



## English transcript of Marios Costi's interview with

### Oliver Eadsforth and Jonny Nelson on 12th September 2018

*- Based on live voiceovers by Karen Newby, Susan Booth and Danny Rose*

Marios Costi	<p>Hello everyone, welcome to Facebook Live; we're here at the <b>BSL Zone</b> office and I'm going to be interviewing Oliver and Jonny this evening, so this should be really interesting and exciting - thank you for watching.</p> <p>Welcome to you both. How are you?</p>
Oliver Eadsforth	<p>Good, thank you.</p>
Jonny Nelson	<p>Good, thank you.</p>
Marios Costi	<p>That's really great. Now then, I have a number of different questions that we're going to get through and we also have some audience questions. I wonder if you've both seen the <b>BSLBT's The Beautiful Game</b>? What did you think?</p>
Jonny Nelson	<p>Yes, I thought it was very interesting.</p>
Oliver Eadsforth	<p>I thought it was a brilliant programme, it covered a lot of aspects of football and it reflects the funding difficulties and the transfers of players to the clubs, so it covered a wide spectrum. Obviously there's a lot more going on but I think it represented what's happening.</p>
Jonny Nelson	<p>It showed young people, the top clubs, and fans too, there was a good range of coverage.</p>
Marios Costi	<p>I saw it myself and I was really inspired by it; the way that young people were getting involved in football and by the community that was alive there. Did you enjoy it?</p>
Jonny Nelson	<p>Yes, obviously, in the past, Deaf people of all ages used to go to Deaf clubs. Nowadays, though, most people over 18 go to Deaf pub nights, so younger deaf people don't have opportunities to meet older Deaf people if they go to mainstream schools. They may only have about six friends. So, football is great because it gives them the opportunity to meet lots more Deaf people. I know that sport is also good because it keeps you healthy, of course, but it's such an important way into the Deaf community.</p>
Oliver Eadsforth	<p>Also, Deaf football is the core of the Deaf community; it's a very popular sport generally, but particularly amongst the Deaf community. So it really reflects the grassroots situation; how a Deaf person can get involved in football at any level and develop on their footballing journey, it's lovely.</p>

Marios Costi	Jonny, I know that you love football and you're very supportive, particularly of youth football, and you think that that's key to the future of Deaf football. Can you tell us a bit more about that?
Jonny Nelson	Obviously, of course, youths are important, because when the older players get to retirement age, we need to bring them in. We need to think – there's lots of talk about the DCL next year and who's going to be top of the Champions League – that's obviously quite important, but it's more important to think about what to do in 10 or 20 years' time. We need to think about a long-term strategy, to plan for the future. We need to make sure that when we retire, we can pass the baton to the next generation and so forth. We want to have something good to pass to them, not something that's a bit of a mess. We need to think about the structure; selfishly we're thinking about how we can spend money now, when that's not right – we should be thinking about how to invest in youth development as well as giving money to clubs. For example, we could spend money on giving opportunities to sub age footballers to go on courses to qualify as coaches, if they have skills in that area that they could pass on. That's so important! We need to think about how we're going to be able to carry on for another 10 years, 30 years or even 100 years.
Oliver Eadsforth	That goes back to what Seb Coe said in the 2012 Games about inspiring the new generations. I mean, we have a duty to the youth to make sure that, of course, we have the football that we have now, but we have to think about what it will be like in 20 years' time. We have a legacy to consider; we have to think about how we can inspire them and how that will progress. We're not going to be around forever, so we have to balance what happens now but at the same time, make plans for the future.
Marios Costi	With regards to funding and supporting youth football, I think there are difficulties there, aren't there? Because there's not really something available, particularly with regard to youth football.
Jonny Nelson	At the moment, you know, this is why I want coaches. There's no money for it; there's no funding, so we have to have volunteers. My friends and I will volunteer as coaches, but if there was funding, we could afford proper coaches and maybe take a little bit of a step back and give them the qualified teaching that they need. We could maybe sort out the competition and matches so that we can travel across the country and play different teams from different places. The FA are really, really rich; they've got billions and billions of pounds you know, so why can't they fund Deaf sport as well?
Marios Costi	I can see how that's important; if there were funds available, that would secure the future of football and bring younger people in to begin their sporting careers, so yes, I can see how the funding is vital for that.
Jonny Nelson	Some of the players' parents are funding things. That's fine, they're happy to do so, but we have some families that are poor and they haven't got the money to do that, so they can't support them; that's discrimination. You know, sport used to be cheap to take part in and everyone got involved. My father was quite poor, but he loved sport because it was cheap. But now, it's so expensive to get involved, there are a lot of expenses to cover as well, so people can't afford it.

Oliver Eadsforth	Yes, if you look at the mainstream football community, the Deaf world of football is incredibly small in comparison, so if you want to develop young people's game, then you have to consider the costs of travel in order for Deaf teams to play one another, and lack of funding creates a barrier. It's expensive.
Jonny Nelson	And you're right about the distance as well. We're lucky because Charlton is here in London, where there's a high population. Before, with St John's Youth, not many turned up, but there were only two clubs in London, so we had a massive selection. However, if you're in somewhere like Brighton, for example, it's more difficult to get youth players because you're relying on them being able to travel further afield. They might have to go 60 miles – will their parents be OK with driving them all that way? What if they have 3 children and they have to take the deaf one all that way, whereas the hearing ones can stay local? Deaf people do need to travel more. It's difficult.
Marios Costi	I can see the difficulty in that. Oliver, EDF have been given £1,000 from the FA, do you have a plan with regards to how that is going to be spent? Particularly with regards to youth.
Oliver Eadsforth	That's right, we did get £1,000 from the FA. We wanted to talk about our strategic plan, we talked about Futsal, we talked about volunteering, but that £1,000 doesn't enable us to consider the youth element of the game, we're having to think about the competition world and keep the clubs involved and consistent. However, we have recently received £4,000 which is good news, great, but is £4,000 enough? Of course, it helps us, and I'm delighted to say that the English Deaf Football, the EDF, will be able to contribute £1,000 to the youth part of the game, so we do want to spend that wisely, but we will be spending the rest on other aspects. But it is important to think about referees, about coaching, about first aid, about child protection, about training, how deaf people can acquire skills to take on those roles within their own clubs. Perhaps they could become a charitable club, a chartered club? £4,000... of course, we appreciate that amount of money, but we need much more than that because we could potentially do so much more.
Marios Costi	So for how long will that £4,000 last?
Oliver Eadsforth	Well I have a 5-year strategic plan and OK, it's OK to cover funding for a year, but I would like to set a foundation for a longer term. It's a good start.
Jonny Nelson	So do you feel that if you spend the £4,000 that the FA have given you well, they might increase that amount?
Oliver Eadsforth	Well hopefully... there's a particular criteria that we've committed to. If we spend the money wisely, which I am confident that we will do, we can then show the FA the benefits of their funding and where it's gone, and hopefully in return, they may offer more funding, that's my hope.
Jonny Nelson	The English FA, they're the richest in the world. We've got the Premier League, masses of money ploughed into that, you know. You've got a right to ask for more money.

Oliver Eadsforth	Also, the way that the FA funds can be county based - it's based on different areas - but of course, it's difficult for Deaf football to access that structure of funding. If the funding came to EDF, then we can give it straight to the clubs, because there are then no barriers for those Deaf clubs, because they know we have funding available for them for development.
Marios Costi	So if you're successful in applying for more funds, do you think the funds will increase in the future?
Oliver Eadsforth	Well hopefully, I mean we didn't ask for £4,000, we really wanted £50,000, or even more. So, as I say, it's a good start.
Marios Costi	<p>Yes, that's a really good start. Can I just remind our audience please click "Like" if you're enjoying this interview, because it's really important for us to see who's out there and who's enjoying this.</p> <p>Now then, can I ask you about a programme called <b>Found in Sport</b>? I think you've both seen that, and it covers journey of a young girl called Gemma, who was not a member of the Deaf community, but she found her way into it via football. Now women's football previously was in a stronger position and I wonder if you worry that it's actually approaching extinction now.</p>
Oliver Eadsforth	It was interesting to watch the programme; Gemma is a great representative for women in football; her story is very interesting, her being very much part of the hearing world, getting involved in Deaf football. She is a great role model for young people. Internationally, it's important for them to look at women playing in grassroots clubs at club level in order for them to then play internationally. It is particularly difficult, women's football, as the numbers are small. I know there are many women out there playing the game, but they are spread far and wide and it's how you bring them together to make them part of, I mean obviously, there is England or GB Women's, but we're talking about grassroots clubs. We want more players in those particular levels.
Marios Costi	Also, if people don't have easy access to the Deaf community, then they're more likely as individual deaf people, to join hearing leagues, but then they all face barriers in terms of communication and coaching opportunities which Gemma actually described in her story. So, they'll therefore experience difficulties in confidence and there's that feeling that you don't really fit in. What's important is a way through the door in the first place, and I guess it's important to have both routes in, both in the mainstream leagues and Deaf leagues. What do you think to that?
Oliver Eadsforth	Well it is part of our EDF strategy that we are looking at under 21s, youth, futsal, and of course women's football, and how to set them back up again. I mean, we have to try, we have to make an effort. If it works well, it's not just about us setting things up, it's about clubs, helping us in that plan and getting things moving. And hopefully it will be successful. But of course, if we never try we will never know, so it's about making that commitment. We don't want it to become extinct.
Jonny Nelson	Yes, in relation to what you said about Gemma, I watched it and a lot of people who watched said she was a fantastic footballer, her game was of a high level. That's great, but the thing is, what if she wasn't so good at football? She'd be so

	lonely! It's lucky that she was so good at it and that led to opportunities for her to meet people – what would have happened to her if it wasn't for football? To be honest, the Deaf community isn't really prosperous – it's in decline, with lots of Deaf clubs and schools closing. So how do we... yes there is the aim to raise the bar and refine Deaf football, but shouldn't anyone be allowed to join in, and thus find the Deaf community?
Oliver Eadsforth	I can't give you an answer to that, it's a really difficult balance.
Marios Costi	What's important is: to keep football going within the Deaf community. It's been an integral part of the community for generations, but as we know, we've seen Deaf clubs closing down, the community spirit is being dissolved in some way, so it's really important to find a way of retaining that and keeping people in our community - keeping football clubs in our community too. What's become problematic is that there are some clubs that are reaching a fairly high level in terms of professionalism, they're able to attract players because they have a little bit more money available to them, whereas the grassroots clubs where people begin their footballing careers struggle with attracting players.
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting we talk about the reduction in the football community. <b>The Beautiful Game</b> even talked about how coming together to watch a game was a social event, it's a really important part of their lives. There can be 450 players who have registered; it's the biggest sport within the Deaf community; as a player or as a participant. It's not just about being a participant, it's about going along and being part of a social event.
Marios Costi	OK, I believe we're receiving some questions from the audience, so please keep them coming, everyone.  I'd like to ask, though, about youth football and Deaf children who may be attending mainstream educational provision. How do you reach those deaf children and get them involved in Deaf football in the Deaf leagues? How do you disseminate information to those more dispersed members of the community?
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting, I get quite a number of enquiries every week, whether it's by text or by email, saying "I have a deaf child," or "I have a child with hearing loss," and they'll be struggling in a hearing club, so they want to know how they can get involved with a deaf club locally? What's the pathway to this? So I'm giving that information out regularly. I contact the nearest club. I'm seeing more and more interest, so what we need to do is perhaps make our website more accessible, make it easier for somebody to locate the club nearest them, so it's more a self-service, rather than me giving out that information. So it's information the people want.
Marios Costi	That's really important.  Now if you look at the different countries in the United Kingdom, outside of England there aren't really any leagues available to the Deaf community, what are you going to do about that?
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting, I mean across England, geographically there's lots of clubs and I know in Scotland they have a Futsal League – 11-a-side – hopefully, that will happen one day in Northern Ireland and Wales. They don't have the luxury of the

	number of clubs that England does. It's not a case that we won't let them join us; we will. I mean, we encourage them to be part of our clubs. If they show commitment, if the numbers are there, then hopefully it will develop. If they eventually have their own leagues in Wales and Northern Ireland, that's great, but in reality, I don't know.
Marios Costi	OK, so with regard to players from outside England joining the English league, are the FA okay with that?
Oliver Eadsforth	Yes, there is that international league, but I would never say to the English Deaf Football League that that's the case forever. I mean, it's open to all clubs regardless of the country that they're in.
Jonny Nelson	And then we've got Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham, we've got three Welsh clubs in the English league as well.
Marios Costi	OK, that's great. The EDF League seems to be gaining more interest from the community.
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting, we've been running the league for 6-7 years and it's grown. This season was the first time that it became a National League, with the North and South Leagues, so that created excitement, it created passion. If we went back to the old days, I don't know, this might be the future, but we want to set the foundation of what clubs want, what suits them; perhaps it's a weekly league that they have the ability to commit to. I think the cup has a legacy and will continue, I think people like that sense of a knockout competition, and having a cup to aim for, but there is that shift towards leagues, perhaps every fortnight, finding out who's the best, having that regular match.
Jonny Nelson	I mean cups are easy, there's three games, you're either through or you're out, whereas leagues are a real commitment. You need to put in the time and effort travelling all year round, you know. If clubs can do that, then good on them, but sometimes it can get a little too much and they'll just go for a cup in their local league. One small negative point is that, before we had no Deaf people in the hearing league, I think it was last year, there was one club in a hearing league and that was Doncaster – the rest of them quit the hearing leagues and were just in the Deaf leagues only, you know. Is that good for Deaf football? I'm not too sure, in terms of future benefit. You know, hearing leagues are very welcoming if a Deaf team join them. We want to set the standard, we want to, you know, challenge our hearing counterparts. You know, if we're just in the Deaf league then we can see ourselves getting back to our old ways and being in a bit of a rut.
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting, I mean there's no right or wrong answer. Clubs need to judge what's best for them and their members. If quality does decline because they're not competing in the hearing teams, then we've got national teams, we've got England, we've got GB, that might encourage more Deaf teams in the league, but I don't know what the aims would be.
Marios Costi	OK, I have another question for you: if clubs have funds available to pay players or cover their travel expenses, do you think that will have an effect on other clubs?

Oliver Eadsforth	It clearly says that clubs are part of an amateur football league, they don't have professional status, there are no contracts, the players don't sign a contract. Unfortunately, within some clubs, they might be able to offer incentives such as expenses or a contract, but there's no regulations as such and there is debate on this subject. Should the EDF stop that particular behaviour, or shouldn't they? There are pros and cons.
Jonny Nelson	I personally feel that, you know, if clubs have plenty of cash and can afford to get some hot players in, to fly them over and put them up for the night, then yes, do that, that's fine. I feel that funding is important, especially in ... we need funding to set up youth coaching, also to support women in football too - that's really what we're looking for. But the clubs' priority, really, is their star players - they focus on them a bit too much. And it's difficult sometimes when someone loses out because they've got a hot player in instead, because they're funding their expenses, so it has a bit of a knock-on effect.
Marios Costi	For example, if a club is kind of not very open about the way that they work and the way that they attract players, they just say that it's no-one's business other than their own, then how can other clubs learn from them?
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting that you say that. If we only focus on the league, will that leave us with only one or two clubs in 5 years' time? That's not sustainable. If we "ignore" those clubs that don't have the finances to sustain, they will suffer. Our role is obviously competition, but we also have a keen interest in how best to support clubs to be sustainable. And it's the same in professional football, you know, if you have a chairman who's particularly well off and they have the funds to attract the better players, you know, UEFA and FIFA have particular ways of spending their money and I'm not saying we will do that with Deaf football, but we could do with a bit of a health check on what's happening at the moment, what's the current spending on bringing in players? How does that affect young people in 20 years' time when they're the future of the game, you talk about investing in the future, Jonny, but it's about balancing investing in the future with investing into right now, and getting that balance right. But it's a different perspective.
Jonny Nelson	I believe it's important.
Marios Costi	Okay, why does the EDF come under UK Deaf Sport, whereas blind football comes under the FA?
Oliver Eadsforth	It's interesting, each country has national sports governance. Within Deaf sport, we come under UK Deaf Sport; they are the governing body and I'm sure visually impaired teams have their own particular governance, but remember, UK Deaf Sport is the governing body for all Deaf sport. We are essentially under the FA; we are validated with the FA in the same way that other disabled football teams are, but UK Deaf Sport are our governing body, so we tend to be governed by the FA and UK Deaf Sport as part of the fact that they cover Deaf sport generally.
Marios Costi	Okay, next question: we now have a new international clearance system, so can that prevent Deaf players getting involved in international football?

Oliver Eadsforth	<p>I am aware of international clearance and it's not something that I support because I know it has its limitations, I know it has its barriers, particularly for the Deaf community. My role within UK sport is if the FA set up a particular rule we follow it, but if they bring in a rule that doesn't suit the world of deaf football or disability football generally... I mean, it is our role to follow those particular guidelines, but whether it's right for the community or not, I can't say whether it's the right thing or not, it's early days.</p> <p>But my perspective is, it would be easier if international clearance didn't exist because we want to be able to develop our game, and if in the future it happens, then that's the case, but there are always changes and we change all the time, and it's about finding the right approach for us.</p>
Marios Costi	<p>OK, thank you.</p> <p>Jonny, do you feel that the fact that Deaf clubs are closing down means that Deaf football is declining?</p>
Jonny Nelson	<p>You're right. Before... I remember my football club was linked to my Deaf club, so members got involved... It was Luton Deaf Club and members who came to the social club to chat and play bingo also liked to support the football team and we were all a big happy family, really. Now, with Deaf clubs closing, most football clubs are independent, just like mine. A perfect example would be how Charlton used to be under Bexley Deaf Club – we were linked, and their social events would raise money for the football, for example. Then, they became separate after the Deaf club decided that they didn't want to be associated with the football team any more, so we changed the team's name to Charlton. So, that's how the Deaf community is changing; the teams often aren't under Deaf clubs – they're independent. Badminton is like that too. So, we've got things like badminton, football and bingo as separate entities now, and that's a shame.</p>
Oliver Eadsforth	<p>Playing devil's advocate, with regards to international clearance which stops players from moving around to different clubs within different countries... That keeps players within the club that they're in, so that may help to expand players within the Deaf community, rather than moving them. So, players are moving to different countries and that dilutes the players that they have.</p>
Marios Costi	<p>So Deaf clubs are playing a really important part. I imagine that the answer is yes, if Deaf clubs continue to decline in the future, it might be more of a challenge to keep football going.</p>
Jonny Nelson	<p>Well who knows, maybe Deaf clubs can set up their own football teams for the future again.</p>
Marios Costi	<p>What about EDF, should that be made national?</p>
Oliver Eadsforth	<p>I think if we look back, England Deaf Football was set up in around 2002, it had an FA structure and, as I mentioned earlier, the FA covers different counties, but that at that time it was successful. Then that fizzled out, and then EDF essentially is a brand, so you don't necessarily have to keep the same brand, we're open to changes, whether it changes to UK Deaf football or national Deaf football, what's</p>

	important for us is to identify the right name that's linked to our strategy and then there's links to funding etc.
Marios Costi	So you think that the change could actually affect your funding streams?
Oliver Eadsforth	Potentially, we know that historically with GB or the UK, we've been told "we only fund England only", so that creates additional barriers, and we've got four countries in the UK, so it becomes difficult. So it's currently England, yes, but there is that opportunity for us to change possibly.
Jonny Nelson	Yes, and it's the same with the hearing Scottish and English teams – Team GB wasn't in the Olympics until we were home in 2012. Prior to that, Team GB wasn't in the Olympics because the FA is separate.
Marios Costi	Yes. Jonny, I know that you have your youth team and your club involves a diverse range of teams available for all. Does that become problematic in terms of people being able to afford the expenses of participating in football? Do you have any assistance for that?
Jonny Nelson	Well, as a club, we try to keep things cheap, you know, but we don't have any funding so sometimes we have to share costs. For example, if our youth team is playing away the NDCS will give us about £300 for a minibus to take us all there, so, yes.
Marios Costi	Who's that?
Jonny Nelson	The NDCS. So when we go to play in their annual tournament in Manchester, it's obviously quite costly to get to, so we asked if they could help and they agreed to give us some money to help us to get there. But, for other things, we often have to beg players' parents to find the money to let them get there.
Marios Costi	OK. Oliver, going back to the issue of international clearance, what's your strategy? I mean what do you plan in terms of that next?
Oliver Eadsforth	I have given my view, I talked to the FA about the effect on Deaf football; we've had meetings. It's not just about Deaf football, it's also related to disability-wide football, I've given my views on the FA and they decided to continue because it's part of FIFA regulations and so whether it's amateur or professional clubs they're all under this ruling. But, I'll continue to fight. If there's a negative or positive impact, I'll pass that message on, on how that ruling affects Deaf football, for the FA to consider. But again, it's not just about Deaf football, it's about other disabled routes, perhaps they can make exceptions – I don't know.
Marios Costi	What about other Deaf people in the countries outside of England who are unable to participate, have you spoken about that?
Oliver Eadsforth	Of course, they are all very different, they don't have the leagues so it's about the FA really needing to set something up in those countries. People like the incentives, but of course, there's no perfect solution. I mean I'm not just talking about my view personally, it's also taking on board the clubs' views about the structure and what they think about it. It's part of our ethos.

Marios Costi	<p>OK, thank you.</p> <p>Everyone, I'd like to encourage you all to watch the following programmes: <b>The Black Cats' Tale, Found in Sport</b> and <b>The Beautiful Game!</b></p> <p>Thank you so much to you both for participating today. Bye everyone.</p>
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