Building a Strong Foundation

build a strong foundation of your organization whatever organization is business sports whatever build that strong Foundation continue to build upon that foundation and surround yourself with amazing people and if you do that the odds are you will be more successful than the guy next to you that doesn't do what you're doing.

I'm sitting here with Steve Govett for those of you are wondering who the heck this bald guy He was the big bushy beard with the funny Canadian accent is peace.

He's a long-time friend of mine It's 30 years, right that we know each other was 30 Years ago right about now that I hired you 30.

Steve Govettu2019s Lacrosse Legacy

Yes, so that means 1996, you're right. Yeah, it's thirty years It was probably right around April May because you guys were still in the playoffs. So yeah for the wings Wow cuz remember you gave me tickets Yeah That's like our anniversary.

Should we hug? No, no naked. No. Okay, I Steve is a if you if You are a lacrosse fan There's a pretty good chance. You know the people that Steve has hung out with you might even know Steve's name But Steve, is actually like this guy I I like to stay say that you are like the guy.

I give you a lot of shit But you, are the, guy you're the straw that stirs the drink I like to think of myself as the John Adams of lacrosse. Everybody loves George Washington, but John Adam's like, you know, he was the guy that pulled the fabric together, made it all.

Yeah, that is a really good analogy for who you are, so. He was like Paul Giamatti, So yeah, well, That's a good point. Yeah. Paul. G. Amati is pretty good.

You kind of look like him. Ooh. So Steve, four time world champion with the wings into all across. It was three with. The wings and then one one with, the mammoth as a GM and yeah.

so only four or five. I thought you had five, I technically kind. Of had another one. With the. Wings as the GM. Okay, so that's where the four comes for with the wings as one was as the GM and if you know lacrosse one of the legends and the pioneers of The game is Gary gate.

Yes, and you played with him He's now the head coach of Syracuse University lacross who is about to go into the final four this weekend. That's exciting That cool and then who was the goalie?

Dallas Eliak. You played with some pretty stellar dudes. I played within an unreal team and we were joking earlier about making sure that you have the good teammates to prop you up.

Roles, Grinders, and Team Chemistry

I didn't have a good teammate yesterday in my golf match, but I had played with a number of wonderful teammates across a lot and building teams, right?

Yeah, which we'll talk about. And the process is all about finding that, you know, the tapestry to weave together a culture of, good teammates. Yeah. Whether they're good team mates in the roles, and I say this a lots, it doesn't matter what your role is, if your roll is to go pick up trash in a corner, Do that really well.

What was your role in the wings? Pick up trash in a corner. Set picks to score. Yeah. And then pick up penalty minutes. There was a lot of that. I mean, hit guys before they went across the crease.

It's amazing. Like when I played, we had this, it's so stupid. We had t-shirt and the t shirt said 14 grinders, two playmakers, one stopper, One superstar.

And it outlined who the team was. And I was super proud to be a superstar. But I wasn't. I actually was one of the grinders. Yeah. You know what? We actually, the 14 guys on that list that were grinds were that with an amazing badge of honor.

So when you start to build teams or think about building teams You need people to be grinders and enjoy it and love it, and understand their role and execute their roll to the best of their ability.

And that's not to say that when the times are tough or times or down or chips are down, or whatever, that those same people who have a role can extend their do more or deliver more in, you know, kind of key moments.

You see that all the time, in the NHL playoffs or the NBA playoffs, or whatever you see guys kind over extending what their traditional role is, and that's great.

But it gets delicate when you try too hard to overextend your role. If you do deliver in those scenarios, That usually creates championship moments. Were you, when you were growing up playing lacrosse in Canada, and then when…

Ratford, right? That's where you went to college? University. Was you the superstar? No, but far from it. I was… Yeah. I was just a kid that, you know, I went in the corners and got loose balls and I did a lot of the quote unquote dirty work, right?

Not George Washington. John Adams. Yeah, and it was… Not flashy, and I kind of made a career out of some of this, but I've made career about not flashy.

Yeah, you've done, I give you a lot of grief. I try not to be, we joke about being the center of attention, which is more of a joke than anything else, But I tried to the guy that kind pieces the fabric together behind the scenes so that someone else can be the star.

And there's a lotta that. Where does that come from? What do you good question? I like I don't know. I mean, I had a dad that way. Well, if I can still didn't use growing up and so my dad World War Two veteran, you know, there comes a lot of guns issues with that.

There is a son of one, too. Yeah, but he also. You know was a guy, as you, know son, of a World war two veteran. They don' talk a lo about it. No. But there was hundreds of thousands of those guys that went over, kept their mouth shut, did their job.

Yeah. Right. And so maybe some of that was instilled in me from a work ethic perspective, like, you know, hard days work for an honest day's pay type of, meat and potatoes, upbringing.

You show up for your teammates, you don't quit. You're not late, right? You say what you're going to do and then you do it. Like it's not a hard structure.

Why is it so hard today? Because I think it The philosophy is not difficult, but actually the execution of it is a bit of a challenge for people, because I think saying what you're going to do and doing it are, and people get, you know, there's a lot of distractions, I guess, in the world today that people are pulled in a different directions.

whether it's socially, whether its digitally, your connection, I think the more intimate connections you have with friends, we talked a little bit about this on the golf course yesterday, but the intimate connection you had with people as friends has waned somewhat in recent years.

Yeah, absolutely. Right? Like you're not connecting with individuals. And I truly don't think, and this is like, oh, the kids, young whippersnappers today.

No, but I like to pick up the phone and talk to my friends. I'll call them. Or text them and say, I miss you. Let's connect. So the connections of keeping in touch have become very sterile.

Yeah, very antiseptic. And I think, you know, and in your business, right in the medical field, it's become even more steril and more antisceptic with doctors.

And you know the medical community that can stay in arms length away right with specialties like I don't know my Practitioner anymore, right? I Don't the guy that's gonna operate on my knee I just get a referral and I go in I see the doctor for what seven minutes is the average time by the way, and then you're out You can't even have sex.

I mean you can have six in seven minute, but it's not very good depends on who you are but And who you're with. Depends on which party you are. Yeah, it depends on who are and where you with and who your with, so yeah, okay, nevermind.

It's a bad analogy. Point being, right, is like the interconnectedness of personal relationships and getting to know people and what's important to them and You know, like, what kind of music do they like?

Remembering that, I guess it's hard for some people. I've never found that difficult.

Leadership, Communication, and Hard Conversations

Is I just think the personal connections and making sure that you have some, and I'm not saying by the way I am perfect at this because I have disregarded those empathetic feelings and said, you know screw it.

at times, but for the most part, if you're building teams, it's about making sure you understand the people in those structures, making and this was like a tenant of mine that is odd.

Like I was fanatical about this, that if something good or bad or benign and indifferent You should not read about that in the press. You shouldn't read that on a social media post.

Or see it on YouTube or whatever. Right. Good news, bad news. Whatever. As the GM of a team or the coach of the team. A captain or a key player. have to read about news about yourself without somebody picking up the phone and having a conversation saying face to face.

And sometimes, you know what, that led to, in a lot of cases or some cases, really uncomfortable conversations. Have we lost the ability to have the uncomfortable conversation?

Yeah, because you text people bad news. Or you post about it. Yeah. Honestly, this is kind of funny that we're sitting in here with microphones, but any idiot with a microphone can have a voice.

Oh, yeah, that is yeah. I've always said the problem with free speech is everybody has it. Yeah, including the idiots and the racist and knuckleheads, which is a complete Departure from the conversation that we're having but ultimately it's like Just because you have a microphone or just because You have A platform or a piece of paper to write on or whatever doesn't make you a journalist Doesn't give you journalistic integrity that's so true doesn' give You the protections of journalism yes it free speech yes It's protected I get all that but Sometimes there's just a common decorum of having a Picking up the phone and saying hey, man, you're traded.

Yeah. Hey, your cut Sorry, we're breaking up. That's not for a text, right? Right and that is a lot of questions Yeah, maybe maybe if you had no no No Well, it's interesting because when we got done yesterday I went back to the hotel and I had to pick up the phone and have a lengthy conversation with a really good friend of mine about a very difficult topic.

You know what he said to me? He said, what the hell up? No, no, I've known this guy 15 years. He's a He said, I really admire the fact that you took the time to pick up the phone and talk to me about this.

Not just blow it off. And it was more of a, hey, this is what I'm feeling, me, right? I am concerned we could go down this path, and my friendship with you is not worth going down that path.

if that's the case that we're gonna, like, meaning just with some stuff that were working on and some that stuff were involved in. And he was like yeah, I really appreciate you bringing, hadn't thought about that perspective.

Let me, and he's a type of person that needs to sit on things for 24 to 48 hours as I am. Which is fair. He goes, can I process this over the next? I said absolutely, go for it.

Like that what we, you know. I think what has happened today into society is everything is so, it's like if you're not rapid fire, and have the immediate solution, it's almost like you're viewed as, like, weak.

You've got to come back with the witty response. Yeah, if you if, you know, yeah, comedic or, or you, know satire or or just straight up a rough, Yeah.

And you now, I'm happy to do that sometimes when I mean like how you were needling me just before we got on here about how I didn't contribute anything to the golf game yesterday.

It's funny because I may use an analogy and you and I have always kind of understood each other's analogies, but When I coach kids, whatever sport doesn't matter.

Kids that are eight, 10 years old, right? Youth. They don't remember a whole lot about their youth sports experience. Like, I don' remember wins and losses.

You know what I remember? Running up and down the hall on hotels, on trips, jumping in the pool, doing stupid shit with teammates. I don't remember the games.

I Don't Remember the wins and losses in the past. So your friend that you had a conversation with yesterday and a number of other people that I have in, you know, engaged in difficult conversations with.

They don' remember what the content of those were five, 10, 15 years later. The content is irrelevant. the fact that You had the conversation. i remember when we talked to each other on this day, right at this time, and it was tough.

But I don't remember what we talked about. I just remember that you took the time to talk to me. Yeah. Absolutely. The memory of interaction is not about the content in most cases.

In my opinion, anyway. It's more about interaction that have and the fact that the regard you have for someone else in the process. Have the conversation.

Pick up the phone. What were the locker rooms like on those championship teams with the wings? What was it about that locker room that was different than, I don't know, a 500 team that you, with The Mammoth?

That's a really, really good question. And my immediate thought process goes to every team thinks they have good chemistry. Every team thinks they're a good close group of guys.

Yeah. Right. Every. Team thinks there are family. And then they lose. And the other team that once said, so this is kind of the myth of pro sports. And I'm just going to, I want to go here is, is because everybody starts the season, right?

Yeah. Baseball, spring training, grasses, greens, beautiful. Everybody, everybody zero, you know, zero and zero. But they're going be 182. Right. and.

Chemistry and team camaraderie and culture and all those things. everybody has one. Right. Some might be, they're all different. They're, all, and, some might better in some ways and worse.

And sometimes you win. One team wins at the end of a year, at, the, end, of an endeavor. Right? But you can't sit there and say that every team, every, team that lost had bad culture or bad chemistry or a bad camaraderie or, bad locker room.

It's not the only thing. You've got to have talent too. That helps. I think some of this. The teams that I played on that were winners or have been involved in as winners all had great chemistry.

But if we had lost, we still would have had the same chemistry, right? Okay. And so at the end of the day, the chemistry matters in the long term, to put yourself in a position.

It's not magic. Doesn't happen just by accident. I mean, there's moments that create chemistry. Like what? A certain win or a loss in a situation where you needed a win, but it galvanized you to go win the next time, right?

The game six loss. relevant today. The Montreal Canadiens losing game six to the Buffalo Sabres, but then they go to, at home, and then, they got to Buffalo, right?

Chance to close out, then. They go Buffalo. And they win in overtime, game seven in Buffalo enemy territory. Win in game 7. Well, that doesn't mean that Buffalo didn't have good chemistry because, you know, by chance, one shot goes in and over time.

But then we compare, well, they had great chemistry, but they didn' That's bullshit, right? It's an overarching kind of activity that goes on over the years.

Now, when you have bad chemistry. There's moments that create Good chemistry or good culture. What are some moments that create good chemistry? Because I think from a sport, as observers of sports, most people are observers or sports.

Very few, half of 1% of people in the world have been able to win at a sustained level. And you know, I know you joke about the fact that I was into the lacrosse league, but you still won multiple world championships.

I mean, you've been on multiple World Cup teams, and you're in multiple Hall of Fames for lacross, right? So you clearly understand this. But what are the things that Great chemistry, not good, but great.

Like if you were starting a team today, and I know you've started a couple of teams, how do you do it? It's an architecture, right? it's a structure, a platform to build from the beginning, And there's pieces that you have to put together.

So I say this, I've said this a lot of times, I'm not in the business of stacking chips.

Winning, Losing, and the Reality of Culture

Okay. I mean the. Business of putting a puzzle piece together. It's a flat structure, right? The puzzle pieces have to fit together because ultimately it's not about stacking.

Chips. Like I can't have all the number one. And I. Can't. Have five LeBron James. Right. You couldn't, have had five Michael Jordan. on a team, right?

They all would want the ball, going back to the conversation about this silly t-shirt that I was talking about, 14 grinders, one superstar, all that stuff.

It's about finding the people that will dedicate themselves to role that you need them to dedicate to in this current situation. They may have more talent or more skill level to do on another team might be different, but what's

expected of them here and then to check that ego at the door.

when they walk into the locker room and say, you know what, I have a big ego. I'm a really good player, but this is my role on this team. And I am going to do this.

That to me develops a chemistry when everyone acknowledges that. Yeah. Superstars still have to be superstars. They still be great players. But there is no sport that I know of other than individual sports where the individual's heart, talent, blah, can carry you to a victory, right?

Carry you a championship, anybody can win one game, any monkey can one win game once or do one thing once. It's about a sustained expertise and excellence and a dedication and focus to And your question is a very complex one because you can't simply pinpoint one thing.

So you don't have like a checklist for chemistry? No. Is it a gut feeling inside of you? It's a good feeling to, like I said, fit the puzzle pieces together, right?

But if you do not know the personnel, if do you not the menu of personalities that you are selecting from, getting them to do the right thing or getting to mesh together is not the job of the leader.

Whose job is that? The individuals included in this structure. You have to, again, it's like building any team, you have faith in the fact that what you've done is right and then let it coalesce.

Let the chemistry is chemistry because it is about a connective, right? Is it about patients too? Sometimes and sometimes you don't have patience sometimes and by the way, I've made plenty of wrong decisions Yeah, well, of course I mean nobody makes on it right and so you find a person you think that person is going to be great and then all of a sudden You know the they act differently than what you expected, right?

It's an evolving process. We make decisions based on the history of Right. The history of a player, the history. Of, of, you know, The markets, whatever happens.

Right? And, but you're, I've, always said this, this was the hardest part about my job is I'm placing my success and you and I had this conversation a long time ago about golf, yeah.

But I am placing. My success. winning and losing team culture, team chemistry in the hands of adolescent boys. Yeah, in my case. Yes. Right. It might have been easier with a women's sports team because they're much more mature, but adolescent boy is at the pro level right are They're adolescent boys, and they do stupid shit sometimes.

Yeah, well, they're not, the brain isn't fully developed into, what, age 33? Yeah. And then they've been hitting the head a lot. But you and I used to talk about the golf business.

Like, I can do everything to set the table as a general manager of a golf course or a pro of golf. You can everything set to table for a tournament, an event, then it rains.

Out of your control. That doesn't mean you didn't do the right things. It doesn' mean that you don't have chemistry. you know, culture in your room, it just means that there are circumstances that sometimes cause success and failure.

Outside of your control, I mean, you can't build championship teams every year. Nobody does it, right? Right. Everybody is competing. The other team's getting paid too.

Yeah. Right? And that, like, oh, we didn't play very well. Well, maybe the other teams played better than you did. Maybe they executed better. better team chemistry, like that's why I think this whole culture and chemistry thing is such a nebulous kind of, it's unobtainable.

We had great chemistry. Yeah, everybody does. And then you win. Sometimes you need luck. Or you don't know

what Gary chemistry is until you've been part of an organization or a team that has great Yes, because it's kind of like being in love right like you don't we're talking about my Historic love life yesterday on the golf course and you like I didn't realize Really?

What love was until I met? Christine mm-hmm. It's no disrespect to the other women in my life in in life right, but it like oh Oh, so this is what they meant.

I want to know what love is like. Oh. it is this like and I think a lot of people don' really understand When you've been part of a championship team, it's like this intuitive thing you can't, is it, It's sometimes hard to explain.

For me it is. It is very hard. To explain, because like, and it was wily. Right. Because when I was at Seaview at Marriott, I, was a really great team.

I mean, if you look at the people that were there, like one guy runs Trump golf. Like the other guy, runs Ritz Carlton golf, Like it. Was an amazing organization.

We won four, our version of national championships were 400, you know, four national, or two time national merchandiser of the year. And like five star, top Mariette golf facility, all of that.

And then we were at our other golf company, Gulf South, and that was not necessarily a great culture organization. But the foundation is important. Yeah.

Right. In order to, you can't build culture. It's like a house. You can put a roof on a shitty foundation. And I think the basis of the Foundation is a tenant or belief system, right?

Set of edicts or the belief that you have, you know, this is how I'm going to build it based on this structure. And again, sometimes you make mistakes based the pieces that you bring in.

Sometimes you make mistakes, but over time, the theory is your foundation is correct. And when you start to feel any corrosion of that foundation, you have to make those decisions.

The decisions to bring good people are relatively easy. It's what do you do when find out that the person you thought was the right person is not. How do you respond to that?

How fast, how quickly do cut out the cancer, How quickly to you identify? Because it's not about cutting out cancer specifically. It's about the cells around it and how they react.

How they've been infected. Right. Yeah. They've infected and they're looking at you. You're the leader. Looking at Are you going to do something about this?

Because you keep saying foundation is important. You keep seeing culture, blah, it's important, but this piece, this cancerous cell needs to be cut out.

Are your willing to the shitty, hard, ugly work to it? And that's ultimately what these guys, these other actors in the mix, the other cells in mix how they're responding to what you do.

And then how do they respond after that? Did you take too long? That can have a lasting effect. You did it, but it took too. Right. The ones that are really difficult or is when you know it and maybe the, other people don't, you, know that you've got to cut something out.

and you do it before they realize that it needed to happen. Because then there's some resentment or some, right? And sometimes you see something from afar or above or below or around, you get feedback and that becomes the harder question because you're doing something that they don't quite understand.

But I will tell you this, this is one thing that I also, there is so much more value in learning how to win after you lose.

Ooh, talk about that. Well, you don't know how lovely, beautiful and wonderful sunshine is unless you spent all night freezing in the dark, right?

And sometimes you have to freeze in dark. If you win early, these guys that win as rookies and think, well, this is the only world, Athletic Endeavor is interesting.

We talk about business a lot. Business is everyday. Yeah. You wake up everyday, right? 9 to 5. Right? You're there all the time. And a lots of athleticism happens every day, where nobody's watching and nobody is paying attention.

They're getting better at their craft everyday that you don't see, but you see when the lights come on. You see them score in the spotlight, but they're really working super hard elsewhere.

And I just think coming out of a loss, you learn a lot more than when you win. When you're successful, right? You think it's because of you. Yes. Successful.

Yeah. Right. Might not have anything to do with you. It might have been circumstances, the environment, you know.

From Sports Management to Business Leadership

Nick Saban said it's rat poison. I mean, there's this whole construct of these people that are kind of breaking their arms, patting themselves on the back, going, look, we're successful, right?

But they had nothing to do with it. And they don't really pinpoint what was important. But when you lose, when your struggle in business, or hurt you, refine, and you get much, much more laser acutely focused on what's the problem.

So you better. Sometimes over time, you'll see improvements to that. I mean, I hate to throw teams onto the bus because I don't know all their circumstances, but there are perennially teams that are basement dwellers.

Yes. Right? Yeah. That could be ownership. But they change a lot of things quickly, easily, trying to find the fix, right? And maybe it's ownership, But, they perrennially lose.

And then you have other teams, that perennial winners. They always pinpoint culture like, oh, they've got a better cult, like the Rockies, Colorado Rockys.

They've housed for a long freaking time. Yeah, man. they're awful. But again, the circumstances are, you know, we're in San Diego today. You look at the Padres versus the Dodgers.

Why did the dodgers win? Why do the padres don't? I don' know. I can't answer the question specifically because I didn't know enough about baseball. But the padres seem to be a pretty well-constructed team.

They have a strong roster. 97 games last year. In any other division. They might be running away with it, but they're next to the Dodgers. Circumstances are dictating their success.

Now, can you get over the hump? I mean, the dodgers seem to find a way to get the over hump, right? But the little brother that lives in San Diego that's kind of battling against this big behemoth of the North and the It's not to say that they're bad chemistry on either team.

They have all kind of the right pieces put together, but they are just not making that so over… over time who's working harder? Hard to say, right? Dodgers working hard because they're winning?

Are they spending more money? Do they have more kind of intelligence, more analytic intelligence? More kind emotional and personal intelligence with their management?

And so again, it's like this, I'd say tapestry because you have no clue in business or sports or What is going to be the catalyst that made you get over the hump?

Whatever the humps, right? Whether it's regular season wins or playoff wins, or championships, you never know. You don't know! I think basketball is easier because one or two players can affect significantly the outcome.

You need a superstar and two really great, high-paid, and then a bunch of role players coming off the bench. Exactly. That's all you need. So in basketball, it's maybe a little simpler, but there are still basement dwellers in baseball that can't seem to find a way to get over the hump.

New owners doesn't matter like the Clippers, right? I mean Steve Ballmer all the money in the world right new building different than Donald Sterling right, you know, like completely different kind of owner and yet they're stuck in a Do you think it's?

Think that's an environmental thing. Like do you that there's some teams are cursed. Do feel like I don't believe in that I didn't but I'm just curious I I think there is a scenario, again, a lot of it's circumstantial.

Can you pull yourself out of the circumstances? Sure. I'm the same GM. That's not true because you can never kind of dip your toe in the water twice, right, in that same river twice.

But you grow and you evolve. My philosophies and tenets were the I mean, a lot of it is what we've already talked about. But my point is, every year, I'm the same guy.

So I am coming at it from my personal perspective. Right or wrong, good or bad, what I believe in is into the organization and hoping that I get the same reciprocal contributions from all interested parties, right?

And that's what you hope. But you can't take in the national. We should joke about the National Cross. Yeah, I'm putting my hands in 21 year old adolescents.

But I also like, you don't know what's going to affect your team. The plane might be late. the bag might get stuck right here. This snowstorm does whatever a guy working his weekly job or whatever gets hurt.

I did this, but then all of a sudden, The positive outcome is some guy steps in that's never had a chance and he delivers in a big way or there's a gaping hole there because this person is hurt and you can't recover from that.

There's just circumstances. So all you could do is control the controllables like every other opportunity. Everybody does the same thing. Control the controlables.

And be consistent. The organizations that have yeah, I mean we talked about luck right but the organizations That have things that kind of go their way seem to I make my own luck Yeah, but everybody I'm not sure exactly that I don't sure really what that means because you know at the highest levels of let's just take the NBA All the owners are successful.

You don' buy an NBA team unless you are Successful like having some level of Yeah, right. Joe obviously built a great company, and I'm sure there was some luck along the way.

I am sure. There was. Right. See, no different than the Rhinestorfs that own the bulls, like from the standpoint of they're all successful people, so they've all got successful habits, they all get successful tenants, They've built successful companies.

And yet, it's hard to translate that. Not everybody wins the championship. You think that they put too much, like, is there too many emphasis on winning the championships in sports?

Because, you know, in business, there's not a podium in the business. Yeah, so you measure your successes in different ways. Yeah. Wins and losses are much kind of differently measured in the structure of day-to-day

business.

I used to tell people, when you're a president of a team, it's the same as the business that you run. Revenues, there's expenses. And the delta is the measurement of your success.

Whether it's a positive or a negative, that's the measure. It's no different. Neither business can survive in law. However, You inject this competitive nature, competitive structure into your, it's an entertainment vehicle right now, especially sports, sportainment.

We're injecting competition into our structure. And so there's two sides to the business and these super, I've seen it a number of times, he's super successful business owners, right?

That have generated vast amounts of wealth. Feel like that they can apply that same logic to. The competitive side. Okay. Tell me about that. It's an interesting structure.

And I mean, I'm not talking about anybody in. Yeah. I know. No, no. Talking about kind of the guy that made his money in medical device production, whatever.

Right. He looks at this in a very kind binary way and analytical way, and, believes that you can then build a team that way. Um, it just doesn't work that.

It it's a. intimate small group of people that drive your success. And I always used to say from a business perspective, so on the business side of team structure and entertainment and sports, you're trying to sell tickets, right?

You only have a very limited amount of revenue streams, tickets merchandise, food and beverage, depending on a building, all these other things that you can make money on.

But there's a finite amount revenue because it's kind of like time. We talked about this with tea times, If you don't sell the Teton today, it's on tomorrow, right?

It's fleeting. And same with a ticket in the building to a game, to special game. Once you've sold it out, you maxed your ability to generate revenue, except you can create ancillary per capita type of things with more food, more merchandise, those types of thing, and more sponsorship, all those things.

But at the end of the day, Winning and losing affects the number of people that come to your building, which is interesting. You're a Chicago guy. The Chicago Blackhawks, for a long time, sold out their building.

They were awful. Terrible. Mm-hmm, but they sold out the building which is fascinating to a lot of people why because they created a great experience whether they won or lost you walked away and said I had a Great time.

Yeah, it was affordable. It was fun. I was exciting It is interesting and then when they started to win they sort of win Stanley Cubs now It's like oh, they got great culture.

They got camera. There are great business Well, there were a good business before a better business.

Adapting Leadership for Virtual Teams

Before yeah, I would but I wouldn't say that they were probably more profitable hundred percent I don't know the numbers for fact but like because the old man is Words, you know through nickels around like manhole covers was the same exactly dollar bill was his name was this nickname so but then you start to inject this concept of winning and losing into your business kind of pro forma and you're thinking about the structure of I'm once again, putting the hands of my success into variables that I don't have a lot of control over.

Did that guy get out of bed and work out, or did he get outta bed, and have it donut, right? Like, like. Yeah, have

another donut. So, you know what I am saying, it's one of those scenarios where it is very difficult as a regimented business analyst, business leader to understand what it takes to win and lose in these scenarios.

And you say, well, you know, Robert Kraft is a genius. I mean, he might be, but he did have the luxury of a duo of people for many, many years, right?

Belichick and Brady that made him look like a genius. Yeah. And Brady rarely got injured. So circumstances. This is silly to say. Well, what's the formula?

I'm just telling you that there's a matter of luck here. But the key is to keep yourself grounded in the concept of value your tenants, whatever those are, right?

They don't have to be mine. Value your foundation. Build a strong foundation of your organization. Whatever organization it is, business, sports, or whatever, build that strong Foundation.

Continue to build upon that foundation and surround yourself with amazing people. And if you do that, the odds are you will be more successful than the guy next to you that doesn't do what you're doing.

That said, sometimes you need a little luck. Yeah. And you'll win, but that's not the championships while we measure those success. Dan Marino never won a championship.

Is he still a hall of Famer? Those questions, right? Absolutely. 100%. He's one guy. But again, We measure teams and championships and that's wonderful and I'm I feel like that great Okay, and you celebrate those and everybody cheers, but there's a lot of teams that are do a lotta great work They all work hard.

Yeah, they're they'll work right those players are all working hard and sometimes they like I said every team has a chemistry Yeah. It might be better in, it might over index in some areas than it does in others.

And that helped them win. Then another team, completely different team has a completely, different chemistry. There's no one chemistry that wins every year.

Right. I just think it's very hard to chase, but it is a bit of a fallacy to think, oh, well, what's the What's the championship culture and how does it work?

Well, it's not that easy I think a lot of times people try to borrow people's championship cultures we talk about culture a Lot with our doctors because they they don't know anything about this Like their idea of leadership is we'll do it because I'm the doc because i told you to because im the doctor like that's their form of Leadership and i'm oversimplifying it but that basically what they're taught and then I?

think, a, lot, of, times businesses what, they try, to, do is They try to borrow sports is what I love about sports no matter what the sport is is Everybody feels like they can relate to it and everybody feels Like they could do a better job running it Everybody's got an opinion about how to run some kind of sports team or something like that, okay?

Or they should make this move or do that move over the fucking GM doesn't know what he's doing because they got this guy I could have told you that guy was gonna be a train wreck, right?

But then they try to apply how you build a sports team to how build you a business team. Now, the closest I've ever come to winning a championship ring is my friendship with you.

Okay? That's really sad. Yeah, but I'm five foot seven, and I am slow. But you can hit the shit out of a golf ball. I can't hit shit on a Golf ball, But golf is singular.

Golf is so different, because with golf, I've won golf. Like I played very well, played at a decent level. Not a high level, not a pretty decent one. golf was soo different than this team sports that I have been on.

A hundred percent. Your golf team, the only thing you did together as a team was ride the bus. That's it. Joe plays over here, and his temper tantrums really has zero bearing in how I play.

Right. Because golf is such… Golf is between the ears. It's… Oh, yeah….it's nothing more than that. You didn't manage your emotions. Wow, he's kind of hot shit.

That was pretty light. I'm like, can I crack a joke? Probably not. He did lead the league in penalty minutes. Probably. And I think we try to take what we see in our sports teams, and we tried to those rules and apply them to the business.

And, I can tell you, business feels vastly different. Because you guys have training camp, then you have preseason, you then have games, You have an arc, a clear end, A defined goal of what it looks like to win.

business there is no The beginning is today every day is the beginning right like yeah You can say it's a month or you can see it to quarter, but you know at the end of the day You don't have an offseason.

No, you no so When you were then building business teams, so you go from being a player to then being in GM to then being president, where you're handling all the day-to-day ops, how did you translate that experience from winning championships to the business side of it?

Because, and now I know the businesses about winning the championship, but you said something yesterday when I said, hey, you know, do you miss running the data day of the SEALs and being involved?

And you were like, I kind of get the sense that you've done it for so long that were tired of because they kind have worn you out. because there's no season.

It's always, it's every day. You're the on season, but that's business, right? Yes. Yes, But you couple that with the roller coaster ride, rollercoaster ride of wins and losses.

And it, I've never been great at managing that roller coaster. Clearly. I saw that yesterday. Yeah, it's hard. It's fucking hard! Yeah. No, It is really hard, I agree.

And it is hard when you're losing and you are trying to figure it out and I think most fans and most observers of pro sports think that when their team loses and maybe loses again and again that the front office or the business people or coaches aren't doing anything.

These guys are not doing a thing. They're not fixing the problem. Again, I go back to understanding the structure of people while trading partners and different things.

there are certain challenges, collective bargaining and all the rest of it. I'm not doing a very good job of answering the question. All I can tell you is what was most difficult for me is that I was always, I always responded to hard coaching.

I also responded. Crack of the whip. Right. And it was, and maybe it just made me a very simple kind of being, right. If it's like, get your ass in gear.

Okay. Hey, hey, we'll do that. So what was difficult for me when you get into the business structure is, especially now is hard. Coaching isn't. No hard coaching is not it's not acceptable anymore Nick Saban will tell you like one of the reasons why he left is because if I coach him my words not his I Coach him too hard.

They're gonna leave the next year for a bigger payday at another school Yeah, so I've got to balance all that now to one and but hard-coaching of players is, is still accepted.

Right. In this case with Nick Saban, I understand that's, that there's a creep starting to happen into athletics, into players who are evolving into a different animal, right into different receptor of the coaching structure.

So coaches now, and this, this is in my opinion, coaches that are evolving with that and understanding that that our young and maybe coming right out of playing and that understand that model are more effective than the old school.

Yeah. You're seeing across all college sports, especially. They're like, I can't control the player. So coaching has evolved, right? I'm not sure I evolved with it as much as I would like to think that I did or didn't do.

But does it really mean that you didn' evolve or maybe you just you had your time in the sun? Potentially, but some of that is is your evolution as a leader, right?

has to continue to evolve. You have to know the trends. And again, I go back to picking up the phone, talking to players, and having the relationship with people to understand what makes them tick and what's important to them.

Because what was important for players and staff and personnel 20 years ago, 25 years, is not the same as what it is today. Right. And so if you are not evolving, you're devolving.

Yeah. So, so the point I'm trying to make is this. I tried to apply a lot of philosophies, hard coaching type philosophes to the business metric. Some people responded to that.

Others didn't. Oh yeah. Right? And, and so trying find a way to navigate the people that didn' and then modify behavior and to fit them all. It became to me, and I'm not saying I hated it.

I loved it, but it becomes challenging. And I guess that's why people that begin to advance in years across every sport or business may be losing touch with You know, the most important people in your structure are your employees and whether they be players or otherwise.

And if you lose touch with that, then you're out of the mix. So maybe I have. It's the hardest part I've had in leadership is evolving. When we worked together 30 years ago, I mean, it was just expected as the GM, you're just kind of an asshole, a hard ass, right?

That's just, that's how you coach, Right? Today, Mavericks, this startup. My company is, we have, let's just call it seven or eight full-time equivalents, okay?

And it's a virtual company, which is a whole different thing, by the way. It's infinitely more complex to run. Everybody's like, oh, virtual companies are great.

You can hire anybody from anywhere and, you know, they get to work from home, but you don't have any relationship. Yeah. Imagine having a marital relationship on Zoom.

They don' t go out for beers. Right. Yeah, play golf. Yeah. You know. And so in my team now is 85 percent women. vastly different than if I think about leading a team of men, which was basically what we had except for Tara and like the Bev Cart girls.

She was a man. Yeah, she was great. But yeah, and she passed away. I know. Sorry. No, I don't. We can edit out later. Oh, we can't know I talk about everything.

So, yeah. Because I'm still connected to her daughter. Just horrible. Like six months she is done. Life is short. God bless her. So the, the thing is the way I've had to evolve as a leader is like, if I compare to like what we had at Princeton Meadows and then going to Perdido and running you club and all that stuff.

And then what I have to do today, I mean, my team is across, um, in two countries, a team in the Philippines. I had my chief operating office and business partners in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Like I was on the phone with her this morning at six 30 this.

Trading Cards, Collectibles, and AI

Talking about some stuff like for an hour, right? It's so different because not only have people evolved and expect something different about what they think life should be You have People that come into the business that have very little business experience But they have this preconceived notion of what They think it should Be and what it Should look like and you and I both know they're like that ain't gonna fucking work like you know and yet you have to manage this of Yeah, maybe it will.

Let's give it a try. Well, hey guys, let's kind of hedge our bets over here. Cause we know that this thing isn't necessarily going to work out as well.

It's really interesting. Really hard. This is so funny. And I don't know why I just thought of this story, but it's just a story. Had an employee worked in ticket sales.

I had an office that had a window and then there was an exit near. near my windows. And so I was in my office and every day this particular guy would leave at like 3 30 every.

Day and I'd see him walking by and not a direct report, right? He worked for somebody in the, the director of ticket sales and everyday this guy. Walk out and And he's walked by and finally I said, you know, we work until like five o'clock, right?

And He goes, well, You told me I could leave to go see my son's game one day. I'm like, one Day, she's our game every day and so he and I actually if you get your stuff done, if work your tail off or you come in at 6 a.m.

and stay till three. I'm cool, right? I like, I am very much, just get your shit done. Right. And I m cool with you. Family, very important, like go pick up your son, do your thing.

But maybe you should like tell us. Yeah. This guy got so upset that he quit. Because I pointed out that he was leaving every day at 3 30. Was there a game every?

Well, I don't know why he? Was going I? Don't? Know all the and maybe I should have learned the reasons and Maybe I Should have been more Compassionate to what was happening, right?

How long ago was this? It's ten years ago two years? Two years. Yeah, okay And I was like, you know, so my response, I, was a bad guy for this. I wasn't terrible guy, goes on the glass door, whatever, and tells everybody what a terrible manager I am because I merely pointed out to him that, Hey, we worked till five o'clock.

You know? And there was obviously we're coming out of a time, right? When COVID changed the workplace a lot. And. And it was like some people were virtual and other people we're on site.

And then there was some that were doing this and this, but different jobs required different structure. But the virtual workplace is an interesting structure nowadays.

I watch some of my family members in this virtual space in my own, right? I just happened, I get up early and I do a lot from like six o'clock to like 10 o clock and go play golf and then I come back and get back on my computer and hammer out more stuff now that I'm working in a virtual environment with a company like yours doing different things.

I just happen to map out what schedule that I want. And I find that very fascinating. We never had to play golf in the middle of the day. You ran a business?

We stood around. It didn't matter if we were slow. Yeah, you got to do something. Go clean something! You have to be there. Unless you work 10 or 12 hours a day, I'm like, God Almighty.

I should have gone out and played a lot more golf. Do sound like like an old guy get off my lawn But you live in a

condo so you can't tell me to get up.

Hey Boomer But it's one of those things like I have people that work for me that like they'll do nothing until I tell them what to do Yeah, that's fascinating me, right?

It's just we're fucked if we get invaded more energy for Me to come up with shit for you to Do then for? Me so like not have you I'll just do it myself and so there's like That's part of a challenge of this whole leadership structure is like, okay, what do you do yourself?

Yeah. Yeah, and then. what do you kind of delegate, right? But then your delegation takes time until you get somebody to the point where they're self-sufficient.

Getting them up to that point is a really interesting process because you're distracting yourself from all the things that you know need to get done and your tether starts to, like you don't know where to manipulate or angulate the tethers, and it's like, okay, if I do this, it is going to take me two minutes, going take them 20, metaphorically, right?

So anyway, it's, you know, and with salespeople, I find it fascinating, because, You know it, very clear to have a KPI or we call it a signal in our company about whether or not the sales and marketing team is doing their job, Right?

If we've got 20 appointment, 20 sets, which is an appointment you, know and then 16 of those wind up with, qualification calls and we wind Up with seven membership applicants, people that join, those are very Clear metrics.

There are very clear metrics in the financial side of it. Okay. What are our ratios, all that stuff in operations? There's not. So like, I don't really care.

I've had all kinds of different salespeople and I had one where this person, like I swear to God, they would get out of bed at like 10 AM. They would surface around 11, 30, 12 o'clock.

And they fucking nailed their numbers and beat him like they were the number one salesperson and they beat Like and it was never one of these things like the last week.

They didn't have a flurry It was just every day. Bam. Do you care about their process? I don't give a shit at all But the only yeah, well, let me rephrase this I do care About their processes as long as they have one that's definable Because I think you have to have a definable process, and I that process comes from understanding how you're made.

So for example, what I've realized in the last couple of years, one, I never should have been in day-to-day operations running a club. That was never, ever something, that's not who I am, okay?

And the second thing is, is that I always thought that had to be always on and always working. And my design is actually that, I actually, I need significant downtime because that's where the downloads come from.

Like, you know, we finished playing golf and went back to the hotel, had to have a conversation, took a shower, and had some dinner, went out with some of the docs.

But I was back in the Hotel by like, 8 o'clock or 8.30. And I have that downtime and literally I start getting downloads of like business frameworks. I've been up since, up to 1.15 and then I'm been since like 3. 30. Just getting these downloads.

But I never would have allowed myself to operate that way because I'd never knew how it was really truly made. And what's really cool about today is we can learn how people are made and what the rhythms are supposed to be more so than we ever have, which then allows us as a leader to create the space in the container for them to operating their best in their fullness.

So I don't care if my salesperson comes in at noon. I mean, you're outcome driven. Yeah. You just want championships. you don' care how they get there.

Why you keep asking me questions? Because you're here. You're asking about culture and chemistry. No, you don't care about the outcome. Because I realized that to get the outcomes, the output is not a standalone thing.

Okay, so let me ask you a question about this particular salesperson. In the context of how that cell interacts with the other cells, You don't care, but the other cells are- No, I do.

But the outcome's what matters. Okay? And I'm using this as a metaphor, don' think this is a personal affront. Well, it's a person afffront. Relax, keep coming over the table.

Okay, but the point I'm trying to make is, I would lose. I don't care how bad these are. My point is on a team, and we're talking about team structure, again, in a virtual world, this might be easy because most people don' watch Salesman A who gets up at noon and does his job and then blows his numbers out of the water, right?

But on team structures, a locker room, If player A walks in, doesn't work hard, does not train hard. Doesn't get better at what he's doing. Does not enhance the people around them.

Right? And all he does is show up and score goals. The outcome, the output is there. But is he positively influencing a locker room? So when you talk about chemistry and culture and those things.

how much better could Salesman A be if he actually got the fuck out of bed at 8 a.m. and did all the things that he does and could he actual sell five times as much if his effort was blah, blah blah.

So we put Salesmen A or Player A on a pedestal because he creates outcomes. And yet, what's he doing to the collective consciousness or chemistry of his coworkers or people around them?

Now, in your case, you're virtual, so probably people don't see them. But when you inject that into a locker room scenario, that becomes very important.

And if you don' see it as a leader, yeah, he's delivering. But what these guys see or girls see when they're watching the performer, right? They're going, well, he could be so much better if he did this.

So how would you handle that in your role? That's a method of communication and constant communication. I've had endless hours of conversation with players who I thought could, that are superstars, more positively enhance their relationship with their teammates.

Right. And again, this is all about the interconnect the tapestry, the interconnectedness of my role. The puzzle piece, right? It's not a stacking of chips.

I'm not the top chip. Right. Yeah, it's the puzzle. It is the Puzzle piece. Um, just, I might be a corner on this team. Might be the blue sky on his team in the puzzles.

Mm hmm. Like you have to figure out where your role is in that structure as a leader, because you might have a team of superstars. Open the gate, let the horses run.

You might have to put the whip to the horse. in certain scenarios. The hard part with a multiple player team, they're all different humans, different ages, all at different stages of their lives.

Some of them have kids, some of have girlfriends. Like I said before, guy lost his luggage, broke up with his girlfriend. Guy's Gatorade deal went sour.

There's a tapestry that goes on here, and there's puzzle that you're continuing and constantly trying to… I use the word manipulate, it's probably not the right word, but…

But it is. I mean, that's… You are. Yeah, you continue to move the puzzle. And the puzzles, by the way, the pieces, shapes of the piece are changing.

Daily. Right. So when you talk about why teams win, don't win. It's, it's the leader and then the cohorts, the players, that constantly find ways to make those puzzle pieces fit better.

Because again, The shapes are constantly evolving on the puzzle piece. Again, we don' stack chips. Because you can have all the best players, but it doesn't work that way.

It's about finding the right people. And I think I said this to you yesterday, and it's a line from the Broadway musical Rent. The third Broadway Musical we covered.

We're going on. Mormons, Spamalot. But it, it literally, I'm looking for baggage that goes with mine. Everybody's got baggage. Yeah. I am looking with my baggage and now you, if you introduce 25 people on a team or 60 people in a football team by the way, or coaches or multiple levels of different actors in the mix.

It's about how do you continue to, and if you don't know these people, if your just merely kind of looking from your perch at who they are and what they do and your measuring their output by contributions to the bottom line, which is important.

But if that's all you're measuring by, you struggle because you can't pinpoint distractions when they come up or negativity or the guy that wanted to play credit card roulette and then skipped out on the meal after a lunch.

You know, and what that does to a chemistry of a team, speaking from personal experience. It's got to be a good story behind that. But it happens. And that's what I think becomes exhausting over a 20-year career, is you're constantly on, And there's no way to virtual in sports.

Everything is right there, person to person. It's right in front of you, right? So, yeah. Do you like running a virtual company? It is interesting. I really like the industry.

The industry is fascinating and I am producing trading cards and collectibles at this point. Just started this company a couple of years ago and fascinated by the margins in the business, the growth of I was mentioning to the people here that trading cards are a $50 billion company.

What? $ 50 billion industry. Are you kidding?

Final Thoughts and Promotion

Like when you think about Pokemon and a number of other iterations of games and cards and trading, cards in sports and fantasy and all the world of training, $5 billion.

And it is fascinating in a digital world, it's still the physical cards. I had a conversation this morning, it's amazing, a conversational, we're talking majorly pickleball.

And the young lady I spoke with today, incredibly intuitive and had just come from a conference last week about experiential marketing. and how using experiences to drive your product levels higher.

And she was saying that the current trend in experiential marketing is very analog. because people are reconnecting to the analog as opposed to digital.

And it's fascinating to hear. People want to touch. They want the visceral sound of the engine. Whatever that engine is, they want engage. So collectors has become a new commodity.

And I find it fascinating. I knew nothing about trading cards. Like I had trading card as a kid and like hockey cards, we used to throw them against the wall, flip cards to see who won the cards and so I didn't collect them, I did save

them.

Yeah, you played with them? Yeah I played them they were playing cards right and I mean I think Pokemon's the same way but now you're going into a structure where the pyramid structure of this and the collectability platform and then it's a lottery, its legalized gambling is really what it is now.

It's fascinating. Really? To create a card, a lacrosse trading card that is a one of one trading cards that sells, you know, two weeks gets graded and two week after we release it, it gets grated and it put up on eBay and they got $10,000 for a car that we created.

out of thin air, right? Well, you're creating your own scarcity. Your own? Yes. 100%. The rarities, the scarcity, it's a supply and demand issue and it is fascinating.

It's like Beanie Babies. They just manufactured, like you do realize they controlled it and they manufactured like how many of those were made to create the scarcity.

On purpose. Yeah, on purpose, they made billions of dollars. And so what is happening now, Pokemon, which is a Fascinating business. It's their fantasy characters.

They do not exist. At least with baseball, it's like real people. So these are made-up people so you can make up anybody you want. And I, there is, by the way, an interesting world that we're in right now where AI is beginning to kind of, not beginning, it's like taking over, right?

And the unbelievable injection of art by AI as a structure for the foundation of a lot of these collectibles is a really interesting world right now. So we're creating this TCG game, which is trading card game.

And it's basically, I don't want to go into it a lots, but I needed an artist to do the work. I found an artists, talk about a virtual world, artist in Russia, who's doing the works.

We're printing in China. Right? We're printing in Italy, we print, you know, trading stickers in italy. We have a printer in Denver, and you talk about like, how do you like working virtually?

I love the interconnectedness of what we've brought together from the world. we had a Printer in Pakistan and navigating just language and the people.

It's harder, but I can pick the People I want to work with. Yeah, it's really fascinating. I've been doing the virtual business thing for 12, 15 years.

Aside from the time that I had the clinics, right? Because I was in the Virtual World. Wasn't as sophisticated as it is now. Then I went back to the brick and mortar.

That was really interesting. To go from, the space of leaving the golf business, starting my first business And you know, back then it was like, you're on the phone, right?

And if you hire, oh, really cool, I can hire somebody in Nevada or Mexico, now it's when you, and I've gone back and forth between this a couple of times and it really, the virtual world is fascinating.

You actually, in my view, actually suspend this energy that you put into creating a culture because You don't need it. It's really fascinating. Until your employees tell you you do.

My Filipino employees like it more than my US-based employees. Interesting. Because that's like their world. Let me ask you a question. How much do you use AI in your business?

How many AI employees do you have? Yeah, so I haven't quantified it. I would tell you that I've probably cut my overhead. If I didn't have AI, I'd probably have instead of seven key employees, Interesting right and it's gonna go

down because we're building like a whole marketing suite for our doctors Like I won't have a social media manager here soon.

Yeah, I haven't had one for you Yeah It does it for me and is gonna cost me five dollars a day or five hours a month which the deterioration of the entire economy Based on AI could be an interesting But it's always been that.

I mean, they said this about, look, industries come and go. Every industry has a lifespan. My mom was a travel agent. She was at the tail end of when travel agents were obliterated, right?

But our unemployment rate didn't go up. In fact, our employment rate went down. And the economy went up. So I don't buy this that nobody is going to have a job and people are people who are always getting replaced.

But the difference for us is we know how to adaptively manipulate our environment to our ability to survive. Yeah, I mean, totally different conversation.

That'd be the next one that we have. When you come up to LA and play golf, you're going play better golf next time. Hide five birdies. Yeah, I know but you were worthless.

I don't know. You're you're like look I'm not a guy that makes a lot of birdie's outcomes matter and whatever You are hurting my chemistry you need to go play golf.

What's your playing off again today? I play again. How many days in a row have you played? Uh I Don't play a Lot You know everybody there. They know me.

Oh You are America's guest. I am. So yeah, no, I like to play golf. But that doesn't, you know, work in very interesting time zones. Yeah. so I'm able to kind of manufacture that opportunity.

God bless cell phones. Anything you want to pimp while you're here like for people to go buy something and make you money well I you know if if you are interested in You know kind of learning a little bit more about our trading card business tfl sport tflsport.com t f l sport okay, no s So check that out if he wants to Yeah, man, I'm uh It's a really intriguing and interesting business, and we're having a ton of fun doing it, but and what's t fl.

What's this t? FL? What is this? That's total fucking legend. Total fucking Legend. Thanks for coming over, buddy. Good to see you. You too. Always a blast.

Yeah. All right, everybody. Peace out. We'll see ya. If this episode got you thinking differently, get follow and share it with someone stuck in the system.

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