

**INTERVIEWER:** In 2021, Blake Proehl was the Minnesota Vikings most promising, undrafted free agent. He landed a \$115,000 contract. Did well in training camp. But a devastating knee injury put him on the sidelines for now. And he has since gone viral for a new talent, music.

[MUSIC - BLAKE PROEHL, "FALLING INTO YOU"]

(SINGING) Every time I look at you, I can feel the minutes move, like time is taking you from me. Every day that passes by, I can feel the seconds fly. There's too many miles in between. It's like my heart--

Blake's on the line now. Welcome to *Minnesota Now*.

**BLAKE PROEHL:** Thank you. Thank you so much for having me, man.

**INTERVIEWER:** So that injury sounded downright scary. You tore your ACL, MCL, meniscus. And this comes right after you battle your way onto an NFL roster. You're shooting for a regular spot beside some of the league's best receivers, like Adam Thielen and Justin Jefferson. Talk about what that felt like.

**BLAKE PROEHL:** It was super tough on me, to be honest with you. I had a chip on my shoulder. And I had been coming out of a free agency. And it was really, really good to be able to prove myself.

It really haunted me because I didn't know if I was going to be able to ever come back from an injury like this. I had heard opinions that maybe I wouldn't be able to ever play again. So I think that's what really made me spiral downwards I would say. And that's what led me to music honestly.

So I'm thankful for it. I wouldn't take it back for the world. I'm a big faith guy. So I believe it happened for a reason.

**INTERVIEWER:** You've also grown up with the challenges of the NFL. Your dad, Ricky Proehl, played in the NFL for 17 seasons. Your brother Austin was drafted in 2018. Did you see yourself following them into the league? Where he always planning a football career?

**BLAKE PROEHL:** Yeah. Honestly, football runs in our bloodlines. That's what put food on our table. So it's all we knew growing up. And I think that's what made it super tough as well. It made me think what is my life without football. And that was super scary for me and, honestly, helped me mature a lot and learn more about life. It goes beyond football.

**INTERVIEWER:** And here you get this devastating injury. I've seen pictures of you out on the field on a scooter instead of playing football. But it opens you up to this other musical side of yourself and to TikTok. What would have been different if you walked off the field after practice with Denver that day instead of this injury?

**BLAKE PROEHL:** Yeah. That's what I'm saying. That's why I don't think I would ever take it back. Life can throw you in the hoop sometimes. But when you look back on it, after you grow and mature out of a situation like that, you learn how-- at least in my opinion, I don't ever want to take back the times of adversity because that's where I feel that's where you truly grow.

It led me to something that I've found that I truly love and where I can really inspire people. I really, really fell in love with it. So now I have a story to tell. And I've been through some stuff the past year that led me to something beautiful.

**INTERVIEWER:** I'm curious about where this came from. I see a lot of stories from your family that you grew up singing. And a lot of accomplished musicians also put as much work into it as an athlete. I mean, were you in-band or choir part of the time and in the locker room part of the time at school? Or you a self-starter? Tell me about your musical experience.

**BLAKE PROEHL:** Honestly, no. I get that question a lot. Actually, it's like, did you do piano lessons? I didn't. For some reason, growing up in a football family, we didn't really do anything else but play sports, baseball, basketball, football. It was the cool thing to do.

And for some reason, it was just like-- I don't know. I just never-- I've always loved music. I mean, I got tapes. My mom shows me, it's pretty cool, my baby book we found once all this stuff started blowing up. Apparently, I told her when I was three years old that music lives in me which is super random.

And then next thing you know, 20 years down the road, it came to fruition which is nuts because, other than that-- I mean, I would grow up singing in the shower and stuff. I've always loved music, loved to dance and all that. So I've always been musical, but never did anything with it, never did a lesson or anything like that. It's kind of crazy. I don't know.

**INTERVIEWER:** And now you've got 466,000 followers on TikTok and lots of the content there's your music. You sing a lot of really heartfelt pop songs. What inspires you musically? What are you looking for?

**BLAKE PROEHL:** I've learned-- and I'm still learning. I'm still new. It hasn't even been a year yet. But I've learned the thing about music is you go through cycles, especially as an artist. And my introduction to music and being an artist was in a really, really dark time, so I think a lot of the lyrics I wrote in songs, whether it was covers or things I was singing on TikTok or Instagram, were usually pretty heartfelt ballads, because that's where my heart was.

And I felt emotional ballads and songs like that, I feel reach deeper when people hear those type of songs. Early and also now, I do write some more poppy-type, upbeat songs too now, but I do love to sing ballads and super-deep messages in songs. I feel that's the reason why I got into it is to help other people who are struggling.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is this something you feel you can keep doing and keep playing football? Can you have people cheering for you in the stands and singing along with you as well?

**BLAKE PROEHL:** For sure. I definitely think so. I'm not going to lie. It's pretty tough. But the one thing is I came here for a job. The Vikings trusted me and my abilities. And that's what I'm here for. So that's my first priority. But music is always going to be there no matter what.

Football-- one thing about football, we wish we could play it forever. But it'll take a toll on your body eventually. And the cool thing about music is you can do it as long as you can have a voice which is a long time.

So everything I've got into football right now. And then I have music at nighttime. I like to call it my moonlight job. And then I got a big time day job. So I try to balance both as best as I can.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you talked about the toll of football. How is your knee? What's next for you in your recovery?

**BLAKE PROEHL:** My knee is good. It was a long process. But the beginning was really, really tough. But I started to turn over pretty well and was healing really, really good. I've got access to amazing trainers and a great staff. So without them, I don't think I would have made it this far.

But I, hopefully, will start practicing here soon, a couple of weeks is the goal here to get cleared. And it's been a long time. But I'm really, really excited.

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, we look forward to seeing you out on the field with the Vikings.

**BLAKE PROEHL:** Thank you, guys, for having me.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's Blake Proehl who's a wide receiver for the Minnesota Vikings and a musician. You can find him on TikTok @BlakeProehl.

[MUSIC PLAYING]