Behind the Scenes Look at the DNA results of Andy Walshe Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Background

Hello everyone. Welcome again to our fantastic series. Here we're interviewing some of the top health experts from around the world. My name is Haris Khan.

As always, the director of Product development here at the DNA company. And today I have a very, very special guest and dear friend, someone I've known for a number of years now.

Absolutely floored by the work that he is doing there. And so I'll hand it over to Andy. Andy Walsh, please do introduce yourself. Thank you for joining us today.

Hey there. I thank you and thanks to the DNA company for hosting us. Yeah. My name's Andy Walsh. Short story, career in, human performance that started many years ago in Australia and, focused primarily, obviously in the athletic space and then over the years moved to the US, started develop, human performance programs that explore potential and, and everybody across from study with athletes.

But maybe you musicians and artists and, and business leaders and military groups, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So I've really just been watching and listening over these 30 years of my career to people who've done extraordinary things and trying to understand how they get there and what they've done to get there and and learn from them and share that.

Let's share that information. Fantastic. So, Andy, you know, we met a number of years ago. Talk to us about, you know, what attracted you to DNA testing time, if you were familiar with it before and kind of what really drew you were attracted you to what it is that we were doing at the time that made it feel like, you know, what?

This is this is something that we could use. Yeah. So in my, you know, fortunate part of my career as like a sort of more sort of, sort of, it's sort of as a across the community, I guess you'd say I would get sent a lot of, new products, new technologies, new systems about sort of enhancing human performance.

Obviously, I think late 90s, early 2000, DNA started to poke, its head into the human performance space. If you like. But the early days, like, with any new, you new technology or new philosophy, it sort of was fairly heavily, I would say a bit it wasn't wasn't proof.

The proof points weren't there. So what we were looking for all over the years was a place or an organization that would strip away the, let's call it the, exaggeration from the claims, and get down to what they really could see and understand and interpret from the DNA profiling.

Why DNA Testing Mattered

And it took a long time. I finally went through the connection with documents or and yourself and the DNA company. We were attracted to the idea that you were very heavily, vested in the scientific support and literature that would sort of back up the claims.

You weren't making false claims around, you know, this DNA sequence means you shouldn't eat broccoli and things like that. Really crazy outlandish claims at the time.

And we really found the rigor in the science, plus the understanding of the mechanistic pathways that underlie the science, and also led to some interpretation that could then be tested, embedded.

So it was that partnership was really appealing as well. So, so like this. This means this what this means this. It was hey, we have this profile. We have this particular sequence.

And we think in a mechanistic way it might point to this. And we're in a position then to check that against all the other data we collected on, on that individual and through that cross check and cross sort of, validation, where I to sort of see where your, profiling really, really did add value to the improvement of this talent.

We were working with. Amazing. And of course, during this process, you got a chance to, to test yourself. Tell us a little bit about, you know, what you learned, maybe things that kind of confirmed your, your suspicions or things that were surprised you.

What did you learn from the actual testing yourself? Well, I think I think you guys told me I had the best DNA. That was information or something like that.

You know, that was actually far from the truth. But for the truth, I mean, there were so many great insights. So, again, it's it's only a small part of the sequencing that you share, because that's the part that's ratified and validated to the level of acceptance.

But one of the interesting ones for me was kind of remove that particular splice. But it was the the idea that I obviously have a have a sequence that allows me to, well, like that when I experience very exciting or challenging things.

So I get a great kick, from the dopamine response in the brain. But at the same time, I had the other part of that sequence that I've, I flush it out and clean it very quickly.

Yeah. And in medical terms, you know, sort of pointed to the fact that, when you did the assessment, Manso didn't know, documents or didn't know, my background and he he was not surprised, to say the least, at that point in time was that high performance director for Red bull was obviously was taking the craziest and, most extraordinary, athletes in the world pushing the limits and all these amazing, you know, from big mountains to big surf and, you know, and I was moving quickly through that space.

So it was like I enjoyed it. We got involved with surf and then obviously potentially I wouldn't say bored, but in my brain was switching to now let's get a big mountain skiing, let's get a motor sports, let's get get to skateboarding.

You know, this kind of full wheel, you know, those sorts of things. So what was fascinating to me was just the ability, all jokes aside, to take that very specific gene, look at its mechanistic pathways with respect, in this way, behavioral, sort of frameworks.

And for me being to say, yeah, you know, much like that does explain a lot of the way I operate. It does give me some more in, reference with respect to how I could improve my operations in that space.

And I think what's really powerful for us is we focus heavily on. So the first phase of your performance, a deep understanding of who you are. So it's just another great piece of that puzzle that we were able to potentially for me, add in to my understanding, allows me then to develop and grow and learn.

Yeah. And it's funny, you know, we you are the prototypical like you are. It's so funny because like you said, we didn't know who you were when we did your tests.

Personal Test Results and Dopamine Response

If I had to describe a person who only is happy when they're jumping out of a plane, it would be you, right? Because that's literally you derive your thrills from the extreme.

And here you are, director of High performance at Red bull, which is all about extreme sports. Like you're just not happy unless the wave is 60ft tall, like it's it's got to be the biggest and the baddest for you to buying.

And it's an interesting combination because what's happening literally in your brain is the dopamine which was in charge of your pleasure, which was the charge to making you feel happy.

It's been cleared out super fast by this little enzyme called comet. It was driven by a gene. So you got a really fast com clearing. You get your dopamine and on top of that you don't have enough of the receptors.

So literally in order for you to experience pleasure, like we got to push you off a cliff and you don't have to know it probably like oh yeah that was fun, right.

And, and it's really interesting because you're the type of person that unless you have those challenges, those incredible lofty heights to achieve, you don't feel fulfilled.

Right? We always talk about Rolling Stones. I can get no satisfaction for any. There's no satisfaction. And unless he is literally putting himself at risk of life and death kind of thing, because that's where you're at, you're you're thriving.

So those entrepreneurs, guys like you, you're you're pushing yourself to the limit. So, it was really, really interesting because we told you that. And you're like, by the way, I don't know if you know what I do.

I'm the director of High Performance at Reckful, and we're like, like mind blown that that's where you were thriving. So yeah. Yeah, I think that's the fun part.

It's like I've been around this game long enough. There's never an answer. There's never a simple yes or no. It's never bond. Right. But there's information you can collect and learn about yourself.

And sometimes it supports what you understand. Sometimes it challenges what you understand. In this particular case, you know, I wasn't I was not the person going out into the big waves or the big stuff anymore.

But I was definitely in there and working with those people who were doing that. So you sort of see you get that connection. That's where you feel most, alive.

That idea, you know, helping people like we subsequently have, like taking a group of executives who we took, recently through a program with you where we, we, you know, obviously looking to understand how does this C-suite group operate at the highest level, what can we learn about each other?

And, you know, as I typically say, everybody, no matter what assessment we do, whether it's on file, biological assess for blood profile something or DNA or it's a physical assessment or cognitive tests.

You know, we're probably 75 to 80% in the ballpark with a really good test. There's always that main part you agree with. And this should be a couple things that you find challenging because it's their investment in DNA.

The epigenetic influence on your DNA profile was going to. So I think in that space in you sitting down with a group of executives and they're trying to really think about how do they bring that, performance for the company to that higher level.

Giving them that information allowed us to say, well, yeah, from a physical, just general health perspective, check these things out and that stuff really strongly validate.

And then you get into as a behavioral physician, like working with Andy, make sure you keep him energized and excited. And because if you don't he's going to get bored and, you know, start to create problems.

So that idea of who's in your team and what they're both doing from a cognitive, biological and behavioral, you know, a level of really allows that team to flourish.

And I think that's the idea of, and whether they agree or disagree, the conversation about the point is really important because it brings, better understanding of each other, deepens communication, and through that deepens trust.

And that's where you start to build that. So it's been, you know, and on many levels personally and know as we operate with it, something that's been really, useful for us, you know, and as we work.

Strength Training and Precision Performance

So I remember actually, you know, when we were, when we were connected together and working with these group executives, a while back, one of the interesting found, you know, was finding that you had done was about building real strength, and you actually had shown the data that, you know, people think that you gotta be pumping, you know, tons of muscle or tons of weights tons of times.

And you were actually able to show that if you're intelligent about how you approach strength training, you can have a lot more output for a lot less input.

Can you expand a little bit on some of those findings? Yeah, of course. I think what we've learned over the years is, again, if you work with the best strength trainers and athletes in the world and, you know, Olympic weightlifting program, you learn about the it's like anything you learn about the efficiency.

So just as a general level, they've they've been doing it all their life for a long, long time. And that's all they focus on. And so you've they've figured out, all right, if we're going to train ten, 20 hours a week in this space, we're going to do things this way.

And they're still learning by no means answers. And I think, you know, that gets you so far experience in practice and just the historical, research that's been done.

On if I left this way heavyweight five times and this line of 50 times, what's the difference? And you do you learn the profile has an impact. What's also now where the industry is heading in that elite performance space is not only recognizing the different stimulus is have an impact on in a different way on you, but recognizing that as an individual your body has a unique response to the stimulus.

So yes, you may lift one big rock five times and super heavy or a lot of rock 50 times. It's a lot of it has a has an impact. There's a there's a physical stimulus in the load.

But as an individual, you and I, if we lift I lift the big rock five times. It's really heavy. And you lift the same big rock five, you're going to have a different response than I will.

So that same stimulus. So I think we're in the position now with this and with the work, you know, and the genetic basis of some of this work that we're starting to understand is that precision performance idea that you as an individual are probably going to respond in a certain way to this type of training differently.

So not only do we now have the picture of what the stimulus I want, we but the input to the talent is. We also looking at your specific opportunity to respond to that stimulus.

And that's where we get to this idea that yeah, not it's not one size fits all, which everybody recognizes is really hard to implement. Like, you know, in the old days and even today, it takes a team of eight, ten, 12 people on one really high performing person to get all the information and recognize that's just not feasible in the in the real world.

So you get this sort of, a genetic profile done on that individual on fast track that you don't need to and, you know, you can start to interpret. And I think one of the, the in other work you've been doing is deeply trying to push, at the DNA company, which is helping us at simplifying that understanding and making it real.

So that people who are not geneticists, you know, have a background, can really look at the information and go, wow, I again, might not agree with everything, but that's absolutely fine.

It should be that way. But when they do recognize what their base level is and they can look at what they're doing, they can then be in a better position to make adjustments to their own program, which, yeah, hopefully puts people

like me out of a job.

Well, hopefully not because the work you're doing is fantastic. And just to expand sort of, you know, on that, on that, on that difference in modalities, in terms of strength training.

You know, people always say, you know, is it more cardio for you? Is it more weight lifting for you? What's that kind of combination? And to your point it's down to the person, not the exercise itself.

The exercise itself is always beneficial, but who is it more beneficial for? So one of the things we did here at the at the DNA company, we looked at genetics who said, well, one of the big factors in influencing sort of whether or not you should have a higher cardiovascular exercise output in your specific regimen was, well, how well do you respond to the eventual inflammation and production of free radicals caused by excess cardiovascular activity?

And of course, we found a very strong correlation between people who carried, you know, a version of their 9 to 1 which influences endothelial inflammation.

That's the inside of your of your blood vessels. Well, the people were more likely to become inflamed during the presence of toxins, toxins like free radicals.

They were going to always be better off having a more weight bearing, lower intensity cardiovascular exercise model versus like, I need to go and do a marathon run to lose weight or I need to.

I need to really push myself to live. And some people just aren't designed to push their heart to that limit. They have to they have to achieve their goals in another way.

So, you know, and to your point, we have work with some of these elite athletes to be like, hey, you're an elite athlete. You're performing at the highest level. But guess what?

Some of your exercises are hampering your growth, meaning you are not achieving your full potential because what you think is good for you, that you've heard and all your trainers are telling you that they've applied every people actually doesn't end up working for you.

So if you just do this one tweak and that's the magic, right? It's the we're not telling people to jump through a fire or a fire or like a hoop made a fire to heal themselves.

We're like, just literally make this one tweak and you see massive gains. It's at the elite level, as you know, that one change is what separates the great from the good.

So, I mean, it's just it's great to see that we can we can see that kind of sort of validation, that efficacy showing up in these people.

Elite Competition, Mindset, and Cognition

One last thing I wanted you to talk about. I remember when we were having this conversation, you made a really important point. You said, look at the elite level.

Like when you've got Olympians and you've got all these, like, ten Olympians about to do the 100 meter dash, right? So you got Usain Bolt and all these guys.

What separates the gold medalists winner from everyone else? And the reality is it's not really about their physical, performance that that's the cream of the crop.

Those are the greatest athletes on the planet. So what in your in your expertise, in your experience separates the gold winner from everyone else? Yeah.

It's a it's the it's the question I think that we're trying to all in our community understand. But you know, the the running joke in our community is, you know, how do you how do you determine who's the fastest is you have them line up and race the winners the fastest.

So it's, when you get to that level, the approach is fundamentally, sort of accepted is that there's this threshold. You know, you have to be obviously a certain, framework, a physical build, a certain type of musculature, a certain amount of training, a sort of history of running fast for many, many years.

And. Yeah, and that can lay into the genetics and who your parents were and the whole, the whole package. What's what's really extraordinary at that level, though, is that there's, it's, you know, aside from the stopwatch.

Shane. Yeah. And Mr. Bolt's the fastest down the track. It's really hard to delineate one thing, and say, that's why he wins every time. And it's really hard to even take it a step further and say this young kid has this particular thing that means they will win in five years every time.

It's just, it's it's sort of at that level. It's winning is this is the test. So the train is but there's this threshold of characteristics that you have to have, and it's trying to understand those thresholds and understand where training should be focused whatsoever.

Training and good coaches do this intuitively. What getting again, the promise of the work that that your into researching deeply is the notion that we can get on top of the intuition and the art.

The science can now start to say potentially there's other ways of training or improving this individual and potentially even finding other people who could have run as fast as he's saying he for the right for the, you know, obvious reasons.

Missed that window, didn't have the right training at the right time and just, you know, went off to do other things. Not to say, you know, everyone wants to win. Know.

But that's the idea is. Yeah. And you and you and you specifically said, hey, look, the guy who's winning, he's performing what he's doing for the last four years, but he's doing it in uncertain environment because of his.

It's it's that mentality. It's the winning mentality was that, you know, mom's calling you before the race. It's that, you know, it's the it's the Kobe Bryant kind of like win at all costs, you know.

And that was genetically influenced. Some people were like, oh my mom can get into the stadium to watch me. And that split second of hesitation, that's what because it comes down to split seconds.

Whereas yeah, you saying both like when at all costs, like I don't care what's happening, I'm going to do exactly if I'm a machine and I'm going to run, no matter what's happening, the world can be born and I'm running.

Right? So, I remember when you had been like, hey, people are ignoring the cognitive part of why, like, athletes are normal people at the end of the day, and they're influenced by by pain and all these emotions.

And so you've done a lot of work in kind of identifying that aspect of cognition as it relates to performance. Yeah, yeah. Well, we spent a ton of time trying to replicate high stakes, high risk, high pressure environments to enable people to practice under those conditions.

And again, that allows you to develop those skills that when you do get to, you know, the 100 mania final at the Olympics, which is a big deal for the few people watching, you know, TV, you know, it's, it's there's a lot of pressure on those people who have managed to learn to adapt and navigate that space, physically and cognitively, but definitely cognitively at that point, have figured out, you know, their way, their way to be very clear of, of, optimizing themselves on those conditions.

You may remember, you know, all the time. And he's always at the edge, kind of joking and. Right. And he's always

fist pumping the kids who are supporting the line, the, you know, the judges, etc..

And there's a great video. And so he's super relaxed and, you know, it's it's a little bit of the nature noticing. Did he learn how to do that? Because he was so fast and he learned how to relax?

Did he have to manage himself better to learn how to run fast? And it's always, yeah, we're not at the point yet to be an answer that, but it's so important.

And then obviously when he executes and launches down the pitch, his level of confidence becomes a weapon against everybody else. Because fundamentally, in those big, big events, he is trying to basically these competitors are competing for second place.

That's awesome. That's awesome. And, and and the reality is, you know, even with the genetics, they're not a death sentence. There's simply a and there's their landscape.

And you can train yourself to excel beyond your genetics. So genetics are not guaranteed. They're simply, hey, this is your predisposition. You're more likely to be like this, but it's not like a guarantee that you have to be like that.

People will exceed their potential. People will. And that's that's who we are. Humans exceed their potential. That's basically everything that you do with the work that you're doing.

So I want to thank you again for, for taking the time to do this.

Know Yourself and Keep Learning

I know you're busy guy. That's so many people that you're working with, so I appreciate it. All the work that you're doing, you know, one last thing you want to leave us with, sort of for for viewers to think about when it comes to human performance and potential, you know, give us, give us a nugget, a golden gem that you would, that you would want to share with people.

Well, I think the first one is make sure your kids don't interrupt the interviews while you're viewing them. Hey, it's okay, man. It's a post-Covid world. Oh, I get it, I get it.

I'm just like, yeah, you're killing me. You're killing me. I think that if I would give people now, is that these are these tools, and genetics is a big one, and it's only becoming more, relevant and more, fully understood and more and such as more impact.

I would say get to know yourself really, really as a human, no matter what you're trying to achieve. Our first philosophy is just know thyself, know yourself well.

Do the work to recognize when you are thriving, when you are struggling, when you are, you know when this particular work helps this particular work. And also when you eat this, it helps and you know and build that puzzle for itself.

Try to take away as many of the questions. And I think that that work again. And we typically start with genetics. We it's the first thing. All right. Let's just go right down to that the root cause here and just see build on it and build and build.

And then that process from an understanding of yourself, you'll be then in a better position to lead, be part of a team. You know, they've been a pair and be a bit, you know, father, son, daughter, wife, partner, whatever it may be.

And you can recognize that the human performance sort of just extends beyond the sort of classic athletic sense, but really applies to everybody in their life in some form or another.

And, yeah, I guess that's the key to it. And take that take and take it with, with an act of kindness, might actually you, you recognize there's no perfect solution.

And as you learn about yourself, be kind to yourself. And but, don't take anything too seriously. That's part of the biggest tip, I think, that people have to make coming from a guy who deals with people who take themselves too seriously for, for a living.

Yeah, yeah. But I think, you know, that's that's their job. But if your job is not there, then just make it a journey that you enjoy. Then don't then get too caught up in it because you never and you know, you never stop learning.

And we may work with someone for 20 years and there's still things they do that surprise us. We learn, wow, could I use that information 20 years ago?

You know, that's how it guess it. Thanks again. Thanks again for your listeners. Yeah, I appreciate any thank you for for giving your time. And, you know, I'm sure everyone who's listening is going to is going to take everything from your wealth of knowledge.

So I appreciate you being a great partner to us and looking forward to chatting with you again, man. I look forward to doing more great work together.

Thank you. Thank you.