

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

Two quick things before we jump into this podcast, number one, this book changed my life. I read this book and I made this podcast almost two years ago. I'm reposting it today in case you missed it the first time. If you already heard it, it's worth listening to again. And number two, I recommend you sign up for the private AMA feed that I have. I've been making short episodes every week based on questions that I get from other members. If you become a member, you'll be able to ask me questions directly. There's actually a private email address that you get access to in the confirmation email. I read every single email that comes in myself. You'll also be able to learn from questions, the questions of other members, and you can also add your name and a link to your website with your question so other members can check out what you're working on. That feature alone is worth the investment. I've made 27 of these episodes so far. You can get access to them right now when you become a member. You can actually join by using the link that's in the show notes in your podcast player and you can also find it at founderspodcast.com It took the fewest of words to set him off. Sometimes nothing more than the faintest trace of a smirk. He was also capable of making things up, conjuring up on a front out of thin air. That's what they would all realize afterward. He would seize on apparently meaningless cracks or gestures and plunge them deep into his heart until they glowed radioactively. The nuclear fuel rods of his great fire. Only much later would the public come to understand just how incapable he was of letting go of even the tiniest details. Many observers mistakenly thought that these are fronts were laughable things of Michael's own manufacture. Little devices to spur his competitive juices and that he would jokingly toss them aside when he was done with them after he had rung another sweaty victory from the evening. But he could not let them go any more than he could shed his right arm. They were as organic to his being as his famous tongue. Many of the things that deeply offended Michael Jordan were hardly the stuff of stinging rebuke. Except perhaps the very first one. Which, as it later turned out, was the most important of all. Just go in the house with the women. Of the millions of sentences that James Jordan uttered to his youngest son, this one was the one that glowed neon bright across the decades. His father's mean words had activated deep within some errant strain of DNA. A mutation of competitive nature so strong as to almost seem titanium.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

Years later, during the early days of his MBA career, he confessed that it was his father's early treatment of him and his dad's declaration of his worthlessness that became the driving force that motivated him. Each accomplishment that he achieved was his battle cry for defeating his father's negative opinions of him. Michael paid him back again and again by achieving so much in a life that his father could never hope to grasp. That is what offspring of disapproving fathers often do. Without even realizing it, they lock in on an answer and deliver it over and over. Confirming that they do not need to just go in the house. And they continue to confirm it even after the father has gone to dust. As if they are unconsciously yelling across time in an argument with the old man. That was an excerpt from the book I'm going to talk to you about today which is Michael Jordan the Life and it was written by Roland Lazenby. Remember that part about his father for the end because the end of the book brings that story full circle. So before I jump into the book, I'm going to tell you why I wanted to do this book. One, I would say I've looked up to Michael Jordan since I was a little kid. He's probably, if I look back, he's probably the first hero I ever had. And so I had a deep personal interest in learning more about him. But also I've come across recently, I was thinking about, you come across these deals that individuals are able to obtain for themselves in their life and career that almost seem impossible to believe. And so we've seen a few examples of these over the last couple of weeks. Coco Chanel. She went from orphan to the richest woman in the world by the time she died. Part of her doing that is signing a deal where she got 2%, 2.5%. I can't remember if it was 2% or 2.5% of growth sales, worldwide growth sales for all the Chanel perfumes, which is one of the most commercially successful products ever created. That gave her an income if it was adjusted in today's dollars. She was getting paid this starting in the 1940s. It'd be the equivalent of if you made \$300 million a year in today's dollars and the company had to pay for every single one of your living expenses. Another example of this that's hard to believe is that Steven Spielberg gets 2% of all ticket sales at Universal Theme Parks. So without having to do anything else, that's estimated to bring him about \$50 to \$75 million a year. And then you have Jordan, which we'll talk about today, the Jordan brand. He gets 5% of growth sales for the Jordan brand. The most recent numbers I found was 3.6 billion a year in sales,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

which would mean he made \$180 million.
And so I just want to bring that to your attention
because it's just a reminder that life is unpredictable.
Coco started out as an orphan, Steven Spielberg started out as a 17 year old kid
trying to get an internship on Universal Lot.
And as Jordan says in the book and in interviews,
he just started out as a poor country boy from Wilmington, North Carolina.
And there's a sentence in the prologue I think speaks to just how unbelievable life can be.
And it's a quote from Jordan.
And he says, sometimes I wonder what it will be like to look back on all of this,
whether it will even seem real.
And so I want to stay in the prologue.
There's a bunch of just one liners that I think will prompt a lot of thoughts.
The note I left myself on this one is this is a one sentence summary of Michael Jordan.
His competence was exceeded only by his confidence.
And what's interesting is we'll see that the confidence he had later in his career
was very real.
The confidence he had when he was in high school,
maybe even early days of college,
a lot of that was just him hyping himself up to convince himself.
To some degree, you could say it's a false confidence to convince himself
that he can compete with the very best.
So he had this like fake external confidence that acted as fuel and covered up internal doubts.
Another line for you and to note that myself is this is something I want to copy.
I was actually on the phone with a friend of mine having a conversation about what I was
learning in this book because he's a huge Jordan fan as well.
And when I talked about Jordan having this trait that I'm about to reach,
he's like, this is something that I'm extremely interested in hearing about.
This is something I'm extremely interested in copying.
He says he worked at his game and if he wasn't good at something,
he had the motivation to be the best at it.
And the method he used for improvement was a complete and utter dedication to practice,
which is another main theme of the book that I'm going to talk about a lot about.
Because I think there's just there's so many parallels between
the how Jordan prepared for his basketball career that we can use in our work.
In fact, I started reading another book on him and he talks about that
in the prologue of this other book I have where it's the same approach I used for basketball.
I used to approach to building the Jordan brand.
It's the same thing.
Another trait that he had was the fact that he was very interested in seeing like,
what is the limits of my potential?
And so it says mostly he tested himself.
He seemed that he discovered the secret quite early in his competitive life.
The more pressure he heaped on himself,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

the greater his ability to rise to the occasion.

And finally, one more thing from the prologue.

It says, actually, I'll read my note to you after I read this.

Text winner who worked with Jordan longer than any other coach said he had never encountered a more complicated figure.

He is a mystery man in an awful lot of ways.

And I think he will always be maybe even to himself.

And so the note of myself on this page is after reading 700 pages about him.

I feel this way too.

I've talked to you about this in the past that one of the great things about reading biographies is, you know, you spending in some cases 15.

I mean, I spent 30 hours reading this book.

This is a gigantic book.

I wish you could see how many notes I have.

It's insane.

But normally when you get to the end of that kind of experience, you feel you know the person or you have an idea of who they are.

I don't feel I know who Jordan is.

I know about his drive, his competitive spirit.

I know about the traits that I want to emulate and use in my own career.

But Jordan, the person is still very misunderstood even to me and an enigma.

So not only did I read, so let me tell you how I prepared for this podcast too.

Before I sat down to speak to you, I read close to 700 pages, took probably 100, 100 or over 100 notes on the book.

I also rewatched the 10 part series, the documentaries on Netflix called The Last Dance, which covers mainly Jordan's last year, but it also gives an entire like overview of his career and his early life.

It's a, you know, a 10 hour documentary.

And then what I did is because a lot of people talk about his retirement or excuse me, his induction into the Hall of Fame, his speech.

I watched that speech twice and then I found the transcript and I read and took notes on that as well.

So I'm going to combine notes that I have on all three of those things.

And hopefully by the end of this, you have a good understanding of Jordan's approach to not only his basketball game, but then his business that has, you know, made him,

I think the estimate is almost \$2 billion so far by the time he signs with Nike in 1984.

So let's go to his early life.

Let's go to a famous story of his where he gets cut.

It's really, he's playing high school basketball.

He wants to make the varsity team.

He's 15 years old at the time and he doesn't make it.

So I know myself as lazy and unmotivated about things he is not interested in, but obsessed with his one goal.

So it says, the 15 year old boy who pinned his hopes on trying out for the high school

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

varsity basketball team in the fall of 1978 was a far cry from the supremely confident Michael Jordan, the world would come to know.

So that's, that's an echo of what I was saying earlier how I think the confidence he has in later life, no doubt that is extremely real.

But I think he had a false sense of confidence that he actually used, used his fuel as a way to convince himself that he can do this.

So he says, and he hated.

So they're talking about the fact his mom and dad would talk about, he had no interest in ever having like a job.

He was completely obsessed with sports and being as good as baseball at baseball and basketball as he possibly could, but he wouldn't go out just to do things to make money like his other siblings would.

So he says he had any hated working, making no effort to do anything to earn extra money. It was clear to his father that Michael would do anything to avoid, would do anything to avoid anything that resembled effort.

That's the laziest boy I've ever seen James Jordan would say time and again.

If he had to get a job in a factory punching a clock, he'd starved to death.

And that's a surprising sentence because he's known for his legendary work ethic.

And it says, and now we see that it's not that he wasn't lazy, it's just that he wasn't interested.

Yet that laziness magically disintegrated when it came to sports.

It if involved a ball in the air, a contest to be settled, the switch came on.

In his adolescent mind, Michael figured maybe he could be a professional athlete.

That was really about the only thing that interested him.

And so that's another main theme of Jordan's life, singular.

He has one goal, I want to be a professional athlete.

Once he gets to the NBA, he still only has then he switches to another goal, but it's not multiple goals.

He has one goal when he gets to the NBA, I want to win as many championships as possible.

And the way he looked at it was I can't be the best player I can be if I'm not focused on just one thing. There's actually a scene about this in The Last Dance.

I took a screenshot and now I made it my home screen on my phone.

It says a guy that was totally focused on one thing and one thing only.

And so now we get to the experience of where he does not make the team.

And this again, what they said in the beginning, he uses every single slight.

Everything is motivation and he never forgets.

He's got like the memory of an elephant.

The realization of his defeat fell on him like a boulder that day.

He walked home alone, avoiding anyone along the way.

I went to my room and I closed the door and I cried.

Jordan later recalled, for a while I couldn't stop crying.

And so this is the first example of many examples of pain as I'm reading this book, as I'm watching the documentary, it's amazing how often not only Jordan, but also his teammates talk about the pain, the pain they went through.

You have physical pain of obviously the sport,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

but the emotional pain is really what I was trying to focus on.
Of constantly trying to achieve a goal, coming up short, having to fall down,
to dust yourself off, to pick yourself up.
It really reminded me of what the founder of Four Seasons says.
Ever since I read that, that's founder's number 184,
if you haven't gone back and listened to that episode.
But Easy Sharp, the guy that founded Four Seasons, there's just a line.
It's amazing, you read hundreds, I guess tens of thousands of pages,
and just how some, a random one sentence will stick in your mind and you'll never forget it.
And he talked about how difficult it was building up one of the most
premier luxury brands in the world.
And he says, excellence is often just a capacity for taking pain.
The ability to experience it, go through it, and keep going.
So eventually, Jordan makes the team.
This is something that comes up over and over again.
It's in the book, it's in the documentary, it's in his speech,
into his induction to the Hall of Fame.
It's that time is the best filter and you should study the greats,
which is exactly what you and I are doing right now, right?
And so he says, young Michael had begun taking note of the pro games on TV.
Later, thanks to the rise of ESPN, the televising of NBA games became on the present
and Jordan's own play would spawn a generation of young players attempting to imitate his game.
That wasn't, it was extremely hard to see games on TV at the time he's doing this, right?
He explained that he had done the same, finding rare and special instructors
through television.
We're finding rare and special instructors through books, right?
First, there was David Thompson.
This is the guy, this is his hero, who he looked up to.
This is the guy that he asked to accompany him to his induction to the Hall of Fame.
First, there was David Thompson, followed by Dr. J.
And this is also maybe a surprising part where Jordan's got a gigantic ego, right?
Of course he does.
But one part where he does not have an ego is constantly talking about,
hey, I couldn't have done what I did without learning from the people that came before me.
And he has later in the book, I'll give you towards the very end,
he's talking about Kobe Bryant in 2008.
And there's this interview in the book where he talks about that.
Like he's very, contrite is not the right word.
He's just, there's no ego involved.
He's like, of course, you know, stop saying that Kobe's copying me.
We all copied somebody.
And everything I've seen with Jordan, everything I've read about him,
he's constantly talking about learning from and respecting the people that came before him.
So this is just a sentence, even at a very, he's still in high school and he's extremely driven.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

And it says, at each step along the path, others would express amazement at how hard he competed.

At every level, he was driven as if he was pursuing something that others couldn't see.

And then while it's still in high school, we're going to see that he had, he makes a mistake. He eventually smartens up though.

He understands that teams win, not individuals and that you have to manage your ego.

And so he's talking about, you know, I didn't want, since the team didn't want me, I didn't want them to win.

And so he says, I wanted them to lose to prove that I could help them.

That this is what I was thinking at that time.

You made a mistake by not putting me on the team and you're going to see it because you're going to lose.

That experience brought Jordan face to face with his own selfishness for the first time. It would be one of the dominant themes of his career, learning to channel the tremendous drive and ego of his competitive nature into a team game.

And so one of the things that helped Jordan smarten up is that every single person from the high school coach, his college coaches, his professional coaches, his trainer, they talk about that Jordan surprisingly to maybe they're meaning surprising it to people that don't know him is the fact that one of his best attributes was the ability to listen.

And we're going to see that right here.

He goes up to this coach.

He's still in high school, he says, but what impressed me was that Michael said, was what Michael said when Bobby introduced me to him.

Mr. Gibbons, what do I need to do to be a better player?

He's a junior in high school when this is happening.

This reminded me of something that I heard the Nick Saban, the coach of Alabama football team say one time that was really interesting.

I think applies definitely to Jordan.

And he was talking to his team.

He says, average players want to be left alone.

Good players want to be coached.

Great players want the coach to tell you the truth every day on every play because they want to be perfect. This is Michael reflecting on the preparation and what he was doing and trying to get better because they're talking about the difference between sophomore year and junior year.

They could not believe how much you progress.

Same thing from junior year to senior year.

And his college coaches said the same thing.

And so what he's about to tell us here is really you have to find what gives you that extra motivation.

So he says, whenever I was working out and got tired and figured I ought to stop, I'd close my eyes and see that list in the locker room without my name on it.

And that usually got me going again.

And this is one of his high school coaches remembering Jordan's approach to his teammate.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

So this is something that's talked about over and over again.
The fact that he was extremely hard.
Some of his teammates would describe him as a bully.
Really, this one sentence he's about to say here reminded me of what Steve Jobs told us,
that you should be a yardstick for quality.
Some people are not used to an environment where excellence is expected.
Where excellence is expected.
That's a that's a fantastic thought.
Nobody had ever had this kid's drive, even in high school.
He took pride in his defense.
Mike was at this point in his life.
He's known as Mike Jordan.
Mike was furious if his teammates didn't play good defense in practice.
And so dedication to practice.
It's something.
It's going to be one of my main takeaways from this book that I'm going to think about constantly.
This is still Jordan at 17.
What he's about to say here reminds me of Arnold Schwarzenegger, what he taught us,
that if you see your seeing your goal in your mind helps you see it in person.
So says at 17 he had a clear notion of what he wanted.
And he wasn't reluctant about expressing it publicly.
My goal is to be a pro athlete.
And so we see he's deadly serious about that goal.
This is a description of high school Jordan as he is getting recruited to play college ball.
The coach would later recall that Jordan kept sneaking back into succeeding groups for more work.
Okay, so we're still right before Jordan goes to college.
This is what I'm about to describe to you.
I'm going to tell you the story real quick.
Jordan later refers to this story that I'm about to tell you is he says,
it was the turning point of my life.
That is a crazy sentence when you think about his life, right?
So what's about to happen is he's going to test himself against better competition.
And this helps him realize, wait a minute, I'm good at this.
I'm really good at this.
And so he's going to go to this thing called the five star camp.
Remember, he's just like a he described himself as a poor country boy
from Wilmington, North Carolina at this point.
He's maybe good at a small, small high school in North Carolina.
He doesn't know how he's never been tested against the greatest competition.
Okay, so that's about to happen here.
So it says the result was that the unknown player from Wilmington,
still something of a mystery to the Carolina coaches was headed to five stars Pittsburgh
to camp to see how he stacked up against other players from across the country.
And these are players that says who had actually made their varsity teams as freshmen and

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

sophomores,
which Jordan obviously didn't, and distinguished themselves and check out this sentence.
The conventional wisdom was that the best young players had already been identified.
Conventional wisdom is we already know who the great players are.
Jordan's not on that list.
And so this is what Jordan says about this time.
I was so nervous.
My hands were sweating, he recalled.
I saw all these all Americans and I was just the lowest thing on the totem pole.
Here I was a country boy from Wilmington.
And right away, all the spectators, the coaches are like, who is Mike Jordan?
Who is this guy?
They call him a one something I never heard of before.
They call him a one possession player, which means that all you have to do is see them once.
And so this is the effect on Jordan's own confidence.
Jordan could sense immediately that he had something the others didn't.
How great of a sentence is that?
He sensed immediately that he had something the others didn't.
The more I played, the more confident I became.
He remembered, I thought to myself, maybe I can play with these guys.
So now he's on the radar.
He starts getting recruited.
He's going to visit the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
He's going to meet Patrick Ewing, who winds up spending his career with the Knicks.
And it says he didn't realize it.
Oh, this is something I need to point out to you, too, because this is, again,
no one's life is all good, right?
There's a lot of downside to being as much pressure and as famous as he winds up becoming.
You know, he talks about multiple times.
He felt like he was a prisoner in his own hotel room.
He didn't realize it at the time of his visits in the fall of 1980,
but he was selecting the place where he would spend the last days of his true freedom
before success took possession of his life.
That's another great sentence.
Ewing met Jordan for the first time that weekend.
Years later, Ewing smiled at the memory.
He was talking a lot of junk.
He was talking about how he was going to dunk on me.
He talks smack from that moment on.
He always had that swagger.
You heard him before you saw him.
And this is the reason I'm pointing this out to you,
because he's hyping himself up here, right?
Remember, the confidence is false.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

It's like he's using his fuel.
Eventually, it'll be real.
Belief comes before ability.
You hear him before you saw him.
At least part of that was his youthful fear Jordan would admit.
And so he's saying that false confidence comes out of fear.
Have you ever heard the song Last Call by Kanye West?
It is really a song about entrepreneurship.
It's like two minutes of music.
And then he talks for I think like 10 minutes, something like that.
And he gives the story of how he broke into the music industry.
That song popped in my mind when I'm reading this part
about where Jordan is in his life, right?
18-year-old kid, raw talent, has a goal.
I want to be a professional athlete.
It's not at all clear that he can achieve that yet, right?
And up until that point of his life,
he had other people telling him,
no, you're not good enough, right?
That's why he wasn't selected to be on the varsity team.
So there's just a few lines from Last Call I want to pull out here
because I thought this was very interesting.
There is a direct parallel between I think the confidence
egotistical confidence that Kanye West definitely has
and then Michael Jordan definitely has, right?
And now both of them, it's very real confidence.
But at the time, it probably wasn't.
And so in this line, Kanye is talking about, you know,
everybody's, they think I'm just a producer,
but I want to be a rapper as well.
I can be an artist.
I can make my own music.
And so he's going around to all these different record labels.
This is before Jay-Z signs him.
And everybody's telling him, no, Kanye, you're not good enough,
which is exactly what just, no, Jordan,
you're not good enough for the varsity team.
So he says, some say he arrogant.
Can you all blame him?
It was straight embarrassing how y'all played him.
Last year, shopping my demo, I was trying to shine.
So he's telling the story.
I just told you that I'm going around.
You know, you're playing me.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

You're telling me I'm not good enough.
I was embarrassed.
I was hurt.
Think of Jordan crying in his room, going home
and crying after not making it, right?
Last year, it was straight embarrassing how y'all played him.
Last year, shopping my demo, I was trying to shine.
Every motherfucker told me that I couldn't rhyme.
So let's stop right there.
Right. At this point in, in, in Kanye's life,
no, you can't rhyme.
You're not good, right?
He sold 20, 60 million records, not 60 million.
I think over 20 million records
and over a hundred million digital downloads, right?
One of the most commercially successful.
You just said I couldn't rhyme.
I wound up being one of the most commercially successful
musicians in history.
Same thing with when, when Sam Walton's working at JCPenney,
the story I tell you over and over again that I've never forgot.
I learned probably three or four years ago when I read the book.
This manager, JCPenney says, Sam, you're not cut out for retail.
Goes on to become the most successful retailer of all time, right?
What is Jordan's varsity coach or potential coach telling him?
You're not good enough to be on my team.
So Sam Walton, Kanye, Michael Jordan all went through the same thing.
How they reacted made all the difference and it was very similar.
Now I could let these dream killers kill my self-esteem.
Walton's not going to do that.
West is not going to do that.
Jordan's not going to do that.
Or I could, and this is the main point of why I'm bringing this to your attention.
Or I could use my arrogance as the steam to power my dreams.
I use it as my gas so they say that I'm gassed,
but without it I'd be last so I ought to laugh.
I really do believe, based on what I read in this book and what I've learned spending,
you know, all these hours studying Michael Jordan,
I feel at the very beginning he used his arrogance,
his maybe fault, his false arrogance as the steam to power his dreams.
And once his belief in himself matched with, once excuse me,
once his skill level matched his confidence,
there was no turning back and there was just going to be no denying
or no stopping Michael Jordan.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

This is a little bit about the progress he's making playing college ball and this is going to be maybe bizarre to you.
But again, I think of everything I, everything new I read.
I think in terms of all the, all the stuff I've read up until this point, right?
So what Michael Jordan is about to say here is going to be very similar to what we learned from Edwin Land, right, the founder of Polaroid.
And so this is Jordan, he says,
I started to do things other people couldn't do and that intrigued me more because of the excitement I got from the fans, from the people, and still having the ability to do things that other people can't do, but want to do and they can only see that through you.
That drives me.
I'm able to do something that no one else can do.
So I read that paragraph and what popped in my mind is Edwin Land, one of my favorite quotes from him.
My motto is very personal, Land said, and may not fit with anyone else.
Don't do anything that someone else can do.
And so now we have another coach talking about what Jordan learned from, he, he winds up losing.
They thought they were going to win the championship in high school and they went up losing their last game.
And so the coach is talking about that, describing why these events are important in Jordan's life and understanding him, right?
You've got to understand what fuels that guy, what makes him great.
He took the pain of that loss, of that loss.
For most people, the pain of loss is temporary.
He took that loss and held on to it.
It's part of what made him.
This is so Jordan, again, one-on-one very unique, but what he went through, what he experiences, the way he reacts to things is not.
There's a couple of examples that pops my mind.
There's a talk on YouTube where the Lakers invited the rock, Dwayne Johnson, to give him a talk.
And the name of the talk or the theme of the talk is, remember the hard times.
And he talks about what keeps him, they're like, why the hell are you making so many movies?
Like, you're already wealthy.
Like, why are you working so hard when you've already, you know, you built an empire you're wealthy beyond belief?
And so he thinks about the time where he got cut, not only from, he winds up losing his spot.
There's a whole, I'm not gonna go like, I'll summer,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

I'll give you like pre-summer here,
but it's like probably like a 15 minute talk,
something like that.
We talked about losing a spot in college,
not making it in a fell, then getting cut
from the Canadian Football League
and having seven bucks in his pocket.
That's what he named his company for.
And he just says, like, I always, like, I start my day,
remember, like, my back is always against the wall.
And so the fact that I never forget the hard times
makes me not put, take my foot off the pedal.
This is something we saw back on founders number 116,
the founder of Seagrams.
Sam Bromfman, might've been a billionaire in this day.
This is the guy that started Seagrams,
this gigantic alcohol company,
and in that biography right of him,
his daughter is telling the story.
30 years after this happened,
Sam Bromfman sitting in a mansion with his family,
shuddering, literally shuddering at the thought
of going to, having to go to his family or so forth,
of having to go to school with holes in his clothes.
That thought didn't leave him 30 years later.
And the reason I bring this up,
and I try to tie all this together,
because if it's motivating, it's motivating for me,
it's motivating for other people,
I'm sure it's motivating for you,
the best description of this that I've ever found
came from the first autobiography James Dyson read,
or, excuse me, wrote, against the odds.
And he talks about that.
He says, throughout my story,
I will try to return to Brunel,
that's Ismbar King and Brunel, his hero,
and to other designers and engineers
to show how identifying with them
and seeing parallels with every stage of my own life
enabled me to see my career as a whole,
and to know that it would turn out the way it has.
And so the point there is Dyson went through this,
Jordan, like you're going to have to go through periods of pain.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

Jordan went through it, the rock, Sam Bromfman,
and in Jordan's case, he's telling us,
use that pain, and the rock said the same thing,
Sam's saying the same thing, use that pain as fuel.
So now Jordan arrives to college, 18-year-old kid,
and we see something that he does for the next 20 years of his career,
the total immersion into the fundamentals,
and later when he gets to view how other NBA players approach their craft,
he's shocked about how lazy they are,
understanding that they're not practicing as much as he is,
they're not working on the fundamentals,
and I think it also gives him a boost of confidence.
They have no idea, I think later on he says something like,
they have no idea of the work the game requires.
I have a quote on that, so we'll get to that in the future.
Michael Jordan arrived on the North Carolina campus in the fall of 1981
to find that he was about to play for a very different kind of coach.
This is Dean Smith, legendary college basketball coach.
Michael refers to him multiple times,
and in this other book I have on him, I says, Second Father.
And so it says, the next stage of Jordan's journey
brought a total immersion into the discipline of the sport.
When you come out of high school,
you have natural raw ability, Jordan once explained.
No one coaches it.
When I went to North Carolina, it was a different phase of my life.
Knowledge of basketball.
He's downloading knowledge of basketball on rebounds, defense,
free throw shooting, and different techniques.
And so just a random sentence I want to pull out here for you,
because I thought this relates to something I've heard Michael say
in other interviews.
So one of the most heavily recruited college basketball prospects,
this is like a year or two ahead of Jordan,
was this guy named Ralph Samson, and he made the cover of sports.
Illustrated a bunch of times.
As unknown as Jordan was, Ralph Samson was known,
if that makes any sense.
So listen to what he says here.
It's fantastic.
Ralph Samson reflected on Michael Jordan,
this force that had upset all of his best laid plans
and monumental expectations.
This next sentence is the most important part.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

No one had seen him coming.

And so in this interview, Jordan said something that I've saved on my phone forever.

And he talks about, you know, everybody after he retires, even when he was towards the end of his career, he's like, oh, this guy's the next.

They would name all these other basketball players.

Some of them even had names as Baby Jordan.

You know, younger guys, they're saying,

this is the next Jordan, this is the next Jordan.

And this is what Jordan said about this,

which I think ties into what Ralph Samson just told us, and no one had seen him coming.

This is what Michael Jordan says.

Don't be in a rush to try to find the next Michael Jordan.

First of all, you didn't find me.

I just happened to come along, and this is the most important part.

You won't have to find that next person.

It's going to happen.

Okay, so let's go to his greatest skill.

Remember freshman, I think we're still,

I'm pretty sure he's still a freshman here.

Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

Okay, yep, he is.

Okay, so this is on the ability to listen, to take in helpful information and apply it.

Easily the great, and he doesn't have a monopoly on this skill.

Something you and I can do, right?

Easily the greatest reason Jordan was successful in his first months at Chapel Hill was his ability to listen.

To his coaches, his capacity to be coached was his single most impressive attribute beyond even the 18 year old spectacular physical gifts.

Dean Smith asserted,

I had never seen a player listen so closely to what the coaches said and then go and do it.

And I love this anecdote.

It's in the book, but it's also in the last dance.

Even so, Jordan's approach was not perfect.

He's 18, of course.

It's impossible that it'd be perfect, right?

Jordan's occasionally casual effort had raised a red flag when Roy Williams challenged him on it.

Jordan replied that he was working as hard as the others, which prompted Williams to reply

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

that if he wanted to accomplish great things,
he had to work that much harder than the others.
Previous in this conversation was Jordan telling Williams
that he wanted to be the best, right?
He wanted to be the best player.
So it says, this is the result.
Williams was struck afterward
by the fact that it only took one conversation with Jordan.
No one would ever outwork him again.
My greatest skill was being teachable,
Jordan later observed.
I was like a sponge.
And that's also made me think,
it's like why I'm constantly pushing,
encouraging other people,
read as many biographies as you can,
spend as much time as you have doing this
because it's a form of listening, right?
You're having a one-sided conversation.
There's a tweet I saw one time I saved on my phone
and it says,
I learned more from speaking with others than reading
is complete nonsense.
The smartest people in the history of the world
have distilled their life's work into a few hundred pages.
Know a 30-minute conversation with your buddy won't teach you more.
And I think the whole point is there.
The main point is the smartest people in the history of the world
have distilled their life's work into a few hundred pages.
When you pick up that book,
you're having a one-sided conversation
and you can't talk back.
You are forced to listen.
Jordan just got done telling us
that his greatest skill was listening,
the ability to be teachable
and to act as a sponge and absorb it all.
So now let's go to his second year in college.
The first year they win the championship,
he wins it, it's called the shot.
I've actually watched it on YouTube several times.
It says that that's another turning point in his life
where he goes from Mike Jordan to Michael Jordan
because he hits the game winning shot for the championship.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

But he's got an older teammate,
James Worthy, who himself goes on to a great career in the NBA.
But the section is now we're starting to see that,
remember the confidence outstripped the ability to begin with.
Now we're seeing they're kind of,
they're slowly, that gap is narrowing.
And so another reminder, I believe in me.
There had been those like James Worthy
who thought his confidence as a freshman had been too much.
But this second year, they all began to grasp
that Jordan's belief in himself reflected a level of intensity
no one had contemplated before.
He's also differentiating himself, Jordan that is,
from other people.
You know, people are in college, they're drinking,
they're doing drugs.
Same thing happens when he gets into the NBA
at the very beginning.
But now you have all these students
that lived on the same floor as Jordan when he's 19.
So this is observations from fellow students
about Michael at 19.
And you can really summarize this sentence.
I was doing the section, focused, serious, committed.
He was surprised to see little evidence of a party animal.
Jordan was a serious guy.
And then he had a teammate, he said,
and they're comparing contrasting Jordan's teammate.
Buzz was definitely not as dedicated to basketball
as Michael was.
Buzz is getting distracted by partying,
by girls, by everything else that you would expect
from a college athlete, right?
The impression I got was that he was so committed
he wouldn't allow himself to be sidetracked.
Even at that age, he knew he wanted to be the best
and he knew the pitfall
and he wasn't going to fall into it.
He seemed very sure of himself,
sure of what he wanted to do
and nothing was going to stop him.
And this is what Jordan said,
I have a dream to play in the NBA.
And so one of these guys was like a,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

one of the people that lived on his floor,
he was, his goal after college was to go,
like be in movies and work in Hollywood.
And so, you know, this is the early 80s.
And so it was really hard for,
as an athlete to watch tape on yourself.
So it talks about, he would have,
like I guess a VCR and a camcorder at the time.
And so he'd go to, this guy, I forgot his name,
would film all of Jordan's games and maybe his practices.
Definitely his games, I don't know about the practices,
but what he said, he's like,
Jordan would come and sit in my room
and watch himself for hours.
And he said what he was struck most by
is not only how much time he dedicated to re-watching,
like what he was doing,
but how silent Jordan was.
He wouldn't say a damn word the whole time.
And so again, I think that really is just another example
of what Jordan had just said,
what Dean Smith had just said,
what all his coaches said, his ability to listen.
The game is speaking to him.
And he's sitting there and shutting up
and taking in that information
and using that information to improve in the future.
The end of the year, they wind up coming up short,
they don't win the championship again.
And so we see two traits that wind up staying with him
for the rest of his career,
still to this day, if you hear him talk,
and so it says, number one, he hates losing,
and number two, that he demands excellence from his teammates.
Regardless, Jordan plunged into a deep funk
at the abrupt end of the season.
I felt a bitter taste in my mouth, he said.
I was so upset with certain teammates,
oh, excuse me, he was so upset with certain teammates,
he felt lack the necessary competitive drive.
Such questioning of teammates
came to be a common theme in his life.
It was very hard for me,
excuse me, it was hard to deal with a guy

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

who wasn't as competitive, he later said.
So he's going to play for the Olympics.
This is his first Olympic experience around this time.
This is before they had professional basketball players,
I think, because these are all college guys,
and they go down to Venezuela to play in the Pan Am games.
And something's going to take place here
that reminded me of a trait that Arnold Schwarzenegger had as well.
I think it starts like drive and commitment to excellence.
The two people that popped to my mind most
when I'm reading the book and how they compare to Jordan
is really Steve Jobs and Arnold Schwarzenegger.
And we'll see, Arnold says, my drive was not normal.
People thought I was strange, why are you so driven?
Stop, do less is what everybody around him is telling him.
We just heard one of the coaches say Jordan would sneak in.
He was so obsessed with working,
he would sneak in and do more work.
It was very rare.
So they go to Venezuela, the accommodations
for the amateur athletes are really crappy.
And then what I left myself is,
my room doesn't have windows or doors, doesn't matter.
Arnold didn't care that his weight room
didn't have heat in the winter.
He knew, hey, to get to my goal of breaking into Hollywood,
he was following Reg Parks Blueprint.
He's like, I got to win Mr. Olympia.
How do I win Mr. Olympia?
I have to work out all the time.
So he had not only to go to the gym,
but when he came home, he continued lifting weights,
realized more reps I do, the closer I get to my goal, right?
But he's living in Austria at the time.
In the winter, like his, the weight that he had,
like a very, they didn't have a lot of money.
I had like a very primitive weight room.
It would literally be below freezing.
Arnold didn't care.
And we see the same thing with Michael right here.
I don't care.
I have a goal, get out of my way.
I'm doing this.
Team USA made his way to Venezuela for the games

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

and discovered their dormitory was a little more than a concrete shell.

The village wasn't completed.

The windows weren't on, the doors weren't on.

Jordan took one look at the concrete, then pitched his bag on the floor and said, let's get to work.

Hartman was struck by his all business, by the all business approach.

No whining, no complaining about the accommodations.

We're here to get our medal, Jordan told his teammates.

Let's go about our business.

So he's being coached by the legendary Bobby Knight at this point in the story.

Legendary infamous, what are we going to describe him as?

But I thought this was interesting

because what Bobby Knight's approach to,

I didn't know this before I read this one paragraph,

is very similar to what we learned from Bill Walsh

in his book, The Score Takes Care of Itself, right?

You do every little things correctly.

You don't have to worry about the score.

And so it says, Knight let his Olympic charges

know from the very diverse day that he was focused on perfection.

I have told them I have no interest in who we're playing

or what the score is.

I'm interested in this team being the best team

it can possibly be and I'll push you in any way I can get to that end.

So that line, I'll push you in any way I can get to the end.

That sounds like that could have easily come out of Jordan's mouth.

Okay, so let's get to his business

and we'll see the business that is now

paying him 180 million a year and who knows

whether it's going to go in the future, right?

It starts out, it's very unknown.

The prehistory of the Jordan brand is fascinating to me

and so I'm going to go into that.

I'm going to spend a lot of time in this section actually.

So there's this guy named Sonny Vakaro.

He says, in basketball in 1978,

you could buy your way into a hell of a lot of good graces

and Sonny Vakaro would transform Nike into living proof of that axiom.

He was a guy from the streets.

Basketball wasn't there to let him into its inner circle.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

So he operated outside the circle
and became incredibly successful for himself and the company
and he plays a very important role into Nike.
He's the one that's going to tell Nike,
no, no, stop spreading your money.
What's our budget?
Our budget is 2.5 million?
Give it all to this dude.
And so I'll get to that in a minute.
By 1977, Vakaro paid a call to Nike's offices in Oregon
to pitch the idea for a new shoe.
Nike wasn't interested, but Rob Strasser,
one of the company's top executives at the time,
was fascinated by Vakaro's relationships with all those coaches.
So these are all these college coaches
that he's been developing relationships with.
They're eventually going to,
Nike's going to give him this budget
and he's like, hey, go out and pay all these coaches, right?
With the end goals, obviously having them wear our stuff.
Other, so it says, they were fascinated
by his relationships with all those coaches.
Other Nike bosses wanted to have the FBI
run a background check on Vakaro,
but Rob would have none of it.
He hired Vakaro at \$500 a month
and put 30 grand into his bank account
and told him to go sign coaches
to Nike endorsement contracts.
You have to remember, Vakaro said,
at the time, Nike was just a \$25 million company.
The main idea was simple enough,
get coaches to outfit their amateur players in Nike shoes,
sending a strong message to fans and consumers.
And so this is where Vakaro's going to tell him,
just double down on one person.
And this is where Jordan's agent,
I don't know if he was the one that came up,
I think he was the one that came up with the idea
because before he had a lot of his,
like his clientele was like tennis players,
individual players.
So they had an idea, it's like,
why don't we market basketball players as an individual?

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

Yes, as a team sport, but focus on the individual.
So it says, Nike executives had a \$2.5 million budget
for pro basketball shoe endorsements
and were thinking about spreading it among many young players.
Don't do that, Vakaro said.
Give it all to the kid, give it all to Jordan.
To make one player work,
Nike would have to tie together many things,
including shoes and clothing,
into a unique product line,
complete with advertising and branding.
Rob approached, Rob Strasser, the guy from Nike,
approached David Falk, which is Jordan's agent,
and told him that Nike was thinking of signing Jordan.
They agreed that Jordan should be marketed
as they might market a tennis player as an individual,
more than as a basketball player.
And that's just one of many key decisions.
But this idea, okay, let's market this guy as an individual.
This just happens to be playing a team sport.
This was fascinating to me.
This is Jordan's first reaction to Nike.
He was an Adidas fan.
At the time, Converse was the official shoe of the NBA,
so Converse was in the play, goes to Adidas,
they wind up turning him down.
He did not want to go with Nike.
Remember, Nike's a tiny company at this point.
The first time in my life I'd ever met Michael,
we sat down and talked about him going to Nike.
He didn't even know about Nike.
I told him, Michael, you don't know me,
but we're going to build a shoe for you.
No one has this shoe.
Jordan thought Vaccaro, so this is a conversation
between him and Sonny Vaccaro.
Jordan thought Vaccaro seemed shady.
Michael was a pain in my ass, Vaccaro recalled.
First of all, he didn't compute the money.
Second of all, he was still a kid.
And he kept asking for a car.
And Vaccaro was like, do you understand the money
we're going to give you?
You can buy whatever, why are you asking for a car?

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

Well, you can buy whatever car you want.
A shoe contract meant nothing back in the 80s.
So he was totally indifferent.
He didn't want to come with us.
He wanted to go to Adidas.
So eventually there's a meeting set up between Jordan
and his family, his mom and dad, and Nike.
And Jordan calls his mom the night before.
And so to know myself on this page is his mom was key.
She made, there would be no Jordan brand,
at least not with Nike, that is, without his mother.
And so it says the night before Jordan and his parents
were to fly to Oregon to meet,
to hear Nike's officials present their vision,
Jordan phoned his parents and told him he wasn't going.
He was tired of all his recent travels.
And the last thing he wanted was a cross-country trip
for a shoe he didn't even like.
Just pause there, imagine this alternative history,
where there's no Jordan and Nike collaboration.
And this is crazy.
How valuable was his mom?
Literally the decision she's about to make is worth billions.
Dolores Jordan insisted that her son be at the airport
in the morning.
She would have it no other way.
And at this point in his life, he would still listen to her.
Eventually he's going to get so big.
They still have a good relationship,
but they went to being alienated.
I think this is right after his father's murder,
before Jordan becomes uncontrollable.
But at this point in his life, he's still very much listening.
He says later on everything started with her.
So it talks about that in the meeting, fast forwarding,
Vakaro couldn't take his eyes off Dolores Jordan.
He watched her expression as this is really smart,
how Nike pitched this, by the way.
He watched her expression as it was to explain
that her son would receive royalties on each shoe sold.
Vakaro told the Jordans that Nike was all in for its commitment.
We are all in.
I was betting my job, Nike was betting their future.
It was unbelievable.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

That was our whole budget.
For Michael's mother, it was like a family.
If we're willing to bet on it, it's like we were saying
we wanted you this much.
Michael, we're going, we're going to go broke if you bust out.
That was the whole point of it.
And this is what I mean.
It's not like I'm not, you're not paying me a wage.
We're partners, right?
Very smart.
It was Dolores's reaction, he would call it.
Someone was making them a partner instead of paying them a wage.
So now he's in the NBA.
And this, this part really just hikes me up
because it really does inspire me to like keep pushing
and to try to like, you can always do more.
And we're seeing from a very young age,
he's coming to a really crappy team.
There is actually, okay, let me read this part first.
And I'm going to, I got to, I want to tell you this note I took
on the very end of the Jordan documentary.
So it says, he came to practice, remember practice,
practice.
This is not Alan Iverson here.
This is Michael Jordan.
He came to practice every day.
Like it was game seven of the NBA finals.
That's what set the tone for our team.
So they say within like the first, I think by game three,
they realized this, this kid is the best player we have on the team.
There's no doubt I'm playing at a new tougher level.
He said, I've got a lot to learn.
You knew you had somebody special because Michael was always
there at practice 45 minutes early.
He wanted to work on a shooting.
And after practice, he'd make you help him.
He'd be working, he'd keep working on a shooting.
He didn't care how long he was out there.
Michael loved to play the game.
So what I left, the note left on myself on this page is
Stephen King quote number nine.
If you love it, you do it until your fingers bleed.
So usually in the show notes, you can see, I usually leave a link
for like my highlights and usually it's like my top 10

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

highlights from the books that I read.

It's also, it's on my personal email list.

If you happen to be interested, I'm just, for any book I read for the podcast, I'll just send you an email if you want it.

It's obviously free.

You don't have to do anything.

But it's just like what I'm trying to do is design with constraints before I'd have like 30, 40 highlights on there.

And I'm like, no, I forced myself and it takes quite a while.

It's easy to whittle down like, let's see, you have 50 highlights.

It's easy to get it to like 20, maybe 15.

It's really hard.

It takes a while to like, which one am I going to kick off there?

But I like the exercise and it's a way for me to like go and review things really quickly.

I can just pull up what are the 10 most important things I learned from the Stephen King book, for example.

And so what I, the note left myself here is where I was talking about Stephen King quote number nine.

So it says, this is what Stephen King said.

Talent renders the whole idea of rehearsal meaningless.

When you find something which are talented, you do it, whatever it is, until your fingers bleed or your eyes are ready to fall out of your head.

The sort of strenuous reading and writing program I advocate in, this is a program I'm on, four to six hours a day every day will not seem strenuous.

I'm doing the reading part, not the writing part, obviously.

Four to six hour days every day will not seem strenuous if you really enjoy doing these things and have an aptitude for them.

So that's exactly what we're seeing from Michael Jordan as a rookie.

I'm showing up to practice 45 minutes early.

When I'm in practice, I'm practicing like it's game seven in the NBA finals.

And then when it's over, I'm pulling in coaches and teammates and saying, teach me more, teach me more, teach me more.

And so the notes, I also took extensive notes on the Jordan documentary.

And so he's talking about, this is, he says this in the last episode.

Really think of, well, especially the last sentence here.

So he's comparing and contrasting, he wins his last title in 98, wins his first one in 91.

So now we're in like 1984.

So he's got seven years of struggle before he gets there, right?

So this is Jordan talking.

In 91, I was young, full of energy and hungry.

In 1998, when you won six out of eight championships, six championships out of eight years, and yet just as dominant as you were in 91,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

that's where the craftsmanship came in.

I think 98 was much better than any of the other years

because of how I was able to use my mind as well as my body.

So I just, I'm a sucker for him using that word craftsmanship, right?

I love that idea.

It was maddening for me to leave him my peak.

But this is why, this one sentence is really why I wanted to put this in

to where we're at in the book, because it's, we're in the shitty,

what he's going to call a shitty team, right?

We're in that part, right?

But it's just really motivating because it talks about the power of one individual,
the power of a formidable individual.

We went from a shitty team to one of the all-time best dynasties.

All you needed was one little match to start that whole fire.

And I love that sentence that he said,

one little match to start the whole fire,

and I loved that they put it at the end of the documentary too.

He right now, and this guy that's showing up 45 minutes before practice,

playing like it's game seven, listening and doing extra work,

he is that little match, that one person that's going to start a gigantic fire,

and that fire is going to be one of the all-time great dynasties.

And so he comes right out the gate.

He's going to win Rookie of the Year, but I'm going to go to the business part.

This is the best advertising you could possibly ask for at the time.

The NBA had this rule where you could only wear, it says,

the league's guidelines called for players to wear white shoes.

So the first Jordan won was the famous red and black model

that people are still wearing and using today.

And so they wind up banning that shoe.

And so it says, NBA said Jordan would have to pay \$5,000 each time he wore the new shoe.

Nike immediately phoned Sonny Vicaro.

And so this is what Sonny said.

Both Rob and Peter, these executives at Nike, said fuck them.

That's exactly what they said.

I said, what do you mean?

We're going to do without him wearing the shoe on the court

and stressor quickly decided that no, Nike was going to have Jordan wear the shoes anyway

and that the company would pay his fines each night.

Then the NBA could not have handed a better marketing platform to Nike.

When you tell the public that something is banned, what does the public always do?

Tell them they're not allowed to do something and they do it.

Nike would ring up an astounding \$150 million in Air Jordan sales over the first three years,
which in turn brought Jordan the first wave of profound personal wealth.

So they had thought, now here's the weird thing, and I can't get confirmation here.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

So the thing I'm about to tell you, I got confirmation.

So Nike thought that they would sell \$3 million worth of Jordan shoes within the first four years.

This, the author just said that they sold \$150 million in the first three years.

I everywhere else I've read besides this book said that they sold \$126 million in the first year.

So I don't know if they did \$126 million in the first year or \$150 million in the first three years.

I mean, that is quite a big difference.

What they're telling you is that it's way higher than what Nike forecasts it.

And part of that is due to the fact that you have this gigantic media attention now saying,

hey, these shoes are so like they're banned and now you have a lot more people to know about it.

And it obviously helps that this guy came out like right away.

Like, okay, he's one of the best players.

I'm going to fast forward.

He winds up scoring 63 points in a playoff game, which was a single game record at the time.

This is in 1986.

So he's been in the league for a few years.

But the reason I bring this up to your attention is because after the game,

there's a famous quote that Larry Bird, he's playing against the Celtics, Larry Bird.

And he says, that's God disguised as Michael Jordan, Bird said afterward.

And Jordan, again, a main theme, if you listen to him talking, you read about him,

is he really respected those that came before him.

He wants to learn from them.

He wants to compete with them, right?

He wants to, and he wants to be better than them.

This is very similar to Steve Jobs.

Steve Jobs would idolize founders that came before him.

He wasn't worried about being the richest person.

He wanted the legacy, like historical legacy.

He wanted to be on Mount Rushmore.

Indeed, I think in Isaacson biography, he says he wanted to be a step above his heroes, right?

Jordan in the same way.

So at the point that Larry said this, Larry's one of the best, if not the best player in the league.

At the time, he had three straight MVPs, multiple championships if I'm not mistaken.

And this is what Larry, this is, again, go back to the thing you and I have been talking about,

like the difference between real, like false confidence and real confidence,

like this is, you have somebody that's extremely talented, somebody you admire telling you, dude, you're really good at this, right?

I earned Larry Bird's respect.

To me, that showed me I was on the right track.

That was the biggest compliment I had at that particular time.

Okay, so he's a fantastic player, one of the best players in the league,

getting all-star games, scoring championships, all this other stuff,

but they're not winning, right?

They're not winning, like, this is where he realizes that it goes back to Jordan being smart.

Doesn't mean he's going to come along easily, but he understands, like,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

a single person cannot win the game.

I've got to come up with a different philosophy.

So this is going to be an intro to text winner, text winner.

I don't know why I could just call him text, text winner.

And this is going to be the architect of the system that the Bulls use to win their championships.

Phil Jackson and text continue to use this for the Lakers after Jordan retires.

Let me read my note to you first, because I think this will actually be beneficial, right?

Because what's happening here is, like, stuff you and I can do, right?

So there's four things I want to tell you about text.

One, he looked at an existing industry differently than other people.

Okay, very important.

Number two, he was able to innovate as a result of that difference.

Number three, he developed his own philosophy on work.

And number four, Jordan's response to this.

Jordan said, text taught me a lot about basketball.

I loved him.

That is a quote from, I think that's a quote from his Hall of Fame speech.

So let's go into this.

And this is about the triangle.

They call it the triple post and the triangle.

I'm going to just call it the triangle.

Okay. In late, in his late 60s at the time.

So Jordan's this young, you know, aggressive kid.

We should probably, how to see, 23 maybe, 20 somewhere around there.

So this is in Texas in the 60s.

In his late 60s, winner had more than four decades of first rate coaching experience.

Other people in basketball scoffed at text winner as some sort of oddball.

Winner's offense was not just X and O's and he liked to point out,

as he liked to point out, but a system, a philosophy for playing the game.

Complete with an entire set of related fundamentals.

Text was folk, I said it again.

Text was focused on detail in a way that no other pro coach even considered.

Text was a very obstinate, aggressive man.

He believed in the triangle.

That was his gospel.

He wanted it installed.

So he's not the head coach.

I think this might be Doug Collins.

This is a coach.

Eventually he's going to get pushed out.

Jerry Krause really believed in text winner.

And Jerry Krause is the GM of the Bulls and kind of the villain in The Last Dance.

But it says winner believed he had been hired to teach.

So he taught wherever possible with the sort of Frank

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

direct feedback that most players had not heard since middle school.

And so this direct frankness obviously is going to be a little bit of conflict, which is completely normal.

This is a famous story.

So it winds up, you know, Texas trying to get Jordan to play more team ball.

And so it says as Jordan walked in and Jordan at this point in his career, he's dominating the ball, scoring a will, does really well during the regular season, maybe even at the beginning of the playoffs.

But they're not, they can't beat a team, right?

If you're an individual, you can't beat a team.

So it says as Jordan walks up the floor, text warned or text told him, there's no iron team.

Jordan looked at winner and replied, yeah, but there's an iron win.

So it's going to take several years of failure for them to eventually Doug Collins gets pushed out.

Phil Jackson's in.

Phil Jackson has always focused on detail on defense, he says.

So he's the head of, he's the head coach, but then he lets text teach everybody offense.

And so that's when they're going to, I'll get to all this in the future.

I'm just telling you, because it's several pages in front of us.

I do want to pull out something that's, that's in the interim though.

This is about the fact that they, they, he didn't just start with a Jordan brand, right?

He signed your first deal with Nike, then he had successfully resented another one.

But this insistence on, on having equity on being a partner is really important.

As Michael's getting more and more attention, he sells, of course, more shoes, more shoes.

And so he's starting to build the foundation of which will eventually be his future billion dollar empire.

So it says, first I thought this was a fad Jordan would say, looking back on his response to the shoe line, but it is far greater now than it used to be.

The numbers are just outrageous.

Eventually a fat new Nike contract would be signed, a deal that would be opened the door a few years later for the emergence of the Jordan brand and create unimaginable wealth for the athlete.

So it talks about the sequence of events he signs first, he then, he gets the big raise then the Jordan brand.

That was a seminal deal in the history of deals.

There's no question.

And to Michael's credit and to, and to Nike's credit, they created an empire.

And so I saw somebody was reading, somebody analyzed the deal and they said, not only is it the greatest single athlete endorsement deal of all time, but it's also the greatest like, so he made more money than anybody else, but also said he's underpaid.

Those two things could be true at the same time, which is wild to think about.

So as we just said, okay, they got an idea.

Jordan will listen, but you also, you need him to fail to learn.

And so I'm going to pull out, this is during the point in his career where they just cannot

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

get past the Detroit Pistons, right?

Can't even get to the finals if you don't go through Detroit.

Detroit's going to wind up winning two championships.

It's a very good team, obviously.

But the note of myself here, and this is, he needed this failure to become better.

That is the main theme I'm trying to talk to you about, but because you're going to expose his team's weaknesses and you want your weaknesses exposed, right?

We just talked about what Nick Sieben said.

Average players want to be left alone.

Great players want to be told the truth.

They want to be coached all the time, and you want to know if you're messing up.

And so the competition, the note of myself here is the competition has studied you and found a way to beat you.

What do you do next?

The Jordan rules, which is the system that the Detroit used to counteract Jordan's bulls.

The Jordan rules succeeded against the bulls so well

that they became a textbook for guarding athletic scores.

In the 17 regular season and playoff games between the bulls and the Pistons over two seasons, the Pistons would win 14.

That is an ass kicking.

You're playing somebody 17 times, and they beat you 14 times.

That is how lopsided this is.

That scheme helped Detroit win two NBA championships, but it also helped Chicago in the long run.

Check this out.

By forcing Jordan and the bulls to find an answer,

I think that Jordan rules defense as much as anything else played a part in the making of Michael Jordan text winner said.

And again, this is not a straight line.

It's not a straight line.

It's an up and down process.

And so we see Jordan, he's still not ready.

Still young, still immature.

He has not figured it out yet.

To me, this is like the most inspiring parts of these life stories, right?

So saying afterward, his coach, Colin, suggested to Jordan

that he was taking too many shots and not hitting enough of them.

Jordan responded with a sort of childishness for game five.

Jordan made his point by taking a mere eight shots from the floor.

So he's throwing a fit.

It was the kind of action that had driven Collins to privately tell

Reinsdorf, who owns the bulls, that the team simply could not win with Jordan.

Remember, Jordan is still not ready.

He has not figured it out.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

Jordan was angry and frustrated.
And I guess to know myself on this page, I need to tell you,
this part is called agony and terror.
Imagine believing your dream will never come true.
Jordan was angry and frustrated,
but he wasn't about to reveal his pain at the loss.
He would say, don't let anyone know that you're hurting.
Don't let other folks know what's in your mind.
You know as much about them as possible,
but for them to know more about you is to give them an edge.
He hid his frustrations.
He hid his sadness.
He hid his disappointments and his agony.
The Pistons would go on to claim their first title
and the bulls would face yet another bout of recrimination, turmoil and change.
And check out this quote here.
For a while, it looked like we were never going to get past them.
And so Kraus makes the decision,
even though Doug Collins got them to the Eastern Conference Finals.
They won a bunch of games,
who ends up letting them go at the end of the season, puts in Jackson.
This is the first smart move by Phil.
And this is his first idea as the new head coach.
I brought in Phil and we talked philosophy.
The first thing he said is,
I've always been a defensive oriented guy.
I'm going to turn the offense over to Tex,
and I'm going to run the triangle.
So Phil's an interesting guy.
And I might read his autobiography due,
because I think it's fascinating.
But this is, I got to bring this up,
because it's in the book and it's in the documentary and I have notes on both.
So I want to talk to you about this,
because this was actually surprising.
I also, I think it's the first time I may have missed this when I watched The Last Dance.
I actually think Kobe was the one that brought this to my attention,
because Kobe noticed this about Phil Jackson and the bulls.
And he said that you would notice when you're watching the games,
like whether they were up 20 or down by 20, they were unbothered.
And so Kobe liked the idea of the copying this practice and this idea of
mindfulness of being in the moment of being over complete control.
And then the documentary talks about,
I think it was the year they got past,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

they finally got the past the Pistons, like Pippin, Scotty Pippin, Jordan's right hand man was fouled really hard. And before they'd get like emotional outbursts and like physical fights and stuff. And they knew they were going to beat the Pistons. And Jordan, I think says in the documentary, once he got a hard foul and just basically didn't react, like I'm not going to let you see me get upset. I'm completely unbothered. I'm completely in the moment. Like he said, at that moment, I knew like we had them. Like they were playing emotional, emotion-blurred judgment, and we were cold-blooded, right? And so this has to do with this mindfulness that Phil taught Michael, which is really surprising because you think Michael is just this psychopathic, driven, competitive person. Kobe being too. And yet they both adopted this mindfulness. This is, it's like a derivative of Zen Buddhism, Buddhism. Let me read this to you. And I'm going to go to the last episode of the documentary as well. Jackson soft-pedaled his eccentricities at first. It would take time for him to get his players to accept meditation and mindfulness and his other unique practices. Remember, this is another, I love the idea of like taking an industry that already exists and analyzing it and then doing something different, right? It's never too late to make a change. I don't know how many coaches in the NBA and at this point we're doing this. In time, Jordan would take great benefit from Jackson's Zen approach and the mindfulness sessions he provided the team, no matter how unusual they seemed. And so in the last episode of The Last Dance, they had just won the final championship. Well, actually, let me read something that happens at the beginning. There's like another author who's wrote, I think he's written, I think at least, I think he's wrote two other books, biographies on Michael. And this is what he said about Michael. Most people struggle to be present. Most people live in fear because we project the past into the future. Michael is a mystic. He's completely present. He was never anywhere else. His gift was that he was completely present. The big downfall of otherwise gifted players is thinking about failure. He would say, why would I think about missing a shot I haven't taken yet? And so now this is in 98 after they win their last championship. The night of the championship, Jordan's playing the piano.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

It looks like they're in the hotel room.

I can't even tell where they are, but these are like reporters and stuff in there too.

And so he says, the note of myself is Jordan's playing the piano in his hotel room

after winning a championship as championship number six and asked, you got another one in you.

And his sentence was very interesting.

Something that we're seeing where we're in the book is what Phil's introducing him to.

This is Jordan.

It's the moment, man.

It's the moment that Zen Buddhism shit.

Get in the moment and stay there.

Just stay in the moment until next October.

And then we'll know where the hell we are.

So now I want to go back to this idea of adopting this philosophy as a triangle.

And again, when you're learning something new, when you're trying to change something, the transition is not going to be easy.

And this transition that they're in the history of the bulls,

which is going to build a foundation for that dynasty, right?

It reminds me of the Robinson Crusoe story in that book, The Dow of Capital.

I think that's founders number 70 somewhere back there by Mark Spitznagle.

I'm going to read a quote from there in a minute,

but it's the idea that you go slow now so you can go faster later.

Okay.

The more he learned about it, the more he saw how steadfastly texts believed in it.

You're talking about Jordan there.

And Phil was the head coach and he was saying how things are going to be.

And it was like a gold mine.

You got players in the system seeing it and prospering,

but that took much selling by Jackson and months with the team under text winners instruction.

The transition was not easy.

Some observers sense an atmosphere boarding on mutiny over Jackson's first two seasons as Jordan's frustrations built.

Making these changes would require much patience.

So from Jordan's perspective at this point,

it could seem like we're going to step backwards, right?

We're going slower on purpose,

but we will go farther and faster in the future.

The operative phrase became that Jordan was going to have to learn to trust his teammates.

Later, texts would look back and marvel at Jackson's determination to stick with the offense and his persuasiveness with Jordan.

They didn't know it at the time,

but they were embarking on the most remarkable error in pro basketball history, rooted in the great discipline.

Routed in the great discipline,

Jordan and his teammates began developing that first year,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

their philosophy, their system made Jackson's bulls unlike any other team in the NBA. It didn't happen all at once. He started to see that over a period of time as the concepts built up. And so what do I mean about that? So the Dow Capital, this whole the central theme of that book is a roundabout, the main point. And I've read that book so many times. I've read, I've listened to some chapters. I can't, the chapter on conifer trees, I think it's chapter number three for me correctly. Can't remember how many times I've listened to that. I still don't even think I understand it completely. I definitely don't understand it like the author does, right? But there's two stories in that book that really synthesize his main point that helps me at least have a tiny bit of grasp of his overall idea. And there's a story of Henry Ford and of Robinson Crusoe about this idea of taking a step backwards to being, to being better than you otherwise would have been without that step backwards in sometime in the future. So he talks about Robin Crusoe on the island trying to catch fish. So just a few highlights. You know, he needs to catch at least five fish a day to sustain himself. And so he ends up cutting back to, to trying to invest in ways to catch even greater fish with less effort in the future. Robin Crusoe ultimately catches more fish first, or excuse me, Robin Crusoe ultimately catches more fish by first catching fewer fish, very counterintuitive to humans, right? And exactly what Jordan's going to do in his career at this point in the book. By focusing his efforts in the immediate towards indirect means, not ends, it is highly strategic, yielding or losing now to, to realize an advantage in the future. So instead of catching five fish today, five fish the next day, he catches, I think like, you know, two or three, and, but he's using the time that he would be fishing to build a net and a boat and all these other things that are going to make him better in the future. Okay. At last, the boat and the net are ready. The hungry Crusoe takes to the water and in less than two hours catches five fish, which used to take them all day. Now with his daily needs met, he can invest in other roundabout production, such as a rack for drying fish and evaporating sea water to collect salt and preserve them. Soon, Crusoe has an exceedingly efficient fishing operation catching far more fish than you could consume and accumulating a stockpile of protein for his diet and equivalently a stockpile of time for replacing and creating even more capital goods. As Crusoe, Crusoe shows us entrepreneurs engaging in roundabout production must contemplate the basic considerations of how long it takes, what it costs, how many resources must be invested to get increased output and how long one has to wait

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

for a payback. Henry Ford, the embodiment of the roundabout entrepreneur would invest a tremendous amount of time and effort to assemble the tools of production in order to improve speed, efficiency, and output in the manufacturing process in the future.

So we might take a temporary step back, might be a year or two, but eventually this system, this philosophy will enable us to accumulate resources in the case of an entrepreneur that could be time and money in the case of basketball team championships that we wouldn't have been able to get to otherwise, right, without taking this step backwards. So this is right before they go on their first championship run. There's an old axiom that's really applicable here, it's darkest before the dawn, okay. This is the right before, check this out, this is, you're going to replay. So you've got two championship runs, right? This is the first one. The second one, it comes right after great deal, right before great deal of frustration. Same thing's going to happen in the second championship run. All right, so it says, furious with his teammates, Jordan cursed them yet again at halftime, then sobbed in the back of the team bus afterward. I was crying and screaming, he recalled. There's that pain. Excellence is often the capacity for taking pain. I made up my mind right then and there and it would never happen again. That was the summer I first started lifting weights. If I was going to take some of this beating, I was also going to start dishing it out. So talking about the physical play that the Pistons played with, right? They were beating the shit out of them. And he was, you know, was really thin. I think he adds like 15 pounds of muscle. I forgot what it was. It was a good deal. I got tired of them dominating me physically, which each, with each Chicago loss in the playoffs, critics had grown more convinced that bulls were flawed as a one man team. Others wondered if, check this out, this is what they're saying about Jordan, right? He's about to be, to start what is going to be the greatest, one of the greatest dynasties in the NBA. Others, other people were wondering if they weren't headed for the same anguish as Elgin Baylor, Pete Marovitch, Dave Bing, all great players who never played on a championship team. Jordan was infuriated by such speculation and criticism. He was literally nauseated by the losses each year in Detroit. So I'm going to fast forward a little bit, to start playing as a team. This is where they're going to win their first championships. This is after seven years of struggle. And you can see this, Jordan even used that term, pretty sure he's hugging the trophy right after they beat the Lakers in the 91 finals. And the note of myself is even a legendary talent like Michael Jordan needs to be coach. This is about him, you know, trusting that you can't win as an individual, you have to win as a team. And so let me tell you the story. It's fantastic. It plays out over a few paragraphs. So it says, the story has been passed along by many Jordan teammates who supposedly suffered his demands and indifference over the years. It's one of my favorite stories, Steve Kerr, who filled John Paxton's role on subsequent bull teams said in a 2012 interview. So this is where he learns to trust John Paxton. Michael's having a rough second half, they're double teaming him, and he's forcing some shots. And Phil calls the time out with like minutes left in the game, and he's looking right at Michael and goes, Michael, who's open? And Michael won't look up. He goes, Michael, who's open? Finally, Michael looks up at him and goes packs. And Phil goes, we'll throw him the fucking ball. And this is the result. This is what I mean, even a legendary talent like Michael Jordan needs to be coach. Paxton would make five long buckets in the final four minutes as time and time again, Jordan penetrated, drew the defense, the double team,

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

then kicked it out. Paxton would finish with 20 and pip in 32 as the bulls closed out the championship

with a win in game five. The tears became a tide as Jordan made his way through the bedlam of the locker room to inhabit the moment he'd sought for seven years. I had never lost hope, he said. Okay, so they wind up winning again in 92 and then summer after they go, this is the dream team, the Olympics. And there's a conversation between the second place between Jordan and

Scottie Pippen on the bus, and they're talking about their Olympic teammates. And this part really fired me up because they were surprised by their laziness. Just like when Jordan went to play at the five star and he's like, whoa, I can actually play with these guys. They might have not have known me. I'm just a country boy from Wilmington, but I'm just as good as these people maybe even better. They didn't realize how hard they were working and the dedication they had to their craft that others didn't. So once you realize, like, oh, it kind of makes sense. Like, he was here, let's talk about this other player named Clyde Drexler. Clyde played for the Portland Trailblazers. There's a great thing. There's a, if you ever want to look on YouTube, where it says, like, just put in Michael Jordan, I took, I took it personally. And it's like somebody, there's a bunch of these videos, they cut up all the times over this 10 hour documentary, the last dance about all the times like Jordan just constantly takes things personally, right? And one of these is talking about like going into the, the, the, the matchup in the 92 finals was that Clyde is, you know, Jordan's main rival. And you, you know, you spend so much time watching this documentary, I'm starting to laugh at times where I don't know if they expected laughter. And one of this is where he already said over and over and like, I took this personally, this happened, I took this personally. And so he talks about this and he says, Clyde was a threat. I'm not saying he wasn't a threat. But me being compared to him, I took offense to that. And I just started laughing. And then I read this part in the book and I was like, oh, this kind of makes sense because he beats him in the finals, then he plays with them on the dream team, right? And then he's doing this interview like 20 years later and it kind of, you'll see what he means. So Scotty and, and, and Mike are talking here and he says, just imagine Pippin told Jordan how good Clyde Drexler would be if he worked on fundamentals with text winner, like so many NBA players Drexler was operating

mostly off his great store of talent apps and any serious attention to the important details of the game. So this is how you can differentiate yourself from your competition, right? Jordan had been surprised to learn how lazy many of his Olympic teammates were about practice, how they were doing this is so, so important. This is the most important sentence of this entire section, how they were deceiving themselves about what the game required. Now, this is very fascinating because there's always parallels, right? There's never just one. It made me think of a, I just happened to hear this clip of Chris Bosch. I forgot where he was talking. I know, you know, it was his

hall of fame. Maybe it might have been his hall of fame speech. I can't remember, but Chris Bosch was on the 2008 Olympic team with Kobe Bryant. And I'm going to read this to you. This is fascinating.

Tell me it doesn't relate to what we just heard. Jordan saying how they were deceiving themselves about what the game required. And so Chris says, I wanted to establish myself as a young leader on the team by waking up bright and early on day one. So the goal was to be the first one at breakfast.

I set my alarm. I make sure I'm up before sunrise. I get out of bed. I put on my gear and head downstairs. But when I get there, Kobe is already there with ice packs on his knees, drenched in sweat. It took me a minute to figure it out. But this guy was not only awake before me, he had already worked out. He had just played in the finals days earlier. Meanwhile, I'd been off for months and I was still exhausted. What he did that day was incomprehensible to me. That dedication

he had only days after falling short of an NBA championship. That taught me something I have never forgotten. Legends aren't defined by their successes. They are defined by how they bounce back from their failures. So let's go back to this sentence. Jordan had been surprised to learn how lazy many of his Olympic teammates were about practice, how they were deceiving themselves about what the game required. So that is something that has been on my mind a lot this week. Like, what can I do? What is my version of practice to make sure that when I come and talk to you, I put in as much as much work as I possibly can to make sure that these podcasts are as good as they can be. And that can be applied to Jordan's applying it to his basketball, I'm applying it to founders, you're applying it to whatever it is you do during the day. He was surprised to learn how lazy many of his Olympic teammates were about practice, how they were deceiving themselves about what the game required. So let's skip ahead in the book. And this is this might be it might be my favorite thing, because it's like, again, something I want to constantly think about and to, to take a ways like love to know myself love to practice, believe in it.

And so this is Jordan about that this was this is what built his life think about like he under says, okay, my business, the Jordan brand that I know how equity in is only going to be successful. And he says this over and over again, it's like, marketing, like the marketing I did for that brand was what I did on the court. If I was scoring two points, if I was getting bounced on the playoffs, no one's buying my shoes. Right. So this is you really think about practice was the foundation. His love of practice makes winds up making him billions of dollars over the course of his career. Right. So that's what he says, rather than misgames, Jordan had to sit out. Jordan had to sit out his favorite time with the team. I have always liked practice.

And I hate to miss it. When you miss that one day, you feel you've missed a lot. You take extra work to make up for that one day. Check the sentence out. I have always been a practice player. I believe in it. Now I'm skipping, I mean, obviously, you know, this book is almost 700 pages, I had to skip over a lot of parts, we're fast forwarding a few years. They've won the third championship right after that, his father is murdered. He retires, goes to play baseball, eventually comes back to basketball. And so this is where we're going to see a direct parallel with Steve Jobs. This is a this is after Jordan's 18 month hiatus. Steve Kerr had never played with Jordan before.

And so it says Kerr was stunned by the way Jordan sees control of the entire team's mental state for better or worse. We had no idea Kerr said he was so intense and condescending in many ways. None of us felt comfortable. On a daily basis, he would dominate practice.

Not just physically, but emotionally, in an intimidating fashion, he was going to make us compete whether we wanted to or not. There were certain days where you're exhausted, and Michael doesn't need rest. He doesn't sleep even today. I don't even understand this. There's a lot of stories in the book about that, by the way, he doesn't need rest. And other guys do. And on those days, when people were tired, he would ridicule us and conjure us and yell at us. It was tough. It was very hard to deal with. So there is a comment that Steve Jobs made in this interview. I think he's still next. This is in between his time, his two cents at Apple, right? And he talks

about he has this metaphor. I've heard it referred to as the Steve Jobs rock parable. So he's got a metaphor for teams working on a product that they're passionate about. It's very similar to Michael Jordan's approach, right? So he says, there's a Steve talking, there's an 80-year-old man that lived up the street from me. This is a young kid at the time it's happening. One day, he showed me a dusty old rock tumbler. We took regular old ugly rocks and some liquid and powder and put them in the tumbler. He said, come back tomorrow. The next day, we opened up the can and we took out these amazingly beautiful polished rocks, the same common stones that had gone in, they're rubbing against each other, creating a little friction, fighting, creating a little noise had come out these beautiful polished rocks. It is through a group of incredibly talented people, bumping against each other, fighting, working together. They polish each other. They polish the ideas. So that metaphor of that, you know, you've got to have conflict and great teams that are trying to do things that are difficult. Steve Jobs had it at Apple. Jordan's having it. Steve Courage just told us Jordan's having it in practice constantly. It's the same idea. So he's coming back, but he had been playing, but he came back towards the end of the season. They only had like a few weeks before the playoffs, if you remember correctly, and they, you know, he's not in shape. He hasn't had a whole entire season to go with the team. So he winds up losing. And this is what I mean about the darkest for the dawn right before his, this is the second three Pete, same things happening. So watch this on YouTube too, where Nick Anderson on Land of Magic winds up stealing the ball at the very end and steals the ball from Jordan, passes it. They wind up, basically Jordan lost the game for his team, right? And he talked a lot of junk. He's like number 45 because Jordan came back wearing 45 is not number 23. Anderson said afterward. And so it says there was a profoundly humbling moment for Jordan. He gets the ball stolen from him in half court by Nick Anderson. We had the game one and then we go to lose, we go on to lose that see that series. His last title was in 93. So he goes two full years while without feeling like he's on top of the world. Failing his team had bruised his outsized pride. For years, he had taken the bull's fortunes on his shoulders and lifted them with brilliant performances in front of millions of adoring witnesses. Now it was his fall that was on display. And so Jordan's trainers, his guy named Tim Grover, actually listened to his audio book. He has an audio book about what he learned from training Jordan and Kobe and other athletes called relentless. It's an extreme book. If you pick that up, by the way, there's going to be some surprising, like he's very frank, let's just put it that way. But Tim told the stories like normally at the end of the season, Jordan would take a little bit of time off. And he would tell me when he wanted to meet again. So right after they lose the magic, but this just happened. Tim is having a conversation with Jordan. He's like, all right, well, I'm about to take off, give me a call when you want to meet. And George says, I'll see you tomorrow. And Tim's reaction is like, Oh, okay, I'll see you tomorrow then. Very, he's like, I'm not wasting any time getting better. So he knows he needs to get in basketball shape. You don't get better at something. This is another left myself on this page, you don't get better at something by not doing it. And his pride is on the line. That is motivating. I'm the kind of person who thrives on challenges, Jordan said. And I took pride in people saying I was the best player in the game. But when I left the game, I fell down the ratings down below people like Shaq and it came a large one. That's why I committed myself to going through a whole training camp playing every exhibition game and playing every regular season game. At my age, I have to work harder. I cannot afford to cut corners.

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

So this time I plan to go into playoffs with a whole season of conditioning under my belt. So not as you fully committed to conditioning and taking care of his body, but we got to take care of our mind and our body, right? And I love that quote that's in Arnold Schwarzenegger's autobiographies, like the Greeks gave us, he learned it from one of his first mentors. This older guy was telling him, it's like, don't just work out your body, work out your mind. He said the Greeks gave us the Olympics and the great philosophers. You got to take care of both. This is where he starts getting into Zen and meditation. There's a psychologist that's hired by Phil Jackson. This guy's named George, George Mumford, a psychologist and mindfulness expert taught the players to meditate. In short time, Jordan gained a new level of trust with Mumford and told the psychologist that if he had met him earlier in his career, he might not have spent his life a prisoner in his hotel room. So that comment really stood out for me for two reasons. One, how much of success in life comes down to how we manage our mind, that internal monologue that's constantly messing with us. And then two, Jordan's level of fame can destroy a person. So let's fast forward a little bit. This is Jordan on his leadership. And this again, is going to echo that Steve Jobs be a yardstick of quality. Most people are not used to environment where excellence is expected. And this is what he says. And this is a very formidable, hard dude. He's not playing around it, by any means. You have a better understanding for me as a leader if you have the same motivation, the same understanding for what we're trying to achieve and what it takes to get there. Now, if you and I don't get along, certainly you won't understand the dedication it takes to win. So I run those people off. I don't run them off with the intention of running them off. I run them off with the intention of having them understand what it takes to be a champion. Remember, he just said, these people didn't understand what the game requires, what it takes to dedicate yourself to winning, you have to focus as a leader, that's what I have to do. That's going through the fucking stages of being on a losing team to a championship team. So you're talking about that's where he learned it. He's like, I didn't start on championship teams. I started out as a loser. I had to learn this, I had to transform myself into a champion. And this is not going to be easy. So this is the last year he's playing in the Bulls. This is an entire chapter when he's on the Wizards. As a Jordan fan, I have to just omit that from my memory. I deny that ever happened, by the way. But this was really interesting. All good things come from compounding, right? And at this point, Jordan has spent multiple decades training, learning, working really hard, being coached constantly. He says, it is quite possible that no one ever did anything better than Michael Jordan played basketball later in his career. Jordan said that he thought the last year was his best year, the fact that he used his mind and his body, right? There is a quote in the last dance that said something like Michael Jordan was as good as his job as anyone else has ever been at their job. And I think that's why he's worthy of study, right? So a big part in this book and in the last dance is the idea like, they should have had the opportunity to come back. There was, and you see this is very hard to keep high performing, high ego teams, companies together. It's just nearly impossible. And so I'm not going to spend too much time on this because I think the documentary does a good job explaining everything, especially just watch the last episode and I think Jordan's the way Jordan left it is just, they should have had the right to come back, right? You didn't have to have, and you got, you know, giant egos in the office, you have giant egos in the coaching staff, if your giant egos in the players, like it's just, it's disappointing to see, but completely

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

understandable, right? So they know that myself is, this is not winning. Winning is winning, and they made the classic mistake of not realizing how good they had it while they had it. So this is about decisions made, like Rheinsdorf, the owner was always like to win business deals. That's what it means about winning. This is not actually winning. It says Pippin was key to Jordan success, but Rheinsdorf wanted to trade in for cheaper assets that would allow Rheinsdorf to win the deal, but it was hardly way to treat the best basketball team in history. Conversations with Kraus, the GM, and Rheinsdorf, the owner, kept turning to how they were going to pivot away from the Jordan era, and this is really the most important sentence to this point, I think kind of sums this up, and maybe a mistake we could avoid in the future. They were so busy leaving it, they failed to comprehend what they had when they had it, and that's just, that spills into our nature. There's old sayings, like you don't know what you had till it's gone. Same thing, they were so busy leaving it. That's just another way of saying that. They were so busy leaving it, they failed to comprehend what they had when they had it. One sentence here about Jordan talking about his teammates, they're, you know, the fact that he was just relentless on them. He says, Jordan presented a singleness of purpose that was hard to dent. So let's go back to that screenshot I took, a guy that was totally focused on one thing and one thing only. And this second, that sentence made me think of, when I was reading Henry Singleton, the book on Henry Singleton on the founder of Teledyne, Arthur Rock, which is one of the world, one of the first venture capitalists, and an investor in Teledyne, Intel, and Apple, I think, he said something about Henry Singleton that made me listen to a 60-hour audiobook because of one sentence. And I'll probably, I'll probably read the physical book and turn it into a future episode of founders, because I think that's a lot that we can learn from. But Arthur Rock said, describing Singleton, he's like de Gaulle, because he's talking about Singleton was obsessed, he has a singleness of purpose like de Gaulle had, and making sure France was free, and in Teledyne's case, and making sure Teledyne's was successful, that that was Singleton's main purpose, single-minded purpose of Jordan too, you know, Jordan presented a singleness of purpose that was hard to dent. Another quote here from Steve Kerr on Jordan that I thought was fantastic, that's what made him a badass. He wasn't just a talent, it was his understanding of it all, the work ethic, the game itself, the strategy involved, he got it all, he understood it all. And that comes back to what we were talking about at the beginning, like what I was talking my friend with, about like if he identified what he was weak at, and he worked to get better at it, he wanted to have a complete game. So there's a few chapters of this book, remember this is a biography, it's not just about his playing career, it talks about like what he did when he retired, he's a young guy, young guy retired now, wealthy beyond means, beyond belief rather, he got a private jet. I want to give you a, in case you decide to read the book, which I highly recommend you do, I want to give you an accurate like assessment of what you might, what you're going to run into, right? There's a lot of crazy stories. This dude was extreme in all aspects of his life, and he essentially retires and just goes on this like global like parting spray. I mean, just I'm just going to read this, there's like a story that happens that takes place in the book over like two or three pages. I'm just going to read the one paragraph I wrote on it, his post playing schedule. There's an entire story about him having dinners

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

and dinner and drink at a strip club with the founder of BET who owns the Charlotte Hornets, or Charlotte Bobcats at the time, Charles Oakley, his friend and then former teammate, and Mark Cuban. And the story goes on, it's pretty wild. And they wind up, what makes Steven crazy is like they party until like three in the morning. I think they leave the club at like 2.30, fall asleep at three, and they meet back up at 5.45 in the morning to play golf the next day. So I don't know, I think the only one that bailed was the founder of BET, but I think Mark Cuban showed up, Charles Oakley and Michael Jordan. So this idea where like they just went, you know, out partying all night, sleep for two hours, and they're up again, like he has an relentless schedule. And now it's crazy, it wasn't dedicated to basketball, it was dedicated to you know, golf and gambling and girls and alcohol and just, you know, pure hedonistic debauchery. And so now this is the section I mentioned earlier where they're talking about Kobe Bryant in 2008. The quote Jordan has on my note is, I couldn't have played the way I played if I didn't watch the guys prior to me. This is what I meant. He's got a giant ego, but not when it comes to this stuff. Comparisons of the two players, Kobe and Jordan, routinely generated heated debates on the internet. Frankly, Jordan didn't see what the fuss was about. After all, human behavior is memetic. Humans copied and aped one another, like every rock band that for decades had sought to be the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, who themselves had derived so much from the great American bluesmen

of previous generations. So it's just a way to say everybody learns from somebody. Let's take the information that was useful to people before us and push it down to future generations. We're doing a service to future generations of humans, right? Obviously his play had created a path for Bryant, Jordan observed. But how many people lighted the path for me? That's the evolution of basketball,

or anything else, by the way. There's no way I could have played the way I played if I didn't watch Dave Thompson and the guys prior to me. There's no way Kobe could have played the way he played without watching me play. You know that's the evolution of basketball. You cannot change that.

And now we get to the part. He's an owner of the basketball team going through, you know, same struggle again. And this is the part I'm going to close. And this is where I asked you to remember how this conversation between you and I started. And the reference they're about to make

from Birmingham is when he, right after he quit basketball, he winds up playing, I think like double A ball or something like that, the baseball, like the minor leagues. And he sent to Birmingham.

He did that to try to get closer to his father. So this whole story starts out with the main focus is trying to prove to my father I could accomplish something. I don't have to just go in the house. I can actually be useful. I can be successful, right? And so he's got the stories where he's having conversations in his mind, going outside looking up at the stars in Alabama, and having conversations with his dad that was just brutally murdered. And you see this like something to really cherish the relationships we have and realize the impact we have that goes in both directions. Like if you're a parent, how important you are to your kids cannot be overstated because you see Jordan as a grown man sitting down and doing interviews for this documentary 25 years after this happened to him. And there's still tears in his eyes. And he's just a reminder to me like, I mean, I have two kids myself, like I need to make sure that I'm not only being the best

[Transcript] Founders / Michael Jordan (The Life)

person I can be, but also to develop a relationship between them and understand how devastating it is going to be for them when I inevitably leave. So let's try to tie this all together. Okay.

During the dark nights in Birmingham, he had visited often with his departed father.

So it wasn't much of a leap to figure out on his bleakest nights in Charlotte. Jordan again

likely sat alone in the darkness of his arena, reviewing all that unfolded with James Jordan,

telling the old man of his dashed expectations and embarrassments. It is also not hard to imagine

on those nights that Jordan's thoughts veered toward fantasy or at least visualization,

settling on the best thing that he could ever hope to find as an owner. There shimmering for him in

the distance is a grand season, a deep playoff run at another championship. In the midst of this

final fantasy, the buzzer sounds. It's almost time for tip off. But the arena is suddenly a stir.

Michael is nowhere to be seen. He's in his office, in the bowels of the arena, sitting and talking

with his dad as he had his entire life. The sun's eyes are bright and wide and starting to fill to

the point that he's fighting to see his old man through the blur. He's suddenly struck to ask

the enduring question, what do you think of me now pops? How about all this? Do I still have to go

back in the house? One can imagine Jordan pausing, then realizing what his closest friends and his

many fans understood long time ago, that he doesn't have to ask anymore. His long raging debate

can be

put away forever now. The answer is right there in front of him, in front of all of us. Something he

can clearly see. And that is where I'll leave it. I hope you enjoyed it. I really did put a lot of

time and effort into this. Highly recommend you read the book. If you buy the book using the

link that's in the show notes, you'll be supporting the podcast at the same time. That is 212 books

down, 1000 a go, and I'll talk to you again soon. Before you go, make sure you tap the link that's

in the show notes in your podcast player to become a member of Founders AMA. You'll be able to

email

me questions directly, which I then turn into AMA episodes. You can also add your name and a link

to your website with your question so other members can check out what you're working on.

And you can immediately unlock and listen to the 27 episodes that I've already made

and add your own question that you and other members can learn from.