

# INTRODUCTION

My name is Robbie Rogers. My sister Alicia calls me ‘Robber’, but only when she’s being affectionate and wants to make me smile. Mum calls me ‘Robbie’ or ‘Dearheart’ and a lot of other embarrassing things. Grammers and Grandpa call me ‘Obbie Ogers’, not because *they* have a problem with their ‘r’s but because *I* used to and they still like to think of me as their little grandson even though I long ago made peace with the entire alphabet. Most everyone else calls me Robbie.

Until recently I was best known as a professional football player who dabbled in fashion. (I have a men’s clothing line.) I’ve played football in one form or another for twenty-two of my twenty-six years and during that time I’ve done what I’ve had to in order to fit in and excel in the game I love.

My fans know that I played for the Columbus Crew in Ohio for five seasons, was voted All-Star, and was named to the MLS Best XI, one of the biggest honours for a player in Major League Soccer, when we won the 2008 MLS Cup. They also know that

## COMING OUT TO PLAY

I played for the US Olympic football team in the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics (one of the highlights of my life), that I left the United States in 2012 to play football for Leeds United, and in May 2013 joined the LA Galaxy.

What I'm best known for now is having 'blazed a trail', as NBA player Jason Collins said, when I returned to football after a very brief retirement and became the first openly gay male athlete to play in one of the top five team sports in North America.

Those are the bare outlines of my life. And while the various media have filled in some of the details since I came out publicly in February 2013, I've been uncomfortable with the shorthand versions of my life that I've seen and read. So in the pages that follow I'll tell you the story of my life behind the headlines, how I lived with a secret that just about destroyed me, how I came to free myself from that secret, and how, despite all my fears to the contrary, I found the kind of acceptance, support and love that I never believed was possible.

My hope is that by reading the story of my life in greater depth you will learn something from my experience. While I wouldn't change anything about my life as I've lived it – because I wouldn't be where I am today if not for all the experiences I've had, both good and bad – I wish I'd known the high price you inevitably pay when you choose to keep a secret that compels you to live a lie.

It's a cliché to say that the truth will set you free. But as you'll see, that's exactly what happened to me. And it's that wish to live an open and honest life that inspires me now to share my story with you.

**ROBBIE ROGERS**  
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