but I was just like, I was like probably if I have to be coming home from school and like, I'm not doing well. And maybe that's just what first breakups are like, I don't know. I haven't had another first breakup since, but anyway, we only get one. I think.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I don't know if you did feel validated, but it sounded like your parents were kind of wanting to actually support you and were just like brushing it off. You were more like no, this is fine. I'm doing

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fine.

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

Probably. And I mean, I didn't really, I didn't, I don't really communicate with them about those same, but I think it's very tough to hide that you're struggling. Obviously it was, but like when I'm like saying like, mom, I'm not feeling well, like I need to come home and stuff and it has to do with a breakup or something like that or whatever the issue was. I was just something, one or line then it kind of becomes a (INAUDIBLE). Like, OK, we're worried about you.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

Reach out to any resources?

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

No, not at that. So I did a lot of reading as I like to do whenever there's stuff I need to learn about. I just love shoving my face into a book, not a mental health professional, but Tony Robbins has helped me through some really tough times because I think it's funny to look back on. And then I actually started seeing a therapist last fall. Nothing was urgent or concerning, but I just felt like it was something I wanted to try and I was excellent up until she went on mat leave, but that's a whole other story she didn't even ask me. (CROSSTALK) No. I mean, no one ever considers (CROSSTALK).

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I really liked that. You spoke about finding resource before there was like a major problem. I think a lot of people kind of go for looking for that when something actually is they're deep into something. So Brooke, did you, how were your experiences with your own mental health and when did you kind of start thinking about it?

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

I would say like in high school I was definitely aware of it, but it was something that could be an issue and people, but it was something that I never really thought about in myself. Like I was aware of it. I knew what it was, but I just never really thought it was affecting me then coming into university. I think the same thing in first year I knew about it. Obviously I joined SAM and I was like this is a good thing. This is good stuff. But again, just thought, well, I'm doing fine. But then as first year went on, I think it took me some time to realize, and I don't know, maybe I was just like denying it in myself, but I've always tried to be really independent. And when I was struggling with things, it was like, no, it's fine. I just got to work harder and keep doing it eventually though.

I think I realized, and then similar daring, like my parents, I think kind of realized it and were saying like, I don't know. And just said this isn't right. Like, shouldn't be like this. Like you shouldn't just be like working yourself, like super hard and then just not being happy with the end goal kind of thing. I would say probably like ended the first year started kind of realizing that or realizing that something was wrong. And then I would say in second year I joined the student support network as a volunteer. And just through the training in that doing drop in sessions, like talking to so many other people, I realized, OK, like this is way more normal than I thought it was. And way more prominent. It is

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everywhere and it's prevalent, but you just don't really realize that pretty much.

Well, everybody has mental health, like that's a thing. So I would say that in second year that opened my eyes and then made me feel like, OK, it's OK to talk about. And then to go and access resources, I was just struggling with like anxiety and stress as I think most university students do. I was able to reach out to some resources just on campus. There was like a stress workshop, I think with Kathy Summers, I tried that then just doing different training through the student support network through SAM, just always trying to learn more how I can support my own mental health and how to support others.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

Darian, I think you also spoke about not being able to take downtime, feeling like that, that you can't shut down. Like you always need to do something.

DARIAN HIRTS:

Quite a fun relationship. I think Jordie mentioned earlier, he's always admired people who have that sense of work ethic, put boards since like sports and athletics. I am also a student I'm also in a band. I also volunteer and I also have a job on campus at the indigenous student center. So I have a lot going on in all my downtime or stuff. I really can't take a break. I always find myself having to really do more. I hear a lot of people say like you get so much done. And like, that's so great. And I wish I could be like that. And you don't like, I wish I could turn it off. I wish I could watch a movie on Netflix on Friday night or like go out with my friends instead of stay at home and read a book or go to bed because I'm going to get up at 4:30 the next day to get to the gym, to run and work out. So I can then like get more done in a day later. Like it's, it's something I just don't like really turn off. And I think that that is a trait you see in a lot of people who can be really successful. And it's also the detriment of other things like relationships and like anxiety sometimes. And like a lot of people don't understand it because they think it's like, it's not really a choice. It's just in a way how I'm wired.

JORDIE LESCARD:

I wish I had that type of enthusiasm. Like I'm someone who has persistent depressive disorder. So I lack motivation and I lack that kind of that energy. Just like, neurochemically like I can't generate it. And so I feel like you and I are kind of like on opposite sides of that spectrum there. But I think for in your situation, it's uniquely challenging because people aspire to what your challenge is. Right? Like people think it as a good thing, but they don't quite understand like what it is that actually like live the type of life you're living. And so I can see how that could be kind of isolating and trying to talk with others because some people, they don't even see it as a problem.

DARIAN HIRTS:

I think you might see someone like me as like I mean, I wish I had those problems, but I think both of us would like to meet somewhere in the middle. Like it's tough on my relationships sometimes. Right. Because I look it's like, what are you most university students do? Like once a week non COVID, like, they're going to go down to the bar where they're gonna have a fun spot, but me I'm like, I'm going to bed at 9:00 PM because I'm get up 4:30 on a Saturday morning to go run around the track for an hour and then go to the gym and then come back and then read and then do work

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and get another week out ahead in school. So I can have more time at the end to like do more stuff. And it's just like, it affects your relationships. Cause people are like, I want to do anything you like, you can't have any fun. And it's like, as with everything, like there's like the good side and the bad side to every situation.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I think that's extremely relatable for a lot of students, especially in university. I don't know if it's like guilty thing you feel, or like, you don't feel like if you're being productive, you feel kind of guilty. I feel like that a lot of times I have a huge problem with taking time to just watch a movie. Cause I just feel like I'm lazy. Do either of you like, feel like that because you do, you both do so much right now, too in your lives?

DARIAN HIRTS:

I kind of realized, I think a lot, probably over the last year, really, since COVID happened, I realized because one school was taken away, like school ended after exams and then we were all in quarantine, sports were taken away and then I realized, OK, like the two biggest things in my life are gone. It was like, well, what else am I going to do? So it definitely opened my eyes. And I was like, OK, there is more to life than these. I got to figure out what else to do. So I would say I really tried to like, I guess focused on my relationships with my friends, with my family and just simpler things like enjoying walks with my dog and things like that. Then in the past I feel like I always just rushed through,

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I grew up very athletic, very into dance. I had body issues when it came to dancing back then, but then it really started to affect me after I quit dancing and getting the anxiety of my body changing or not being able to be athletic as much as I did or active as much as I was able to be. And I fell in to a few poor coping strategies, I guess we'll say a lot of like binge exercising where your kind of think about everything you've eaten and then like just figure out how you're gonna work it off. And so when you mentioned during quarantine not being able to work out as much, it really resonated with me that idea of that anxiety I had to. So I was wondering if you wanted to speak more about any anxiety you felt during that time?

DARIAN HIRTS:

Definitely. During quarantine, like I experienced, I think similar situation, I had gone from being super active, like having practice lifted day, walking around campus, like walking to school most of the time as well. And then everything shut down. And then I was just at home. I feel like for the first like week or two of all the shutdown, I just sat in bed and watch Netflix. I think a lot of people just binged everything and yeah, that was tough because I mean, it didn't show right away, but then after a little bit I was less active. So my body started to change a little bit and then I was thought, OK, I need to do something about this and be more active. So I was increasing my activity, but more in one big boat instead of just throughout the day, I realized, well, it wasn't very smart that I was just trying to ramp up my exercise all at once and I should have known that at the beginning, but it was just kind of, well, I used to do all this activity.

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It should be fine, but I did go from a few weeks of very little to then really ramping it up all at once. Which definitely wasn't a good idea. And as an athlete, I should've known that, but it hit me quick. And then it was a struggle just trying to figure out how to keep active and then like maintain a certain like body composition and image. And that is challenging when, again, you're at home, most of the time you're in your sweat pants and just in comfortable clothes. So it's very easy to just not really realize the changes and then all of a sudden all at once you do. So that's definitely something I struggled with over the whole summer. Like everything I wrote the MCAT this summer. So I was pretty sedentary most of the days just studying. So again, it was just tough. You're not on campus having to walk around to different places.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

I can definitely relate to that anxiety of, I need to move. I haven't moved. I just feel stuck in this place. Especially from exercise, you get so many endorphins and you kind of lose that. And there's also a withdrawal with that too. Did you learn anything from yourself in quarantine and having to rework your schedule around it and kind of learning more about your body and about maybe staying active and trying to be healthy during that time?

DARIAN HIRTS:

Definitely. I definitely realized that a routine is very important to me and it's something that I need to stay with beyond a day-to-day basis. If I get off routine, it just kind of has like a snowball effect and then we'll just keep getting worse and it's hard to get back on track. So definitely trying to make sure I woke up at the same time every morning. I would go for a walk with my dog and my mom every morning and that just kind of got me in a good space to start my day. Something to that. I'm pretty lucky that my family is very active. Like both of my parents, we have a lot of equipment at home, so, and they also both exercise every single day. So it was very easy for me to make sure that I would exercise every day because they were it's a lot better when you have somebody to do it with you.

Another thing that I realized, like I used to always previously consider myself like pretty introverted and not super social. I just realized that I guess I was pretty social just through my sports and going to class, but I think I just never realized I was something that I really needed. But then in quarantine, like when I wasn't with people, I was just with like maybe my parents, but they went to work all day. I realized, OK, well you really do need that social activity. So, that was a big challenge at the beginning. And then like lonely, I'm sure a lot of people. But I then started like weekly zoom meetings with all of my friends, like from my team and like roommates and every Friday night we would just like hop on zoom. We played different games and we just did random stuff and it was, it got a lot better.

And then I just realized like, OK, like how important my friends are to me. And it was something I think I definitely took for granted in the past, but now going forward, like into this semester, I have just been able to prioritize it a lot more, as much as everything sucked in the lockdowns. Wasn't exactly an ideal time. I think I'm happy that I went through it. Cause I think I did learn a lot from it. And I think now going forward, I'm just better off because I am able to prioritize. Prioritize my friends more like human connection, which is just so important. And I think it just makes me overall just like a happier person.

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JORDIE LESCARD:

What kind of advice would you give on like this kind of day to day stuff to kind of take care of yourself?

DARIAN HIRTS:

One thing that was really big for me making sure, like I wake up every morning and I get just dressed into clothes. And then it's just, it feels more like a normal day, like when you used to actually go somewhere and that's been something that's really helped. I like lay my clothes out in my room the night before and then just get up just like I always used to like, just to have a routine try to eat my meals at the same time every day workout around the same time every day as well.

JORDIE LESCARD:

I'd like to ask both of you, Brooke Darian, what kind of impact do you think having sports in your life is like positives and negatives.

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

It's been awesome. Like I can't imagine not being a part of a team really at any point in my life. It's going to be interesting when I do graduate. Cause I've always, like I said, I've always played sports. So I think that that's something that's really important to me is being a part of a team like you're always going to belong. You have a safe place. Like you have friends on that team. So I'd say that's really benefited me just going forward. I know how to work with others. I know what it's like to be a part of a team. I know like I've experienced like ups and downs, like with a team just personally overall it's taught me a lot just about others and a lot that I can take away outside of just sports and taken into my future life.

I think. At times there's definitely been tough times when you're not playing or it gets just really overwhelming trying to balance everything, but I wouldn't have it any other way. And I think that definitely going forward and I got a little bit of a taste of it this summer, not playing sports and all having it. Yesterday I was actually on a meeting with some like Megan Hallett from the athletic department and Carrie Charles from student wellness. And we were talking about just the importance of like athlete identity and then kind of the struggles that can happen when your sport is taken away from you or when you do like retire from your sport. And that was something that I kind of started. I think the field prematurely one, we did go like one school ended in March and then even this semester not having a competition.

And it was something that was tough because especially in the summer didn't have practices or anything. And it was, I was just thinking to myself, like what do I have to do? Like, how else do I define myself? Like there was just nothing else to do. And it was, it was like tough. I mean, luckily for me, it wasn't a very long period of time because then I did come back to school and we practiced again and I could kind of still define myself as a soccer player, but once I graduate and once people do graduate, it's definitely something that athletes struggle with. And I think it's something that's important to consider and recognize early. Like I'm happy that I recognized it early before it actually was taken away.

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LINNEA VELIKONJA:

That productivity is so, so important because you hear a lot of football players once they, once they retire, they fall into a really hard depression, because like you said, that's their identity, that's all they've done for their whole life. What kind of strategies have you learned for yourself that you might implement in the future?

DARIAN HIRTS:

I don't know. This might come across the wrong way or not resonate with everybody, but just not taking myself too seriously in soccer. Like realizing that like it's not my whole life, not everything boils down to this one thing. And that's, I think with anything, like if somebody's like, it doesn't have to be a sport, if somebody is really into music or whatever, like their instrument, just realizing that there are other things and not everything in your life relies on how you do in this one thing or this one aspect.

JORDIE LESCARD:

You don't have like ` all your eggs in one basket, right? Like if you're, you have diversified stock all over the place, so you can kind of, you can handle loss of the fender.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

See with athletics when you get so much praise from it. Right. It's hard to find other things that give you that same kind of rush.

DARIAN HIRTS:

And I think it's important to realize like what you really care about and what you're taking away from the sport. Like it's not just that as much as I love the game of soccer, that's not all that I love about soccer. Like I love like the teamwork aspect of, I love just being able to work hard, like seeing results from hard work. There's just so many other things that you take away from it more than just the actual sport. So I think it's just realizing that like.

JORDIE LESCARD:

So I'll wait for you Darian. Like what kind of impact do you think playing, like what you said when you were younger playing hockey and then playing rugby, like what kind of impact does that had that had in your life?

DARIAN HIRTS:

I struggled with hockey as a kid because I wanted it so bad, but I just wasn't fantastic. I mean, I wasn't bad, but I wasn't rep level and then not just kind of turn to me just really wanted to be good at a sport. And I think what sports have given me is it's allowed me to do like develop a really strong sense of work ethic and staying strong in the face of adversity. I came and I chose Guelph a large reason was because we didn't have like a top five program in the country for rugby, with amazing coaches and an amazing program that is even better now than it was when I came in. And I got cut

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and then I got cut in my second year. And I know there was a lot of people.

I saw a training camp in my first year who were also first years that I didn't see second year. And then same thing happened when I tried out third year and I finally made it. So it really, I think it helped me develop a strong sense of work ethic, which I'm so grateful for. Cause like, I think a lot of people give up on their goals when they're right around the corner from actually achieving them. It's just really helped me develop a sense of like, don't give up if you care about something and just keep going.

JORDIE LESCARD:

I wondered though on campus, like what resources or supports you guys have access.

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

I mentioned, I reached out to just some of the workshops, like stress and anxiety workshops. Other training that's been offered on campus, I've done like safe talk training a lot of through the student support network. And then I also I've accessed the counseling resources in the past. And those were really great. I think counseling's just one that you have to just find a right fit. And I think just in general, I've realized just connecting with as many people as possible and talking about it with my friends and say in the last couple of years that we've all gotten a lot more open about all of these things and talking about them. So I'd say that's been the most beneficial resources, just it's so prominent at the university of Guelph. Like everybody knows about the importance of mental health. So you're not really afraid to talk about it. So I would say because it's such a welcoming space and everybody's on the same page, the most beneficial resource has been just talking to my friends about it.

JORDIE LESCARD:

That's something exceptional about Guelph is how welcoming the staff and faculty and the peer helpers like everyone is like, it's such a more welcoming environment especially for mental health stuff.

BROOKE DAVIDSON:

Just there's so many resources and everybody is just aware of them. So there's just really no fear in talking about it or sharing it.

DARIAN HIRTS:

It's really important just in your life to be able to have like honest and frank conversations because the conversations that are the most difficult to have are the ones that are the most important have. And that is so important when assessing your mental health or problems in your life. And you have to be willing to talk about the stuff that makes you uncomfortable because you're not going to grow and improve if you don't do that.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

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Well, thank you for both being with us. It's been really nice talking to you both, and I've really appreciated hearing your experiences of mental health and, and all you're doing during the year and during COVID too.

JORDIE LESCARD:

Thank you so much.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

Thank you guys are describing a song (MUSIC PLAYS). If you've enjoyed today's podcast, you can find us wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts.

JORDIE LESCARD:

The Shine Cast is hosted by Jordie Lescard and Linnea Velikonja. Were produced by Rebecca Skelhorn, Shannon Brown, Tony Nguyen, Charlotte Cherkewski and Melanie Bowman. Editing is done by Dawn Matheson, artwork by Emma Hak- Kovacs.

LINNEA VELIKONJA:

To see more of Emma's work or to keep up with the Wellness Education and Promotion Centre projects at the University of Guelph, check out our Instagram page @wellness_uofg. For resources and supports available for University of Guelph students, visit us at our website, wellness.uoguelph.ca/shine-this-year. Please, don't forget to rate and review this podcast. Thanks for listening. And we'll see you next time (MUSIC PLAYS).