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Taking His Best Shot

The actor/athlete seeks a new challenge.

INTERVIEW BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

Greg Finley belongs to an exclusive club of talented young people from Maine—think Anna Kendrick, Tim Simons, Rachel Nichols, Kyle Rankin, Caitlin FitzGerald, Patrick Dempsey, Judd Nelson—who have succeeded in Hollywood. In

Finley's case, it was an improbable trajectory from Scarborough High '03 to a lead role on the long-running ABC Family TV series, *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, in 2008; a role in this year's series *Star-Crossed*; upcoming appearances as a heavy-metal meta-human on this fall's new series *The Flash*; and guest spots in between on shows including *Law & Order*, *Cold Case*, and *House*. He'd originally gone off to study restaurant management at Johnson & Wales University. "The plan was always to run my own restaurant." His dad's an owner of the Dry Dock Restaurant & Tavern on Commercial Street in the Old Port, so he knows the business. ("Oh yeah, I started washing dishes there when I was 14.")

Then he sustained a sports injury requiring emergency surgery and lengthy, bedridden convalescence at age 19. This resulted in months spent watching countless movies on DVD. When he was well, there was a new plan.

Were your parents worried sick when you told them you were quitting school to



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go to Hollywood and become an actor?

They didn't—or maybe they did—freak out, but inside. They were supportive; they believed I could do it. I probably never would've stuck it out without the moral support from my family. I get out here and I'm living in the Hollywood Star Inn, 25 bucks a night, and I'm homesick. There were some hard times, when I really wasn't in a good place. I almost gave up after a couple of years. But they'd say, 'No, stick with it, stick with it.' It really helped. At one point I'm in this empty apartment, no furniture, sleeping on the floor. I mean, I'm 23 years old and I'm working dead-end jobs.

Then you suddenly have a great role in a TV series.

I was really lucky *Secret Life* went for five years. It might not have been a huge hit with critics, but it had viewers. There were times we were doubling *Gossip Girl* numbers.

After *Secret Life*, you were cast in *Star-Crossed*. You have tattoos yourself, but your character had very different ones. Didn't your agent ever tell you to not get any tattoos if you're planning a screen career?

Oh yeah, everyone told me. They used to joke on the set of *Secret Life* that I spent more time in makeup than the girls, getting my tattoos covered up. I just like tattoos.

And that scar next to your eye?

Yeah, a kid threw a rock when I was a kid. Just missed my eye and my temple. But it required 46 stitches. Early in *Secret Life* they makeup'd it out. Then it became cool.

Talk about *Danny Boy*, the movie you wrote and are trying to produce in Maine.

Co-wrote. I came up with it and I wrote the first draft, but it wasn't where it needed to be, so I hired a real writer. I have a production company. I'm a director and one actress away from rolling. The Maine battle continues, though. It's always about the money, the tax incentives. It's just really hard to make a movie in Maine because the incentives aren't there. That's why there's so much filming in places like North Carolina and New Orleans. But I really want *Danny Boy* to film in Portland. In my head I'm picturing the docks on the waterfront, the cobblestones. Danny's a Maine kid who comes up through Golden Gloves.

Did you box as a kid?

No, my dad had a heavy bag and a speed



Finley in *Law & Order: SVU*, with Detective Nick Amaro, played by Danny Pino. "I was on the Emmy ballot for that part."

bag and I worked out with them, but I never boxed competitively. I play basketball. I'm in the NBA E-league out here, I was rookie of the year one year. The league's for basically anyone in the entertainment business who can actually play. I've played with Josh Hutcherson, Terrell Owens, Chris Brown, the rapper J. Cole, all kinds of guys.

Terrell Owens? Isn't he an NFL guy?

Hey, T.O.'s done reality shows!

Who are the actors you admire?

I've been a huge Leo fan from day one. He is just so good. Jack Nicholson. And Christian Bale. He's our greatest chameleon.

Did Bale's work in *The Fighter* influence your creation of *Danny Boy*?

It's funny, but I actually start writing my script before *The Fighter* ever came out.

Besides the film and two episodes of *The Flash*, what do you have going on?

I'm back on the grind since [*Star-Crossed*] didn't get renewed. Auditions, auditions, auditions. My agent—Amanda Glazer, she's great, she's been with me right from the start—has some irons in the fire.

So after years of struggling and making it, are you now out hobnobbing with other young actors in Hollywood?

No! I'm not into that. I hate being photographed and going to those events. I do keep in touch with the gang from *Secret Life*, though—we got to be a close group.

Hate being photographed when you make a living in front of a camera?

That's not *me* when I'm acting. That's why I can do what I do.

Do you get back to Maine much?

As often as I can. It's great because I couldn't get back much in the lean years. I get there and I just stuff myself with seafood. I love going to Old Orchard. And my family visits me out here.

So do you have an apartment with furniture now?

Got a house! Got the pool. I'm looking out at my fire pit in the backyard right now. ■

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