

THE MIKE ALKIN SHOW

TALKING STOCKS OVER A BEER



Announcer: Free and clear of the chatter from Wall Street, you're listening to Talking Stocks Over Beer, hosted by hedge fund veteran and newsletter writer, Mike Alkin, who helps ordinary investors level the playing field against the pros by bringing you market insights and interviews with corporate executives and institutional investors. Mike sifts through all the noise of mainstream financial media and Wall Street to help you focus on what really matters in the markets. Now, here is your host, Mike Alkin.

Mike Alkin: Welcome. It is Monday, March 4th 2019. Hope you had a good weekend. Mine was nice. I'm still licking my wounds. The Islanders have had a tough stretch, played three really tough games, four tough games over the last week losing three of them. I was at two of them, so I think I'm officially banned from going. My son and I were bad luck charms. They're in all games except Sunday. Yesterday they got rocked by the Fliers 4-1, but it's getting down nitty-gritty time. It's that time of the year. Playoff hockey's around the corner. Vying for playoff positions are there. It's a fun time of year.

I spent time though, it was my son's birthday this weekend so we had a lot of family stuff we did. He officially became a teenager so it was pretty exciting. Although I'm a bit shy of six foot, although I think I say I'm six foot. Here he just turned 13 and he's just a drop shorter than me. His foot's about four sizes bigger than me. Gosh, it goes pretty quickly. It's funny, he's evolving now into the period in his life where, you know, early on kids play a lot of different sports. Some kids do. Some kids don't like it and that's fine, it doesn't matter. For him, he tried a little bit of everything.

Then as his time has evolved you could see what's of interest to him and what's not. For him, he loves football. He's been playing football for many years. I know I'm gonna hear them, "How can you let your son play football?" We're gonna talk about that a lot today. No, we're not gonna talk about football. We're gonna talk about lessons learned and how they apply in life and investing.

He's evolved into football and lacrosse. It's been an interesting experience for me because some of the times like he also has played basketball and baseball. Baseball was easy because I

couldn't get him out of the car. He hated it. It bored the tears of him. He said, "Dad I just hate it." "Okay, no problem." I am not that guy that says you have to play anything. But it's one of these things where when you join something, you finish it. I'm a believer in that. I'll give you the choice. "Do you want to play it?" "Yes." "Let's talk about it going in." "Okay." "You're not a big fan of something but you think you wanna play. Your friends are playing." "Okay." "If you join you're going to have to finish the season." "Okay."

We've gone through a few of those. When they're seven and eight and nine it's easy, you just push them here. But now kind of like I'm learning. I'm learning on the fly. I haven't had a teenage boy before. We've gone through this with basketball this year. He's played on a couple of teams. He's very good in football. He's really good in lacrosse. He's not that good in basketball. He's just whatever, for whatever reason he just, it doesn't. I think 'cause he's so tall for his age I guess. I guess. Not to make excuses, I guess he just doesn't, the coordination isn't there for what's required in basketball.

I think that's kind of made him feel a little awkward, 'cause he's not been awkward athletically before. I've had to deal with him not wanting to play hoops midway through the season where he didn't wanna play. Trying to get him to go has been a battle. I've had to pull out all the stops from what I learned as my experiences growing up playing sports and how they transferred in life.

I always thought for me that subconsciously for me, for those of you who are first listening to the podcast you may not know or you wouldn't know, but those of you who do listen know that I was an orphan growing up. I was raised by my grandparents from a very young age. For me, they're Italian and just generationally just on a different planet. Good people, salt of the earth people, but just real old fashioned, real strict.

For me sports was my salvation. It was everything for me. I just was, just dove into it from playing and watching. I mean back then think about that there were no video games. There were no distractions. It was the Mets, the Islanders, the Jets, the Knicks. But I didn't like the Yankees and Rangers but I watched them and the Giants. I could tell you every stat. I probably still can, about sports. For me, I got lost in it. It was great.

Along the way though is you learn so many things. I didn't realize what you were learning. I didn't realize how they transferred in

my life as an investor. So many of the lessons that I learned from playing football, we're gonna talk about that with our guest today, who is a 13-year Canadian football league veteran, a multiyear all-star, two-time Grey Cup champion, who had a wonderful, fabulous career. He wrote about it, about the lessons he learned from one particular man, his coach. He wrote a book that talk about that.

What I realized as I've evolved as an investor from getting into the business, so many things that I learned the lessons of sport translate over into investing subconsciously. But my guest, he put it in words. It was remarkable to see this because I've always felt that there was something there. Why did I know that? Why do I realize that if I just keep working harder and reading, no matter how tired I am I still gotta get through this 10k. God, what a pain in the ass to get through these footnotes in this annual report. But I know that if I go through those footnotes, and I didn't know it at first.

If you have a checklist of things and part of that checklist is to go through the minutia and practice it over and over all of a sudden, in the world of investing you put together the checklist and part of it is go through those footnotes. Then you go through those footnotes. You might not be knowing why when you're first starting you're going through those footnotes of these reports and a little asterisk on the presentation. But as you're going through that and over time you realize that that's where a lot of the beefy stuff is. The discipline to have a mental checklist, have a written down checklist, have an organized game plan to know what you need to attack to find the weaknesses in what companies are saying. They bury the juicy stuff in the fine print, many of them.

As much of a pain in the neck it is to do it, a lot of people don't because of that. Then you kind of realize that when it's a Wednesday afternoon, that it's frigid outside late in the season and you wanna throw up because it's been a two and a half hour practice and you can't run anymore. Then you have to go run another 20 sprints or go run two miles afterwards. You're thinking, "I can't do this," but then you do it. Very similar to reading an annual report at 1:30 in the morning, knowing that you've gotta have the answer by 9:30 the next morning because a company may have just put out their annual report with an earnings report. The earnings report may have been really spectacular on the surface but now it's your job to go in and sift through what they really said. Not what they presented as adjusted numbers. Not what they presented as what they want you to see. But what did they put in the report that the regulators are gonna see and look at and require?

You can sit there and say, "You know what, I just don't have it in me right now." Or you could say, "There is no amount of information that's here that I'm not gonna be able to kick its ass and go find it. 'Cause I know as tired as I am, I know that I've just read five of these today, different companies. But I know this is necessary and I gotta get it done. I'm gonna get it done." That stayed with me early on. Whether it was the end of football practice or the end of hockey practice where you're skating suicides, blue line to red line, and red line to blue line, and back, and back, and back, and you can't do it. You can always do it.

Now again, you don't have to have been an athlete to be a good investor. But there are so many parallels that can be drawn, so many similarities. Teamwork, management questions. One of the things I did throughout my whole career, and I don't know now it's over 20 plus years and I can't even begin to guess how many CEO and CFOs I've interviewed. Not interviewed for podcasts, but interviewed as an investor. Sat across the table from them. From really large cap companies down to really small companies to really understand their business, to understand their management style. When I do a meeting with a management team I have a mental bank of several hundred questions that I go through. It's all different categories. I don't sit out there with my checklist talking to them. But there is one. I have one that's written that I've always compiled. But it's in memory now. I look at it once in a while for a refresher.

One of the important things that, it's income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, working through the business model with them, understanding how the business works. Educate me. What's the competitive landscape? One of the really important things, and you can't really ask this but it's this mental checklist of management, leadership. 'Cause one of the things you realize when you meet with management teams, I'm guessing in the thousands now, across numerous industries, is they all get to that level, the C-suite level, the CEO, CFO level of a public company. They're all bright people. I can't say I've met many not bright people running companies.

But they also are great, great salespeople. They may not have been a salesperson going up but there's something charismatic about them to convince the board of directors that they should be the one to lead the company. Leadership is an entirely wide open field. It takes all shapes and sizes. It's amorphous, not one size fits all. I've seen so many different types of leaders. When you talk to a management team they're going to tell you what they want you

to hear. It may be true or it may not be. They're gonna say what they think you want to hear. I've seen all sorts of leaders and managers. I've seen tyrannical ones. I've seen weak ones who let their management teams walk all over them. I've seen ones who just were too aggressive, fire people on a whim, ruled by fear. I've seen management teams that gave too much leeway to their direct reports. Some who were day to day micro-managers, others who weren't.

But the one thing I think I've seen always is the ones who have been really successful, at least the ones that I've observed, ultimately are the ones who know how to develop the respect and trust of the people who work for them. Oh sure, we know there are many CEOs who are running successful companies that are tyrannical. But the ones that really I think create fantastic value, that inspire people, are the ones who help grow other people. We get to that. When I'm talking to a management team I'm listening to them. I'm asking them, "How is the sausage made? How are projections made? Are you looking to Wall Street for guidance in terms of what expectations are for the company? Are you telling your senior management team, 'This is the growth we need to keep Wall Street happy, to keep our stock price elevated, and by golly go down into the ranks and fire them up and tell them they need to deliver X percent growth, 'cause that's what we're going to do.'"

"Or have you set the tone where we're going to go out into the lowest level of the organization at the front lines, the salespeople, and really have developed the process and a repeatable process for working with them and developing them, developing their talent to be able to dive into their markets, to be able to extract the most repeatable business from those salespeople? Have you given them the tools, the training, to go out and competitively win business in their marketplace day after day, year after year? Have you given them the tools to understand their marketplace, to frame the size of the market, the growth rates, the competitive landscape, the pricing challenges, what the risks are to those growth rates? Are those people on the front lines equipped with that? Do they have their training camp? Do they get regular, repeatable practice at doing that, at improving their skillset? Then does that work its way up into the organization? How much filtering down does that get done?"

"If the C-Suite wants 10 percent growth but down at the lower levels of the organization are they trained, are they equipped to understand what their business can grow? It comes up less than

that, is that less than number squashed or is that the C-Suite that number digested and communicated to investors? Are expectations reset? If they are, what's being done to go out and help those people down in the field?" If the numbers come from the top down that can get tricky. You could have a whole organization that doesn't know how to do it. But by golly, Wall Street needs it. That's where financial engineering occurs. That's where games play. I mean we could spend 24 hours through the next two years going over what this stuff is. But there are things to think about when you're you, as an investor, this podcast is for individual investors, there are so many parallels to be drawn from athletics into investing. When you're listening to a management team give a presentation, we're gonna talk about that today with my guest. We're gonna bring him on.

He had a very long 13 year career in the CFL. I randomly stumbled upon a book he wrote called Thank You Coach. It's a best-seller on Amazon. I love sports books. I'm always inspired by them. I'm always looking for interesting different ones. I came across this. Thank You Coach written by Angus Reed, two time Grey Cup champion, several time all-star, 13 year CFL career as a center. As randomness would have it, the power of social media, one day I get a follow from Angus Reed and I follow him back. Well it turns out Angus Reed likes Uranium. He was intrigued by it so he started following me. I wrote him back. I said, "Hey," on direct message, "I know you. You wrote a pretty good book."

One thing led to another and we've developed a nice relationship. He is one of the most inspiring people I've ever spoken with. I come across a lot of people throughout my career but this guy has that It factor. He gets it. He put in words, on paper, what I've always kind of felt but didn't know how to articulate about how sports transcends life. Man, how it, if you are a leader, if you're a manager, if you're a salesperson, if you're an investor, what this guy has to say matters. Let's bring him on. Angus Reed, welcome to the podcast.

Angus Reid: Thank you, Mike. It's a pleasure.

Mike Alkin: "A good coach can change a game. A great coach can change a life." John Wooden. Pretty powerful, huh?

Angus Reid: It's very powerful. It's even more powerful when you understand it from actually having it happen to you.

Mike Alkin: Pretty wild. I wanna take listeners back. I was telling them in

the introduction that I'm a sports book junkie and came across your book. I'm like, Thank You Coach, well that looks kind of interesting. Amazon bestseller. To me it's one of the best books I've ever read in terms of leadership and management and understanding, it's more than a sports book. It's a book that transcends sports. It's a book that, because of sports, teach invaluable life lessons. But as I was saying in the introduction, if you're a CEO or a business leader or if you're a salesperson or if you're an investor, there are so many things that you put down on paper that translate into helping you become better at what you do. You learned about it from a life of football.

But God, when I watched your TED talks, your first TED talk, you didn't even know what football was until the 11th grade. For our listeners, take us back. Who's Angus Reed? Tell us about growing up. You come from a big family. I think you have four or five brothers. You have a sister. Gosh, poor Mary.

Angus Reid: Come on. She's a princess. Come on. Yeah, thanks Mike. I do come from a big family. Well, I mean I guess relative. In modern times we're massive. In older times we're nothing. I mean we're six kids. Five boys and a girl. I'm the youngest boy, so four older brothers and a younger sister. Yeah, little Mary, I wouldn't give her too much hardship. She was the princess that had everything new she wanted. Listen, I never owned anything new until I outgrew my brothers. That's just the reality of being a, listen, I lived in a closet for two years of my life. Four of us were in one bedroom. Literally my feet were the only thing sticking out of a closet. So my sister had it okay. We're not gonna put too much heat on her.

Mike Alkin: All right, so Mary gets a [inaudible 00:24:02], yeah.

Angus Reid: Yeah. She's all right. She's all right. But thank you for that great intro, Mike. I'll take you back. It's not entirely true that I didn't know about football. I knew the sport very well. I didn't play it 'til the 11th grade. My brothers played all sports and they were my heroes growing up. We played whatever sport the school offered at every season that they offered.

Mike Alkin: This was in BC, by the way? British Columbia?

Angus Reid: Yeah, in Vancouver. I grew up in Richmond which is a suburb of Vancouver, maybe 20 minutes outside. We ended up going to an all boys Catholic school. It was a big sports school in town. Yeah, I mean my brothers are, put it this way, people talk about parents with children and dealing with youngsters. My mom had four

under the age of three, so you can do the math on that if you want. I'm not good enough on math to do those long division fractions but there's twins there. Then there were six years to myself and six years to my sister Mary. I had this clump of four heroes in my house that I looked up to. Really my childhood, all it was Mike was being dragged around to soccer tournament to basketball tournament to a football game or to anything else they were doing because that's all my parents could do was take me along for the ride.

I really did grow up watching sports and loving it from a kind of a youthful fan perspective and had the cool ability to be my brother's team's ballboy or their mascot or whatever they wanted to do with me. But I got to sit on their bench and hang out in the locker room at high school games for them. I really loved sports. I played everything in elementary school, basketball, soccer. I hated soccer. I mean I was a big fat kid. I hated the running in soccer. It was just, to me it seemed nonsense. All this running, you never got to do anything, 'cause I couldn't get there fast enough.

Then high school came and everybody thought I'd be a football player. I mean I was a big kid and my brothers played. But I got really sick my first year in high school. I don't wanna get the story too long but I had a blown appendix that I didn't tell my parents about for six days 'cause I thought if you have a stomach ache and you could play your brothers laugh at you. I just kind of dealt with it. Long story short it almost killed me as you could imagine, six days with a blown appendix. I spent most of my freshman year of high school in a hospital really holding on for dear life. That wiped me out. It wiped me out physically, emotionally, and maybe most of all, wiped out all confidence. I came back to school kind of a physical shell and really someone that just didn't believe much in himself. So I didn't play any sports, nothing.

Even then my tenth grade, kind of wandered the halls. Didn't have direction, motivation. Didn't have anything. Didn't think much of myself anymore. My brothers were long down and into life so they weren't at the school anymore. I felt lost. Then football found me again. Our senior coach, as he always did, you go around the hallways recruiting players. He invited me to come out and said it in a way that made me feel like they wanted me. It was a simple message. It's a real reminder of if you're somebody in any type of authority figure, the way you speak to youth or others can be very powerful. If you invite them out and give them words that make them feel like they matter, you can really change people. I felt, "Wow, maybe I'm wanted. Maybe I'm needed. Maybe I can do this."

That was heading into the 11th grade. That's where the seed was replanted. I came out to the game and I'd like to say I was an instant star but that wasn't the story. I was terrible. I had never played the sport before. People think that pro athletes must always have been great. Well, that's not always the case. I was one of those, what do they call them? Kind of a grinder, a slow gainer I guess. I sat on the bench, didn't know what I was doing in that sport. I took the long road. I learned what it meant to commit to something, to ask questions, to work really hard, to learn fundamentals, to master fundamentals, and do all the hard things that it took to get out there. Really I took the long road. I mean I didn't get on the field until the championship game. Well, I got on kick off and some nonsense here and there. I started my championship game my grade 11 season I worked my way into the starting lineup for the last game of my grade 11 season.

Then grade 12 became a pretty good player. But I was never a blue chip. I was late to the game and I wasn't a physically imposing guy. I was undersized to be a lineman. My local school, Simon Frazer, which is the only school in Canada that plays in the US league. When I was there it was NAI. Now they're a Division II school, the only one in Canada. They offered me a scholarship which was amazing to me. It was kind of my only option at the time. I took it. I don't wanna spend too much time on this but my college career kind of went wonky again. I tell this in a lot of my keynotes.

When you get to university and now you have aspirations of being a pro football player, just like any job you look at the requirements. You realize you have to come up with those requirements somehow. Professional lineman are about 300 pounds, usually more than that. I wasn't. I was about 235 pounds my freshman year and maybe a daunting 6 foot 1. The plan was let's gain 80 pounds. I tell people, what do you eat when you wanna gain 80 pounds, Mike? You eat everything. I mean everything. I was just consuming food like maybe more than I was breathing. I got bigger and stronger. My appendix from my early days came back to haunt me. I mean you start cramming that much food down a system that's already been damaged years ago, I got really sick again. I ended up with some ulcers through my bowels. Anyways, it's a long story but I missed three years. I missed three years of my college football.

Mike Alkin: Oh my gosh.

Angus Reid: I had to move home. I shrunk down to 200 pounds again. I mean

it's an insane story. I was told I'd never play sports again. I fought my way back. I made it back for my senior season and played very well.

Mike Alkin: You must have. I was gonna say, you were a first round pick, the first overall pick in the 2003 draft.

Angus Reid: So how about this? The 2001 draft.

Mike Alkin: 2001 I meant, yeah.

Angus Reid: How about this? I make my way back. I'm an NAI All-American my senior year. I lift strong, I run well, I impress the scouts like you do at a nice job interview. You kind of smokescreen them with your resume and make them think you're real good. I get picked in the first round by the Toronto Argonauts and I get cut in training camp. I mean I might be the only professional athlete in history of all sports to be a number one pick that gets cut in training camp. Not traded, not demoted to a development league. Cut, flat out cut.

Mike Alkin: Well-

Angus Reid: You talk about, yeah?

Mike Alkin: But you didn't realize it at the time which is one of the greatest things. I always say this as an investor. My greatest sometimes investments are the ones I lose, especially early on, lost money 'cause they're the best teachers.

Angus Reid: Yes, yeah.

Mike Alkin: You learn to deal with the failure and do a postmortem and say like, "What could I have done differently?"

Angus Reid: Big time.

Mike Alkin: Right? So walk us through that. You're there. Obviously you're a number one round pick, fourth overall. It's gotta be demoralizing when that's-

Angus Reid: Big time.

Mike Alkin: Happening to you, right? Now-

Angus Reid: Particularly-

Mike Alkin: Yeah, go ahead-

Angus Reid: Sorry, particularly-

Mike Alkin: 'Cause-

Angus Reid: Yeah. Sorry, Mike. Particularly what I'd been through. It was such a long shot and I started so late. I missed so much of my college years. I remember when I got drafted, inside it kind of felt like I'd made it. Wow. I never thought I'd guess this far. I beat all the odds. Then to get cut right away, it really did-

Mike Alkin: Did you know you were gonna get cut, Angus? Could you feel it coming?

Angus Reid: Yeah, by the second preseason game when you're not playing you're kind of like, "Well, what's going on here?"

Mike Alkin: Yeah, yeah.

Angus Reid: But you know I think it's probably similar to your analogy of investments. When you look back it makes perfect sense why things happened. To me, I got drafted number one by the Argos and because I tested really well, you know, I'm the classic NFL combine mistake. I look good, I was strong because I hadn't played much football. I wasn't physically beat up. I was fresh. But that was the problem, I hadn't played much football. I was very raw. I technically wasn't ready for elite professional football. I just didn't have the years of skillset development. It made sense looking back. I wasn't ready. I really wasn't ready. I mean I was ready physically strength and speed but I wasn't ready in terms of seasoned in how to play this game enough.

You talk about lessons learned, well, the biggest lesson it taught me was, "Do I really wanna do this?" Do I have the stomach to fight back or am I gonna let defeat or hardship dictate quitting? Am I just gonna say, "Well, I wasn't good enough. Better do something else." I remember I called home from Toronto and talked to my parents saying, "Look, I got cut. I don't know what's gonna happen. I don't really know if I can make this." My dad told me, "What do you say about it?" 'Cause I said, "Look, they said I'm not good enough." He said, "But what do you say?" I told him-

Mike Alkin: Great question.

Angus Reid: "I can play. I can do it." He goes, "Well then what can you do about this? Don't tell me what you can't do. What can you do right now to make yourself move closer to what you wanna get done?"

So I got on the phone. I started calling teams, trying to get on a roster, trying to do what I can. My agent at the time helped. I said, "Listen, let's not talk about what we can't do. Let's worry about what we can do right now. What can we do to improve?"

Mike Alkin: And Montreal heard that call.

Angus Reid: Yeah. Well, they heard it 'cause I kept calling 'til they picked up the phone. Back then it wasn't trying to sneak a social media blast, it was old school phone ringing.

Mike Alkin: Yep, yep.

Angus Reid: We got myself on Montreal. Basically it was a practice roster position but I always told myself I don't care where I start, I just gotta get in so I can climb from there. We got back in the game and spent that first season, Montreal was good to me. They just said, "Look, just get better. You're gonna be on the developmental team here. Just improve." At every moment it was my dad's advice, "What can you do?" I was first guy out on the field, last guy to leave, doing the extra reps, studying at home, soaking up everything I could from the veterans. No ego, no ego, just a willingness to wanna get better. I was there 'til week 15 and the GM called me up. I go, "Great, I'm getting cut again." He said, "Listen Angus, we're trading you." I'll never forget this. I said, "I hope you're trading me to BC, which is home 'cause I just don't wanna go anywhere else anymore." That was what it was. That was what it was.

Mike Alkin: You get a free plan ride.

Angus Reid: 100 percent. I said, "Worst case scenario, I get a free flight home." They traded me. He traded to BC and I spent the last couple weeks on the practice roster there. Then my second year with the Lions, kinda made the roster. I was a backup, kind of grinding my way through but not really doing well. Just kind of hanging on. Really my second year at BC was really questioning, making myself question myself. "Do I have what it takes to make this?" I just sort of got through.

That's where the book sort of picks up, where entering my third year pro in 2003 we had a full coaching staff change. Then I really got worried because now we have a new coach, doesn't know who I am. My positional coach came with that staff. Coach Dan Dorazio became my new offensive line coach. From that moment on was when my career, but more importantly, my entire life changed, when he entered the picture.

- Mike Alkin: Tell us about the day your cell phone rang in January of '03.
- Angus Reid: Yeah, well with the backdrop of what I've just told you, my phone rang and I knew it was the BC Lions calling. My initial thought was, "I'm getting released. New staff, here's the call. I haven't put anything on a resume in my first two years to prove why I should be their guy. They're gonna move on with their own people." I didn't have high expectations for this call. On the other line I hear this, "Angus, it's Coach Dan Dorazio." I'll never forget it. He's very slow and deliberate with this voice. "This is Coach Dan Dorazio, new Offensive Line Coach." I'm going okay, if he's telling me he's my new Offensive Line Coach that means I haven't been cut.
- Mike Alkin: Yeah, that's right.
- Angus Reid: Right? Okay. I thought okay. He wanted to invite me out to a lunch on my convenience, which was kind of weird. I've never had coaches at the professional level ask me when did I wanna meet, where do I wanna meet. It was a totally different conversation than I'd ever heard.
- Mike Alkin: That's something interesting. You say that in the book. You say he put the power in your hands.
- Angus Reid: Yeah. Yeah.
- Mike Alkin: That, your first time, I've never had any level of sports experienced that but at the professional level, which I couldn't even sniff, that was completely different. It's not ruled by authoritarian nature then. How did that break the barriers down for you?
- Angus Reid: Well, and I think particularly too, Mike, someone in my situation. I mean maybe if you're a Tom Brady you have some power in the conversation. But here I am a nobody, that has no confidence, that's never had any validation that I belong here. Here's a new coach who I do not know who's asking me when would it be okay to meet, when would I like to meet, where would I like to have lunch. He'd like to take me for lunch. It put me in a position where I felt like I belonged and he was interested in me and wanting to get to know me and have the courtesy to ask if we could meet up, ask how and where could he take me for lunch. I don't know if that's the way you should do it or not but I can tell you, with me, it changed my frame of mind from being a nervous, insecure young athlete that had no idea what these people think of me to excited to meet my new coach in a framework that this might be someone I might wanna spend some time with.

That, to me, if you start relationships that way where there's a coach or leader and a player underneath, that now has opened the door for trust off the bat. It's opened the door for good conversation off the bat. It's opened the door for me coming in wanting to engage in this person and find out who they are instead of being a little cautious of my new coach and, "Should I give him any information?" Or, "I don't know what he's thinking of me." It puts you in a different mindset and a frame of mind to begin the long work that would come ahead.

Mike Alkin: Now you say, "Yeah, I'd like to go. As a matter of fact, I wanna go to Boston Pizza. That's my favorite place." You guys meet and he shows up and he's wearing well-pressed slacks and a crisp, starched golf shirt and pours more pepper on his soup and salad than you've ever seen. But there was something during that conversation that struck me which you pointed out, he asked a lot of "what" and not "why" questions.

Angus Reid: Yeah.

Mike Alkin: Talk about that because I think it translates 'cause when I think about when I'm asking management team questions, the "why" questions I've always thought do put them on their heels whereas the "what" questions don't. Same thing if you're a sales manager and you have people working for you. When you're giving people the ability to talk and not make them feel threatened or defensive it gets so much more out of it. Talk about how Dan walked you through that.

Angus Reid: Well, it's funny too, Mike, 'cause I didn't realize a lot of this stuff 'til later in my career.

Mike Alkin: Yeah, of course. Yeah.

Angus Reid: You don't know when it's happening. All you know is you feel good about it. You have to look back and you have to ask yourself why. Why was that a good conversation? Why do I like talking to this person? Why do I feel comfortable and engaged? And most importantly, why do I trust this person? 'Cause that's what it comes down to.

I was so used to meeting coaches and they would lay out how they coach, their system, their expectations. "This is what we do here." Basically telling you how they operate so you can adjust. That's kind of the normal way. "Look, this is offense we run. This is our blocking system." Dan, really most of the talk had nothing to do

with football. He was interested in who I was, things I liked to do, things I was proud of, family history, who were my heroes. Again, there were not a lot of "why, why?" It was a lot of, "What do you like most? What are some things that you're very proud of?" Very open ended questions. They were just letting me engage the conversation as I felt fit. They were letting me open up and just start talking.

What Dan knew at the beginning was his number one job was to get to know who I was as a person first. The only way to do that is to get someone comfortable enough to open up and start talking about things that matter to them. Because Dan could then take that and use that as the framework for how he would coach me moving forward. I don't wanna skip too far ahead, but there's a phrase he said to us at the beginning of every training camp that took me a long time to figure out. It was this, "I will treat each of you fairly but I will not treat you all the same because you're not all the same and to do that would be unfair." That is a very powerful line that I think every leader needs to take into account. That again, Dan would teach us, "We will grade you and evaluate you objectively but I will coach you subjectively because each of you are different people."

Mike Alkin: That's a lot of work for him to do that.

Angus Reid: That is a massive amount of work. Think of this. Think of this, Mike. People say, managers in business say, "Well I have too much staff and I could never get that. I could never reach everybody." Listen, in the football world some of the average career spans are three days. The turnover is insane. The reason this book worked is 'cause I played 13 years and 11 of them with Dan. Nobody has an 11 year relationship with one coach except maybe Tom Brady. I mean it's very rare. So the depth he knew me was more than anybody.

But he, no matter who it was, if they lasted four days or four years or 14 years, he did what he could at the beginning to take the time to get to know the person as well as he could so he could frame his coaching to them and personalize it as best as possible under whatever situation he had. It mattered that much to him because he knew his job was to maximize our ability to play this sport. The only way he could help maximize us was to know how to get through to us. The only way to know how to get through to someone is to actually know who they are, what they care about, what matters to them, how they respond to things so he could tailor his coaching. You're right, that takes a ton of time. But that's the difference between a coach that can coach technique and

systems and a coach that can coach people. That's what it comes down to, people.

Mike Alkin:

Well and think about how that translates into business. I was saying before you got on the podcast, one of the things that I was finding in talking to all these management teams, so much of what they say they're programmed to say. But meeting with them and talking with them, to really try and understand how the sausage is made is important. After doing thousands of them you get to kind of really get a sense for kind of who's kind of full of crap and who's not full of crap.

But it really is, one of the things you mentioned when we were talking just now you said, well guys will say in management positions that, "I got so many guys I can't get to know them." Well that's fine if you're the CEO or the Head of Sales and you have 2000 direct reports but there's a chain of command. Down below that guy may have 30 direct reports. It's not impossible for that guy to get to know 30 different people and understand what motivates people. I find that a one size fits all approach doesn't always work.

It sounds like what Dan was doing was the antithesis of a one size fits all approach. Because you first have, and also by giving you some power if you will, it sounds like it enabled you to know that when he was going to, what you were soon to find out with your box jumps and what lied ahead, is it wasn't peaches and cream. Just 'cause he was nice at that meeting didn't mean that he was gonna make this a walk in the park for you. But by breaking down that barrier and making you feel comfortable with him, that gave him almost the key and the ability to really just be brutally honest with you. Because you felt as though he was separating Angus Reid the person from Angus Reid the football player. Is that a fair characterization?

Angus Reid:

Yeah, it is. I think you touched on a few things that I really believe made the difference between Dan and probably a lot of other coaches or other mentors out there. Again, he took the time that a lot of people don't think they have but you realize it's necessary if you wanna get the most out of anybody, to get to know me but most importantly, to allow me to know that he actually cared about me, as you said, about me as a human being. He cared about who I was and that showed. So when we got to the next stage and all the rest of the stages where he had to push me and criticize my performance at a level that needed to be better, I always knew one, he cared about me as a person, and two, he was doing these things

because he cared about me as a person. Maybe we'll touch on it later, the language he used when he wanted to criticize and push was always about the technique or the action being taken, never about me as a human being. That is massive and I don't think a lot of leaders consciously think of the words they use enough when they're critiquing or looking to improve. You always attack the problem, never the person.

So when he would push, and sometimes he would scream and yell and demand, it was always because a technique or footwork or there was an error in what was happening, not directed at me as a human being because he cared about me. There was nothing wrong about me. There was just maybe some things wrong with how I was performing the given play or the given technique. To me, it may sound small and it may sound like semantics to some people and words. But I'm firsthand knowledge of if you cement that caring, that belief that the coach, the leader cares about you as a person, you can engage in all the criticism possible to improve you because you know they're doing it because they actually care about you. They're not critiquing you as a person. They're critiquing the performance and the actions that need improvement, and that's good.

Mike Alkin: Yep. I find it interesting, there was a part in the book where you talk about listening to Dan on a radio program. He was talking about a new draft pick. He's 6'5" measured, 305, new offensive lineman. Dan says he's got good girth, he's got a great body, he's everything you want in an offensive lineman. Here you are listening to this going, "Oh great, here comes the guy to take my job." Right?

Angus Reid: Yeah.

Mike Alkin: But the NFL, just like business, it's all about measurables. I think about it, a lot of the questions I get. When I'm looking at a management team, say somebody said, "You should take a look at XYZ company. Guy's got a great CV." Okay, great CV and he's got great pedigree, so he came from somewhere. Well I learned in the investment business, Angus, for when I first started I came from a tiny little local commuter college. I first started out at the University of Arizona. I didn't finish there. I went to a local school where I grew up, which isn't even open anymore. So I didn't have, I fought and clawed my way in and I got into the business but I was around really pedigreed guys from top flight business schools. At first that's intimidating but then you kind of realize as you start to do it, and you're grinding it out every day, that those

measurables don't necessarily mean anything. It took me, I don't know, a couple of years to say, "I couldn't be less impressed with where he went to school. It doesn't matter."

It's kind of like the guy who has a big wingspan. He's 6 foot 5. He's got big hands, big feet. Because that's important. I see so many, this podcast if for, a lot of individual investors listen. They're business owners, they're executives, or whatever they are. But I see, it's important to understand when a lot, I see individual, on Twitter especially somebody will say they, they always reference what the management, what the CEO said as though it's gospel, as though they laid out the framework for what's going to happen and it's going to happen. Those guys have great measurables, but it doesn't mean it's gonna work. What did you see in your career, all those measurables. It's just like in the draft, you never know what you're gonna get. How do you separate fact from fiction? What did you see to be able to do that?

Angus Reid: I think that was all very well said, Mike. I guess it sounds like you and I have a similar storyline where we were underdog long shots that were never, we were never exactly what people wanted when they're drawing up the perfect scenario-

Mike Alkin: Absolutely, yep.

Angus Reid: For what's required. You're right. Every line of business has measurables to do their best to sort of weed out the cream and the rest. They have to because you have to start somewhere because there's thousands of people that want a finite number of jobs. I get it. You need a vetting process. You need to do something, even how imperfect it really is. In football it's very tangible because they go off body measurements and actual human actions that are easy to time and count. Really my position, there was four measurables that mattered because they couldn't be changed. It was height, wingspan, hand size, and foot size. They could tell you how that correlates into the ability to block and absorb force and cover more space, and they're correct. But as you said very well, that doesn't equate always to a better player and to someone that can contribute to a team winning. It might but I think we put too much stock in this plus this will always equal great.

I don't wanna jump ahead but I speak so much to kids all the time at schools because I outline what the measurables are and I show myself against them. I'm embarrassingly pathetic compared to them yet I'm the one that played 13 years. That puts me in that top one percent of the top one percent. I feel confident when I speak

to kids because I tell them all the time, it's one thing for me to tell you that you can do it too and here I am 6 foot 9 with a 7 foot 3 wingspan and size 19 foot and every kid's looking at me like, "No I can't. I don't have that." Neither do I so okay.

So when you ask me the question what did I find really matters, well Dan explained it to me early in career and then at the end of my career and I believe that this is true. I believe it's true in the business world. I know it's true in relationships, in family, in community, that two of the most dominant characteristics of greatness shall we say, whether it be a team but most importantly an individual, in any walk of business. Dan explained this very well to me, very clearly, was durability and dependability. To me, these were two things that had nothing to do with innate talent or physical gifts that you happen to be given. These were choices.

In football people think durability probably correlates to when the body can take a lot of pounding without breaking he's lucky. Yeah, maybe that's true. But really the way it was explained to me and the way I understood durability was, the importance of what you've committed to is more important than all the other distractions that happen to you every day that will take your attention elsewhere or all the reasons why you shouldn't, wouldn't, or can't continue down your road but you do it anyways because you're durability. Because you know what, you've committed to something. You don't feel like it today? You do it anyways. You're tired? You do it anyways. You'd rather do other things that seem more enjoyable in the moment? You do it anyways. To me, that's durability. You keep showing up no matter what. That to me is a rare trait but I think you would agree, take your business cases. When you look at companies, if they're not durable, I couldn't give a damn how talented they are 'cause you don't know if they're gonna show up tomorrow.

Mike Alkin: You know, you weren't listening to the intro but what I was talking about in the beginning of the podcast was one of the things that sports taught me, and I didn't know how to articulate it but it was always innate in me, was that it's that cold November and practice is after two and a half hours you've got to run 10 hundred yard sprints and then you gotta go run two miles but you wanna throw up and you're thinking, "I can't do this," but you can.

Angus Reid: Yes, of course you can.

Mike Alkin: Of course you can. It's the same thing with hockey. You wanna throw up doing sprints at the end of practice but how I equated

it to my work life was a company reports its earnings and simultaneously releases its annual report. Now it's one o'clock in the morning and you've got to go through those footnotes in that annual report 'cause that's where the good stuff is. Not the BS they put out in the press release, but where you're gonna find really how the sausage is made is down in the stuff in the small print. Sometimes the last thing you wanna do at one o'clock in the morning is say, "Holy shit, I gotta go through another 30 pages of this." But you don't even think about it. You just process it and go through it and do it. That's 'cause that's where it's made.

But it becomes a repeatable process. You learn about repeatability from doing it all the time. A, having that, as you call it, the iron will to do that and then B, repeating that process over and over, which then makes you become durability. You first learned that with Dan on your first day of meeting him, right?

Angus Reid: Yes.

Mike Alkin: I mean talk about that. 'Cause that opened you up. You didn't necessarily have that, right, when you first started?

Angus Reid: Well-

Mike Alkin: I mean you did. To get to that level you did.

Angus Reid: You just don't realize-

Mike Alkin: Exactly, exactly.

Angus Reid: How much more you need to get to. Here's the thing, Mike, that was very well said about how it translates into business. Here's the thing. I think durability, I think it's way higher rated than talent because if someone will show up every single day, you can gain time and manage the rest knowing that they're gonna be there. If they're not then who cares? Their resume's useless. Here's the thing I think coaches and leaders need to realize is I think a lot of people think durability is you're lucky if you have an employee that's durable. No, no, no. You need to coach him. You need to coach your ability and you can coach your ability. I learned about durability. You have to basically show them what that means, push them to get there, and as you said, keep them there by repeating the process so that becomes normalized. That getting up every day and doing what you've committed to do is what you do. It's not a chore anymore, it's what you've been conditioned to be able to do. It needs to be coached.

My first workout with Dan he had this, I walked into the room and there was this 36 inch high box. Maybe that seems high to some, maybe it doesn't. I don't know. I was 310 pounds. I figured we were gonna jump on this thing, okay. I've done box jumps before. Well, no, no. We were gonna stand to the side of it so it's on my right hand side. He wanted me to do a 180, all the way around to get on the top. Okay, I can do that. Then jump back down, do a 180, and come right back up. Okay, I can probably do that. Then we're gonna do it 40 times. We broke it into sets. I'm like, I don't think I can do that but whatever. We start doing these reps after reps. I'm gassed by a third way through and there's no way I'm gonna do anymore. Just like you said on the sprints. There's just no way you can do it.

What I learned and I think we know this, the mind will always quit before the body. You're always gonna tell yourself you can't do it before you actually can't do it. That's where building durability comes in. That's where a coach that will show you that you can do more. But it comes back to the beginning, Mike. If he hasn't built trust and he hasn't built the point that I know he cares about me, he's just some prick yelling at me then. Why would I do it for him? He doesn't give a damn about me. He's just gonna use and abuse me.

But once you've built that connection with someone, and you know how to push them, and they know that that pushing is coming from a point of caring, you'll do more. Then you'll learn that you can do more. I finished those whole box jumps. You know what we got up the next day and I saw him, we did them again. I don't think that's probably healthy, what we did from a biomechanics human kinetics kinesiology standpoint. It doesn't matter.

Durability at the highest level isn't always about making sure you feel great and you're always fresh. It's about doing what you gotta do because life demands that of you. You need to be trained to that level and have an understanding that that's where you live if you want to be exceptional at things. It's about going past the point where most people won't because it's hard, it's too difficult. Because they've never been there they don't think they can get there. They need a coach that can show them that not only can you get there but you can live at that point for very, very long periods of time. That's where you win.

As you said, it's those hours working after everyone else is exhausted of doing anything where you find the good stuff. That's where you do the good things. That's where you do the things that

other people, I would suggest, just won't do. Not that they can't but they won't. That's a big separator. That, Mike, is available to anybody. That is not wingspan. That is not foot size. That is not talent.

Mike Alkin: And it's free. It doesn't cost anything to do.

Angus Reid: Free.

Mike Alkin: You say something in the book. You say you don't rise to the level of your expectations, you fall to the level of your training.

Angus Reid: Right.

Mike Alkin: The listeners on this podcast, like I said, I don't do it for institutional investors. I do it for folks, obviously if you're taking the time to find the Mike Alkin Show, I'm a nobody. They went out and found this-

Angus Reid: Come on, Mike.

Mike Alkin: No but I mean come on, there's thousands. I'm just a regular professional investor that tries to share my insights with people. But they come on and they listen so they obviously have an interest in learning. One of the things I get asked a lot, whether it's where I live at my son's ball game or if I'm playing hockey, "What do you like? Do you have a good stock tip?" Like, yeah, okay. That's the stupidest question I ever get. What I realized over time as an investor, so for most of my career, all my career I'm in the hedge fund industry.

What happened as the hedge fund industry grew you would go to peer dinners where a bunch of guys would get together and have a dinner, maybe 10 or 12 or 15 guys. You'd sit around and you'd go around the table and say, "What's interesting to you? What are you working on? What do you like?" Somebody would say, "Oh, I like XYZ company and here's the thesis," and they lay out their thesis. Then you hear enough of those something might sound interesting. Then you go back to your office and what tends to happen is an analyst at a hedge fund is covering let's say 15 or 20 stocks. He's trying to outperform the index that they're benchmarked against. He hears a good idea, and it's a smart guy, it was another pedigreed guy, and they were at this dinner. He goes back and he does a little bit of work. He assumes that that guy who pitched it did a lot of work. Now he presents that idea and that idea gets in the portfolio.

Then the way he stays current on it is by calling that guy that he got the idea from. Or he may do a little bit of work on his own. But now, because that idea is currency for him, Angus, it's currency when he's talking to another mate from another firm. The guy will call up and say, "What do you like?" He'll say, "I just did some work on this idea. I just put this in the portfolio." Now that guy says, "Hey, here's a pretty good idea. I kinda like that." He does a little bit of work and he puts it in the portfolio. Now you see how the game of telephone starts. You know how the game of telephone ends is you say something at the beginning and then 20 people later it's a completely different story. Well, that's the idea dinner. That's the evolution of how a lot of this stuffs work. Somewhere down the line you have a portfolio, some guys have a whole portfolio of names that they know a little bit about but not a lot about.

What I always find is if you don't have a lot of names that you're looking at, a lot of names that you're focused on, but you just can focus and keep working harder on those few names, you're gonna know it better than everyone. You keep training yourself to keep doing that. It doesn't mean you're always going to get it right. Shit happens in investing. You could miss something. You get something wrong. But your chances of diving deeper, having a disciplined process to understand. Now part of it you just have to know. You have to understand a little bit of finance. You have to understand the income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, the relationships within those. But it doesn't matter if you know, 'cause every one of those guys at the idea dinner, they're smart. They're crazy smart. They're ridiculously smart.

I always say this when I talk to professionals versus an amateur investor. The professional investor is crazy off the charts smart, well versed in multiple industries, well versed in global geopolitics. But it doesn't mean he's a better stock picker or she's a better stock picker. Because if you as an amateur and you as a do-it-yourselfer learn a process and repeat that process and work hard, you can do well. So I find so much of what you're saying about the you can do more and the process by which you go about it is so important. I just thought it was fantastic when I was reading that because there's so much of what you're saying is that, and another thing that you talked about in the book which I thought was interested was always being ready to go. You talked about Dan used to say, "Do you ever see a cheetah warm up?"

Angus Reid:

Right.

Mike Alkin: Talk about that 'cause I think that's an interesting, and I think there are correlations with business and investing.

Angus Reid: Yeah, I think there is. I think it's everything to do with life. Look, we live in a society now Mike where we've been conditioned and sold that, maybe 'cause there's a whole business behind this but you need to do all these things to prepare yourself to get ready. I'm talking initially from the sports perspective. There's this elongated 15 minute warm up you need to do, the dynamic warm up. Then make sure your nutrition is perfect and all these things. It really handcuffs you from dealing with reality 'cause I don't know how many times in life, whether it be in business something happens. You go, "Wait a minute though. I gotta get ready here. I need about 20 minutes to kind of warm things up." You go, "No. You gotta deal with this now."

So there's two things. There's always being prepared. That's your constant work on your art or your craft shall we say. You're always working on it so you're never caught off guard. You're constantly honing your craft. For me physically it was keeping mobile, keeping strong in the evenings in the morning, any time I had a chance. Like a cheetah, they kind of stretch here and there. You're always kind of, you're working away at what you're committed to and focused always, whenever you can. So when an issue happens, whether it be you gotta come off the bench in the middle of a game or the bus broke down and now you don't have time for the warm up but you gotta play. If you let yourself get so handcuffed to this need for this elaborate process before you can do anything you're done. You're done. You need to be able to respond to life right now and go from zero to 100 in a heartbeat.

That is a mentality, that's a psychology that has to be coached, reinforced. We gotta get away from, "You can't do anything until you do all these things first." No, you gotta be always doing things so when life throws the problem, which is an opportunity, at you, you can jump before anyone else to deal with it, solve it, win it, and move on. That again comes down to a durable person that can attack when they got to attack because their mind is ready to go and they don't need everything to be just right and to have ticked all these boxes before. You could make the case you're looking at businesses, you're looking at companies, and when a situation arises you're ready to jump because you're always ready. You're always ready and you've been doing your work every day to your craft.

Mike Alkin: Absolutely.

Angus Reid: So you can make the move where the other person's going, "Whoa, I need some time now to think this through," it's over. It's over. The amateur goes, "Well, I'll just jump into do things yet." Well if you haven't trained yourself properly you make terrible mistakes 'cause you're making a decision based on nothing. But the pro is always working their craft so they're always ready to go, if that makes sense.

Mike Alkin: it so makes sense because I see a lot of times people make the mistake, when it hits the news, when something, back in the early part of the 2000s I worked for a fund called Zweig-DiMenna. It's still around. It was just a very big hedge fund, incredibly successful. Zweig was a guy named Marty Zweig, God rest his soul. He passed a few years ago. Marty was a high profile economist. He was on Louis Rukeyser's Wall Street Week which was a very popular show in the 80s and 90s and 2000s. He started a hedge fund with Joe DiMenna with just a few million bucks and they turned it into, when I was there it was a 10 billion dollar fund, years ago.

Angus Reid: Wow.

Mike Alkin: Really successful. Marty used to say, it was like a loose rule but if something we really like shows up on the cover of two national news magazines, it's time to like get out because it's already there. What you tend to find though is people react to what's presented to them in the moment versus having done the homework before hand. If two national magazine covers said it's a bear market, well that's already reflected in the price of the stocks, so it's time to start thinking to go the other way.

I think it's really interesting because you talk about in the book dysfunction is always a hindrance. You talk about how you have to reverse engineer everything. That's kind of how Dan taught you is you learn in reverse. I kind of think about that from investing where, and I'd love to get your view on this, because the outcome is I'd like the stock to go up or down depending on whether or not I'm long and short. But man, I gotta go backwards. I gotta go and say, "Okay well, what are the expectations? Are Wall Street expectations for revenues to go up 10 percent? Well how are they gonna get there? What's the mix of price versus volume?" So I gotta reverse engineer the numbers from what the expectations are. It sounds in your profession that's what you had to do as well.

Angus Reid: Yeah, I would totally agree. The way we were taught, whether it be any type of block we had to learn which, similar to your

industry, there's multiple things that you have to be able to do to be successful in football. There's multiple different blocks that are required to run a whole offense. The way Dan taught us was always at the end. What does this look like at the end? Let's learn that and feel it so we can know how to get to that place. Because if you start at the beginning and your body and your mind doesn't know where it's going, it's very hard to understand why we're here and why we're doing the next step. You're trying to create a road where we wanna know where the destination is and we can [inaudible 01:08:43] the road backwards so now we have a smooth way to get there. We'd finish a block in the finished position.

Here's something when you're coaching I think is very important. I think this transfers to anything. It's one thing to coach someone how to do it and to see it, a lot of people use video and film. You view what you did and you see yourself up there. That's important but I think you need to understand what it feels like to do it. Dan would coach us in the finished position and we would hold it until we had that ingrained of what it felt like to be right there. Whether that be closing your deal, what does that feel like when you're doing it so you know when you get there how to feel right. We'd walk it backwards of mechanically how to get to that positive. Each part of the step he would ingrain it so we would feel, we knew intuitively it felt right. Not just him telling us it's right or we saw it on film that it's right. I knew what felt right and what felt wrong in the moment because what happened, what happens is once you've properly walked it backwards and now you start doing it in real speed, you know if it feels right in the moment.

You're able to self-correct, which I think a lot of people never get to that point. They always need a coach, forever. "Did I do it right? Did I do it right?" Look in the business world, they come running to you. "Mike, did I do it right?" You'll know. Your coach has taught you what right feels like, what it looks like, and what it actually is. You're doing it now going, you know right away. "I'm doing it right because I've been put here by my coach a million times and I know this feels right." It feels off, you're able to maybe ask for some guidance but maybe even self-correct and go, "Well it feels good now. Now I know." There's a rhythm to knowing what perfection or not perfection, but what proper feels like. You do it again and again, you know when you're out of sync. You know when it feels wrong and you're able to get yourself back in.

It was very, very powerful because it takes a long time to learn to do something right. I mean that's just the truth. You think you

can shortcut that or hack it, forget it. It takes a long time to know how to do something right. But once you know how to do it right, this is why it's so important to coach it correctly from the get-go, you can roll through it a few reps here and there every day. You don't need a lot of reps, 'cause once it's right you're just kind of reinforcing the wiring of it. Once you know what you're doing Mike, you just make sure you do a bit of it all the time so you're always ready, you're always ready. But it takes a long time at the beginning. A coach or teacher needs to take you through each part of that step so you really know what you're doing and how it feels to do it correctly. Then you know for the rest of your time when it's a little off. You know it. You know. You know when things are a little off. Maybe you need guidance and that's why the coach is there but usually you can kind of self-correct. Go, "Yeah, that feels good again. I got it."

That to me is how you do things right. There's no way of getting around that. You need to learn at the front end bit by bit. He reverse engineered it so we always knew where we were trying to get to and how to get there. Once we had it down, a little bit of reps every day to make sure the wiring was always reinforced and strong. You ingrained what correct is. You knew how it felt. You knew how to do it. You were durable at doing it. You were dependable at doing it 'cause you always do it and that meant you were always ready to go when the real game time hit. You didn't need this elongated process because you were always doing it and you did it right. So when the lights came on you just did what you know how to do.

Mike Alkin:

Makes great sense. One of the things, you have a whole chapter dedicated to excuses. Again, translating into investing, I listen when I'm meeting with management teams, or if I'm reading a transcript, or listening a conference call or a presentation, if they've hit a rough patch. I wanna hear what they learned from it. I can't tell you how many times I hear excuse after excuse after excuse. Versus, "Well let me tell you what we missed. Here's what we could have done better." When I hear a lot of excuses it tells me that they're playing the victim versus being proactive and trying to figure out how to avoid.

I see it in a lot of deeply cyclical industries. Let's use Uranium. Now it had been in a brutal bear market for a long time. If you're a uranium producer there's nothing you can do to overcome a 90 percent decline in a commodity. But that doesn't mean you couldn't have done other things proactively to not have to dilute shareholders so much throughout the downturn. There were steps you could have taken ahead of time or during it with a little

bit of preparation and foresight. When I speak to some of the management teams I could see that they didn't have that full grasp of the macro. Not all, but some of them, they didn't have that full grasp of what was going on in the market and may still not. And they're full of excuses, some of them, not all. Talk about your experience with excuses and how that played out in your career.

Angus Reid:

Well, I learned early on from Dan a simple phrase that I think translates everywhere in life. "There are never any excuses, there's reasons." The second we deal with that type of mindset you can look to improve. As you said, excuses is kind of a victim card but even worse than that, it's become a statement that states that you're not open to one, even looking to correct the problem or get better. You're gonna hold on to the excuse. You said, "This is why it can't work. This is why I wasn't able to do it," where reasons will open the door to solving that problem.

The reason shows, the analogy in the book was it happened right off the bat where I was going to block somebody and I tripped over my own feet. I fell. Dan said, "You fell." I said, "Well I tripped over my own feet." I've looked it off like that happened. Who cares? That's just what happens in life. That was unacceptable because we had to look at well why did we fall. Well my footwork was bad. Let's work on the footwork, improving this, and then you don't fall next time. But if it's just like, "Well, you fall in life," well that wasn't good enough because that was an excuse and it didn't look at the root of the problem.

As you said, in the business world maybe they didn't understand the macros. Let's look at why. This is coming back to he did say, "Why?" off the bat but you get to the point where you need to address the root of the cause. That's the reason. Let's work on that so we can improve the situation and ideally, moving forward proactively take care of that so this doesn't happen anymore. But if you just lean on excuses, you're not interested in solving any problems. You're not interested in getting any better. You're interested in making sure they know why you can't do something or why you weren't able to do it and that's good enough.

That's not good enough. It's not good enough if you're at a high level. It's not good enough if you care about improvement. It's a mindset where you're looking to solve the problem, not looking at giving a reason why you couldn't do something. That was something that lasted with me all through my career. Even my book, it got to the point where I had forgotten I'd mis-packed a pair of shoes. I only had one, I had two left shoes-

Mike Alkin: You had two left shoes.

Angus Reid: We're running out of time because I'm not someone that took a lot of time pregame because I'm a cheetah now and, well I'm not physically a cheetah but you know, mindset-wise. I didn't need three hours to get ready for a game. I realized I didn't have a right shoe. There's the proactive excuse. I think a lot of people look at things like, "Well I don't have this so eh, it's not gonna be a good game today," or, "I'm not gonna be a good show." They put their mind at a place where they've already given themselves an out because of a situation that they found themselves in before they've even done anything. They've told themselves why, "Ah well, it'll be all right. I don't have this so I already got a reason out." That's not good enough.

You need to problem solve. You need to look at how you can fix solutions and not go to an excuse, which becomes a very convenient way to not bother getting better. It becomes a very convenient way to not address any real issues. It gives you a side track conversation that allows you to avoid dealing with the reality of whatever's not good enough in the moment. That is something that our parents need to teach our children again. Our coaches need to keep players accountable. The coaches need to be accountable to themselves that there are no excuses.

Mike Alkin: It's so true.

Angus Reid: There are reasons. Reasons you deal with and you improve so we can move forward.

Mike Alkin: One of the things that, you play in front of 50-, 60,000 people. You're a center. You're calling out the defense and you're calling out the blocking assignments. You're the quarterback of the offensive line. To anyone who's played in front of that amount of noise, you know I've mentioned I'm buddies with Chad Cascadden who was a Jet linebacker for a lot of years, back in the early 2000s. He was telling me in '98 and '99 when the Jets played in Denver at the AFC championship game, he said you couldn't even hear yourself think it was so loud. It was just a jet engine in your ears the whole time. When you're in that environment you've got to learn to just block out the noise and take things as they come and slow the game down. The game moves at 100 miles an hour but you gotta get it down to five miles an hour. You talk about that.

There's a parallel here because when the markets are moving and news comes out and it's breaking, you can really react and panic

or do what I try and do, and I think I'm pretty decent at doing it, just step back and say, "Okay, what's the situation we have here? Don't look at the screen. Don't look at the stock. Don't let the market tell you if you're right or wrong. What's going on?" I had a young analyst working for me years ago. We were short a company, a for-profit education company. The earnings report came out. I don't look at the after-hours quotes because that's knee-jerk reaction, that's people reading headlines. The report came out. I printed it out. My office door was closed and I started reading it. I thought, "This company's full of shit and here's where they're lying." Because I had a model already done. I had what was expected for this particular quarter and what I was anticipating that they could do to make those numbers look better.

Well, 20 minutes later the analyst comes in. He opens my door. He's like, "Shit, we were wrong. The stock's ripping." Now the conference call hadn't started. I said, "The stocks gonna end the night down, I'm telling you." He said, "No, but look," this and that. I said, "Listen to me. Never look at it," and I'd told him this before but he let enthusiasm get in the way. Sure enough the numbers on the conference call, it just took a couple of questions to pull the veil off and the stock imploded the next day. It was down like 35 percent. But you have to learn how to slow the game down. Talk about, and preparation plays a role in that. Talk about your ability to do that and how that translates to business.

Angus Reid: Well I think you just said how it translates to business. I think you really said what it comes down to is there's a preparation process that has to take place. Mike Tyson had a very great quote. He's had a lot of terrible quotes but he's got a great quote. He's got a great quote.

Mike Alkin: Yep, I know where you're going.

Angus Reid: "Everybody's got a plan until they get punched in the face." Then emotions take over and nobody makes good decisions emotionally, nobody does.

Mike Alkin: But how did he do that?

Angus Reid: Well that's training. It's coaching. It's all coaching. It's coaching in terms of one, getting you in those environments often in practice situations. You can't expect somebody to perform in an environment they've never been in before. That's just unfair from a coaching perspective to go, "We'll practice you in this nice little safe environment and then we'll throw you out there," and just

think that it translates. Practice has to be at an intense level that can translate somewhat. You have to prepare people accordingly in that environment but you have to give them tools how to handle it.

As you said, there's a process that you leaned on when news would hit. In the football world that's when the game is live and the defense is moving around like crazy. You need to lean on a process and how to make decisions. You have to lean on that or else you're going to revert to emotions, which is gonna make them dictate your decisions, which is horrible, where they're able to control how you respond because they're owning your emotions. The situation should dictate how you respond without you personally being invested in it, your processes invested in it.

As a center I'd walk out and immediately it wasn't like, "Holy cow, there's a bunch of people moving around." It's, "Okay, is there three down or four down? Is there three defensive lineman or four defensive lineman?" Nothing else matters, nothing else. Everything else is noise. "There's three. Good, you've cut out half the possibilities for the call. Okay. Is this person now in or is this?" He gave me basically a one, two, three, four checklist. You don't skip steps. You start at the first one. You go to the second one. No matter what is going on. No matter if there's zero people in the stadium or 50,000. If they're all lined up nice and tight telling you where they are or if they're running around like crazy, the process is the process. Is this person out there? No? Tick. Good. You've removed those options. Is this person out there? Tick. You've removed those options. You weed yourself down to an extremely highly probable answer to the problem at hand.

You're not always perfect, just like your industry. We're not always perfect. But you follow the system that works, you're gonna be right a lot more times than you're wrong, and that's how you win. That's how you avoid the pitfalls of 99 percent of the world reacting emotionally and hoping and guessing. Then getting really excited and proud if they got it right and getting really mad if they got it wrong, but either one was based on nothing. So it's unrepeatable, and you don't learn anything, and you don't get better. That's where most people spin their tires and they hope their talent's good enough to get them away from their own emotional disasters. It's frustrating because as a coach you can't work with that but it's your own fault as a coach because you haven't implemented a system to short circuit their own biggest problem which is emotions.

Mike Alkin:

What do you say? People ask me, "What do you think the top keys to investing are?" I always say a repeatable process.

Angus Reid: Same thing in sports.

Mike Alkin: Where does that rank for you?

Angus Reid: 100 percent, particularly in the sport of football. Football is such a mechanical, particularly offensive line shall we say. It's such a detailed, technical position. It's your ability to do it right or do it the way it's supposed to be done again, and again, and again, and again. Whether it's raining, whether it's shining. Whether the person is 400 pounds or 300 pounds or 200 pounds, you focus on your system and do it again and again. As long as, if there's problems you have to look back at the system. You don't sit here and adapt every single time to different people. Obviously your strategies will manipulate a little bit depending on strengths and weaknesses. But you worry about doing what you do properly and it's something that can be done again and again and again, you get great at it. If you get great at something, I don't care what they're doing. I'm gonna keep doing what I'm doing because I know it works. We keep assessing how I do things. Not so much of what everyone else is doing. You worry about your own process. Is this something that works and is it repeatable? Then you can build everything else around it.

That comes back to the very beginning of this conversation, Mike, where that has nothing to do with innate talent. That has nothing to do with jumping power, and speed, and strength, and arm stretch. That's a boring, methodical, repeatable, learned behavior that enables you to weather storms, that enables you to keep going when everyone else is always reacting and panicking. You just keep focusing on what you know works and getting better at it and chipping away at the little details of your craft so you're always improving at what you do. Your probability of being successful over time keeps going up. I think any smart investor or any smart person that looks at the long picture of life, that's what you want.

You want something that has the highest probability of being successful repeatedly rather than randomly putting together highlight films here and there and being complete disasters in between. It looks nice on headlines but you don't build careers like that, and you don't build anything that's sustainable, repeatable, or really coachable.

Mike Alkin: When I read your book, as I'm reading it I'm sitting there, the book Thank You Coach. I'm sitting there and I'm thinking, "Yes. He got it. He put down the keys to coaching, the keys to being a successful player. As importantly," I said. "This is what every leader should

read, every investor should read because the lessons that are in here about the things that make you a good football player, a good football coach, are the same key ingredients that make you a good investor or a good business manager or a good leader of people." It transcends sports. I just thought it was a fantastic job.

You should be, and I'm giving you my opinion here, you should be in every company telling people this, coaching the leadership teams, coaching the sales teams, and talking to investors about how there's a process to be driven. Talk about what you're doing now and how Thank You Coach, what that translates to because people should be watching your TED Talks. What are you doing, how are you spreading the word of this?

Angus Reid: Well thanks, Mike. I think it starts with good people like you that have taken a chance at reading it, enjoyed it, and connected with me and wanted to discuss it more.

Mike Alkin: I wish you had more pictures, though. That's my only thing.

Angus Reid: Yeah. The children's book's coming out next, Mike. We'll get that one out-

Mike Alkin: I wanted to see some like Grey Cup holding.

Angus Reid: Yeah.

Mike Alkin: Yeah, okay but whatever.

Angus Reid: What I wanted to do, and thank you for the kind words. My objective in this book was, there's a million books written by leaders on how to lead. There's a million books written by coaches on how to coach. There's a million books written by athletes on what a great athlete they were. I wanted to write a book that was showcasing the impact great coaching leadership can have on somebody, from being that somebody. I'm speaking back to leaders of how you're impacting people, and how the power of your conversation and your interactions with people are gonna shape them, positively or negatively. So are you conscious of how you're interacting with these people on an ongoing basis to make sure you're maximizing who they can be?

I wasn't sure where the road of this book would go. I intuitively knew it was bigger than football, but that was my obvious easy entry point. I've spoken a lot with coaches and teams here locally and the word is started to spread, again because of good people

like you where people through the US are starting to reach out and bring me down. It's starting to, you're right, trickle into the business world where people are realizing it might be a book about sports but it's not a traditional sports book. It's a football story 'cause that's what I have, but it's a story about the power of leadership and how you can shape people. That's, again, transferrable everywhere. I mean it comes to parenting, teachers, coaches, leaders, managers, everybody.

It also does speak to the power of being open to that leadership from a player or from a person perspective. It takes two people to have that interaction. I was that guy. There's power in being open to being led. I wanna get in front as many businesses as I can to help, to help people better maximize the people they work with and make them the best they can be at what they do but in doing so, allow that to transfer to everything they do in life so they can go home and be a better husband and be a better father and be a better coach to their little league's team 'cause they understand now the power of every interaction you have with someone is leaving them with an impact. You wanna leave them with an impact that makes them better at what they do and makes them better at how they live their life. To me that is the ultimate coach. That is the ultimate leader, where you are improving every aspect of someone's life through how you're coaching them with whatever you're doing.

Mike Alkin: That's pretty cool. When I first saw Dorazio I assumed it was an Italian background. My family's Italian. I was raised in an Italian household. Then I saw a picture of Dan and he has another trait that my family has and I have is a strong nose.

Angus Reid: He's a Pittsburgh steel guy. He's a Pittsburgh steel guy.

Mike Alkin: Yeah, yeah, he is. Yeah, like a tough guy.

Angus Reid: Oh, big time.

Mike Alkin: Are you still in touch with him?

Angus Reid: Oh yeah, yeah. Dan and I, he was the first person I had to get this book to before it went public. I wanted to make sure I had his blessing. He didn't really know I was writing it. His wife knew.

Mike Alkin: I was gonna say, he must have been like, "Come on, stop."

Angus Reid: I was kind of shocked because I was bouncing a lot of stuff off

him, getting some old papers and making sure I was right on my grading systems. But he didn't really know because he's so focused on what he does. I met with him and gave him the first copy. It was something to see, the tears in his eyes that he was blown away. But I think the greatest compliment was, or shall I say the most powerful thing for me was to him, letting me know he had no idea how much he has impacted me as a person.

Mike Alkin: It had to make his career.

Angus Reid: Yeah.

Mike Alkin: In terms of it all worth it to know he had an impact.

Angus Reid: Yes. The first two chapters, obviously one of my good friends Rob Murphy was a two time All American Ohio State. He wrote one of the openings. That touched Dan's heart. Then our long time sports psychologist wrote the other one. It was our way of thanking him, and by extension thanking all coaches, and thirdly reminding all the coaches of the power you have. I think Dan is so humbled that he knows that I'm out there spreading the word to the world using him as my example. He's humbled knowing that we're gonna hopefully help improve coaching and improve relationships with leaders and their people through the story of me and Dan.

Mike Alkin: How do people get a hold of you?

Angus Reid: I have my own site, Angus Reid, A-N-G-U-S-R-E-I-D64, so AngusReid64.com. You can get me there. I'm on Twitter, AngusReid64. That's probably the easiest ways for the world to reach me now. I'm very accessible. You get a hold of me through my site, I'm emailing you right back. It's me personally. Yeah, I love speaking. I'm starting to build some workshops on trust in the business world and how to create it.

Mike Alkin: It's a good TED Talk on trust that you did. I really liked that, yeah.

Angus Reid: I appreciate that.

Mike Alkin: By the way, you don't look like a 310 pound lineman.

Angus Reid: No. I'm about 80 pounds down now. I'm a normal human being. That came down to, again, I did what I had to do to play-

Mike Alkin: That's discipline, right?

Angus Reid: Yeah. You learn it. It transfers. It was discipline to gain those 80

pounds in the first place so it was just the same thing. I did what I had to do to play because it's what I wanted to do. I'm a stubborn, determined guy. Then when you're done, I got two little sons. You look at a long life and you say, "Okay, now you gotta do what you gotta do to still be who you need to be for my family now. You don't need to be a 300 pound person anymore so why are we doing that? Let's commit to doing what you gotta do to be who you need to be for the people that matter most."

Mike Alkin: One of my closest friends played. He was an offensive lineman at Yale. He's in his mid-50s now. That was when Yale was, they were a top 20 team at the time in a different era. He now probably weighs about 185.

Angus Reid: Wow.

Mike Alkin: When we're talking people say, "Come on, you didn't play football." He's like, "No, I'm telling you I did." He'll show an old picture. He said, "I wanna be healthy again." It really does, you trim down. I'm seeing a big trend in that too with offensive lineman who are retired really slimming down.

Angus Reid: Well I think a lot of the, a lot of realities are coming out too about you're starting to see, we're starting to see the guys that played in the 70s and 80s and a lot of them dying young. It's not healthy to be 330 pounds for 40 years. I think people now are seeing that, the reality of being that heavy for that long. I think the guys that are knowledgeable of it and able to are doing everything they can because you have families, you have people that rely on you.

You can't just say, "Well, I was an offensive lineman." Yeah, but you're not anymore. That's an excuse. Don't lean on that to say, "I still have to be 350 pounds 'cause I'm a lineman." That was 10 years ago. You need to do what you need to do to make sure that you're being the person for as long as possible for the people that need you. To me, it's about being healthy. It's about being there. All the injuries that I had, we're all beat up. The more weight you can lose the better off you're gonna be to live a healthy, happy life after the sport's done.

Mike Alkin: That's great. Hey man, it was great talking. I really enjoyed it.

Angus Reid: Oh, thank you, Mike. It's a pleasure. I'm so happy you reached out. I'm really glad that we've been communicating lately. I'm really appreciative of you having me on.

Mike Alkin: Oh, my pleasure. Well, I hope you enjoyed listening to Angus. Like I said, I don't talk a lot about, once in a while I give a book that I read and I'll mention what I like. This just really resonated for me. I saw a lot of parallels, whether you are a business owner, you are a business manager, you're a salesperson, you're an investor, there are a lot of parallels that can be learned from here. It's not one of these self-help books. It's you're drawing lessons out from reading about an interesting guy and an interesting career, who wasn't destined to do it. He had to work really hard. It was the combination of a guy who's wired to want to succeed and a guy who was wired to wanna help people succeed. The book is Thank You Coach. Angus Reid is the author. I think it's interesting. Anyway, I hope you enjoyed it.

It's gonna be like a two part series this week. I've got another guest and he's not an investor, professional investor. What he does is part of how I think about investing. It's somebody I've gotten to know and who I have a great deal of respect for and worked in the corporate world for a long time. Listening to him can make you a better investor. That's gonna come out later in the week. Anyway, thanks for listening. Speak soon. Thanks.

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