

Episode 50 | Creating Hope and Possibility Through Sports

Ladies and gentlemen welcome to this episode of the Players Nil podcast our nil playbook supporting student athletes families coaches and interested parties in this crazy world of meme image and likeness My guest today the executive vice president at the Sports philanthropy Network is one of her many many titles including mom of eight including great social activists my guest my new friend becoming better friends Kayla Brad Kayla welcome to the podcast Thanks Mark I appreciate you bringing me on I love the work you're doing to create whole and complete athletes Well thank you very much I think uh you just mentioned in our pre cha here about how connected we have seemed to have been for some time And um we have two principles that the players and I all want to talk about both of them because they apply to you directly The first principle came from my father and that is how do you use athletics to better your life And people always say well I don't you know I wasn't a great athlete I'm not a great athlete I'm not a divisional athlete No no no no no no no How do you use athletics your interest your passion your commitment your friendships to better your life So I want to talk about Caleb Brad Young growing up in Wisconsin I love your accent What was your original interest in sports What was the connection Who did you follow Who were you with Was it your parents brothers sisters grandma grandpa Tell us the story All right So who did I like Raleigh Fingers Um I I was in second grade during the Milwaukee Brewers World Series and he was my first crush for the mustache Um But yeah Mark I grew up in poverty and when I say in poverty like if I say we didn't uh have a car sometimes we didn't have a phone or TV people will shake their head Yes And they get it But I say no you don't understand We were so poor My mom didn't even have a driver's license that resonates with people So when I was at whatever age you are when you get the registration for sports and for band I was on fire and the teacher hands me the softball registration I said oh no no no I think you gave me the wrong one I'm gonna play baseball like the Brewers and she said Kayla um baseball is for boys You need softball And I was like well that's dumb And then you know I was gonna play the Alto sax and I was gonna be like my aunt Debbie and just be awesome And the alto sax and I got home and I was so excited Mark and I give my mom the permission slip and she just looks at it and she says money doesn't grow on

trees That stuff is for rich kids You're not doing that My heart sank It was the first time in my life and I don't know how old you are when you get that stuff Like what 9 10 years old 3rd 4th grade And I realized like oh sports and band is for rich kids I'm not playing sports I'm not playing band It's just not what poor kids get to do So I went back to school the next day and I turned in my permission slips I had it all signed out I had it signed up before I gave it to my mom And my teacher said Kayla this is great but you need your mom's permission And I said yeah well money doesn't grow on trees and I just started crying Mark Iii I know it sounds funny but I just started bawling I was just like there's nothing I can do Right Like money doesn't grow on trees I'm a little kid I'm not getting money I don't know who Mark but somebody I I'm 50 years old I do not know Somebody paid my registration that fees for me to play softball I never got to play band but I got to play softball Uh on my way to my first practice I'm riding my bike I find a quarter on the sidewalk I stop I pick it up I go to a garage sale There's an old perfectly weathered rawlings left-handed glove and the price tag on it said 25 cents I went to my first practice with the glove and I I played third base in left field That wasn't that good But I remember and I can only say it my way just being this little girl on an August afternoon saying God if you're real when I grow up can you help me do this for other people That's that's my purpose creating hope and possibility through sports for the people who need it most whatever that looks like Well that leads me to the second pillar of our company First is how to use athletics to better your life which we just described and you have and that's an unbelievable story It's not a story that I've heard before So ladies and gentlemen this was not pre planned It's amazing It touches me I have a little tingle in my voice right now But the second principle is how do you use athletics to better the lives of the people around you And um I don't know of anyone in my circle that does it better than you So tell me what your reaction is to that statement Um So for me it it starts with the story I just told you and it continues that hope and possibility I'm the first person in my family to have a college degree And when I say we were poor and my mom didn't have a license I paid somebody to drive me to college and for me to go to college I had to work four jobs So I worked every job I I specifically I applied to one college only one It was a private college It was very expensive and it's where the Green Bay Packers had training camp because I wanted to do sports media in a time when girls weren't allowed to do that I was told you need to be a teacher or a nurse because you're a girl Ok That that far back So I worked every job that the Green Bay Packers were

at I was their bartender their caterer I worked in the green room the lunchroom I washed their dishes I was the girl saying hello Mr Gilbert Brown Would you like an extra scoop of turkey Tetris And the Green Bay Packers just loved on me and and you talk about creating hope and possibility for others That's what they did for me It was Reggie White saying Kayla you get up this morning and pray you keep your focus on God and he'll keep his focus on you It was Gilbert Brown academic all American Jay Hawk like focus on your studies It was Santana Dotson Get outside and throw a frisbee with us Stop working We see it working all the time but it was Leroy Bar uh Leroy Butler who said to me girl fix your face I said I don't know what that means And he said it means stop looking down at your shoes like you're ashamed We see how hard you work You work all these jobs you are smart you're talented you're hard working you have everything it takes to be a success be proud of yourself So mark the crazy thing that happens in life is when we start believing in other people and we create hope and possibility in their lives sooner or later just maybe they'll start to believe in the things that we see in them And it was those Green Bay Packers who helped me to believe in myself this little girl in poverty from a town of 8000 people who grew up physically sexually and emotionally abused to say you see something in me maybe just maybe I can start to see it in myself and then maybe if I can see it in myself maybe I can help other people see it in themselves too And for me sports is the tool to do that It's about literally creating stronger healthier and more inclusive communities using sports as the tool If that makes sense Now it makes total sense You're preaching to the choir here literally and figuratively Um I told you I had a connection to your college which is Saint Norbert's because in the fall of 1978 I played football against Saint Norbert's in Green Bay Wisconsin And I and I remember as a freshman traveling from Hillsdale College in Michigan by bus all the way up to Green Bay We got out and we saw the green and the yellow colors and we thought we were playing the Packers We weren't sure who we were playing because they have the same colors So that was my connection to Saint nor I played football on that field many years ago I I love it and I'll give you a fun fact that will echo that for all of your listeners who just need one fun fact today the Green Bay Packers do not have a cheerleading team So when I was in college the Saint Norbert cheerleaders were the Green Bay Packer cheerleaders Hence the green and gold colors There you go There you go Great great tidbits So you work your way through college your journey you have all of this inspirational advice and guidance and leadership and

examples you know Reggie White I don't know if there's a greater man in the history of the NFL And so now you begin your career your life journey tell us a little bit about some of the earning points in your life from a professional standpoint Now you know about what brought you to the sports philanthropy network Yeah So I love it I get bored easily So sports is is great for people like me Um I didn't get di and let's normalize some of this stuff I didn't get diagnosed with dyslexia until I was in college I didn't get diagnosed with AD D A DH D until I was in my forties I had eight concussions dealt with a lot of of the same issues that professional athletes deal with with multiple concussions some of that volatile emotions the depression the migraines the seizures all of those things I dealt with Right So first of all let's normalize that Second of all when I started my career I wanted nothing more than to be a mom So for you guys looking at my screen mom to eight Children that is my greatest calling And I always started businesses that would allow me to stay at home or bring my kids with me to work So when my kids were very small I owned a cleaning company a home health care company things like that Always I'd write business plans or I'd take great nonfiction books and I'd write them down into two cups of coffee Summaries always creating things for myself to help others And when I made my entrance into corporate America my oldest daughter was starting eighth grade and I um I wanted to find a job that would help me help other people be unstoppable to create hope and possibility So I was offered a job as a GM of a Starbucks which would make a lot of sense because coffee but I took a job getting my foot in the door as a cleaner of a fitness center And I knew if I just got my foot in the door I'd get promoted Uh within three years I had five or six promotions to come out of the glass ceiling in corporate America managing 17 to 25,000 member fitness centers um that were affordable and really great amenities like salt water swimming pools and saunas and hot tubs and things like that Uh Cairo things like that So hit the glass ceiling felt called to pivot and I'll call it a right foot pivot not a left foot foot pivot to purpose and knew I couldn't go any further Um taught two years at a Milwaukee public school choice school as we launched sports philanthropy network to get it to where we needed it to be so that I could make it my full time passion and that that's where I am and I have no greater joy than working around my Children at home working with professional athletes and influencers and business executives and sports nonprofits and guys like you I tell people all the time I got the best job in the world Well you know what they say If it's that much fun it's really not work So I guess

that makes it true Right Yeah So you know congratulations on all that And I don't need to say congratulations you you congratulate yourself with your success and the people that you've touched we are connected Uh because I have joined the Sports Philanthropy Network I've recently relocated to Philadelphia and I'm gonna be part of that chapter and I'm looking forward to doing that because it's part of the principles of what we do And although it's not my sole purpose my purpose is to help athletes using nil pillar four In our guidance is community service and philanthropy Tell me about the philanthropy sports philanthropy network How does it work Where can people learn more about it Tell us about everything that you want people to know Well thank you so much for for giving me a little space to do that because the work we do is vital Um I'll use PJ flack for any of you Minnesota fans and for those of you who don't please don't push pop right now but roll the boat We are building out 30 chapters in the nation's biggest cities to roll the boat on stronger healthier and more inclusive communities through sports So to do that we're building out leadership councils mark as you know uh to support and grow those chapters because we believe if you can get 30 of the nation's biggest cities fixing the problems that exist in their local communities and you can do that at the same time across the nation It's gonna build some momentum I I it's going to take everybody rowing the boat together to really create the traction that we need to roll that roll that boat and get it moving So um for us it's building stronger healthier and more inclusive communities through sports Whether that's with focus on the military de I stem education financial literacy mental health all of the issues issues that we face in our communities and they're different for every community right Like the needs in Philly are different in Milwaukee and Milwaukee Fun Facts 25% of all black men are currently incarcerated 25% of all black men in Milwaukee are currently incarcerated and less than 25% of our adults all adults have a college degree That's why I'm in Milwaukee The needs in Philly are different Needs of L A are different than the needs of New York City Chicago Kansas city et cetera When we work together and solve our local challenges collectively we're gonna make it We're gonna for the first time I think in our nation's history uh I would challenge people to you know to debate me on that but for the first time we're really gonna create hope and possibility by working together So sports philanthropy network dot org sports philanthropy network dot org or reach out to mark or reach out to me I was just gonna ask where can they find you Uh I I wanna I wanna say thank you for sharing your life's journey uh with us it makes it personalized

right And part of what we teach uh young people is to create a network and to create a follow and you have to tell a story you have to be authentic right And of course it helps to have some realistic resonating moments which you shared with us today But I think sports philanthropy is one of the next horizons that we're going to accomplish together because athletes hold such a special place in our heart You know the little Kayla Brad or your maiden name whatever it was when you were young and going to Saint Orbits and looking up at those big football players I've seen some of your pictures on social media Kayla you're never gonna play defensive line for the Green Bay Packers but it doesn't mean that you can't use that passion You can't use those connections to change lives right And I believe we can change thousands of athletes' lives You're gonna change thousands of people's lives maybe millions and using athletics is a great way to do it I tell people all the time you can use math science food travel fashion technology for you with sports for me with support And I just want to say congratulations to you and your partner Roy on building the sports philanthropy network We're proud to be part of it You're an awesome leader You do a great job I wanna say Thank you Thank you so much Mark I'm honored just to be on your show I appreciate the work you're doing to partner with us Great Have a wonderful day Thank you