

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Well, say five nice things about me.

Tall, handsome, good voice, funny, charming, kind, selfless.

What else?

That's it.

I think.

We went over five, but we couldn't get to ten.

Well, I know you're in there.

I felt like you were going to keep going.

I felt like I cut you off.

I don't think I could possibly get to ten.

You're in an incredible boxer.

Welcome to the sports.

Smart, less.

Smart, less.

Smart, less.

Smart, less.

Smart, less.

You know, the one thing I will miss about New York is the prepared meals at the grocery store because I just, just right before this, I just finished having sushi with, you know, the spicy tuna and then, but, but I always go there and I get like the spaghetti.

Like don't you guys love that?

Like, you know, we have those out here on the West Coast.

No, but, but not to walk to, you know, you just walk in, you get like a spaghetti and meatballs and you just walk back home.

Where your house is.

Spaghetti and meatballs is not sushi.

I mean, I'm going to check it out right now.

If you check that out, Will, while I explain to Sean that if you live near a place that sells pre-packaged food, you can walk to get it.

Could you, Sean, you could walk to large one if you wanted to.

I'm not divulging.

It's kind of far.

Kind of far.

Well, I mean, for a guy who doesn't like walking up a flat of stairs.

Yes.

Yes.

No, that's not true.

He does walk.

I will say this about Sean.

I like to walk a lot.

Often times when I call him, he's walking in his number.

Yeah, I love to walk.

He does.

By the way, Amanda says she saw you and Alessandra knocking down the big hill over here.

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She did it the other day.

That's so adorable.

Yeah, Will likes a good walk.

In the afternoon, I can just see you sort of pushing your laptop aside and saying, reach for the intercom there in the mansion and you say, hon, what room are you in?

Are you up for a walk?

And then you guys.

You put your ankle weights on.

You zip into your bag, right?

Your sweat bag.

I put my sweat bag on and I put my body weights on and I start climbing that hill.

And you know what?

The first time I really did that hill was with you, JB, during the pandemic and JK, JK.

And I remember the first time we did it and I was like, oh my God, and you were like, you were so good.

I was like, fuck, this is so hard.

And now I've done it, you know, every time.

I know.

And Will, you live on a hill.

Yeah, live on a hill.

And so I do.

You tried biking.

I biked up that once.

No, you did not.

Yeah, that was a whole different thing.

That was amazing.

That is brutal.

I've seen a couple guys do it.

And they're barely, they're barely going forward as they go up.

Yes, exactly.

God bless it.

Ten speed.

But I've seen, I've seen JB, I've seen you over the years a few times on that hill and usually give me like a scornful look or whatever.

Like it's sort of a shitty like, but Amanda honk and swerve near you and try to scare you within the family.

Because Amanda yesterday, all of a sudden this like Tesla comes in and the swerving.

I'm like, what the fuck?

And then it's Amanda waving, you know, brightly.

She's waving brightly.

With the drake just pouring out her window.

I just talked to her yesterday.

Yeah.

End of story.

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I were though three hours.
Yeah.
How's your ears?
I love talking to Amanda.
She said she's going to throw me a party when I come home.
We goddamn right we are.
Can I go?
I'm like, you asshole's better throw me a party.
Are you kidding?
It's soon.
Isn't it?
Isn't like a week now.
JB, you're looking real stripy today.
Are we, are you kidding me?
Well, back on the golf course today.
You are?
Yeah.
I like the shirt, Jay.
It's been a while.
I was visiting with Will out there East.
Yeah.
I'm going out there to one of Burbank's finest courses today.
Oh.
And I'm going to enjoy myself.
What a life.
What a life.
I feel like I have something more to say, but maybe I'll think of it while we're talking to our really high level guest here.
Oh, nice.
Okay.
We've bored this person.
Huh?
We've bored this person now.
Yeah.
Sorry.
Sorry, guest.
They're day to day, day to day.
And you know, it's not, it is not the first time he's been exposed to our pain.
He's been here before and I don't want to, I don't want to spoil anything, but it was during a time very, very early on.
We didn't really know what we were doing.
Things were very, very topical in our interviews, so it didn't age well.
And there's a few week delay before we put these on and COVID was, so we ended up not even airing the episode, but he's back.

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We've got a jack of all trades and a master of all.
His books have been New York Times bestsellers.
His columns and newspapers and websites are instant must reads.
His television appearances are appointment TV and his, his overall opinions on all things culture, whether it be entertainment, politics, sports are unapologetically honest and singular.
He has a degree in political science and a master's in print journalism.
We three dummies admire him for his already massive success in something we're just trying to figure out, but we love him for his profound work on the Jimmy Kimmel Show.
Please welcome Boston's own William John Simmons, the third.
Bill.
Oh, we came out of town.
Please.
One minute.
What?
Sean still doesn't know who I am.
No, I, no, I love Bill Simmons.
Wait, what happened to the show?
We never aired it because what we talked about was like, what was happening that week and really?
Yeah.
It was just, it didn't.
Yeah.
I did one of the first test shows.
Yeah.
It wasn't a test, but it was, you were one of our big shots right up there along with Dax Sheppard.
Wow.
Oh, so you just squashed it.
Oh, I should feel much worse about this.
No.
It's not even air because it was too, Jason's right.
It was too topical.
It was too, like, exactly.
It was like, what was going on?
It was like May.
You're not alone.
There were, I think, Tapper, same thing happened with Jake Tapper, right?
Yeah.
Yeah.
I just thought you guys didn't like me and then like maybe I said something about Ozark back in like, in 2020.
We tried to edit it and make it entertaining and we just couldn't make it work.
We love you and review you in spite of your allegiance to certain teams.
Put it that way.

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Certain teams.

Like you mean every Boston team?

No, not every Boston team.

Where's your beef?

What don't you like about your allegiance?

I'm not going to, I don't want to get into it back and forth with Bill Simmons.

He'll crush me.

Are you kidding?

Well, he doesn't like the Bruins.

I don't have the firepower.

I do like the Bruins.

The only team you have a passion for are the Maple Leafs.

Well, you didn't for a while, right?

Well, I was mad.

We had a cheap owner and he cost us a Stanley Cup and I was in my 20s in spiteful and I got mad.

Right.

But now you're back.

Now I'm in a better spot.

You're back with the Bears?

The Bears.

The Bruins.

Yeah, they do have the Bears.

I mean, that's.

I thought you meant the Hershey Bears.

He became a Hershey Bears man of the A.H.L.

We're taping this right now and Mookie Betts is going back to Fenway Park, which was the most traumatic Red Sox thing that's happened.

It's going to be the last 30 years.

Yeah.

He was our best guy.

You guys are both huge baseball fans.

Yeah.

And did you guys, when Mookie Betts came to the Dodgers, did you guys fire some text back and forth?

No, I told them.

I told all my Dodger fans, I was like, you guys won the lottery.

This guy's amazing.

This is the biggest mistake the Red Sox have made in my lifetime.

I couldn't get too mad because we won four World Series and I had said before we won the first World Series that I would probably sell my soul to win one World Series.

So we won four.

Wait, wait, wait.

I thought it was only two.

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When was there four?

So you did sell your soul.

I just want to confirm.

No, we won four.

Yeah, I do think I might be going to hell.

I think I might have said that drunk only one night that I would sell my soul.

So it's hard to complain too much, but you know, we had this awesome guy who was great in the community.

And, you know, he's so much fun to watch and they just trade them.

How far were the Red Sox from making that deal?

Did they have an opportunity to match what the Dodgers offered them?

They got super smart and analytical about baseball players as they hit their 30s, how their production declines and you're basically paying for past performance, which is true with like the sluggers, but like the Sean Hayes kind of wiry athletic types, age pretty nicely into their 30s.

Wiry.

I know Sean is still playing squash and doing whatever he's doing.

I got my things on.

Look at his compression wrap on his elbow.

It's not a good luck.

Hammering the piano every night.

Bill, I wanted to ask you, I mean, you are sort of a jack of all trades, as Jason said, and you opine on lots of different things, but sports is sort of the lead.

That was the sort of the cutting edge that got you into this world.

What was it about you, like as a kid, where you like, this is going to be my milieu, like I'm just a sports guy.

I love sports so much and I just got it.

It's got to be my life.

What was the sort of the genesis of, you know, you as the ultimate sports guy?

Well, it also might have been not having a life.

You know, I was the only child and I absolutely love sports.

I was all into it and all the Boston teams, my dad had Celtic season tickets, just kind of threw myself into it.

And at some point in college, I had a column in college that really from the first week

I was in college and I was like, I wonder if I can get paid for this.

So it was one of those.

I just love sports.

I remember everything.

I have opinions.

I have a sense of humor.

Can this be something?

But it still took me the entire 90s to get there.

But you early on decided that you were going to make your journalism come from the perspective of the fan as opposed to sort of trying to stay neutral and just kind of report the facts.

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Was that shaped by your experience as a Boston fan and that the Celtics were, were, were just killing it there in the, what was it, the late 70s, early 80s, right?

We had a nice run, right?

And then the socks were giving you a lot of pain.

So did that kind of shape, well, that's more of like, I'm a, I'm a very passionate fan by virtue of the local teams.

And so let's, let's do that angle.

It was two things.

The first one was that the way people wrote about sports back then was very, you know, reporter-y, dry, like non-fan stuff, right?

And it just wasn't the way my friends and I talked.

So I never really liked reading that coverage that much because I was like, do these people even like sports?

They just seem like angry old white guys.

So was that.

And the other thing was, um, because I couldn't get in the clubhouse, I was writing like a sports column on the internet.

I couldn't get press passes for anything.

So I really tripped down on, all right, I'm going to write from the fans perspective.

A couple of the writers that I really liked had done that.

Like there was this book, the screenwriter William Goldman had written called wait till next year where he wrote all of his parts were about New York sports from a fans perspective.

There's Roger Angel and the New Yorker was another one.

I was like, I feel like that's a better lane for this.

So I kind of just threw myself into that and it kind of worked.

What was your first, well, what was your first sort of, um, moment where you got, uh, not validated but got entree, like where somebody said, okay, you can come in, you can get into the, into the locker room, you can get into the press box, you can have access.

What was that moment?

Yeah.

How do you get into the locker room?

Yeah, that was so ESPN got my column in 2001 and I had a little more juice at that point to go to stuff.

But at that point I was like, you know what, like having some distance from this and writing from the fan side is actually better for me because I was weaving pop culture and all my stuff.

And I was like, I actually think like this is a better lane.

So for really though, all the 2000s, I tried to stay away from being kind of too embedded with athletes and getting in there and just kind of being detached.

And then in the 2010s, I realized cause I had, I had so much, uh, I don't know, such a high profile at that point, I could talk to just about whoever I wanted.

And I was like, you know what, now that I'm hitting my forties, there's stuff to learn from some of these guys, from some of these coaches.

And I really kind of threw myself into just kind of learning more from people who played

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and coached.

Yeah.

There was that, that big transition you talk about, you becoming a high profile.

So listener for those of you that aren't, you know, sports junkies like me and Sean Hayes, you know, Bill exploded onto ESPN.

He started a podcast, a dynasty with, with Grantland and then the ringer and my podcast was 07.

Sean.

It's amazing.

About that.

It was like me and Mark Marin and like two other dudes.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I know who you are.

So what, so tell us about that.

That transition was not gradual.

It was, it was, it was pretty not overnight or no, I don't mean to diminish it or belittle it at all.

I don't mean that at all.

It was very deserved.

What happened, maybe it was just overdue.

But were you, were you comfortable in that transition?

Not only what it did for you publicly and being sort of famous and recognizable.

Yeah.

That kind of maturing from ESPN, from ESPN to the next chapter.

Is that what you mean?

Well, being, being on air, like all of a sudden you were, I remember seeing you on the finals.

On TV.

Yeah.

And I was like, I was like, who is this guy?

And I was like, oh, Bill, oh, that's what Bill Simmons looks like.

And, and listening to you talk and like, it was just this great new personality.

He's so handsome.

I remember how disappointed you were at how handsome he was.

Yeah.

Jesus.

He's handsome too.

But there really was definitely like an unapologetic, sorry to use the word again.

You didn't really make much of an effort to be some like zippy on air personality.

Like you were just like, look, I'm just a guy.

And I got an opinion and it's backed with knowledge and facts.

And, and here we go.

It was.

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Yeah.

You were fine with just being a plain regular guy, which we really admire.

Yeah.

We're just small.

Yeah.

It was, it was actually fun to do those shows because I would just kind of call it like it is.

Yeah.

And I think people were surprised initially because it was very like a Barclays doing a good job.

Studio shows were very.

Yeah.

Barclay could do it because he was a Hall of Famer.

But like when the media guys usually came on, they were way more careful.

I went going backwards, like probably 06.

I made a decision like every single year I want to try to add something and take a swing at something.

I don't want to be in the same spot at the end of the next year that I'm in right now.

So what can that be?

So like in 07, that was when, when I started 30 for 30, I sent the memo we created on our show.

Yeah.

That was when I started writing my basketball book and that was when I started doing my podcast.

And then the next year after that, it was like, all right, how can I keep going?

How can I keep going?

And that led to Grand Land in 2011 and then just TV in 2012 and it was just each year.

What can I do?

I don't want to be in the same spot.

Well, what I love about it, sorry, and correct me if I'm wrong, Bill, is that you, you say you do all these things and you're like, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do this.

And it feels like you're at ESPN, then you're at HBO, I think for a minute.

And it's almost like those places just couldn't contain you.

You ended up, you're like, well, fuck it.

I don't need them.

I don't need them.

I'll just create my own network.

I'll create my own vessel because then I don't have to answer to all that.

Is that kind of how it went?

Yeah.

I realized I got suspended in 2014.

That's fun.

From ESPN for.

That was for dealing all that heroin, right?

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I mean, yeah.

Turned out here, the H was just not, wait, what did you get suspended for?

I said some stuff about the NFL commissioner who was their biggest partner and they got upset.

And when I got suspended, something weird happened.

All these people reached out like, hey, when you branch off, I'd love to invest or I'd love to.

I was like, wait, what's going on?

Wow.

And that really made me start thinking about it pretty seriously, like, okay, if I left, could I create something?

I had some people grailin' that I really liked working with and just over the course of 2015, it was like, all right, what if we, could we recreate grailin' as our own thing that we own?

We don't have to answer to anybody.

Could we really triple down on podcasts?

Because we were convinced, you know, he has pinned it in care about podcasts at all.

And we were convinced like, we can probably pay for everything through the podcast revenue.

And I never ended up taking money from investors because I kind of felt like we could pay for everything through my podcast and which is what happened.

That's a risky proposition, a little bit, I mean, not nerve-wracking, but it's a leap, right?

Yeah, I remember explaining it to my wife and she's like, I trust you, but I can see like this glimmer in her eye, like, should I go on Raya now or like wait for six months?

Raya.

Well, before you give us all a layman's lesson on podcasting and where it's kind of going and all that, talk a little bit about where this moxie came from to sort of double down, triple down on yourself and to be really proactive in an entrepreneurial way because, you know, dudes that are super big sports fans that like write about it and stuff aren't famous for being business titans to put it kindly.

So where does all that come from?

I mean, you're very well educated.

You come from, I think your dad was a teacher and your mom was a superintendent.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So I mean, you're raised by adults and you are one.

So is that simply it or do you just have an innate business acumen?

You guys are probably going to like this answer.

The more I got embedded at ESPN, you start looking around and you're like, wait, I can do that.

That guy's kind of terrible.

Yeah.

This guy's terrible.

Yeah.

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This guy get this job where he decides stuff.

This lady's awful and you just start going, wait a second.

I feel like, I feel like I'm smarter than a lot of these people.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It turns out nobody knows what they're doing.

Yeah.

But even if it's not that usually I find if you just get in the door in any sort of industry, sort of the mystery of it that you build up in your mind just kind of melts away and that's half the battle.

Yeah.

You think everybody is awesome and all knowing and they're just not.

They're not.

Or that they've got this like well of like secret knowledge that you'll never have access to.

You know what I mean?

Yeah.

And most of the people just got, yeah, they got promoted a couple of times and they kind of can't believe they got to where they got like when we did 30 for 30 and people loved it.

The first volume.

Is that like, is that like 80 for Brady?

No.

Well, they were.

It's a sports doc veteran series.

So we created it and we finished it and the person who was in charge of ESPN films who it changed hands a couple of times and by the time we finished 30 for 30 people loved it and they were like, all right, so 30 for 30 is done.

We're going to call documentaries now ESPN films and do it that way and they didn't want to do a second volume.

And we were like, we just created a brand.

That's like the hardest thing you could possibly do.

So they released like four more documentaries, not called 30 for 30s or called ESPN films presents and everybody was like, you see the new 30 for 30 and we're just sending emails to people and we're like, we, we did it.

Like we did the impossible.

We created a brand.

Just let's do another volume of 30 for 30.

We had to convince them for like nine months and now the thing's still on 14 years later.

Amazing.

That's so cool.

It was so stupid.

I can't tell.

I would go now.

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I don't get as mad as I did back in the day, but like in the late to, I would just lose my mind.

I would send these 2000 word emails and I thought it was normal because I worked for Kimmel for 18 months and you guys know Kimmel.

Kimmel is like he will whip off a 700 word email in three seconds as he's playing a video game and doing nine other things.

So I thought, well, Jimmy's like that too.

That's normal.

And then you realize like, oh, Jimmy's also a lunatic.

So we're both lunatics.

Yeah.

I'm very similar.

Yeah.

You guys have, Sean is by the way, Sean will answer an email before the person has hit send.

Right.

He's telepathically answering it.

And I write Sean a couple of times.

I've been like, Hey, I'm really sorry.

Like we're on some sort of like email chain or business thing.

And I'll be like, I'm sorry that I'm not answering yet, but I need a minute to think about it.

Yeah.

Sean's already answered.

But you know, it's funny you say that it makes sense that, and I know you and Kimmel are friends.

I know you worked with them for a little bit.

It does totally make sense that you guys both have this kind of, you're very confident and you're both opinionated, but confident in your opinion and confident about being right.

And generally, I bet you're both right most of the time.

And they don't, they don't, they don't pop off on shit.

They're wrong about.

No, no.

And wait, hold on.

Let's, let's be clear.

Kimmel is way worse than I am.

He's not confident.

He is super stubborn.

Yes.

And we'll just fight to the death until he just breaks you down and you admit he's right, even though you don't think he's right, but he's smart enough not to dig in on things that he's not smart about.

He'll just back off and it'll be like it never happened.

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Yeah.

He's like one of the most frustrating people to argue with because he's just, it could be like, we could argue with Celtics.

He's like, no, Larry Bird only went two MVPs and I'm like, do I have to get like the basketball encyclopedia?

No, it was two.

And then it was like, now here it is.

It's three.

It's like, I told you it was three.

And we will be right back.

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You put it in milk and I add a little honey in there.

It's really, really great.

And they sent me this frother when you, and you stick it in it to stir it.

It's kind of like, you know, those milkshake frothers, you know, when you were a kid and the milkshake machines, but you get your own and it spins it and it's really cool.

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So go to [MUDWTR.com slash smartless](https://mudwater.com) for your free frother.

That's [MUDWTR.com slash smartless](https://mudwater.com).

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So you know, there was a time in my life when I knew it was good for me, but my brain was getting in the way like, you know, when I was trying to fall asleep at night, but my mind keeps racing and racing and racing.

And of course, when I wake up in the morning, either like, or in the middle of the night, just to go to the bathroom, my mind starts racing and racing and racing again.

Do you ever feel like your brain is getting in its own way like me?

You know, it takes a lot to calm it down.

And what I find helps is therapy, like, you know what you should do, what's good for you,

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you just can't do it.

So what I do to stop the kind of racing thoughts is I utilize therapy because it always helps me.

Therapy helps you figure out what's holding you back so you can work for yourself instead of against yourself.

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And now, back to the show.

So how did podcasting hit your radar earlier than anybody else?

Not just listeners, but podcast creators and what was it?

Who whispered in your ear and you got ahead of it and carved away and made it possible for idiots like us and DAX and all the rest of them?

Oh, I like that I made it possible for your podcast to succeed.

This is good.

Well, it became a medium.

It wasn't a medium before you and Mark Maro.

Jason, our lawyers just emailed me and said, take that back.

We'll cut that out later.

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No, when I started it, it was just because I saw there was this interview link on ESPN.com with the interview with the Celtics GM.
And I clicked on it and it was like podcast, it's interview with Danny Angel.
I'm like, what the hell is this?
So I emailed them and I'm like, can I have one of these?
And they were like, okay.
And they mailed me this equipment.
So I did my first one with an NBA Redditor named Mark Stein.
And the second one was with Corolla and Corolla came over because I only had one Jack in the phone.
So he came over and we realized we couldn't do it in the same room.
And he was wandering on my driveway on the phone doing the podcast with me.
So it was like the early days were like crazy rocky.
And I was like, these are really fun.
I used to have my friends on and my whole goal was like to emulate Mike and the Mad Dog because I love Mike and the Mad Dog in New York.
And it was like, these guys, I love Mike and the Mad Dog when they would be talking about like the Oscars, not like the Rangers and be like, all right, who do you have for best acted dog?
And they would like be going, I'd be like, this is amazing, what is this?
So I would have my friends on and just like people that I thought I would have good chemistry with.
And then around 09, I'd had it for about two years.
And I remember Seth Meyers texts, he emailed me about it and he was like, yeah, Jacko was my buddy, Jacko was like, yeah, Jacko was feeling it today.
It was, it was so funny.
And I'm like, you listened.
Like I had no idea people are listening because they didn't tell me the numbers.
And I was like, you want to come on?
So in 09, I started just having these celebrities on.
And I was like the first podcast for, I would say like 50 celebrities and all of them thought it was amazing.
It was like a first date with somebody who were like, that was amazing.
And now it's like all these, every celebrity has been on what 50 podcasts.
There's nothing special about it anymore, but it was really fun to grab people.
So by like 2009, 2010, people were mentioning it to me on the street.
They weren't mentioning, they were mentioning my column, but then some people are like, hey man, love the podcast.
I was like, oh, and it just felt like it was building.
It's also a great way for celebrities to be, to have an extended conversation with a, with an interviewer or journalist or whatever and not run the risk of, of having a headline.
You know, Cherry picked out of there for some sensational use, you know, like, yeah, it's all verbatim.
Well, I remember talking to you about it, Jason, because you were like, we were talking

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

about how frustrating the talk show circuit is, where you come out and you do like, well, Kimmel's, but you do like, you're on a talk show for 10 minutes, right?

And they do the pre-interview and you come out and you hit your three things and you have a little back and forth.

And I think for the celebrities, the podcast was just such a more fun format because it was more relaxed.

This is who I really am.

Yeah.

You're hanging out.

For sure.

So that was a big win for everything.

Bill, tell me, sorry to just go back again.

So your parents were teachers.

What did they think?

What did you see say to them when you graduated college?

You're like, all right, I'm just going to go into the sports thing.

Were they like, great.

Were they expecting you to become a teacher?

Did they want you to become a lawyer?

No.

I think they was like 50-50 for them.

I was going to be able to have a steady job.

I don't think I was waking up at 25.

But you just got a master's degree in print journalism.

I got a master's, my senior year, my dad was like, hey, what are you going to do next year?

I was like, I don't know.

And he's like, you should, you maybe keep going on the sports round there.

And I'm like, you're right.

And I just like the last minute applied to three journalism schools and got into a call.

So he encouraged you.

Yeah.

More like, what are you doing next year?

And just kind of staring vacantly back with no answer.

But then I went to journalism school and, you know, it wasn't, it didn't work out right away.

Like I worked at the Boston Herald for three years and did grunt work and Chinese food orders and covered high school sports.

And by 96, I was out.

I was bartending.

So did you play sports as a kid?

And then did you not want to go into professional sports, like playing them?

I was, I was like high school level best.

Yeah.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

And what was your sport?

Basketball is my favorite.

Yeah.

Oh my God.

I still played tennis.

I had to retire from basketball 10 years ago because we're all old people.

Oh, did you, did you roll an ankle too many times?

Yeah.

I remember speaking to North Beach surgeon once in New York and she was just basically like, yeah, like nine out of 10 injuries of dudes over 30 or from basketball.

Yeah.

And now it's like pickleball and basketball.

Yeah.

Pickleball.

Yeah.

And I was like, you know, we'd run down to one end of the court and I'd be like, and then they'd get the ball, the rebound and I'm like, wait, we got to go all the way back.

We just, we got to go all the way back to the other side.

I don't, I don't understand.

And why do I, can't we just play half the court?

I didn't understand it.

I was too much for me.

So basketball was your, your main sport.

You played baseball too, I imagine a little bit when you were a kid.

I played everything until high school.

Just played basketball.

Basketball the most though, cause we, we had the season tickets.

We were like front and center for the whole Larry Bird era.

So I just understood it the most.

Did you grow up in Boston, Boston, or did you grow up?

Yeah.

I grew up in Brookline and my parents got, my parents got divorced, which is why I have a sense of humor.

Yeah.

Exactly.

And my mom moved to Connecticut and eventually I moved to live with my mom for high school.

Okay.

And they got divorced like at a, at a tough time for you too, 13, I think it was?

No.

I was nine.

Yeah.

I had Dan Wikipedia.

The Red Sox.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Yeah.

Don't read Wikipedia.

The Red Sox lost to the Yankees in 1978 playoff game, which was the most traumatic sports loss ever.

Bruins lost to the Canadians and my parents got separated all in the span of six months.

So and I had glasses.

Wow.

It was tough.

Wait, was that 78?

Did you say 78?

78 and early 79.

Yeah.

Cause the Leafs, the Leafs lost.

They were swept by the Canadians before that.

For the Canadians.

Yeah.

They just.

So you were both on the edge of a few buildings that year.

It was tough.

Yeah.

I mean, the Leafs thing is, it's so tough.

One of the most traumatic professional sports relationships that anyone has nothing, nothing good happens.

But Brandon Shanahan is going to bring it all back.

Right, Willie?

Shani is the man.

Shani is our man.

He's the best.

He's the best dude.

I actually just played golf with Shani and Mike from Mike and the Mad Dog a couple weeks ago.

Yeah.

Well, did you ever get tempted by the Kings just like doing a full hockey divorce and just second wife with the Kings?

I couldn't.

I mean, I go to Kings games when I'm here and I'll, you know, sometimes with the kids and stuff just for fun, but I'm just such a huge hockey fan, but the Leafs are just my team.

They're just it for me.

And they always have been.

It's been hilarious that people will divorce human beings, but not their teams.

Like if Will was like, I'm a, I'm now a Kings family, but like, that's horrible.

You broke up with the Maple Leafs, that's the worst I've ever heard.

You know what?

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

If it's a relationship, it's fine.

You know, it's funny.

So, so when I was with Shani a couple of weeks ago, he goes, he's like, I think I hear, you heard on the podcast or somewhere, he goes, so I heard you say, cause I've become like in the last 10, 12 years, like a massive soccer fan and I'm a big Liverpool supporter through my friend.

And I just,

Bill loves Tottenham.

Get him.

Do you, are you a Tottenham fan?

It lasted three years until my kids started playing sports every Saturday.

Right.

So it's tough.

It's tough.

Yeah.

It was too hard.

But it's, yeah.

So I'm up at 430 in the morning watching games and stuff.

And I'll watch every, I'll watch Bundesliga.

I'll watch the league.

I'll watch anything.

Champions League.

It's so hot.

So I started watching it.

So erotic.

430.

And I guess I had sort of said offhand that like it's, that watching Liverpool and watching soccer has become almost, has almost taken over hockey.

And he looked at me with such disappointment, he's like, is that true?

Is that true that you love?

And I go, hey, first of all, relax, settle down, settle down.

But I do, it has helped to, to kind of mitigate my frustration or disappointment by watching that because I, I'm so invested in the Leafs.

I live and die by, you know.

So I've gotten into, and football has been a really great soccer has become a really great sort of antidote to that.

And so I can have some, I can have some highs.

Better attention span sport too.

It's two hours.

There's a half-time.

It's fantastic.

Just flies through and you're done.

It's perfect.

And once I got into an understanding who the people were and what the stories were behind

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

it is super interesting and Champions League is interesting.

And I'll watch virtually any sport, which makes me like, I ended up watching, you know, the Ashes, the cricket, I'll watch 2020 cricket, T20, like I'll watch and I think like, is there anything I won't watch that it's not a sport when you watch, is there any sport you won't watch?

Not a sport?

Well, okay.

It's a game.

It's not.

It's a game.

Is there any?

So is golf a sport then?

Game.

Game.

Baseball is a game, not a sport.

Yeah.

I guess golf is a game, but it's the, but the, but the top guys are athletes.

True.

Have you seen the bodies on the Red Sox?

No, no, no, no.

It's a real softball team.

No, no, no, no.

I'm saying golf.

I'm saying golf.

Is there a sport you won't watch?

Sorry.

That was my, my big, long lead.

Is there a sport I won't watch?

Yeah.

That you don't enjoy watching.

I don't get auto racing and like there's this F1 resurgence and I gave it a, gave it a kick, a kick drive and I just, I don't get driving around in the circle.

It's just cars just going in laps.

I don't get it.

Well, the road courses I get, but circles.

You'll come, come to Formula One with me.

I'll get it.

Come with me to Formula One.

No, I listen.

You're the hundredth person.

It's like, no, no, you'll get it.

You just, but it, it's starting to feel like Scientology a little bit where you don't understand.

You've got to meet Miss Gavage.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

You'll get it when you need it.
Just have brunch with him.
I don't know.
It doesn't take.
I don't know if I love F1.
Wow.
So wait.
So this is a perfect opportunity.
I've asked, and this is going to be a long question.
She's just hanging there because I was like, should I ask it?
Should I not ask it?
I'm going to ask it.
I'm going to go make a sandwich.
Yeah.
I've heard your long question, Sean.
I'm excited.
They're not.
Okay.
So it's, it's to the three of you guys.
Uh-oh.
So, and this is a perfect opportunity to ask this.
And I wasn't going to ask it, but here we go.
It's already too long.
No, no, hang on.
All the qualifiers.
No.
So I,
He's a big qualifier guy with his questions.
So what is the psychology behind loving sports so much?
Okay.
So wait.
So like, you know, in movies, theater, TV, whatever it is, you're watching a story or emotionally invested, you're watching the beginning, middle and end of something in sports.
I get it.
There is a beginning and end because who's going to win and then they win.
Okay.
Sure.
But what is the psychology about loving it?
So like, what are you rooting for other than a team that you don't have a personal connection to?
Yeah.
You go first.
Yeah.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

For me, it's just simply, and it's, and it's heightened by the Olympics because it's, it's, it's only every four years.

It's the televised live moment of somebody putting everything they've got on the line and it's a binary result of success or failure.

And I get to see this person reach for excellence and let's see what the best they can do is going to yield.

Yeah.

And that's a really exciting thing to me and it's not, and it's unwritten.

Yeah.

I get that.

I would say for me, it's, it's not dissimilar.

And as I explained, my sort of, my appreciation of soccer was, came from understanding the stories and the people behind it.

Yeah.

You told me that, Will.

So once I can get into like this guy came over here and for me, it's not necessarily binary because there is victory sometimes in people in failure when they don't actually get it, but they try really hard.

I like that.

Yeah.

But, but the stories, like you told me that a long time ago, you're like, Sean, just try to watch the stories of the people.

So I'm watching.

I'm like, well, this is a dateline episode.

Like I could just watch, you know, I could learn about these people without watching them kick a ball around for two hours.

Sure.

You know what I'm saying?

So, but then, but then there is a, there is a moment.

There isn't, there is an actual venue for them to go and, and try to do that.

You see the story behind it.

So like, for instance, if you watch like one of these great soccer documentaries and you see the importance of the team to the town and to the, the fans and you see, and then you see these players and these guys and their town and what it means.

And then the players who come in and they're trying to do it and they're trying to do it, not just to win, but they understand the cultural impact that they have.

They feel it.

They know it.

And watching them go through that is super compelling.

Yeah.

I get it.

I kind of also, but on the other side, I went to a daughter's game with Jason a couple of years ago and we're sitting there and I was like, I kind of get it.

I get like the atmosphere.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

It's like watching this old house on a Sunday.
You're like, oh, this is very relaxing.
This is on so well.
You know what I mean?
I get it.
There.
Bill, get him back on track.
But Sean, in the same way that, like, for me, I can't go, I can't get into musicals.
Mm-hmm, right.
And I, and it's why-
Because it's why I admire people singing.
And I'm like, what?
And if you get it.
But if you learned about them, if you, if you, if you kind of understood kind of what,
what goes into it all, then you-
I do, well, I do in the sense that it is sort of adjacent to what I do as a profession.
Right.
And yet I still can't, it's just not for me.
It doesn't speak to me.
And for whatever reason, sports does in that way.
and Bill, you probably have a much more concise answer.
I just think it's almost like a DNA thing.
It hits you, it's gotta hit you before like age six.
And I see it with a couple of my friends' kids.
I had like my friend Nathan's kid,
just like I could tell when he was six.
I was like, oh, he's gonna be one of those guys.
He's gonna be really into it.
And now he is, he's like 14 and he's one of those guys.
Yeah, like I was obviously, I'm from Chicago
when the Cubs won finally, what, four, five, six years ago.
I don't remember when that was.
I was crying because I was like, oh my God,
I haven't won and it's like 200 years.
I'm from Chicago.
Like that was incredible.
Yeah, that's all it is.
But, and Ann, I'm a huge football fan.
I just need a reason to watch.
Like I need to bet or something.
When I was growing up in Boston in the seventies,
but the cold weather cities, you know,
it's pretty miserable for like four or five months.
And Canada has this too, I know Will knows.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

But, you know, the sports teams take this
outsized importance of just like the kind of,
whatever the teams are doing,
it kind of sets the mood of the city.
And, you know, when Bird showed up for the Celtics in 1979
and we realized like pretty quickly,
like this is one of the most special athletes in any sport.
And we get to go on this ride with him
for the next 10, 12 years.
That's when it goes to a whole other level.
Like Cleveland had that with LeBron
and the Lakers had that with Kobe.
And, you know, you just kind of hit the lottery
when it happens.
And that's, that's going to make everyone care more.
Bill, you know, I remember distinctly thinking this
at the time, and Sean, again,
this kind of goes to the way it makes you feel.
I remember when Tiger starting in sort of 99 through 2008,
really up to the 2008 US Open.
In that time, he did something that was so spectacular.
And I remember thinking,
there were people who didn't like him.
I remember thinking, we have,
I hope we all appreciate how incredible it is,
what this guy is doing.
It was so-
And that we're alive during it.
And we're alive.
And we get to watch it in real time.
Yeah, that is cool.
That is cool.
I thought you were going to talk about Jason with Ozark.
It was-
Yeah, there you go.
Thank you for bringing the background.
Oh my God.
I agree.
I'm a member of the Species.
I know we get to go with the slow blink.
Take your time, Bill.
With the slow blink that McConaughey pointed out.
Do you know McConaughey pointed out
that Jason's got the best slow blink of all?

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

He's a slow bank hall favor.

To be honest, I'm not sure what that compliment was,
but I took it.

I loved it.

Dude, I have thought about it every moment since I said that.

I looked at myself in the mirror yesterday,
and I was like, I tried to do a slow blink,
and I realized, wait, I can't see what I'm doing.

So I'm not sure what he's talking about.

That is good.

Hey, Bill, I don't need me to back you
into anything controversial,
so feel free to pull the ripcord if it is.

But online sports betting,
that is now sort of really all over the place
on television and online and whatnot.

How do you feel about,
are you worried about your average sports viewer,
especially because when you started talking
about the six-year-old,
pretty soon he's gonna have a phone,
and he's gonna have an allowance every week,
and he's gonna be able to make little bets
prompted by the on-air announcers,
saying, hey, listen, if you're thinking
this might be a field goal versus a touchdown,
you can bet right now.

People are gonna get hurt,
and I'm wondering how you feel about that
being in the space right now.

Well, the way the apps are set up,
it's impossible for any non-adult
to just start a gambling account.

Like my son is a sophomore in high school,
he can't gamble because he's not allowed.
So they have a lot of checks and balances with that.

I just think this is where it's been going,
really for the last 20 years.

Like I remember when my first couple of years
at ESPN.com, gambling was like a big part
of the way my friends and I talked about sports,
and they wouldn't even let me write a gambling column
the first year in 2001 with the spreads.

But the on-air announcers sort of encouraging that.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Do you feel like that's on the same side of the line?
Do you feel like it's encouraging or not?
I don't know if they're encouraging it as much as,
it's part of the dialogue of sports now to put in perspective.
Well, but they're promoting it,
and I think the network is as a participant in that action.
I could be wrong with that, but-
Well, ESPN just did a deal.
ESPN bet, they're calling it.
I think they all kind of see where it's going.
Are they doing that with Penn?
Yeah, they-
But Bill, and again, correct me if I'm wrong,
the NFL has all sports,
but certainly the NFL always posted the odds
in the newspaper for as long as,
it was always about that from day one.
It's just more overt than it used to be,
but teams would get fined if they didn't report injuries.
Why are they getting fined?
Because it affected the spreads.
Then how does it,
can you reconcile it with the position
that baseball took against Pete Rose gambling on baseball,
and now they're actually a partner of gambling with baseball?
No, but you can't, because the Pete Rose thing,
he was betting on his own team,
and he was managing that team.
So he could affect the outcome, potentially.
Yeah, and they've been cracking down on,
they don't want the players to gamble on anything, right?
And there's been, especially in football,
there's been a few guys that got nailed,
but if you go back to the history of the sports,
like there's been gambling scandals in every era.
But there was a ref in basketball
that just did it, right?
Yeah, oh yeah, there's been.
But college basketball in the 50s,
there was that huge scandal, right?
A point shaving way back when?
Yeah, and it almost killed college basketball.
What's weird is there's so much attention on it now,
it would be really hard to fix anything.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Anytime something's out of whack,
everybody, all the casinos, everybody kind of knows.
So they get caught like immediately.
So yeah, it's part of the dialogue.
I just think it's a generational thing.
I think for like our kid's generation,
they're just more used to hearing the announcers talk about it
and the dialogue of these guys were favored by nine.
Al Michaels used to be on Sunday Night NBC.
The great Al Michaels.
And he would always be,
he would always be discreetly kind of mentioning the line
without mentioning it.
Yeah, yeah, I remember, yeah.
He was like, well, that was a big field goal
for some people out there.
Yeah, exactly.
Someone missed an extra point
inside the last two minutes they go, yeah.
So now it's just kind of out in the open.
Yeah.
Yeah, so I'm good with it.
We'll be right back.
SmartList is supported by Soylent.
Funny name, but serious nutrition.
We could come up with lots of jokes on the name, right?
But the internet has been there, done that.
So we will just focus on how incredible the product is
and the science behind it.
You know, I'm into science.
Soylent was perfected by food scientists
and tested by doctors and researchers
over the last 10 years.
One bottle has all the balanced nutrients
of a complete meal.
Vitamins, minerals, protein, healthy fat,
and only one gram of sugar.
And it actually tastes great.
In fact, in one product of the year,
the science-backed food hack is the perfect meal
for when you don't want to think about food.
Soylent is convenient and requires no refrigeration
so you can have breakfast or lunch whenever
and wherever you want or need it.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

I tried the Soylent Creamy Chocolate Meal Replacement Shake.
That's really good.
Of course, I love anything chocolate.
And it was so delicious
and I didn't have to think about meal.
I was in and out of my house
and my next appointment in no time.
Go to Amazon now and get Soylent for 30% off using Smartless.
I repeat, go to Amazon now and get Soylent
for 30% off using Smartless.
And back to the show.
How are you as a sports gambler?
Do you do it?
Oh my God.
You must be good.
I go up and down.
I know you're trying to jinx me right now,
but yeah, I have a long history.
I started gambling in 1990
because the Patriots went one in 15
and there were only two games on
and we were in college and the Patriots were terrible.
And it was like, this is the worst football season
I've ever had.
And you made a million betting against them.
And we had a buddy on my house,
like I have a book here, like what?
And we start like betting on football
and all of a sudden I had all these favorite teams.
It wasn't just the Patriots.
So yeah, it's been a long journey.
I've written about it a lot
and I've had a lot of fun with it,
but now there's like so much analytics
and analysis that go with it.
Like Sal and I, Jimmy's Cousin Sal,
we do a Sunday Night Podcast on my pod
and we did this over or under with the wind totals.
Last year and we did great.
Like I went like on the wind totals,
whether a team was gonna go over or under,
I went 24, seven and one.
It was the best I've ever done.
And I was more excited about that than anything.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Over or under a certain number of wins for the year.
Yeah, so they'll say like the Giants are seven and a half.
You're thinking we'll go over under
and we just like,
and we were like so proud of ourselves that we did well.
But there's been other years where we're like,
oh my God, we're getting annihilated.
Does God hate us?
Does that translate to fantasy sports prowess?
Are you really good at that?
I was wanting to ask you
if you're into fantasy sports.
Oh, I was like, I was in the first wave.
I was in basketball leagues in the 80s,
baseball leagues in 1982, football since 1990.
What's the name of the,
wasn't there a baseball group early on in ESPN?
What was it called?
Yeah, I wasn't in that,
but yeah, it started in the early 80s.
There's a bunch of people that have tried to claim
they started the first fantasy league and it's...
No, but this was like, these guys are like the best,
supposedly, I forget what it was called,
but I wonder if they're part of it.
Well, I'm in the Kimmel League where we vote everybody out
and Sal has the hammer this year
and I think he's going to vote me out for comedy's sake.
Why, because the trash talk's not good enough?
Well, we show up and there's 11 owners and only 10 stay.
And at the beginning of the draft,
the guy won the draft the year before,
votes out one of the 10, one of the other 10.
Ruthless.
And you just have to get up and get the F out.
We had, John Ham was in it and he showed up late
because he was filming Mad Men and we waited, waited, waited.
He showed up like a half hour late,
comes in, sorry guys, sorry, gets a beer, sits down,
and then he got voted out
and he just like drank the beer and that's it.
Oh my God, I'm the commissioner of my baseball league.
It's the worst league of the world
because I don't think that there's not one trash talk

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

at all through the entire season.

Yeah, the 90s were so much more fun.

Yeah, the 90s people get mad.

The draft was like really vicious and everybody's nicer.

I have a question about this stuff.

So what about...

You want to focus on the fantasy part of it?

Go John.

Yeah, exactly.

No, why?

And I think Jason, well, I think I may have asked this on another episode of our podcast.

So we can cut it if so.

But if all this...

I'm smartless, available wherever you get podcasts.

Yes, I'm smartless.

But you can get it early on Wondry without ads.

If you realize that...

I read about all of these crazy, unbelievably massive amounts of money thrown around to all these players for all these teams, right?

Contracts that these guys are playing.

So if these teams and owners and all these people have literally billions of dollars, it seems like, why wouldn't they just go buy every single top player and create and have that one team if they have all this money?

Bill, you'll be more, you'll be more concise.

No, I mean, but there's an actual...

The Dodgers kind of tried that.

It's working.

Well, because there are rules, there are rules as to how much you can actually spend

There's rules over a certain number.

You'd then have to start paying a punitive tax on that.

But how would you explain what's going on with the Yankees and the Red Sox this year with all their payroll?

Aren't they the last two in the American League East?

The Yankees thing is great.

Aren't the Red Sox cozied up next to them in the standings?

The Red Sox aren't winning the title, but what's happened to the Yankees is kind of like my World Series is shared.

It's their fans are so upset.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

They have George Steinbrenner's loser,
son Hal runs the team and it's like the classic,
like the son who had the only reason he had
is the charge of anything.
It's just cause he was related to his dad,
which is always the best and funniest scenario in sports.
By the way, it's the funniest thing in any arena.
I know this guy.
It's so good.
I love the idea.
It's like Giuliani's son running his defense.
But like, think of Hollywood ran this
where like Bob Acker's retiring.
His son is now the president of Disney.
Like it would never happen.
But in sports, they just hand the teams off.
I love kids who were born on third
and square on a wild pitch.
I love that storyline.
It's so great.
I'm like, they just have zero talent.
And yet they're just cause their dad had a ton of dough.
Bill, you know what we were talking about sport.
I want to get back to Sean's question, Bill,
and hear what you think about this about it.
Why can't the owners just go?
We were talking about the Red Sox and Yankees
and they do try to do that.
And they've had, and you're jumping with glee
at how much Yankees have spent and to no success.
Really what's happening again to bring,
I don't want to bring everything back to soccer,
but if you look what's happened in the last year in soccer,
the Saudis, in fact, the Saudi sovereign wealth fund,
which took control of the top four or five clubs
has now provided enough funds for them to go
and poach from all the major European leagues,
all these top stars and pay them these salaries.
Sean, Neymar just signed a \$300 million deal for two years.
Plus they paid a release clause of 80 million euros to PSG.
They apparently offered Mbappe 750 million euros
to play for one year.
Yeah, I read that.
Ronaldo's getting 400 a year.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

I mean, this is, they're doing that exact thing that you're talking about.

And Bill, what do you think that something like that does to the balance of world sport?

Well, soccer, it's just basically a free market and they're all maniacs.

I think the NBA had a little bit of this issue where they had, they had this luxury tax and it was punitive, but then you had a team like the Warriors that we're saying, we'll screw it.

You know, we're in San Francisco, we make a shitload of money, we wanna win the title every year.

And they had like a three, with the tax, they paid like 350 million for last year's team.

So in the new collective bargaining agreement, they changed it so that, all right,

if you go over this number, not only is there a tax, but now you're gonna have your issues with your draft picks, issues with how you feel at your roster, you're not gonna be able to do trades as easily.

Oh, really?

And they really made it harder.

And now, but what's funny is there's always some new owner, it's always a rich guy, they come in, like obviously a rich guy, they own the team, but like some newer wave rich guys.

So the guy I bought, Phoenix, this guy, Matt Ishby, who I actually kind of like, he's a fun character.

Yeah, I kind of like him too.

But he came in and he's just like, they all want a zag, right?

They're like, everybody's going this way, I'm gonna zag.

And he's like, we don't care about draft picks.

We're gonna pay for Kevin Durant.

We, they traded for Bradley Beal.

We're gonna have this crazy payroll.

And like everybody else is afraid of the luxury tax.

I'm not afraid.

And those are always my favorite owners.

Like Brooklyn got bought by this Russian guy Prokhorov in the early 2010s.

And he's like, I'm gonna spend and just made all these crazy moves.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

And then two years later, he's like,
ah, I don't want to do this anymore.
And then just stop spending money.
And the Celtics had all their draft picks.
So the whims of these guys that they, you know,
they see these teams as like these toys
and these things to play with.
But meanwhile, all these, you know,
hundreds of thousands of fans are attached to the team.
And these guys can just run rough shot,
which is what's happening with the Yankees now.
It's owned by the owner, the dead owner's son.
And he just won't fire anybody and they're in chaos.
Well, it occurs to me that there's,
you can almost draw a parallel between that
and maybe any business, but certainly our business
that you have these big sort of rich guys
who either rich themselves
or control these big corporations,
they're driven by, you know, whatever,
the stock price, et cetera.
And there's no actual reverence for the thing itself, right?
So the culturally, they don't really care
about what impact.
So they come in, they go, I'm gonna buy this team.
Well, hey, look, it's really bad for basketball
or it's really bad for soccer.
And they're like, I don't give a shit.
I'm gonna be dead in 15 years.
I just want to win a couple of championships.
I don't give a shit.
And that's happening in entertainment.
These guys came in, these people came in, they run it.
And they're like, potentially destroying it.
And they're like, I don't give a shit.
I just want to strip it down and sell the pieces off.
And I don't give a fuck of it, you know,
fucks culturally with this, you know, this thing.
Is this why Dr. Pimple Popper is on the lead cover
of Max right now?
Is that a succession or a curve enthusiast?
That's exactly why.
Hey, Bill, do you think that the fan base to your point
about how all these hundreds of thousands of people

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

are associated or attached to each team in the fan base,
does the fan base really have any leverage?
Like, if an owner is just in a tailspin,
can they strike effectively and say, well, we're not going-
We just saw it with the Washington football fans.
They had this owner who was Daniel Snyder,
who was like the worst owner.
He was like the championship belt holder every year.
And he sucked the life out of the franchise
and the city to the point that, you know,
they would have a home game and they'd have more fans
of the other team.
And everybody was like, I'm out until this guy's gone.
And it really had no impact on him.
It's the TV rights that really have the leverage, right?
And financially, they still sold for how many billion?
Right. Well, what happened was the sponsors started fleeing
and it became, and then he had a couple other things.
But that's because of his behavior personally,
as opposed to team performance.
But that's the thing.
These guys, like the Phoenix Suns owner
had this whole toxic environment and they made him sell.
And then he sells and he sells for like a record price,
you know?
Or Sterling made a bunch of money at the Clippers, right?
Right. Sterling's the worst guy,
probably who's ever owned a team.
And, you know, he cashed out and made more money
than anybody ever made.
By the way, my feeling on that,
I've thought about it since that sale
and that everything that went down
and then his family was trying to block him from selling it
to Steve Ballmer back in the day, blah, blah.
And then they were claiming that he was sort of unfit
to make the deal, Sterling himself and all this stuff.
And I think it was all by design to drive the price up.
Now I'm a cynic, but I do think that that was all by design
because the more that the family was fighting
and they were saying the price just kept going up
just to grab it.
Oh, no question.
I have had Clippers season tickets for 20 years

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

because I got him to go see the other teams.
And so, but I got to know a lot of the people in my section
and Sterling would show up
and he'd be dressed in all black and he'd sit court side.
And it was, he was like the fucking Grim Reaper.
And he would go and, you know, this team had such a malaise
and then you have the Lakers on the other side
that are like one of the jewels of the league.
It was like a fascinating sociology experiment
to watch this fan base who basically their hope was
either he's going to sell
or they're going to stumble into some draft pick
that will get them LeBron.
But if neither of those things happen,
I'm here to see the other teams.
And that was kind of the vibe.
So Bill, not to embarrass you,
but you've done very, very well financially
with all of your efforts.
So have you guys?
Well, not like you.
Junior, junior.
And we're trying,
but you're crushing it.
My question is, as you mentioned, courtside seats.
Yeah.
What's the thing that you could never afford
that once you started really doing well,
you treated yourself to,
it doesn't have to be sports-based.
I can guess one thing
because you're living in Wayne Manor, it looks like.
Yeah, it looks like I'm in my Wayne Manor.
But because you seem like you've really kept
very close contact with your sort of simpler self.
And I don't mean that as a pejorative,
but you're a very normal guy, which is great.
Oh, thanks, Jason.
How are you, is it comfortable to say,
well, you're not, you're a very, you're a mogul,
but you don't seem like one.
You were in a t-shirt
and you're just talking with the us idiots.
And so how are you able to match all of your dreams?

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Dreams.

All of the, yeah, all your dreams
with trying to stay grounded.

I've never, well, just on the courtside seats thing.

Yeah.

They're actually like, it's like a pretty bad seat.

Have you ever-

But they're expensive.

Like if you're at a basketball game,

I'm always like amazed people spend that amount of money.

I think it's really just to be kind of seen on the court.

But you're too close.

Like the seats I have for the Quipper games,

we're like four or five rows up.

Same for my dad's Celtic tickets

that he's had for like 52 years.

And there's perspective and you can actually watch it.

The courtside thing,

like sitting in front row in a movie theater.

I always say that about hockey games.

People who were like, I'm gonna write that on the glass.

I'm like, great, you got the worst seats in the house.

You can't see shit.

You want to be hockey.

You want to be 10, 15 rows up between the red lines.

Or right between, right behind the goalie is cool.

Cause we had those king seats for a couple of years.

Oh, that's cool too.

That's where you're like, how are,

how is every goalie not just completely traumatized
and in a mental hospital?

When you see like what happens to them,

narrow lives, it's just like,

they're getting just things fired at them.

There's all this commotion in front of them.

They're falling, they're jumping up,

they're falling and you're like,

how is any of these guys-

They are.

That straight jacket.

Bill, what do you do when you're not watching sports?

What's your thing?

This is sort of a Jason Bateman question.

What's the thing?

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

What's your-
What's your guilty pleasure?
Yeah, your guilty pleasure that you watch
or you do or you read or something
that's outside of the realm of what you do professionally.
Well, oh, outside,
cause it's a lot of sports movies and TV.
And I host this rewatchables podcast
where we do a podcast about a movie
every week that people really like.
And it's fun to like try to figure out,
is that rewatchables worthy or not?
And then if it is, I'll watch it twice, but-
But is there something else that you do
that's outside of that or no?
You mean just like my personal stuff?
Yeah, your personal stuff.
Yeah, I have two kids.
A lot of kids sports, both of my kids are athletes.
What do they play?
My son is football on the cross.
My daughter is playing soccer actually in college right now.
So, so I had a lot of,
there's a lot of sports parents stuff that kind of took over.
And then, you know, still playing tennis
and still a lot of like stuff with the friends.
You know, you find your little friend group
as you get older and you do the dinners
and then somebody gets mad at somebody
and you talk about it the next day.
It's great.
Well, we can't believe we had you longer than an hour.
We can't even talk to you forever as we do this.
You're the man.
Yeah, you really are.
Thank you for doing this again.
Thanks guys.
I can't wait for you guys not to run this.
Yeah, we promise to air this one.
Promise.
And go socks until the World Series.
And then we'll let the Dodgers go by.
I agree.
Go socks.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

We won't be in the World Series.
Don't worry.
I'll give you the red socks.
Celtics you can have.
And Celtics.
Yeah.
And by the way guys, it was cool to be on the test show
and then watch how the podcast blossomed.
I remember telling Bateman, I was like,
do you guys want to do this at Spotify?
I was like, no, I think we're gonna hold on to this.
We kind of like just kind of being in control of it.
And it turned out to be very smart.
Well, we'll see.
But we're certainly having a lot of fun.
We're in the bed on ourselves.
I know it's true.
Thank you for making the bed
that we're enjoying resting in.
Yeah.
You're the best.
All right, good to see everybody.
You're the best.
Thank you too.
Take care.
Thanks, Bill.
Well, that is a, that's a good man for coming back.
It is.
Yeah.
And it was so long ago.
I didn't remember anything we talked about.
So I'm glad.
It was well over three years ago that we first had him on.
It was one of our first shows.
And we asked him about the podcast business
because we know, if you can imagine,
knew even less.
That was the first though, right?
Didn't we ask that first?
That was the first episode, yeah.
That was the first.
But, and then we got very topical at the time.
And so, yeah, it just didn't work.
And I'm Jason's kudos to you for bringing him back.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

Cause he's such an infinitely interesting guy.
I could talk forever about everything.
I really admire that he's been able to just crush it
in multiple areas and stay so grounded.
A topic up and he fucking knows about it.
It's crazy.
Yeah.
Yeah.
You don't want to get into an argument with him.
He'll kill you in the facts.
So who's the by work coming?
Sean.
Yeah, Sean.
How is the by work coming?
Well, I can't really do it because I have.
I have enough for probably 40 minutes.
You're wearing, oh, you're not wearing your regular glasses.
You're wearing your.
Bye.
Bye.
Of course.
Of course.
With the assist from our net.
Bye.
Until your day.
Smart.
Less.
Smart.
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Every big moment starts with a big dream.
But what happens when that big dream turns out to be a big flop?
From Wondery and At Will Media, I'm Misha Brown and this is The Big Flop.
Every week, comedians join me to chronicle the biggest flugs,
fails and blunders of all time like Quibby.
It's kind of like when you give yourself your own nickname
and you try to like get other people to know you.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "Bill Simmons"

And the 2019 movie adaptation of Cats.

Like if I'm watching the dancing and I'm noticing the feet aren't touching the ground, there's something wrong with the movie.

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