

[Transcript] Between Two Beers Podcast / Awen Gootenbeil: Lessons from my island

On this episode of Between Two Beers we talk to Alwyn Gootenbeil.

You may know Alwyn as one of New Zealand's greatest rugby league players, with 170 caps for the Warriors over a professional career that spanned 15 years.

What you might not know is that in the first 5 years of his career he spent more time under general anesthetic than he did on the field.

In this episode we talk about the mental toll of 60 hours under GA and how he got his career back on track, the hustle grind and drive to set up his thriving business career post-footy, reflections on the Warriors' most famous scraps, the best end of year trip stories, why he didn't fancy a career as a broadcaster, meeting the queen, what he's learned as a dad, golf, what the next chapter looks like, and much, much more.

This ep was really special.

Alwyn is such an eloquent speaker with a lifetime of important lessons to share.

We asked them some big picture questions at the end and the impromptu, thoughtful, articulate answers blew us away.

You'll love this one.

Listen on iHeart or wherever you get your podcasts from or watch the video on YouTube.

A huge thanks to those supporting the show on Patreon for the cost of a cup of coffee a month.

To get involved, head to www.betweentwo beers.com.

And while you're there, sign up to our new weekly newsletter which has behind the scenes recaps of each episode.

This episode was brought to you from the Export Beer Garden Studio.

Enjoy.

Alwyn Goonville.

Yeah, yeah.

Welcome to Between Two Beers.

Thanks for having us Sabine.

We're in the Export Beer Garden Studio tonight, but your 100 days sober we were just talking about?

It was my aim each year, trying to do 100 days sober and normally it's during winter.

Enjoy the summer time, but this year I thought I need to start with a bit of intention.

Off the back of an interesting few years with business and stuff, I thought why not do it from New Year.

So yeah, trying to get that roll going.

Surely in the old mad Monday days though, you must have mixed a couple of exports with a few DB bidders back there.

Oh, you know it.

You know it.

The DB bidder, they used to drop pallets off to the training and you could take as much as you wanted.

And there was always beers left over because it wasn't like that.

And then boys, you know, take anything for free, but yeah, it was still the DB bidder.

Not so good.

Loyal to the bitter end, eh?

When you come to some concept like 100 days sober, do you actually, Matt, do you think on the 100th day are you having a drink?

Yeah, sometimes, but this time, yeah, don't really feel like it.

So we'll just see how it rolls.

Yeah.

It's interesting.

It's interesting that we did a, what was it, 96 or a 72 hour fast?

Stephen and I, we kind of decided to do it.

And then I got to 72 and was like, well, let's just keep going.

Yeah.

Just keep going, keep going rather than.

You're just never going to eat anymore.

Yeah.

I did, I did eat again, just to be very, very clear, but yeah, you kind of do way, you don't just kind of mark it off and go, oh, I'm just going to go and smash a huge feed or drink a box of booze.

Yeah.

Although your mates do.

They're like, okay, we've marked down the day, we're going to lunch and we're getting on it.

Yeah.

Don't let them know when that 100th day is.

So at the end of every episode we do, we ask our guests to recommend someone they think would make a great episode.

And Melody Robinson wrote down your name and we said, hell yeah, Shay has been on at me for ages that were overdue a leaky.

We are overdue.

And he's right.

Yeah.

I think we had Monty Betham was our last one that was over a year ago.

But the word that Melody used to describe you was depth.

She's had a great storyteller with real depth.

So I'm really looking forward to digging into your whole story.

But before we get there, there's a few bits and pieces that we want to dig around in.

And we've gone to a variety of sources and friends and colleagues just for some stuff to get to know you.

And just a precursor.

Sometimes these are fizzes as well.

Sometimes people give us stuff and it just goes nowhere.

So it's a licorice all sorts.

Let's see where we live.

Yeah.

But we've been suggested to ask, your nickname is La.

And what's that from?

Oh man.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's sort of my uncles were involved with Richmond Rugby League and they had a crew down there that they called the Lahors.

And yeah, obviously the name's interesting.

And they used to play touch and play footy together and yeah, so they'd sit up on the bank and drink.

And one of the guys that was involved with that group was Tony Timavavi.

And when he comes to the chief, yeah, when he comes to the Warriors, I was there as a youngster and they'd call each other La.

So he started calling me La and that was it.

It just stuck.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's almost a tip of the cap to you and your heritage there, right?

Yeah, yeah.

It's nice.

Yeah, it's rather flattering when the ladies were like, oh damn, I'm like, you only knew the real story.

The large hands man, the La.

His first hands, La.

Makes your dick feel real small.

It's nice.

It's good stuff.

Good stuff.

First one's hit.

First one's hit.

Yeah.

So another tip we had is ask him if he still owns the motor home, which is like Narnia and has a never ending supply of powers.

I know who said that.

Yeah, we do.

We do actually.

Yeah, yeah.

Motor home, yeah.

Love it.

We bought it maybe four, four summers ago.

Wanted to sort of travel with the kids where they were young enough and they still wanted to hang out with mum and dad on summer holidays.

So yeah, still got it.

We call it Bruce.

Nice.

Bruce the camper van.

Yeah, it's good for us.

What is the best place Bruce has been to in this great land of ours?

We've been down to the South Island a few times.

We've spent New Year's in Queenstown a couple of times and yeah, we've done all the South Island, we haven't done the East Coast and I don't think we'll get there for a while with the roads washed out.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah.

But yeah, good fun.

And up North, I did a little camper van trip up North.

It was amazing.

Yeah.

The places I never knew existed.

Yeah, beautiful up there.

Well, I'm born in Whangarei, so North's home for me, so I always try and head North if I can.

Yeah, awesome.

Yeah.

Next tip is, and I don't know if our correspondent has got this wrong, but said after a few drinks, he loves to do a Barry Manilow voice, but we think this tipster means Barry White.

Well, what is it Barry Manilow?

Well, I know, it wouldn't be Barry Manilow.

Yeah, exactly.

No, it'd be Barry White.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah, a few drinks and yeah, well, I haven't pulled it out for going or nearing that hundred days, sort of halfway, so I forgot how it goes.

Same tips to Sid, you have an amazing voice that you don't pull out often enough.

No, no, no.

Very enthusiastic when I've had a few drinks, but I wouldn't say I'm great.

No one ever does, but they are.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

It gets better with age too.

Your voice does get better with age.

I'm a firm advocate of that.

For those wondering what we're talking about, there's something like oh yeah.

Yeah, baby.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

It's good to bring out those basic tones.

Brilliant.

Okay, we're on a roll.

And can you tell us a bit about your daughter, offered a music contract in seventh form at the moment?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Like what does that mean to be offered a music contract?

Yeah, pretty cool.

Her and three of her mates from Intermediate sort of put a band together and Intermediate, they do the talent quest and stuff and there was seven at the time and remember, as a parent, you go along and watch all these talent quests and you're like, oh man, this is rubbish.

You know, hurry up, I want to get out of here, but you sort of pay homage to your child to support them and they got up there and they were okay.

The second year a couple of them sort of dropped off and I was like, damn, they're actually pretty good.

So they kicked on through high school and yeah, they've been really successful for young girls trying to grow up and understand what it is to be an adult or a teenager and stuff and yeah, they got offered a gig with a pretty well-known band in New Zealand and they've produced and written some songs themselves and it's interesting now that they're in seventh form and they're all looking at what happens next for them.

Are they traveling down the line for university and stuff and yeah, who knows where that's going to go, but you know, daughter Mila, she's extremely talented.

Awesome.

You left school at 17 and went overseas and played rugby league.

Are there any similarities when you're thinking about her starting a career in a different direction?

Like, are there any transferable skills you pass on or advice?

I think it's, we just let her sort of come up with what she wants to do.

So we never really pushed her into music.

My wife's a musician, yeah, she plays and sings on the guitar and yeah, we never really pushed her into that and she picked it up at, I guess it was form one and started asking for music lessons and from there, she just, yeah, really loves it and is often at home writing her music and coming up with new sounds and new songs and it's really interesting to see her from when she first started it and then to where she is now with a boyfriend and the depth of song and all that stuff, it's a change, you know, and you start going like, hey, what you talking about, girl?

Oh yeah, you listen to the lyrics, are you like, ah, okay, okay, yeah, yeah, that's really cool.

That's a really interesting window.

Yeah, I imagine you learn more about your daughter, there's stuff she wouldn't share with you, perhaps, but then you hear it through song.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it is cool, it is cool, but yeah, we're just supportive of both our children and what they want to do and haven't put pressure on them to be anything other than what they want to be, you know, and yeah, it seems to be working out all right.

Yeah, nice.

Last one before we get into it and a tough act to follow because we're asking for a Mike Tyson story and the last Mike Tyson story we had was Shane Cameron.

Go back and listen to the Shane Cameron episode if you want to hear it really good.

Yeah, no, I've heard Shane tell that story a few times, yeah.

But we've seen in our notes that you have met Shane, Mike Tyson before.

Yeah, yeah, so I was over in Las Vegas and he was doing like a stand-up show for people and you pay a ticket and go along and watch and it's about an hour sort of show that he gets up and just talks about his life, just him on stage and it was pretty amazing. He has an earpiece and it's as if he's playing something through and he's just repeating the stories that have been told through his earpiece, but fascinating, fascinating story, great storyteller, extremely honest and yeah, just the journey he's been on and yeah, yeah, just just really incredible.

I was extremely nervous afterwards.

I managed to get up and get a photo with him and yeah, he's not the not the tallest dude man, but he was the man, you know, growing up watching watching watching him fight. You're just like this guy.

He's the man.

Did he still have that aura about him that even just in his presence, you kind of go, whoa, this dude is a cad could be a bad man when you wanted to absolutely 100% 100% yeah, it was yeah, I was nervous and you kind of like man, I feel blessed to be to be in his presence.

Awesome.

Yeah.

And is it like an audio book come to life?

Is he animated when he's telling these stories?

Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah.

Yeah, totally animated.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It blew me away.

Actually, I was thinking, how's he going to stand up there and talk for an hour about his life and have it be entertaining because you see interviews of him and any could go either way with the high-pitched voice, but no, it was it was really, really entertaining and took a lot away from it.

Awesome.

We'll be right back after this short break.

I'm going to start painting the picture now of Arwen Guttenbeil and I want to go back to the start growing up in Whangarei.

It's amazing the amount of high profile successful sports people we have that come from smaller towns, but we'll get to that later.

A little bit of a selfish angle on in the process of growing a big family and I know you came from a big family, one of five, and I wondered if you could reflect on what you remember from growing up in a bit.

Was it a good childhood?

Was it healthy, competitive?

Yeah.

Yeah.

So there was three of us that were a bit older and then two siblings that were younger

and we grew up around sports.

So basketball was probably our main love and then rugby league was our religion on a Sunday. So my grandparents sort of ran the Portland Panthers and Mum and Dad were involved with the West End Jumbos.

So it was always rugby league on a Sunday and every day during the week it was either basketball or athletics or something else.

So in terms of the five of us growing up, two younger siblings and then a brother that's one year younger than me, my older brother was four years older and they'd share a room and I'd be in my own room.

So it was always them, it felt like they were always picking up on me, picking on me.

So yeah, I was out there to beat the world and if I could beat them then I knew that I was going to hold my own in the family and I was a rather violent kid trying to prove myself.

And yeah, it was called my dad's side of the family of Tongan heritage, living in Ponsonby.

So that was always amazing to catch up with them.

They played rugby league all their junior years, playing for the junior Kiwis and stuff.

So they were our idols, Mum's brothers, similarly played for Northland.

So it had some really good role models to aspire to be like in the sporting realm.

Before we get to some of your challenges, what was it like playing against Perot Cameron in terms of basketball growing up in Whangarei?

Because I gather he was your classmate or your form classmate at Whangarei Boys?

Yeah, look, he was a few years older than me but my first ever game of rugby league was playing for the Portland Panthers when I was three and Perot was in the same team. He would have been five or something.

Three years old playing rugby league.

Yeah, well, I don't know if you can classify it as playing, Mum said I was running around picking up mushrooms for her.

But I was out there anyway, you know, and that's kind of, I guess that was free babysitting on a Sunday.

They'd chuck the kids in a footy jumper and throw them out on the footy pitch.

But yeah, Perot was pretty amazing.

Yeah, but there were so many other guys that were in and around the similar age that were into basketball and it was really cool to sort of grow up aspiring to be like them.

I just want to circle back to one thing you said, their violent kid growing up violent.

Because you're a bit like Monty Betham, like the nicest, most softly spoken, most genuine everyone I've talked to has said you're the nicest guy.

But you've also seen that, you know, you can handle yourself in the boxing ring or on a rugby league field.

Were you a big unit growing up?

Like did violent mean you got in fights on the playground?

So what was that side of you?

I think it was probably, couldn't express myself verbally.

So I just get pent up and build up some anger and I remember chasing my older brother around the house with a knife and trying to hold him down and all that sort of stuff.

So mum and dad cancelled Guy Fawkes for me and sent me to Karate for three or four years to try and temper my anger.

But yeah, through that sort of journey and getting sick as a kid for a period of time through that sort of tempered that and yeah, it's interesting now because I try and stay as far away from that aspect of my life as I can.

So any conflict I'm like, hell no, I can't go anywhere near that because I probably don't trust myself.

Yeah, the sickness you talk about, it seems like quite a defining moment of your childhood. The first time perhaps you overcame real adversity.

Can you tell us a little bit about what happened?

Yeah, so I remember I would have been nine and it was our athletics day at school and I was keen to try and prove that I was as good as the other kids and make mum and dad proud of me.

So I was really stoked to get up and get into it.

I remember waking up in the morning, getting out of bed and I couldn't and I'm sort of, I remember we had a long hallway in our house and sort of leaning against the wall trying to get myself down to the kitchen where mum was and she thought I was just trying to pull the sickies so I didn't have to go to athletics and I was like, no, I'm actually, I can't walk and so she called my grandfather, he came around and took me to the hospital and I was in hospital for maybe two or three weeks and they couldn't understand what was wrong with me and they sort of ran a whole lot of different scenarios that I might have had.

Who knows what really and I remember being in the hospital bed and mum and dad were outside and the doctors were talking to them and I remember overhearing them say to mum and dad that there's a likelihood that I might not be able to walk again and I was like, shit, that's pretty serious and I was, I guess, fortunate it wasn't that and sort of two or three weeks later they diagnosed me as having rheumatic fever.

So heart condition and I was in hospital for maybe several months until I could get well enough to get out of hospital and yeah it was probably the first time that I looked at setting goals for myself and being able to overcome some sort of adversity.

The first goal that I had was to be able to go outside and play with my brothers and then it was climb a tree and then it was to do, you know, go out there and hang out with my mates on a weekend and yeah so from the age of, it would have been nine to eleven I wasn't allowed to sort of hang out with my mates and do anything like that because they were a bit worried about me catching other bugs that would affect my heart even more.

Wow, how frustrating is that as a nine to eleven year old, like you look, you're thinking about it now with adult eyes and adult mind but as a kid like, I can't imagine some of the like frustration I don't have kids myself but frustration of little kids not being able to do what they want to do.

Yeah, absolutely, yeah, it was, it was and when you have kids now, you know, I look back and I go, wow man, that was pretty heavy, I'd hate for my children to have to go through that journey and then I also am extremely thankful that, you know, it wasn't at the most severe end of having rheumatic fever and needing open heart surgery.

Yeah, and I guess reframing things for me is that sometimes things happen for a reason, you know, they don't happen to you, they happen for you and although I wouldn't like to go

through that again, I've taken the learnings and the lessons from it and that's shaped me to who I am today.

Wow, yeah, we're going to get to a little bit later the injury setbacks and overcoming adversity again but overcoming this, was it the surrounding framework of support from friends and family that helped you get through that?

Like looking at it as now a father with that lens on, do you think back to how people helped you through?

Well, I am probably, I'm sure it would have, but I went at that time into this sort of insular person that felt like I was on my own island and I was the one that was going to control my destiny.

So yeah, probably did the opposite although I know that there was plenty of support and love from my family and the wider network that I was surrounded with, but for me it probably reprogrammed something in me to go, you're in control of what you do and it's up to you.

That's a crazy mindset to have at that age, that's insane, yeah, where do you think that comes from?

I'm not sure, I'm not sure, but yeah, looking back now I think that's kind of how that was shaped and then that's helped me overcome some other stuff in my life and it worked really well for me to achieve some of the things I have, whether it was sporting or professional, the professional side of my life, it doesn't necessarily work really well in a relationship, let me give you a tip.

Fast forward a couple of years, did that sense of being on an island or that sense of I've got to control my own destiny, make it easier for you to leave Whangarei and come down to Auckland and come to high school down here?

Yeah, I think it did, definitely did, I remember being asked when I was 13 whether I wanted to leave home and move to Auckland and it was the first time that I was attracted to fear, that really scared me and I was like, what's the worst that could happen?

Just say yes and then deal with the consequences later, so yeah, I don't think I would have done that had I not have gone through that journey with rheumatic fever and sort of framed in my mind that I was in control of where I wanted to be.

Do you remember coming out the other end of it and a moment where you were thinking I'm 100% again and you obviously like an incredible athletic specimen, was there a point where you were like, right, I'm going to sort of beat this world, did you start dominating athletics days and cross countries and sprints and all that sort of stuff?

Yeah, I probably did, I remember surprising, I don't know if I was going to beat the world but I just wanted to prove to myself that I was as good as the other kids, I remember in Form 2, I just sort of come out of being able to again participate in sport and stuff and surprising the teachers because I signed up for every athletics event at the sort of Intermediate Athletics Day and did rather well and become the Whangarei Intermediate Senior Boys Intermediate Champion, yeah, yeah, still, still got the record, I'm not sure man, I know to have won a record at Whangarei Boys High in third form, triple jump. Isn't that funny those records still stand and people are still talking about that.

Yeah, I was really cool, so my older brother, he was seventh form when I was third form and I remember them doing this triple jump and I was like, what the hell is triple jump man?

And they're like, oh, you run and you do this hop and a skip and then a jump and I'm like, oh, okay, I get it, all right, sweet.

And my brother was one of the judges sort of measuring out for the juniors and I've gone to do it and I've done it the first one and I've jumped further than all the seventh formers and they're like, well, no, wait, wait, wait, he doesn't know what he's doing, surely, do it again, I did it again and yeah, and beat all the seventh formers at third form.

Awesome.

Yeah, so that was cool, so I had the bragging rights.

Yeah, the sort of legend starts spreading man, when you get a third form, I out jump in the sevenths.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm pretty sure that still stands up at Whangarei Boys today.

And was it that sporting prowess that attracted or that brought you into the radar of Kelston or was it an organic shift to Auckland?

No, it was actually a play in the under-13 league tournament for Northland and there's been a few defining moments that I can recall clearly.

One of them was, it was probably obviously having romantic fever and changing my mindset. The next one was, I remember driving down to Topol, the North Island under-13 league team, a league competition was there.

I remember sitting in the front seat, my dad driving and the manager and she had a son in the team and we're driving down, I put on some, I think it was, it's going to be great, I can just picture the moment of time.

Yeah man, whatever song you come up with, it's going to take me to the moment.

It was Mr Telephone Man, it was playing and I'm like, yeah, and I remember turning to dad and I said, dad, I'm going to make this North Island team and the manager who was in the passenger seat, I remember her looking at me and laughing and just saying, there's no way you'd make that.

I was like, you wait, that was it man, I was just like, all right, I'm going to prove you wrong.

So I made that team and then I got offered the opportunity to come down to Auckland. John Acklin was putting together the first development program for rugby league here in Auckland and he said, well, if you want to be a part of this, we'll give you the spot but you've got to come down to Auckland.

So that was the reason I moved.

I moved down, went to Westlake Boys, I stayed with my auntie and uncle over the shore, went to Westlake Boys for a period of time, started school at Whangarei Boys, come down for the league season, finished at Whangarei Boys and then the whole family moved to Auckland. My eldest brother was going to university so then we moved out west and that's kind of how I ended up at Kelson Boys.

Was Sir Graham Henry the headmaster then?

Yeah, he was, yeah.

Yeah, he used to give me shit all the time for not playing rugby.

I was going to say, was he a pressure to?

Yeah, yeah, massive pressure.

So yeah, I'd represent the school in swimming, in touch, in basketball, athletics but he would not make me a prefect unless I played rugby.

Really?

Did they have a first 13?

Or did you have to play club?

No, no, so I just played club.

We managed maybe two or three years of me being there to get a team into the sort of weekend competition that they had but there was never any league and we got, you know, the first 15 boys came and played which was awesome so Case Muses was part of that and it was cool but yeah Mum called a meeting with Ted and went and sat down and sort of said you stop giving my boys shit and sort of sat them down and gave them the talking to but me and Graham Henry get on really well and have a laugh about that.

Amazing.

Did you ever come close to switching codes?

I did, I did.

Yeah because at school they were doing exchanges, sort of the fifth form, first 15 we're going to Canada and doing all these overseas trips and I'd never been on a plane man and I'm 16 and I'm just going shit, maybe this is an opportunity for me to go on a plane.

Wow, is that right?

I stayed strong and then the following year the Auckland sort of development and the Warriors development team where they put a development program together and that's when we travelled overseas.

Yeah not long after that you're getting attention of in those days I guess was it still Winfield Cup in those days or was it?

Yeah, yeah it was, yeah.

Of those scouts, are they coming and watching your games here in Auckland?

They weren't actually so we toured over to Australia and we played Penrith, we played another side and then we played Paramatta so that's kind of where the scouts were hanging out and identifying talent from there.

And is it around that time you link up with Stacey Jones?

Like that friendship kind of connects at that point in time?

That's when I came down to Auckland for that development sort of program.

My parents knew Stacey's parents and they were the ones that said come and play for Pointchev so when I moved to Auckland I played Club Footy for Pointchev which is where Stacey was playing so yeah from 14 all the way through we sort of played a lot of footy together.

Can you just get the contract or whatever that manly offer you and you leave school to play for them?

What are you at that point?

Like are you one of the biggest 17 year olds around?

Are you known for your power and your pace?

Is it your strategic thinking?

What is the attraction to sign you?

Yeah, I was never the most talented athlete, you know I really love basketball.

Basketball is the game that I wanted to play and yeah sort of got offered to go down the

basketball path at high school and sort of go over to the States and play basketball there but when I was third form I was six foot two.

When I was sixth form when they were asking me to go play basketball I was still six foot two.

I can't dribble, I can bump people out of the way as a small forward but I knew that basketball wasn't the way to go and I guess yeah I worked really hard in the sports that I was involved with and sort of set goals and I think that was probably one of the things that sort of gave me the opportunities and I guess I could offload the ball a fair bit and had decent enough feet to create space so it was pretty cool.

So yeah got Phil Gould when we played penrithy offered me a contract and then yeah it was mainly that I decided to go to under Bobby Fulton who was the Aussie coach.

But you didn't end up playing any games for Manly right and I need a little bit of explanation on this because it was a little bit before my time.

Shay knows it well.

The Super League standoff trade off and you bounce back to the Warriors?

Yeah yeah yeah so when I went over there so ARL was the competition so ARL ran the competition.

The CEO of Manly ran the ARL, Bob Fulton the Australian coach obviously it was an ARL strong sort of side and yeah it was actually interesting there was a sort of precursor to that so I played one year at Manly and they promised to put me through architecture school and all these art sort of degrees and that was in my contract you signed a contract to go over there it was basically a track suit and some meal vouchers and I was like yeah yeah I'm a Manly boy.

So and then I had in there that I wanted to do some tertiary education so I went to apply for the facility that I wanted to go to and they sort of turned it down and I was like okay that ain't cool you're not living up to your side of the bargain and Dad's relations are the Sorensons and the Sorensons were obviously at Crenala so I gave Dane Sorenson a call and just said hey look I'm Manly haven't lived up to their side of the bargain how's about I come over and join you guys and he was like okay sweet so at this time the Australian side was on tour over in the UK so I've gone over to pre-season switch clubs Bob Fulton gets back from his tour and the first thing he does is give me a call and gets my butt back over there and promises me the world so I did a pre-season with the Sharks went to Albuquerque's parents house for the Christmas party and that was it and I got a t-shirt and some shorts just pause there was Al in the house as well or just the parents I feel like this is a real critical part of the story I wish she was there she wasn't just a couple of old people pictures on the wall maybe yes I then yeah we're back to Manly and it was in 95 95 coming home from training one day Matthew Ridge and Ian Roberts had signed with Super League and it was all the buzz sort of happening at the moment at that time Super League was kind of like the live golf tour you know the rebels coming in that's a great analogy with a whole lot of money and I just asked Ridgey when he's dropping me off home I said what's up with the Super League thing man he's like oh I tell you what though they're actually talking about you would you be interested in going in and having a sit down I was like hell yeah hell yeah so he arranged that got my dad's cousin to come along with me sat down in front of them and they sort of laid it out for us you know this is the vision this is this is kind of where things are at and John Rebo that you you were meeting it wasn't

John Rebo actually no no it was you know it was it there was a few others that were involved with that but yeah no no it wasn't it was actually Graham Lowe who sat me down and we went through it and whatever I was paid at the manly they said I said we'll give you double that and I straight away I was thinking how are you at this point I was and I can see my friend over here getting excited because he's a money guy so I was 18 or 19 at the time yeah and double that I was like hell yeah and then they said and that says a sign on and and we'll give you a hundred and something grand a year you know Australian and I'm just so how good is this you know it's just and money back then that's a lot of money that's a lot of money now yeah that's a lot of money now yeah yeah and you know being 19 I'm just like oh I'm gonna milk this now I know I know they're game so sort of you push them back and forward and you know added a whole lot of travel costs and new car and then there's tax to be paid and are you are you a wily 19 year old or are you getting outside influence from people like Matthew Ridge suggesting hey Alan ask for this no no no no I sort of negotiated all my contracts wow I'm just yeah yeah again it's up to me I'm on my own island man I gotta make it work so yeah I ended up signing for Super League under the provisor that it was for a New Zealand site and that's at that stage the the Warriors weren't hadn't signed with Super League so they eventually did and then that's how I found myself back here at the at the Warriors and manly you know I was playing preseason trials first grade and stuff and as soon as I told you Bob Fulton I gave him remember giving your call and he was just like shit you're gonna you're gonna be nothing you know that comp's not gonna work and that was it I was on the bench for under 19s for the rest of the year I was gonna say because you still hadn't played a first had you played a first game at that stage no no no no no just the just the preseason stuff was with the top side and that's amazing went from there to basically getting no time anywhere and one of our tipsters suggested there might be a good story about your visit with Stacey Jones to Mel Meninger's place yeah yeah yeah so that was that was part of a Super League day so we go down to Canberra and play down there and there's there's there's another event that I won't give too much information about that happened the night before anyway and those are the days when when when we used to play a game you'd have beers at the airport on the way home you know and you just drink and drink on the plane drink at the airports all that sort of stuff and that was all Kosher that was all play on and growing up as a youngster that was that was what was modeled from us you know so we're like okay want to prove you're a man okay we'll drink with the older guys and you know we go we go on the day after the game let's say it's a Sunday around there and John and John Rebo's there and they're giving a big big chat about the Super League and what it's gonna be like and you know bringing everybody together and we're gonna have all these after functions that don't normally happen in Rugby League and you know Mal's part of it and Laurie Daly and Bradley Clyde all these guys are hanging around we're having having a good chat with them and Stace has had a couple couple probably too many and Mal comes over and starts talking and breaking down you know how he sees the the comp going and how we can do things and and Stace there just looks straight at him and starts going hey Mal what about D just rubbing in his eyebrows hey we're just like oh okay it was all fun but yeah just just yeah fun times you know and how much the the professional environment has changed since then when it was okay to just yeah go full full tack on the on the way home from a game that's a ballsy play I may imagine Mal Meninga was quite an intimidating

man at that point yeah absolutely yeah absolutely but he just he just laughed it off yeah and yeah yeah it was all good it's an interesting point you raised because knowing what we all know now like do you think you could have prolonged your career had you looked after yourself a little bit better back in the in the prime playing days I think um potentially um I think I got to 32 which is which is doing pretty well um the other guys that pushed 35 and stuff but I don't think they would have they would have stopped the blunt force trauma that I sort of put my body through but I think I probably would have played a better game if if um yeah it was if I adhered to the same sort of standards as there are um today and understood um sports science you know we never understood that um so it was just yeah um I remember at manly um it used to be a club training night on the Thursday irrespective of um whether you played the Friday the the Saturday or the Sunday um and it was out for for \$1 drinks afterwards you know that that's what you did yeah everyone's out um on the drink so that was that was kind of normalized for us and it wasn't until you know I'd say sort of Mark Graham came in and started introducing a little bit of um sports science or philosophy behind performance um and he was probably a little bit ahead of his time for for our Warriors group at that stage we'll be right back after this short break. I'd say there'd be a certain section of our audience and I'm definitely included in this that would know you as Warriors legend Alain Gutenberg 170 games um one of the all-time greats of the club but perhaps they don't know how difficult those early years were um and the injuries involved and sort of in researching this episode like we talked about the the dealing with adversity when you're younger but this like three four five year period was hell you had this incredible body you were built to be this amazing professional rugby league player and then it kept breaking down on you can you take us to the start of your your battle with injuries yeah yeah um so you would have been 96 was my first year back here at the Warriors and and um yeah my goal was always to make the Kiwis and as a kid I guess when I was when I was that sick kid in hospital that was that was my goal you know to to play for the Kiwis so that was that was always number one for me and and um yeah 96 was was a was a good year um played um a fair bit of first grade a bit of reserve grade um and Frank Endicott was a coach of the reserve grade side at the Warriors and also he was the Kiwis coach um so playing well enough and and I remember our first grade season finished and the reserve grade team was still playing and they were in the finals so um I hadn't played um too many games of first grade not to qualify to to drop down and play reserve grade and help help the side out and and I remember having a conversation with me that um it'd be really good for me to to play reserve grade to get keep up with a match fitness so that I'd be playing for the Kiwis um so I was like oh hell yeah um I'll um I'll jump on board with that um and then we played a a game over at the Sydney football stadium um uh reserve grade semi-final and and I remember um they're going into a tackle and and turning in awkward way and and um you're rupturing my um my ACL um so so doing my knee um at that stage I'd I'd be carrying a sort of a dodgy shoulder as well so that was my season done I had a knee reconstruction at the same time I had a left shoulder reconstruction um so it was a it was a long time um under the general anesthetic um and then uh went back and they I had a hernia as well sports hernia so that was 96 um had those and then sort of hell of a year yeah hell of a year um and then that because it happened um later in the season I sort of missed the start of the

of the next year um worked my way back and then it was um my right shoulder I did and busted that um so I had surgery on that reconstruction another at least six months out um and then yeah things yeah just kept kept happening and and back in those days you had unlimited interchange so you had I think might have been six on the bench or something and well four I'm not sure and you just rotate players through so um sort of worked out in the first five years of my first grade career I'd spent more time under general anesthetic than I did on the footy field no way yeah so really there would have been 50 or 60 hours uh under under general anesthetic and I was yeah pretty pretty

pretty crazy I mean yeah had um two shoulder reconstructions two um hernias repaired knee reconstruction another sort of six or seven surgeries on the same knee had surgery on my ankles broke my leg um snapped the major tendon under my foot which is the equivalent of doing your Achilles um broken thumb um yeah there was a whole lot man that's insane like I really want to dig in here because this is um central to the success you've had in your life and we'll get to business and post career later but that mindset that you had general and rheumatic fever and then you've had all of these injuries and most people that would be enough one or two of them would be enough to derail a person and they wouldn't continue but you've gone on to have this amazing career afterwards so you're a man now when these things are happening do you remember in those moments how you did you have a plan for getting through everything or um probably not my goal was always to make the Kiwis and and all I kept thinking was if I can't get that get it this way there's another way you know and I just had to I guess I probably um matured a lot more um when we had Daniel Anderson first come into into the Warriors environment so prior to that um the expectation was you had to out train everyone else that was fit to be able to be picked you know so I'd I'd be pushing my body in a way that it probably wasn't able to be pushed because of the injuries that are suffering so so I was always um sort of felt like I was behind the eight ball um and then it wasn't until Daniel sort of come in and basically said I don't care what you do during the week if you can give me 80 minutes of footy um I don't care how you get there you deliver on the footy field um that's all that counts for me so from there I sort of evaluated where I felt I could give um my best contribution to the to the team environment and what did we need you know and sort of step back instead of being the um the the sort of floating back row that played on the edge that was a um um I guess the guy that that scored all the tries or set up all the tries I was I was sort of reframed to how can I be the guy that everyone wanted to play alongside wow two two points there one set back after set back after set back did you ever come close to packing it in and the other one is like how much were you valued by this team that you haven't you've been spending more

time under an aesthetic than on the field but they continue to believe in you and was was it just the contract was long enough that like did they re-sign you when you were injured yeah it was um you know timings also um you know I've been blessed um to come through it had had had the right doors open for me at the right time um you know a great example is my younger brother is far more talented than I am um and he you know his injuries um probably come at times where the opportunities

weren't abundant you know and for me um yeah I remember sort of working my way back from that from the major injuries um my shoulders and my knee and a few other surgeries and made round one

I can't remember if it was 98 this is the north sydney game um no it wasn't north sydney it was

we played we played over at the sydney football stadium against the the roosters might have been round two I can't remember but um and I played a really good game um that pre-season I trained the team and then I go do my own training afterwards um and I was just 100 focused on being the best that I could be um and played a really really great game and um Tynell we had taken over the club then and Graham Lowe who um obviously I had a relationship prior signing me up to super league was was sort of in charge of of the Warriors football sort of environment um and on the back of that game he um extended my contract um for for another two or three years at at money that I probably didn't didn't necessarily um deserve given given the amount of challenges that I'd been through um so yeah so so that was extremely fortunate that was sort of a bit of a safety net for me to get through the next few years um until um the club went under I was gonna say like not only

have you got these injuries the club at that stage is going through a tumultuous time off the field yeah yeah so so the club went under in 2000 um and yeah it was that was our case actually so the club folds you know we're all owed two months worth of salary they pay you at the end of each month

so that money's gone and all the boys particularly Logan Swan the tightest man in rugby league um pulling up in trailers loading up all the training equipment into the into the cars because we knew that the next day all the doors are going to be shut so so the gym was was so sparse um when we started pre-season in 2001 um and Daniel Anderson um comes along they got ridgy involved to sort of

broker deals with the players and you know the the contract I signed at that time I'd sort of you know the free ride had gone and it was it was basically living wage to get by you know um but I backed myself again I had I still hadn't played for the Kiwis and I'm like I'm gonna get there man I don't care what it takes and um yeah I remember the first training that that Daniel Anderson turned up there might have been half a dozen of us and two footy balls I remember him getting us um to dummy half pass off the ground in in our in our changing rooms to hit a cone just so he could understand what sort of skill that he was dealing with you know he had no idea about most of us he he hadn't seen much um of some of us play um particularly myself because I was injured for so long um and and that was kind of how he he um he built the team did did he introduce an amnesty period where okay guys if you've taken anything from the gym 24 hour period no questions

asked just return it would be like that was all gone man I don't think trade me was around there was buy salad exchange man unbelievable scenes but that must be crazy time as well for you to to have to overcome the injuries but then also to stick with the club throughout this like you what was it about the club itself I know you've got the Kiwis dream but what was it about the club that kept you coming back to well I think at that stage um I had no other option you know I'd been busted so much and so many injuries that that I wasn't that attractive to anyone else you know at times I wasn't attractive to to the Warriors environment I remember them getting me to work in the reception and doing all those these sorts of things to justify them paying me my wage you know because um obviously there was some financial troubles with with the owners um at the time and

and yes I was in there trying to try to do what I couldn't make coffees and and things like that because I couldn't be out there training and they'd send me on all these promotional trips and do a whole lot of stuff for that involved a lot of drinking and and and partying and I'm like I

don't want to do that man I want to get my body right they're like actually the best thing you could do for us is go out there kiss some babies shake some hands and make people happy did you view that as also skill building for a career post playing or yeah I probably I didn't at that time but but um it definitely was understanding relationships and um yeah and connecting with people absolutely are you proud looking back are you proud of the way that you got through all that adversity like that's a shitload of stuff that you pulled yourself through to get out the other side looking back reflecting now just talking about it like how do you feel about getting through it yeah uh it's just it's just my journey you know I don't really look back and go well that was awesome I'm just like how else was it supposed to play out yeah yeah and then so Eric Watson comes in and then I've heard stories about um sort of match payments and you know the win bonus win bonus and is that like is that real camaraderie building like when everyone's on that together and yeah does that sort of bring a bit of spirit to the team yeah it was really interesting because it was the first time as I said um they were chucking money at us that were pretty pretty low balling you know and and they'd make can you ballpark what a low ball rugby league offer is uh at that stage it was like 60 grand right you know um and you're you're you're training every day you're traveling all the time and to top it up it was incentivised so you win you get get some more you make five games 10 games 20 games in the year you get more you make the New Zealand side you get

more um and it was a really interesting dynamic interesting dynamic because it'd never been a part of anything like it before where it brought out some some real competition for for spots in the side or something we hadn't had at the Warriors prior um and then it also it could have gone really

bad but but it went really well for us you know we had a lot of young guys that were trying to prove themselves and I think that meant that they were on an even par with a lot of other guys that have been around the environment for a period of time um so yeah so making the side you'd have to earn your place um and then and then winning um felt like you were you were directly rewarded for your effort so you want to be in the team number one and you're going to bust your asset to make sure you could do everything you could um to get that win and and balancing the the contribution to the team versus the individual being the star um that was that was I guess um Daniel Anderson's biggest challenge at that time and were you one of the heads in the dressing room that helped manage the playing roster as well on Daniel's behalf um not not that first year I was I was just um trying to earn my spot in the side you know um coming back from injury but but there was definitely um assistance that he would have had you know Stacey was was there for a long time Ivan Cleary was involved you know we got Kevin Campion back um and so so there were players in there that that um definitely helped steer who was a part of the side but um I think was bigger that you you wanted to be picked for the side but you also wanted the respect from from your teammates um for me the the the later years of my career I trained the team maybe once in the week um that's the captain's run and the rest of it I'd train on my own um but the guys you know I'd I'd put in enough effort so that I could convince myself was good enough um to deliver on the field but then also um to try and justify my position in the team without having to do what everyone everyone else was doing pretty much every uh best fights of the NRL compilation has the scrap with the Broncos uh where Monty Beatham gets picked up and gets driven back and then it's just everyone's in there and you're in there and and it's just hell for leather when you reflect on those fights and there's good and bad obviously fighting is looked at

differently now but the camaraderie of sticking up for each other and like if one's going down we're all going down like how do you reflect on on that now yeah that was um that was a really uh obviously the violence part of it um has has changed in the game now but um it was yeah it was it was

awesome and that was really the feeling that we had in that camp you know for those um two or three

years that um we'd worked hard and we had each other's back you know you you could trust that someone was going to be there for you if you needed them um and yeah it was you know playing against the Broncos particularly we'd we'd never beaten the Broncos um at home or ever I think until

whether it was 2001 or two um so that so that was kind of the the biggest chip we had to get off our shoulders you know that was the monkey on our backs that we wanted to get get off our shoulders so

we look forward to that opportunity to to try and intimidate them you know that's what they used to do they used to intimidate you so we didn't necessarily have the biggest um pack but we we played um really physical and uh yeah I think there was a stat at the time you know for a couple of years that after a team played the Warriors they're most likely to lose the following week because because of the physicality yeah and is that stuff spoken about like the the fighting is it just like an unspoken thing that if anyone starts something we're all in or is it like you need to back each other up out there I think it was a it's just it's just the feeling you know um words are easy and I love watching any melee now and everyone's running in you get all the little wingers coming in and chins up and yeah yeah pull and tug each other um but yeah I remember

another thing that Daniel Anderson said to to our front rowers um was if you're not suspended at least once in a year you're not doing your job you know I was like uh yeah that's that's cool that's cool we want to play with um aggression physicality and that's part of the job you know well there's a line isn't it and you've got to go as close to that line as as possible absolutely yeah absolutely and and yeah there was you know the teams that succeeded around that sort

of um late 90s early 2000s were intimidating sides you know they're big they're physical they're powerful um and you wanted to strike a bit of fear particularly for us having teams come to to mount smart to our home ground we wanted to to make sure we made it uncomfortable for them I'm really curious about the notion of like having to flip a switch to get into that red mist mindset before a game is it is it as rudimentary as that kind of concept of okay boots on jersey on I'm in now and the rest of the time you're relaxed or are you high tension a lot of the time during the season uh no I think um it's different for different people um and yeah I mean for me I I yeah worked out that the only way that I could um be confident that I could deliver the best I could was was to do extra training over and above anyone else and because I wasn't out there on the on the

footy field with them I'd be just trying to do extra stuff whether it was finish a game and do another 40 minutes on the on the on the bike to get a bit more fitness to to train my mind and condition my mind that next week I'm going to be even better um so that that was it for me so going out there I knew that no matter what my opposition was doing I was going to be more prepared than they were um but for some others it may it may have been the you know they talk about running

over that that that chalk and that line um some are just really high strung all the time um others are out there having a bit of fun I remember um with Daniel Anderson so so we're in the changing rooms and and he's waiting to get the whole team together to give a team talk and pull everyone in and uh Clinton Torpy um Francis Mele uh Shontane Huppe they're all AWOL and can't find them and we're like where the hell are these boys and you could hear this what the hell is that the boys are in there with um with colored uh textures coloring in their boots before we run out on the footy field because they wanted to be the fanciest and that's what back uh when when all the tri celebrations were in and all that sort of stuff they're getting their hair braided and is that far fairly was cutting the coconut cutting the coconut yeah so um yeah hard case so those guys never never approached the game like that you know they're just out there to have fun but um you knew that they had had uh had your back if if you needed it because it's an interesting cast of characters inside that dressing room right you've got a mix of people super religious backgrounds a lot of Pacific Island and Māori influence in there you had Kevin Campion the hard-nosed Ozzy like a kind of like a motley crew is kind of a disrespectful way of describing it but to have that blend across that team and perform like it's personified with a try that over the over the head pass and it's against the Bronx again as well I think as well like it was just an amazing time to be a Warriors fan yeah yeah it was it was um we felt that we were really skillful and that was the one uh or the great thing that Daniel Anderson um bought to the club was was the fundamentals and

I think we'd probably lost that or hadn't been taught that you know for many years um as as Kiwi rugby league players growing up in New Zealand so um just instilling that confidence and we're always playing um conditioning games at training and and so you're you're matching up against each other and you're um you're throwing the ball around and it's um you know if you if you can trust your defense to get you out of trouble then you enjoy the game because you can you can attack any any style of footer you want to. We'll be right back after this short break. I like to draw comparisons between my very limited amateur football experiences and elite athletes that we have on the show but every successful team I've been in had an amazing off-field culture and that meant piss trips basically from Hamilton to Auckland or everyone would party together and it just brought everyone together. I know that you were in charge of um end of year team events and that obviously was important to you. Do you think that was central to the team's success when you reached those heights? Um I don't necessarily know if it was if it was the the end of year team trip um because we had yeah it was an interesting really interesting mix um you had guys you know the the younger Polynesian boys wouldn't come to the after functions for about an hour or an hour and a half because they'd sit in their car drinking their beers in the car and then they'd come in for the photos and then they'd be gone you know um so yeah it's not an amazing trait of Pacific Island culture crazy like Solomon Islands background yeah go to independent celebrations it's the same thing yeah man everyone's in the car drinking booze and not being inside at the function it's so weird yeah yeah yeah so yeah crazy crazy um but yeah the end of year function and then just trying to come up with with ways to connect the boys um or the or the or the club in a way that respected and appreciate everyone's individuality um that that was always a challenge and um I enjoyed that sort of stuff trying to trying to understand how to bring a group of people together um from different backgrounds different beliefs um different levels of commitment and and make it work. I'd heard one story that these sort of the kitties for the end of year trips um sort of grew throughout the season and there's one year that it was

particularly big and you couldn't travel for some reason and that ended up being like 100k worth of kitty and you had to go to like Bay of Islands or something. Yeah man yeah so this so this is when um yeah you mentioned Eric Watson comes in and you know we're all on these incentivised sort of sort of payments and stuff and that was each individual and I remember we win won the first game and Eric comes in and goes all right we're going to put every every win we're going to put 10 grand into the team fund we're like hell yeah go the bonus um we won sort of three games and we're up to 30 grand or 40 you know might be four 40 grand um and then Nicky Watson's mentioned something to the press and of course we we've got salary cap conditions so we can't can't do that you know so he's like all right so here's what happened we can't we can't give you the money right now or we can't we can't keep uh building it up but if you make the top eight I'll give you 100 grand plus the 40 you already have so there's 140 grand we're like oh shit yeah and and we ended up making the top eight for the first time in 2001

and then we planned for a trip to go overseas and then 9-11 happened no and we're like shit we don't want to go anywhere that's too far abroad and then we looked at booking um Bali we had Bali flights ready and then Anset was the airline and it went under so so we're like oh man we've got like two weeks to turn this around we were gonna go we're like guess where we go Bay of Islands 140 thousand dollars to spend baby wow that is a big injection all right I'm gonna dig in on details here are you the one are you driving have you got that like is there like a leadership group well what are we gonna do with 140k in Bay of Islands yeah there was there was some ideas chucked in there and it was I mean we helicoptered everywhere we helicoptered to Waitona caves first

and then and then up to vineyards and then across here and the boys room service having crayfish for breakfast lunch and dinner and ringing home back in Samoa and stuff non-stop it was we didn't spend all the money I think we got through maybe 70 grand or 80 grand of it that's a decent effort decent effort man up there yeah how are we yeah that was good imagine it might

be the first end of year trip I've ever heard about where they didn't spend exactly yeah yeah and the following year watershed moment grand final yeah man was at the peak of your playing career I think it was I don't know I don't know if it then if it was I think it was probably the most enjoyable environment 2002 and 2003 yeah it was it was a pretty wild ride you know we ended up becoming minor premiers on the back of the bulldogs fudging the salary cap so they got deducted a whole lot of points and heading into the last game of the year we're playing the tigers at home and you know Daniel rested maybe six or seven of us that were playing regular first grade just to protect us for the finals and we needed someone else to win by a certain margin and we had to win or something and it ended up coming off that that our team that we put out there won the game against against the Tigers and it might have been I don't know might have been Newcastle had to beat somebody by an X number of points and they did that and then we became minor premiers so it was it was it was uh yeah pretty amazing for us as a club to get that and going into that final series was was pretty amazing going to you know play footy at that level I guess I there's a couple of reflections that I have on that like I'd never been to a grand final before so I didn't understand the gravity of it and I guess how important it was a conceptually coming from New Zealand you're like yeah we're gonna grand final that's all cool yeah it's gonna be cool let's go to the grand final and stuff but yeah after going to them many times afterwards as a as a spectator sitting there and absorbing what is I'm like ah now I get it now I get it

I only wish I'd been to one before you know and kind of understood the stage and the significance because it's all sort of conceptual at that stage you know we hadn't had a lot of success um and leading into that year you know we sort of set ourselves a goal we'd made the top eight prior to that and then it was make the grand final you know and you know for me I felt like we set our sights one game too short you know so we made the grand final we achieved what we wanted um I'm sure there's other other members of the team that may think a little bit different but for me that's it's kind of um one of the one of the regrets that I think I have as a as an environment that we didn't set it to win the grand final because you do talk about that grand final on that sense of occasion because as a as a league fan you hear about the grand final breakfast and the footy show has a lead into it like is that all you swept up by the hype of of the lead in that week leading into the yeah yeah I think so you know I definitely think so and he used to be saying that you got to lose one to win one um yeah I don't think that's the case but um understanding what it is um certainly would frame it correctly and I know that we've had coaches um in the past that used to sit us down and watch us I'll make us watch some pretty significant league matches um of of the past era um but I don't I don't appreciate I didn't appreciate at the time I didn't appreciate what the lesson was at that time you know I thought I'm just going to watch some old game you know not understanding um looking back now I'm like yeah I wish I had to pay attention to that you know I wish leading into that game I would have watched the um the first time that the new car I was sorry the Melbourne Storm one uh and Tawera Nikao's performance in that second half sort of changed the game you know I wish I had to watch that and modelled my um my level of of success for that game of of what he did wow yeah I'm fascinated in team dynamics and you were involved in some of the most successful warriors teams of all time but then in 2004 they kind of fell off the cliff with essentially that same group of players 15 finished 15th out of 16 with 18 losses I'm sure you probably get asked about this a lot but do you pinpoint a reason why it was so high one year and so low the next yeah I think um at the time probably probably didn't quite understand um um I think from a from a from a leadership perspective um at the club that that they probably lost sight of of who we were and and what we were there for um at the time um that they were looking at a super rugby franchise um we had conversations myself Stacey and Monty about um moving over to um over to London and being part of them taking over the London Broncos and us having an equity share in the in the footy club um there was a whole lot of other stuff you know that they got onto boxing and there was a whole lot of other events that that um you know that they were looking at and I think we probably um well the management and the ownership probably looked a little bit too broad in in terms of what they were trying to achieve and and that may have meant that there was a little bit of um yeah confusion um down the ranks in terms of the coaching and the stability of the coaching um yeah we had other people wanting to be promoted in in terms of that that coaching environment and and it probably there was a lot of undermining being done and that that continued for a couple of years yeah there's lessons to be learned there right like it's so unusual for it to go from the very top to the very bottom yeah like um yeah what are the lessons what are the lessons out of that that you that you maybe have taken away outside of sport that you

can implement in your kind of post-career yeah and you know the fish always rots from the head you know and and it's trying to make sure that um yeah you stay focused on on what you're there to do and and um you know I'm always looking at different strategies and different ways of approaching

a situation and making sure that the people um surrounding me or under me or um you know giving me um advice or direction feel safe and they feel trust and and that um yeah they've got a pillar to to um make sure that they can always come back to if if things go wrong um well the other things with that 2004 season so um Penrith Panthers uh they they won the 2003 grand final and they're a big side you know so so um I think in in the game whatever side wins or whatever side wins everyone

else tries to emulate what they did the year before so um yeah the roosters were up and in uh defense on the outside you look at melbourne storm the wrestle so everyone tries to emulate that and um I think we or daniel anderson had a had an approach that we all needed to be bigger um to play that 2004 season so where uh we had um guys would stand on the scales and if you're overweight you're in the fat club if you're underweight you're in the skinny club so we're guys like mark turkey in the fat club and they'd be in the in the gym changing room on the exercise bikes at 6 a.m and our skinny guys that weren't carrying enough body fat would be in the gym at 6 a.m eating bacon and egg um sandwiches from on the barbie you know so in front of them and there's this there's this real contradiction man of being a a sport side you know a professional environment so yeah we just had to bulk up and it and it wasn't necessarily um bulking up in the best way you know it was just put on weight man put on weight that's how we're gonna win we're gonna win and we did everything really well that we'd all put on a whole lot of weight um we didn't do much running that preseason it was all in the in the swimming pool or on the exercise bikes very very limited running um and we had gpses just come out then tracking our distances and all that sort of stuff so the science around that was it was sound it was going to get us there um and remember the preseason you know we sort of excused some of our performances because we weren't necessarily

there to win we were there to build up to our first game against um against it was a brisbane broncos over in brisbane and i remember running out there first 10 minutes um brisbane scored a try and then we all go back to the the try line and i remember thinking oh shit we don't f**k up here man because we're we're in trouble we were we were just all blowing and we just had nothing in the tank man and and that was i guess yeah it wasn't a wasn't a good ingredient to put into the recipe of a little bit of lost focus from from the leadership um of the of the club and you know in the direction that we took in terms of um our footy and and what we were actually really fundamentally good at and we tried to change that what was the biggest you got to weight why though what was the range what was your um min weight and max weight yeah so so probably 101

was was my playing weight 101 sort of um after a game you know you'd be down to 90 98 or something

um and then that preseason was 106 and a half i think um yeah yeah so carrying a fair bit a bit more weight and how'd you feel in the in the weight room on the bench uh i was i was actually really good because i couldn't do anything else i couldn't run man so i had the record for a fair fair fair amount of time until what was it uh i think it was 167.5 three times yeah three times yeah that was that was is that recorded up on the gym wall so yeah well then you had Brent Webb

coming um who's who weighed 80 kilos and and beat that you know yeah oh we had Mark Ellison what did he say 150 150 maxed out at one rep yeah yeah yeah so yeah it was yeah interesting i guess

we're getting close to leaving rugby league but before we do i wanted to touch on your international career because it's an incredible arc and an homage to both sides of your family where you were able to represent tonga in 1995 the end achieved your goal of representing the Kiwis in 2002 i think was your first appearance and then swan song was 2008 with tonga again how special is that to be able to honor those two sides of your family with that international career yeah it was it was really special um yeah my grandfather um yeah it was from tonga my dad's born in tonga um so yeah it was it was really nice um as i mentioned growing up and all my uncles had played um footy and and told all those stories uh my grandfather father had passed away as well so

so it was a real tribute to him and and i was fortunate enough that that i got put into the squad you know as a as a 19 year old um this was when i signed with super league so i wasn't playing

much footy on the on the bench flowing locks as well on the bench for reserve grade yeah the flowing locks oh man a hard case hard case but it was really cool had had some um really amazing players there um and it was a real eye opener to to um international footy and it was the first time i'd really um been surrounded by my tolin culture so so that was you know it was really really really special um yeah it was awesome and then i guess to finish up my footy career um playing

in another world cup for tonga was was a nice um way to to give back to to the nation and and um yeah stay connected from that perspective take us back to that 95 experience because had you had you kind of mentioned there that was your first time really interacting with the culture was it an intimidating thing for you or did you instantly feel at home once you were in that group um no it was it was intimidating um but you know there was some uh Solomon Homono was with me at Manley and

and um so you know he sort of held my hand through the through the process he was my roomie um you

know we were really good mates at Manley and and then John Hopowari and his mother uh Melia they

they over saw a house so when i went to Manley there was about eight or nine of us and went over at a similar age and i was the only one that didn't go and stay in the house with the with the Hopowaris

um i went and stayed with another family so um always spent a lot of time with them so um yeah it was it was intimidating but it but it felt right you know and sometimes you go ah this is what's been missing you know and it was it was really nice it was really nice and did you play in that 95 game against the Kiwis yeah man yeah yeah yeah yeah talk because i that's a vivid that's burnt into my memory i know man i know we were so close to beating them you know and and um yeah

they they called the tackle count incorrectly and i think we kicked the ball rushed and and then Ridgely slots um you know slots a couple of goals and a drop kick and and they end up winning by one point but yeah it was yeah it was interesting you know and that was Stacey's first test match my first test match and we played against each other i remember him um trying to run around me

and i managed just to get him um and he played the ball then i pulled his pants down because for those that don't know Tonga you Tonga were leading 24-12 with a few minutes to go yeah yeah yeah it would have been like eight minutes to go and tempting fate but celebrations almost yeah yeah we're celebrating too soon you know um yeah the sideline watching them was just like oh no it's happening it's happening yeah and and yeah oh man yeah it would have been it would have been uh would have been awesome but then to see the the way that the um you know the the Tongan rugby league players and the Samorn rugby league players are now getting behind um you know their their heritage and and representing their sides um and international footy is is is pretty amazing because that's the point that i wanted to get to is that you're almost a trailblazer in that regard of of being someone that represented New Zealand and then decided actually i'm going to go and honor honor my heritage and represent Tonga which Tomalolo famously did that again and but almost became the first in that 2013 rugby league World Cup that's an amazing kind of turnaround and philosophy too yeah man yeah yeah no it's um it's great for the game too you know it takes um yeah someone like him that's extremely brave at the height of his career um to step up and make a statement and you know everyone else that that followed you know i think uh would certainly thank him for it i'm going to take us away from league now because a lot of athletes when they achieve their success you have struggle post career um transitioning into whatever whatever comes next but it seems like you have done it right um and i'll get to business soon but first of all was it punditry pretty soon afterwards like did you start transitioning into punditry uh you know towards the end of your career and for anyone who's with us i mean you know how much of an eloquent eloquent speaker you are did that appeal as a long term um like career path uh i think it was fortunate that um i was doing bits and pieces while i was playing um you know i was a reliable i guess um person that answered the phone to go on and and sort of sit in on games and and give um updates on the team and things i think i was doing something for for sky sport um within the the the warrior's environment um so yeah i feel extremely fortunate that my pathway and my landing post footy was was a lot softer than most um because i was i was able to to still earn money um i was still in the in the rugby league environment and i still had that connection but but just from a different perspective so that still fulfilled i guess a need that i had um and and gave me a bit of a safety blanket to to explore life after footy and i know so many don't get that same opportunity so yeah it was cool it was good and um i sort of got might have been four five six seven years into it and and it wasn't fulfilling me anymore you know being in that in that sort of environment i i just felt like i was i was boxing myself in because i've been doing footy for so many so many years and i knew that there's there was something else out there for me that that um yeah that scared me and and um yeah i thought i hadn't i thought i had no other option but to jump at something that scared me again and deal with the consequences after so so you know i walked away from from sort of working for sky and and do very little um sort of radio tv stuff anymore just on the punditry before we moved to business how hard i mean good pundits have opinions and they uh say what they feel how hard was it critiquing guys that you had played with only a few seasons earlier

yeah i don't um i never tried to go down that path because i understood um number one i understood what the players go through and they're not out there trying to to fail and and um yeah not succeed

and number two i felt i had a duty of care to the game not to do that you know um i wanted more people watching the game and supporting the game um there may have been the odd time that that you

can't help but be critical but um yeah and maybe that was it for me that that i couldn't necessarily um be honest and and i felt almost um yeah like like it was it was prescribed that you you had to do certain things a certain way you know and um yeah that's that's kind of not how not how i roll but yeah the transition was um an interesting one too because um it's basically really set here's a mic and the way you go man you know there was there was no there was no support

you know and and um yeah say some words say some stuff what do you say what do you think yeah yeah

yeah it's just like you go you're live i'm just like shit man yeah and and i understand that it's probably um for some people it's seeing people that have played the game come in um there's a threat to them uh in terms of them being the the the star of the the show or keeping their job for a long time so you know that's that's not the game i played you um we'll make our way to pacifier at the end but to to start the business journey like you're obviously very switched on towards or maybe even in the middle of your career towards the end but there was painting telemarketing sports

tours like what's driving that are you just thinking am i how can i earn money or are you thinking what can i do to set myself up for for after career it's kind of looking at how can i hustle um to get the best out of this the situation man yeah i mean i yeah uh what is that has that been a hustlers mentality you're the kind of life i think so you know again man i'm on my own island and i gotta make sure it happens so um yeah i've always sort of bought and renovate houses

when i was when i was playing footy yeah i had a painting um franchise um telemarketing company um had no idea about any of it lost lots of money um yeah in the share market doing doing a whole lot of different things um yeah and and just trying to figure out what i liked what worked what didn't um and and when i was playing footy you know i'd be i'd be trying to hustle and broker deals um for myself but then to get sponsorship to um one of the sparkles so so i hustled the club to give some because we you know it was all in the salary cap and stuff and you get tickets and someone will look after you here and do all these sorts of things so so yeah i was always always trying to come up with creative ways to get two parties the result they wanted you know um yeah i mean a perfect example i had a testimonial um for the warriors one of only two ever right yeah yeah um stacey me and stacey yeah that they've actually put on a testimonial um sort of event for um and and the salary cap comes come sort of into question there so um the club can't be seen to support it so you know everyone's best mate the mad butcher sort of jumped in behind it and i convinced um the puma were the sponsors of the club at the time and each year i understood that they could come up with a with a variation to the jersey that could be used um so so i went to them and and the warriors and sort of said hey look my testimonials this year have you come up with something yet um they said no we haven't actually and i said well what about this full concept what about um you give me the opportunity to to put together a testimonial jersey for myself um and then we can run this sort of event and they were like great idea man but um we can't be seen to supplying to be supplying any jerseys because if we're paying for it we can't do it i was like okay cool well problem solved i'll pay for all the

jerseys um so i think you had to put together 54 jerseys or something for for the nrl club um so i did that so i went and got somebody to design um a jersey based on my heritage um puma was on board i paid for all the jerseys and then at the at the charity auction i come up with the idea that we um everyone puts in a silent bid for the jerseys we auction off the one that i wore um to try and raise some funds and and um yeah it did really well man you know raised over 100 grand from from from those jerseys you know and and um it was just a you know i just came up with the idea

you know i was just like how can i hustle this and how can i make it work um come yeah so it was yeah i was always trying to look at ways to like i said um give people what they wanted um without feeling like someone was taking advantage of them i'm keen to dig in on the sports tour hustle how long how long how long did that last for what what were some of the best best trips that are you gonna bring back yeah yeah well i was doing i was doing stuff with um willamette travel you know they'd be taking people over to host and all that sort of stuff and um they asked me to host a couple of grand final tours and then i was like man why don't i do this myself you know so um i um i think i did one for willamette and then in new zealand we're doing some um so i was like okay well i'll jump on the end new zealand bandwagon um for grab a seat and then i made contacts

there and again they they were sort of looking at doing stuff um but didn't have the resource to do it in terms of the time to put these trips together um so i would um use them for the all the flights and they'd block off flights for us um and then i'd try and find contacts that i knew um whether it was boxing world title fights um UFC whether it was golfing um whether it was just shit that i wanted to do yeah like what do i really want to do and i want people to pay and we could have this amazing time that's why we started this podcast yeah man yeah yeah yeah so that was it you know um one of one of my wise is creating magic moments for people that may never have them otherwise um and that was it so trying to pull these things together and and um yeah do some pretty amazing stuff and what was the best one that you pulled together the one the most memorable one um yeah i mean that probably wasn't the one for punters but um we got a group uh that we've been we're going

for uh 20 years this year actually um friday the 13th um boys so 20 years ago there was a few of us my brothers and and sort of close mates um would have been about a dozen of us we're like

how do we how do we convince our wives that or partners at the time that we can get on the piss for a whole day um and they're cool with it we're like all right let's let's pitch this every friday every man is now taking notes every friday the 13th um we'll have a have a friday the 13th club and they were like it's sweet there's only probably one a year or something and most of the time there's

two every now and then there's one or three um so we've been doing it for 20 years and and a lot of the guys um hadn't traveled a lot um so yeah we sort of they were they were fundraising for about three years we're doing hangies and all that sort of stuff to put money together and stuff on a plan this trip for us over to los vegas i had 70 grand left over so yeah there was there was 20 i think 24 of us um put a trip together we went to los vegas for a week and then up to cancun for a week amazing and just yeah just created these these amazing moments for for uh for a group of mates man it was it was pretty good aren't those just the best yeah many four mates going to vegas like the excitement about that trip in the months building up i can't imagine for sure man it was like three

years like i said they were doing hangies every two months you know so the boys would get money together and and building up to it it was uh yeah there was our 13th year so friday the 13th in los vegas then we then we convinced our partners or why is it that time um for most of us um that cool down and relax and wind down and we went to cancun it didn't work out too well that was great but no we come back broken that's amazing we've got a similar um theme in our friend group it's the 12 pubs of christmas it's one day every year at the start of december and it's just this group of mates and we all go out and it's just a big blowout and we never really do it anymore but it's just one night a year but it's in its fifth year and i love how it sort of evolves and gets a little bit bigger and a bit more in depth than each time like a program and an agenda and there's games at each pub and all this sort of stuff we haven't got to vegas or overseas well that's the that's the extension is the the logical extension if only we had someone in the know that would organize some sort of a tour for us and come with us yeah yeah um okay so so link us up you've had these hustles and you've tried bits and pieces uh and and then you've stumbled on what you're doing now like i'm not sure if there were more in between but where did pacifier come in

and talk us through great name by the way yeah very very clever well yeah i mean it's the industry you know pacifier so um sort of it's just names on the tin can but um so when i yeah when i was doing the sort of commentary stuff um and i wasn't feeling fulfilled i knew there was something else out there for me um i really like i wanted to be an architect at school i love the construction stuff and i've done some developments and and subdivisions and i thought i want to jump into that and dive into it but i appreciated that if i wanted to i wanted to do it in a big way um but i didn't have a construction background i didn't have a construction company um didn't have a job to go to you know so um a friend of mine was a q s on a on a job that um the developer went went under um and i was talking to him about what i wanted to do he was um saying well look i can put you in front of the client and if you can bullshit your way in front of the client he'll give you the job i'll back you up well that's sweet put me into the meeting so i called a mate of mine um Quincy who had a construction company come along to the meeting and i um yeah i bullshitted the the the client that i had a construction company we could do all this sort of stuff do all that and so he gave us the job and and uh it was a massive job for for my mate um hang on hang on pause there you're sort of fluffing over this like but how much prep are you putting into that like this is a big meeting right are you are you spending days thinking about what you're going to say and and planning how you're going to bullshit this guy or is it sort of off the cuff no it's pretty much off the cuff yeah yeah i i kind of understood a bit about the background what they wanted the result to be and yeah i just said i asked him what his challenges were said we'd fix him and yeah that was it man came out of the meeting me fuck yeah i did help go deliver oh shit man can we do this it's like oh yeah so let's say yes so we jumped into that and and and doing the doing the build there um yeah there was this passive fire stuff that they asked us to do because the company that had done it before didn't do it well enough and the council wouldn't sign it off so i sort of looked into it a bit more had no idea what it was um saw that with um laborers that we had we might have been making 10 bucks an hour um we could put the same

labor into passive fire and make 50 bucks an hour from them you know and it was i was like okay so that stacks up um what else is behind this well why why is this an opportunity and um it was sort of on the back of the leaky building stuff that that we had um and understood that

in the building code there's there's a couple of clauses that talk to um smoke and fire separations um i'm learning i'm learning this as i as i was reading it at the time and realized that the council weren't inspecting it correctly so there was a massive liability on on existing buildings um and um i knew that if we could get in front of the right people and convince them that that they should get a specialist pacifier company and as opposed to the individual trades to do their um fire sealant um that that would be onto a winner um and i guess through my um sort of

network and and um relationships i was a good friend of the owner of dominion construction brett russell and he sort of backed me to to put me on some jobs and and um uh and and and and and

and and and Andy Hall was was sort of working there and he they gave me an opportunity and as long as we could deliver um they they keep backing us so so most of our work was was on the dominion

jobs and then slowly grew the team and then sort of grenfield tower incident happened over in the uk where where the building caught on fire and it and it sort of brought it front to mind of the front of mind of developers and and i guess the people doing the the builds that that needed to be done prior to that they were trying to think of it as as a cost that they were putting in there that they don't get any return for um but yeah it's life safety you know so um yeah so so it's just sort of growing from there and and try to try to base the business of of um what i've learned in my sporting environment and and being parts of successful and unsuccessful teams um and it you know it has it's it's we've had our challenges if you get the wrong people into into seats on the bus that they don't belong in um but you know for most of it it's um it's been a pretty awesome right how often do you dip into your sporting experience in your business experience now is it like an everyday thing where you go should i've got this in my toolkit i can pull it out from this experience yeah yeah it um yeah i mean the skills are there um they may be just um yeah uh they may be covered by um a description that is a is a footy term versus a business term you know um it was really interesting doing some work with the Warriors guys um many years ago um and

and seeing um the value that some of them had was solely tied around them as a football player and and the associated skills that they've learned um they didn't see that that could um serve them extremely well after their footy careers you know and and i think that's one of the bridges to be so the the gaps to be um bridged by um yeah by encouraging them that that they have these great assets that they've learned from their footy career you know um being driven being focused being open to feedback um making sure that you're there on time you're delivering um yeah there's so many attributes that that lean towards um being a fantastic person for business or to be hired into a company what what yeah i'm gonna have a coffee with it oh you're right man get it all out yeah um so what year is the business in now like how big is the company how many people uh yeah so we what did i start i sort of had the idea maybe eight or nine years ago and then started it seven years ago um we got staff of 45 um looking to bring in another 10 at the moment um so yeah we're in a we're in a good place um we're slowly spreading through through New Zealand at the moment um prior to COVID that was sort of our push was so was to go national and now obviously COVID um stunted that but yeah at the moment we're working in and sort of several regional areas and and um yeah by the end of end of the year we're hoping to be um in the south island as well so it's cool man got a fantastic team um yeah it's you know one

of those extremely rewarding things is is providing opportunities um for people that might not otherwise

have it um eight of our guys have got their residency visas from the Philippines and and um you know just seeing some of the sacrifice that they've made to to provide a better life for their families um and and to be able to be a part of that journey is a journey is is really humbling man like you see you know the building houses that they didn't have prior you know they're able to put their kids through um secondary school and tertiary school education which helps take them out of poverty you know that this is this is real life stuff man and and um you know that's that's um that's why i do it you know yeah it's awesome it's such a cool story and and i love the the the hustling background of the trying the different things and you've found something and it's been a great fit and you've just succeeded it like you've done with everything in your career i've got a section here question titled big questions and i told che before we started i was like this this section's gonna pop but we needed to sort of paint the um the picture first paint the landscape of all you've done because i heard in an interview you said your biggest fear was not living up to your potential so i wondered have you lived up to your potential um no man there's there's still there's still a whole lot more to do um yeah i don't know i guess i'm just one of those people that always see we are at now as the stepping stone to something else you know and and that's probably a safety mechanism for me as well that that um yeah that if things change then that's cool um i think change is is what um helps me grow and and you know um you know chase things that scare

me man stepping stone like are we talking about your dream in in 10 years time is the business is twice as big or is it more time with family or more time with friends like what what is the perfect version of the next 10 years for you yeah i probably haven't looked that far ahead other than um knowing that um my family is my number one priority um and that's always hard when

when i'm focused on trying to to create more and do more because that that um fulfills a need that i have um but yeah i guess yeah being surrounded by love um having a an environment that creates and

breeds happiness um yeah a lot of laughter a lot of smiles a lot of experiences good and bad that that um maybe feel supported um and um yeah but i guess i don't know where where the next 10 years

is going to take me and that that you know i'm i'm typically somebody that likes real certainty i want to know where where i'm going to be and what i want to do and we've got to get here on time and

we're going to do all these sorts of things because it gives me certainty um but when it comes to what

the future looks like i had no idea that i'd be doing pacify you know and and um where you know working on technology at the moment um putting a lot of time into that and understanding um what that looks like um and that excites me that's something totally new where i'm where i'm learning a whole lot of stuff so um yeah the idea is to to to build this um this vehicle that provides for so many people opportunities um have an amazing team that can they can run with this and you know

i'm who knows where where i'll be um you know 10 years time but um that excites me told you who's going to deliver yeah he was and you speak to support we talk about 10 years in the future

but i'm i'm interested in in your wife natasha because she's been with you for a long period of time along the journey can you speak to her importance in terms of your life and what she provides to you yeah oh man she's um she's my best friend you know and i think people say that all the

time about their partners but um she she is you know um remember the first time we met um we were

going back and forth with um delirious quotes in murphy i'm like all right yeah all right you're right you're right yeah it always junk that um yeah she used to used to stalk me and all this sort of stuff but it was it was the other way around me and it was uh yeah pretty pretty uh pretty amazing um sort of journey we've had we've been married 21 years now um together 22 22 beautiful amazing children um yeah she there's no coincidence that um you know my sort of injury and and um i guess what i was striving for at that period of time um seemed to dissipate when when i met tash you know um just just calm me a bit understood that i didn't have to be everything to everybody um i had somebody that loved me and and unconditionally and it was yeah man it was it was amazing and we've had some amazing experiences we've moved over to england lived there for a while we love to travel um you know we love to open opportunities for for people that we love and and um you know family first and foremost and wider family and friends and um support network um but yes now she is my sounding board she's my thought partner she's um yeah she's somebody that um i treasure um dearly man and and um yeah she gives me the right amount of um freedom and space to be myself but also um the support and uh i guess the guidance

to follow my dreams if you know what i mean it's really nice um tough questions uh i do tough questions on the spot but i love talking to dads about their dad journey um you got two kids what have you learned about yourself on your parenting journey yeah man this is um yeah yeah and really yeah really cool um and really challenging sometimes because um i guess when i was um doing the commentary broadcasting thing um we only work on the weekends and i said weekdays my golf handicap was really good um we'll get to your golf but i was able to drop my daughter off at school pick her up i was i was really heavily involved in her um sort of early childhood in schooling um and then with our son i've i've been busy with um so sort of creating this this vehicle um to to provide for our family and and there's there's a lot of guilt that i they have tied in that i haven't been able to be the same um father to my son that i was with my daughter you know um and particularly that that father and son bond you think it is um is extremely important and critical so yeah um i guess i've i've learned that um sometimes you can't have the best of both worlds um i think that i've learned to understand that they're their own humans um and not to portray

my expectations of of um what i wanted to be as a kid onto them um but then also there's there's a really um challenging um scenario that growing up um we didn't have too much um so you want to provide a better life for your kids and then when you provide that um you look at it out almost out of um a perspective of how do we create adversity for these kids so that they could be as driven as i am you know so so yeah there's a real conflict there um and i'm sure there's many parents that that sort of feel that way and think that way um and i think that's normal um we don't understand that their challenges and and i think that they still have a similar level of of challenge um for them their challenge may seem insignificant to us but the emotions they have are exactly the same as we had you know so that's hard for me to understand sometimes and and and work through but

yeah just patience i think um and being their friend um and and trying to listen to them and um and you know i haven't been that great um with this um for a wee while but i remember being um

um asked by somebody um how do you look at your child the first time you see them in the morning or when you pick them up from the school you know i just like oh shit because that's that's that's who they see back you know how do you how do you look at your kids what's the first thing that you say to them in the morning i'm like man okay i want to be i want to be portraying that i love them and conditionally that everything's going to be good that i'm there for them so yeah yeah man parenting's um challenging man and it's also most rewarding thing but yeah yeah i don't think there's a perfect script on how you can be a parent man that's one of the most articulate brilliant answers that we've ever had on those podcasts that was that was amazing i've got one more um and it's a again it's a tricky one favorite failure do you have a failure that is a lot of people grow from failures um that they make them better people is there one that you have that you look back on and think that that that was a good failure um yeah um yeah depends on how you frame failure um yeah yeah i i guess there's been many failures in in my life and and yeah i don't think i can single out one and i don't necessarily frame things as a failure because i've i've learnt that um that's an opportunity for me to learn and reframe um how i get to my goals you know um yeah i i'm not somebody that gets extremely embarrassed um i i learnt when i was playing footy that if you're if you're willing to take the the accolades that come um then you've got to take the criticism that comes as well so i was always trying to somebody that was pretty pretty level headed the whole way through um and that you're part of that um is because again i didn't really care about anyone's perspective other than mine um i was i was my own person on the island um

so yeah i i'm i'm sure that there are um failures probably and and relationships with people that mean um a lot to me that that um yeah i probably regret um and you know the i'm fortunate that they're still around and there's an opportunity for me to to make that right but it's a cool question because it's made me think about that yeah yeah it's a hell of a question to put on the spot but i was talking to shea i was like you know he's he's definitely uh up to the challenge yeah man thank you so much for sharing that that was cool um can i go yeah yeah i'll lighten it up ever so slightly with a with a couple of kind of interesting anecdotes that that we skipped over and it's i'm gonna dip back into rugby league and let's do it and that was you putting like an all-star dream team together for the point shea of pirates and just getting just getting some of your mates together and yeah reversing the club's fortunes and taking it back to the glory days like how would an opposition player feel when he comes up to walk a park and why don't you corpus there

kaltanana's there stacey jones is running the cutter at half back once you beat them there yeah mons is playing you're on a side like peter illich is running the water on like it's an amazing thing and was that just an excuse to get a good group of people together and spend time together on a weekend oh it actually come about um so stacey and i obviously played for point shea of stacey had just retired had been retired for a year stacey came back and played at the warriors after he did a stint over in england and we went back to the club rooms for the senior prize giving one night and there was no senior players back there you know it was just the kids and we felt that we had a responsibility to to go back and help our help our footy club so we sort of put together a plan at that stage they'd won i believe one senior match in the last two or three years

um they were the the bottom team of the bottom division in the Auckland competition and there was three divisions so um we yeah we went back and and we um yeah felt it our duty to go back and help and and doing so yeah we pulled together a bit of a crew and and it was a good opportunity to yeah to get a cool crew together we had guys that were from other clubs or were in the in the environment at the time the point shea of team and again it was giving them an amazing experience and and um yeah just just changed um the focus i guess for for that low division of footy and there was a lot of people turning out to watch games you know it was it was fun man it was it was uh it was a great um great environment and i learned so much um from coaching back then and um and being

in a an environment where people are giving up their time um to serve a purpose they they strongly believe in um and yeah i could only i could only stay there one year you know for me it was um extremely um well intended um but again you've got to have um the right leadership at at the top to make things um flow down but um yeah um Stacey um kept on as coach the following year we won the won the bottom division went up to second division Stacey um won that and then got up to the to the um Fox Memorial and and then point shea have been the most dominant team over the last 10 years up there man it's it's a pretty cool um pretty cool journey and and uh it was interesting so so the um the chairman of the Warriors now um Kenny Rainsfield he was our wrestling coach and a good friend of mine and Stacey's and um he was saying that one of his mates um Mark Robinson um used to be a point shea boy and family was into league and stuff and and after we won that first comp that we should catch up with him and and have a chat about sponsorship and so we went up to the malt bar up in Grayland uh Westland and caught up with him and

you know had a chat and sort of got him on board and he was like all right so how much um how much

is going to cost me to get involved with this team i think we had five thousand dollars a year before to do it and and again make it up on the spot and come up with a number and and hustled him

and i don't know we managed to get you know 20 grand or something together and and um from that

moment he's he's put a lot of money into the point shea pirates and and um obviously um found his love and passion for supporting a rugby league club and um and it's no surprise that he jumped on and and is now you know the owner of the Warriors and pumping a lot of money and into that direction

the the other one that we i feel like we skip over this fact for a lot of guests that we've had on but it's meeting royalty and it's it's meeting the queen which you had the opportunity with the all goals overseas what's that actually like because not that many people get the chance to go to Buckingham Palace and have an audience with the queen we had a guy Dave Wooden here who used

to prepare salmon for Prince Charles and he sort of just said it nonchalantly like i uh Prince you know now King Charles of course so what's take us to Buckingham Palace and kind of that experience yeah man that was that was pretty cool i think we only we only found out maybe a week or so prior um maybe it was longer but it didn't listen anyway we jump on the bus and you go in there and they sort of give you a briefing about the media that's going to be there with the with the league team and we were the first rugby league team to to sort of go into

Buckingham Palace and and that we're going to meet the queen and then we get there and the security from Buckingham Palace come on the bus and they give you sort of the rundown on what you

can and can't do and then they walk us through into into Buckingham Palace and it's amazing obviously it's now extremely ornate and all these marble floors everywhere and the walls are just covered with what seems like um velvet and and everything just looks so luxurious and all these amazing paintings that we have no idea what they are in these portraits but obviously they're really fancy and then we go into this this big banquet room and and then they they brief us again about when the queen comes in what will happen and they say okay so what'll happen is the doors will burst open you'll hear these trumpets playing and then these corgis will come running in and then when the queen comes around you're not allowed to look her in the eye i say that to steven a lot of the time you bow your head and shake your hand and you don't ask her a question you can answer a question but don't ask prince philip will come around as well and do the same and and then the royal party will follow and we're like okay that's cool so we're in this banquet room and and they've got all these beautiful paintings and like i said extremely ornate and and we're standing around waiting waiting waiting and then i noticed um few of the Polynesian boys going up and getting cups of tea i'm like it's kind of weird they don't usually drink hot drinks it's interesting so so you see them go up two or three times and like shit boys what's up with these cups of tea man and they're like oh if you tell me get a cup of tea la you get a royal teaspoon i'm like shit no way all right i'm going to get one so i go up to get my royal teaspoon as i do the bloody doors open the corgis come running in and we've got to go get our spot because i was right next to um where they were serving up um these beautiful club sandwiches and cups of tea i ended up being at the front of the line so i'm at the front of the line ruben wiki's there is our captain so the queen comes in ruben's the most nervous i've ever seen him he can't even get words out to introduce who we are and stuff so the queen comes around prince philip comes around shake hands and stuff and and i guess the uh the really cool thing is we're the first group ever to do the hucket inside buckingham palace we've got that opportunity which was which was amazing so we go out outside of the the banquet room into this big foyer that um would have hosted so many so many um events and and we're there the queen's sort of two stairs up and um she's there and she's ready come on ruben's come on hey ring a pucky yeah start slapping our legs and of course all the boys with the teaspoons you hear this ding ding ding so the boys doing the hucket they've got their elbows on their pockets so that so the teaspoons don't jingle and they're doing the hug the first time ever doing the hucket and buckingham palace and it's the most awkward uncle non-threatening hucket you've ever seen so going through it oh a few of us and then one of the boys clinton torpy forgets we no longer do the hucket jump and of course he does the hucket jump he's got the most teaspoons in this pocket elbows come off the pockets hands in the air teaspoons hit the marble floor ding ding ding ding ding ding and the queen looks straight over him adam and you know when your mum looks at you with that disapproving look imagine the queen looking at you with that disapproving look and we're like oh you're in trouble boy and without skipping a beat he picks up the teaspoons puts them in his pocket and goes what you stole our land he must have that line for peaches on the spot he's thinking of this if it comes to that yeah i've got a line line down i've got a line line down so it was awesome so yeah so the boys ended up with all the teaspoons i didn't get one so yeah gonna be a few few royal teaspoons out

south

Auckland that's a good queen story that's a good queen story right last one before me before she wraps up we've got to talk golf i found myself i found myself in these youtube rabbit holes when we have guests on i type your name into youtube and i found myself watching you play a round of golf about seven years ago on the golf show i'm like oh what's he going with you seven iron yeah what's the golf handicap at these days and what was it at its highest so yeah i'm at a 10 10.8 at the moment i'm a little reluctant to play a bit more we have a few golf tournaments that i'm involved with yeah ulterior invitation ulterior invitation oh yeah we put that on in conjunction with um good friends of mine Nathan McCallum and chris brebner who own total property works um and

we've raised funds for um you know for for great causes and and um you know the friends in construction

is is sort of what we've done done it for the last two years mates in construction which has been great

and um yeah we do it every year which is which is pretty cool but yeah um we have a have a few other

tournaments that are pretty uh pretty significant in the golfing calendar for uh for the ones that are involved and and so you don't want your handicap too low yeah okay but my handicap yeah maybe six

months ago was 16 um but when i when i wasn't um yeah working full time um and just doing the sky

tv stuff it was it was sort of around that that uh number anyway because i was playing a couple times

a week but yeah yeah it's good man i love my golf um try and get up to uh tiara links um at least once a week and play up there the new course up in mongafi it's beautifully i'm just unreal and and um

they had the helicopter there or not quite no quite no can't can't get up there at the moment with the bloody road so um no it's it's it's pretty um pretty special you know that was one of the things i thought uh thought of spawning myself with is is joining me getting membership up there and and um being able to take mates of mine up to give them an experience they might never have either so um yeah it's pretty cool you got my number right yeah bro we have to do it um look i'm just going to say a little mini outro before i throw this away this has been such an epic

uh episode like highs and lows the the deep and meaningfuls the the great yarns uh so cool thank you for giving us your time like i've learned so much about you and it's been like an awesome ride i know the audience is going to love it but i'm not the outro guy it's shea oh man um you spoke about being on your own island and it must be an incredible island that you discovered through adversity at such a young age and on the surface i think it seems like a rugby league chat and a and a view of your greatest hits but mel robinson was right like the depth of your character um the vulnerability that you've shared uh the the rawness your thoughts on life particularly your thoughts on fatherhood and love for your wife and for your family have been amazing and i'm so

thankful that an audience gets to hear this because you've got some incredible wisdoms which have been built up through an amazing body of work and obviously a great foundation through your formative years but as well as that you have an incredible love of life and seem like the kind

of guy that just enjoys having good times as well and to have that balance between such an articulate and thoughtful person who loves a good time it just seems like the perfect match and i was coming into this thinking it would be a rugby league chat and it's just lessons in life so thank you very much for sharing some time with us it's been incredible and i would love to spend more time with you and and sit down and pick your brain without a microphone and and just shoot the shit because you seem like an incredible dude cheers man i really have enjoyed this and yeah i i sort of shy away from anything like this but i thought yeah i mean this again um you do something that scares me and i've sort of hidden myself for a while so this is uh this has been nice man i enjoyed it awesome thank you so much yeah appreciate you thanks everyone

cheers bro hey guys if you've made it this far hopefully that means you've enjoyed this episode and if you feel strongly enough about it to share on social media that would be much appreciated also make sure you subscribe to the show in your podcast app and leave a review that stuff is really important for helping us grow catch you next week