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GAY SOCCER PLAYER DAVID TESTO TALKS COMING OUT & MALECALL.CA

January 23, 2012 By [phjoshua](#) • [1 Comment](#)



Last week I was fortunate enough to sit down with [Rannie](#) and speak by phone with professional soccer player, role model, face of Male Call Canada and out gay man, David Testo.

If you follow sports and gay culture you may have heard of David. In November 2011 he made the decision to go public with the most personal information of his life... he's gay. His family knew, many of his teammates, coaches and opponents knew, but the public did not. That changed last fall and when we asked him why, his answer was like many that we've all heard before – the time was right. His family knew, his friends knew, he turned 30 in August and yet he still wasn't living his life to its fullest. He wasn't part of the community that he feels he belongs in. He wasn't being true to himself.

Note: Rannie and I met David on Monday afternoon to snap a few photos and he is one of the nicest people you will ever meet in your life. And he's handsome too... I'm not kidding.

David told us that he first started telling people about his sexuality in a round about way. While playing soccer in Columbus he started dating an MTV reality TV star and the pair were often spotted out together. It wasn't long before people started doing the math and found out that $2 + 2 = \text{gay}$.

However, he told us that it wasn't a conversation that was ever really had out loud. I was surprised to hear him tell us that it was easier for him to say things like, "this is my partner Shane" than it was to tell people, "I'm gay".

Things became more relaxed and comfortable for Testo when he first came to Canada to play professionally in Vancouver. He says that it was a different vibe than Columbus and while he continued to put together an impressive soccer career he also continued to grow as a person. Teammates and new friends became privy to what was still a secret as he built relationships in the community. And that same trend continued when David made the move to Montreal to play professionally with the Impact.

But even in the more welcoming and accepting environments that Vancouver and Montreal offered from the 2006 to 2011 seasons David didn't feel comfortable enough to come out publicly. The time wasn't right. He was still traveling to major US cities to play soccer. Cities that aren't known for their welcoming nature to gays or the gay culture. There were validated and very reasonable concerns that he would be targeted by fans and right wing groups.

And then, on November 10, 2011 something clicked. The time was right. David was ready and he came all the way out of the closet.

Since that day David has done an amazing job of talking to everyone who needs anything. He told us that he has talked to other athletes and shared his experiences and advice. We asked him what advice he gives and he told us...

Make sure that you have a solid and supportive group around you. It can be friends, family, co-workers or teammates before you come out in public. This isn't something that you want to do alone.



I also asked him if and when he thinks we'll see more gay athletes come out. His answer made a lot of sense. He says that he hopes we will, but that it probably won't happen until society becomes more accepting as a whole.

Sports is still very much an old boys club full of testosterone and judgement. It's an Alpha heavy environment. And historically it has never been seen as a place that gays lived.

In December 2011, about a month after David came out he was approached by the people from Male Call Canada. Male Call is a confidential telephone survey designed to gathering information on attitudes, behaviors and issues for men who have sex with men.

The study is being headed by a group of organizations including the Aids Committee of Toronto and the University of Toronto. Once the survey is complete, the data will be analyzed and a report of the national findings will be prepared. The report will be available online at www.malecall.ca as soon as it becomes available. It will also be shared with community groups and policy makers nationwide. By participating you will help make recommendations for future research, programs, and policies.

David told us that the first thing he did after being approached was call and take the survey. It was after finding that it was helpful and worthwhile that he signed on to be the face of the campaign. And now David is welcoming all men who have sex with men to call and do the same thing.

This is a huge opportunity for the community to step up and be part of the solutions of the future. Every day we complain that we don't have enough input – well today you do!

If you want to find more information about the survey (and I hope you do) check out www.malecall.ca and when you're ready to call (and I hope you will be) just dial 1-855-846-MALE (6253).

Before we finished the call there was one last question that we couldn't help but ask... what's keeping David in Montreal now that his playing days with the impact are over, the city and opportunity or someone special?

Rannie and I could both hear David smiling on the other end of the line when he told us, "A little bit of both maybe."

Good luck in all the next steps that you take David. We wish you nothing but the best.