

## [Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

This button is not working. What floor are you guys going to?  
I'm going to three. Oh, maybe I'll just press that button and we can just go there.  
I'm not really going to a floor. I'm just here for the ride.  
You're just riding the elevator, just trying to meet people. My name's Jason.  
And this is my friend, Sean. What's your name, friend?  
My name's Wellhey. Yeah.  
I'm sorry. I was not exercising. I'm just a heavy breather.  
Are you hot today? Why are you not wearing anything but socks?  
You guys looking for a friend?  
We're busy. We've got to do a podcast. Welcome to...  
Oh, welcome to SmartList. That's it.  
SmartList.  
SmartList.  
SmartList.  
Oh my god, I'm so nervous.  
Okay. Do we just go or do we practice once or...?  
No, we're just going to do it. We're just going to do it.  
Okay. Okay. Great. Ready?  
Hey, SmartList listeners. This episode is brought to you in part by our friends at Verizon.  
If you're wishing for the new iPhone 15 Pro with titanium,  
you don't need to find a genie in a bottle or, I don't know,  
steal an unsuspecting kid's birthday wish.  
I get it, Sean. I get what you're doing there.  
Verizon is making it easy to get Apple's latest and greatest with an amazing trade-in offer,  
even if your current iPhone has seen better days.  
Me, my phone is pristine, but some of us just aren't as careful.  
No judgment here, though.  
Shout at you, Sean. Shout at you.  
That's, I got it. And you've got another one coming up too.  
Yeah. Hey, look, Sean and I are well acquainted with the excellent service and offerings from  
Verizon,  
so believe me when I say this upgrade deal is one for the books.  
Get the new iPhone 15 Pro with titanium on Verizon,  
plus Apple TV 4K and six months of Apple One on them,  
with select phone trade-in and new line on select unlimited plans.  
That's over \$1,100 in value, only on Verizon, a network you can rely on.  
Visit a Verizon store or Verizon.com for full details.  
Offer ends November 15th, 2023, and is only available in the United States.  
I was just, I just dropped Denny, sweet little Denny, who's, as you know,  
is three off at school, and on the way there, he starts telling me this story.  
He's wearing a shirt that's got an alien on it.  
He's going, I saw an alien. I said, you did?  
Yeah, last night. No kidding.  
Yes.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

And he go, really? He goes, yeah, I saw an alien.

It was in our home.

The alien in our home.

Yeah. And he was in the pot. He was next to the potty.

I said, the alien used our potty?

Yeah. I said, do you go, do you go pee or poop?

He could go poop, and he goes, no, he did a huge poop.

I said, really?

So then he starts telling me this story, and the alien ends up in the toilet, and then they're kicking a soccer ball, and I go, what color is soccer ball?

It's green, just the same as him and him family.

And I said, okay. So he tells us this whole story, and I go, so then I start every time I keep relaying it back to him.

Let me get this straight.

So you see the alien, and by the third time I go,

so let me get this straight, the alien's in her bathroom, and he goes, the end.

He was done with the story?

Okay. And then Jay, I start telling this story because he sees this building that one of the other boys, his buddy lives in, so we start getting into friends, and what's the name of Archie's friend and his mom?

And I said, what's the name of Maple's daddy?

And he goes, Sean.

And I said, no, close.

Yeah, might as well be.

And he goes, Jason.

I said, yeah, it's Jason.

I don't believe it.

I swear to God.

And we go through, and then Amanda and Franny and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And I go, yeah.

And then remember, we were at our friend's house the other night for dinner, and then Abel's other friend, and then he goes, I don't like your story.

I like my story better.

It's a fucking kid, but right kids.

I'm still believing that there's an alien in the bathroom.

I know.

Did you see the photos from, from where was that from Mexico?

Yeah, I mean, yeah, are those real?

I mean, they're obviously can't be real, but CBS and CNN and everyone's like reporting them.

I should like, I thought that was like what news of the world used to do.

Yeah.

I can't believe that Sean's not doing this episode from Mexico City.

I'm just realizing that when I rebooted right before we started recording,

I lost all my questions for my guest.  
No way.  
Yeah, like what?  
Did you find them now?  
He's rebooting on sense.  
Why do you have more reboots than anybody?  
I don't know.  
I guess I'm technologically not gifted.  
I don't know what's going on, but you know what?  
I don't need them.  
I don't need them because where I, where I'm deficient in technology,  
I am gifted in asking questions.  
Not verbosity.  
Okay.  
All right, here we come.  
Here we go.  
Do you want me to tell you another story?  
I do still have my intro.  
Sean, sorry, Sean.  
Sorry, Sean, did you, are we on a?  
No, I'm going to say, do you want me to tell you something while you look for them or no?  
We can wait until we're done with your break.  
Sean just found the drive-thru for Cinnabon  
right around the corner from his house.  
Are we interrupting breakfast or anything?  
Is it really Cinnabon?  
No, it's a peanut butter sandwich, peanut butter jelly sandwich.  
By the way, listener, we're on a Zoom yesterday with about 20 people.  
And we'll ask Sean, hey, Sean, it's about five o'clock.  
Are we close to dinner?  
He's like, yeah, let's go in and see what's cooking.  
So he goes into the kitchen and there on the stove is,  
I forget what you were talking about, that it was some sort of a fish thing,  
but there's like a bacon is being fried to contribute to the sauce.  
There's some sort of a cheese dish that's for you.  
You guys didn't see Jason's face right now.  
I said, do you have family over or friends or something?  
Or is it just Thursday?  
Yeah, it was a lot of food.  
So you have like a full, you have a full meal.  
That's the only meal.  
Full course meal every night.  
Yeah, almost every night.  
Yeah, but that's because I don't usually eat like fish or something healthy.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

I'll eat like something healthy-ish during the day,  
so that I can have like spaghetti and meatballs or something at night.  
Do you put bacon in that too?  
Were you so worried about the health content of the fish  
that you had to throw the bacon at it?  
By the way, Jay, when was the last time we got an invite for a dinner?  
I mean, he has a nice meal every night.  
Every night.  
I just kind of figure like you all want to go in your own corners.  
You don't need to folksy that up to excuse your rudeness.  
Folksy.  
I'm so excited that we have one of the world's great talkers today.  
I'm getting, I'm introing my guest.  
This man is electric with his words, his guitar, and his charisma.  
Today's guest is one of the most famous and successful athletes alive today.  
When he played, he was as dominant as he was compelling.  
He was fiercely competitive and never boring.  
He has an unbelievable amount of trophies and records in his sport,  
but what he's done for the Caucasian Afro and the on-court microphones  
will never be matched.  
Please welcome the winner of 17 Grand Slams, a great guitarist,  
a good golfer, and a new friend of mine, the one and only John McEnroe.  
Wow, my gosh, Mr. McEnroe.  
Good morning, John.  
Very nice, Jason.  
Thank you.  
That's Bravo.  
That's Bravo, right?  
I shortened it a little for you because I knew Will was going to go,  
it's McEnroe.  
And he did.  
He beat me.  
It's a race with him.  
He's bright.  
As he said, once I knew about the curlier, the guitar,  
when you said Grand Slams and guitar, I was like, yeah, it's got to be back.  
I didn't know you play guitar.  
Hi, John.  
Nice to meet you.  
Nice to meet you.  
Yes.  
I loved you, by the way, and brought, I hadn't been to a play for years.  
Your performance was amazing.  
You came to the show?

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

I did.

They, I tried to come back to say hello.

They wouldn't let me in.

No.

Yeah.

He's not.

That's very kind of you.

Thank you, pal.

Thank you for coming and thank you for saying that.

I didn't realize that they do that great piano player, man.

That was something at the end.

Wasn't that stunning?

Can you believe that he has talent?

I knew he had talent, but that was off the charts.

That's very sweet.

Thank you.

Yeah, classically trained pianist.

Never, never, never knew it.

But this is about Mr. McEnroe.

Thank you, John, for coming to the show.

This is about Mr. McEnroe.

Now, John, do you play piano as well as guitar?

No.

I do not.

Although Jimmy Webb, who is a famed songwriter and pianist, tried to teach me the guitar a couple of times.

We traded tennis lessons for piano lessons.

Yeah.

And it just wasn't for you.

It's easier on the fingertips, isn't it?

I love the piano, but I prefer the guitar.

I try to get all my kids to play piano.

They did, but they didn't stick with it.

I said, stick with it.

It'll be good for you.

Maybe someday you'll be on Broadway kicking ass.

Yes, when in Tony's.

But no.

Yeah, exactly.

Maybe someday you'll be wearing two compression sleeves and icing your fingers every night.

Exactly.

John, don't the guitar strings hurt your fingertips?

Yeah.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

That was my problem with it.  
And also, could you ever get carpal tunnel  
or any kind of tendonitis?  
I've been lucky, actually.  
I probably don't play enough to get carpal tunnel,  
but I've had, you got to build up the calluses  
like you do with my tennis hand.  
You had to do the same thing when you grip a racket.  
So that takes a while.  
But I got over that.  
And, you know, at least this is one of the few things  
I'm improving at, a guitar playing.  
Did you ever get tennis elbow?  
I was about to ask the same.  
You know, generally speaking,  
I had issues at times with the elbow,  
but never real bad.  
Thankfully.  
How about golf elbow?  
Have you been?  
I've not had golf elbow.  
I just have, why am I playing this dumbass game sometimes?  
Elbow.  
No, John, that's not true.  
You're a good golfer.  
We've played a couple of times.  
And not unlike what you said about guitar,  
I feel like you're getting better at golf.  
I feel like you're more consistent.  
I've seen you miss some short putts.  
Sure.  
And I currently have a video.  
Wait, you guys always play together?  
Yeah.  
We have played a couple of times.  
I have a video currently on my phone  
of John missing a putt on the ninth hole over at our place there,  
and he fell to the ground.  
And took off all his clothes in protest.  
That happens every time I play.  
I don't like how much time you're spending in New York though.  
It's not great for our golf outings.  
Well, sometimes, Jason, I do have to work.  
You know, the US Open was the big one for us in hometown.

It's great.

But we missed you well at Augusta though.

I know.

I know.

I wish I could have, as you knew,

I had a dear friend of mine passed away,

so I couldn't make it.

But we're going to do it again, same crew,

and we're going to do it up and get down there.

I'm so excited.

Now, also what's keeping you in New York

is your great tennis academy.

That started when?

I would say about 12 years ago, the last 10 of which,

we've also started a charity arm,

which is called the Johnny Mack Tennis Project,

which is, you know, we're constantly trying to raise money

so we can get more kids to play this great sport.

It's too unaffordable.

It's not accessible enough.

It's too expensive, especially in New York.

So it's an ongoing battle, but we're making progress.

If somebody wanted to contribute to that,

how would they go about doing something like that?

It's a 501c3.

Go on the web and the internet,

and go to Johnny Mack Tennis Project,

and anything you can give would be incredible.

But we just had a program,

and we do a comedy night every year, which is great.

Jason should give 10 grand.

Jason, give 10 grand right now.

I'll do 10 grand right now.

Sean, Will, you going to match me?

Let's go. That's 30 right here, John.

Come on, boys. Come on.

You're breaking up. You're breaking up.

But your tennis academy was...

Sean's going through a cannon.

Your tennis academy is charitable in concept.

And I mean, you're already doing charity work there,

basically, or philanthropic work,

where you are identifying kids that wouldn't otherwise maybe be

drawn to tennis or have access to tennis,

and you're giving them that, right,  
through scholarships and whatnot?

Absolutely.

And we have a lot of programs.

We go to public schools, and we bring them in.

But this is also a for-profit place.

You know, I work for someone.

This is city-owned land.

And the people put \$20 million into it,

and we're putting an additional 15 to add another 10 courts.

So this is an incredible place.

But at the same time, there's 90%, I'd say,

are people that went to schools like I went to high school,

the Ivy League high schools that pay the bills,

that come and play once or twice a week,

so that we have a chance to do enough and raise enough

that we can get the 1%.

Unfortunately, what, 99% can't afford it for 90%.

Well, what was that like, John, for you,

speaking of high school?

Because I know now, I mean, it kind of,

and again, please correct me if I'm wrong,

but it seems to me that kids who played tennis

when they were growing up and they were young,

the idea of going to like an all-Tennis Academy

started with Nick Balletieri, is that right?

Sort of that dedicated thing where the kid

you started to hear about.

But for guys like you who were like right on the,

before that, right before that generation,

were you playing tennis every day on Long Island?

Were you, or were Queens, or what was that like for you?

I grew up in Queens.

The best thing that ever happened to me

was not going to a Balletieri's type camp.

I would have quit the game when I was 16 or 17.

I loved to play other sports.

All studies show, both physically and mentally,

it's healthier for kids to play other sports.

This idea that you got to go all in and soccer, basketball,

is a bunch of, can you say bullshit on this?

You can say, yeah, yeah.

Total BS.

You know what you, you can say fucking bullshit.



**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

Beautiful, I'll get to that shortly  
when you ask me a lousy question.

I got one for you.

But the truth is, is that what I base my beliefs on  
or what this Academy is all about,  
that you should play other sports  
and you should come to this a little later.

Tennis players are peaking later than they ever did.

I think college is an experience that not only  
you get to play as a team, potentially,  
if you're in a sport, you get to grow up a little bit  
and also have some fun before you work,  
work your way into a profession  
and you'll be more prepared to handle it.

So I completely disagree with what they do most often.

Right, because John, the idea that like,  
not just as an athlete, but also as a person,  
as a human being, if you come in and you turn pro  
when you're 17 or something, and if maybe you have success,  
again, like you said, you're not peaking yet,  
but you have success, all that kind of pressure,  
everything that goes along with that, the traveling,  
being away from home, being away from family,  
your support group, it seems to me,  
especially for tennis, it'd be pretty tough  
to deal with all that if you were young.  
For every person you hear that succeeds,  
there's a million that don't,  
not everyone's Carlos Alcaraz,  
he's one in a billion, he's just a freak,  
he's an incredible player, but most kids  
have no business doing that.

And college now has become more competitive  
and now they can offer money, which was unheard of.

You could actually go after a guy and offer him something.

For the NIL stuff.

The NIL stuff, I mean, most obviously  
is going to football and basketball,  
but it at least allows kids that otherwise  
would have nothing in college to think,  
maybe I should wait a couple of years.

Yeah.

John, why do you attribute, you talk about Alcaraz,  
these guys are hitting the ball,

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

and who is it that Medvedev played him, right?  
They hit the ball so hard, I have to,  
I mean, it's not like...  
Not like us.  
No, but I mean, like, that's what's...  
We didn't go in and saw John.  
No, I'm just saying, like...  
We were dinosaurs.  
Well, but I mean, you guys were every bit as big  
and as strong, is it just the racket?  
I mean, you guys were playing,  
I can't believe what you were able to do  
with the size of the racket that you guys were playing with.  
Why, is it bigger now?  
Oh yeah, it's bigger now, lighter now.  
I didn't know that.  
Look at this.  
Look at that thing.  
Yeah.  
What I played with till I was 23,  
which is about, you add another 40%,  
that's the difference in power and the size of it.  
So the sweet spot's a lot bigger,  
so that's allowed kids at my academy,  
I'm at my academy right now,  
that hit 12, 14-year-olds hit the ball harder than me.  
John just showed us his wooden racket.  
Did you win Wimbledon with that racket?  
Like that kind of racket?  
I did.  
I was one of the only records I still have,  
and I think I will always have it,  
is I'm the last male player to win a major  
with a wooden racket.  
Wow, that's so red.  
What if somebody made a storm,  
or it came back onto the scene with one of those rackets?  
How long do you think they'd last?  
You just, you can't compete with one of those, right?  
If you played one event,  
Carlos Alcaraz could play with anything.  
He is an amazing player.  
What about Federer?  
Federer seemed to me had like such,

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

and I remember over the years,  
watched a lot of matches of his that you've called many, many.

You really liked the way he played his style,  
and he was so graceful,  
and I don't know, how would you describe it?

He's the most beautiful player I've ever seen.

I idolized Rod Laver, he was an awesome,  
he's like the Bryzhanikov of tennis,  
that's how I would describe him.

When you look at Rafael Nadal,  
that's not your typical or prototypical tennis player,  
his body, he looked a lot bigger up top.

When we grew up, they were like, don't lift.

You don't want to get too big out of here.

Oh, Jason got that same memo.

Yeah, yeah.

The same memo.

I was like, don't worry.

Who do you think you'd match up best with today?

I mean, like another leftie?

No.

You mean, who would I play like?

Or who would I match up with?

Yeah, if apples were to apples today,  
as far as age goes and equipment goes,  
who do you think you'd have the most entertaining match with?

Well, the dream would be to play Roger Federer at Wimbledon.

The nightmare would be to play Rafael Nadal  
at Rolling Garrows on clay,

even though I grew up on clay,  
and that was my best surface, so I turned pro.

Wow.

But what he did was insane.

Why don't people still serve in volley like you used to?

I need to find that so far.

I feel like Becker was like the last one to do it.

Right?

That's correct.

Yeah, well, they changed the court speeds.

They slowed it down at Wimbledon.

They did the same at the Indian Wells or the US Open.

Actually, US Open is fairly quick,  
so you're seeing it come back a little bit with Alcares,  
and people always imitate the top guys.

## [Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

But the explosion necessary to come in point after point,  
I don't think people realize that takes a physical toll.  
Right, of course.  
So it's easier to serve big.  
These guys are bigger.  
Medvedev 6-6.  
The average player has gone from, you know, when I was...  
He's 6-6?  
He's 6-6.  
So the average player has gone from 5'10, 5'9 to 10 to 6-2, 6-3 even.  
Jokovic is 6-2 and a half.  
Murray 6-3.  
It used to be 6-1.  
That would be Sampras Federer and Nadal.  
But players are getting more athletic  
and taller, so if you combine it with these rackets,  
the ball's coming back faster,  
unless you stand 20 feet beyond the baseline like Medvedev.  
Yeah, that was amazing.  
And so it's tougher to get closer than it.  
Right.  
We'll be right back.  
Big thanks to Zip Recruiter for their support.  
Guys, you know who I'm grateful for?  
The two guys listening right now recording this for me,  
I love them very much, Bennett and Rob.  
They're like my family.  
We couldn't do the show without them.  
And every single day, I say a prayer for them, and I love them,  
and I have photos of them on my refrigerator.  
We love you too, Shawnee.  
Thank you.  
Love you, Shawnee.  
Thank you.  
It takes a team of people to make this show successful,  
just like it takes a solid team to make any business successful.  
So if you're hiring,  
how do you find the best people for your team?  
Zip Recruiter.  
And right now, you can try it for free at [ziprecruiter.com slash smartlist](https://ziprecruiter.com/smartlist).  
Here's why you'll be grateful you tried Zip Recruiter for your hiring.  
Zip Recruiter uses smart technology to scan thousands of resumes  
to find the most qualified people for your job.  
For these two, we went through thousands of resumes,

and nobody was interested.

And we landed, and I mean landed on these two.

We still love you, Sean.

Wow, that was a wet one right through the microphone.

You'll also get great match notifications.

Zip Recruiter lets the most qualified people for your job know

they are a great match for it and encourages them to apply.

See why so many business owners and hiring managers are thankful for Zip Recruiter.

Four out of five employers who post on Zip Recruiter get a quality candidate within the first day.

We'd be super grateful if you could go to this exclusive web address right now to try Zip Recruiter for free, ziprecruiter.com slash smartlist.

Again, that's ziprecruiter.com slash S-M-A-R-T-L-E-S-S.

Zip Recruiter, the smartest way to hire.

Our thanks to Amazon Prime for supporting this episode of smartlist.

You probably already know Amazon Prime offers a range of services like Prime Video, Amazon Prime Music, and Prime Fast Free Shipping.

But let's take it one step further.

It's this very collection that can help you pursue your passions

and get more out of whatever you're into,

or perhaps whatever you're just starting to get into.

Prime helps you get more out of your interests.

Take jazz, for example, right?

I can do jazz.

I'm doing jazz hands right now.

Are you a fan?

Great.

You can browse Prime Video for a jazz doc or a jazz-centric movie, or listen to the sweet sounds of smooth jazz on Amazon Prime Music.

And hey, while listening to a jazz playlist,

you might just be inspired to up your knowledge

and use Prime Shipping to get a book about the legendary Miles Davis delivered to your door.

There are tons of scenarios where Prime could make life a little richer that for me to list them all would be impossible.

From shopping to streaming to saving, it's on Prime.

Visit amazon.com slash prime to get more out of whatever you're into.

Hey gang, Jason here.

November is Diabetes Awareness Month,

a time to bring attention to diabetes.

So let's talk a little bit about that.

Managing diabetes requires a lot of effort,

and unfortunately a lot of people living with it don't feel understood

## [Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

because not many people know what it really takes to manage the condition.  
Well, that's where Medtronic Diabetes comes in.  
Medtronic makes devices to manage diabetes  
and they're very passionate about supporting the community,  
which is why they've launched their blue balloon challenge to raise awareness.  
The balloon represents the mental load and constant decision making  
that people living with diabetes are faced with.  
It's a constant balancing act,  
trying to keep blood sugars in range while living their life.  
Medtronic Diabetes wants you to join the challenge  
and help them spread awareness and support for the diabetes community.  
So grab a blue balloon and try to keep it in the air  
while doing everyday things in your life.  
Tag Medtronic Diabetes on social media  
and use the hashtag blue balloon challenge.  
We can all come together to help make the invisible visible.  
Visit [medtronicdiabetes.com/smartlist](http://medtronicdiabetes.com/smartlist) to learn more.  
That's [medtronicdiabetes.com/smartlist](http://medtronicdiabetes.com/smartlist).  
All right, back to the show.  
You know what's funny?  
You're talking about these guys who are coming on the scenes.  
Alcatraz, as I call them.  
Because, you know, I just like put a twist on it.  
You know what I mean, Jake?  
You're amazing, man.  
Sean's not with me.  
You know, since you started, I'm with you.  
Yeah, I'm just with Alcatraz.  
You talk about these new guys who come on.  
So Alcatraz has come on the last two years  
and he's just been an absolute, he's exploded,  
like kind of seemingly out of nowhere.  
I mean, for us, for, you know, I'm not a huge,  
I don't follow it, the minutiae of tennis.  
But you- Well, he's number one in the world, isn't he?  
No, he is.  
Now, I'm just saying before I didn't watch,  
I didn't know about, I didn't know that he was the guy  
who was in the pipeline who was coming.  
I just, all of a sudden, he was there and he was incredible.  
I know, I know.  
But John, you did the same thing.  
What I'm getting to is, I remember distinctly,  
I remember being up in Northern Canada,

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

watching you and Bjorn Borg play in those unbelievable,  
when I was a kid, those unbelievable matches from Wimbledon  
and everybody's like, who's this guy?  
And you know all the stuff.  
He was like, he's brash, he's from New York,  
he doesn't give a shit.  
He won Wimbledon and then he fucking went  
and got pizza with his pals or so.  
I still remember that story.  
I'm partying with the pretenders.  
You partied with the right.  
Really?  
Among other people.  
But the afro and the headband though, was just so hostile.  
Wait, I wanna hear about partying with the pretenders,  
with Chrissy.  
No, well listen, who would you rather party with?  
A bunch of old farts, the dinner that we weren't sure  
I had to go to or some rock stars.  
So I don't think that was a tough one.  
I went to Wimbledon when I was 18.  
I was sent to play the juniors and I broke through  
and qualified and made it to the semis of the main draw.  
And that completely changed my life.  
I didn't realize what Wimbledon meant,  
except when I saw the guy you mentioned,  
my great rival, Bjorn Borg.  
And I remember seeing him play a few matches  
when I was like 15 before I played there  
and the hundreds of girls ran on the court  
and it was like, oh my God,  
this is like Tennis's version of Beatle Mania, Borg.  
I go, I wanna be a tennis player.  
Somehow I gotta get some of that.  
And then I wanna just mention this  
because to practice what I preach,  
which is I actually went to college after that.  
I played professionally all through the summer.  
I was 21 in the world when I entered Stanford.  
Wow.  
So it's unheard of if anyone's even above 500.  
So I felt like I wasn't ready emotionally  
and wanted to experience being part of a team  
and going to Stanford.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

And I think that was good for me in my career as it ended up.  
And then you fast forward a couple of years. Those are the matches where I played Borg two years in a row, 80, 81.  
Incredible.  
And so that was like the greatest, a great time for Tennis.  
I was lucky.  
I came into what turned out to be a really important time where Tennis was really growing.  
I mean, if you had told me that golf without rate tennis, the way it does now is on the networks, I would laugh at you in the 80s.  
And so we haven't done nearly enough as a sport. We were at the same ratings as basketball.  
And it's absurd how far we've gone the wrong. Pickleball, if I hear a pickleball, one more goddamn time.  
That was my question.  
I'm gonna fucking, I'm with you on the pickleball thing.  
Yeah, that's your cue, Sean.  
Go for it, buddy.  
I was just gonna say pickleball thought.  
But you play a different kind of pickleball.  
Oh boy.  
I played a kind, when I played tennis, me and Andre Agassi played along with Michael Chang was on my team and Andy Roddick.  
So it was like tennis players playing.  
So it wasn't as painful as having to put up with some college player who didn't make it in tennis.  
And that was one of the best pickleball players in the world.  
And it's a wiffle ball.  
I agree.  
You ever played wiffle ball outside and when you're a kid growing up?  
I did in Queens.  
It's not the same as baseball.  
No, it's trash.  
I think it's total trash.  
I used to play, I used to play paddle tennis in the beaches in Venice for years.



**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

That's a better game.  
At least you play with the tennis ball  
that's had the air taken out of it.  
But the fucking pickleball, I'm sick of it.  
I like pickleball.  
I like it.  
Oh, of course you do.  
Everybody, it's like when people  
start getting into racquetball,  
you can, the fat guys can stand in the middle.  
They don't even have to fucking walk.  
The ball comes through.  
You will watch it with racquetball.  
Pickleball is the fucking same.  
You don't have to do shit.  
Racquetball in the 80s out in the San Fernando Valley.  
It's a fucking wiffle ball.  
Everyone calm down.  
I can't wait to all these fucking rich assholes  
have to pave over their stupid,  
what was that over there?  
We have a fucking pair.  
We have a damn put in a fucking big old ball court.  
I'll tell you who the happiest people around are,  
the doctors, because a lot of people have played.  
It's better to do something than nothing.  
So I'll go with that.  
I did legs yesterday.  
What's that?  
I worked on my legs yesterday.  
I mean, he squatted down to the stove,  
opened it up, pulled the pie out.  
No, he had to get a good meal.  
No, he had to put his feet around a fucking huge,  
he had a 10 pound bag of checks mix  
and he had to use his feet to hold the ground.  
John, talk about what, I mean, obviously, winning.  
This is for the folks out there that don't play tennis,  
but something that you could talk to them  
about that's applicable.  
The gain you'd get from winning versus losing,  
because everybody has experience with winning and losing.  
How you've probably had to develop a muscle early on  
that could turn a negative into a positive

and try to gain from it.  
Was losing a tangible gain for you at times  
that you can speak about?  
Well, obviously, as a father of six  
and having grown up being told that losing builds character  
and you learn more from losing than you do with winning,  
that there was something that was ingrained in me  
at a young age and I do believe that it's true  
that you can sort of take a step back  
and that it does help you in a lot of ways,  
not just on a tennis court.  
So that's what I try to tell the kids  
that are at my academy, try to nurture them.  
It's hard though, because you feel like the last place  
you wanna be is on a tennis court  
when you're getting your ass kicked by someone.  
Especially if you ever got to the stage  
where you're playing a U.S. Open and Arthur S. Stadium,  
which would be like a dream come true  
for any professional tennis player  
and then you get toasted by someone.  
So my problem was is that at a certain point in my career,  
I think late 20s, I started getting more fearful of losing  
and not sort of embracing the idea  
that you need to learn from it  
as opposed to facing up to it and that hurt me.  
And I felt like I was a lesser player from that point forward.  
I had more of a fear and a fear of failure  
sort of gotten away a little bit too much.  
You always have to battle that as well.  
Did you end up getting on top of that?  
Or is that still something that like,  
do you take that on the golf course?  
You take that into experimenting with music?  
Like, have you gotten on top of it  
and factor in losing as an acceptable result?  
I go by the belief now that it's better  
to try and fail than not try at all.  
Early on when I was doing commentary,  
I stopped playing boys like 30 years ago.  
The main tour, I played as a champion seniors tour  
for 25 more years.  
But at that time, I started to get some positive feedback  
about my commentary.

And once it's at a certain stage,  
people would come up to me, you're a better commentator  
than you are, we're a player.  
And I'm like, bolt shit, okay?  
And it would really make me angry for quite a long time.  
And for years.  
And then I realized, I thought to myself,  
I took a step back once and I said, wait a minute,  
if they think I'm a better commentator than I was a player.  
They never saw you play.  
Well, that'd be one possibility.  
Or else, hey, maybe I am a pretty damn good commentator  
and I should take that as a compliment.  
So, you know, and I have, but it took a long time.  
I guess would be the long answer to your question  
was that it took a lot of experiences that you referred to,  
you know, the love of music as a hobby,  
getting a second chance with a second marriage  
that, you know, worked out far better than the first,  
trying to be the proper role model as best as possible  
for my kids as often as possible.  
I got six kids between my two marriages,  
appreciating life that I've been pretty damn lucky.  
That's what I try to give back at my academy.  
And even when I do with commentary,  
working around the players that, you know,  
I'll do next week when I go to labor cup,  
which is our version of the rider cup,  
and try to just be around the guys.  
And if I can help them that little bit,  
5%, 10%, that can make the difference, hopefully.  
So I've got a much better attitude than I did, although,  
I think that some of the things that I used  
to hide my fear of failure, which was showing anger  
and said, I'd like sit in there, start crying.  
You know, that I don't think we were brought up to be,  
let's cry on the tennis court.  
So a lot of that time that was manifested  
and sort of turning into anger, God forbid,  
I thought I had a decent sense of humor.  
And I would think of something funny,  
like that was going on the court,  
but I felt like when I grew up, it was like,  
you got to keep intense, you can't,

you'll lose your edge if you do anything.  
Now you see guys that are out there like Federer.  
I was like, how the hell does this guy look like  
he's so happy to be out there?  
Or, you know, Alcaraz, the guy's smiling.  
I'm gonna, just you wait, just give it a couple of years,  
you'll be miserable like the rest of us.  
Yeah.  
But I watched you, I think we talked about this once.  
I feel like, John, I wish that you would commentate  
on other sports, because I know you're a big sports fan.  
And I'm like, I wish you would go on and commentate  
on football and basketball and hockey.  
I know, you know, that would be fucking, you should,  
have you ever thought about that?  
Didn't you say once you were gonna,  
or you did do it for basketball?  
It's like a simulcast, like Peyton and Eli do.  
I did Peyton and Eli just this past Monday.  
Yeah, they don't count.  
Peyton and Eli don't count, they're pretty damn good.  
I loved it, but no, no, but I actually, last year,  
when I saw it, I was like, oh my God,  
this is absolutely perfect for me and my brother  
to do on the tennis.  
Let's unleash us, let us do it.  
Oh, the guy, it's already been done.  
What?  
Okay, so what?  
Yeah, it's a proof of concept.  
And as far as answering your question,  
yes, I was a few years back, I was gonna do a next game.  
Unfortunately, my dad passed away,  
like literally right around that time,  
so he wasn't able to happen.  
There was a time, I don't know if you remember this,  
it was probably 15 years ago,  
Dennis Miller ended up getting the job,  
but they said Monday night football,  
they want someone who's not a football player.  
Oh, right.  
And they wanna maybe bring in three or four guys  
for three or four games each,  
and I go, oh my God, that's absolutely perfect.

Yeah.

This would be unbelievable,  
because I love sports, like you said,  
and I'm no football expert,  
but I know enough about it to sort of,  
at least give my two cents, like a fan.

Yeah.

And then I called my agent,  
and he was like, ah, they went with Dennis Miller,  
and I go, what did they say when you mentioned my name?  
I didn't mention it, I didn't think you'd get it.

I'm like, what?

What a guy, you got a deal on him, huh?

So he was done.

So, even though he helped me initially with the TV deal,  
so I'm like, what are you doing?

But I'm not saying I would have gotten it anyway,  
but now, of course, you feel like in a certain way,  
I don't wanna be like walking and be like, yeah, here I am.

I can do football, and some football player  
who wants a job and needs it,

I feel a little weird about that.

So maybe the talk show format,

I was gonna do radio.

I loved your talk show, by the way.

You should do that again.

Thank you for both, you both came on it.

It was 19 years ago, unbelievable.

Oh my God.

That was so great.

Unreal, that was that long ago.

That was right when CNBC got started, right?

Wasn't CNBC?

Yeah, they wanted to do,  
as a matter of fact, I followed Dennis Miller,  
and they were trying to get,  
usually people turn off CNBC at four o'clock, right?

Tom Snyder and Charles Gross, too.

How the stops do.

Yeah, Sean, you should know when John did his program,  
our mutual, but all four of us know Meredith.

Walker?

Yeah, who worked for John.

Yeah.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

Oh, they didn't know that.  
Yeah. I love Meredith.  
And that's how we ended up doing it.  
I still got, I think, I still got the racket.  
You gave everybody who was a guest a signed racket,  
Dunlop racket, I gotta say.  
And just you guys.  
Just us.  
Oh, shit, just us.  
Not me, but I'll check the mail again.  
I'm fascinated by, John, you know,  
these guys know, I'm fascinated by medicine  
and medical things.  
And whenever an athlete comes on,  
I always ask what's the worst injury  
because I'm, you know, the repetitiveness of,  
like Jason was talking about earlier about,  
just the repetitiveness nature of, especially tennis,  
of the constant back and forth,  
what was your worst injury  
and what did you do to take care of it?  
Because it is like theater, I know these guys joke,  
but it is every single day  
doing the same movements over and over again,  
takes a toll on your body.  
So how did you, how did you play for so many years?  
What was your regimen like if you got hurt?  
Well, first of all, I'm gonna knock on wood  
because I'm pretty lucky.  
I've never had a surgery.  
Wow, amazing.  
So that already is lucky.  
When you hear these horror stories of the football players,  
I remember they asked Joe Montana recently,  
who's the greatest quarterback ever?  
He said, Dan Marino.  
And they go, you don't mean like Tom Brady  
or Patrick Gohomes.  
And how would it be different for you?  
And he was like,  
because they protect the quarterback more.  
27 surgeries later he's had, 27.  
John L. Ways had 27 to 30 surgeries.  
So these poor souls take way more of a beating.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

The worst injury I ever had, I tore my hamstring and this was in the senior store, not the main tour. And then you have chronic shoulder problems. I tore my meniscus twice the last five years without, I didn't do surgery and I recovered. But I was fortunate, I was taught in a way that it didn't put a lot of strain on my body. You look at Nadal, the way he swings at everything. It's like the home run swing. So I think that you're more likely to get hurt, but I was- He did get injured, right? For a period there, wasn't he quite- He's been injured a handful of times, but he's got a great team around him that keeps him going. I don't know how he still does it at his age, but he's had numerous injuries. Boris Becker's had 12 surgeries. A lot of guys have a lot of surgeries and it's cost them. Hips is the worst part. I think the hip is the thing I've struggled with the most and it's all connected obviously. So I had a, mainly when I was younger and most successful was pretty much tennis. You do running, sprinting, that type of stuff, not a lot of weight work. I played doubles, which no one does anymore. And as I started doing weights, I actually didn't help me in off court training. I just enjoyed to like work out, to generally try to keep reasonably fit. So that's, I've been pretty fortunate all in all compared to most people. You've got to be the only Uber champion of any sport that has never had a surgery. And that's got an ace record by itself. That's unbelievable to me. You and Cal Ripken. No, I bet you Cal Ripken's been cut. I've had like 17 myself. The only person ever that reached number one in the world who has the same size arm, left arm is right arm. I used to try to copy Rod Laver because his arm was like Popeye.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

And I was like, I would squeeze balls like hours  
and hours a day when I was a kid.  
And you know, do any type of, anything I could do to,  
well, I'm not even going where you're going.  
Well, it's got jokes.  
I'm just saying it's nice that you can,  
Sean can finally relate.  
Yeah, check.  
I'm just saying squeeze balls and I just perk up.  
But most athletes, anyone,  
especially if you're doing something with one arm,  
95% of the time or more, I had a one handed backhand.  
I could not figure out why nothing changed.  
So it's bizarre, but the body was pretty resilient  
all in all.  
I never, I played tennis off and on  
and I don't really play that much anymore,  
but I used to and I used to love playing some  
for various stages.  
And I always prided myself because you would talk about,  
I always prided myself on having one handed backhand  
because I grew up in an era when everybody wanted to have  
like in the 80s, everybody was trying to get that doubt,  
to hand it backhand and prints rackets  
and all that kind of shit.  
And I was like, no, I want to play a more graceful game.  
And anyway, I just want to say,  
I think you'd really approve of my backhand, John.  
Go ahead, Jason.  
Hey, the bad news is that if I had a young kid now  
and said, should you do one or two, I would tell them to.  
Of course, it's more.  
Well, you can, and the way they hit off the back foot more  
and obviously you can take balls up higher,  
especially when you're younger,  
but even as you're older, because there's so much spin  
that it makes more sense to use the two hands.  
It's actually better for you physically  
because you're using both sides of the body more.  
Just doesn't look as cool.  
And the other thing is,  
one hand backhand looks so graceful.  
But I will say, it's funny if all this sort of,  
years of playing and taking tennis lessons



when I was a kid and whatever,  
then when you watch these guys the way they play now,  
I'm like, what game are they playing?  
Because the way they hit their body,  
where they're at with relation to the ball,  
where they're grip now, all that stuff is so different.  
Absolutely.

I mean, I played with one grip.  
Now these guys have huge changes  
on their back and their forehand grip.  
They seem to do it effortlessly.  
It's like learning a language.  
If you learn a language, it's a lot easier when you're young.  
They're moving the racket as they play.  
And what did I see during the US Open?  
One of the players actually took his racket,  
walked it up to his coach, handed it to him  
and asked him to restring it  
while he continued playing with a different racket.  
Well, they bring six or eight rackets on the court  
and they're always complaining like the coach fucked up.  
It's their fault.

You got to blame someone other than yourself.  
So you give it to him.  
You told me it should be 52.  
I'll get that fucking thing and put it at 48.  
But did you ever hand a racket to your coach  
and ask him to restring it during one of your matches?  
No.

Well, first of all, I didn't travel with the coach  
back when I played, but second of all,  
I brought like six rackets in a bag,  
but I'd have like four different tensions  
to sort of be, have available in case it was humid,  
in case the ball was flying, heavy, whatever.  
These seemed to bring all these same tension,  
which I don't quite understand.  
And the stringers are like millionaires now.  
We didn't restring rackets every five seconds.  
These guys, string rackets, I remember Sampris,  
he brought out six rackets to a practice session.  
He'd use one of them for like an hour.  
And then he'd go, all right, Mac, I'm done.  
And I go, okay.

## [Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

And then he'd give the stringer, restring all six.  
I go, why are you restringing all six?  
He didn't even use five of them.  
Why do you think most sports are more tolerant  
of players having outbursts than tennis?  
I feel like you kind of got the short string on that  
to go back to strings.  
You know, obviously things are, it's more accepted now,  
but like at the time, people were looking at you like,  
oh my God, what is he doing, complaining about that call?  
Why, it's so not okay.  
Now, other sports, it's fine.  
Why is that?  
Well, first of all, if you put a microphone  
in the middle of the field in a football game,  
something tells me they're not saying hello, how are you?  
How good are you?  
And basketball, you know, they control it.  
And baseball, we used to love when the manager  
would go up to the umpire, kick dirt in his pants.  
That was incredible.  
Then I'd go out there and I'd go, you missed a call.  
And I'm like, you know, tell her to hunt,  
all of a sudden, you know what I mean?  
And we will be right back.  
SmartList is brought to you in part by Allbirds.  
Guys, I think I've mentioned this before,  
but I have Allbirds on my feet right now.  
I have three pair in my room total.  
I wear them every single day.  
It's like walking on a cloud.  
I wore them the other night to a memorial service,  
which was incredible, with like fancy pants.  
I did.  
The right shoes can take an outfit from good to great  
and Allbirds elevates your everyday style  
with timeless comfort and supreme versatility.  
Like they're all new courier with nods to a classic silhouette  
for undeniable appeal and made from 100% organic cotton.  
Allbirds makes the most out of sustainable materials  
like leather made from plants, sugarcane, and tree fibers.  
Materials so natural, one might even say,  
they're super natural.  
I've been wearing my tree dashers the most.

## [Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

I wear tree dashers to the gym.  
I wear tree dashers to the store.  
I wear tree dashers everywhere.  
They're so unbelievably comfortable.  
And I have them in two colors, which I would tell you,  
but I'm colorblind.  
Everyday comfort delivered.  
Allbirds, all new courier.  
Elevate your super natural style at allbirds.com today  
and use code SmartList for free socks with your purchase.  
Don't forget to use our code to show your support for the show.  
That's allbirds, a-l-l-b-i-r-d-s.com, code SmartList.  
This episode is brought to you in part by WeWork,  
the world's leading flexible space provider.  
The world of work has changed, right?  
Whether fully remote, in-office, or somewhere in between,  
people are looking for spaces that inspire, connect,  
and help with productivity and collaboration  
to give their businesses an edge.  
Enter WeWork.  
Their solutions are inherently flexible  
and built for all the ways people work today.  
WeWork has solutions for individuals and for companies  
no matter what the size,  
from co-working memberships to hundreds of workspaces  
around the world, and dedicated office space  
for teams of all sizes to collaborate.  
Their spaces foster collaboration and connectivity,  
bring teams together in person  
and work alongside some of the most innovative companies today.  
Get the flexibility your team needs  
with monthly memberships without the long-term commitments  
that can change just as easily as your needs do.  
WeWork makes it easy.  
Get into a turnkey office with furniture,  
Wi-Fi, and other amenities ready to use on day one  
without all the upfront costs.  
Interested in finding out more?  
Visit [wework.com](https://www.wework.com) slash SmartList.  
Hey, SmartList fans.  
Have you heard you can listen to episodes  
of this very show, Ad Free,  
and one week early on Amazon Music  
with your prime membership?

## [Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

That's right, all your favorite SmartList episodes can be heard Ad Free anytime on Amazon Music, and you'll always be the first one to catch our new episodes so you can brag to your friends.

But that's not all.

You can listen to your other favorite shows, like, I don't know, Bad Dates and Just Jack and Will, early and Ad Free too.

They also have favorites like The Daily, Pardon My Take, and up first, Amazon Music offers

the most Ad Free top podcast

so we know they definitely have something for you.

And it's already included in your prime membership.

To listen now, all you need to do is go to amazon.com slash SmartList.

That's amazon.com slash SmartList,

or download the Amazon Music app.

It's just that easy.

And now, back to the show.

How do you like that new thing now?

Where am I wrong?

Or there are no more umpires calling lines.

It's now computer, yet they put in a speaker of somebody, like an audio of somebody saying out or whatever, right?

Isn't it?

It's new, it's automated now, isn't it?

I don't mean to be a cynic,

but I'd like to know how accurate it was,

but having said that, it is, actually.

If you knew that you had a chance

to sort of double check a call,

I went to Wimbledon the first year I played there,

and I'm playing a match, and I look over,

and the guy's sleeping, one of the linesmen,

and I'm like, he's probably seen the ball better

now that he's asleep,

because they can't see a damn thing.

And so-

I always dreamed about being one of those guys.

Did you?

Yeah, I was a kid, I watched you,

I'd watch tennis, and I'd watch you,

and I'd be like, I want to be the kid

who runs across and catches.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

Oh, the ball boy too.

The ball.

Yeah, that's a cool-

It's actually a tough gig to get, apparently.

I ballboyed, I ballboyed for a handful of years at the U.S. Open, so you get close to it, it's awesome.

At Forest Hills?

At Forest Hills?

At Forest Hills.

The old Forest Hills.

And by the way, to answer your question, the electronic equipment, I would have been, you see, my hair might have been closer to your color, Jason, or Will, and I would have won more, but maybe I wouldn't have been on your amazing podcast.

That's true.

You would have given a damn.

So I got to look at the bright side that, you know-

Your game was better than your Alper's.

I would have been more boring.

No, your game was better than your Alper's.

Did you ever look back on some of those old-Alper's.

Freakouts that you had Alper's over a call, and that turned out you were right, were you right like 100% of the time?

Now that-

That's what I tell myself.

Yeah.

No, but-

Something tells me it might not have been quite 100%, but there was that call, you know, the ball was in, you know, Chalk flew up, I did that one, and 30 years later, we literally did it last year.

I played the, or it was two years ago, because it was 81 that had happened.

The guy that I was playing against came on ESPN and said, John was right, the ball did hit the line, Chalk did fly up, and I just was like, yes!

It took 30 years before, but the vindication finally, not that I'm worse than Jack the Ripper.

So in Wimbledon, you can challenge a call because there's still people calling the lines, but at the US Open, it's automated, right?

That's correct.

It's gonna be all automated within a few years.

I think baseball's doing the same thing.

Are they?

Maybe they should, because if you play baseball, just think about this, and you know, the umpire calls a ball that's clearly outside the plate.

Why is that a strike?

I don't give a damn who you are.

It's the plate.

Yeah, exactly.

But meanwhile, they're like, well, that's the umpires.

You know, he's given the pitcher a little extra, you know, a couple of extra inches.

Why would be my question?

Yeah, it should be without opinion or nuance.

But let me say this, and this might be controversial.

I've felt, and I'm serious,

I've felt like with all the instant replay and shit, and especially when you have VAR and soccer,

which, you know, every goal they look at,

I feel like it's taken a little bit of,

it's just, it's not opinion, it's just nuance,

and the human error should be part of kind of everything.

I think that's it.

I liked it.

It made a story when they get the wrong call.

That's drama.

Well, until you're on the wrong side of it,

if you're on the wrong side of it,

then it's like, why is that a part of the game?

Why shouldn't that stuff be taken out

and what is left is just pure execution by the athletes?

I think that what you're saying about the human element,

there's some truth to that, but as an ex-athlete,

if you know that the call could be corrected properly,

I mean, and that could be the difference

between winning and Wimbledon and losing.

I get that.

I mean, that's, that would be hard to argue

if you're an athlete at any point to say

that you should have that.

I totally get that.

And obviously I'm not an athlete.

And so I can see, yeah, the injustice of it.  
So Jason, in baseball,  
they would just get rid of the umpire then?  
No, the umpire would still be there  
to make a call as it plays on the plate.  
I mean, I'm not positive about this.  
And to sweep the plate.  
And yeah, yeah, you need to have it a little more fast.  
That's very important.  
Yeah, very important.  
Sweep the plate.  
I'll sweep the plate.  
John, let me ask you something about,  
and we've asked other folks that are incredible champions  
that are no longer playing their sport,  
where they scratch that old itch of competition  
and challenging yourself and seeing what you got  
week in and week out,  
was that something that was an easy adjustment for you?  
Is it a current adjustment for you?  
Or where do you sit with all that?  
Yeah, actually, it's a constant thing.  
And I've tried to sort of taper off slowly.  
What happens if no one wanted me to play tennis anymore?  
I've been asked this a lot.  
Do you love tennis?  
And my answer to it is,  
I don't know if I love it because I've never played it  
where I played it for nothing.  
I'm still asked, believe it or not.  
And I hope, no, that it never gets to that point, by the way,  
I have to play for nothing.  
But if I do, you'd have a better idea  
whether how much you still want to be part of it.  
But I've learned over time that you're always gonna be,  
I'll speak for myself, very competitive,  
but I'm not as competitive as I was when I was playing.  
It's not the end-all, be-all.  
As much as I like to beat you that second 18 in Augusta,  
when you came on and shot an 80 or 81 or whatever it was,  
and I was flailing and hitting balls in the water,  
I'm like, try to get a little perspective here, John.  
Life's pretty good.  
Will couldn't make it because his buddy passed away

and saying, all things considered, how lucky are we?  
That type of thing.  
And again, I know you guys have kids.  
I got six.  
If I'm sitting there telling my kids,  
I should have won the French.  
I should have done this.  
Why didn't I do that?  
And then I still want to beat their ass  
on the basketball or tennis court.  
I mean, I think that would be sort of like  
the wrong message to be sending to my kids  
or the kids at my academy.  
Are you kids in sports?  
It depends how loosely you define sports.  
They did play high school basketball and high school tennis.  
And one of my boys played college for a year.  
But you need that fire in the belly  
if you really wanted to do it in a serious way.  
And I don't know, I think I love my kids  
and thankfully knock on wood,  
they're doing well, all of them right now.  
But they had a little bit, and this is my fault,  
what you call afluenza.  
Yeah, sure.  
They're that hunger that maybe you need to succeed  
at a professional level.  
Sean's got that hunger, that fire in the belly,  
but it's for a foot long sub.  
But John, your kids, like everyone else on the planet,  
always is probably looking for something  
that they fit with and can excel in  
or at least put themselves in a situation  
to see what they've got.  
And it sounds like, while it was pretty clear  
what you had with tennis,  
you know, the father clock or father time doesn't stop,  
sorry, and you know, everybody ages out of everything.  
It sounds like you have found the other things  
that you can see, what have I got?  
You become like the best announcer ever in tennis  
and will probably be equally good in any other sport.  
Your philanthropy, your parenting, your music, stuff like,  
it sounds like you are, I don't wanna put words



in your mouth, but it sounds like you are sated, right?  
I mean, you're not hungry for arenas  
to see what you've got.  
No, no, I feel like I've worked at this for 40 years,  
literally, you know.  
And I feel like I found that sweet spot  
and been able to appreciate more the things  
that I enjoy doing and wanna do them as often as possible.  
And to enjoy, you know, one of the reasons  
why I love commentary work still  
is I only were doing the majors.  
You know, I didn't wanna go on tour and do it all the time.  
So I get the super pumped up for the eight weeks  
of the majors, do some stuff here and there,  
maybe 10 weeks, and I was still playing  
because, you know, there's never anything  
that will duplicate being on the center court at Wimbledon,  
but you know, still going out and competing,  
I played the seniors tour, they have it in golf, obviously,  
it's harder in other sports, but I did that for 25 years.  
I made it close to 60.  
So I'm sitting there going, man, you're pretty,  
you know, you gotta look at the bright side in this one.  
So whatever comes your way, if someone,  
at some point it's like, who's that guy?  
You know, I didn't think I'd get the gig  
as a narrator of a show, Never Have I Ever,  
where I'm like the psychologist for, you know,  
a high school Indian American girl  
trying to figure out a way in her school.  
I didn't see that one coming.  
And part of the reason I'm gonna throw this in,  
I was asked to be the commencement speaker  
at Stanford this year, which turned out  
I was the first athlete in 120 years that did it.  
And I was the Stanford dropout.  
So that was, you know, and the Stanford class presidents  
talked to me, they were like,  
one of the big reasons why we picked you,  
because you were a narrator on Never Have I Ever,  
and I'm like, what?  
You gotta be kidding me.  
So, you know, you never know.  
So who would have thought?

So thank you, Mindy Kaling.  
Yeah, no, no, no, but that's, look, I understand that.  
We never thought that we'd be doing this thing,  
this podcast before three years ago,  
and it was just like on a lark.  
And now this is like a big part of our lives,  
and it's fucking crazy, it's crazy.  
John, two things I wanna know.  
First of all, right off the top of my head,  
where you stand currently on,  
I don't think you're still endorsed,  
but I mean, you had some of the greatest Sergio Tecchini  
tracksuits warmups of all time.  
And where you stand on the Sergio Tecchini's,  
did you have any of those great beautiful zip-ups left?  
I mean, they're incredible.  
Yeah, Sergio Tecchini, back in the day,  
Fila, Alessia were the best.  
You know, the quality, made in Italy, beautiful clothes.  
I got some nice, Alessia, I got some nice Alessia.  
By the way, I'm the longest serving.  
I'm still, believe it or not,  
Phil Knight still has me on your contract with Nike.  
I've been signed with them since May of 1978.  
So I'm 45 years.  
Wow.  
When is the next Mac and Roe tennis shoe coming out?  
It came out, I just did a little spot,  
it's on the internet, check it out.  
Me and Travis Scott,  
because he loves that my old sneaker  
was called the Mac Attack.  
So it's being reintroduced, go ahead, Will.  
John, you used to have,  
your first one was the Mac and Roe All Court, right?  
Was that the first one?  
It was like over the Wimbledon, you know,  
it was the original, sort of like this version,  
Stan Smith, what he did with the D-thus.  
And then I went to sort of like the three quarters,  
which was actually like a racquetball,  
which is now everyone pretty much uses.  
And then the Mac Attack.  
It was nice that they reintroduced that

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

and Travis Scott apparently takes a sneaker like that  
and puts a little zone touch on it  
or does it something a little differently.  
And unbelievably, you know,  
more people are asking me about that  
than almost anything else.  
So it's crazy, they want to do another one  
with me and Travis Scott.  
I'm like, does he know why?  
I think he knows why.  
I think she'd do a golf shoe.  
She'd do a golf shoe with him.  
Yeah, do a golf shoe.  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.  
Touch on you.  
I don't know about that.  
I'm open for suggestions.  
Yeah.  
Can we do the smartless Mackinac golf shoe?  
Can we do this?  
There we go.  
A little collab.  
Come on, let's do that.  
What, before we let you go,  
what's the thing that people will be most surprised  
that you do?  
We know about tennis, we know about music,  
know about golf.  
Is there a hobby that you just can't live without  
or a little past time, even if it's just watching TV,  
or maybe even reading.  
Will likes to read about World War II.  
A lot of people don't know that.  
A lot of people don't.  
I'm pretty much an open book, more or less.  
What you see is what you get.  
I do have a passion.  
Thankfully, I love music.  
It keeps me humble in a way,  
because I've obviously been around so many great rock guys  
and seen so many shows,  
and it's like, who the hell am I?  
Married to an incredible thing.  
I was just gonna say, you're married to a guy.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

And so that's, she said to me way back when I said,  
cause she was disillusioned.  
She had sold a couple million records,  
but it wasn't, felt like she was treated fairly enough  
as a woman and she was disillusioned.  
So I'm coming in and I'm like, hey,  
why don't we have a band together?  
I'll join your band.  
I've got a lot of energy.  
And she goes, yeah, we should play mixed doubles  
at Wimbledon also.  
And I go, you don't play tennis.  
And she goes, exactly.  
So that was 28 or nine years ago.  
So it's kept me my perspective there.  
I still love it.  
I try to be less,  
I guess one thing that would be different  
is that I try to be less competitive.  
Yeah, yeah, yeah.  
Cause you look at me and the way I played  
and obviously the people saw that I was pretty competitive.  
So they're always, you know, if God forbid,  
I don't scream or fall over on the golf course.  
They're like upset at me now.  
You guys say like, we're not gonna invite you to Bel Air  
unless you fall over at least once and scream and skip.  
Skip Bronson.  
We only mentioned skip every fourth episode.  
Hey, do you know, do you know, John,  
I will say this is not a question, it's a compliment.  
Of all the times I've met you over the last 20 years,  
you're so consistently yourself.  
And I think that, and it really shows.  
And like you said it, what you see is what you get.  
That's true.  
You are very, you're an authentic guy  
and you really are you,  
whether you're talking to the biggest rock star  
or you're talking to the guy who's bringing you your car,  
you're the exact same dude.  
And I think that it speaks a lot to your character.  
So, you know, it's admirable.  
Yeah, it never seems insincere.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

Like you're not doing a thing.

It's true.

You enjoy being you and that's infectious.

I do and I want to thank my wife, Patty Smythe, for, because the greatest thing you can have in a relationship, it's been 29 years now, is to let the person be the person you want to be.

And she's allowed me to do that.

So love you, baby.

Thank you, well, I appreciate it.

Hey, what band are you loving listening to right now?

Off the top of your head.

Like the grunge guy.

I'm looking for new stuff.

Wait grunge.

So you're into Pearl Jam and Soundgarden and Alice and Chains.

I'm going to go see the Foo Fighters and all that stuff.

It's so good.

You know, I love Kings and Leon too.

But there doesn't seem to be like the new rock stars or the rap guys.

Yeah.

Or it's all electric or something.

Yeah.

Rock is sort of a little like tennis.

You know, I mean, we got to get our act together.

Yeah, yeah.

All right.

Yeah.

John, thank you for spending some time with us, buddy.

Please come back to Los Angeles soon

so we can go play some golf.

Love to, man.

Thanks for having me.

I appreciate it and awesome.

Thank you, buddy.

Thank you very much.

All right, can't wait to see you again.

All right, John, thanks.

Thanks, John.

Bye, buddy.

Take care.

All right, man.

Bye.

[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"

You know, I really mean that about him.  
He is, you know, I find myself saying this to my daughters  
as often as they'll bear me saying it.  
That's daddy's.  
Yeah.  
Oh, I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.  
His, there's just, there's just one of all of us, you know?  
So why would you waste any time trying to be someone else?  
I mean, I'm biting that from someone else's  
famously said that, I'm sure.  
But he's so clearly himself.  
He's unique.  
He's singular.  
And he enjoys that, makes no apologies for it.  
And it is encouraging.  
It's infectious.  
He's the same when you, if you're having something  
to eat with him, or remember we played with him at RIV,  
we played in the Pro-Am.  
If he's teeing off in front of 100 people,  
if he's walking to the thing, if you're grabbing it,  
he's the same.  
He seems like he's talking the same way in the supermarket  
and the checkout line.  
He's just him.  
And when he's in the booth too, right?  
When you listened to him on the broadcast.  
I wanted to tell him, I wanted to tell him  
I played tennis when I was a kid a lot.  
I took tennis lessons.  
Oh, he would have loved to hear that.  
Jesus.  
Are you back?  
You're snacking again.  
I love when you save, I love when you save  
some of your best moments for after the guest is gone.  
What else would you have put him to bed with?  
Um.  
Ha ha ha ha ha.  
Ha ha ha ha ha ha.  
Hey, hey, so wait, so wait.  
Show your head, yeah, yeah, so.  
So my brother used to ride me on his 10 speed bike

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

to tennis practice.  
I used to sit in the bar in the middle of the bike.  
Sure.  
Like side saddle.  
And he would, he would ride his bike  
all the way across town.  
And then on the way home, I, he crashed  
and I blacked out and I got a super fat lip  
and the ambulance had a came.  
And I was sitting on my neighbor's porch.  
Ambulance had a came was the sentence.  
Ambulance had a came.  
The ambulance had a came.  
The ambulance had a came.  
I was just peanut butter stuck in your ear.  
With the silver in our hair.  
Well, I was at the pickup truck nearly.  
This sounds like the lyrics for  
Stoned Me by Van Morrison.  
I thought he was just trying to back into a bye here,  
but no, no, no, bye.  
No, I thought.  
Sean, what are you eating?  
Tell us what you're eating.  
I just put a grape in my mouth.  
Okay.  
A grape.  
Is it green or red?  
Hey guys, let me ask you this.  
Do you think that?  
Oh, it's red.  
Do you think that, that I want to know  
where you guys stand on?  
Because it happened and then we kind of let it go.  
Where you guys land on father clock?  
Cause.  
Father clock.  
That was a low point for me.  
That was real.  
You know, the brain just doesn't fire like it used to.  
I never forget.  
Father clock is like a name of my high school band.  
We're going to make smart this father clock sweatshirts.  
Yeah.

**[Transcript] SmartLess / "John McEnroe"**

And then father clock, you know,  
when you watch the father clock,  
you just watch time go.

Bye.

Very nice.

Smart.

Smart.

SmartLess is 100% organic and artisanly handcrafted  
by Bennett Barbaco, Michael Grant Terry, and Rob Armjurf.

SmartLess.