

Hanna Glas, Swedish international women football star, grew up in a small town of Sundsvall - north of Stockholm. She began to play football at five years of age.

Hanna started her professional football career in her home country Sweden and played there till 25 years old. She switched to PSG in France for two years and in 2020 moved to Bayern Munich for a three-year contract. This year she has crossed the Atlantic and she signed a 2-year contract with the Kansas City in the USA.

She was integral part of the Swedish squad that won the 2012 UEFA Women's Under 19 Championship. In 2019 she was part of the Sweden squad that finished 3rd place in the FIFA World Cup. In 2021 she was a started in Sweden's 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games where they won a silver medal. Glas missed the 2023 FIFA Women's World due to the knee surgery.

Glas is considered as one of the world's best defenders and she visited Aspetar this year as part of her rehabilitation following her last knee surgery.

In this interview to Enda King, she opens up to discuss and share her experience with multiple knee injuries and surgery and especially long rehabilitation period, "coping small celebration" on the long way to her final goal of returning to performance after ACL Reconstruction.



You have more experience than most with ACL injuries during your career, could you give us some insights into your knee injuries?

My first ACL was when I turned around 17 years old at the national team camp for youth, in 2010. I was operated on two days after injury, so I was lucky. I had no idea and had never heard about ACL before, because I was young and didn't know about it, but it was tough. But then got back to playing and in 2013 it happened again in the same knee with the same situation. I just passed the ball and then I got tackled from behind, then when I landed on my leg, my knee just went out and clicked. Then I got back to playing and it was almost like two to three year cycle. In 2015 I injured myself

A background image of Hanna Glas, a Swedish soccer player, running on a field during a match. She is wearing a white jersey with the number 7 and the Swedish national team crest. The background is blurred, showing spectators in the stands.

HANNA GLAS

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

CLUBS

2023 Kansas City

2020/23 Bayern Munich

2018/20 Paris Saint-Germain

2017/18 Eskilstuna United

2014/16 Umeå IK

2011/12 Sundsvalls DFF

NATIONAL TEAM

2020 Silver medal at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020

2019 3rd place at the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019

2012 Gold medal at the UEFA Women's Under-19 Championship 2012

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again but this time it was my left knee. Then also got back from that and played for many years. I played a lot of years without any problems but then I landed on my knee and then gradually it was then my ACL, but it was fine, but I decided a year ago, 2022, to have the surgery done.

Obviously, that is more injuries than any team would want rather than an individual player, did you find that the rehabilitation and recovery were easier or more challenging as you gained those experiences?

I would say the second one was definitely easier than the first one because I had no idea what I was expecting. The long journey, the

pain, and the hard work. Also, I could learn from my first mistakes because maybe it wasn't so cardio-focused at first time, so I took a bit longer time so I could add more of that stuff. The third one was maybe the hardest one mentally because I just got my first call-up for the women's national team and had been doing well already. It's like knowing exactly the journey again, but it was also okay because it was easier in one way, because I also knew what was expected and I was learning from my previous two ACLs experiences, "I need to do this better and this better". And you know, you learn then you grow. Last time has been pretty hard because there are some cartilage issues and stuff and with the swelling, so maybe mentally that's also been one of the hardest ones.

What have your major learnings been about ACL rehabilitation throughout that time?

Well definitely to set, of course, the vision has to be back out there playing games and be fully fit and healthy, but to also have smaller goals directly after the surgery. Get full flexion, get full extension and the next step is like walking without crutches, biking, jumping, running and it's important, or at least was for me, to have those small steps to be able to celebrate the big thing or not the big but the small celebration on the way to the big goal.

How have rehabilitation approaches changed over that time?

I have a lot of learnings, just to take it more day by day. It was also that it goes up and down. It's like a roller coaster, that I feel it's like a journey, you have good days, you have bad days, but also now to accept like "okay maybe today was a bad day, what can I do to have the best day today?". Well, to prepare yourself in the best way for the next day, be calmer in the whole journey. Not being so stressed, just do everything I can, but still accept that maybe it'll take longer time. It's important not to compare too much to other people with the same injury, because I've been doing it. I was telling myself not daily but very often, but it's so easy, just look at other players and you're like "oh, they're playing again" or like "They're running, why am I not running? It's been one month more!". So, I don't know, maybe mostly the mental aspects of it.



Image left: Hanna Glas during the match between Australia and Sweden at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, 2021 Japan.

Image bottom left: Glas and her teammates celebrate their victory in the match between England and Sweden, securing third place at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France.

Image right: Hanna Glas and Nikita Parris battle for the ball during the UEFA Women's Champions League Quarter Final match between Olympique Lyon Women and FC Bayern Muenchen Women, 2020, Spain.



When you are speaking to a colleague or teammate who has suffered ACL injury, what advice do you give them and what are the most important factors for them to consider while going through the process?

As I said, be prepared that there will be ups and downs. Do not to skip any steps or rush ahead, really take it slow, because if you do it and you do it correctly, it will also go better in the end. Do not rush it and then have a setback from that, then it takes even longer time or that you cheat with some things or exercises because the only person you're cheating on is yourself.

For those involved in rehabilitation (physios, S&C, coaches) what advice would you give them from a player's perspective to optimise their approach to ACL rehabilitation?

Well, I thought about this a lot yesterday, but then I still landed on a kind of mental aspect also by going through the same journey with fellow teammates and stuff. Don't forget the mental aspect of it all, because usually if you're playing a team sport and you get kind of separated from the team, it's pretty hard to be alone and it's pretty easy also to get kind of outside the team and the circle. So just have that in mind. Don't forget the human behind the athlete during this journey because it's a long journey and it's tough. But to still have in mind, how the human is doing or if you need massive support or it could also just have to make it fun. That is what's kind of helped me during my journey to make it fun. You can make jokes and find like good things during the process.

In spite of these challenges, you have had a wonderful career and played for some of the best teams in the world - what are your career highlights to date?

There are so many but would say the World Cup bronze medal in 2019 in France is definitely a highlight. It was the second tournament

with the National Team, but it was just amazing. A big tournament and a big achievement for me as an individual but also for a team. It was also great to play the Olympics in Tokyo 2021, it was a bit different because it was like all other sports too. So, it was really cool to see all the athletes and we were so close. I'm proud of the silver medal, but I will never get over everything, to win that final.

You are now playing in the USA - what are the main difference in terms of football and training compared to European football?

I would definitely say the athletic part of it, I feel that a lot of American football players are so strong and so fast that I'm really impressed with the athletic systems that they have. It's also reflected a bit in the game. It's more transitional going back and forth. It's very fast and not as much tactical maybe as we have in Europe.

What about in terms of rehabilitation - what differences have you noticed either side of the Atlantic?

Not too much, but it's been a lot more running this time, so I have been the fittest during my whole rehab in the US. So, it's a lot of training, a lot of hours.

Enda King PT, PhD