



In Conversation with Elena Tice

John Scally interviews Elena Tice, Ireland's young hockey star, about the role faith has played in her life and career.

The COVID-19 crisis has deprived us of many sporting events this year. It has been a difficult period for stars like Elena Tice.

She was a prodigy. By the age of five, she was out the back with her father and older brothers hitting, kicking and playing. Cricket, soccer and then hockey. At thirteen, she became the second youngest player in the history of cricket, male or female, to play in a one-day international match. Four years later, in fifth year, Elena made her senior international debut for the Ireland women's hockey team. She has also excelled academically, winning a scholarship to study Economics in UCD.

Playing in the World Cup hockey final was a joyous experience for Elena. 'And then finally you just achieve something that is beyond everything you've ever dreamt of. Everything, in that moment, seems worth it. It kind of justifies it. I'll never forget that moment. I was just hugging my Mum and Dad and crying inconsolably. It was just such a blessing and I have to be thankful to the Lord I got to experience that. So many people worked hard to make that happen and I was just fortunate to be there.'

Elena's reaction to reaching that final was not typical. She tweeted: 'All the 5:30 alarms, all the freezing nights, all the blood, sweat and tears. All of it. And now, tomorrow, we will play in the World Cup final #GreenArmy#Philippians 4:13. ("I can do all this through him who gives me strength.")'

On the morning of each game, Elena would draw a cross on her left forearm and, for the World Cup final against Netherlands, she wore a white wristband with a black cross as a representation of her faith, a reminder of her biggest motivator and a source of reassurance in the biggest game of her young career.

'My faith is a massive part of my life. It's the biggest part of my life, it's more important than hockey and it's more important than Tokyo or World Cups. It's lasting and it doesn't change, God's love for me doesn't change if I do well or I don't do well and that's what's amazing about it.

'It gives you a different perspective, I suppose. I try and think about how I can honour God in the way I can play as opposed to just thinking about competing with people around me. It's the biggest motivator to work hard. I feel like I've been given these gifts to be able to play sport and it's a



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blessing to have all the opportunities to play and therefore I want to work as hard as I can to use these gifts to glorify him. It's a huge part of my life and, unlike hockey which will come and go, my faith will sustain me and is very much lasting.'

Faith provides Elena with a compass to navigate through life.

'I spend a lot of time praying before games and not just for myself but praying for my team-mates as well. It's a reassurance that you're not alone out there on the field and the Lord has you in his hands and he's guiding you too. I don't know if I call

it an edge but it gives you a sense of peace and takes a bit of the anxiety away. I get quite nervous around games so I have to lean on my faith at those times.

'It allows you to have joy even when it's not going so well. My family are all really strong Christians and they give me a lot of guidance and support through everything. When I say really difficult times, it's still enjoyable, it's hard. We obviously love what we do, but I always have my faith and can always just lean on the Lord and turn to him and turn to my Bible when times are really difficult.' 