



STILL COMPETING, STILL WINNING: A CONVERSATION WITH TOM BRADY AND SHAQUILLE O'NEAL

Jim Gray 01:07

Thank you all for joining us this afternoon. Great to be back at the Milken Conference. I've been here for every one of them. But I want to ask all of you just one question before we start. How many people in this room, by show of raising your hands, have had your lives changed because of your association with Mike Milken? Mike Milken, thank you so much for having us. We honor you, we appreciate you, and we love you. Thank you, Mike. So, we're going to talk about some sports, we're going to talk about business and sports, and we're going to talk about guys who have made the leap from sports, being great, into business. Yes, shoot. Go ahead, Shaq.

Shaquille O'Neal 01:53

No Charles Barkley questions. Ever. Okay? Thank you.

Jim Gray 01:59

Tell everybody what you always say to me, first thing you see me.

Shaquille O'Neal 02:02

I'm ready to die, Jim.

Jim Gray 02:05

What do you mean you're ready to die? Spinal.

Shaquille O'Neal 02:10

Tell them where that came from, though.

Jim Gray 02:11

Came from a Mike Tyson interview that I did many, many years ago, and in the middle of the post-fight interview, he said, "I'm ready to die." And I said, "What do you mean, 'I'm ready to die?'" So, the next day, I go do a Lakers game with Shaq and Phil Jackson and Kobe and the whole gang, and Shaq comes on the air with me, and they just win a huge game, and the first answer to the question is, "I'm ready to die." So, ever since then, that's the first thing he says to me. So, love Shaq. I'm honored to have my good buddy, dear friend, a man I truly, truly love—he's changed my life as well. He's been my partner for a couple of decades. It's Tom Brady. We own the Hall of Excellence together at the Fontainebleau Hotel, and he's been with me on the radio for 20-plus years now. And let's go. So, Tommy, great seeing you, pal. He's up and down in that airplane more than I go up and down in my staircase.

Tom Brady 03:04

Don't we all. Great to be with you guys, and this is my second time being up here on a panel, and first with some of the great guys that I love hanging with. And, obviously, for a lot of people that come enjoy a day like this—and I know the next few days are coming up, and it's been a long time since Mike put this all together—but it's conferences like this and sharing knowledge and shared experience is what this world's all about. And, think for us to have the opportunity to come back and give back to other people some of the knowledge that we have. So many people up on these panels have so much unique insight into this world, do so many great things in this world, and then you take the things you learn, and you take it back to where you live, where you work, the people you hang with, and you spread the knowledge. So, it's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to do that with you guys today.

Jim Gray 03:51

Tom has thrown, literally, we counted it up—I asked Kobe Bryant one day, "How many free throws did you shoot?" And, he didn't just give me an answer, he came back three days later and he said, "I practiced and

shot in games 1,208,000 free throws." How many passes have you thrown, and how many interviews have we done?

Tom Brady 04:11

Well, less interviews than passes. I certainly enjoyed throwing passes, sometimes more than some of the interviews you give me. Because Jim would always find a way to make me slightly uncomfortable, but I always enjoyed all those. One great thing I always heard about practice was—someone said it, I didn't shoot, or I don't know what the reference was, I'll put it in football terms—I didn't throw the passes until I was sure I was going to make it. I threw it until I was sure that I wasn't going to miss it. And, I think that practice, time after time, and unconsciously getting good through repetition of what you're doing, was what the sport was all about. That's why we're sitting here today, because—Shaq had this insatiable ability and mindset to compete at the highest level against the very best. And, when you're blessed like we've been able to find something that we love, this true obsession with a sport, you want to go out there and you want to perform at your highest for as long as you can. It's a great thrill to do it, and now as you transition to other parts in life, you want to surround yourself with other like-minded people who have had that same type of growth mindset in their lives.

Jim Gray 05:17

The other two gentlemen up here are very highly accomplished folks in business. This is Jamie Salter, ABG, Sports Illustrated, Graceland, obviously very involved with Shaquille O'Neal and a number of athletes, and Mike Ferro from eMed, Merrick Ventures chairman. Tom is a partner in eMed, and so we're going to have them speak to us as well. You can have the pick, Jamie, of anybody you want to work with. There's not a single guy who you haven't dealt with in sports. What attracted you to Shaquille, and what's the criteria for ABG to want to be involved?

Jamie Salter 05:53

Well, the first thing, they have to be bigger than me, so they have to pass that test first. And of course—

Tom Brady 06:02

At what age—like four years old or five years old—does Shaq pass you?

Jamie Salter 06:06

But, what we really look for is someone that is global and, more importantly, that their family values and work ethic values are incredibly important. And, obviously, with Tom and Shaq, they have both those

qualities. Because you got to remember, what you're doing is you're buying 50 percent of their name, their image, their likeness. Not for 10 minutes, you're buying it forever. It's just like a marriage, right? You get married forever, and you've got to make sure that this is going to last forever, and you've got to make sure that they're going to stay out of trouble forever. Because both those are incredibly important in a relationship, like we're doing, obviously, on the media and entertainment side. And I can tell you that Shaq, we've been together now 11 years, and I can honestly say he's the greatest partner I've ever had. And we've built this incredible company together, and we wouldn't be where we are today at—authentic—without Shaq. And Tom, I can honestly say, he's unbelievable. We haven't been able to land the plane there yet. But we're getting closer.

Tom Brady 07:18

I'm a tough date. I'm a very tough date.

Jim Gray 07:19

You know what they would say about Tom in Georgia? That's a tough dog to keep underneath the porch. But I want to say something about Shaq. I have tremendous respect and admiration because this is a man who has thousands of acts of kindness and wants no acknowledgement or attribution, and I've become aware of one that I'm not going to disclose—that's his business—but it touches my heart in such a way that I have chills just saying it. So, God bless you, because what you do for people is remarkable.

[Applause]

Jamie Salter 08:02

That was really nice.

Shaquille O'Neal 08:03

Thank you.

Jim Gray 08:08

Hello? Where did you get that kindness from? I knew your dad, and I knew how he raised you, and I know the respect that you had for him, but he could be tough.

Shaquille O'Neal 08:20

My father was a drill sergeant, but he always told me to honor people, treat people with kindness, treat people that are less fortunate, make sure you can give them things, especially things that you don't need. One of my favorite stories is one day my father got some extra cash from working, so he says, "Big man," because he used to call me big man, "you want to go to a restaurant and get something to eat?" I was like, "sure." But keep in mind when I say restaurant, it's not a five-star restaurant, it's not a sit-down restaurant, it's White Castle. You guys familiar with White Castle? So, he gets five double cheese. I get five double cheese. That's 10. And on the way home, we see a guy—the sign says, "Homeless vet will work for food." So, my father snatches three burgers out of my hand, and he gives it to the guy. And, I asked him, I said, "Why'd you give the guy my food?" He said, "Because this gentleman needed them more." And then he ended it by saying, "If you ever become big times, I know you have a lot of dreams, aspirations, make sure you always look out for the little man." So, that's where it comes from. For me, it's what I was taught.

Jim Gray 09:32

Michael, let's bring you in. What was the impetus to say, "You know what? I want Tom Brady." He represents health. Obviously, he wrote the book, and he has the maniacal wherewithal that he has followed and the discipline to follow it, and we have all become familiar with the TB12 method, through the course of his career and longevity and what he was able to accomplish with the help of numerous others, including Alex Guerrero and Neal ElAttrache and great coach in Bill Belichick and so forth. But, what was it that you saw in the post-career that you said, "I made this determination. He has to be with me."?

Michael Ferro 10:11

Well, that he kept saying "no" to Jamie was very exciting. But, in reality, I'm a lifelong Chicago Bears fan, and the only person in our family that we'd root for besides the Chicago Bears was Tom Brady. We didn't root for the Patriots. We rooted for Tom Brady. So, I was there when Tom won his first Super Bowl, just in the stands watching that in 2002, and still remember when they kicked the field goal. I was on the bus going to the Super Bowl. I remember everybody—they were playing the Rams—everybody's like, "God, we hope these guys make it at least competitive." Right? It was a foregone conclusion. But I got to sit there and didn't know I was witnessing history. Then years go by—became a lifelong Tom Brady fan—I meet Tom. We both go to Miami for different reasons. Mine, to go help solve the COVID issues for the country and build testing systems. Tom to go play football. And, while we're there, we get to meet, and we start building a little bit of a relationship, and then Tom takes me into his closet. Okay, it's not like that by the way. But we went to show me all of his paraphernalia. But the thing that Tom showed me—when we were getting to know each other, is—he showed me the notes he took for each game, and these weren't just notes, he would have all the notes of how he would run plays he would run against the team if they got into overtime. I am not kidding you. Like, copious amount of notes. And then we were on another flight together to Saudi Arabia, and Tom was getting ready to be a broadcaster, and for the whole time on the flight, Tom was just studying. Notes after notes after—like I've never seen it. Other people who act like

that is Mike Milken and Ken Griffin, two other guys I've spent a lot of time around, and you're like we need to work. Besides the wellness, the type of work and effort, the way you become the GOAT, like Tom and Shaq, is you've got to put the time in. I mean—but talking about—Tom is the GOAT, but Shaq, I just wanted to shout out, my family and I are friends with Shaq's son, Myles, and I have to tell you, his son, you would not know he's Shaquille O'Neal's son. Shaq, every time we see him out, every time in public—he's a DJ in Miami. Shout out. Hire Myles O'Neal. He's a great DJ. Anybody here from Miami? But congratulations, you did a great job Shaq. Thank you.

Tom Brady 12:36

Can I say something as a follow-up? I just think it's important, for Shaq and myself, speaking for myself, but—it's very intimidating. You're a professional athlete, and you play for a period of years, and it's truly your first love. You love sports. You love the competition. And, through elementary school, high school, and then ultimately college, we're committed to being a great athlete, and it's pretty daunting for—very fortunate that I was, and Shaq played 19 years, I played 23—to live your dream and have a career that allows you so much opportunity. And then all of a sudden—there's not many athletes that are as fortunate as Shaq and I. We're like the 1 percent of 1 percent of athletes. So, many guys last two years or three years after basically studying to be an athlete through high school and through college. Well, Shaq and I had these opportunities, and, by the grace of God, a lot of people came into our lives, and—Jamie, with Shaq, over the last 11 years, Jim, you came into my life, Michael, you came into my life—and I think what a blessing to have people who are so talented in other areas of life to come together and create a partnership to do things above and beyond what you ever could imagine. That's true teamwork, and that's what it's all about. I love being a teammate. I love doing my job. I love being in a role where I can bring awareness to certain things that I really believe in. And Michael created something through Global Population Health that I wanted to be a part of, and I was a part of. My journey in sports was all because I took care of my body. For 23 years, I was so proactive about everything I ate, everything I drank, the treatments I got, when I worked out, when my rest periods were. And I realized that not a lot of other people could attack their physical wellbeing in the same way that I did as an athlete, because they just didn't have the time. You guys, you work every day. You sit in a desk. You're traveling on airplanes, and that's tiring because you don't have as much time to commit. But with the opportunity that Michael presented in front of me, this is a great way to go out and reach people—how to make people healthier, how to help employers cut their health care costs. So, there's a much bigger purpose to all of it, and, I think through my training of sports, my training of my body, created a really unique partnership that we've been able to share.

Jim Gray 14:49

What do you do to work out these days, both of you? Shaq, what do you do?

Jamie Salter 14:51

Don't ask me that question.

Shaquille O'Neal 14:58

I'm trying to be as sexy as Tom, so—I mean, we've been friends for years, but I can't stop looking at him. *[Laughter]* He's—so I try to work out three to four times a week, but I admit I don't have the championship discipline. I'm not supposed to be eating burgers and club sandwiches and all that stuff, but every now and then—I just miss it so much, I just do it. My weight is down. I am looking better, but—

Jim Gray 15:33

But you told us last year, or two years ago, when you came on with Tom and us, me on the radio show, you said you were over 400 pounds.

Shaquille O'Neal 15:39

I was. I was fatter than Charles Barkley, and that's when—and that's when I decided I need to make a change. I looked at his belly, and I looked at my belly, and I didn't like what I saw, and I was like, "I have to make a change." But I—

Jim Gray 15:54

That was the only motivation you needed?

Shaquille O'Neal 15:56

Yeah—so I try to work out three to five times a week. And I'm glad people like Tom are in my life because I've always aspired to be the greatest, aspired to be great. Tom mentioned opportunities. It's always been unfortunate—I don't know what it is for the NFL, but for the NBA—five years after retirement, 70 percent of the athletes have nothing, no income coming in, and—my father drilled this in my head, and he drilled it, and he drilled it, and at first I didn't understand it, but he gave me one statement. He said, "Don't lose your mother's house." And with the money that I made, I was able to buy my mother her first house. And before he passed away, he said, "Don't lose your mother's house." And I knew that if I was going to be on the other side like the other athletes, I could possibly lose my mother's house. So, I really started focusing on business. I started reading a lot, and I came across a quote from General Dwight Eisenhower, "The greatest leaders are the ones that hire people that are smarter than you." And then I met Jamie. I met Jamie by accident because I don't know about some of you, but jealousy motivates me—

Jim Gray 17:10

Really?

Shaquille O'Neal 17:11

Yes, towards it—

Jim Gray 17:12

Why?

Shaquille O'Neal 17:12

I don't know why. Let me tell you why.

Jamie Salter 17:14

If you had passed by me, you wouldn't have seen me.

Shaquille O'Neal 17:15

No. I'm going to tell you why, because before I became this great athlete, I was not a great athlete, and I was told, "You're not going to be a great athlete." So, it just always kept motivating me. So, the last three years of my career, when I wasn't feeling like Shaq, me and my son, who's here, we were walking on Hollywood Boulevard, and I seen about 50 people walking around in Elvis shirts. So, now I get pissed off. I'm like, "Elvis has been passed away for a long time. How the hell is he still making money?" So, it made me do my research, and then I came across Jamie, and I met with Jamie. Like he said, he's a family bunch, and I told him, I said, "Jamie, I want to live forever." And Jamie was familiar with the work that I'd done. My business was 100 percent endorsements. Now it's 50 percent endorsement, 50 percent licensing. And then I told Jamie, I said, "Jamie, I'm rich. You're going to write me a lot of check. I want to invest this check in your company because I want to be part of a winning team." And Jamie accepted, and I'm glad he accepted, because I think it was one of the best decisions of my life, and it all stemmed from me not losing my mother's house. And I'm only here to create relationships and just have fun. I got my youngest son, who's about to graduate. Stand up. *[Applause]* This is Shaqir O'Neal. They were mad at me for years because I made the public statement that I'm rich, you're not rich.

Jamie Salter 18:46

Don't worry, you're doing just fine, okay?

Shaquille O'Neal 18:48

Yes. I said, "I'm rich, and I—"

Jamie Salter 18:50

I got you.

Shaquille O'Neal 18:50

So, he asked me today, he said, "How do you do what you do?" And I said, "You know what? Go to Nordstrom's, get a suit, and I want you to follow me." So, I'm glad he's here to experience Tom, to experience all you great leaders, because I wouldn't be able to do it without you guys, and I appreciate you guys shaking my hand and just giving me knowledge. And I appreciate you for being so damn hot.

Jim Gray 19:14

You know, my college roommate wrote this about Tom Brady. His name was Rick Reilly. He's one of the great writers ever.

Tom Brady 19:20

No, please don't tell that, for God's sakes. I'm embarrassed.

Jim Gray 19:22

Don't be embarrassed. He brought it up.

Tom Brady 19:23

Well, listen, one's enough.

Jim Gray 19:28

Are you asking to move on?

Tom Brady 19:30

Do it. Go for it. Go ahead. Frannie said yes, his wife, so—

Jim Gray 19:35

Men want to be like him. Women want to be with him.

Tom Brady 19:39

Yeah, now I'm really uncomfortable.

Jim Gray 19:44

Tom, the question was about your workout schedule. We found out about Shaq's. How about yours?

Tom Brady 19:49

I just felt like the quality of my life depends on how active I am and how much I'm moving and traveling. So, I'm pretty OCD with my workouts, and I do a lot of it. I do a lot of swimming and still throw the football a little bit. I had a flag football game about a month ago here in Los Angeles. Had a lot of fun doing that. But, yeah, just very active. And physically, Shaq talks about discipline, and he didn't have the championship discipline. There's part of that, and I'm not seven foot three—and there's something Shaq was really born with and blessed with, and he has incredible traits as an athlete, as an entrepreneur. Jamie, the same way. Michael, the same way. I wish I could take credit for being disciplined or hard-working. I think I was born with that. I really do. I think that was part of my DNA. I think my mom and my dad gave me that. So, I can honor them by fulfilling that every single day by waking up and making the right decision. But my dad got up and walked out of the house every morning at six a.m. to try to make a living for our family, and my mom worked effortlessly to try to maintain the house for her kids that she loved. So, I think that was just something I was blessed with. I remember being in fourth or fifth grade, and I had an older sister, Maureen, who was a great college softball player, All-American at Fresno State, and she wanted to go to college ultimately to play softball. She was a tremendous softball player in the state of California, and she would get up and go to the gym with my dad. My dad would take her. She was a freshman in high school. And I was getting up at five thirty in the morning, five in the morning to go to the gym when I was in fourth and fifth grade. So again, you could say, "Oh, that's unbelievable, Tom. How do you do that?" I'm like, "I don't

know why I did it. It just felt better than sleeping in." So, it wasn't much of a sacrifice because I just loved doing it, and that has really carried over the course of my career—and very fortunate and a blessing because as we realize, discipline, hard work, all those things really do pay off over a period of time. And when I thought that, maybe physically I was a little bit delayed over the course of my career, I wasn't quite the five-star recruit coming out of high school, and I wasn't some electric college player that was wowing the pro scouts, and then I got drafted by the Patriots as 199th pick—there was a lot of people that never thought that I could have the type of career that I had, but because of my hard work and because of the discipline that were instilled in me by my parents, those traits were sustainable over a period of time. Just like everyone who's sitting in this audience, you have all these amazing values that mean a lot to you, that allow you to go out there every day to try to be your very best self.

Jim Gray 22:33

Michael, let me ask you, nobody in my life—and I've been lucky to travel with all these guys, Kobe, Dr. Jay, Muhammad Ali for many years, and partners with Tom—nobody takes criticism better than Tom and accepts praise and accentuates it better than Tom. So, I'm wondering, how do you coach somebody like this? Because the transition from sports to business is very, very different.

Michael Ferro 23:05

We were just discussing this in the room earlier, and the exact words I said is, "We let Tom coach us." We don't coach Tom. The toughest person on Tom is Tom. And, so, Tom is constantly looking to be coached all the time. We actually let Tom come to us because Tom's constantly—like I said, when I watched him, it was his work ethic, and it's the same way right now. Tom is meeting with CEOs. He wants to know how he can get better, what can he change. He wants to be in the room for the pitches to hear what we're doing. He wants to understand nuances and peptides and how things work. He wants to meet with the doctors. And, so, a lot of times we're waiting—our CEO's in the audience, Linda Yaccarino is over there I see her. And Tom coaches Linda a little bit, too. So, Tom is coaching us, and Linda coaches Tom back. But Tom is what everybody wants to have as a player and a coach. He constantly, constantly wants the feedback.

Jim Gray 24:10

Jamie, same question of you with Shaq. How do you coach somebody who's been coached by—

Jamie Salter 24:15

I mean—

Jim Gray 24:15

—Phil Jackson and has been just so prolific in Hall of Fame and the most dominant big man ever?

Jamie Salter 24:23

So, Shaq's got a new idea—virtually every day I get an email or a text about a new idea. He puts my four children that are somewhere out in the audience that have helped me build this incredible company—but what I can tell you is he's got these great ideas. He calls me up one day and he says, "I want to buy Reebok." And I say, "Shaq, you can't afford to buy Reebok." He says, "Yeah, we can." I said, "No, no, it's going to cost a lot of money, and I'm not sure they're really willing to sell it." But every single day, he's got a great new idea, and I got to tell you that that's the entrepreneurship that is in him. But the most important thing is if we say to him, "Shaq, we need to put that in the parking lot," he actually says okay, and he leaves it alone till the next day. And then he calls back the next day and says, "Have you thought about buying Reebok?" I go, "Shaq, that's still got to go in the parking lot." So, he never really gives up, but he is definitely somebody that does take "no" sometimes as the answer, which for anyone that is like Shaq or Tom Brady, "no" is a hard word. But he's a professional, and I think that's because he's been coached so well for so many years that—he does understand—when somebody actually tells him what to do, he actually does do it.

Jim Gray 25:57

How do you take that coaching and that "no" these days, Shaq?

Shaquille O'Neal 26:01

I know who Jamie is. I know who he was. He's one of the best in the business. A young lady—

Jamie Salter 26:08

"No" is spelled a different way.

Shaquille O'Neal 26:10

Say what? What is that? The young lady from CNBC asked us do we have arguments, and the answer is "no", we have respectable conversations. And what I love about Jamie is he also has a lot of crazy ideas. I called him one day and I said, "Jamie, I want to do a gummy bear." So, he says, "Well, what do you want to do with the gummy bears?" I said, "I want to put my face on them." And he said, "Okay, what do you want to call it?" I said, "I want to call it SHAQ-A-LICIOUS." And he says, "Okay."

Jamie Salter 26:43

True story.

Shaquille O'Neal 26:44

He made the call to Hershey. Now we have the number one candy at Hershey. So, I'm all over the place, he's all over the place, his boys' all over the place, but we have respectable, heated conversations, and there's never disrespect, and that's what you need. We're not going to always agree on everything. I know he's the CEO, I know he's the founder, but it's good to have that type of conversation. Kobe and I had the same type of conversation, and it helped us get three championships in a row, and I would never change it.

Jim Gray 27:13

What's your perspective now on Kobe? The passage of time—you guys were the greatest duo to ever play, and then his unfortunate passing.

Shaquille O'Neal 27:26

My only—

Jim Gray 27:26

And the relationship had healed during that time.

Shaquille O'Neal 27:29

My only—

Jim Gray 27:29

But now that you reflect, what is it?

Shaquille O'Neal 27:31

My only perspective now is we've all had past people in our relationship. If you haven't talked to an old friend or an old colleague, send them a text. Old girlfriend, old male friend, old enemy, just send them a text. Tell them you love them, tell them you miss them, say, "Hey, let's get together." I wish we would've communicated more. Our relationship was big brother, little brother. Everything I did was planned. I knew I had a wild pit bull at my control, and I would do things just to tick him off because I needed him to do the same thing that I was doing for us to win. But, when he passed away, it was very upsetting to me that we never had any communication. So, my message to you is an old friend, an old relative, a mother or father, shoot them a text. I know we're all working, we're busy, we're working on business plans, and we're working on our hedge funds, and working on portfolios. But you got to take 10 to 15 minutes a day to reach out to loved ones, because once they're gone, they're gone forever.

Jim Gray 28:37

How often do you think of him?

Shaquille O'Neal 28:39

All the time. All the time. He was definitely vital in my career, but he passed away at a very sad moment for me because my sister had passed away right before he did. And I went to see her on a Thursday. She had stage four cancer, and I asked her, I said, "You want me to stay?" Because I had a meeting in LA. She's like, "No, go handle your business." But I forgot to tell her "I love you." So, I was already thinking about this process, and then he passed away, so now it just hit me. So again, old colleague, old high school buddy, college buddy, just shoot them a text. FaceTime. Just tell them you miss them. Tell them you love them.

Jim Gray 29:19

Tom, you said to me a couple of weeks ago, "Patience equals peace." How do you decide what opportunities you're going to take? How do you become patient, and how do you decide when it is you should pass on something?

Tom Brady 29:33

I think it's been an evolution to have that type of mindset. I think it took me into retirement to actually realize that. It's interesting when you play quarterback on a team, there's a lot of variables every single game—the opponent, the refs, the weather, the who's playing on your team, what the plays are—and there's so many things that you want to try to control. And the more I thought things were in my control as a player, well, the better I could do. Who we putting in the game on that play? What route is he

running? What defender is he on? How deep is the route going to be? All those little things, to me, over a period of time, I thought allowed me to be successful.

I remember I was in college. It was my last year in college. I was at Michigan, so I was 22 years old, and we were playing Ohio State, which was our rival, and it was my last game playing in Michigan Stadium. It was my last game against Ohio State. We had a bowl game after that, but kind of in some ways it was senior day, and I just remember the game was on a Saturday, and I remember Wednesday morning at six a.m. I'm in the coach's office, Thursday morning I'm in the coach's office at six a.m. going, "What plays are we going to run?" And they said, "Would you go home and go to sleep?" And I just felt like, no, I've got to make sure it's perfect. Got to make sure it's exactly the way I want. And that was a blessing in so many ways. In some ways, there's a little bit of a curse to that, too. Because the reality is we're not in control of everything. And I realized over the course of my career, I loved being obviously the field general, knowing what to do, but there's also a part of your life which—when my career ended, there were many more things that were not in my control, and that was really hard for me to deal with. And there had to be a growth period of me understanding that it's okay to not know what's going to happen the next day.

It's okay because we're such—all of us have different routines. As a football player, you really have a routine. Every Sunday from mid-September through, hopefully, the end of January, I knew exactly what I'd be doing. Then you go into retirement and you're like, "Man, this is a whole new world." I don't know my day. I get to create my own day. I don't even know what to do. Some days it's a little paralyzing, to be honest. So, I had to realize that when I wanted something to happen, it didn't necessarily happen the way that I wanted it to happen. And how, over the last three and a half years, kind of scrubbing this really control, fearful aspect of my life to be a little more not in control and to be okay with that and to find that, okay, I can have a little more peace because the patience equals peace. So, I needed to have patience for things to come back around at the right time. Also, there was always a rhythm I always played with as a player. When I was in the right rhythm of playing, man, I was really good. In the other aspects, sometimes you get out of rhythm and you try to force your way back into a rhythm, and it didn't work. Sometimes it takes a moment just to sit back a little bit and to observe and to rather feel like you have to do, why don't you just sit back and be for a little bit? And in the observation, find that rhythm again and then jump back into that rhythm when you can, and then you find that flow. So, to me, it's just been a period of time and a transition of constantly finding ways to adapt from this really stringent, detailed, obsessive part of life, which I had in one career, that now in other parts of my career, I can use parts of those things, but I don't necessarily need to use all those things.

Shaquille O'Neal 33:04

And that's very interesting because I have no patience at all. No, seriously. So, I love coming to conferences like this. You listen to brilliant people speaking to help you better yourself. So, I probably will have patience because Tom Brady said patience is peace.

Jim Gray 33:22

Can you adapt that quickly?

Shaquille O'Neal 33:23

It's going to take a while, but—

Jim Gray 33:28

There was a guy named Ben Crane—I used to broadcast golf—and he was a very slow player, so they gave him a warning. He said, "Look, I know I'm a slow player. I'm going to work on it, but it's going to take some time."

Shaquille O'Neal 33:40

Yep. Take some time.

Jim Gray 33:43

So, I guess that's what's going to happen.

Shaquille O'Neal 33:44

Yeah.

Jim Gray 33:44

We have a lot of sports fans in here, so I'm going to ask a couple of sports questions here. So, Jamie and Mike, I know the people here want to hear from Shaq and Tom, a couple of things that are going on right now.

Jamie Salter 33:45

Are you implying that we're not sports guys?

Jim Gray 33:49

You are, but they just have a different expertise because of the number of championships. Who's going to win the NBA championship Shaq? I know you're getting ready to broadcast this on ESPN, the first time you'll be broadcasting the championship.

Shaquille O'Neal 34:15

Have you ever heard of the player called IDC? IDC.

Jim Gray 34:19

I have not.

Shaquille O'Neal 34:20

He's a new player—I don't care.

Jim Gray 34:24

Oh, yes, you do.

Shaquille O'Neal 34:25

Oh, no, I don't. Trust me. No, I like San Antonio. Victor Wembanyama, I said this the other day, he's the perfect big man—can shoot, dribble, shoot the three, make free throws. He's great for the game. So, I would actually like to see him win. The Lakers are still there. Hopefully they will do well. The Knicks are still there. They'll do well. But—Knicks fans, be quiet. Know where you are. You're in LA. You're in Laker land. OKC probably still has a chance, but me personally, I would like to see the San Antonio Spurs.

Jim Gray 35:04

They're so likable, too—Vassell, and Castle, and Harper, and Wembanyama, and Coach Johnson. His father—

Shaquille O'Neal 35:12

I didn't say I liked them, now.

Jim Gray 35:14

No, they're a likable group. They're young guys and they seem to like each other, which is kind of rare these days for groups.

Shaquille O'Neal 35:20

Being a big man, I like to see other big mans be very, very successful. So, I'm going with Wembanyama.

Jim Gray 35:28

Okay. And every day we're inundated, particularly on your network, with this question. GOAT. Who's the GOAT? This one or that one?

Shaquille O'Neal 35:41

Well, I'm sit—

Jim Gray 35:41

And you know the question.

Shaquille O'Neal 35:42

I'm sitting next to the football GOAT.

Jim Gray 35:45

That's a given.

Shaquille O'Neal 35:46

And you mentioned that flag football game.

Tom Brady 35:48

Yeah.

Shaquille O'Neal 35:48

Jake Paul, next time you disrespect Tom Brady at a flag football game, I will punch you in your face. I had to call Tom. I called him. I said, "Tom, is this kid serious? Because I will punch him in his face."

Jim Gray 35:59

Logan Paul.

Shaquille O'Neal 36:01

Jake Paul, Logan Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul, Wall. Nobody messes with Tom Brady or my wife. No, I had to call him. I said, "Tom, is this guy serious?" He's like, "Shaq, stand down." I was like, "I will punch this kid in his face." Tom is the nicest guy. He's beautiful, sexy, all that stuff. I'm sitting next to the GOAT of football. The GOAT of basketball? I'm going to have to go Michael Jordan. Michael Jordan. But there's so much conversation around the GOAT. I have to correct people. I say, "If you're going to have the conversation, I just want to hear all the participants." Somehow, they go from Jordan to LeBron, and I have to correct them and say, "What about Kobe?" It doesn't matter who your pick is, but I want to hear all the participants. But for me personally, it has to be Michael Jordan.

Jim Gray 36:41

Well. Tom, you're minority owner of the Las Vegas Raiders.

Shaquille O'Neal 36:48

Boo.

Jim Gray 36:58

Southern California is full—hey, you live in Las Vegas.

Shaquille O'Neal 37:01

Cowboys—

Tom Brady 37:01

He just told me he's a Cowboys fan.

Shaquille O'Neal 37:03

—Cowboys, Cowboys—

Jim Gray 37:05

A lot of Raider fans here in Southern California.

Tom Brady 37:08

Yeah.

Jim Gray 37:08

Obviously, they played here, as well as Northern California. Fernando Mendoza was drafted. What do you see in him? And he just had his first rookie camp, and what are your hopes for him as he moves forward and under your guidance?

Tom Brady 37:21

Yeah, it's obviously exciting for all the new teams when you get these new draft picks, and the reality is nobody really knows how it's going to turn out. I was the 199th pick, and no one could've imagined that. I played with—some of the greatest players I ever played with were not the number one overall picks, and yet there were some number one overall picks like Peyton Manning, that I thought was the guy that I looked up to, and I was like, "That's how you play quarterback in the NFL." And every year, I would study

every single play that the Indianapolis Colts offense would run because I said, "Man, I just want to be a field general like that guy." And, when you have great quality players like that it helps you raise your game. You look at around the league, throughout my entire career, it was constantly like Aaron Rogers would win the MVP, and I would watch all that. Ben Roethlisberger did some things that I could never imagine quarterbacks doing. Patrick Mahomes, later in my career, was the guy that, man, when he was on the field, he's just an electric player.

If you really want to compete in the NFL, there's a belief of mine—and I think about this, this is what happens at 11 o'clock at night in my head every single night, I'm thinking about football and teams and what makes them great and how to make our team, the Raiders, better. There's no position more important than winning and losing on a football team Monday through Saturday than the head coach. Critically important to preparing the team, tactics, strategy. It's not like basketball. Football's very different. In basketball, you got to flow to the game. In soccer, you got to flow. In hockey, you have a flow. In football, there's no flow. It's all tactics. It's angles, it's power, it's how much leverage you can get on a certain run play or on a pass play. So, the head coach—and he orchestrates, obviously, what's happening offensively, defensively with those coaches—that position is absolutely critical Monday through Saturday to who wins the game. The quarterback position on Sunday, there is nobody more important on Sunday to who wins and loses than the quarterback. So, unless you have a coach that is one of the top 10 coaches in the league and a quarterback that's one of the top 10 coaches, or—excuse me, one of the top 10 quarterbacks, you're at a huge disadvantage every single week. If you have the 20th best coach and the 20th best quarterback, guess what? You aren't going to win many games. It's just the way it goes.

So, when you finally find that quarterback in the NFL, obviously with the draft, the worse position you finish, the higher your draft pick. Raiders, we were terrible last year, three and 14, so we had the first overall pick. So that gives you a great opportunity to pick the guy you think that's going to give you the best opportunity to win. And this year, having a quarterback in that position at the number one spot was a dream come true for all of us who love the Raiders, because—I think this young man, you can look at his physical skill, and that's going to be improved over a period of time if he puts the work into it, but what I value most is how he approaches the game, how he approaches his—he loves it. He prepares hard. I love that he talks about his teammates. He cares about his teammates. I watched him play in the national championship game, and it was in Miami at the Hard Rock Stadium against University of Miami, and he made some really clutch plays down the stretch. And I think for all of us, we always love people who perform their best in the biggest moments. So, you have a young man, 22-year-old Fernando, had a great upbringing, and his mom and dad gave him a great foundation for success. And then he's taken every opportunity that he's had, and he's made the most of it. And he's got a desire to be great, and he's got a desire to be great for his teammates. So, puts us in a great position going forward. Now, it's up to the organization to develop that prospect into what everyone hopes he can become.

Shaquille O'Neal 41:13

Can I give a shout-out to a friend of mine?

Jim Gray 41:16

Yes, please.

Shaquille O'Neal 41:17

Sir, can you stand up? You. You. Yeah, you. No, not you, sir. This one. You. You. Everyone, say hello to Tim Tebow in the house. That's not Tim Tebow. I'm just playing with you.

Jim Gray 41:35

All right, we're going to—

Shaquille O'Neal 41:35

I thought it was Tim Tebow. I'm getting old.

Tom Brady 41:36

It does. Oh, my God.

Shaquille O'Neal 41:38

Yeah.

Jim Gray 41:40

It's my wife, Fran, I thought you were pointing at.

Shaquille O'Neal 41:42

No, man. I'm not going to point at your wife.

Jim Gray 41:44

Hey. So, Tom just talked about the Raider organization, and let's leave with this thought from Shaq and Tom. Al Davis used to always say, "The greatness of the Raiders is in its future." Shaq, what does it take to be great for all these people who are trying to improve their lives?

Shaquille O'Neal 42:13

What it takes to be great is having total control over being committed to your cause, realizing that before you succeed, you must first learn to fail. Never let anyone tell you that you can't get it done. Be wild, be crazy with your thoughts, and just go for it. I love when people tell me I can't do something. I will get it done. Never thought as a youngster I'd be sitting up here next to the great Tom Brady. Never thought I would be smart enough to be at this conference, but I'm here. It's because I'm very, very committed. I know everybody in here is committed. I know you guys are very, very successful. May God continue to bless you. Keep it going, keep fighting, and remember to reach out to your loved ones and friends. Thank you.

Tom Brady 43:04

Yeah, so well said, Shaq. And I think it just comes down to how do you deal with failure? And how could I say—that's about the only thing that could unfocus me right now. To be great is all about how many times you're willing to fail in order to be great. So, nothing should come easy, and obviously anything of significance will never come easy. No matter what you're doing, being successful in your business, being successful in sports, you are going to face adversity. It is coming your way. It's football season. I tell this to the team, "I don't give a shit how you guys feel about each other in training camp. I want to see how you guys feel about each other when you get your ass kicked and who shows up on a Monday morning with a good attitude." Because life comes at you fast, and life hits everybody hard. And it's hit Shaq hard at different times, and it hits me, and it hit Ferro, and it's hit Jamie, and it's hit you, Jim, and you don't know where it's coming from. It could be your personal life, could be your professional life, could be your kids, could be your parents, could be your loved ones, it could be a coworker. There's a lot of things that don't go our way, and I think if you want to be great, you got to be great for the people that are around you, and you got to be willing to take the licks and get your ass back up and deal with it.

Jim Gray 44:20

Michael, Jamie, thank you very much. We're so lucky to have Tom Brady, Shaquille O'Neal in our lives. If you want to be inspired, go see the Hall of Excellence at the Fontainebleau, Las Vegas. You'll see Shaquille O'Neal. He's represented. Tom, seven rings. We've got everything you could possibly want. That will inspire the next generation because the ones that are great will be following these two. Thank you all for attending here. Appreciate it.

Shaquille O'Neal 44:42

Thank you.

Tom Brady 44:42

Thank you, guys.

Jamie Salter 44:43

Thank you.

Announcer 44:49

We hope you enjoyed the discussion. Be sure to utilize the mobile app to stay up to date on the latest programming changes. As you exit the room, please remember to bring your belongings with you.

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