

Sixty Seconds with Jason Robinson



by Paul Simper

Published September 19, 2019



■ The 2003 rugby world cup winner, 45, on carrying the weight of a nation, meeting The Queen and cleaning toilets

What will be your involvement in the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan?

I'm working with Mastercard as an ambassador doing lots of different events, bringing the fans together. As someone who has played the game at the highest level, it's giving that experience to fans.



England hero: Jonny Wilkinson

Jonny Wilkinson's drop goal is the most celebrated moment of the 2003 final against Australia but you scored England's only try. Did you both get to keep match balls?

Listen, I think we were just ecstatic about winning the game. I punched a ball in the air with so much emotion I don't think it's come down yet. It was this outpouring of emotions. I can't tell you how much pressure there is. The further you get in the tournament, the more every little thing you do is analysed and scrutinised. A missed tackle or a missed kick could mean you losing a World Cup. Carrying that weight for a nation — that is pressure.

Was it hard to deal with the aftermath of that win? The side broke up soon after...

Well, in 2003 we just had Plan A, so we had to make that work. Thankfully, it was a really good Plan A. But after that World Cup it was like, what do we do next? England just fell off a cliff. Then there was a rebuilding period.

Which team do you think is the dark horse this time?

Wales are looking better than they have for a long time coming into a World Cup. They are the number one team in the world right now. And my wife is Welsh!

What's family viewing like at home on match days?

It's bragging rights, isn't it? I just don't like it when she puts the Welsh shirt on my four-year-old son [laughs]. He has got an England and a Wales shirt so it's whichever of us gets up first in the morning to put theirs on him. I'm excited about England's chances. It's a reality that England can win this. On our day we can beat any side in the world.

You credit your mum, who raised you and your two brothers on her own, with giving you a strong work ethic. Can you tell us more about her?

Yeah, she's about 3ft 2in, little Scottish woman, hard as nails. Dorothy. Somebody who I would never back-chat. She just taught me some simple values. She was a cleaner, she worked really hard. For me, because I wasn't brought up with my father, it instilled in me that work ethic from an early stage.

What advice would you give to those Generation Z kids who see a lack of opportunities in the world right now?

Sometimes you've just got to create stuff. There are opportunities everywhere. First it's having the humility to start from the bottom. Nobody wants to start from the bottom, nobody wants to clean toilets. One of the worst and best experiences for me was cleaning toilets with my mum. Every week. Kids' toilets in schools are disgusting. That gave me some humility.

As opposed to expecting overnight fame through being on shows like Love Island?

Yeah, I must admit I've got stuck into criticising shows like that. I'm probably just a bit jealous 'cos I don't look like that [laughs]. I've had to do it the hard way and get my head kicked in. But you do what you do. It works for them.



Tea time: Jason met the Queen

Would Dorothy come to big games when you were playing?

She went to a lot of the games when I played rugby league. She came to rugby union at Twickenham and said it was too posh. She didn't come to many rugby union games. What she said from an early age to me was just, 'Do your best.'

Your eldest son Lewis plays rugby league for Scotland...

Yeah, I've got another son who is about to start playing for Scotland as well. But I've never been one to push. Naturally, my kids have had a lot more privileges than I had. I came from some of the UK's roughest council estates [in Leeds].

Where do you feel you are in your life now?

I'm excited about life. When you finish playing sport it's, 'Now what do you do?' I didn't have any qualifications, I've just got me. What I've done over the years is be able to deal with people. Whether it's people from a council estate or having tea with the Queen. That's a skill set in itself.

What's it like having tea with the Queen?

It's nice because there aren't many people I'm taller than. This is where sport is so good. When you're growing up on a council estate you've got the cheapest of everything. You're having sugar sandwiches, tomato sauce sandwiches and crisp sandwiches. Then all of a sudden you get this opportunity and you can go to nice places and meet the Queen.

■ Jason Robinson is an ambassador for Mastercard, Worldwide Partner of Rugby World Cup 2019