

Nystrom – Podcast with JDLR number 47. An Expressen production

N – I rarely get star struck any more, I might have gotten too old for that. I have great respect for elite athletes in general and ice hockey players in particular. Ice hockey players never stops impressing me with what they can do on the ice, so it does happen I get lost for words from what happens as that one time when I as a sports journalist with Expressen stood up and cheered in the press section, when Fredrik Pettersson (of Lugano HC and previously drafted of Edmonton Oilers) netted that penalty in the quarterfinal against Canada in the Stockholm World Championships. But star struck like we could be when we were kids, not so much, as I got when I met Borje Salming for the first time He was playing for Toronto and I was freelancing for a small regional paper called NSD which is what his family and friends reads back home in Kiruna. When a assistant coach yelled for Salming to hurry up in order to catch the bus who was about to leave, Salming just said with his almost whispering voice: “The bus has to wait, he (and he pointed at me) is from my home town paper.

Okay – I did get star struck last season it was almost Salming level on that, but it needed to be a F1 race, at the classic “Spielberg” in Austria and I got to meet the old champion Nikki Lauda, and I did lose my cool, to meet hockey players is a bit of an everyday job. But to meet Nikki Lauda was to be eight years old again, and I just stood there staring, after that I even called home to old friends in Eskilstuna to tell them “I have met Nikki Lauda”. But there is still a few places I can get star struck when it comes to ice hockey, even if I am an old guy, even if I have gone from the first time I wrote about hockey I was younger than all players in the league to now be as old as most players parents. But the times I get star struck is when I get in contact with the original six, that is the six classic NHL teams: Boston Bruins, Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit RedWings, New York Rangers, Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens. It becomes even more special whit Henrik Lundqvists fame and success because he is king in the best city in the world, New York and because he is New York Rangers. I do get shivers like last season when I was forced to mash together in the old and non-functional press stand in the Joe in Detroit, what an environment, what an atmosphere, what history, it is in an old arena. I was also lucky enough to catch games in the old Boston Garden and Toronto garden, and I do remember a few years ago standing in a dressing room in Chicago with a shy rookie in Blackhawks he thought one of the great things with being in Chicago was that it was a classic original six team, when I told him I had bought a Blackhawks jersey the classic red. The shy rookie said “you are completely right in doing that, we have the best looking shirt in NHL”. It was Jonathan Toews...

But nothing can beat Montreal Canadiens, 24 cups and all legendary players through history, 17 jerseys in the rafters, 17 numbers retired in Montreal. I have never experienced the same fantastic atmosphere as in the old Forum, it cannot be explained, that atmosphere that was in that old classic arena, well except maybe one place might get close to get the feeling on how it was to walk into the old Forum, the new arena The Bell Centre in Montreal. Now you will have the chance to experience something really special, you will get to go behind the scenes in Montreal, the story on how a young boy from Arvika went to North America in belief that it would be a season in AHL but he finished as one of the main cogs in Montreal Canadiens in the play offs last season. Jacob de la Rose, will tell us about the chaos like debut who was going off the rails, first because of a snowstorm, then because of lost equipment and then a few things more that happened, and to top it off a really crappy first period from Jacobs side when he himself was sure he was going to get kicked back to AHL and the

adventure of NHL was over for this time. He will tell us some fantastic things about the life in Montreal and about training camp when 64 players were fighting for 24 spots. He will tell us who can get the whole locker room quiet, who after a game can be so angry that he will shatter his stick. Yes this will be an amazing story about life in the Hockey worlds absolutely most classic club, it cant get bigger than this, you don't want to miss this.

N – Well Jacob de la Rose you are playing in Montreal Canadiens of all teams, do you understand how huge that is?

J – yes, no you get to hear most of it from others than what you realise yourself. It is amazing and a great story.

N – you told me just before we walked in here, that you have met “old ladies on the street that wants to talk hockey with you” everyone in Montreal has a good knowledge about what is happening in their beloved Canadiens.

J – yes they are really living for hockey in general, and Montreal in particular. It is pros and cons with it, when I have been there it has been going well for the team but I can imagine when it goes bad that it will be a completely different story. Its just to love the situation and to enjoy everything rather than to add some extra pressure.

N – what does the “old ladies” say when they come up and talk to you?

J – They think its fun, and wants to say hi and take a few pics and so on. Its really cool and this is me, I am kind of 3rd 4th liner who they should barely know who I am. The Stars can not even go out on town, they cant take a step forward.

N – we will talk a bit about life in Montreal in a lot of different ways, but I was thinking lets start from the beginning, the training camp. To start with, you decide early to go for it, you are only 19 years old at the time, and you think “I need to go for it” and you leave Leksand. Why were you ready to take this step?

J – ahhh, it was a mixed decision, they wanted me to come over, I was mature enough both on and off the ice. My contract ran out with Leksand, and I felt it was worth a try. But also, I didn't go over to get a place in NHL but to get a year in AHL, which was my expectation. When people were asking me “are you going in order to take a place?” I was like “no” I will be in AHL the whole season.

N – but what did you think when you were alone?

J – That's the way you have to go, my own goal that I did not express, was to do a few NHL games to see how it was. I have very high expectations on myself, that I won't express outward. And that's what happened, 45 of them I think with the play offs.

N – How well did you know what was expected of you when you arrived, how well did you know Montreal, and the club how things worked.

J – of course it was new, to move there and to Canada as a 19 year old is not only (to do), it's a different culture, both from how they run the club and how the coaches are over there and how the team is. And of course there is another kind of hockey, it took some time from my point of view, at

times I felt “what have I gotten myself into?” But I never once thought about leaving and going back home or anything. It was just to play there the whole season.

N – But it was a giant leap, you are coming from little Arvika from the start, and you didn’t really move to a big metropole with your move to Leksand (both laughs here) and then you move to the big city of Montreal. To really make you listeners understand, how difficult it is, I’d like to stress – I like to remind people it’s not that easy to become a star – you were drafted by Montreal, you were signed by Montreal you get a lot of good company on this training camp. It all kicks off with the rookie camp where you are 44 players, 31 of them continue to the next camp, btw how long was the rookie camp?

J – about a week,

N – its not as much of a knock out competition

J – No it’s a training session in the morning, some tests as well and a scrimmage in the afternoon. I think. I think I played 11 scrimmages in 12 days, you got a bit fed up playing your own team mates the whole time.

N – But these are no friendly games?

J – no it wouldn’t be. Everyone fights to get a place on the team at the end. Even if no one from that rookie camp took a place in the end.

N – you did

J – yes but that was later during the season. Everyone wants to show themselves, it was the same for me we all show ourselves in different ways.

N – you will get some numbers here; when you finally meet up for the real camp, now the big shots will be in it as well. Then you are 64 players, and that’s like three teams. And when you then play an NHL game, 2 goalies, 6 defenders and 12 forwards. When you then weed out players you lose 4 goalies, 16 defenders will be let go – one of them was Magnus Nygren – and 24 forwards. When you arrive there the first day, and realise “okay we are a lot trying to live this dream” please tell us how it was that first day and what were your thoughts?

J - ahhh well, partly there are players, I arrived to a whole new team, I only knew Nygren, and some of the ones you’ve met on the development camp but no one you are really tight with. So you don’t really take a lot of space outside, on the ice you def have to show yourself, it’s a big change. I come as you say, from the little family in Leksand.

N – But I think about PK Subban the Super Star, a player from the Canadian Olympic team was he one that said hi to all 64 in the camp at the start? I mean how is the players interacting with each other?

J – its very different from player to player, some wont come over and say hi or welcome, and then you have the others that are super, they knew how it was, they have been there themselves, and they take care of you. And there wont be any problems at all.

N – was there anyone in particular that took you under their wing?

J – I don't really know, on that I think stood out and took care of me was Brandon Prust, and he was just traded. He was fantastic with us younger guys, and used to hang out with us. He felt like he was one of us and he was a cool guy. He took good care of you.

N – Telling you guys how things worked and so on?

J – Exactly and he was going on with the banter and jokes, and then as a rookie it's a bit different... Rookie in Sweden and Rookie in NHL are miles apart.

N – You don't walk in and start throwing tape rolls at Carey Price?

J – Nah – not really (sounds like he thinks N is an idiot) I don't think I said that many words the first weeks.

N – How were you guys divided? All 64 cannot even be in the same locker room.

J – Rookie camp guys, we got to sit in the opposite side of the arena in a small locker room, I was in there the whole camp.

N – this is in Brossard outside Montreal.

J – yes, and all the real guys have their seats in the main dressing room, and then there are practices together. It becomes clear who belongs and who doesn't (yet)

N – And here it starts really early with scrimmages?

J – yes, second day. First it was 7 scrimmages with the rookie camp, then it was internal scrimmages with all, but not all at the same time. Some I was in and some I wasn't, in total I did five there.

N – what was the instructions there? What did the coaches say before? Do you get any instructions?

J – Not really, they say go out and show yourselves, it is that that Bergevin our GM pushes as well. Get out there, steal a place you have a chance. I want to see you go out there and play. No-one is secure, if you are good enough you'll get to play.

N – how did you feel from the start, did you feel "DAMN IT, I CAN DO IT" did you feel that?

J – in NHL?

N – no in this environment.

J – I had no expectations, I didn't speak with anyone, Nygge (Nygren) and I had spoken a bit as he had been to one before. You were more sitting there waiting for someone to tell you to pack your things and leave. Because you knew that, sooner or later it will be your name that gets called.

N – when is the first name called? I mean you start a scrimmage, and then what?

J – the first day, when the others when the older players arrive.

N – but that was rookies?

J – Yes.

N – but after that, you play and?

J – It was very clear who will go to AHL directly, some had AHL contracts and that's also a factor. And they will practice by themselves, and we'll practice with the main squad. Its quite clear.

N – and then what? Now you get called by text when your time is up? And get the walk to the office; do you get verbal communication as well?

J – yeah when your time is up they come over and tell you to go to the office, where the coach and GM waits for you.

N – But that happens quite fast, this big group gets smaller and smaller.

J – Yeah – a few every day.

N – what was your thoughts about this?

J – As I said, I was more or less just sitting there waiting to get called into the office. And then we have the friendly games quite soon, sooo as long as you get to play you wont have to worry. But you also realised that in the first game there was like three NHL players in the team, and the rest were rookies, and then the NHL players will just get more and more.

N – But you are still in it?

J – yes, I didn't play all friendlies, I played 6 out of 7 I think, I played the last one as well.

N – Who did you play then?

J – Ottawa home I think.

N – Did you at this time feel like you “god damn it, I am getting close to a place”. Because at that time quite a few has disappeared?

J – yeah – then I was close, there was not many young ones left, and I knew some payers still carried a few minior injuries among them Lars Eller, so I knew a place for me was possible.

N – A centre place? Was it centre you did play all the time?

J – In Hamilton I was centre the whole time, they wanted me as a centre... But now that you mention it “fuck” I was centre in camp as well. And then I played the first 15 games or so I played centre in Montreal before being shifted to wing.

N – we will get back to that later, but in this camp as I followed NY rangers, and I could see “big strong “ hockey pros could be “small sad boys” there were tears running down their cheeks, the dream is gone, and so on, did you see that as well?

J – yes of course... I think it is what kind of expectations you harbour, I knew I was going to AHL from the start, I took everything else as a bonus, I took it as a lecture, to play . I was in Chicago sold out and I was playing Toews and Kane and Keith, in a friendly and it was surreal. I was checking this place

and them on telly three months ago. I was just enjoying the moment. And it went well, sooooo.... It was just fun!.

N – How did you feel when you saw other players dreams come crushing down, did you feel compassion, or are you as focused on your own so you don't really see it?

J – I think everyone that goes there knows what they are getting themselves into, and then you need to have know yourself if you are not good enough, maybe not everyone has that. I think I know what I was good for, I knew what was going to happen.

N – Was there something that surprised you?

J – Nahooo – it wasn't that much of a difference form playing with Leksand, of course there is a difference, but its not that big. They ar humans as well, they are not some sort of super heroes you are playing against. Its not that big of a deal.

N – It gives you some sort of confidence getting that feeling.

J – of course it does, I felt “fuck” I am good enough to play here its just to ride the wave.

N – and you almost rode it in to the opening night. Because you are with the team in Toronto on game day? Partly because of Ellers injury problem. Tell us please.

J – Yeah – no, well, I was there in the last game before the season, and there were injuries, and then I got my meeting oww Shit now I'll get sent down. So I got nto the office

N – And who is there?

J - its “Coach” and The GM.

N – Mark Bergevin and Michelle Therrien.

J- those two.

N – and those two high level guys, what do they say?

J – they started by telling me they were surprised how good I had been, and that I had done a great training camp, ahhh, if there was more places you'd be in. It's also you can only have so many one way contracts on the team,

N – Politics?

J – yes some, but they were like, we are checking this every day and right now it looks like Eller can play. So you'll fly with us to Toronto, and if he can play you get a cab over to Hamilton. Otherwise you play with us.

N – Taxi to Hamilton? How far is that?

J – Nah – its on the outskirts of Toronto,

N – That's right, I am wrong, not that far. But what contrasts, either you play opening night in NHL as a debut or you play AHL over there. And it was a taxi unfortunately

J – yes,

N – How was that trip, what was going through your head at that point?

J – It was sad, it was so close, to play in the NHL

N – was it a regular Taxi? Or do you have your own ones?

J – Yes – it was a special one.

N – So you didn't sit and complain to the driver "Damn, it was so close"

J – No , absolutely not. As I said I was expecting it the whole time, and it didn't come as a shock.

N – But this is tough, no matter how you have prepared, and you are contradicting yourself a bit, you had expected it, but your own goal was to get to play in the NHL. And you had felt you were good enough.

J – of course of course, every one dreams about it, as did I. it's a difficult, and your expectations change as I felt I was good enough. So of course it was a big disappointment, but it wasn't like I was thinking oh shit I am being sent to AHL and everything is so bad there and bad boring hockey. I was thinking – I am going down there to show them and prove them wrong.

He also said in the meeting, if you continue like this you'll get the chance during the season, that was the feeling I took with me. I know there will be injuries and I will get the chance, especially if I keep this game up. If they have believed in me that long during camp I will get the chance sooner or later.

N – AHL is a very special league, the best players is on a very high level, they could play in NHL 3rd -4th line, the defenders might not be as good. I have with my own eyes seen young Swedish players go there and get shocked when they get a pass on their bum or chest, and where ever. And that it is a "primitive" kind of hockey, tough and a brutal schedule, having games Friday, Saturday and Sunday. And then off. It becomes very intensive. What was your first impression of the quality of play?

J - As you are saying it is a huge difference between the players, every team has a first line that could potentially play in NHL. And then you have a 4th line that could possibly play in div 1 (third tier) in Sweden.

N – Grums you mean?

J – yeahhhh.... Nothing bad but, all players in shl could play in AHL, probably all in Allsvenskan as well, with out making a fool of themselves. Its another way of hockey, its actually the most difficult league, I think its easier to play in NHL. Especially after having done a few games in NHL, its easier. In AHL its fucking players everywhere there is no structure not even a penny's worth.

N – it's a lot of old School hockey – get in there!

J – Yes but it is different from team to team, it's a completely different league, as no one wants to be there.

N – So that creates a special environment?

J – yes, no one wants to be there and everyone dreams of playing somewhere else in principal.

N – that makes it very special.

J – Yes but it is the way to go. You have to do it.... Maybe...

N – do you notice that team mates and opposing players that showed very clearly that they didn't want to be there, with their performance or body language?

J – of course, but that happens in all teams, some will have a worse attitude than others.... (what should I say) Everyone plays for themselves, because no one will remember if you have won three AHL titles. Everyone wants to go further.

N – this is a very different attitude from Sweden, where in Leksand every one fights for the same goal in a way, same with Färjestad and all other Swedish clubs. But in AHL you have to think first and foremost about yourself.

J – But that's not the Swedish way, we haven't been brought up like that. Its always the team before "the I" and in AHL its completely different. Make sure you do what you are supposed to do, so as a swede it becomes very difficult as we are thought to think, if we don't work together we wont go very far. It becomes a culture clash; you get fed up when you see some people that don't care. I go mental if I see that someone wont bunker down and doesn't do all to win. It fries my brain (? He says "It burns" not sure you have a good expression) , but I cant really say anything as a 19 yo in AHL, and I play with 30 yo.

N – So there were old guys by your side you felt didn't do their job?

J – Yes – but then you have to think more about yourself, do your job and you might get away.

N – People in your situation has felt like "this is not for me", and I don't think those thought hit you at all did they?

J – NO! I was prepared for at least a year in AHL, it can be so that you'll have to play AHL your whole first contract.

N – I can imagine the feeling for you is different as you were that close, and you had a good last meeting with them, it would have been different if you were sent down after one friendly as an example.

J – Yes but also, when I go over as young as I am, I wont have had a contract with big big money as others do in SHL and go over. And have contract proposals from other clubs in SHL and Europe where they can 5 times more than you do in AHL. Of course tat is a selling point "Shit here I don't really want to be" but for me it was different, it was not about the money. But I still earned more money in AHL than in Leksand. But I don't care as long as I am alive I didn't have anything better to lean on. This was better than I had back home. So I don't have anything else drawing me away, so I don't get homesick.

N – you were alone the whole time, no girlfriend or anything?

J – NO! (there you go ladies!)

N – who was your coach in Hamilton?

J – I really don't want to say anything, it's a French name and I can slaughter it. He is an old player. But they took care of me, they know I am young, they cared. But I have heard a few having coached that won't say a word. But he is a guy that really talks and wants to give lots of feedback, and I like that, that's what I am used to from Sweden.

N – so he felt like someone who supported you and trusted you?

J – Absolutely, but there is also a culture difference, but he spoke and gave my tips and so.

N – Sylvain Lefevre, an old NHL defender, he was with Foppa (Peter Forsberg) in Colorado?

J – I think they were roommates there.. .

N – Good defender, quality..... Because that must have had an impact on you, feeling that you have one that wants your best.

J – nah, of course they want, they took care of me good. Nothing to complain about. But of course it was tough in AHL as well. I didn't produce, I almost thought it bothered me, when I got there I got a 3rd centre role, no power play. But started every box play and felt like, there were players that started power play and was on the first and second line that I was better than. And it caused me to challenge my own ability and I almost asked the coach about it, because I got fed up, as the players I didn't think was that good got the trust in power play and so on. I think it showed and they realised I got frustrated, so he told me, we will play you in the exact same role you'll have if you get a call up to Montreal, that made me realise what was going on and I bought into the concept. Even if I still felt bad about it, I still felt I could buy into it. Lets go and lets make that role mine.

N – But that must have been difficult because all players want to have as big roles as possible, want to be as offensive as possible but Montreal has clearly stated, through you, them and the papers from over there, that this will be your role, in the 3rd line, and become a defensive great player, you will be matched against the best of the opposition in different situations. This will make it become a less glamorous role, is it a role that many other Swedes has had over the years? Dackel, Arvidsson, Palsson etc. But personally you must have felt I want to be even higher up,

J – Yes when you are in NHL I would have bought that role, but being in AHL hearing that's the role I have to play here and I was good enough to play PP and that was really tough, you felt a bit like "fuck" give me some responsibilities, give me one shift and I'll show you. But getting the explanation, I bought into it, and it became a bit easier. But not even in Leksand was I one of the go to guys to produce, but others might expect it, having been part of JWC, he should. But that's not the role I should have, I am a work horse. A good two way player, I even called to Rickard Grönvall during this time (Agent????) we have a good relation, he just told me to keep going. They are testing you, to see if you have something strong behind that skull bone of yours, or to see if you fold, to give you a chance in NHL one time. If you will just keep going give it all that chance will come, so it was an easy choice just keep going.

N – This is a type of mind games that they try on you in NHL to test people, to see what they players do when they get assigned roles they might not be happy with. And that's the right words from Grönvall, and you took it in the best way possible.

J – yes – if I should play in NHL it will be that role, I will never be someone who scores 40 goals in a season, that's never going to happen. But I think its fun to have the role I have, I get to test myself against the best players, the get them frustrated, can not really be better than that.

N – of course not, and we will get back to it because some were clearly upset with you later in the season.

What about Hamilton, Magnus Nygren succeeded in talking about Hamilton in Swedish media so it became stories over there... when it was translated and got back to them, he didn't really talk about Hamilton as a tourist ambassador for the city, I wont put you in the same situation, but you are also used to Arvika and Leksand which isn't the biggest of metropolises but you are far far away from where it started, in Montreal. How is daily life there? Especially weekdays when there are no games, practice, everyday, and then home to Hotel or how did you live?

J - there is a city called Burlington which is a bit nicer, Hamilton is an industrial city and might not be fun to live there, so we lived in Burlington which is more of a family town, outside Hamilton, and I lived with two Americans (Yankees) whom were also rookies,

N - you shared a flat you three?

J - Yeah a condo, to stories, and I have a good contact with them still, they are two really good guys, we had fun outside as well. The only time we were n Hamilton was practice and matches. You went to the arena and then home. It was not problems, they were to creat guys and we had loads of fun!

N – How much impact did Magnus Nygren have? He had some troubles on his end, and got a bit caught up in politics even if it went well in camp for him. He didn't get a place and was sent down, and got into troubles and had to cancel his season more or less. But how much help did you two have of each other?

J – it was fantastic to have another Swede there, we could talk with each other, we sat next to each other in the dressing room, we also knew each other a bit from before we crossed the Atlantic. If he hadn't gotten the concussion he got, I am totally convinced he would have gotten the chance in Montreal during the season, he had an amazing start of the season and I think he lead the team in points even your forwards. And lets be honest everyone in Sweden has seen the direct shot he has in power play.

We had a great support from each other, I don't know how it was for him the first year, it can become lonely being the only Swede, and then the injury came, its so fucking shit with concussions it's the worst thing there is.

N – A parenthesis – will he shoot the cup to Farjestad now that he is back?

J – We will have to see, they have signed some amazing guys.

N – Indeed they have.

J – If they can gel they can go far.

N – before we get to the NHL, we had a JWC that you were part of, how nice was that to be part of that team, the finish wasn't that fun (we'll get back to that) but the start. Your feeling getting in to that room?

J – it's the best time of they year, I was part of three squads, I think it's the best thing there is to play for your national team (Sweden that is he whispers haha!) And JWC is that kind of year and the interest at home is crazy – you have to love it!

Everyone gets in touch during the tournament and think its great! Old friends stays up the whole night to watch. Its so cool, and so cool to play with them guys, we have played together since U-16, so its graduation day sort of.

Unfortunately it didn't go the way we wanted, it was the last year, I had two silvers from before I was hoping for that gold, but it didn't go....

N – How disappointed were you after?

J – if we had won the Bronze I think we would have felt better, because we didn't really have the same kind of squad as we have had the two previous years.

N – The loss in the final game, the bronze game, hurt.

J – yes, and that it was the last game with the team and Slovakia that we should beat any given day of the week.

N – It was a surprising loss.

J – Yes, and a JWC Bronze game (the disappointment and hurt is clearly still there)

N – Had you lost focus as a team? With the disappointment of not reaching the final that had emptied the tank so to speak?

J – I don't know, I can only speak for myself, I wanted to play and I was going to win this game.

N – You were the best player for Sweden in the game and during the tournament in my mind.

J – Yes, no ahhh I don't know what to say - Thanks!

N – But you must have satisfied with your own performance?

J – yes I was, I got to play centre, I was supposed to play wing. But after giving up like 200 goals in the friendlies before, Richard (the coach) asked me If I could play centre to get some added stability in our game. He knew I played centre before, I thought it was fun and great, you participate more in the game as a centre. It went well personally, but I feel responsibility as a captain when we don't win a game like that against Slovakia JWC bronze game. I think that is an embarrassment losing that match, but its nothing we can change now...

Part 2

N – After JWC you go back to Hamilton for a few games, and then you get THAT call. The one you dreamt of.

J – It wasn't a phone call actually, it was just sick the whole thing when I got called up.

N – Tell us

J – It starts in Des Moines Iowa, we had played two games against them, we were on a road trip.

N – and then its long distance bus travel?

J – No we are flying, you know it's quite a bit (both laughs), well then, we went Friday, supposed to play Sat/Sun and therefore you pack for a three day tour. A suit, two shirts and a t-shirt more or less... I think it was super bowl weekend. But I am not sure.

We played Sat – Sun, I did my two best games of the season, and we were supposed to go home, but it's a massive blizzard. So we got stuck, and we went out to follow Super Bowl, and you know.

N – And where are you then, some small place?

J - Des Moines,

N – In the middle of US...

J – we got a new flight at 6 am, so we had to get up at 4 am. And then we get up at 4, it was a late night before as we'd been out watching Super Bowl, up wat 4, still a blizzard, get told we had to wait another night. My clothes had already been finished, and then another night, and the next morning we are delayed, and we had a new flight we are going to Detroit, and ride a bus from Detroit to home to Hamilton, we are on the airport sleeping all of us, and the night before, I am not sure but I think Eller got injured again, anyway I knew someone got injured, of course you follow the team. So I had a feeling someone might get called up, but as they hadn't called up many players earlier in the season I wasn't expecting it. Anyway, I thought that they wanted me the whole year in AHL to learn the role, so I didn't think it was me. So we are there playing cards, and the coach comes up and tells me, you are not traveling with us anymore, you are going to Montreal, and you are doing your NHL debut against Buffalo tomorrow! The only thing I remember is the feeling in my body, I almost start to shake! And then I called my dad, he was over the moon.

The coach came back we are trying to move your gear, because they were already in the plane.

N – so that plane becomes more delayed because of you?

J – yes. Don't worry they'll get there, it will be alright. So I had to wait further when the other guys left. I don't remember to where, but I didn't leave the airport until midnight. I landed in Montreal at 3 got to the hotel at 4, had practice at 10. And my stuff didn't arrive at the airport, I had to wait for an hour and a half, and the stuff didn't arrive.

N – so you are alone, no one from the team is there.

J – No – I am alone. And I feel – God!

N – could be some important stuff for a hockey player.

J – So I call the “gear guy” and its midnight, “we can’t do anything, we will deal with it tomorrow. Go to the hotel!” Get up in the morning, had to get a cap to the practice facility, saying hi to everyone, but I still have no gear. I had suit trousers and a t-shirt for morning practice, the other comes in gym clothes, and then the gear hasn’t arrived, we hope they ‘ll be here in time for the game. You can practice with borrow things now. I asked really you want me to? I was on ice yesterday? Yes get some gear and suit up. I got skates, Pacioretty’s shoulder pads and gloves, I just thought what the fuck is going on, is this twilight zone? I had nothing that was mine, I think I had Sekac sticks, it wasn’t even my angle it was 10 cm short.... The came back and said “it should arrive in time for the game” otherwise you’ll have to use this, and it had gone so bad on that practice. The skates were cut differently; I just wanted to tell them to stick it! I don’t need to be there, but it was my NHL debut so what could I do? So I saw 4h before the practice, and then after I slept another 3h, because I just went around hoping my gear would arrive. And when I got into the Bell Centre my stuff was there! And that was so good! My gear, NHL debut, had gotten so many messages that everyone would be up watching. Then I had -3 in the first period!

N – oh NO!

J - I was in first...

N – And against Buffalo which really wasn’t a top tier team,.

J – And I won’t score either, I was stuck a t the blue line, at least I was in on all goals in the first period, 3 in our own end and 1 in theirs.

N – You were at the centre of attention

J – You could say that, minus 2 after the first. I was thinking about going in and say “Sorry guys this is not for me, just send me down again, I am going home.”

N – And you couldn’t blame the wrong gear!

J – Exactly, and I am sitting next to Eller in the dressing room, and he goes, just don’t give a shit, it cant get worse! Its not your fault, none of the goals can be blamed on you. So I felt I could go in and just drive, I have nothing to lose, cant get worse. They have already decided to send me back down after the game. So give it all. It went better the second and third, but I was in on another in the back during the game. So I was -3 in my first NHL game! Haha!

N – But you won right?

J – Nope we lost!

N – You lost.... Whops!

J – I got a few questions after, it’s quite a big media thing in Montreal.

N – And they all went for the new guy?

J – Yes of course, and they asked me “How does it feel” “there was quite a few goals you were in on” and I just answered, “Of course I am not happy, it’s what it is”,

N – yes because then you cant really say, just send me down. You have to keep a straight face.

J – Just keep face.

N – What did the coach say? Did he talk to you after that?

J – Nope. Nothing as I understood it he had said in a press conference that he was satisfied with my game.

N – because that is also different (to Sweden), you don’t really go up to the coach and ask him to talk?

J – Absolutely not.

N – you just keep to yourself?

J – Yes, and then after the game, the guy who sort of does everything say you going to the GMs office now. So I thought – at least I got a game! Now I am going down again. So I walked the corridor only looking at my feet on my way there. I got in and he told me, you are going down tomorrow. That’s what he started with. And I felt ah Shit, but okay I get it. Then he continued, because you have nothing with you right? And I was like “no, I have nothing, a t-shirt and a suit. Bergevin continued, I guessed as, much pack a bag, you’ll be her for a while.”

So I went down to Hamilton and packed my bag.

N – That feeling, then you called your father again right?

J – Yes! But nothing was given, Bergevin had said bring some things, it wasn’t confirmed I was going to stay for long. I was also needed to play 10 games to have the first year count.

N – And sometimes the clubs use this and have someone play nine games. And then send them back.

J – Yes! Exactly, and that was probably the best feeling when I played my tenth game. That was a relief.

N – How did your new team mates treat you? Because at 10 you are one of them, one of the big guns right?

J – you got more comfortable each day.

N – did they receive you well?

J – Absolutely, they had some sort of knowledge of me as I was part of the camp for so long, and I knew the younger people a bit more as well. They took good care of me no problems at all, I didn’t say much the first week.

N – But then came match nine and ten! Tell us! When did they tell you – you are here to stay?

J - I had after game 10, I think it was 10, my dad and uncle was over to see me play. Then I had a meeting with Bergevin after the game, then I thought, damn they let me play 10 games and then send me down... Because the only time you get into that office is when things go south.

N – Bad News!

J – Yes, it's not a good thing getting called in. so I was called in, he asked how I felt. I said I think it feels good. Because it had gone well the first ten games, some of them really well. Then he told me "we are really happy with you and want you to stay the rest of the season". We are going on a road trip but when we are back you'll have an apartment set up for you. Just make sure they send all your stuff from Hamilton.

N – Your father and uncle is there, and you walk in to think you are being sent down, and instead you get to tell them this!

J - yes! I didn't say anything when I saw them either. When we had our post match meal together I told them, "it seems like I get to stay here, I had a meeting after". We all three were shocked! Dad asked why I didn't say anything earlier, and started to cry. It was a great night!

But at the same time I felt I am on a two way contract, if I do a bad game they'll just send me down anyway. SO for me I didn't really feel safe, it was of course good to hear that.

N – But at the end of the season you must have felt it? I belong here.

J – Not really, we are 15 forwards, a couple always got benched every game.

N – we have to mention that, usually two forwards are scratched every game. And it can be some very experienced players that gets to sit and eat popcorn on the press stand and at the same time a 20 year old guy from Arvika skates around the ice. That could be cause for jealousy

J - There was a guy like Manny Malhotra, how has played for a long time.

N – 15 years or so, he was at that training camp at that training camp I spoke about with NY Rangers, that was when he was a rookie.

J – He has like 1000 games, and if you take his place, as we have more or less the same role, you get a bit of bad conscious not really but close.

N – a special feeling?

J – most definitely, at it almost becomes a bit stiff (the expression we use in Sweden, cold maybe?) But he is the greatest guy, he was like our most humble person.

N - He didn't get upset with you?

J – Nope and he practices harder than anyone else on the team, I have never seen anyone with better physique.

N – But its not the two of you having lunch together?

J – no but that nothing personal.

N – and this is when the ladies start approaching you? And you start to realise how it is to be a player in Montreal? And it overwhelmed you a bit this enormous passion for hockey that only exist in that place, its incredible the love the city of Montreal has for Canadiens.

J – its been sold out for 20-30 years in a row, of course its incredible and to be part of it, its mostly people reminding me how big it is than that I realise it myself. As I understand. For swedes we don't understand, you might think its huge, but.... you don't even get how big it is for a Canadian player to play in Montreal for them there is nothing better! Its incredible, not that many swedes has been there either, so it makes it more special for me.

N – But it makes it special for me as well, I am so old that I was there when Mats Näslund and Kjell Dahlin played and they were in the old Forum, and I thought, and still think there is no better place you could have watched hockey. I was worried going to the Bell Centre the first time, imaging if that atmosphere cant be recreated that was in the Forum, but I'll be damned its there, maybe not completely, but very very close. It's a fantastic atmosphere, and how engaged the people are in the team I remember when Patrice Brisbroboa an old defender

J – Patrice, he was our development coach, he retired this year.

N – that's right, incredible funny and sympatric person,

J - really funny guy

N – But he has as a player in Montreal lived through heaven and hell, he won the cup '93, with everything that it entitles. To be the scapegoat, and jeered by his own fans, and he described this environment, and I believe and is convinced there are players that has said no to play in Montreal because they cant handle the pressure. You need something extra, there are a few other clubs that comes close but nothing can match it. But its not like playing in any other team.

J – as I see it, I have only been there six months, and we topped the table more or less, and then all is sunshine. But when it goes bad, then it cant be that fun to be there, its easy to say but it's a bit like that in Leksand it cant compare in a city with 2m inhabitants, with a town of 7000, but it's the same thing, because in Leksand its life or death as well. You talk hockey everywhere, the town lives for hockey.

N – they thought you that in Leksand as well!?

J – Yes a bit of both, as I said you can't compare it, but it's the same in many ways. I remember they asked me about the pressure at the draft combine, "Do you have what it takes to play in Montreal? Because not every one can, can you?" I answered, "I played in Leksand, it's not the same but close"

N – You can't hide in Leksand either?

J – I said "I am totally convinced I can do it". Then he said, Rick Dudley I think it was, "so do I" completely stone faced.

N – Cool, and really incredible you had that feeling. Not many could say that, I can choose not to go to Montreal and get an easier ride somewhere else? You must be attracted to these kinds of places?

J – if you are going to play, lets do it at the best place possible! It's not fun to play where there is no interest...

N – Wonderfull!

And how cool is it to be named PK Subban or Carey Price in Montreal and walk the streets as a normal man?

J – I don't think they dare try it.

N – They are rock stars?

J -Price has a hat and sunglasses on and everyone spots him anyway.

N –Talk about pressure, my god, he gets Heart and Veiznia and handle the pressure in Montreal.

J – He got Ted Lindsey as well

N – Three awards,

J - Four, he got like best save percentage or something as well. He is....

N – and an Olympic gold, he has to have a psyche that is out of this world.

J – He is the absolute coolest player I have ever played with, and as good as he is, he is the most humble person on the whole team.

N - it is like that?

J – yes he doesn't say a word, he only "is" ... And at matches as well, I don't know if you have seen it, he saves a shot, leaves a rebound with an open net... but he doesn't hurry and throw himself, he just slides in slow motion and grabs the puck! It looks ridiculous, he looks lazy but he grabs every puck. His winning mentality, from the top of his hair, all the way to the toenails. If we don't win one of his sticks will break in the locker room. He looks so collected.... But when he enters.....

N – that side exist?

J – yes.

N – We don't see that

J – nope not really.... And then he is so humble, is to me incredible. He is best in the world right now, there is no contest, you saw that at the NHL awards,

N – He is better than Hank?

J – they are good at different things but yes he is.

N – We are in a hotel in Karlstad, Sweden, and if you said the opposite, and you said Hank is a little bit better...

J – I can't I have never played against Hank, Rangers was the only team in our conference I never played. But Hank is great as well.

N – But if you said it, it would be a halabalo over in Montreal, that would pop up directly, and people would be like "this Jacob he doesn't get it"

J – Yeah they know (thanks Zeb!)

N – But price has proven it with all the prices he got, but I bring it up, because the interest over in Montreal nothing passes by when it comes to Canadiens.

J – then it's cool as well, if we have a meeting in the dressing room, PK or someone might say something, it's still a bit of a nice level, but if Price says anything, it's completely silent, no one says anything we just absorb every word. It's really difficult to explain when you can't see it, but he has such an aura around him. He is an amazing athlete.

N – Montreal is a very special environment, among other things the dressing room with the pictures of old legendary players and a quote from a poem (Flanders Fields by John McCrae) I don't remember it perfectly but "you carry with you the traditions of old" Patrice Brisebois said when it was most difficult he could use the old guard as inspiration and build from their legacy, it must be very inspiring to have all that around you?

J – The ones that fall gives you the torch to keep safe, I am not sure about the translation. (a long discussion about how to translate it, and actually googling the poem on JDLR phone!)

N – they feeling of being in that inspiring environment.

J – yes – there is like 20 jerseys in the roof in the Bell Centre, and when you read the names on the jerseys... they have like 5 Cups and 20 seasons, it's not like 2 cups would do the deed to get a jersey in up there. People don't realise how difficult it is to win one cup. It's a crazy (as in amazingly crazy) history.

N – Henri Richard 11 Stanley Cups, a different time...

J – yes but as superior they were, it's still very cool.

N – This is it, the motto comes from a poem written by John McCrea 1915, the first year Montreal won the cup, speaking about an organization with a long and distinguished and fantastic career. The motto was written on the wall in old Forum, and now also in the Bell Centre, it says: "To you from failing hands we throw; The torch; be yours to hold it high."

J – Damn, I wasn't even close.

N – you were close, closer than me. We got the meaning right.

J – and it says it in French on the opposite wall as well.

N – I will not try to say it in French!

J – Me neither!

N – Speaking about French, have you considered learning French?

J – Nah, it's a little bit like bits and pieces

N – But that is something that would benefit you in Montreal

J – Its sick, I actually studied three years of French in school (Sorry Jacob, I am sure all media in Montreal will know this now!) But it wasn't really highest priority in High School, but of course some words still linger. And that would make it easier for me to learn. There is also different French, I learned classic French whereas there is a lot of slang in Quebec.

N – What about an intensive course?

J – Some guys in the team have done that.

N – It becomes even more fun, when you can speak French.

J – Yes that become so happy when you do, even if it's only a sentence, and the people love you even more. It is something I should probably consider.

N – You weren't there when it happened, but it is also an example of the enormous popularity that Montreal (Canadiens) has and old players has. But in December last year one of the most legendary players passed away, Jean Beliveau. You were in Hamilton. He was laid out, I don't know the expression and that is embarrassing (lie-de-parade) but as a start of the funeral service more or less, in Bell Centre, and people could walk by to pay their respect at the open casket.

J – All the players were there as well.

N – Hundreds of thousands Montreal citizens did this for an old hockey player.

J – it's amazing. We played with his, number 4 behind the net for the rest of the season and also we had number 4 on our chests last season as well.

N – Did you ever meet him?

J – No.

N – I did it once, just said hi, he was an astonishing sympatric man.

J – His wife always sits two rows behind our bench and when we turn around she stands there and waves. He also has his chair, where he sat next to his wife, where they have pressed his number into the chair. So there is this chair that is empty, no one gets to sit in it.

N – He does that in spirit.

J – indeed

N – I get Goosebumps when you tell me that!

17 Stanley's has his name on it; 10 as a player and 7 when in management.

J – You can't understand that, it's incredible.

N – You got to experience play offs in Montreal, and it can actually just be the start of something, by God, you have a great team. A very exciting team, I have the feeling it can become even better. The experience; and you started against Ottawa, a team on the rise with Erik Karlsson as a general, then you get to play against Tampa and gets knocked out. Can you tell us about that?

J – Yes, it was... Before the play offs all my team-mates were talking “I can’t wait for the play offs”, “now the season starts” I asked if it was a big difference, and they were like “it’s a completely different thing!”. I was like yeah right it will be different. As big difference as it was I could never even have dreamed of, it was a completely different sport. It can be an average slow game in the middle of the week, in the play offs if you weren’t in it you either got drilled or it was 1-0 with in a second.

N – The tempo, the intensity, the hits, you get more of everything.

J – you follow through it becomes different as you coach so actively to get lines against each other. So I was playing against the same line every line change, every match the whole series. So you become so god damn tired of them. You just want to punch them in the face!

N – you want to finish them off?

J – yes.

N – what was the line-up you got? Because this is the top lines in both teams.

J – I was playing against Mika (Zibanejad) mostly.

N – You wanted to punch out Zibanejad?

J – No, I know him so I didn’t really want to do that.

N – But you didn’t want to buy him coffee the day after?

J – it is a bit different among Swedes, we stick together...

N – But anyway... you were not the best of friends at that time.

J – you get so tired of playing the same player all the time, so damn tired. Unless it’s a bad line, then it’s so damn fun!

N – Hahaha!

J – but this was Mika, Bobby Ryan and Michalik.

N – whom are you playing just so people know.

J – Lars Eller and Smith-Pelly most often.

N – And these are quality players for people who don’t know Montreal.

J – we were a...

N – But you stopped them, and stopped them all along, they lost confidence, because they probably thought they could knock you out, but they lost.

J – We were not on the ice for many goals against, that’s something I feel proud of; when you have that role, we should not give up any goals. But as a third line we have a bit of different, we are the middle man. First and second line should produce, but to go all the way the other two lines need to produce as well. We didn’t really do that we could have made a goal more or two.

N – But it was good enough for your line and the team to cross them off, and move on to play Tampa.

J – We did well against Ottawa, we took the lead with 3-0 in games, but personally I wasn’t that happy with the first round. I felt I was one step behind all the time, I felt it took me the whole first round of games to adjust to the play offs.

N – It became too big of an adjustment from normal hockey?

J – yes, I didn’t play “my game” and I started to think too much, I didn’t play the way I should and coach said that to me as well. “Wake up, its still ice hockey, you know what to do out there”.

N – You got a bit of a bollocking

J – Yes, but it was good, I needed it. I closed my fist (Swedish proverb). Coach told me “you are not here because you are a good guy, or because we like you (as a person), you are here because you are a good player. Now go out and show that!” There was no way around it, and I took heart.

N – You didn’t object?

J – Obviously not, I felt like “Damn kid you better get going”

N – Shut up and listen sort of.

J – I felt it went better the last games, I think it took me four games to get into play off hockey. Six games against Ottawa, the last to I am personally satisfied with. And then I was satisfied with all six games against Tampa (on a personal level), I felt good. It is a different kind of game as well, Tampa is a very skilled team, it wasn’t that much of a physical play.

N – it went fast?

J – It was all about skating and other stuff.

N – which line did you match up against then, the “triplets” or the Stamkos line?

J – No we were partly up against Stamkos, but they went around their team in a different way. They had loads of guys out especially forwards, so it became more of a mix.

N – I got to know about it now, you probably didn’t know, the teams go around and discuss players and opponents, someone in Tampa was asking “hey, who is this guy de la Rose?” Victor Hedman had to take some time and discuss and explain “we need to look at him, he is damn good.” So Victor actually warned the guys about you.

J – Before the Ottawa series, the guys asked me about Mika, everyone knows about Erik and how he plays. But they asked what is Mika good at, how does he play what should we do get him off balance?” But I don’t know him that well; I said what he was good at. The do ask what swedes knows about other swedes.

N – But the feeling of experiencing play offs and all what that means in exposure and what goes on around you. Can another person even imagine what it’s like to even reach a final with Montreal Canadiens? That will flip the whole city upside down?

J – that would be yes, play offs, that’s chaos, that’s the only thing every one waits for, there is play off things all over town things like flags “Go Habs Go” its on every building, so it’s a really cool thing. To win Stanley Cup in Montreal is something that I dream about.

N - Mats Näslund spoke to me once, it’s a bit comical, I don’t know how we got into it I think he was manager with Three Crowns (the name for the Swedish national team) and we were together with a group and someone started to talk about the hype it was after -94 Football World Cup (Sweden took Bronze) about 50.000 was welcoming the players back from USA. Näslund just shook his head and said “When we got back from winning the Stanley with Montreal then it was a million out on the streets.

J – I spoke with Patrice Brisebois when they travelled down St. Catharine the main street of Montreal, they had travelled they whole day. There were people stopping traffic even on the street crossing St. Catharine. It can’t be explained, it is something that before you retire would be great to experience.

N – What are your thoughts on the upcoming season? Because you are on a two-way contract, that would mean it’s easy to get rid of and send you down to Hamilton, you don’t have a one way contract which restricts that. You also have less of an impact on the salary cap if you get sent to AHL so you can become a victim of “politics” on the other hand, if you are good enough you get to play in NHL. So you thing, I am in it for good?

J – No I don’t

N – You don’t have to say it, but you must believe it right?

J – No I don’t, I can’t and I don’t know what to say you can’t take things for granted. I know I have to go to Camp and fight for a place, I am very easy to push out, I am on a two way contract, and I am on low salary as well, especially considering the others. But I have a better chance than last year.

N – and the low salary can also be a good thing in order to squeeze in under the cap.

J – yes it’s good in a lot of ways. I have a better chance than last year, but I am not feeling secure at all to get a place. I have to give everything I have every time I am on the ice, and every practice to be part of it this year again. And I am sure they will tell me that as well “you shouldn’t be here and think you belong just because you played half a season last year”.

N – But at least you’ll be at the right side and the good dressing room when it starts.

J – I actually don’t know, and I have wondered that myself... Haha!

N – I do think you will, and as I said, when you go into Montreal Canadiens website and check the roster, and then it will come up a few of the players that played mainly last year, and then there is the list of the prospects. And you are in the first group. But of course this is probably based on last year. You'll play in NHL next season, I am totally convinced, I also think you'll get the best message ever when they tell you "it's time for you to look for a permanent apartment/house in Montreal". I really hope so and I wish you nothing but the best it will be very interesting to follow you in Montreal. It's been super fun to have you here!

J – No problem

N – I think this is it.

Actually in regards to WJC, with all the young guys you were with and played a few WJC with and there are quite a few of you in NHL, William Nylander, among others.

J – Burra (André Burakovsky) played as well.

N - that's right, if you were to mention one of them as they guy that will make the biggest statement in NHL who would that be?

J – We in Sweden knows who he is, but I think before he had the play offs he had, Axel Holmström (Drafted by Detroit in 2014, and broke the points totals for the play offs with 7 goals and 11 assists – knocking of the Sedins that previously held the record). I think he is fantastic, and I would love to have him in my own team, because he will always give 100% then he is amazing both on the defensive side and the offensive side of the puck. He is skilled, he might be a bit smaller than me size wise, but he still skilful but can also go out and play box play, to block shots and he isn't afraid of anything, I think Detroit drafted well.

N – As it looks now, he will have another year in Sweden.

J – you mean a player who will break this year?

N - it doesn't matter, he will be a huge attraction in Sweden this year. Thanks a million for taking the time.

J – Thanks!