

# John Fairbanks Transcript

Sat, Sep 30, 2023 6:22PM 3:56:21

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

play, kids, team, florida, coaches, gainesville, area, talking, fucking, call, dudes, years, athletes, football, family, work, meyer, told, michael, dad

## SPEAKERS

John Fairbanks, James Geering

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**J** James Geering 00:00

Well, John, I want to start by saying, firstly, thank you for coming on you and I have had such an unusual kind of interaction through social media. And then your family came to visit my last Fire Department. And when we were at Disney, and then kind of, you know, the strong fit community, and then this documentary comes out, you start new podcasts, and then the universe is like, you know, oh, yeah, you know, and then I tell them this a lot. There's lots and lots of people that I want to talk to. And it always seems to be the perfect time that everything lines up and again, now now is when we're supposed to talk and this is obviously, with this documentary. I just binge watch the last few days as well. Another element of so many things that we're going to talk about so huge monologue, but I want to welcome you to the behind the shield podcast today.

**J** John Fairbanks 00:46

James, I really appreciate you having me. I've loved listen to all the episodes and everything you bring, bringing the light like it's, it's, it's awesome. So I'm honored to be able to hang out.

**J** James Geering 00:56

So where on planet earth are we finding you today?

**i** 00:59

So I am in Virginia. I'm about 30 minutes outside of the University of Virginia in the Blue Ridge Mountains in the Shenandoah Valley.

**J** James Geering 01:08

Brilliant. Well, I know that's not where you were born. So let's start at the very beginning. Tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic. What your parents did, how many siblings

 01:17

so I was born in Palm Springs, California. So Southern California, Palm Desert, Palm Springs area, ultimately grow up in Orange County, California. So Dana Point, Laguna Niguel, Newport Beach. So this is like the OSI and ends up being kind of the same time period that like the OSI hits, so that you have like living on a beach reality TV shows start popping off. And so that's that time period that I was there. And my family, so I have one sibling. And then my mom and my dad, when I grew up, they owned a before like the UPS store and FedEx stores became FedEx Kinkos. And all that stuff became a thing. They had their own, like Mom and Pop version of that. That was called the mailroom. They ran that and they ran mail and plush. And you know this before, like, I think even before staples, right is the thing. So they had like supplies for school and all that kind of stuff. They own that business for a number of years when I was growing up. And then my mom ultimately ended up working for Disney. So she ended up moving over and working for Disney and then worked for Disney for the rest of my life until she retired there. Now, there's the Anaheim. So Disney and Adams so Disneyland just started off at Disneyland on Main Street and their main stores there and then went to Disney California Adventure, which was right the park that's right across the way. And then when I came to Florida, she transferred. So the whole family essentially kind of followed and came out to Florida. She just transferred to Disney World. And she worked for Hollywood studios, MGM Studios and Magic Kingdom and then ultimately the boardwalk. Right all those hotels on that damn area. That's why when we got to come and visit us literally like down the street where grandma's at, you know, being able to hang out.

 James Geering 03:04

So she was still working when you came to visit. Yeah, she did an hour she retired.

 03:09

Now she retired now because they, you know, aging parents the deal, writing's on the wall, she was taking care of her mother. And it was one of those things where you just have my own aging parents are taking care of aging parents, and now they're the only ones in Florida. My brother's not there. I'm not there. I'm in Virginia. So I'm like, You guys have got to come to us, you got to come up and be here. So now in this little area that we had no one for my family exist. I have multiple generations, I have three generations, four generations of family all now living in this one little town here in Virginia, which is great to have all that family support and and be able to support them as well as they have to doctor's appointments and all that kind of stuff.

 James Geering 03:52

So I obviously got to see behind the curtain of Disney, there are some people that absolutely adored working for that organization. There are a lot of people that didn't as much, you know

adored working for that organization. There are a lot of people that didn't so much, you know, certainly you know, there was some some stories of people kind of getting close to actually earning their retirement and then getting let go prior to that. So you know, there are some bad stories. However, there's an I know there's a lot of people that really enjoyed it and it was their kind of dream job. Now that your mom transitioned out when she reflects Did she enjoy her time there?



04:23

I think she did. My mom did a really she was like rule follower to the nth degree. So what we call like as a hall monitor. So she did beautifully at Disney. And and but she she she saw the writing on the wall so my mom made it through several layoff periods. Right? And so she was able as she worked her way up at minimum wage when I was a kid, of like truly, even after owning your own store and doing tons of things of handling, you know, processing and merchandising and doing all those pieces. She still had to start at minimum wage. And then as she worked her way up into management, I remember there were several periods of just layoffs, especially in a riot. Oh, 809 was when I got really gnarly. And she always just said, she goes, I think I'll stay right here. She was because if I go one layer higher, or two layers higher, they always get fired. So she kind of just saw that writing on the wall and kind of strategically just stayed, stayed put. And what was the best part best case scenario for her was when she transferred from California to Florida, she kept the same role, but structurally speaking, management wise, it was like two clicks lower than in California. So California, she was like, right there at that dangerous level. And then when she went to Florida, she still stayed at the same pay, but then went to let levels down in seniority. So she was able to at least work a little bit higher up, but for sure, she had multiple managers and people that were above her that she loved that absolutely got canned. And there were like, just it was it was, it was terrible. It was terrible. Like she had tons of those stories of it being terrible, but she worked for Disney for a while my brother worked for Disney for a while he was a skipper on the Jungle Cruise. Like these all we have these old videos of him doing all the cheesy, like puns and stuff when my babies were little. But I would say overall there, they were really positive about being of working with Disney.



James Geering 06:30

Well, there's a parallel obviously, when we get to UF we were talking before before we hit record, so I'll kind of hold that portion. For now. With your parents having the mailroom though. Have you ever had any conversations? I'm sure when they were, you know, with their business, we were still sending a lot of letters, then email comes along and letters diminish. But then now we've come full circle with Amazon, where now it's all about the packages. And I would assume those businesses are booming again. So have you ever talked to them about you know, the last 20 years through their eyes, I



07:02

don't think it was one of those things where I don't know if they were ever super passionate about like the Postal Service and all that kind of thing that was you know, I mean, I think was a means to an end. I think the most amount money they truly made was like gift wrapping for people. And Christmas time came it was bring your packages because they sold gift wrap. But

it was like we'll wrap your presents for you. I mean, I remember my mom like gift wrapping presents for like 12 hours a day, like leaving early at like 3am just to go gift wrap more presents, because there's so many people that had packages that needed to be wrapped. And so talk about just like the epitome of, of like, a skill that is so like, you could just you can do this, you know, it's like that or no, I'd rather pay somebody to, to gift wrap the presents. But definitely it was interesting, just Washington kind of my dad as as they sold that mailroom, he kind of was part of that trying to figure out where he fit in that technological, old those technological changes and advances and those types of things like he's worked so many different gigs of trying to apply whether he was a medical transcription writer where he would type out notes from doctors from home. Like he he's been doing a working from home style job sense to 2000. So like it just is, it's been very interesting to see him navigate whether it's customer care, customer service, working from home, being a real estate agent, like all those elements that he can kind of figure out where mom was able to just get into Disney's system, and then just kind of systematically work that system. But it was a sacrifice that my dad made, I think consciously to where it's like and if you were looking from afar you look at it not through the right lens, you could say it was like did you just chose to to take terrible jobs. But I think truthfully, deep down, it just was he wanted to be around. He wanted to be able to not sacrifice or miss games or practices or those things where he just he was always around. So my family growing up, built such a Intense Foundation for whatever I wanted to do. They would help me do it. And it just was never like you know, you're not gonna do this. Like I've seen having coached and been around so many different style athletes and so many families and parents, it's it just kills me to watch people be dream robbers. And so for me, it's like you don't you don't get to say that to people. Like kids are smart. They'll figure it out. Like it's like if their dream is to play for LSU on their offensive line. But you know, Billy is just not going to get much taller than six foot and much heavier than 195 pounds. Billy will figure that out. Like Billy knows and Billy is going to not will adjust that dream accordingly, you don't need to have these dream robbers, or these people that just feel like well, no, like they need to be woken up. They need to be told. And it's like, no, they don't shut your mouth. Like it's just let them be just support and that. And that comes from just because I was so supportive in that way, while still having family members that didn't that felt over overly zealous to the fact that we're they had to make sure I knew that I was too fat. And I was too slow. And I was too dumb that I just wasn't going to do any thing worthwhile. And I'm grateful for those people, because it really fueled, right, that hatred, that they allowed me to do a lot of great things. So the flip side, I would have been devastated to have parents that were that way. But it's very helpful to have horrible adults that were around me enough to give me that motivation. But my parents really did. I think my dad did that. And it's, as we talked about more about my story is my dad has made huge sacrifices to just put me in the best possible position to be able to be successful.

J

James Geering 11:01

Well, firstly, I would have used your mom when she was doing the gift wrapping anytime because my best attempt looks like a raccoon just pulled out of a dumpster. So I don't know why I can't follow paper. Yeah, but also, I mean that that ability to be present be home that was, you know, one of the things that came out of my transition from the fire service, so a lot of compounding factors, and it was frustration of trying to make a difference and swimming upstream. But also it was walking the walk, you know, it was about that valuing sleep and some other things and being present. And the basically the last five years now I've been home. So my son just turned 16, you know, so that's from 11 to 16. As he's transitioning from child to man, I've actually got to be home. And I think I admire your dad if that was what he did with my guests yesterday, Brett. So Rhea Sobieski, I think I'm to remember how he plans I think

Sobieski, his dad was a cop and had a full time job. And he was working like 100 hour weeks. He admired his work ethic, but he never saw his father, which is more important. So I salute your father to be honest.



12:09

Yeah. And for me, being a dad, now to three young boys, there's a lot of decisions that I do make that are very conscious, where it's like, well, we need we need more money, or we want more money, and we want to do these things. But it's like, but I'm not willing to sacrifice nights, I'm not willing to sacrifice, being able to work or being able to coach and be around them and do these things. Because you have if you have enough old people in every aspect of your life that says it goes by so fast, like do these things like it's I throw the ball with my boys before school, like I'll throw the baseball with them. And we're out in the front yard or whatever. And it's literally just so we can get some energy out before they had to get on the bus, we would do that. And we've done it for years. And it's the old people constantly are like, This is so great. It's so great that you do this. And it's like, I'm doing this so my wife doesn't kill them before they get on the bus. Like it's just like it's sitting. But I also am not naive enough to, like know, like, there's a bigger purpose of doing some of these things. That that just matter, you have enough people to say it is kind of like, alright, if I choose not to try and do some of this, or do some of it, it's almost like you're just you're just squandering any of that good advice that you've been getting your entire life or people desperately trying to give you that advice. Like, you're just too busy to hear it?



James Geering 13:30

Well, you said dream killer as well. I mean, I see that. And again, when I look back at my childhood, there were pros and cons like most of ours, but one thing that my mom especially did very well was she just had that shoot for the moon mentality. Men truly. And so I was never, by my family told, Oh, you can't do that thing. And I discovered, for example, I wanted to be a doctor. Because I want to be a firefighter, they told me I was colorblind and said you can't be a firefighter, or I'll be a doctor, then that sounds easy. So when I realized that I have zero capacity for any sort of advanced mathematics, and that was the end of that journey. But like you said, you know, the smaller guy want to be a linebacker, well, maybe he finds himself into play. And it was all that training for the same thing, pushing forward momentum that took him on a different route that he never envisioned. And so what I don't see from a lot of conversations these days is you can be anything and I point this out like it used to be when we were young, you could be prime minister or president. Now, no one wants to be the last two that we've had. For example, yeah, I mean, so this is the thing we need the astronauts and the firefighters and the cops and the soldiers and the teachers and the sports stars and you know the poets and the chess players and everyone to be like, I was a kid just like you. You just think about what you would want to do more than anything else. Actually in my I do a journal every morning on the quote and I'm gonna butcher it was something thing like, a passion only began becomes a job. If you were wishing you were doing something else. And I was like that there's something I'm paraphrasing, but but that's just it, what was it? What would you want to do? What is your burning desire, like my next book, my vision is to turn it into a film or TV show. I haven't even finished the book yet. But that's where I want it to go. Because that's where you get the eyeballs. And to me, it's like, Well, why not? Everyone else that makes films and television and writes books are people that went to school, you know, and got the bus and had

a dog and we're all the same. So How dare you piss on the dreams of someone? Because you don't think that that person is able to get there. All you know is the Instagram highlights of the people that you admire. You didn't see where they started. So I think we need so much more you can lifting kids out rather than this eye rolling kids today participation trophy bullshit that we hear, which just discourages kids from actually believing in themselves.



16:02

Yeah, there's a quote that Tim shares at the start of one of the episodes in the swamp kings Docu series. And he goes, he's talking about how he shouldn't have been born. Right, but his parents don't abort him. He's born. And his parents, just from a very young age just said, yes, you're a miracle baby. And God has sent you here to do amazing things. And he goes, Do you know what happens to a kid that has told their whole life, that they're gonna do amazing things? They start to believe it. And it's like, it's for me, it's like, Jess, all the yes, all the things, but it's so common. It's so counter to our lived experience like that, how the media wants us to believe like, what what, like how you hear or see things, we're just as kids are just not lifted up in that way. And it just isn't that hard to just be like, you're gonna do amazing, like, you're gonna be incredible man. Like, don't worry, like we've gotten that's weird, just my wife always is worried, along with every other good wife on and mother on the planet, is worried that they're fucking their kids up. They're doing a terrible job to the worst mom that's ever lived. And they're no good at it. That's every mom on planet Earth. And I just tell them, like, Listen, I'm like, you don't, you just have, we have to love them. Like, we just have to love them, and just support whatever it is that they want to do. I'm like, the bar is so low. And it's so frightening, because the book of parenting is blank. And we get to write those pages every page of the way that we go. And it's terrifying, when you're holding that first baby that like, can't do anything, and you're, you're gonna break it each time or break it, I'm gonna break it. And if you don't break it, and then the baby keeps going, and then they get bigger. So it's been for me being a dad has been so awesome. Having them go through these different phases. And just knowing like, I just, I just know, you just have to just tell him, you're gonna do awesome, and we're gonna love you. And it's okay. And we'll just help you do whatever it is that you want to do. But there's so much damage that gets passed on and passed down from that, that that lug and that's where again, I feel very fortunate where it's just as I didn't, I don't have a whole bunch of I have everyone has baggage. But the baggage that I have, I think is I was had such good examples of what to do. And I think it's we can, but it takes collectively, it's gonna take all of us as a community, because that's why I fell in love working with at risk youth, or working with kids that were on the islands of misfit toys, or throw aways where they felt like they were throw away, whether it was the military school kids or kids that were like on the east side of town, or whatever it was, because they just hadn't had someone say, you're doing great. Like, hey, you're doing awesome, like you've got an eight, like way to go like it's to kind of be in their corner, because everybody, all the adults in their life just had so much shit that they were dealing with that they just didn't have time to try and worry about the little ones.



James Geering 19:11

I threw my son's life like there's been academic years in middle school where, I guess Middle School, the end of elementary where he almost got held back. I mean, he was very young for his age and just developmentally you know, it was a little bit hype behind on speech and reading and writing. And so fought tooth and nail to stay in that that school year. And I always

told him, I am so proud of the work you put in, I don't care about what letter is on your, your report card. If you end up having to, you know to hold back a year, then it is what it is. But as long as you're working hard and as long as you're being kind to other people. Those are the two tenants that are important to me. You're never going to win the Attendance Award because we're always going to travel the world and I'm going to take you out of school but that's more important to me. You know, you may not win the academic awards. Come on aboard. But the holistic human being which I bet you read, I think it was your bio when you were a teacher is still on the internet. And that's what you were talking about the holistic child. That is what's most important. You know, academia is just one of many, many pillars of a child's physical and mental wellness and ability to achieve. And of course, certain ladders, they're quite academic focused. However, there are so many different routes. And if a child's passion is like mine was, in the end to be a doctor, it wasn't to be a doctor. Actually, what I envisioned, I didn't realize it was to be a paramedic. And that doesn't require a high level of mathematics. It requires a community college education, and the ability to, you know, work under pressure and work in a team and other things. So that I mean, just like you said, empowering these kids and not using Academic, you know, rigid academic alphabets to decide if your child is worthy or not. I think that's that's a hard lesson. Because us if you're not winning college championships in football, or you're not winning spelling bees, and you know, Pat smashing the FSA, then is it how does your child feel successful if they're told these are the pillars of success? So I think it's so important for us to empower kids take away education, imagine your kid was was grown 100 years ago? What would you tell them? Good job for the kind they have they work hard. I mean, all these things that, you know, we're around a long before a schoolhouse was ever even conceived?



21:32

Oh, yeah, we have, we have a lot of very upfront conversations with my son's teachers. Because I don't, it's the worst thing ever, when you were a teacher was to have someone come in and be like, Well, I was a teacher, like, Oh, where are you? I can't wait to hear whatever it is, you're about to tell me. So I don't ever lead with that. And I don't ever say it ever, to the teachers. And it just is for it's just like, please understand upfront that it's, we do not care about his grades. Because like, please understand what does matter to us is how hard he's working, and how he is working in the classroom with you. And in your community of students. Like that's it, there's the only two things that matter. And so it is what it is how we've raised our boys up to this point, which is we don't care is Hey, Dad, I got an A. And it's like, yeah, but you didn't like I don't think you worked on that at all. It's like, Yeah, but it was like, you know, an open book test. And it's like, okay, well, then there's no kudos to be given for the open book test or whatever, right? But there's so many times where it's like, man, we worked really hard and studied for whatever math or science, whatever it was gonna be. And he just barely gets to be or gets a CD, or whatever it is. It's like, did you work so hard on that? All this tells us is where you're at right now. And we'll get you there. Like, don't worry about it. Like, it's just, you worked hard. That's all that we care about. Is it first for me. That was I wasn't the best athlete. So my attitude on any of these things, and I wasn't the best student either. But it was like, I worked incredibly hard. So my attitude always just was, I will outwork you. Like if you if we're even, I will beat you. And I'll beat you. Because I will just do more, I'll do more, I'll do it harder. It's I won't be beat when it comes to the level that I'm willing to put into it and the amount of work that I'm willing to put into it. So for me, it's like, that is the thing that I think was just in me. And I that's the bar that I'm holding for my boys. It's like it's No, listen, you're going to work, you're not going to be the fastest, you're not going to be the strongest, but you will work


the hardest. So that's where it's like it's you can run on and off the field. It's a non skill issue. It's an effort issue, or skill problems and there's effort problems. We're not going to have effort problems, our effort will always be there and skill will come next.

 James Geering 23:51

Well speaking of athletics and football, walk me through your journey from you know, the school system up to high school, and then how that took you to University of Florida.

 24:01

So we were so I grew up in Southern California. And so the first sports that I really played was volleyball. So men's volleyball is super normal for the West Coast. And I grew up my grandparents were boosters and donors for UCLA. So it gave me really, really unique experiences early on as a young kid where I got to be around college athletes all the time. So like scholarship dinners where the donors get to go and the boosters get to go eat with those scholarship athletes, like sometimes I would get to go with grandpa and grandmas like I got to go. And JJ Stokes played for the 40 Niners for a number of years was a wide receiver and he was one of their scholarship athletes. So I got to as a little little little kid, getting to meet all these athletes and seeing them and being a part of it. So I was going to UCLA for All games. You know, the guy that sat in front of us at all the football games was the head coach for UCLA men's volleyball program. It's like the most winningest college coach named Al skates. He wants something crazy, like 17 1819 National Championships. So I was seeing national championship rings. You know, his wife had one on a necklace and had them for earrings or whatever it was. Like, they just like chopped off the, you know, like, because the way the rings sit, right, like they're going to be, they'll just have like, you know, a crest that sits on top of the ring. They didn't can pull off. So they just had, it was everywhere, right. And so that was normal, right? That was a that was what my normal was. So being around these people that just achieved crazy things athletically. And the one, one of their wide receivers that they had had one year, like his wife was an Olympic volleyball player. And so you get to just be around these people. And so growing up going to all these different things I really wanted to play. I always wanted to play football. So like my parents weren't, my mom played, you know, softball in high school and could have gone to college to play golf. But it wasn't the time period where you went to college to play women's athletics. Like it just wasn't like, just up there chose not I think she had even had a scholarship. She was like, no, like, I'm not going to do that. And then my dad, like no athletics in his background at all, like he was the band, kid. And for whatever reason, I came out just being like, I want to do football, where we were in California that you couldn't, they had, it was junior all American was the league that was in our area. So it's like Pop Warner, all that kind of stuff. So like general American was the league that was there. They had weight limits. I was a festively plump, young man. Growing up like I was meant to.

 James Geering 26:53

fest makes me think of it as just turkey. That's it.

 26:57



I was a delicious turkey for quite a while. And so like fourth grade, I was 100. Navy 185 pounds. Like give you reference, right? So I was I was in North, I was huge. And the problem was, is that the weight limits for football, were like, topped out eighth graders playing tackle football when you were a kid was 175 pounds. So it's like, well, if everybody wanted me to play, all the parents were like, are you having your son play or whatever, but it's like, yeah, when he was in third grade, he'd be playing with the seventh graders. My parents were like, we're not going to do that doesn't sound like a good idea. Now, and so I just didn't, I got to watch. I've watched and was at the games, doing all things, and just continue to just love football. Loved it. But so I just played whatever sports I could, only to get better at football. Because the goal was always to go to the NFL. So everything I did was always in a step for football. So I'm going to play volleyball because in volleyball, you can state and it never was a conversation. There's so much conversation nowadays of like, we need to keep the kids active. The kids keep the kids moving, keep them active. Like I don't remember that ever being like a conversation for us back in like the 90s It just was. You played sports because you liked playing sports. Like it wasn't. So like we could stay active and moving. And it wasn't like we were we didn't have video game consoles around. We didn't like live eat and breathe the way it is nowadays. But like, I had an N 64 Whenever that came out, like we had that in the house. But my love to play sports just kept it always balanced. It wasn't like Well, this was now all that I do. And I now I'm going to live in the basement. This is all I'm going to do now. Like that wasn't on the menu

 James Geering 28:43

or just to jump in as well when you said about not framing sports as a way of moving keeping fit, whatever. I mean, the original name was game. It's a game of football, for example. Right? Because you weren't in this system trying to be groomed at that point. Was it the element that you were enjoying sports because you were playing these games that gave you that that balance rather than you know some of the youth athletes now that are just you know drilling like they are in the NFL, but they're only 10

 29:14

know for sure. And it was like and also remember 185 pound fourth grader? I don't know if you've seen men volleyball. Well, that's not what they look like. Like you're not you're not rotund meatballs out there playing live like these are these dudes are look like professional swimmers, like men's volleyball is when you can get a men's volleyball and they will jump with the best basketball players on the planet. Like it just like these dudes are freaks. And if you've not ever seen men's volleyball because where you grow up has been where it's a girl sport or people the men don't do that. It's watch just the the just the sheer power and explosive and explosiveness that comes with like a men volleyball player hitting like an outside hitting the ball at the other team. Like it'll break your face. Like it's crazy. So it was, but I just loved it. So my point of saying all that was like, It's No it wasn't, it was I had no business like love and I just love it. I love playing volleyball, like volleyball to this day, I still really enjoy that sport. And, but it hurt. Again, if you're if you're a little dude, and you're real heavy like that, and growing, right, so I grew up, you know, growing and I've always been, you know, the tallest or second tallest in the class. So like I said, it 665 Right now like six five to 95 is like where I sit right now. And that's how I leaner than it was certainly when I played right for for football for in college, it was right they can, they'll make you wherever you need to be. So when I was the field goal, it was like, don't we need you like 315 Like, we need you as big as you like, we'll just make you bid.

And, and so based off that size, but when you're a little guy that hurts, like your knees hurt, your knees hurt, and you got growing pains and all that, but I loved it. I love playing softball, so did lots of volleyball, and then eventually gets introduced to basketball. And it was brutal. Because basketball, it just was like the team that I tried out for at school, the coaches just they just wanted to win. So it just was like, that was one of my early experiences with someone that wasn't like in the fan, I had a couple family members that were pretty rough when I was little for being as chunky as I was that were like extended family. But this was the first time I had a coach just be like, well, you're too sunny, you're too fat, you can't play basketball, you're too fat. And that was pretty good. Like, it's it wasn't like it was a secret like I had been made fun of for being a fat kid at like school is school is a great indicator for whatever your life problems might be. Or that you could be emotionally vulnerable to like school that you know, like public school makes sure you're very clear on whatever your problems are. And so I was very aware, but I never had an adult just come out and be like you're a fat kid. And that's why you're not making the team. You're too slow. You're too fat. And, and I remember being like, that sucks. Like that's super, super sucks. And so like, but I wanted to play basketball. And so I played volleyball, basketball, and then ultimately get into middle school, and now start to lean out a little bit more. Now I'm sick and tired of being told I was fat. Now I'm sick and tired of these things. So I do what is always highly recommended and which is you starve yourself and only drink SlimFast shakes for a year. Because I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell my parents. And this was the time period where like SlimFast was the popular so we had him in the house. So I'm like, well, I could just not eat all day. And then if I go home, I'll eat dinner. So mom or dad really won't be aware that I'm not eating all day. And I'll just have a SlimFast shake for lunch. And then I'll play really hard at recess. And the only goal was to lose weight. Like it just was. But because I wanted to do at this point, we're now in eighth grade. And again, I had said earlier was like I played volleyball, so my footwork would get better for football. Because as I learned I would listen to football players, again, like UCLA, football players, UCLA athletes, it was, you know, there's one guy that we had named Danny farmer who was a wide receiver for UCLA, and also was on the volleyball team. So he's a dual sport athlete at UCLA. And, you know, up to that point, like Jackie Robinson was the only one that I knew that did that. I played multiple sports in college. And I'm like, That's awesome. So talking to him, he talks all the time about how, like, volleyball helped him be a better wide receiver. And like at this point, JJ Stokes now plays for the 40, Niners and we're hearing about how he's taken like ballet lessons in the offseason. Like that sounds why. And it was like, well, because this, that and the other because it helps him understand how to move his body and do all those things. So for me, it was always just hearing these lessons and being like, oh, so I can just do lots of different things that are unique. And it always helps me towards my number one goal. So for me, it was always tied to that. And so basketball then was like I really liked basketball. Again, this was a good time period to be in Southern California, because Kobe and Shaq were together. So you got to see like, domination happening. And again, a big guy dominating. So being able to be like, well, then I can work my footwork here. And then I'll continue to be able to just continue to get in shape and do all these things. And so, between volleyball, basketball, and then football, that's what I played mainly. And so I've been on that the sidelines for football camp, wait to play, and then we start hearing like, oh, well UCLA has a football camp, like a summer football camp. You go you stay in the dorm for a couple of days. And you go and you get to play. The coaches will coach you for a couple days. And so my family is like, do you want to do that? I said, Well, yeah. And so like, well, we have to tell we're gonna tell everybody that you're a ninth grader but you're actually eighth grade. Hmm. And are you okay with telling me that I'm like? Absolutely. Like at this point, it's like, absolutely. So we like go bypass I've never played football ever before in my life. And so we go to the UCLA football camp. And they have like, whatever their 12 year old go and stay in the dorms with all high school kids, like 18 year old men that are playing football, trying to get scholarships, whatever. And so I go out, and my dad goes, because my dad went and

didn't stay with me in the dorms, but he would come to all the practices, and watch. And he goes, I watched you go ass over teakettle for three solid days, because I've just I've never done any of it before, and I'm just getting smashed, like smashed, and I was in heaven. I was so in love. Because it just was my whole life. I've been getting in trouble for hurting kids. You're playing on the playground, your junior John's too rough. You know, he hurt the kid. I'm in the principal's office. But everyone knew, like for me, my personality was I was super kind. And I was I wasn't an aggressive kid on but for me, it was like no, like, this is a place you can be aggressive. And not only do you not get in trouble, but they reward you for it. It's a little bit like the clips in Russell Crowe's gladiator was like and the old, the old timey gladiator is like kind of talking to him, like listen to like, this isn't just about killing. But you got to do it with flair, like, and they'll love you for it, like you'll be rewarded for it. Like it's, that was what I learned very early on. And I learned that I loved to be hit as much as I loved hitting. So just there was no aspect to the game. It's running besides running, which was the worst. But there's no aspects and there's no aspects of the game at all that I disliked. And so I of course, as soon as I got a taste of it, I was hooked. And so then I show up and play in high school for the first time, and then had success just, we were big enough school or had enough kids playing football, we had a freshman team for just football was like just freshman team, then you had a JV team. And then you had a varsity team for football. So I played freshman year, and then after my freshman year, when they went into playoffs, it was super exciting. I got pulled up as a freshman like go with the team, to the varsity team for the playoffs. And then by sophomore year, I was starting and just played both ways or whatever. And just did that throughout all of high school.



37:19

But I talked about this a lot because it's you have a lot of like the Pop Warner or young families that feel so obsessed with putting their kids through tackle football at a young age. And just it's like, I didn't start playing football till I was in ninth grade. Like I just wasn't allowed. But please understand that it's I was just waiting in the wings. And all those kids that got to play all those years that were hot shit, and everyone thought they were so great. And they're so amazing. It's I showed up. So weird, like is this kid Ben. And it's like, and then I ate your kid's lunch. Because you didn't allow me to play. And there are freaks that are out there. Like it just as like as an I was the small guy. Like I'm a little guy at all my friends that I played with Florida I was a little guy at 652 50 to 300 pounds, like I was a small guy. And our team was little compared to LSU. Like LSU is average lineman was when we played them was like six, eight, like 350 375 pounds. Like they had us by like four inches, there were monsters that was the average. So it's like and that don't even get us started with like Michigan. And like Ohio State, like it's a totally different game. Sec balls is a radically different game than we're playing out in like big town or big 12 and one, whatever the conferences are now but and so it just was I was little and yet it just came in and was able to play again. It wasn't cuz I was the best athlete, it just was I had a motor and I loved to hit. And then so that's how it got me into football. But again, I wasn't I wasn't the best athlete, but I really enjoy playing. And so again, my family put me in great positions where was alright, his goal is to play pro. So we gotta get to college. So for me, it just was I stay eligible so that I can go and get into a good college. So that's why I did homework and I did all those things because I wanted to play football in college was not of any desire or interest or anything football was the only reason I wanted to go to college was because I could continue to play football because you have to go to college in order to be able to go to the pros. So this is another stepping stone and so during the summers once I'm in high school is now going to more of those camps I get to UCLA and then you find out oh everybody's got these camps so that I would go to USC USC is camp even though I hated USC. We hated USC but we

go to USC as camp and then my grandparents now have a spot out in Florida so now we're gonna go to Florida State's camp and you find out Georgia Tech's got a cancer we go to Georgia State so we when it was all said and done, I went to so many camps UCLA, USC, Stanford, Georgia Tech, Georgia, Florida State, Florida, Miami. There's all over hitting all these different camps. And it wasn't until, like my junior year, you start getting tons of letters start coming in. And people are interested in wanting you to come and and just want you to know that you're being recruited. The best part is the first bladders that come in are from all the Ivy League schools. So you get like, tons, like, it's great to Cornell and Brown and Harvard, just get these letters and be like, Oh, these are just AutoSum. Because like, I don't have even sort of the grades to go to any of these places. So I'm like, Oh, well, I'm not going to Yale. So I'm not sure like, it just was you learned very early on, it's like, oh, once a kid hits a certain age, and obviously has like maybe a certain height or weight, they're just sending you a letter, or whatever it was. And I went to Stanford, one of the Sanford camps. And I got like, best lineman in the camp, like got the little plaque reward at the end of the camp. And that's when things started to be like, hey, like, we think we're kind of good. But like, Okay, this is cool. Like it isn't, and was a big deal for me, because my parents, my grandparents, like weren't donors at Stanford. So it wasn't like there wasn't like some fuckery afoot. Like I got, I got an official visit to UCLA that I guarantee was just because Grandpa said, Can my grandson get an official visit? So there's a little bit of like animosity, not animosity, but just was, you didn't earn that piece. And so, one of the years I went out to Florida, and we went to, I was supposed to go to Florida State's camp, but it got canceled because of a hurricane coming or whatever. And they had canceled it. But my grandmother was like, hey, there's a school between Orlando and Tallahassee. And, and they're holding a camp the same time period Do you want to go? I say, sure. What is the school. So again, from being from California, there wasn't really a lot of differentiation between the state of Florida, it just was Florida has is the state that has the universities. At this point, Florida State has been pretty good. So we know who they are. Miami had been good. But like Florida of the 90s, once you get to the 2000s, when I really become now like aware and have schools and teams on my radar, Florida in 2000s is garbage. Like they're not good. And so I'm completely almost completely unaware of the University of Florida. And so that's when she's like, well, there's that school. So we're like, Well, then let's go, you know, and so we show up. And as soon as I get to that campus, I don't know anything about this one. I know nothing about anything. And I also wasn't a kid that like listen to like ESPN or watched ESPN obsess over stats, or obsess over, like recruiting classes or whatever. Like I found it just being an enormous waste of time, like I could not have less interest in it. So I was unaware of like any of the hype, any anything about Florida at all. And when I get there, as soon as I get out of the car, I immediately got a feeling of like, this is the place. I've been to a lot of campuses at this point. I've been to a lot of schools and done a lot of camps. Like I haven't even started the first day of camp. And there was like a noticeable difference. As soon as I got out of the parking lot. I'm like, Okay, so I'm just paying attention to that ends up being a Florida State's camp wasn't supposed to be a paddock camp, Flores camp, did have pads had helmets and shoulder pads, and I didn't have them. And Florida was ultimately like, it's fine, you can do it. Just be careful in the drills. So I wasn't careful and the drills and so I ended up head butting another player that had a helmet on while we were in a drill and I cracked my eye open and I'm bleeding all over and the coaches just fucking think it's awesome. And so I come over, they, you know, you wanna keep Of course, I'm gonna keep going. So this like, for day, you know, day one, or whatever. So they, you know, put a butterfly on it and get it taken care of, and then I play out the rest of the week. Try not to headbutt anybody else. And then at the end, I got invited to go within just whoever the invites were to go now into the swamp and practice in front of Meyer, with whoever the best people were in the camp. And from then on the defensive line coach just stayed in contact with me like every week. I was like, We want you to come to Florida, keep your grades up. Like we want you to be here. And then when it push

came to shove, they're like we can't give you a scholarship schools too small. I wasn't good enough. Like it just as I wasn't there, because like, but we can give you preferred walk on status. So in football, right, you can have a true walk on where you get you're already at the school and you want to walk on to try and be on the football team afford walk on status as they helped you get into the school. And that was the only way I academically could have gotten in. So they helped me get in. And that's ultimately what gets me into Florida was having that status but that was it was between UCLA or Florida. And not only did UCLA football program look like they were going to be diarrhoea like they were not gonna be good. And then that ended up being true. But it was I just wanted to make sure like it was mine. I did it and not having it tied to, oh, well like your, you know, your grandparents were boosters and that's why you're there, whatever. And so it was a no brainer for me to go to Florida. Everybody thought I was an idiot. Like I was just the biggest idiot on the planet because nobody knew again nobody knows what Gainesville Florida is like University of Florida is almost irrelevant. And they're like, Wait, you're going to Florida like why? Why they're you're gonna walk on like you didn't get a scarlet like what are you thinking? And I went from the biggest idiot to like the smartest person on planet earth. Because less than like eight months later, we won our first national championship.

 James Geering 45:41

So when I first moved from, I went met my my ex in Japan that we moved to England for six months. And then we came, spent some time in Hawthorne before we went down to Orlando to live but her family and Hawthorne so I was in Gainesville, a lot. And the entire frickin city is basically painted blue and orange. And when you talk about, you know, a city that's passionate about the school, and obviously, all the sports are predominantly football. Ironically, I ended up becoming a UF graduate myself years later. But I lived in Anaheim and I worked in Anaheim fire and lived in Burbank in Huntington Beach for for the years that I was there. Very different culture. So what was just say that what was your initial experience, once you kind of, you know, laid your roots here as far as the differences in those coaches.

 46:34

The OC so growing up in Orange County, you don't know it, you know, it's a bubble. You know, where you're at in Orange County is unique, but when you grow up, so the one thing that always was helpful is that I didn't, I came into that area of Orange County like Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, Huntington Beach, that area, I came to it in middle school. So I had at least a little bit of perspective before getting there. But this is a place that is I would never want to raise children they're so culturally speaking It's It's It's unfathomable amounts of money that's in this area. And it's it's homes are bad, like not nice homes are a million plus. Right? And this was back then like what it looks like, you know, I don't even know what it would be now like this is back in like, the 2000s, late 90s. And that's how expensive it was to be there. And so it just was it's nothing but lawyers and doctors and Dad's not around and mom's not around and knowing what I know now, right? It's like it's everybody is is taken pharmaceuticals. Like none of the parents are present. The stories of growing up in high school. For me my stories of high school parties and growing up in high school are how people describe college. So regular humans describe College of like drinking and partying and drugs and this data the other like, that was my high school experience. Like I had so many friends that either got kicked out for smoking pot at school when I was in middle school. And like pot was like weed wasn't even

considered a drug within our population of students. It was only like, if you did drugs, it was because you were doing like Coke, or you were doing mushrooms or you're doing things like that, like it was so much different. And alcohol wasn't even like what are we talking about? Like everyone drinks alcohol. And for me, I was raised Mormon. So I was an LDS kid. So the best part was I was always the DD. So being the DD was I but I had tons of friends. So I loved going to parties. And it was an easy sell of my parents where it was just like, Sean and Matt won't make it home. So it's like I have to be there. So Sean and Matt can get home. And the experience for me like one of the was one of like, here's I guess this is like a story to really say what it was like growing up there was like, there was a house party we were at. There's a kid who went to my high school, but I didn't know him. And he was in his Escalade, because of course, right, because it's 1617 That's what you have. He's in his Escalade. His lights are on the engine is running. And he's passed out with his head on the steering wheel. And so I'm out because I buy the car because I was also like, I was looking out for cops. cops come my job is get in get Matt and Sean we're gonna get the hell out of there because we're not getting arrested. And I'm gonna get them home safe like paranoid. So I was always looking for cops. And but I see this kid he's passed out and so like I'm this appears to be like the cars on like in Drive. So I walk up knock on this window or whatever He doesn't respond so I open up his door and sure shit his foots on the brake with the car in drive. Like he just passed out Read the last second So we put it in a park or whatever. I don't know who this kid is. So I pull them out trying to talk to him. He's like, he's so drunk, right is so far gone that like his eyes are going opposite directions, right and are all glassed over, like, what are chameleons? Right? What are the lizards are? And so he can't, he's not. He's not all there. So all I do is I pop them onto my shoulder, walk in to the party and go, who's this kid? There? Let me know who he is. And get his phone. I just tell Matt and Shawn, you got to find a way home. Because homie here is got a problem. Like, I don't know it right. But he's for sure. Like it's, it's, it's alcohol poisoning at this point for sure. So get him in my truck, get a hold of his phone, figure out where he you know, he's staying or whatever. He's got some nanny or whatever, that's home, that his parents are out of the country because of course, they are like, whatever. And get him home. Pull him up. He's pissed himself. So he's pissed down like my shirt as I've carried him home and bring him in. So the nannies they're just like, oh, you know, thank you so much for bringing him home. Like, that's it. That was the night, you know, and I go home. That next Monday, that kid finds me, he goes do thank you so much for taking me home. He's like, my, they rushed me to the hospital and they put my stomach because like, they're like, if you didn't get here, you're gonna die. That was a normal Saturday. That's a Saturday where I grew up because it's too much money. It's too much time. no parents, no family, like no accountability. But so many kids that I went to school with, have gone through rehab before we hit 30. And, and we go to Florida, and a screw up at least these are the 405 this is the five the 55 like these are areas where it's like it's you're driving 80 miles an hour on 65 highways. Everyone's got beamers like I had a a Harley Davidson truck that was like the Ford Harley Davidson truck had a supercharger in it at 16. Like what are you talking about? Like it just was like the norm your normal this place of kids haven't Porsches and all these was that was normal. It was just it was like Well, yeah, you have the teacher lot and the other student lot and the student law doesn't have a vehicle under \$70,000. And that was our normal when we played against the kid that was like on the one of the first seasons of Laguna Beach, or whatever, like any was such a tool. So we were super stoked because we broke his ankle in the game that we played him against. It was such a douche. Like it just was it was that was Yeah, so that was what it was like growing up there. And then you get to Florida. And again, you think you know football like I like football. I've been to UCLA tons of times. Like they're super passionate about football but James the Rose Bowl Pasadena the whole thing. Like you have no idea like it's so hard it is impossible for you to comprehend and understand what football means in the south. And so when you get there it is it's on like I already knew it was hot like we've been to Florida in the summers and

stuff but like it's ungodly hot. And I think just because of the heat and the humidity everyone slows down 25 miles an hour. Like it just is slow you're in it's swampy or whatever but at this point like you don't care like you are just you're so in it but like you said it's the gas stations and the car washes and everything is orange and blue every like It's like it this this area of the word does not exist. Without football. Like this The City probably of Gainesville probably goes to what 30,000 People when school is not in and then is that over 100,000 people when school is in session or whatever, like it's the swells and ebbs and flows are just a whole nother animal. That's why I never went back to California. It just was not only was it just outrageously and prohibitively expensive to be there but it just was like I just couldn't see myself going back and I have tons of NF friends that are there and guys that I that I truly love that are still there and never really left for or went to Colorado or or went to different areas then went back and they still live there whatever but I don't know if I ever could once I got a taste of not they're

**J** James Geering 54:20

starting off living in Burbank and where I live was literally when you watch a movie and some poor, for example want to be actor moves to LA and they live in an absolute shithole under an airport. That's where I lived with my wife. If you go right under the fucking I mean the you know, the wheels or the planes almost hit us before they went on to Burbank Airport.

 54:42

Yeah, that was Santa Ana where we were right. That was

**J** James Geering 54:45

what used to be John Wayne Airport. Yeah, exactly. And then I go down to Huntington Beach. And again, the house is very basic. And you talk about the cost. It was a 1400 square foot house 1950s And it was basically a million dollar house we rented but I see Unit for sale now and as over a million, which is insane. But you got to see the contrast LA, you know, if you were if you want to paint it politically la seems to be a little bit more blue. You go through the orange curtain going south, and all of a sudden it's like you're in Florida. It's a very very different for sure politically yeah. Oh yeah so you have that, you know, you know, I remember just being like, what the fuck I'd have my friends yapping about, you know, illegal immigrants in here and then in the same breath saying they were gonna go to Home Depot and pick up some Mexican so they can help, you know, whatever thing in their house I'm like, Do you know how fucking hypocritical you are right now? But um, yeah, it was. It was interesting because Anaheim itself you've got Disney Land. You know, we've got some very, very poor areas in Anaheim, you know, in relation to the areas around us some very dangerous areas, really bad gang activity. But you know, Huntington and Newport and all those other areas, like you said, this, this kind of projection of wealth the same way you'd see driving down Ocean Drive in Miami, which by the way, most of those are rented. So it isn't actually rent people like pretend to be wealthy for a day a lot of times. But when I looked at the firefighters, like I got made fun of because I have a 1997 near San Sentra that when I traded in had 309,000 miles on the clock, but they all call it my creampuff because they all had the big trucks. And you know, this was I was there before the crash. So they had ski boats and Winnebagos and jet skis and you name it. But when you just said that now I've never thought about this before. I found that so fucking alien because to

me, an immigrant from the UK, the American dream was the American dream, a little bit of land, a home, you know, some places to grow vegetables and have some, maybe some chickens and enough space for your kids and dogs to run around. But that wasn't the American dream I walked into. It was unique, you know, all these fucking toys and a 4000 square foot home and, and these guys were killing themselves trying to chase this. And after I left is when the crash happened. I heard about all the repossessions and all the bankruptcies. But you know, you've got these firefighters living in a place with doctors and lawyers that are actually making crazy money. And this element of Keeping Up with the Joneses was even bleeding into the first responders who felt like clearly felt like they needed to match it with their, you know, projection of their lifestyle. But uh, you're right, it was an absolute bubble because the rest of the US I mean, again, not Manhattan, or some of these other pockets, Beverly Hills, but the rest of the US they weren't subject to this constant pull that you need more. That's not good enough.



57:49

Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was it was a really unique place to be and grow up in Ocean's 11 Ocean's 11, right with George Clooney. And right and Brad Pitt and all the guys right at the robbers. So at the very end of the movie, the dude I came up with that is awesome, right is the Italian cat. And he's making a threat right to George Clooney. And he's like, you know, no matter where you are, I'm gonna find you if you're driving your Lamborghini in Newport Beach, California, and he says that phrase, and the whole fucking theatres erupts. Because it's like, that's, it's it just it's so unselfish, aware. And I think that that's probably the best way really also to describe that area is just it's just mind numbingly unselfish, aware of like, what it is, just like you said, of the idea of like political leanings, just hard. Hard, right? Right, as always been. And yet is picking up illegals from Home Depot, or is it's like it's Oh, you just have no idea. So that's was coming into Florida, the culture shock to which was a big part of like playing ball is that we didn't have like its there was one kid that was African American. And his mom was British. And his dad was African American. And so he was mixed. That was the only kid that we have that wasn't like white, like on the team. And then we come to Florida and Ally came in as a defensive lineman. I was the only white player on the entire defensive side of the ball. And it was a number of dudes that I played with that had never played with a white player ever until they got to college. So it was a massive, a massive culture shock as far as just, oh, understanding kind of like where you fit and then fitting in, but it never was a situation where I wasn't embraced and loved. You know what I mean? Like even as a walk on. I had guys because you all live when you're a freshman you live all in the same dorms you live in Springs is the name of the dorm. that are there in Gainesville. And that's where all the athletes live. So you get paired up with roommates, you're hanging out. And you know, when you're with that, that you're your incoming class, you do a lot of things with that class, especially just as like workouts and practices. So you just get to know guys and the guy that I ended up busting my I open at the camp, he ultimately gets a scholarship as a defensive lineman, so I'm like, Oh, I know a guy. So then, like, we're, so he and I became good friends and went back to his home, and, and spend time with his family. But this is, you know, again, it's now in areas that are not so nice. And so this is, again, this is getting introduced to, you know, parents who, like you can't have you can't have your friends smoke black and milds in the truck. I'm like, I know, but I didn't know what to do. Like, he just started smoking. Like, I didn't know what to say. He just was like, there's so many lessons, like little lessons like that, where it's like, okay, and so it's like a tea. If you don't mind, like we wait till we like get wherever we need to go before you smoke black like black. Like it just was these little things as you start to, you know, get introduced to new cultures and new areas.



 James Geering 1:01:06

Having experienced Orange County, I mean, obviously, there's, there's more of a Hispanic leaning and an Asian leaning. You know, Westminster, for example, was very Vietnamese, and it was right on the edge of Huntington. But when you talk about diversity, it just, it just depends where you stand. Like, where I grew up in England, it wasn't extremely diverse. I mean, I remember, you know, the handful of people in my school that weren't Caucasian, but that was just because that was that area. But I also remember as a young boy, absolutely loving Heathrow Airport, because that's really reflected. Britain, you know, the UK, because there was, everyone was there African nations, you know, Asian nations, you name it, they were and they were all British. You know, it's funny. I love the fact when I see someone, you know, that's from wherever, in their lineage, but they got a thick glass, we're gonna Glaswegian accent or London accent a Cockney or whatever, because this is England. This is the UK to me. We are a diverse culture. And you can stand in Newport Beach, maybe and think, wow, we're a very Caucasian country. But you can stand in Manhattan, and realize what a beautiful melting pot America actually is. So people can get a very skewed perspective, especially when it comes to racism. Oh, you know, Anaheim is a perfect example. So the hiring to be a firefighter in Anaheim I've tested against 1000, certified firefighter EMTs, or paramedics 1000 of us in. I think it was the convention center in Anaheim for remember rightly. And I remember looking and going, Wow, that is a sea of white faces. So if you look at Anna Heinz diversity, some people could say, why aren't you hiring more whatever. And I remember thinking, Well, you got to show up to be part of that thing. Now. Again, mentorship and removing barriers to entry is definitely part of this conversation. But as you saw, you know, if you stand in Gainesville, Florida, a lot more diverse you stand in, and I'm just guessing here, the Midwest, Iowa somewhere, maybe it's not as diverse because that's the geography of that particular area. But when people project America is a racist country, there are some shitbags in this country, we know all the way from homeless through the in the White House the last six years and everywhere in between. But most of us are a beautifully diverse community. And seeing the similarities and watching I say in the documentary, watching that passion when you guys won against a common enemy. It was a diverse football team unified by a single purpose. And that, to me was such a great metaphor is what is needed now more than ever, not to unify to go kill another country, but to come together and elevate our own country.

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And universities. I think they've gotten a bad rap, rightfully so over the last several years. You know, I left university in 2010. And but one of the incredibly positive pieces that I think university holds is that it does bring people from all over the world to those to those walls. So you just not now you are you're with it's Heathrow Airport, right like you are now in a massive melting pot of humans everywhere. And so it was being able to be exposed and I draw I draw I dragged my wife because I really dug like Old Testament studies and research all this time and all that stuff when I was in college like it's a drag my wife to like the Jewish, the Jewish club thing that they do like where they'll teach you stuff out of the out of the Talmud. Like you're going in and you're learning right from the Jewish Center or whatever. And we were going just because it's like, why are we doing this like because It's here. Like I've never like it's we can dive into some of these things and dive into so many different elements you can just be immersed. What the at the library grounds and Gainesville has the, the Hari Krishna is they're always there. So the hikers are always there and they're serving food. So it's just like, I'm

getting a punch pass, I'm eating food, like this food is tastes nothing like anything I've ever eaten before. And just as like, so you just get introduced to so many different things that again, being from whitewashed Orange County, it was, and, and being with people that are that are all doing the same thing. And so that was what was also unique of being at UF where it was, as a football player. You just have this common connection with every single person that you are interacting. So whether they're PhD students, master students, regular students that are in your classes, you're a football player, so you now immediately hold status. So it was a very interesting relationship with the student body. And we won. So it wasn't elements were like why or tells the stories of like being booed in oh five when he first gets there, and they're not doing very well. And he gets booed when he walks into a place like not like I'm in the Arby's drive thru. And you're on a scooter and they're like, You football player. It's like yes, like we you sign this, like you're just signing autographs because you're picking up food at the Arby's like it just was immediately that was the level. So it just was really, really awesome to be able to be part of that and be successful. And then also have that coincide with everybody from all over the world you're interacting with. So

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James Geering 1:06:39

there's someone right now listening, probably it's got a framed meat sandwich with your signature on it. Exactly. Well, we were talking before we hit record. I worked on some accounts for six years up in upstate New York. And I think it was like the fourth year I was there. I had a roommate, a fellow counselor in my room. And we normally looked after the youngest kids, and his name was Ty. And I literally it was a different spelling, but I named my son after him. And sadly I found out years later he passed away and I still don't know why we lost him. Tyrese Hopkins is his full name. But he had worked in inner city summer camps. I'd spent a few years now on this one. And this was a very wealthy Jewish summer camps. It's funny he talks about the Juris studies, I learned a lot from just being a counselor there. But some very, very big names kids were there. Everyone from Frank Oz who was behind all the Star Wars Cody was was with me and my bunk. But Ty. And I would talk and he'd be like, Look, there's a lot of similarities. And I would see it between the inner city struggling kids that he worked with before. And these very, very wealthy kids and I would see the mental health struggles, the loneliness, the lack of parent interaction, even though these people's bank accounts have more zeros, and I'm ever gonna see in my entire life. So you talked about I mean, obviously, you went on to do education as well. And we'll get into that. But you come from this hyper affluent part of California. Now you come to Gainesville, which I mean, I don't know, if people are aware, we got some very, very poor areas of Gainesville. And, for example, let me see, Brandon Siler comes from Pine Hills, which I used to work and protect as a firefighter in Orlando, very violent, poor area of Orlando. So now you're side by side with a lot of these, these people that are from very poor, somewhat dangerous areas. Talk to me about your realization of the commonalities, regardless of the socio economic status of maybe a fractured family dynamic that contributes to the same issue, whether someone's very wealthy or very poor.

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Or definitely when I was playing, I didn't have enough perspective, because the only people that I knew that were not from where I was from, you had the most extreme examples of guys that I played with, you're talking about, like, it's, we would do the sessions where we call it like, you're, like the bleed on your sessions. And these were sessions that we would do oftentimes,

during two days, it was some like to bring the team together, and players would share just you understand, like, where they're from, like, what their upbringing was. And there was just story after story after story of guys that had guns pulled on him, that they they were running streets and they had guns on them, or they had siblings that, you know, murdered people and went to jail for life. Or you know, that I remember one of the stories was, you know, kid is not where he's supposed to be. And then a gun is like, put in his mouth. Like, it's just it's like such intense violence. Chris Rainey right is born in prison. Like my mom has him while she's in prison of Shree Floyd which doesn't get taught He's a player that later on in my career, he was homeless. Sharif had no family. And they recruited him to come to Florida, I think he and he goes on to the NFL, like he was a super nice guy, and was credibly strong was an amazing athlete. And like he goes on to play, but it's like, there's so many, just just devastating stories. And so I didn't have the perspective when I was playing of like, all the pieces, either that were missing or similarities that existed. And it wasn't until I started getting into teaching. So now, so when I, when I played ball, I got my degree, as a walk on, and then I earned my scholarship. So I earned a scholarship, and football paid for my master's program. So I got a master's in teaching my last year playing football in 2010. And part of that master's was that I did practicum teaching. So I taught in at the east side of Gainesville. And as I was learning, so you get a really cool opportunity as a football player good because you're given status. And you could do what you want with that, right, you can get free drinks, and tattoos or whatever it is that you're going to do. But you also could go and do a lot of good as well. And so I had a great college counselor named Caleb, and Caleb, desperately wanted me to not be a shitbag. And so he would bother me all all the time, he bothered me all the time about come to this community service over here, this community service over there, you should you should do this, you should do that. It was so annoying. But him constantly asking got me to go do it. And so then you start doing it. So then you go to the burn wing, or you go to the cancer wing of the hospital, and you wear your jersey interact with kids or you interact and then you start to fall in love doing those things. Because there's there's got to be an element to of being like a paramedic or a firefighter. We're like, it's kids, my boys were so excited to go to your firehouse. Like I'm so pumped, like there's very few things for a little boy, his I think they get more exciting than like a fire truck. And you get that as a football player is you're the football player. And in Gainesville, again, it's you hold. It's not like other places, like it's football players were gods. And so you got that. And again, it wasn't that you were elevated in your status where you felt better about yourself. But the amount of joy that it brought them was so disproportionate to what it meant to you that that's where I started to realize, and so we had a friend whose girlfriend was a teacher on the east side for an elementary level. And I would pop she's like we would you guys come over and like read to the kids and hang out with the kids. And I started doing that like all the time. And I loved coming over and doing that. And so as I had to figure out what my master's degree was going to be in, it was going to be like, you get a master's degree in entrepreneurship. And then I saw education. And I'm like, it'd be cool. Like, I want to do that. That sounds like something I could I could get behind. And so once I started interacting with this population, on the east side where it was, there's still like taking ketchup packets home, right, so that they can eat over the weekend. Because they don't get the food and they're gonna make soup right out of the ketchup packets. And Mom and Dad aren't there and they're not there. And it's like, there's no one there. Like the kids just go home. And they would stress her out because she tells stories versus like, I always worry every Friday. Like, do I get him back on Monday? Do they come back. And so there's just there was so much of that. And realizing just how good these are. And for me, it was always like, we have to sit like it's I know what these kids are going to turn into. And these are the best ones, the play football, they could run fast and they could jump high and they were freak athletes and they could get out. But there's 1% of the 1%. And it's like, if you're going to save these babies, you're gonna save these guys were like, these dudes don't have to have these stories. And they have them. And


then I'm interacting with those babies. Now these kids that are 567 years old. And it's like, how can you help them? Where do you see you know where their life will go? I'm here your horrible stories of what it could be like how do you save that? How do you how do you intervene? And that's what really got like it's there was a group of us that were this like we had the paper work filled out and sent to Tallahassee to start a charter school in Gainesville. I just was in the right circles at the right time and I was earning my master's degree and everybody else in the room were PhD students linguistics and biology and just evolutionary biology and like all these people that were like, We want to make a difference. Like, we want to be able to start a charter school, we want to do these things. And then oh nine happen, right? And then the bottom falls out, and then there's nothing for education, then that idea dies on the vine, and we don't end up being able to do it. But then that really scratches that itch of like wanting to be able to do better. So as I'm interacting and seeing those similarities, it isn't. I don't see the similarities. Again, I'm a kid. So when I grew up in Orange County, there was my lived experience, my friends, like you don't have hindsight of being like, so why does Willie drink a fifth of Jack? Like, why is that something that everybody gets excited about? Like, that's not the question you're asking. It just is. Willie can drink a fifth Jack, like all at once? That's like, that's, that's crazy. Like, it's not even like there's no deeper, at least for me, there was no deeper thoughts. It just was like, That's really impressive. Because like, I can't drink that at all. At this point. Like, that sounds terrible. And then when you give distance, give a decade, like, Oh, I know why. I have an idea of why your job Willie was drinking a fifth of Jack. And then now you see. So then when I get to the military school, so when I end up graduating, I applied to every single county in the entire state of Florida. I graduated with my master's degree is 2010 season's over, I'm done. I have my masters, I have everything. And I played every single county in the state of Florida to be able to get a job to teach. And because of the economic downturn, they froze all new teacher hires in the entire state of Florida. And it was like nobody could get a job. You could not get a job. So I was moving coeds, I was working for a car detailer. And I was moving codes for moving company in Gainesville, with my master's degree. And that's what I was doing for work. And then it was just like, luckily, I had a friend whose dad had worked in military schools, he's like, Well, put put your resume out. Like there's a couple of Headhunters, to put them out and see if they can help you in military schools. I can tell you right now, public universities that are trying to help get you a master's degree in education, they're not teaching you nothing about the military schools that are out there or private schools, you're getting pumped to go back into the public system. So I was completely oblivious to any of that world. And sure enough, a random Tuesday, I get a phone call. I am so so this is Colonel cedar and we're Fishbourne military school and, like know if you'd like a job, I ain't even got an interview yet. I gotta have been called the human do one interview in the entire state. I had I had already been coaching at BJU holds High School in Florida. in Gainesville. I had already been coaching all spring, hoping to have a job come the summertime to be able to be teaching and coaching for that coach. And then we get to whatever june july spring season gets over. He's like, Oh, like they won't let me hire you. What's that was the whole point of me being here was like the like now like, it's hiring freezes. It's whatever. And so it's now August, I finally get a phone call. And it was like, Do you want a job? I was like my wife sitting. She's dental hygienist she's working. We now have a baby, right? Like it's when I in 2009 is when I was a senior, like a redshirt junior or whatever. And my wife and I are like you're done. It was great. You got your degree.




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I have job to go sell insurance and Ocala. Because that's everybody's dream when they get their bachelor's degree in history and a minor in communications because that's what you're gonna do with it. You can go sell insurance. And I was stoked, had money, whatever, a lot lined

up. And we're like, we want to be able to have a bake sale I want to be to have a great, let's do it. Plan it out. We'll have the baby. So we now have baby coming. And luckily, unlockable however you want to look at it was in 2000 that wants 2009 season is over that offseason, the long snapper just wasn't up to snuff. Because that's what I did. I long snapped and I was on kickoff return. Those are things that it wasn't up to snuff and it was driving the punter who was the holder in the kicker craze? Do like we need this dude back. He has eligibility. So Meyer calls me back calls me all spring goes by spring game doesn't go well for the new long snapper or whatever. And so he calls me he goes Chaz and Caleb will not shut up. And you have to come back. Like That sounds great. I said I don't have any money. So I can't come back. Like I'm gonna walk on like, I've already had my student loans because that was the that was the play, because that was really smart. That was the advice I got was to go through Wachovia, which ends up becoming Wells Fargo. And it's like to get all my student loans, because I'll have money to play. And that was what my parents were told who never went to college. So that was student loans. So I went through a private bank not even through like government student loans, massive advice. I haven't looked at it a year, but it's just pay paying whatever the minimum payment is forever. And it just is and I'm I can't come back to play And he's like, sorry. So I'm like, sorry, coach, but like, no. He's like, what if we sort of calls me back a week later? What if we paid half? Like then I'm math? No. The other half would be yes. But now I'm half.

 James Geering 1:20:12  
I'm not a math major. But

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I'll tell you like, what I say, I don't have money. This isn't me. Like, I'm not trying to like lowball you and get you to like, it's I don't have money to do this. And so then a week later, whatever he calls and says, if you get if you get into your master's program, we'll pay for it was like back off, off we go. So but now I have a baby coming. So then it was like my wife and I had to talk to be like, if I go back, I won't have the job. I won't be, you know, just making buckets of money selling insurance in Ocala. And I'm like, but we're gonna be like poor like, we're gonna be hilariously like on full assistance poor. And I kind of was like, everybody got together as a family. And we're like, no, like, it's limited amount of time, we know what the point is, we know what the deal is, like it's Go Go get your master's degree. And so that's what we did. So when we go back to play, my, my son is born in the middle of two days, going into 2010. So, at that point, it's like, once my wife has the baby, she's now the full breadwinner. And we now have the baby. And we're now I'm getting my master's degree playing football, and have and I'm a new dad. While we're doing that last year in 2010. And it was like, I would show up to practice for fulfill goals, filled on pa t was my bread and butter. And that's all I ended up doing my last year. Like in 2009, I was the middle wedge for kickoff return when middle wedge was still allowed. And then also long snapper. And so because I only long's that my senior year, because that was the deal that I made, I would come and I would snap for the first 15 minutes of practice in live situation. And then I would leave a run off the field and I would go to class because I was already 20 minutes late to class or my master's degree. And then that was it. So I would literally just be at practice for an hour total for like the whole week. And then I would travel with the team, my wife and her and our baby would come to practice on Sunday nights after the games were over and was the next practice the next night and be there like it was it. I

had kind of earned my way to get to that point. But once we had that master's degree, and now I'm teaching it was being able to go and finally get the gig to teach and got the nod to be like, okay, like, do you want the job? And I'm gonna we're just sitting on a Tuesday. I'm like, Yeah, well, I said, it's job. She goes great. I said, Well, we'll be there today. He goes, Well, we're in Virginia. And so I needed the phone. I said, they're in Virginia, she goes, Okay, great. And so we then drop the baby off with my parents. And then we drove through the night and showed up from Gainesville, into the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, you know, at 2am or whatever, and then slept for a few hours at the hotel, and then went and interviewed and got the most amount of money I'd ever seen in my entire life on a contract for \$32,000. And I was just over the moon, because we got our degree getting a job teaching, and then I just didn't that's what started me over at the military school. And that is when I realized, working with those boys where it costs \$30,000 a year for them to go to be at this military school. It was, Oh, these kids was it. It was it was primarily Caucasian families that could flip the bill, we would have we probably had maybe 20% of our population was non Caucasian, and a mix up there. And but it was all these kids that are identical. It's identical to the same at risk youth that we wanted to start a charter school to save. in Gainesville, Florida, the kids here are identical. And this was from all over the country. Right? This was these were kids that were got in trouble, you know, smoking pot running with the wrong crowds at home and mom and dad just have enough money to send them off. They're just as were those kids on the east side. And those kids that are in at risk areas have moms and dads that either aren't there because they're working or aren't there because they're in prison or on dirt because they bailed and grandmas raising them to where these kids now at the military schools just have parents that just sent them away. You know, got rid of them for a very particular reason. And you always knew like it just when you when you had like parent teacher conferences and you sat down with family she like I get it. I get it now. And that's where like it's the brand we mentioned a brand Seiler so in the swamp kings documentary they talk about in that first episode, where he's trying to help random he's just like all Brandon's is struggling you know brand your brand says like it's I like to do everything is as excessive as possible. And I like to drink or whatever in mind is like, you know, I'm calling parents and the parents come and they sits with the parents. The parents have been drinking all day. And essentially just tell them The flyer Kate, like you don't know what the hell you're talking about Coach, like get bent. And then when they walk out, he just hugs Brandon. And just be like, those. Just keep doing what you're doing. Because those are the craziest parents that I've ever witnessed at Brandeis, right? But it's like, that's so real. Like, that's so so real. Like it just when those parents would come to for the military school, and they would come in, and they would interact with you be like, Oh, thank God, your son got away, like, Thank God, he's here, because then at least we can, we can help them. And we can say, because he's like, there was 0% chance, like he the way he is the way he is because of who you are, because of who you guys are. So we just got to keep them away from you, like at all at all costs. But it is it was just I never, I never would have ever made that connection, right? linearly, where it's either you have or have not, to where it's so much more cyclical the same way that the, you know, Bernie Sanders voters can jump over to vote for Trump. It's cyclical, like it's they're just not making a linear jump. They're not jumping this massive. It's like, no, there's literally going one one degree over, because they're all the right there. And there's so so similar.

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James Geering 1:26:10

Yeah, no, it's amazing. I mean, you see, again, great parents, some of them for the kids in the summer camp, and they were usually the most grounded kids. But you know, if, as I said, with my previous guests, if Dad is always away, or mom is always away, whether you know they're

at work, they're traveling for work, whatever it is, regardless of again, what you get paid, or you've got this multi generational trauma, through addiction and violence, where now mom or dad or both overdosed, and died or in prison, or, you know, are addicts, so they're physically there, or they're mentally there. I mean, these are the same problems that we see, across all races across all socio economic, you know, paths. And I've had interviewed the gift team in Orlando in Paramore, which is just again, another very, very, very kind of densely populated, poor, dangerous area in in Orlando, predominantly Haitian background. But these kids that have found this mentorship program, the new new imaging center, when I'm sitting down and talking, and I'm kind of waiting for this kind of fractured family backstory, it was the opposite. There was some great great parents behind these kids, which is probably why they found themselves leaning into this youth center and have now one of them's in college now with a ridiculous GPA. And he's just had to fight because the red tape of the finances, you know, for referencing how Expensive Colleges these days, almost got him removed, even though he's flourishing there just because of you know, of politics, basically. But this is it is it doesn't matter how rich or poor you are, if you're fortunate enough to have good parents, you know, you're, you're gonna be okay. And if you don't have good parents, but you're fortunate enough to find a mentor, that turns a corner for you, you're going to be okay. And the answer to this issue is not to look down your nose and say, Well, the problem is these, you know, these broken homes? Well, yeah, but that's not something you can unfuck what you have to do is be part of the solution. And be like, Okay, if there are broken homes, regardless of again, wealth, be part of the solution, fix your own home, if you have the ability to and then walk outside your front door and be a mentor in your community. Because that is how we change the world.



1:28:33

Yeah, 100% we have way too much attention outside of our hyper hyper local communities. Hyper localism is how we get out of this. And this isn't a populist thing. Right it's it's it's it's beyond populism is we're going to drill three layers deep into populism is that it's like no, no, this is hyper localism, that if we can come in, and just take care of it, because that's where we all look left, right. And there was like, whatever the diversity is, whatever the the drama is, it's, you don't see that on your hyperlocal level. Brothers and sisters in your community all are the same role here. And so it's a totally different angle. He's had to shut off those voices. Meyer used to call it poison. He goes, the better you guys do, the more the poison is going to try and seep in. You just keep it out. Keep the poison out. He goes, you're gonna have uncles you sign that you're gonna have uncles that are going to tell you, you should be playing, you should be starting, or you should be doing this, or we should be doing that. And he goes that I want it's poison. It's poison coming in. You gotta keep keep it out, cut it out. And it was just like it was very much just US versus the world mentality. Because as shocking as it seems Meyer was getting calls from aunts and uncles. And what does have the phrase right The armchair warriors armchair quarterbacks, right there, we're calling. Why isn't my kid playing? Why are they doing this? Why aren't they doing that. And eventually, he's just like, I remember one time, he had us in a huddle. And he goes, if I get another call, if I get another call from one of your guys's aunts, or uncles that wants to know why you're not playing, he goes, I'm going to invite them to come to practice. And I'm going to let them see why you're not playing. He's like, So be very clear. Whatever you're being told at home, it's practice tape doesn't lie. Because you know how it is you go home, you know, I say face, like, oh, you know, the coaches are fucking me or whatever it is. And it just is like dinner? No, we'll show you exactly what the issue is. And so that poison seeps in from everywhere. And that's how I would view it is just, it's poison that keeps us from staying together.

 James Geering 1:30:55

Well, as you mentioned, the documentary swamp kings just came out on Netflix, and I binge watched that the other day. And you see, and as you talked about, the timeline may not have been exactly how it was portrayed to us. But you see, a, a team that is struggling. And then he comes in, and one of the the obvious tools that he uses shared suffering to get people to start coming together. Now you came in, obviously, kind of at the beginning of that crest. So walk me through that you're this young, high school football player, you've done all these camps, you realize that you are good, you are a lunatic, because you enjoy getting hit. What from the athletes point of view walk me through that journey and what you walked into and how you either thrived or struggle in that environment?

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Well, so when when I first get there, it's you already have a group of guys that have struggled, they've already suffered a little bit together as a group. So and they document this in episode one of the swamp kings, where it's, you know, an oh five, that's the true culture shock for those dudes that are there. Like they were the coach that was there at Florida before Meyer got there was like a player's coach, you know, one of the guys super relaxed, whatever. And Meyer was so not that, right, they just refer to him as the dictator. And that transition. So when I come in Oh, six, I don't know the amount of suffering that these guys have been heard. So I get there, June of Oh, six. So in California, high school graduation is at like the end of June. And so I graduate, and then I take six days or whatever. And then I go immediately out to Florida for like the summer AB session to start summer school. Because it was like, I gotta get out there as soon as I can to start like practicing. And when I get out in June, you can't practice with the team yet. Like there's no team activities, like you're not part of the team. But you're there, the team has helped you get into school. So you are going to start taking classes and take, you know, whatever, one or two classes during the summer, which I highly recommend, right? It's like back then it was it was it didn't make a lot of sense. No one understood like, Wait, why are you going to summer school because like summer school in high school is like if you've not done well, to where it's like the ability to get acclimated and to slowly get introduced to like a college environment. When no one is on campus was really ideal as like a young guy. But we had to start like so we just knew we were gonna go into college football, like buzzsaw, whatever we could imagine. So there was a group of us that ended up finding each other at like, the local gyms that were done by the school, there was like, Hey, are you are you a lot? Like, are you playing football? Like, why are you here, there's only so many people on campus, you end up finding other walk ons that were there that were trying to train and prep to show up for fall camp to go into two days. So you really don't get to do we didn't get to do a lot. So we ended up finding each other and like working out together. And that's when I ended up meeting and making friends with the other guys that I ended up walking on and staying with for like the rest of the time that we were there Florida. She ended up sort of kind of making those friendships as walk ons, and then we finally get to fall camp. And it's it's hard to describe. You're not ready. And there was no way to get ready for two days in Gainesville. Because it's so if people love Florida, they want to move to Florida. They think Florida is beautiful and is amazing or whatever. But it's like you need to be in Florida on August 15. To fully appreciate what Florida is and what she has to provide to you and not on the coast. You need to be in the armpit of the state where Gainesville Florida is live. Kill



**J** James Geering 1:35:01

someone I saw recently it was my coach posed to the owner of my gym, Ted. Someone described Florida as living inside someone's mouth for three months. That's it, you've nailed it. That's,

**o** 1:35:14

that's it, after they've drank a warm cup of coffee, like it was. It's it is it's a blanket. And the best way that I've always described because I was born and spent time in the Mohawk, like in the Mojave Desert out in California, right, so we get 120 degrees 125 degrees, you had to have shields hovers over your windows, or your dashboards would melt, right and like the the 90 stuff like so I know what I knew what heat was. But it's, it's the difference of like being where you get burned, where you have like a sunburn is in the West, and in the east in Florida down into the swamp areas, it's, you're cooking from the inside out. And so when you were there, like there was no preparation for that. So that was very overwhelming of like, over 100 degrees heat index, maximum humidity, you knew it was going to rain, between your first practice and your second practice. And the humidity was going to be raised to levels of like rain forest, like in your in ground plane, and you're gonna practice. And so it just was It was established. We thought that was hard, right? So going into Oh, six, your, your, your cannon fodder. It truly is a buzzsaw walk on and science where you're just gonna be? Well, you're just going to be going in and it just was you couldn't if you had the mentality of why am I doing this? Like, what why am I doing this? Like, what is this for? Like, why is the coach making me do this, if you have that mentality, you weren't going to make it, it would have been impossible. It just had to have been unapologetically just going for it. And to doing whatever the coaches said, whatever they said, you just do it. And you just know, have faith, you're gonna make it through. We win and oh six. So when we win, we win the national championship and Oh, six, we play Ohio State. And we win that game. And that's when we lose, right? The leaders and the problem was a bunch of the young guys that really came in that were really stellar in that Oh, six class and this is Tebow and spikes and Percy Harvin and Riley Cooper, and so many, many, many guys that came in that Oh, six class, they really weren't good. But we hadn't really earned the victory. Like, a lot of guys did participate or whatever. But you didn't put in the time in the offseason. Like there wasn't that just it's impossible. Like it's yeah, you worked hard, no doubt like it was. There was no question that we worked hard. But once we got through oh seven. And that's when there's like there's trouble in the swamp and the series and they start talking about that. It is you we are we're not good. We're super splintered. We're overinflated of what we think we can do. And that's when we lose four games, we lose the Michigan and the Capital One bowl. And that is when Meyer talks about, he's like, that's where the timeline gets wonky inside of the Docu series where it's he's like, you know, it's we started having problems. So we turned up, you know, we cranked it up, but we really put the screws to the players and we were going to have a battle of attrition to lose you know, we'll happily lose cut the fat from the fat will lose the guys that aren't aren't worthy or whatever are not going to stay around. That's what happens in the oh seven offseason. So when we talk about that 2007 offseason, it is so gnarly. And this is where we're talking. This is now like your the mat drills experience of being in combat style, like you have a combat style drill, where it was like, no rules. And it just was you either are trying to touch the line, or you're going to keep the person from touching the line. And they would put offensive line versus defensive line wide receivers versus dBs, you know, et cetera, et cetera. And, and it was the final drill that you did. And this was already going through an hour workout, which was only the only goal was it wasn't necessarily physically taxing, but it was mentally taxing it just if you weren't perfect, you let your teammates down to where like

the seniors would be first, they'd be first in line and they'd be in for five seconds of whatever the exercise was. And then they would get out and then the next guy was then juniors or seniors that don't start or whatever. And so you slowly work your way down as the hierarchy and then the walk ons and then kickers are like with the lock ons like you're in the very very back of the line, whatever. And you just it was it was so serious. The first guys go they do the drill to get out. If the second guy in line didn't immediately snap up, have his feet behind the line be down into an athletic business. shouldn't be ready to go, the seniors had to go again. And so if you did line one, line two, line three, and then a freshman in line four, as his thumb up as asked and he doesn't isn't ready, then everybody has to go again. And you learned really quickly. Like I remember it just I watched to do when I was a freshman. This is the Fabio long blonde hair who was like, you know, big old tight end, he kept screwing up too slow to whatever his foot was on the line. You know, he wasn't in a proper position, all those different things. And he screwed up like three or four times in a row, so he doesn't have to go. And that's one of the like, the most gut wrenching parts even as like a third party observer. You're like, Oh, no. Like this is so bad, because those guys that are in front are so angry because they've now gone like four or five times they're blown, and the coaches start to feed into it. We're now they're going to make the seniors go just a little bit longer. And they're going to push them a little bit harder. And then the kid screws up again. Now they're watching him like a hawk. So anything that he doesn't do right is just immediately like don't start over. Everybody start over. All of a sudden, we're just in the middle of a drill. He screws up four or five times I'm just thinking man, I'm so glad I'm not him. Like I'm learning through reps of being like Don't be that the he ends up just getting punched in the face. From one of the senior Junior Senior defensive linemen, and they break his face was that like shatters his orbital bone spikes doesn't. Seiler tells the story. So Brian Siler tells the story of doing that to a freshman running back. Oh, okay, I'm getting inside of the weight room. Because a lot of dudes got hit in the face.

 James Geering 1:41:39

It was specific? Well, for sure.

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And it wasn't just exclusively for like walk ons or young freshmen guys getting hit in the face, like are starting punter was being and I wasn't in the gym for this. But I remember hearing about it happening where it was, again, again, it was the the requirement for perfection of like, if the coaches say your toes behind the line, you didn't put your foot behind the line, you put your hand behind the line, you didn't put your hand in the ground, like whatever those things were, that wasn't a suggestion. That was a requirement that if not followed, brought violence to you. Because of the repercussions that would then penalize the entire group and penalize the entire team. And that men are starting punter who back in that, oh 506 time period, he was whatever having a day and wasn't going to put his hand behind the line and was making everybody had to start over making everybody had to start over. And I remember he got knocked out. One of the defensive linemen just punch that dude right in the face, like right on the spot. And just it was like, there were two hits him getting hit in the face and him hitting the ground. And it just so it just was it was not saved for anyone in particular. It just was the expectation was perfection. Now and just when



**J** James Geering 1:42:55

sorry, right, just to jump in for a second when you first walked in. So a couple of parallels. Firstly, I had Catherine Dale die on and he's the one who trained the band of brothers cast the platoon, I mean, all these these are these military movies, the boot camp, the guys and for example, Saving Private Ryan, they deliberately left Matt Damon out of a lot of the same with the guy that plays Rawson friends in the band of brothers, who's kind of always given the excuse not to train. So there was resentment. So it kind of shows the camera. Yeah, I remember in many situations where someone would show up, and we already had a tight cohesive crew. And there is that feeling of who the fuck have you you haven't deserved you haven't earned your right to be in this fire department or whatever it is. So when you first walked in, you know, was there a glaring feeling of being on the outside was that still even though you didn't win initially, or that you said you won and then there was a downfall? Was there already that strong cohesion that you realize you really had to earn the spot and the trust of the team that you're trying to join?

**o** 1:44:03

As a class you do? And that was where again, as as a walk on, this is your this is your reality 100% of the time, because you're not a producer yet. So again, I think we've referenced it before but I cannot. I cannot emphasize how real it was, which was when Meyer and Sylar talk but they talked about it in that first episode of swamp kings where it's, I'm gonna treat my superstars like superstars. I'm gonna treat my shit like shit. And if you don't want to be treated like shit, then do something to change it. And it's like that is in that 10 seconds is the perfect like just synopsis of what it was like to work with Meyer. It's he was going you were going to get everything. It's like slash and burn farming. He was going to get everything out of the ground. Whatever we were that whoever he had, he was going To get them like it was he was going to squeeze as much blood out of that turnip as humanly possible. And it was up to you then to decide how you want it to be treated. And it only came with performance. So as a class as a walk on you just the guys that make it and though and there were some really there were solid studs, there's like James Smith and Billy Lascaux, like these were guys that came in as walk ons and ultimately get scholarships, like, almost instantly, because they're such like James Smith was a walk on that becomes the starting long snapper, and like oh five, and so he's well established by the time I'm there. He holds he ties the record for the most starts that any player in Florida history. Any Florida player, and this dude was a walk on Billy Lascaux becomes a starting fullback. So there's some days where it's like, if you have already had that mentality and mindset in lock, which is like me against the world, I'm gonna prove myself that you were going to be successful, the struggle that we watch, because and then I watched it for years, and I started to learn about it. And when I first come in, is scholarship guys, we're told their shit doesn't stink. They were told that they were God's gift to Earth, and man, in order to recruit them. So imagine like, not only imagine the difference for you guys from like, as a firehouse, where you're going to bring in a new guy, it's going to come in, like you said, he's kind of on the outside. But imagine if he was told that he was like, the world's greatest firefighter in the history of firefighting,

**J** James Geering 1:46:30

which is going on now. And I'll tell you why. Because when I first joined the fire service, like Anaheim, California, I tested against 1000, certified firefighter EMTs and or paramedics. Today, there's such a hiring deficit. that there's no crucible. And this is what's an interesting parallel. is

you happy and I'm not saying that people getting hired now or arrogant and everything but and we'll go back to your perspective. But when you don't have to fight tooth and nail for that position, when you don't have to get up, which I did, I'm not glorifying it, you know, doing a workout and your lunch break from your shitty office job. And then when you go back running for miles in a Florida storm, and doing pull ups on the apartment, stairs and getting fucking ready for a job that you want more than anything. Yep. But you just get to show up and take the test. And if you don't have a bad background check, then you basically walk through the door. It's a very, very dangerous environment for a group of people. That not downplaying football, but this group of people are the ones that are going to be responding to save your fucking child's life.



1:47:35

No, and I think it's really valid. And I think it's super fair to call that out right now. Because it's, there were a lot of parallels that get made of like, we're fighting to go to Iraq, we're training like we're going Iraq, like there was a lot of military. Like, there were dudes that we had on our team that were former military, that were Marines. That were right, an Army Ranger, we had an Army Ranger that was on the team, you won't be able to get in contact with him. He doesn't answer once calls. I'm 100% convinced he's in the CIA now. Because he was applying for FBI CIA jobs when he was finishing school.



James Geering 1:48:14

If you're listening, let us know. That'd be great.



1:48:17

If he's listening, I would love that. Because he's because his perspective was so different. And his story is amazing. And I can share his name with you when we're offline of being like, want to poke around but it's like, no one's been able to get in contact with him for years, and he's not dead. So the reality is, but he was such a stud, but his perspective was so unique. And that's where it was like, there were so many. You know, we watched clips before every single game, you'd have like highlight reels to get pumped, like literally right before we're gonna go to the stadium to go play, we're in a hotel, everybody comes in, we're all dressed up in suits or whatever, they sit us down and they show us a highlight tape. And we always have great clips right gladiator that matrix seen in the elevator, we're like in the lobby, we're just did goes ham and the original matrix, and for sure, Black Hawk Down. Right of like, don't drop the rifle. Don't miss the rope. Like it was like so many of those. You have so many that's natural with athletes to want to be able to make those connections and coaches want to make those connections to the military. But it's not. Right, it really is just a game. But those principles, everything that you've just described is that was very, very real for us. And that trusting your brother with type you know, foxhole mentality, right? You trust that when you do your job that was everywhere that was Meyers, things do your fucking job. You're not your job is not to worry about your brother doing his job because he has to do his all you worry about you do your job. And if you got 11 guys on the field for four to six seconds going as hard as they can go and doing their goddamn job you win. And so that just gets beat into us but definitely the mentality of the US Other, and it definitely got worse for me as I ended up being there all the way to 2010 when

things were different Meyer had kind of quit and kind of not and had taken a step back and just wasn't as involved because he was dying. And that was kind of where a lot of folks call out some bullshit of like, oh, Meyer had this plan, or this, whatever. And we just had such a unique perspective as a special teams unit, where we're around some of the coaches when they're by themselves longer. And we just could see like, he's losing weight, like he looks ill there's something wrong. And then that was what was interesting from the Docu series bill to kind of hear some of his thoughts and some of those things that were going on. Like, that makes a lot more sense. But then to zoom back what our original conversation wasn't your question were like, as a freshman class you come in, and it is, you're told that you're, those scholarship guys are told that they're God's gift to green earth, and then they show up and realize, oh, no, dude, like, you're gonna have to fucking earn this. And there were some guys that just couldn't, they couldn't mentally get over that hurdle. As they were told that they were the best, and they show up as like, No, dude, you're lower than fucking dirt. Like the coaches don't give a shit about you. And again, it's to the level of which they were used to. There was a man, you're in high school, you're the man I should I was the man in high school. But you it's I knew I didn't get a scholarship. So I already knew that mountain that I was having to climb to, like, earn and prove myself. So just an insatiable appetite, to prove others wrong, to be able to earn my way like those pieces like that. Just, that's what I ran on where other guys run on being the man to run on being in the limelight. And so you had to earn it. And so as a class, you had to earn it. Tebow talks about it right? He had to earn his way and earn that respect from beside, like, Syllar started earnest, like starting to earn it and trust like that Tebow was willing to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

J

#### James Geering 1:51:57

You talked about, you know, the, what ended up being fistfights because the guys are going over and over and over again, a prime example in my career hire Leah, we all got hired on paper as civilians. And then they realized that a bunch of us were already firefighters and EMTs. And a couple were actually or paramedics already. And so they had, they split the class, all of us are already certified. They literally beat the shit out of us for three months straight. I mean, I'm not exaggerating, whilst this other class went through fire academy and EMT school if they needed it. And one of the guys on the other side was a paramedic already. And I don't know how the fuck this guy even got through fire school, but somehow he did. So they come back now. And they join us as these these fire recruits. And they are besting us. And this guy is exactly as Ken underlining what you're saying. He thinks the shit don't stink, it's kind of hiring was competitive. And higher. Lea was one of the only ones but they paid so poorly at the time. I think they still do that there was a sense of well, you know, they're lucky to have me kind of thing. And I remember your PT read. And I don't know, I think it was I think we watched this particular event. Because it was this other class going through this. But this guy was such a piece of shit, they pulled out a lazy boy and put it on the drill ground and sat as asked down while everyone did all the extra PT because of him. And to your point. It didn't faze him, I would have I mean, that would have killed me, I would have stuck and kept put that lazy boy on my back and done push ups I would have had to do him. But you know, try to do push ups to try and you know, say sorry and make it up. But like you said, that process as unfair and obviously, you know, dangerous, some of the results, that shows the character of the person who's failing. For sure you really care about this and you are going to take responsibility and ownership and fix it. Or do you a prima donna or is your heart not in it in the first place. And now we can see it clearly and we can get rid of you.



1:54:08

And I think that truly is right that that's that is the goal. Because you need to get that figured out. If you're talking about your example, you need to figure that out right there. You can't figure that out on an active call when people need to be saved. Like that's not the time to figure out that the guy that's to your left is a bitch. And that was for us where it was we couldn't do it can't get to well, we have to go score or you have to hold this or we have to kick we were in a situation where like in 2009 We beat Georgia and overtime right we had to go kick a field goal to win the game last second go kick the field goal and all and it just was like all the players of course are freaking out and I'm long snapper this time. And they're coming over they don't they don't talk to us. They don't fucking talk too as ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, they never speak to us at any time. At any moment. We keep to our corner, we do our job, we come on, we come off. As long as we make and do what we do. Everybody leaves us alone. It's an expectation hit the field goals are barely even tell it like televised PSATs are barely even shown on TV it just as they scored, and oh yeah, there's the kick. And then off we go, like we're gonna go is an assumption. And all of a sudden, now everybody wants to come over and tell us like, Hey, man, you got this? Like, we're like, yeah, we know. We know we've got it like this is, it's really big for all of you right now. Because now you're paying attention. But it's, this is what we do. And we just went out and kicked and we win the game. And it was fucking awesome. But it was like, there was no doubt, because we had already earned that shit back in February and the years before, so that that's where like, that level of trust is just there and that fast to be earned. And it's only earned through like blood. It truly can't. It's not earned through talk or earned through how fat like it's burned through suffering. At least it was my experience where it was. And we did and we suffered. And it wasn't just the mat drills like mad drills were the combat thing. Yeah, it was really intense at 100%. We all collectively as a group of players hate the month of February. Because that's when we did metros and offseason. So it's like we that month will forever be cursed. And thank God, it's the shortest month. And it just was like, but there was also how we worked in the weight room. It really was, it wasn't about strength, it wasn't about getting stronger. It was about putting you sometimes literally in a corner and getting motherfuck so bad and pushed so hard to where you will fail. There's not a question. It just says, How long are you willing to hold on until you do. And you don't understand that as a young guy. You don't get it, you did it a couple years later, because now you've made it through and you haven't died and you didn't quit. So you've got like are now firmly on the bandwagon. But it was like early on, you don't know You don't understand. And they did a good job of like spikes explaining like, I came here to play football, like I don't know what we're doing in here. Because they don't explain it. It just is not your you're just gonna get motherfucker to death. And you're gonna be put on the leg press machine. And you will only get out when you start weeping and hoping that your mom was there.



James Geering 1:57:29

So you know, as we speak now you've got well into the world of Strength Conditioning, you know, strong fear, I mean, all the different areas now. I've had, you know, a huge metamorphosis in the way I look at strength conditioning versus for example, 10 to 15 years ago, when you look back now with a 2023, coach's eyes talk to me about the strength conditioning, because when I'm watching the exercise, and I understand exactly what you're saying it was less about perfect form and more about grit. But overall, the programming to make you guys fitter and stronger. What was it already there? Or when you look back now with today's lens? Was it? Not behind the times? You know? Would they have come a lot further now on that side than what we got to witness on the television?



1:58:20

I think that I think that they learned I think early on, it had to be barbaric. Like for the style of Listen, it's I'm not telling you whether it's right or whether it's wrong. But now that coaching staff was going to run how this ship was going to be ran required barbaric style training and mental toughness, because it's your mentally weak like it was this was their tool to break you down. They had to break you down into that clean slate. And those of you that asked too many questions and didn't want to do it or were like Fuck this, then you got transferred, you quit. And then all that's left are folks that are willing to be broken down and then willing to build back up. I think we saw an evolution even during my time there. Where it was it stopped being as barbaric, because I think there were unintended consequences. Right in the year of oh seven. I think we had like 15 Dudes tear ACLs.



James Geering 1:59:28

Yeah. And that put that performance versus wellness longevity is an important part of the overall conversation.



1:59:35

And I think we had and I and I and there's no way right there's no way that that's an expectation and I'm not. And I'm not saying that how we trained was why that happened. But what I am telling you is that is we had a number of things that happened that I believe we evolved where there was a time to turn those screws and put screws to guys and get them to go. And then there was a time where we did then start to train because for sure I got stronger. But I had friends that were like at Colorado that were playing that were scholarship athletes and stuff, and how they trained, and how I read about how Georgia trained, how I read about how some of the I see some of the strength and conditioning, you know, articles and things that break down how certain players have training or whatever it was certainly now, and it's, it's also not how retraining, which is not how we trained it off. But we were speed it was it was like speed was priority, we never maxed out we did you know, we always were working triple extension, we always were working these pieces. That wasn't how I heard other dudes were training. But at the time, you don't question you're not questioning anything. And so definitely looking back on it, that lens, I think it's really important. And I enjoy, like I come into schools now. Like for the local high school where I'm at, and in the month of February, I'll come and I do Mental Toughness Training for the football team, where they come in and once or twice a week is going to put them through a workout that's going to tax them and push them mentally. But for high school guys, but because there's just as there is an element that's missing, and this is a piece that I think is is I'm not condoning it. Right. But I do know what the end product was, which was all of us talk about as a collective unit. Now years later, it's, there's nothing, literally nothing that we go through in this life that is going to that is harder than what we went through them. There's no boss, that's more intimidating, there's no situation that's more stressful. It's, we've, it's literally made it to where our bar is so high that our ability to then just perform, you have a lot of dudes that are very, very high performers in their regular lives now. And it's because you're the result that iron sharpens iron type of a deal like you were forged in this scenario. And that is, as I look at, like the future generations of kids that are coming through,

and as I look at other people that struggle with just regular life, it's like, Oh, you just haven't done anything hard. And that is where for me there is an element of that I liked about the strong fit, that I liked about certain elements of suffering, getting on a sled and making your soul bleed. Right, those concepts, it's really important, whether it's cold tank, whether it is right, it's any of these things that are hard, you don't want to do, people just aren't doing hard things enough anymore. So the most stressful our day gets is when somebody cuts us off in traffic. Or when your boss maybe does say something to you that you don't like, or whatever, somebody leaves a comment that you that you disagree with. And now all of a sudden you become a keyboard warrior, like it's and I think Rogan does a good job of like, of calling this out quite a bit on his podcast where just as like, he's like, I'm a better person, when I make myself kind of suffer a little bit in the gym. And I cannot I cannot connect with that stronger. For me, it is like I'm a better husband, a better father. I'm a better colleague, I'm just a better human because I push myself to those limits and allow myself to suffer just enough just remember like, it's just gonna be okay, like you, you're a bitch you're gonna fight that urge and push that envelope. And I think that that got forged there at that moment and, and I think for men, I really like for men for boys. I think it's, it's vitally important. Now I'm not saying we need to send the kids off when they turned seven the way the Spartans did and turn them into men. But I am saying there's an element here that is missing and just our general ethos as a community where we're not allowing men to be formed and forged.

J

James Geering 2:03:56

I had Doug Orchard on the show he's the man who made the documentary The Motivation Factor and if you ever watched that about the 1950s 60s P program in California and the suffering was just the bar but it was shared suffering again and you know you look at what you had to do to earn whatever the I think it was gold or blue that the top short color you're talking about seven pegboard a sense I think it was a three mile partner carry I mean, crazy crazy stuff but you look at this, you know the senior class every one of them could have been on the front of Muscle and Fitness today every single one of them but the beautiful thing about that was even the kid that you know wanted to be great at the oboe was still in really good shape. He may only or he you know it was it was he at the time. But if it was today, he or she may only have color X on their shoes, but you're forging all these great people each group was was a team of kids that had to rise up together. So now you're getting community and it's the shared suffering, which as we said before, binds people. I'm jumping ahead a little bit, but obviously you got into the world of education. While we're on this topic, talk to me about your perspective of physical education in schools. And again, if you're king for a day, what would John do to change it?

P

2:05:18

Oh, man, Pete PE in schools. One, they just kept cutting it. So I got into the world of education. The one thing that gives me a little bit different number perspective, though, is, I never, I never worked for public education. I ended up only working for private schools. And as I got into private, because that was just the first gig I got is that I worked for a military school and all boys military school in Virginia. And then we moved to Florida, back into the Tampa area. And I worked for a co Ed boys and girls private school, that was a non like non denominational, non religious, private school. And when I would look and see what was happening on the public side, where public teachers made more money, you made more money than private school



teachers. And so there was an a lower there. But as I watched for money wise, but then I watched his the bureaucracy, you know, and Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution, right. I remember watching that earlier. Right. That was before I got into education fully, but just seeing like, these incredible struggles, that were of just common sense. It just became very clear that the goal was not to have physically fit populace. The goal is not that and and you'll get me on my soapbox, with education, please

 James Geering 2:06:39  
go ahead.

 2:06:42  
Well, because it's, it's the, it is very clear that the purpose of our educational system in the United States is not to create individuals. Right, it's very clear through that, that the Prussian models that got put in and the support that, you know, at the turn of the century, and the industrial revolution, that Carnegie and all these cats came in and knew the importance of just keeping the keeping that standard, so minimal, so that we have people be able to read the instructions, read the dials, and turn the knobs, to be able to have a working class of humans content to be built up to work those factories. Meanwhile, everyone else is being private schools are individually tutored. It's like, no surprise that anybody that's ever done anything in our country dropped out of school as soon as they could, to be able to pave their own way, or we're homeschool. Like it just it was just homeschool. And this was before it was like a religious zealot type connection that homeschooling got for quite a while. And then post 2020 People kind of started like, it's not just crazy religious people that are doing this. And we started kind of seeing the writing on the wall. But for PE there's a reason why it started getting cut. And it started being less than, you know, oh, well, now it's every other day. And now maybe it's once a week they do PE and you watched art and music, and you watched all these, these pieces go by the wayside. And we ended up saying what was more important, meanwhile, would just feed our kids just some of the most horrific things on earth, and then expect them to be able to sit down and pay attention and do whatever. And so with education being that way, and with PE being that way, it is if I'm king for a day it's anarchy. It's mass anarchy, it's it's you have to burn the system down. And that's where it's, I made a huge connection where I really wanted to fight, to be able to bring good and change education as a teacher as an administrator and be able to flip classrooms and have classrooms be more of a place of collaborative nature and just the grades have to not but but um work. grades don't have to matter to the degree that they do. But I'm working in Paulette college prep private schools. So when I was at the military school, I saw a significant need for kids that you need to have top 10% of kids that are going to go to college and they have huge aspirations to be surgeons and doctors and all sorts of things of amazing quality and levels that require college. But I saw in a massive group of students that were being lost and forgotten. So for me it was I have to have even within these college prep systems, I have to have systems to capture those that are not going to go into that that are going to go into the trades. I have to have partnerships with the local trades groups and with the local colleges that are here that are going to help people get certificates. It was equally important for me to be able to have those tracks and have very clear tracks not to stick someone in them and have them be stuck there. But to be able to introduce it to them and have them it's that that play little cartoon where there's right there's a goldfish and an elephant and a giraffe and a monkey. And they're all sitting there. And there's the tree. And as

it says, the test is whoever can climb the tree gets an A go. And it just was like, for me, that was that is what education is for us in our country. And I got tired of that and having to fix it. But then I realized the phrase, I have to fix it, I felt this overwhelming desire to fix it. And that's why as I continued to read and learn, it was, oh, no, there's nothing to fix, the system is working exactly the way it was built to work. And this is exactly where it's, it's meant to be exactly as it is, it's meant to help people feel the way they feel it's meant to have kids drop out, it's meant to just as it's, that's what it's built to do. And that's where, for me, we talked about hyper localization, and hyper community. And that's where again, it's like, as a community, you have to identify what are the needs of the people that are in your area with the needs of the kids that are in your area, and then start to build mentorship programs, build programs to be able to pick those kids up, because it has to be gone are the days that you're told that because you can't get an A, it's because you're stupid, and then put it in, put it into a child's mind that it's like, I'm not good at math. And that's what I was told, it's like, well, it's well, you know, you know, your dad's not good at math, or I'm not good at maths, or you're not good at math. And that's how that works. And it just is so detrimental for have generations of people that are told that. But it is the physical aspect is the most dangerous. And that's where, for me it is getting whether it's PE getting kids moving getting kids, whether the playing sports, or just lifting weights being exposed to all the different varieties, it's, you will eventually stop playing sports. It just it happens, right, we all end up not getting to be able to do that anymore. But you'll be able to exercise and move your body for the rest of your life. And that is where in my opinion, like physical education, nutrition, all those things there are so they can be taught so simply. But it is a vicious cycle of what parents are doing at home, what they're going to do and be like, it's you don't have that support. So you have this this massive populace that all has to be able to be supported in the right way. And it becomes very daunting. That's why for me, it was always just like, this thing has to get burnt down. It has to get burnt down first and then be able to be built up on like local levels. And then that always gets squirrely because then people get all butthurt about like, well, what is it going to be like in Alabama versus what it's going to be like in California and be able to build out and then kind of have these like city states that are being broken up and then creating the programs that are specific to their, their populations.

### J James Geering 2:12:51

I think the crazy thing is if you just go far enough back, we have this arrogance like oh, now we have to invent this thing or you know, we're forging a path over here. And it's like, we'll take movement and nutrition. Just go back 100 years. That's it, Mike drop, yeah, grow your own food, if you're going to eat meat, let it eat grass, or you know, pack through worms or whatever it is, you know, move, don't sit on a chair, get into a car, go to a classroom for eight hours, get into a bus, go sit on a chair again, walk to school, you know, I mean, this, we've created so much comfort, like you said, I have Michael Easter on the comfort crisis. You know, that's That's it. And the problem is, we're also put into these boxes and I'll throw higher education into this too. I went to University of North London, which is now think Metropolitan University and did two years of a British degree in sports science and fitness evaluation. And then I did my last two years in UF like 30 years later, and one semester at UF prepared me for the NSCA CSCs. That was a great semester. Sure. All the other shit. nothing prepared me to actually walk out those doors and truly be a better athlete, or a good coach. Now I could put a lab coat on and sit, you know, for 12 weeks and test someone's fucking vertical jump and then make a bunch of algebraic equations. But for the money and time that I invested, I should have walked out the door being able to coach all kinds of shit and this is the problem I see. And and then the prereqs to even get to that point and the financial side and I'll be full transparent. I get calls all the time from us saying, Hey, do you want to donate? You want to donate and I've got 10s of

1000s of dollars worth of fucking, you know, student loans to pay off first and you're asking for handouts. I'll give the dude at the traffic lights and money. You don't you don't need fucking handouts right now. So this is the problem. Within these systems are great human beings. Don't get me wrong, amazing professors and teach And, and coaches and but the system there has gone from, let's get the let's get the people that require this track the doctors, the lawyers and then my wife's in medical school now as optometrists, she needs to go through a medical school program, she needs higher education. But I forged my path through a trade school, fire schools and trade school paramedic school is a trade school. And these are life saving skills. So taking away that profit driven education system, and putting it back to, you know, let's give these establishments, the tools and the support and the finance that they need. But make it affordable. So that kid in Pine Hills can actually become a lawyer, if he has the skill set. You know what I mean? But we've created such a barrier to entry and like you said, there's this this kind of caste system where well you're born in you know, pine hills or Lando, then yeah, you're gonna be a great, you know, factory worker. Oh, but you grew up in, you know, Belle Isle, Florida. So pine hills, Florida, rubella, Florida, on the lake and your million dollar house? Well, yeah, you're gonna be fine as a lawyer. So I agree, we're not. It's not a community focused education system. It's become so rigid. And you look back at you know, Victorian times, we were training factory workers, that we the people again, need to rise up as with our political system and go the system is broken. And how do we know that because every four years, we had a fucking idiot out of 330 million people. So rather than fighting over your Messiah, that's either 120 years old or bright, orange narcissist, how about you take a step back, and actually rise up and fix the system. And the same with education. My son's scores are awesome, and has some amazing teachers and amazing mentors in the ROTC program JROTC and the track program, the cross country program, I love those people. So give them a fucking environment where they can amplify their amazing teaching skills, so that they can elevate all these children and then forge you know, an incredible path where they are fit. And they are excited to get into whatever career they're thinking about.



2:17:12

I could not agree more, the issue in my opinion would have truly comes down to and you alluded to it, it's the same reason why you can't fix the homeless crisis. Because you have too many people that have jobs to fix the homeless crisis. It's a cottage industry. And you have too many cottage industries that are built to a well, we need to change what the testing is. And this is what the standardized testing is, and you have millions and millions of dollars, you have lots and lots of people, and you have lots and lots of lobbyists that are all built to work on the education system, we can fix the education system, because just like you said, it's well then just go back 100 years, go back 100 years, where now people are able just to have a little bit more accountability and let the local communities just take it over and not have so much big government that's involved. The problem is it'll never happen. Unless things drastically change and happen on the local level. And like you said, people rising up, but it's, it's no small task. It has to start local because you won't be able to solve it national, because you have too much money if too many people with jobs getting paid millions of dollars every single year to solve problems where a lot of people like you know, this seems simple enough like this, but it's like Yeah, but there's no money in your solution. You're an AI solution. Oh, joy. Absolutely. Right. So it's like it's but there's no money in the solution. There's no money in the cure for cancer. Right. But there's there's solid money and keeping us sick. They're solid money, and that I don't want to have a store too many rabbit holes, but there's, they're all these are all tied together. These solutions where we're like, Anna solution just seems like what our grandparents and great grandparents were doing, like we can a mix of this with the technology that we have now. Like

just it seems like we could bring this together. We have so many good examples that are out there. I live 30 minutes from Polyface. So I've been with Joel Salatin multiple times when he's doing his lunatic tours being on that site my kids go to the farm camp that's there. I'm just down the street and you have just so much knowledge that exists not just at his spot but multiple farms that are in this area where I'm at in Virginia of people that want you to learn they want you to I have now I live in a city area so I can't keep you know goats and pigs and cows but I have chickens. I have a lot of a lot of chickens too many for where I live in the city area that I live in. And but the reality is that for me, it's it's that light and I have a big garden and we have those pieces because it just is there are little pieces here where you start to take back and remove yourself from that system. But I learned early on, it's if you want, there is a fine line, where if you want to be able to make change or make a difference, you cannot just, you can't go be a hermit and live in a cave. It may be what's what I want to do at times, I want to go completely off grid, cut it off completely be totally self sufficient. And then my wife would be happy that we don't have to interact with other people anymore. But the reality is, is that if you want to be able to play the game, you have to stay in the game, and now start to play that game on your own terms. And like you said, individually, I think there's lots of amazing people. There's guys that I played with, that are amazing people. You know, Brandon Siler, like we've talked about before, like kids, taking everything that he learned and all the passion that he has, and now the programs that he's doing, and the good that he's trying to do, and give back and help the people in his local communities. I think you have a lot of really great examples that are football players and professional athletes that go back to the communities that they're from. Because they're not Waiting for Superman. They're not waiting for someone to swoop in and save them. And it can be a very jaded conversation. And it can be a very cynical conversation. But it doesn't stop there. Because if you have the platform, and you have the means to be able to make a difference and make a change, you just go do it. And I think that that mentality just comes from again, being made that way. It's you've been forged to become those people versus like, I'm not sitting around waiting to get this figured out. Like, I'm just gonna go do it. And that's what becomes the most fun and it's been the most enjoyable for me is as I've just gone and did shit. I've been able to meet you and meet amazing people in my life, because it's people that are ended up like it's just a attraction, right? As you go, it's magnetic. As you run into certain humans, you're like, that's someone I need to be around, I need to hear their thoughts, I need to read the words that they write, I need to be able to be involved with what they're involved in. And that, but you have to know how to identify those people, and also be willing to not get stuck in your own shit. I think a lot of us get stuck. And there was lots of dudes, even when we go back just to football, where it's like, they get stuck. They get all you know, they're in their emotions, as we're saying nowadays, right? There's just so deep in their emotions, just there's no way they're not getting out. You can't save them. It's like quicksand. So it's like, well, then you're gonna have to figure that out too. But there's enough of us that are forging forward and onward that we're able to go and try and make, you know, actual change.

J

James Geering 2:22:43

When I've made posts, and it looks like the show just like this conversation. You know, it's pulling problems out when they come up in the conversation and want to be the whole doom and gloom episode every single time. But occasionally, I'd be like, Why don't you just go back to England then, as well, because you know, who does that sees a problem and then fucking runs away? A little bitch. You know, if you truly love your country, you fucking dig your heels in and you change it. And this is the problem, you know, where we have the left and the right and that this and that, that this fucking World War, one trench mentality that we saw the last three

years more than ever. It's like, well, if you actually care if you truly a patriot, if you truly love this country, what are you doing to fix it? What are you doing to be that mentor? What are you doing to I mean, even in my neighborhood here, we had, you know, I've talked about a couple of times, we had a kid, like terrorizing this community with his driving. I mean, it was, it was like 25 mile an hour zones, were all the streets. I mean, there are kids everywhere. And it's the kind of community where the kids can literally come home and the streetlights come on. A beautiful kind of central area with a football pitch and soccer pitch, you know, and basketball courts and everything a path that goes away around. So a child can literally be there the whole time, be safe. unless someone's driving like a fucking asshole, which this kid was, and he was doing like 60 through our neighborhood, almost wiped out in front of a bus stop full of kids at one point. And again, I went I basically was like, you know, does anyone know who this is? What are we going to do to fix it? And then it was like, Oh, they need to put in speed bumps. They they they and I'm like fuck fe. We what are we gonna fucking do? So anyway, I went to a friend of mine who has who's in our local police force and reached out to the fucking cop that protects here. He said the fucker didn't even respond to his messages. So I'm like, All right, motherfucker. Well, then, thanks. You know, fellow fucking first responder a piece of shit. I guess I gotta fix this myself. So I did some internet creeping found this kid. Again. Kudos to the community that a couple of people gave me some clues on who he was. Found his dad went to the dealership his dad works in, sat my ass down in front of him. professionally, with the kindness of my heart, I'm like your child is going to not only kill other people or kill himself. I've seen what this happens how this ends, too many fucking time. And I'm almost like tearing up talking to him. That's how passionate I am. This man makes a phone call to his wife there. And then they take his keys away for six months. He's come back in his neighborhood six months later, and hats off to this this kid. Every time I've seen him driving, he's driving normally, again, he learned his lesson. So do I throw my arms up and just say they need to fix it? Or do I roll up my sleeves and that particular thing, I was able to make a difference in my community. This is not a yay, James. Yeah, that's amazing story. This is I was able to stop people from probably being killed just because I fucking did something. If much one of us did something, imagine the effect we would have not only in this country, but on the world.



2:25:54

Just do one thing. Just Just one thing just do is just do Just do your job. Because it is it that is an element of the community where and it is this. We've been taught. And we've been conditioned the same way that the team that I was a part of, and the men that I played football with the same way that you were conditioned in good units that you are part of, it's you can also be conditioned, or deconditioned. To be the opposite. You can become baby birds, right? You can become you know, the difference between, right, a feral pig and a wild pig? Is how it's treated. Still a pig still the same animal? But are you going to be tough? And have teeth? And can you take care of your shit? Are you gonna get fat and happy because you're being fed. And I think that there is there's so many parallels that come with that of what majority of people have experienced for so long, which is I just need to be fed my baby bird, I need to be fed. And it's safe that way. It's a cow. But the problem is, is that eventually that pig does get taken to slaughter. And I think it's folks that may have balked at that. Prior to 2020. I believe that that number has gone down. I believe more people have lived life a little bit and have experienced some things that have pushed just collectively have been like, we might just need to take care of ours. And by what I mean by ours is our local communities, the people where we can make a difference, you can make a difference in that neighborhood. We all through that one action, just doing our job of hope being accountable and holding accountability. And that's been one of the toughest things to see in education is the lack of accountability that is on students. My son

hasn't done homework since kindergarten. He's in eighth grade James. What the fuck are we talking about? You're telling me that I have to assign homework to my kid. Because what in the area that I live in, all the children are destined to work for the Hershey factory, or the lycra company, or Little Debbie, because those are the major employers in the area or the target distribution center, or the 1 million square foot Amazon distribution center that just got built a million square feet. So that's where that's what my son is destined to do. That's why he doesn't need to do homework. Because fuck them, it's either like you as well as he's got advanced classes, then he's not going to college. He's 12. The fuck are we talking about right now. And it's I care greatly. Now because I believe in college, I believe in choice, the ability to put these kids in an opportunity to put people in opportunity to be able to make a choice. And you have so many communities that are just Hook Line Sinker, going and stamp, what the narrative is, that are just allowing these kids and these families because their lives are not good. The hard times are hard. Mom and Dad aren't around all those things that we've talked about before. It's like, okay, then those kids are just those choices. They're being made for them. And most families don't know that. And that's if that kid beats the odds, because right now, a high school graduation rate, it's below 60%. Below 60% You know what happens when you have a community that has high school graduation rates that are that low, it ceases to exist in a decade. And when there's no way we're alone, these little communities that are all over the country, and it's like you're sitting around waiting for the men north of Richmond, right to show up and solve your problems. And it just has to be enough people saying, you know, fuck that. And he didn't see that South shown that little bit of the Midwest has shown that. I've been like, you know, fuck that. We're just, we're just gonna do it. We'll just do it. We'll figure Get out. You have some areas now that are completely like D legalizing the ability to like sell your own food and do all these own thing. And I think it was even like New Hampshire somewhere, right? It's like it's, you have these areas that are starting to kind of push that envelope, you just have to have enough people that are willing to rise up. And I think that's what you're calling out, which is the idea of like, we the people standing up, you have to have people stand up. But you have record number, we have a record low of kids that are playing organized sports anymore. You know, it's now eSports.

 James Geering 2:30:32

Well think about this, you have kids that literally physically struggle to stand up. That's how fat and sick and D, what's the word? There, they don't even have the strength and conditioning of a normal child that would have played forget about sports, it would have been running, jumping, climbing, etc. You see these kids, and some of them they aren't. And again, there's some phenomenal athletes out there's a lot of healthy kids, again, it's not tiring, it's identifying the worrying signs. But the skinny kids have kyphosis, you know, they have no muscle tone. So this is the thing, it's not just obesity, it's the ability to, like you said, physically stand up for your country if you can't even physically stand up.

 2:31:21

So and that's where again, it's it is like you said you don't want it to be do but we don't want it to be totally doom and gloom. And so then what's the solution? The solution is, there's a lot of us with strong backs. There's a lot of us that did go through fires of being forged into the men that we are and into the women that we are. And so the reality is, is that it's then it's up to us. It's up to us to be able to, for me, for certainly for your podcast, it's sharing the stories of men

and women and amazing humans that were forged in just on imaginable circumstances. And the sharing of those stories binds us and brings us together and raises awareness to things that nobody is wanting to talk about. And it needs to be brought into the into the light. And then while the same thing for me is that that is that calling that I have found where it's like, there are lots of amazing people that are just regular ordinary people that did amazing things just for me from what I was tied to, which is like they were walking on athletes that they went into this scenario, they went into these situations where they were told that they weren't wanted, they didn't get a scholarship, and they still fought through it for food that I knows why we have this itch in our brain to go do these things. And they were forged into amazing men and women that did stuff that only people could dream of being able to do and have a shot at doing. And they made that way. collectively as a group, those people that have strong backs, and strong Next, we always just talked about football, it's like you got to have a thick ass neck. Like if you're gonna play ball, you're gonna have a thick ass neck and we sit next to it all the time. And the whole idea was so you could hold the helmet on your head and not die. Well, okay, that mentality, a lot of us have people across the globe that have strong backs and strong necks. What's the point of having all that? What's the point of having it unless you're going to use it? For me, it was always that it was always like, what's the point I am only learning what I'm learning. And I'm only going through what I'm going through so that I can teach my boys that. So that when my son is 10 He's learning what I know, at 34 Because I'm gonna give him a 24 year Headstart. And for me, that's that's what it's all about, is we got to give these guys this next Headstart, we're gonna give them that jump. And we have strong necks and strong aspects to carry people. He's gonna have to carry on for long because they figure it out, and then they get stronger, and then they get more emboldened. And that's where it's like that it was 100% falls to us. Because if you're strong and you're capable, and you're able, then what are you gonna do? Just take care of you and yours? Like there's a surefire way. I don't know if anyone's seen like a zombie movie, but it doesn't work out if it's just you versus everybody.

J

James Geering 2:34:20

And that's your Will Smith. Will Smith. He did have a dog. He did an amazing dog. Well, I want to get back to football. Just one thing you mentioned Joel Salatin. Now Yeah, this is this is an irony. One of his books is is titled everything I do is illegal. It's raised the farmer. So you I mean, I haven't actually got to Polyface yet. I meant to get up there before and, you know, I haven't got anywhere in the Northeast for a long time. But I definitely will. But talk to me about that, you know, you you actually get there to see the farm itself. The way you know, like you said the raw milk and some of these other ones the industry side got hold of it and the way that we had, for example, drank milk, which I would argue is probably why a lot of us have dairy intolerance, because it's not milk anymore. You know, it's vilified because of supposedly, you know, health and safety reasons. To the point now where, you know, there's monopoly and farming as well. And we saw it with Monsanto, you know, the lawsuits against farmers whose seeds are just blown into their land, and then they try and shut them down or do shut them down. So with you being in that particular area with you interacting with Joe, and Joe has been on the show twice, we did another one with me with during COVID, which was amazing. It was, talk to me about just your perspective on that and educate a lot of people that probably don't even know who Joel is, on the potential of what the origin of our food could look like, again, if we advocated for our local farmers to do a similar thing.



2:35:56

So if you are getting introduced to this name for the first time, so this is he is synonymous with regenerative regenerative agriculture. And the easiest way to explain this is like Circle of Life, right. And so the way he runs his farm, if we're going to break it down to very simply, it just is, he has an acre of land is two acres of land. On one acre of land, he has a partition that where his cows are on that land, and those cows eat the grass that are in that acre, depending on the number of cows that he has, he keeps those cows on that acre for a certain amount of time, that allows the cows to eat the grass down to a certain point. Then he moves those cows to the next acre over. And while the cows are their cows do what they do, which is they poop, they eat, and they poop and they move around. They're not causing global warming, just so we all can get out out in front of that insanity.

 James Geering 2:36:52

It's when they when they buy an Escalade that they start impacting.

 2:36:57

Exactly. The cows then get moved to the next acre of land of fresh grass, and that's where they're gonna go. Then behind those cows, you bring in chickens. So you'd bring these big chicken mobiel. We're all these chickens, and they're going to now be partitioned in that acre of grass where those cows were before. Because they pooped and what poop does, it brings in flies and larva and maggots and all these things that happen right naturally. Chickens the way they eat, right, because I was so naive to chicken before I got them. Right chickens eat a very particular way. It's Scratch, scratch, head down, scratch, scratch, head down, they literally back up. It's like they're doing the shuffle back, back, bounce back back down, and they're scratching the earth. Well, what they do is that they come in and they literally just spread the cow manure all over the grass. And that spreading of that manure allows the grass to get incredibly healthy and get all of the competence centrally with all those minerals that it needs. And chickens are not they will eat grass with those our little baby dinosaurs. Make no mistake. I've watched my chickens eat mice frogs, like it was when in the wintertime when you can't get chickens. Meat Joel talks about in his books where the job is the young farmhand The young man was to go and hunt raccoons or squirrels or rabbits or whatever they could during the winter and literally just got the animal and throw it in that pen where the chickens were. Because chickens are dinosaurs.

 James Geering 2:38:26

They will have it on my farm and they're vicious the obas is 200 times the size of and they'll still chase Eros across the field.

 2:38:33

Oh yeah, man, I'm talking it just you learn very quickly those dead eyes. It's Oh, I get the Velociraptor thing. Like if this is what they are. And they're awesome, but that's what they do. Right. And so as you do this, so the chickens follow. And then if you have other animals, you do very similar things where it's you have pigs that come in, they route up the earth with their



nose because they have the best trial that has ever existed and route up Earth and you do this natural rotation of these animals. And when you talk to Joel Joel says they're primarily a meat farm right? Of course, that is what they do. They do meat. He they old contracts with Chipotle and when all the major farm like restaurants in this area. So he's still playing the industrial game, but with a much higher quality product. And it when you ask them, will you work in me? And he goes, No, I don't talk about working in me. He goes, I'm a grass farmer. For him, it's all about just letting nature do as it does. He talks about like, let the pig exercises pigness the pigness of the pig, the Countess of the cow just letting them be who they are and just setting parameters just around them to be able to kind of control that and not allowing it to be chaos. The difference is is when you go to their farm, it's there's tons it's nothing but green screen and it's grass. And as you go in you drive through the farm areas and you see other farms that are there that have cattle, and it's black, right? It's black, it's barren, it stinks. It reeks. Because it just is it's the only you're eating from a pan, they're only eating from the corn and the feed that they're given. And it is just, it's like a wasteland. And then you get to Polyface interested to rolling hills of green and grass. And, you know, he calls himself like the lunatic farmer, that is like, Libertarian, Christian, like anarchy. Like it just as the students, this is such a conundrum of all of these things. And it's beautifully packaged in his ability to then teach and explain and just break things down. So simply, whereas books are really enjoyable to read, as you have just even a general interest in these things. And he recently had a book that came out that deals with like micro farm. So it's like, can you do this in your backyard. And that's where it starts become a lot more approachable. And just gives you tools to where you can now say like, Alright, maybe. And I have friends that we got chickens and a set of friends had chickens and the one guy that's kind of like, well, so you guys got the chickens and stuff. And a year later, he's like, Alright, maybe I'll get like a little mobile. And so now he's got four or five chickens in his backyard, moving them around. And it just is now his family, his eggs. And now it's just it's an element where it's not a cost thing, this is a peace of mind thing. This is where it's I don't go to the grocery store to buy eggs, I don't go to the grocery store to buy meat. So I buy all my meat from politics, is Polyface allows you to come in and buy cuts of meat to where you can go and buy directly from them. So you are now bypassing the grocery store, to where back in the day, it was a little bit more expensive. But I know where it's coming from, the quality is better, when you don't have a lot of money. Those are hard things to be like, I kind of just need to eat. It doesn't at some level here, like I just need the ground beef to be \$1 a pound. And it's I'm gonna get it from Walmart. And it's kind of like, Wow, all right. So we're willing, like you pay now or you pay later, right. But then the price, I don't know if anyone's seen the prices in grocery stores lately. But it's cheaper to buy the meat directly from the farmer now to where it used to be, of course, and it just is. So it's like well then go to the farmer cut them out. And as you start to get into this world, I just warn you, right? It's it's a slippery slope, you get into this world. And it's like, well, now I'm buying only my meat here. And maybe now I have some chickens and now all I get my eggs from here. And then it's like, well, who who does raw milk. And who was offering herd shares because it is illegal, you can't buy raw milk, you have to have a herd share we ever share of our herd of cows that then allows you to be able to reap the benefits of owning that herd share. And then you're able to get that milk but we get our raw milk. So then we have a farm is there and then so as you start to kind of look in this area of like, well, how much like is it possible that I don't go to the grocery store? Is it possible that I don't have these things that happen anymore, and you kind of take that back, but it all started with Joel and Polyface and just their willingness where you could just show up any day, anytime, walk onto the farm, go wherever you want. And it's, it's been a lot of fun, because they do stuff for like the kids as well during the summer. So they bring the kids on, you know, my 10 year old is there. And they're calling chickens teaching the kids how to be able to call and clean and handle chickens and do those types of things. And, and they're they're so game to just work with you and work with the community. So you come in and be like, hey, so I have

this idea. And whatever that idea that you say, they're like, Okay, like, I like this, like, let's go. It's like what does it look like if I want to be able to get like a hog. And we just did it here on the farm. And you guys just showed us how to do it. They're like, Yeah, that sounds like a cool idea. Like it just is there. So games just work with helping the community do whatever it is that you want to be able to do for them to teach it. Because it is just a dying. It's a dying trade and dying piece where I think a lot of more people are starting to look to get out of cities get into the rural areas. Your farmers are where it's at. And I hear people say it all the time. And it seems like it's really intimidating. But it's this is like, it's as simple as just calling go farmer, it seems bizarre. It seems like you'd be bothering someone, but it's they really do want you to know because their kids may not give a shit. The grandkids may not care or they do want help or they do want to be able to pass on that knowledge because it is dying, the same way that it's dying for like plumbers and electricians and trades where that age discrepancy of like the younger generation is just not there. And you have a 40 year gap. That's real for farm as well and agriculture. So it's something worth getting into.

J

James Geering 2:44:48

Yeah, well I appreciate your perspective. I need to get Joe back on. I think talking about what people can do now. I think there's a lot more eyes open. Agreed. But I mean I've one thing I've heard the currency recently has been eggs And when you have chickens, they're, you know, all but free. But, um, I know for a long time, I've been up to like six, seven bucks here for 12 eggs, you know, and it's like, and I'd happily pay five \$6 for eggs that literally were, you know, in a check in 24 hours prior that would have been free range. And so yeah, it's just reclaiming that. And I've talked about that the farmers markets and all these things, if you live in an urban or suburban setting, and you can't, you know, just can't grow. I mean, you've got HOAs. And these are things that are barriers to then find your local farms, because we saw what happens when there's a monopoly on agriculture, a pandemic comes through, and no one could get anything. I've even had as Agra hood, they call it in North Carolina. And I had one of the founders of that. And that's another interesting concept, you build a community around a farm. And so when when COVID hit, they were like, we just went to the farm, and got food, you know, so I love these ideas. This is why I love this conversation, even though, you know, we're gonna get back to college football. Now, these are so many important perspectives that people need to understand. We are not educated on any of these things. I mean, as he said, Joe's was vilified by so many organizations, but he's the very leader in this space that we need to be looking to, and anyone I know, has got into the kind of holistic farming, you know, Joel, is there the Messiah, and I mean that in a positive way, you know, he's the one that's been walking the walk, and being, you know, threatened with, with, you know, legal action, his whole his whole life for simply doing what people did 100 years ago,

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for sure. And I understand the reason for vilification this is across the board is anytime that anyone wants to bring you together, to be able to provide you independence, and give you the means to be independent, to think independently, to bring people together, they're the most dangerous. Those are the most dangerous people that exists. So you will see across the gamut of people wanting to shut them down, and shut that down. And like you said, vilify them for whatever the reason, the the reason is less relevant as to what was the person saying, and why are we trying to quiet them, it's like that this makes more sense. The reasoning becomes far

less important, why they want to silence you is more or less what the person's being silenced. What were they saying prior to that, and if it's inclusiveness and togetherness and independence, and oneness and community, it's like, he's all seem like good things like Yeah, but you know, he's a racist. It's like, oh, okay, I guess I'm wearing no mask, you don't even have a man he just tells you that you could just it's your body your choice. You're like, wait, what I thought this was a good hold on I'm confused which team we're fighting for now. And now it's so it ends up being a lot of that

 James Geering 2:47:48

exactly, which I pointed out, you know, a political because it is for me, politics is a facade These are human beings in all of these different positions. And the last two at the very pinnacle of our suppose it, you know, structure in this country, have deliberately divided and one of my guests have told us a few times made a great analogy is that alright? You're a medieval England, and you've got the villagers fighting amongst themselves. Who are they not looking at now? The fuckers in the castle that have taken all your money in taxes and everything. So understand that this is a very deliberate thing. The right do it the left do it a leader unites people, especially under crisis and look at the people of New York at 911 Look at the people of London Grenfell fire in that area, or the bombings, people want to come together and real leaders emerge. So if you're being divided, know that that's tyranny that's not leadership, and I don't give a fuck what color tie that person has and what you've signed as your allegiance to on your voting poll, take a step back and go is this person bringing us together? And if the answer is no, they need to fucking go it's that simple. I like it all right, well, back to leadership in us so I want to get to some of the things that we we talked about before we hit record you know the the other side of the glory of college football but before we do that, let's go on a positive path. So you a lot of the guys kind of get to experience the wave that was a success and oh six as you said then there's a kind of a fall from grace. So walk me through that and then how you know as a team you were able to be pulled together and get back to that oh, wait success again.

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Oh seven was kind of the year of the suffering right there was lots of things that were negative guys struggled. We lose guys we lose guys due to issues like with the law, right? We lose guys. You know, it's and the documentary touches on it for a moment but it's stuff like you know, it's I think One of the charges like, oh, you know, this player brandished a weapon or whatever, have showed a concealed weapon. And that was charged. Like, I don't know that that player pulled over downtown pulled an AK 47 out of the trunk of his car. And then and then, like, shot it in the air. Like when we're talking about like it was it there were so many just things where it's the when you allow the wheels to come off. Like as you got bring guys in, you're playing with fires that edge where you have these guys that are going to come in to come in from really we've talked about like just terrible circumstances, and they just don't have the guidance or support or structure to keep them just have like this is it's okay, like, let's not be in the club. Let's not be in these areas that can bring out the worst. You know, I played with Aaron Hernandez right. So Aaron comes in and oh seven. It's a death sentence for Aaron Hernandez to go to the New England Patriots. It was a death sentence for him. It was a guarantee where it was when he was in college. He wasn't allowed to go back home. Right they they made Tebow his roommate. They did tons of things to try and just put the bumper lanes on the lane to go bowling right the bumper lanes were put up to try and protect him just from his environment where he came

from all the gang affiliations, all the problems that came with him. But he ends up being a you know, it's a dice worth to roll because truly is one of the freakishly good athletes that I've ever seen. And it's tough because we want him he murdered murdered people. That's right, we can't we're not gonna be able to like it's that's that's our thing. But please understand, we can't be naive. Nobody's all good or all bad. Like this is not this is not Satan incarnate. Right. This is this is a young man that had a really tragic and horrible upbringing

 James Geering 2:51:52

and maybe maybe a TBI. If I remember the documentary. I think there was no rain. Yeah, they were able to see that too. And that's a big part of it. I mean, the number of suicides that have come from TBI, especially in special forces that have happened on special operations, anatomically, that's the thing that controls you. So if we're not bringing that into the conversation, then again, like you said, that wasn't Satan. That was a child, as we think we talked about before, a little toddler like all of us, the blank canvas that had physical trauma that had mental trauma, and sometimes it's suicide, sometimes it's homicide.

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And, and I think when they opened up, he was the youngest individual that they had opened his brain and to see CTE, like you said, TBI see that in his brain, like was the worst case we've ever seen for someone that's young. That freaks out a lot of us. Because all right, like I didn't play the next level, but I have a lot of concussions, like a lot of undiagnosed concussions and then concussions that I just couldn't hide. So those are my diagnosed ones. And so it's like, man, like it's that was where Aaron was, and so for me it's so it wasn't it wasn't like it wasn't all bad human like it just was he was he had a great smile and love to joke around and whatever it was and but there were demons right there was demons they hid. So as you play with this razor's edge for recruiting and bringing these dudes in, it's we had just again, it's you have an attrition level of players that either weren't going to make it or we're going to make it and so oh seven because the wheels started to come off frustration was there that's where we have a lot of legal issues and we have a lot of guys getting arrested. You know, overall, I think if you take a look at our entire team that I played with while I was there 41 players have either been arrested or have been in jail or prison that I played with and this is like the like that's that's just that was that's the population that we're working with. And insult to injury even in oh seven is we're going through we're not only struggling with like arrests and discipline issues, but we have a player on the team die. So it's was ended up being my roommate. And the first guy that I made friends with when I get to Florida in oh six when I'm not trying to earn my way was another walk on kid who dies in a motorcycle accident. So you have not only just turmoil, just generally have discipline, but then you have like a death of a teammate. That ends up dying with the girlfriend of another teammate on the back of his motorcycle because we're at a party and she just wanted to go for a ride and then never came back. And that it's though that devastation that comes with that is just insult to injury in a year where it just was nothing but turmoil. So we get and we lose, we lose the Michigan is terrible. Like it just is when we finally get through that and I think it was that. If we're going to suffer to the degree that we do in the offseason. It kind of was that moment of are you going to zig or you're going to zag And the fact was, for those of us that are walk ons, we're just going to be doing the best that we can to be able to give guys that are going to play on Sunday and make millions and millions of dollars. The deal was for us, it was like, if you're a starter Florida, you will go play in the NFL. Like that

was just the standard. And so for us that we weren't starters, we're still trying to run away. That means you have you have a if we don't perform on the scout team, and we don't give these guys as strong or as good of a look that we can, we're not preparing them to go play Tennessee or LSU that next week or that weekend on Saturday. So there was a lot of pride and effort for those of us that were were in robot and we didn't leave or were there to be able to give these dudes look to just get crushed to get crushed by these NFL prospect level dudes and it's just like into it play after play after play after play. And but we're nothing if these dudes don't buy in to get it figured out. And I think that that year of suffering and struggle, and no one came No, Tebow couldn't do it on his own. And there was lots of good dudes. That's the one thing too that I want to call out is there's a lot of drama and stuff that gets tied around of like, just it was Tebow and then all the criminals. It's like, okay, like, there were lots and lots of really solid human beings on that team. Sons of pasture pastures, like just just unbelievable people that were just get continued to do great things, but it's no way it's who wants to WHO CARES wants to who wants to hear there's no sexy, the went to class, and now you're a pharmacist cares. Like nobody wants to hear about that. So we have a claim. Oh, yeah, no, it's you. We have engineers and physicists and orthodontists and dentists and pharmacists and, and lawyers and guys that have started their own business, like Jim Barry was an offensive lineman that was a scholarship guy. He goes to law school. And then, like, becomes aware, and he's like, I don't want to do this. I want to open a brewery. And so we opened a brewery in Gainesville. It's so successful. They moved down to Ybor City and berry house brewery is like an incredibly successful brewery that's in Ybor and that's his that's his spot. Well, it's not sexy. What you what you've started a business. It's super successful, good for you. Like it just nobody was like, you know, this is a really lame documentary because we didn't hear about whatever Aaron killing another person in college or something. And it just is this yeah, there's, there's so much more. And so that was one thing that definitely grinds my gears a little bit of being like, you know, well, Tim was the only one you know, he's the only one doing the right things. Like, settle down. Like this is a team of like 112 guys. Like, it's hard. It's hard to understand, like his football teams and colleges. You travel like 75 or 85 Guys for conference games, but you have over 100 players, over 125 players making that team run. So yes, there's one dude who truly is the greatest nicest human being that truly is exactly as he says he is and how he acts on TV. That's how he is that's who he is. To him through and through. He is the outlier. There is no salacious story that's going to come out about something horrible that's been lying about like Is He truly is what he is. That is an outlier. And that is unique. There was a lots of lots of really good dudes and really good staff that was working to be able to get us there. And so we got the ballers to buy in those ballers finally bought in through the work of that staff, that really good staff that was around us. And that's when we come into OA and come in with our hair on fire with something to prove. Because we were just it was embarrassing. We were embarrassing, and oh seven and then we had such a stellar class come in. So not only do we have a stellar oh six class, but then a stellar oh seven class. So as these were new recruits come in. We've been tortured. Some of these new recruits come in. This is now the first time I was talking about with another guy about this earlier where it was like I think this is the first time we see like high school kids are graduating high school early to get into college sooner. So we had Oh, seven guys graduated high school in like December of their senior year like they get done playing football. They graduate high school and they're with us at Florida in January. You know the Pouncy boys are with us in January. And so they come in like they had a half of a senior year where they were and now they're playing football was so they suffered with a sooner. So those guys get to suffer as true freshmen right out the gate. And I think that that mattered. Because these dudes didn't know they didn't do it. They didn't when they were coming in and super great and then they are going to suffer. They're going to suffer with us and get to spring ball. And now then when we struggle in oh seven and it sucks and so then you already have this new cast of characters that are like, no, let's go to work. And now you have such a cohesive unit like

we've spent some time of like that, that shared furring to get to OA and we had such a chip on our shoulder. And it was like we lose to Georgia in 2007, Georgia scores the first touchdown, and the entire team comes into the endzone and celebrates. Their whole team comes on like weed, none of us even move like it was so shocking. We have no idea what's going on. We have guys that would punch you for in the face for way less than such a thing. And yet those guys do nothing. No one on our sideline, runs out, because it was so confusing. And then they beat us. It was so embarrassing. And so in the offseason, that mental warfare side it was we were punished every game that we lost, we ran stadiums, which is you run every single step inside of the Florida stadium. That's a big stage all all 94,000 plus people, it's you run every step every section, the entire stadium for every loss. So in the winter we ran for in the spring we ran for before we ran for every single one, they brought us into the team room before we run at 6am. So you had to like be in the team room at six, they would show highlights of the of the Georgia game. There show us highlights of them celebrating and then beating us. Every time we run stadiums. They would never we did like the midnight lifts and did the lift weights where it's like big hype up like super torture sessions. If you were a defensive guy, you had to do 188 reps of whatever it was you were doing. Because no Shawn Moreno ran 188 yards on the defense that day, all offseason. So the chip on our shoulder was so real. That's why when we come out, we just want our hair on fire. And we just biliterate Georgia in a way. But that's where now we come in. And now it's just it's a whole nother level that's been turned up and buy in. And now you have the ballers that are ready to go. They're no longer top man. I don't like this, I don't want to do this. It's like those days are gone. And once you have guys that are going to play on Sunday that are bought in now everybody goes and now the the machine really starts to move.

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James Geering 3:02:15

The last place I worked when I got hired. It was so piss poor as far as the on ramp experience. Again, there are some great people in this department but you literally went you did HR shit. You kind of toward, toward like you were like you and your family did the station. And then you went around the theme parks and you rode rides. And that was the bar. And I remember going How the fuck do you figure out if I'm good or a piece of shit. By taking me on a theme park day or frickin it was weeks. And so by the time I left, along with against some good people that were already trying to do this, we actually managed to put in a proper PT crucible for these new recruits. And I remember, there were the some great people that they hired. And they were like this is this is the hardest PT you've ever done. I've worked for two three departments, whatever it is, but it was again, it was a lot of strong fit stuff. You know, it was it was very organized, planned PT to bring them together, real world firefighter movements. But they were the ones that were like What the fuck, I thought we were just going to ride rides, because that's what they'd heard. And I think that's interesting comparing that I don't know if they still maintain that level. But once you say, hey, it's not like that anymore. This is how we operate at UF. It filters out the chaff at the front door they're not even going to walk through. And so but you're going to have enough for example, Anaheim or Hialeah. People know it's going to be brutal. So right from the get go before you even lose the people that get cut. Everyone's walking in knowing it's going to be a meat grinder. So like you said, comparing now away. It's a different mindset of the people and I think this is the problem with this hiring issue. They've continued to lower, lower, lower the standard. The opposite is true. I think to fix this, you put the standard high, you invite the fucking best potential male and female firefighters in the you know, the city, the county, the state the country, they're going to be lining up outside yours because they want to be challenged and they want to get through that crucible and be shoulder to shoulder with other amazing first responders because lives are at stake and who do you want next to

you when someone's trying to shoot you or you're going into a burning building? So it's an interesting parallel again, when you when you first went in when it wasn't this notorious meat grinder. It was a different mentality for a lot of people now three shows out years later, you've got people walking through the front door going, I'm ready, let's do this.



3:05:05

And the accountability does fall to the individuals. Right? It's like the coaches can only they can set the stage, they can put the pressure on you, they can show you. But eventually, it can't just be can't be the coaches holding that accountability, right, it has to fall to the leaders to the players to maintain that accountability. Because when it's when a coach isn't looking, do your feet go down. Like when you're doing we just brutal, just add stuff where you're just, you're just getting torn, torn apart, of like core type exercises, like leg raises, and all sorts of stuff. And it was, the coaches eventually don't look, but it's do you put your feet down. And if you've got a brother that's next to you, that gets after you're asked what your feet go down, there's that accountability that now it's permeates within the whole thing. And that's when you really know you're making a difference. That's where the struggle has to be where you have to get guys that are willing just to punch dude in the face. And it is an element where a lot of times that level of accountability either just never quite gets built there. And then you do struggle. And like you said it does out the gate when guys come in it is just it is now the bar is so high it arrived. And you don't get as a freshman as young guy as you start to complain and feel sorry for yourself and it's hot or whatever. It's you don't get that reinforced from the guys that you're looking up to the guys that you're looking up to just like, come on buck, get with it. Because this is about to get worse. It's about to get worse. And it just is okay. Like it's I don't have time, I don't have time to do it. And so that is definitely is that that bar lowering is what we're doing across the board across multiple industries, multiple areas and avenues. And that is it's a serious problem of all the guys it's all make it more fair, make it more equitable. While at the same time we're we're lowering it to the degree where it's no, you gotta keep it high. And for me, I saw that right, I got all the way through. Oh, 70809, we went again, right, it's a way we win the national championship. It's Oklahoma oh nine, don't we go undefeated and then get crushed by Alabama in the SEC game. Now Alabama goes to win national championship. But we get to 2010. And then we saw the bar drop, like the bar does lower. And those guys we have our leaders that are gone. And just it's you don't have the same pressure. Because as you have strong personalities that control a spot it when they go, you're going to have a very, you have a void that has to be filled. And those guys that were behind learning, they need a year to get hardened to build that shell, they don't have a shell, they kind of got to sit and like a soft underbelly and kind of just watch and be like yeah, that's what you do. And and they kind of learn how to lead but they don't you just kind of imitating whatever the leader was before you. It's not who you are. So you kind of have to have get forged. And so that's where college stays so interesting, because the staff that we had in 2010 was not the staff we had an O seven, Charlie strong and all these guys that we had that were really solid coaches, they're now head coaches elsewhere. They've left. So now you have a new cast of characters and they came from other places. Well, they weren't hard to understand the staff had to be hardened as well. They were hardened by Myers drive and dictate dictatorial level of expectation. Realize we lost staff, you lost coaches as well. Guys that couldn't cut it that couldn't couldn't handle rusher. What I could only imagine what coaches meetings will look like. So you have just this top down level to where we get to 2020 of guys that are known they're from temple or they're from wherever the fuck and it's and they're just like, oh, and I remember. Then I'm now a scholarship. long snapper. I have a baby, I'm getting my master's degree like I'm and I'm only a part of the team for so much because now I'm at in class and I'm just getting my job done

snapping for PA tees and field goals. And then I go to class or whatever and come back. And just being a part of the meetings. I remember very clearly going to Meijer and being like, no one's afraid in this meeting anymore. Like the punt team meeting that punting that Meyer ran, he was the punt team coach. So imagine all that ferocity and intensesness that exists now dedicated to one single team on special teams. That's why we had the number one punt team in the nation multiple years. And it was it was it was horrible. It was horrible. The level of accountability and ferocity that existed inside of this punting meeting There were guys review get done, they'll get motherfuck so bad, you'd be like, take his shoelaces tonight. Like he's gonna kill himself when he gets back to his dorm. Like we got to like Jay dubs on suicide watch, like, nobody let JW by himself tonight because like I was the world's worst meeting I've ever seen. And like this kid was like, told that he was, you know, it's because you can't hold the block for 1.2 seconds, you're gonna have to explain to this coach, his family and his wife why they're gonna have to move. Like, why is that gonna have to move because you can't hold a block. And such a weight and pressure put on him to perform, but it was what we were we performed. And then I get to 2010. Now we have new staff in there. And there's none of that. So do better. do better next time. You gotta do better, whatever. I'm just like, what, what is this looking at, though? Like, you just need Imodium, to come into this meeting. Like if you missed a block yesterday, you should have diarrhea. Before we get in here. You should feel like you're gonna throw up like it is just like, oh, this is gonna be a problem ended up being a problem.

J

James Geering 3:11:01

Well, I want to go back. You mentioned about losing a roommate, Michael Guilford. I think it's, it's important to tell the story because as you said, and we'll get into this a little bit, you know, when, when things happen. Sometimes they're not given the exposure and time that they deserve. And two human beings lost their life. I'm sure some perspectives were wrong. And as to the backstory of that incident, it was your roommate. And as you told me, before we recorded you even were on the scene first. So if you want to tell me who Michael was, you know, so let's paint a picture of this, this man that we lost, and then kind of walk me through that and the impact that that had.

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So Michael was from blunts town, Florida. And bloods Town is a one stoplight town in the panhandle of Florida. And he was a baseball player, football player is a really stellar athlete. He was a quarterback. He was well built, you know, like, you know, 200 pounds, six, one ish, and ran like a 434 440. Like freaky fast. Specially for a white boy with long blonde hair looking like sunshine right out of Remember The Titans. And just one of those accents, you can cut with a knife. we've ever been in the panhandle, right? We're flirting, we're flirting with the bayou kind of area, like it's, it is a thick accent. And he was a was a was a riot was truly a unique dude. And that's how ultimately is long hair throws you. So it's a super long blonde hair. And, and so that's where initially that's how we get connected is that we're, you know, at the same mess halls at the same time. A friend knows a friend that kind of a guy that I know that's walking on has this other friend named Michael. And so that's where we ended up getting connected. So we both just had this drive to want to be able to make a difference and get on on the team. We ended up becoming roommates because we end up becoming roommates and become friends ultimately, because a roommate that he had, that was this was not working out. And so so like the the team was like, Hey, would you I didn't have a roommate at the time, which was like



unheard of like at first get Florida and I'm in my dorm, I don't have a roommate, which was awesome. And they're like, hey, really struggling with this one guy? Can we give you this one guy? And it was so Michael than was by himself. And so he was just like, thank you so much for taking this dude and not having him be my roommate anymore. Like, totally fine. And so ultimately, when you get out that first year, you get to move out. And so we all move into a house together. And so that's where now me and the one roommate that nobody really wanted, but like it was they were all like together because we all spend so much time and then Michael, we all come together. And Michael ends up if you go back to that 2006 season. So he was crazy fast and was a quarterback. So he's on the scout team. And was Detroit. I'm so bad with names now. I think it's a Troy Smith, whoever the there was a quarterback for Ohio State. That was a running quarterback. That was stellar. And I think he was even when the Heisman like it was like something like he was like this dude was stellar and was running quarterback. So Michael was him on the scout team. And he would go in day in and day out like the defense we had in 2006 were murderers. Like these dudes were and I'm not talking literal murder, like they were just they were animals, right? They were animals on the field. And we would get to halftime or the end of games and teams would have like negative 10 rushing yards on the game. Like it's just they were just they were monsters. And he would go day in and day out and just literally get the shit kicked out of him because his job was to run around and get smashed. Linebackers and defensive ends and because it wasn't like didn't let up on the scout team quarterback starting quarterbacks had red jerseys that you weren't allowed to touch, but not the orange jerseys, not the scout team jerseys, you hit those guys. And so we ended up playing we go to Ohio State for the national championship and oh six he ends up having like a special ran on because he's a unique look and duty looks like sunshine is playing quarterback. And his job is to get the starting Florida defense ready for a running quarterback that can run and gun so they did a special on him and he did that because everybody called him sunshine and he hated that just was like you know, but that's ultimately how he becomes known as sunshine. And so So we're at a party in 2007 It's our bye week by week some guys have gone home you know we've been out and about this is a perfect example I was talking to another guy we were talking about Michael and we went there's the office of student learning on campus and this is where athletes go and work with tutors and stuff and we had just been in there three of us and we're walking out of the OSL and oh on our way in before we show Michael goes oh man look at how lovely that grass looks like grass is lovely. Like it just it's I want to roll around in it so we go we go and let's wait that's right as we walk in that was like that was a quintessential type of thing that like Michael would say we go in study whatever we come out and we're talking to me man Bernard talking and we're going and we're looking at Michael's gone. Michael's gone somewhere. And we look over and he's rolling around in the grass and he pops up with his bag and goes alright I'm good now like it just was like that was it like it was that so that was him and so that weekend that night right is we come back his dad had come into town because the by week and was staying with his at the house and got him got a new tires for his motorcycle he had a ninja like Kawasaki Ninja motorcycles super tricked out and and taught us all how to ride so that's like how we all learned was on this unreasonably fast motorcycle that we all learned how to ride a motorcycle in our neighborhood off his bike. And so we go stag get some new tires like we're feeling like feeling good, whatever that's at the house. And so we go back to we go to a party and house parties for us. It wasn't like Michael was a gamer, like hardcore like Xbox Halo gamer. And so he's actually upstairs playing Halo essentially the whole time. And we're just kind of hanging out. He's playing he's playing Halo with my little brother, like down in Kissimmee. CO so in Kissimmee, my brother is now playing with Michaels, you're playing online, so he's playing whatever, and I'm in the party for a while. And ultimately, I get a call from someone time has passed, I get a call from someone just said, Hey, there's an accident with a motorcycle. I'm not too far from the party called Michael, because Michael was dealing with a head that type of little just had a motorcycle on the team. And so I call and I call

on he doesn't pick up. And so I'm like, alright, well, it was an accident. So I get on my scooter. And scooped scooters is how you get around Florida, by parking is horrible. So everybody had scooters. And so get on the scooter and I go down. And as I pull up on the scene, it's like a motorcycle has exploded. Like it just is everywhere. And as soon as I pull up, Michael's where was wearing my hat, so he didn't have his helmet on. So he was wearing my hat. And it was in the middle of the road, like 200 feet from where the motorcycle was, the way the road ran was it would would bow up. And then when it came down, there was a median and then the other side of the road would ball up again. So if you were looking from afar, it would look like one solid road if you didn't remember there was a median on this road. And it's poorly lit because it's whatever it's one I am and as I'm coming up and then as I go back to the scene, multiple times years you know as the years go on, you can see where the rubber had hit where he had had hit the brakes, but he had brand new tires. Brand new tires don't have the same stopping power within the first so many 100 miles so his tires don't stop and so you see where he's laid rubber and then you see where it made contact with. And then when I'm there the scene is there's a car that was at the light and you know the back window is gone. And you can see clearly right it's I lay the bike down contact, sent bodies into the car. At this point. There's a pile. The pile is the description right a pile that has a as white cloth right over it under the car. I had to have like the they had to have just gotten there. First responders had just been there. So I'm pulling up and I'm looking. And it was a, it's a dismembering accident. So Michael shaved his legs. And so it's. So it was clear that his thigh was on the same. But there was just a sign. And so I'm now the only one that's there. And I'm flagging to one of the first responders and I'm like, Hey, is that this is my roommate? And they're like, Well, you're not family or whatever. I'm like, No, but his dad's at my house. And so immediately now I'm in, I'm in with first responders, and kind of breaking down okay, was was there alcohol was this was like, going through all the things with me. And it just was no, like it was I know what we're know, like, I know where we were, I knew what we were doing. And I'm still not fully there, right. And so the question does get asked, like, well, which hospital is the app?



3:21:01

And just as like, he's not. And then I'm like, Oh, okay. Now people have come up, people have come on the scene, because probably multiple people have gotten called same as I had. And so now, it was one of those things where it was, I couldn't afford to have his dad or anyone else get notified that Michael was gone. And that was kind of the first responders were like, Hey, this is the deal. Like, we have to notify the parents, we cannot let anyone know. So it's a very interesting spot to be in to feel yourself step back, emotionally, like five or six steps to where it's like, there's a job to be done right now. So there's no crying. There's no feeling of emotions. It is now I have to go back to friends of his and mine, and have them say, what happened. And I have to explain that Michael is not dead at the moment, and be able to be like, the accident? No, I think they're working on what I can't remember what I would have said, but you couldn't give up the ghost. And so the first responders like we need to go and notify the father. Will you come come with us? So we know where you live? And then we'll know like you're not, you're not going to tell him? I'm like, I'll I'll tell him like, are you? Like it was like they took some time that like, Are you sure? Like that's like, yeah, like this is literally like my best friend, his dad, I'm not showing up and having you explain it to them. And so it's, um, I know you've done it. Right is first responders. And for listeners, this is something everyone's probably has done. And it's terrible to do it. And so we go back to the house. And sure enough, you know, we have to go in and have to wait, you know, wake him up, you know, upstairs and then explain that his only son is gone. It was the worst hour and a half of watching, like agony on someone's face, and like disbelief. And that's when I started getting phone calls to them from the team. So now I'm

on the phone with Meyer, and on the phone with coaches, and it just is like, what happened. And it was i i want to know, if I call I may have called I may have called you know, and like, left a message or like had called someone and woken them up been like, this is what, uh, what's happened and so on. Talking to the team lawyer first that was not as abnormal, like, well, our team lawyer was like, on staff all the time. He actually like babysat us as specialists, and like long snappers and stuff. So he was the one that was like, he was an amazing guy. And and so it was very normal for me to have a conversation with Ken, I gave him the heads up, and then Meyer eventually calls us to 3am. And then just going through all the questions was the drinking. Do you swear? Like, are you 100%? Positive? Like, are you aware because now it's not about Michael dying. We're now in damage control. We're now like, this is going to be in the news. And this is going to be a thing, because there's the young lady that dies as well. And probably it's like her, she's a footnote in that accident, sadly, because she dies with the football player. And, and, and she just wanted to go for a ride. And so that was tough to go through the Docu series, right and we get to oh seven and like October 12 is the day that I don't forget. Like, that's when Michael died. And it doesn't get mentioned like at all inside of the Docu series and like, we step back and my wife and I talked about it's like it doesn't flow like it doesn't flow with the store. or rely on or whatever it would take them from one. And then they wanted to spend a lot of time talking about like a reactions, who would they have kicked off the team, and it died of an OD or whatever, but you'd like died the year before. Like it just didn't. That's where, like I've talked about, like, the timelines don't always match up and doesn't make a lot of sense. But while at the same time, it's like, if you're trying to talk about like adversity for like a team to go through where like bad goes to worse, having a teammate die is was pretty horrible. And not even just for like me personally, and like having to grapple with that. But like, it's, it was such like, it's I made Michael's dad, my first son's grand godfather. And my first son is named Michael. And so it was, when my son Michael was born. Michael's dad was the first person to hold my son, Michael. So there's the connection is so strong, right, from just teammates, again, like suffering together. This isn't somebody I grew up with. You know, I mean, this isn't somebody that it was like, it was it was a closeness, because of that shared suffering. That just a few, you know, a few years of being together two years of being together was like something was strong enough and to have that be gone and have him be gone. was, like I said, for a year that that was that years insult to injury?

 James Geering 3:26:24

Well, firstly, I mean, thank you for sharing that. I just, I feel like, as you said, it didn't show up in the documentary. You know, the young lady barely got a mention, even when it did happen. And it's important that we tell this story, you know, this is this is a huge tragedy. And what really kind of resonated with me when you're telling that is, and I've talked about this a lot. The horrors that you see in the accident is Uber traumatic, but not as traumatic as watching the person that loves that person that they just lost. Go through their grief,

 3:26:57

for sure. Yeah, it's not even the same, right? Like, it's not even the same, like, you're not even in the parking lot of the ballpark of a of like, a trauma. But I would, I wouldn't have done it any other way. Like, if I had to make those choices again, and make all those same choices again.



**J** James Geering 3:27:19

So you personally, oh, I'm sorry, mate, please. No, we

 3:27:21

don't, you're good. No.

**J** James Geering 3:27:23

So you personally, I mean, you know, as a team, you lost a brother. But I mean, this is, you know, a roommate, a best friend. How did you navigate the weeks, months, years after that? Because I mean, it's all well and good to do damage control from a legal and optic perspective. But that's not a human experience.

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No, I, those weeks were tough. It was tough, because he meant so much to me. And that, I'm glad that we did it the way we did it. So it's gonna sound crass, it's gonna, I think it sounds maybe a little crass. Now, as I am about to say what I'm about to say, but it was like, as soon as it happens, like buyers like Well, will you help put together a memorial service for him? So it was like, he was my best friend, identify as after identify his body and tell his family, and now I'm responsible for putting together a memorial of memorial service. And so it was like, for me, it was like within Yeah, like, of course. So it was like this element where it was like three or four days before I finally started, like break down. And, surprisingly, not surprisingly, right, is that it's when I'm now having to, like go through photos. And like, pick stuff for the memorial service? And how are we going to do the memorial service because the memorial service for the for the team? You know, I was a pallbearer at the funeral. Like when we went up to bloods down, and we went to go home to bury Michael, like, we were up there. And that was part of that service and being there. And so it was, be the responsibility of putting that together was was hard and devastating. And so that's when I started to, like feel those feelings and deal with that grief. And it was horrific. It was it was really, really horrible. Because it is this immense sadness. That's so real, which is just he'll never walk through the door again. And you had the next week, you've still play. So it is you just keep going. And the team did a good job to where it was like, you know, back then it was like those rubber bracelets were like all the rage number like the LIVESTRONG bracelets so They had like custom bracelets that were made that said you know sunshine and I think on the back it was like you know be your brother's keeper or something like that don't let your teammate down or something to that effect which was so perfect because like the the ultimate reminder was like the nickname that he hated but, but it ends up being but it ends up being a so you actually see in the clips like Tim is is playing that season or whatever and he has one of those orange bracelets like that's his that's Michael's bracelets that he wears. So things like that have been able to have like the team come together and it was it was nice right? It was nice to be able to have the team be able to come together guys shared stories. It was emotional because to like some of his friends and family came down. So friends from like back home that he had grown up with and Oh 607 We're still grinding like we're not walk ons that have made it Yeah, we haven't gotten to a starting spot. So got a lot of guys were super great to us. But a lot of guys were also total dicks because you were a walk on. And again, it's a treat mine superstars like superstars treat my shit like shit as

a walk on, you're below shift. They don't know your name. You're just a piece of shit that gets hit. And just shows up and the coaches can motherfucking it's funny or whatever, right? Like it's there's those elements because it is it's the champ right you get you are gonna weed out guys that are just looking to be coattail robbers, and trying to just like get a ring because the team's really good. And you just show up like, it's no, no, no, you earn that ring. And, and so Oh, 607 was tough. That was lose maximum suffering time period. So Michael probably had a lot to say to friends back home of like, dudes that he didn't like, and I remember one of his friends, kids, one of his friends gets up, and is just so wrong. He's just like, you know, it's like this was, you know, for him is like this is one of my best friends is no longer here. And he's like, and it's great seeing all of you guys were challenged, sharing stories and sharing stories. And he's like, but like, Michael hated a bunch of you motherfuckers like, he just immediately was, like, era that like, it just was like that frustration for his friend kind of thing. And I remember being like, Oh, no. Like, I know what you're talking about, like, I know who we're talking about. But like, please fill up with God, don't start. Don't start naming players. Like this isn't the place and luckily, like he composed himself and like, stop, but it was it was moving forward. You know, it's because it just is that's the spot. That's the spot now that that that's where Michael died. And you know, and I lived in an apartment where first apartment my wife and I did is just up the road from there. So every day, I have to drive by where Michael died. And it's not something that ever goes right. It's just me telling the stories now gets me choked up. Thinking about on October 12 comes magically, every year, every time for fonts, it just shows up. And and again, it's just a reminder of like, it's my mind. Michaels namesake is Michael Guilford. So there's just as always there, that reminder is always there. And it's on the minds of guys too. I'm talking to the dude that was with us at the LSL where Michael is rolling around in the grass. You know, soon as we're talking, you know, before we haven't please like, say, you know, I gotta tell you like it's I miss my like I miss Michael. Like, and this was a number of years now that Michael has been gone, you know, and so he gets, rightly or wrongly, right? He gets immortalized as a character as death does. But he just never is older, I never you just stay is 1920 years old. Forever.

J

James Geering 3:33:40

That element that you touched on, you have to still keep playing again. You know, as you can imagine, it's the same with the first responders. I mean, I've lost numerous friends in uniform. And every third day you show up at seven, eight in the morning, you put your gear on the rig and you do your job. That's good for healing in one respects, as far as surface level, but there's also a danger of shoving emotions down because you're kept busy with winning football games, responding to calls, whatever that arena that you exist as in how did you navigate the emotional side the trauma, you know, whether it was when you were still wearing a UF uniform, or maybe years later.

i

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The trauma how I navigated it in different way, like it just was it's a lot of like, being like, I'm not a crier. Like it's my wife. She always is like, you're completely void of emotions. But you have no emotion whatsoever. Unless it's one of like two topics and Michael's one of them. And it was it was never a thing to have like being void of emotion quote unquote, was never even like like a macho man type bullshit type thing. And certainly for Michael It just was like it was my my parents were super supportive. Just like there's gonna be times that I'm just going to burst, I'm just going to be bursting into tears and be sad. And that was a lot of that first year

and on anniversary day it's or because it's, I don't know, fucking Wednesday, and memory hits you just right. Or you get those, whatever they're called right like ghost kisses or whatever it is when like something just makes you think of them of like what you know, it's a moment where it's happened literally last week or the week before I was walking in the yard and there was like, like a seal had fallen off something that was like by our by our aboveground pool, and it was orange. And this is an orange perfect circle. And at first glance when I'm walking, it reminded me of that of the bracelet. And I haven't had it in here, right, eventually it gets gets broken and gets worn out. And so you don't have it anymore. And just it was just been and now it just makes me smile. Right? Those memories make me smile. And but those early on, it was it was just lots of just pain of like loss and music, and wanting to stay in contact with his parents, with his dad, you know, his dad, his parents were divorced. And so his dad, like it was Michael was everything. And there was a weight, there was a weight of responsibility to him, to not leave him alone, to have him be felt like that he's alone. And so certainly early it was trying to call and then you feel bad for calling. You feel bad for calling because the only reason that you call is hey, this the anniversary that your son died. Like, that's great. That's, that's a great annual phone call to have, like a reminder, like, I don't think the dad ever came back to Gainesville. That's where your son died. Like it was a place that was so much joy and so much hope is now just a place of agony. And just no interest. And, and so that's where it gets hard, because then it's wanting to keep up and do those things. But then it's also like, it's, you're you are that is you're just a reminder of the death of their son. He did come back to games where I came back when my son was born. But I think that was the last time that he came back. And so it's just it there's so many elements where you second guess what's wrong? What's right. What's wrong, keeping up? My not keeping up enough? With the family? Do I keep up is a too much not enough all spent and spent. Next thing you know, it's like shit, it's been like six years, I haven't called them in like six years. And she deal with my guilt in there as well, of those types of emotions. But it is, there's times where it just is. For me dealing with it emotionally. It is. For me, it's always has been there's not a right or wrong, I guess is what I just always come back to for that emotion. And it's, and it's okay, if I let October 12 Go by some years goes by, and I don't really I'm like, oh, today's the 14th Holy shit. Like, it's like it's not it doesn't get into a place where it doesn't ruin his memory because there's not, you know, an altar of depression once a year, because I think about them all the time when it's not October 12. And so it just is at the end of the day, like you said one of those things where it's like, you just keep going it ends up just being any other day. And, and that's kind of been a short, like, long short synopsis of kind of like how I've dealt with it over the years and kind of that that roller coaster that I've been on, as I think about Michael and then it just is memories, time. Whenever those phrases are right, like time helps it helps you heal, you need to have those pieces where for me, it's like it's not that the gap. It's not that that that wound gets better. Right? It's always there. It just is as memories, as you make more and more memories, that wound just isn't as large in comparisons like was like a wound it's in a room or whatever it is, right? It's a window in a room. It's very small. And early on, it takes up all like it's all the space on the wall. And just as we go like the room just gets bigger. Like life just gets bigger. The memories get bigger so that the window stays the same size. It's the same size. It's the same thing. So it's always there, or, you know, the idea of like, you throw a rock, a rock into the into a lake, you throw that rock into a lake is gonna make ripples, it's gonna make a huge effect, and it's gonna sink, and it will sink to the bottom and it's time will go over and those ripples will eventually settle, but that rock will always be there. And that's okay, I want it to be there. Like I want, it's that memory. I don't want it to go away. So whether it's happy memories, sad memories, whatever, it's, for me, it's like, that's what eternal life is. Right? Is memory. So it's important to me that my son is named Michael, because then it's forever is bringing that continuing that name, and then have an opportunity to share the story here, right is that it's a luxury because in immortalize that internalizes the stories. So now that story is with whoever else hears it, to where otherwise, it

would have just died with him in 2007, because then we go on and win a national championship, and then it doesn't show up. Like it just ends up being where it's, it's all but forgotten for the people that, you know, knew almost immediately.

J

James Geering 3:41:08

Exactly, with with the contacting family, I know exactly what you're talking about. And I watch people find new partners, you know, and because there's a lot of male firefighters that were lost and their, their spouse, you know, the widow, find someone else, and they're like, Okay, well, should I reach out because now they seem happy. And I think what I've heard from a lot of them is we're all there at the beginning. But then it tapers off. And so when we organically think I haven't spoken to them, pick up the phone, don't wait for an anniversary, that's when they are going to have the Facebook memory reminders and listening and I watch it my wife or boyfriend before me took his own life on the phone to her on the Clearwater Beach. And so, you know, July 29, I forgot that right? I think it is, you know, this is there's a physiological response almost every year that I watch, but it's the organic times that the other day went and visited is great. We just were on a drive and was like, let's, let's go to the graveyard, let's go sit with him. That is I think the kind of thing and the same with the families, you know, not an anniversary, but just when it actually when you get that ghost kiss in a way, you know, just pick up the phone, then hey, I was just thinking now how you doing doesn't even have to go into that conversation. Another thing that really stuck out listening to you talk, and it's a beautiful journey that we've been on, because you've talked about so much physical suffering, and this, you know, these physical behemoths that you are and you know, the the men to your left and right are. But that physical suffering doesn't prepare you for the pain, emotionally, of so many of the things that human beings go through. And obviously, you know, losing someone as close as a best friend, is a different level of pain. And so when you're going through that, whether it's a loss like that, whether it's a kind of downward spiral from a mental health side, you look at the guy in the UFC uniform in the locker room, and he's like, Well, they're all fine. The fuck is wrong with me? Why am I why am I being such a pussy? Sure. But how we look and firefighters are perfect example. You know, we show up on that scene. All those men and women that responded that day, had a stoic face, I'm sure. But that's a facade. It's our you know, go time response. But then after that, that call is going to be in all those first responders minds for the rest of their life. So having the ability to realize that yeah, I am physically strong, I am brave I am whatever. But that doesn't prepare, you can't callus the soul. This raw emotion fucking hurts, and it has to be dealt with no matter if you're an SA s, you know, operator, or you know, an NFL player. The physical strength is not, does not prepare you from emotional pain. And that is an entire separate journey that a human has to make on a soul level. That if we try and have that, you know, rub some dirt in it Boys Don't Cry bullshit and project that physicality on someone's emotions. That's how we also end up with a lot of the overdoses and suicides that we see. For sure. Yeah. So I want to just touch on something and then we'll get to what you're doing now. So we can navigate ourselves out of this conversation. There was a couple of things kind of suggested on the documentary. One of them I forget who it was now was saying that if UF wasn't there, Gainesville would cease to exist kind of thing. I saw the same kind of thing with my last place who you know, the the fire department was run owned by this theme park that could potentially make it one of the best fire departments on the planet, or what I saw was when you have people that have no understanding of what a first responder organization should be doing preparing training, except Try, it could be very, very detrimental and stories of old that I heard prior to me getting there as you had a heart attack in this theme park, they would be ordered to drag you backstage before they started doing CPR. So that's a perfect illustration. Yes. So with that, not loading the question. But you know, you have these, this

football is so powerful. In the south, you know, as we've mentioned earlier in the conversation, the city is painted, you know, orange and blue. Talk to me about the impact, if any of that maybe overreach on over protection of the players or any other area because it just it was an interesting parallel for me having worked where I work just now.



3:45:46

Well, so definitely is right. And again, if you're if you're not in the south, it really is hard to fully understand what we mean by like, football, it's like life and death. Like it was like the Florida State game, there were people that would be killed every year. Like at the game in the parking lots. I think it's ultimately what like drives to have, the Florida State game ended up like being pushed into like, the 12 o'clock spot 330 spots, because night games resulted in the death of fans all the time. So it is unreasonably real, of like life, life and death, not for us on the field. But like, if you're a fan, right, it was a bad deal. And because there's no way to get around it as an athlete, for some of these schools, we win and oh six, the basketball team wins the national championship and Oh, six, two. So we win the basketball national championship, we live in the football national championship and oh six, we win again, in a way, the amount of donor money that comes in to the school and boost your money that comes in the amount of fundraising that happens that allows the university to build dozens and dozens of buildings and upgrade academic facilities and upgrade that just the university as a whole off the backs of the athletes makes it to where this isn't just a multi million dollar industry for like the game where the coaches are being paid four or \$5 million a year or whatever, like it's, this is this is 10s of hundreds of millions of dollars on the line for the university. So it cannot be understated how you they have to protect the product on the field. And so there was this element where it we were protect we were protected in a sense where we were from very beginning taught very quickly. It is you like less than that God taught to us all the time by Team lawyers. And was because we had team lawyers conversations all the time. So I don't know what that if that's real for other people, but it was that was a regular thing for us. And it just was like, if you get pulled over for a DUI, if you get pulled over and you believe that you could test positive for a DUI, you go to jail, do not blow, do not blow into the meter refuse, ask for a lawyer right out the gate. And it was like, Well, what if we would have waited haven't done anything wrong? Ask for your lawyer. They're gonna threaten you, the cops are going to tell you whatever they're gonna tell you anything to get you to blow in the mirror, they're gonna tell you that they're going to take your blood when you get back to the station. And is I want to speak to my lawyer. It's like those are the only words that ever come out of your mouth ever. Because the truth will not set you free. And there was an element of that where it just was there was a target on our backs and so they on any athletes back because it's when you get arrested, it's not John Fairbanks has been arrested. It's another Florida Gator has been arrested tonight. And then your name comes. And that was talked to us a lot. We're just like understanding is you hurt the team when these things are happening. And but we did have lawyers. So we did have lawyers and we did have local lawyers, we had lawyers that were just with the team always that were on staff they had local lawyers that would help protect the players and help get charges dropped. So they did get talked about right is that some of these charges would get dropped or the one reporter inside of swamp kings it was the idea of with the one particular incident where Hernandez punches the guy at the swamp restaurant, and he's like, we never got a police report for that, like police forces disappeared those days. And it is it is there is a level of naivety right and if Taylor like it, what do you think they're going to do? Like get the fuck out of here like the idea of like this is not in there is an element where it's just like it's this is what runs the town, this is how the university makes real money. So there is this element of looking the other way that pulls in politics. And there is again, like I talked about earlier, like there's a razor's edge. And this was



where as a player, you had to be careful. So like be James is is allows himself to like go in the fact that he bought bought weed from a cop, right from under a cover cop and gets popped and he's sitting in jail. And he's not worried about anything other than who, who's the only person he was worried about. Was Meyer. He's like, all I could think about was my mom was it wasn't a it was just, I'm worried that Coach Meyer is going to kick me off the team because it was being the worst case scenario is that you get kicked off the team. The second worst scenario is that you die. Like it just was like it was that was that was so disparate. That's so real him breaking that down that way. And so it just is okay, that is real. That's a real emotion. And the reason why I think that that's real, too is at that time, B James had the potential to be like a baller and he ends up being I think, Brandon's in the Florida Hall of Fame. Right as a kick returner as as an athlete. And, but at that time, I don't think that it's a guarantee that he's going to be saved. And that's where it is, is that razor's edge is an athlete, because Meyer says a phrase in the documentary goes, brand, James is not a bad guy. It's like that phrase, a bad guy is weighted, that's a weighted phrase that if you're just a casual listener, you may not catch exactly what that means in our world at that time. Are you a bad guy? Like, do you mean, is it a mistake? Or is it something that can't be fixed? Because you're a bad guy? And the phrase bad guy is subjective. And the reality, the truth of it is, right, is that that subjectivity of that word bad guy comes down to are you going to be able to produce? Can you produce on the field? Did you test positive for a drug test? Are you getting kicked off the team? Or are you in a boot on Saturday? Because you sprained your ankle, and you're technically serving a suspension that week. Because Florida can drug test their own athletes has been a drug tested all the fucking time just moves horrible. You have to get up and like pull forever early. And you had to go and get a piss into a bottle with someone watching you. It's like first thing in the morning, it's so early that you just get up at like literally the last second so you can make the appointment. So there's plenty of stories of like, punishing the drug testers, because like, it's early guys, like there's a BM that's going to happen here. And either you're gonna be in audience for it, and I'll give you your sample or not. And they're just wonderful stories of linemen that were so furious to have to give piss samples for these drug tests to check a box. This is like, I'm gonna clear out this bathroom. So just you and I are about to go on a ride together, and I promise you'll get your you're gonna get a urine sample. But it was, but if you pop positive that that was an internal drug test. And smartly for the team. It was like we need to be internally drug testing, because NCAA will come once or twice a year. If you pop positive that there's no say I can't help you. And it was there were lots of guys that they tested positive. So can but like Didn't somebody else like test positive too. And he's like, it's like, yeah, but this guy's a bad guy. He's like, it's the guys guys. And he's not a producer. And so you saw a lot of players, you lost a lot of players, players got to kick off team, or they had to transfer out to other teams. Because they were a bad guy, they had a problem. You know, it was we had a player a member either my first and second year, he got stabbed by his girlfriend, he got kicked off the team. He got kicked off the team because he was stabbed. And it was because I'm sure I'm sure at some point, you probably hit her when he was stabbed or whatever. And we had a rule, right? You can't hit a woman that was that was like Meyer had some some core values where it just was, you know, no drugs. And you can put your hands on a woman if you put your hands on a woman like you're off. And and that was real. And that was what that was one story that Meyer tells right? Avery Atkins had put his hands on a female and that's what got him kicked off the team. And then ultimately, he dies of a dui, dui dies of an overdose of a year or two later. But those types of elements. So then b James does get saved he has to earn his way back and they did they tortured the shit out of him.

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James Geering 3:54:50

And they like and it was just a bag of weed. So it's funny because it wouldn't even be in the crime



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would have been nothing, right? Absolutely. It was it was it was It was, yeah, like just for himself, you know what I mean? Like just for themselves to be able to smoke a little bit. Anyway. So that was that situation, but that that example was if you got if you got into trouble. It was were you worth the effort? And if you were you got saved. And if you weren't, then you didn't. And there were guys that made lots and lots of mistakes because we've called out before it's the 17 1819 years old, right? Cam Newton steals a laptop. Cam Newton steals a laptop because cameras with us comes in and oh seven and then oh seven class, he steals a laptop because he's a young kid, and he's making mistakes or whatever. And he would have been a guy that got saved. The problem is he threw the laptop out the window, essentially, at the feet of the police that he was on the phone with telling him that he didn't have the laptop. And the cops were just literally sitting downstairs and like landed on the hood of their car kind of thing. And it was like, oh, we can't save you. Like this is over. Like it's over now. And so there were elements were just you couldn't help them. And I don't want I don't think and I truly believe this across the gamut for lots and lots of things is that it's these are young, they're young dudes, these young kids like it just is I don't want