****  **Josh Simpson: 1998-2001**

Josh Simpson, one of Canada’s all-time top soccer players, was a gifted natural athlete who excelled from a young age. Soon after being introduced to the sport at the age of five through church, he decided he wanted to play professionally one day.

At Belmont, he was a leader of a talented group that also included future NCAA star and best friend Liam Girard. Josh recalls his best high school sporting memory as competing against his brother Jordan when he played for Spencer Middle School. He also was an excellent cross country runner and was a key contributor to the small school team.

After high school graduation, Josh accepted a Division 1 NCAA scholarship to the University of Portland and hoped to earn a finance degree. In 2003, he was selected to the Team Canada Under 20 team and played in the quarterfinals of the U20 FIFA World Cup. After three years at Portland, he accepted a contract to move to Europe to play professionally. He had a very successful career and over a ten year period, first playing two seasons in England, and then suiting up for teams in Germany, Turkey and Switzerland. He also became one of the anchors of Canada’s senior men’s national team and collected more than 40 appearances in international matches. In 2011, he was one of three finalists for Canadian Soccer Player of the Year! Unfortunately a devastating leg injury in 2012 ended his national team playing career.

There were many people who contributed to Josh’s success on the soccer pitch, but he singles out his dad and closest friend Liam Girard as being particularly positive influences. He sums up the role the sport has played in his life by saying: “*Soccer today is my livelihood. It has given me everything. After my career I will continue my studies and coaching licenses to stay in the game.”*

When asked if he has any advice for current aspiring Belmont athletes, Josh replied: *“Professional sport is not an easy path to pick, but if you want it bad enough don’t let anyone tell you it’s not possible.”*

  

Grade 12 school photo

Josh with his Team Canada team-mates

Josh celebrating a goal