

MG: Bob how are you.

BB: I'm great Mike.

MG: yeah OK. Here we are. So great breakfast. That was a really fun conversation that's going to help sharpen this conversation as well.

BB: Sure

MG: OK. Where'd you grow up

BB: grew up in Columbia South Carolina.

MG: What was it like growing up.

BB: It's great. I feel like I had a you know wonderful middle-class upbringing you know. I had great parents a sister went to good schools had a lot of good experiences educationally had a very strong extended family to support us. So it was great.

MG: What does Dad represent for you.

BB: I think my dad represents discipline. He had pretty high standards for us how we were expected to behave and do in school and just kind of just the way we went about doing everything.

I just felt like we had a there were expectations of what we should be and how we should be.

MG: And then mom

BB: but kind of the same you know. And I think my mom had much more. She probably pushed us harder in school. She recognized the value of doing a lot of different activities. I studied music extensively but in a lot of different activities at school and I think she supported all of that. So it was great having parents who really felt like a well-rounded education was important and not necessarily just academically.

MG: When you said they have high standards that does two things for me it's like OK so parents were involved.

BB: Yeah

MG: and the other thing it does for me just listening like OK there was some tension in the house for execution at a high level.

BB: Absolutely.

MG: I got that right.

BB: Yeah.

MG: OK. So how did you deal with that and how did your parents. How did your parents deliver that message? But I want to know both of those.

BB: I don't think it was delivered in like a militant way. But you know if I came home with a 90 on a test my mom would say well what could you have done to get 100 instead of oh can I give you five bucks because you got an A on a test or you know. So I feel like there was a we were supposed to do well in school. That was you know or whatever we were doing were expected to give our best effort. And then once we were doing that if there are ways that we could improve I think they wanted us to find us

MG: did they match up their life in that same way that they had high standards for themselves.

BB: Oh Yeah.

MG: Ok. Did they achieve the way and the things that they wanted to achieve the most?

BB: I'm pretty sure they did. My mother was a teacher a high school teacher. And I think an excellent one. You know she was always there early stayed late put in the time I think had a good rapport with her students. You know she's still today is in contact with so many of her students over 40 years 50 years. My dad worked in the state government worked his way up to being a commissioner of a state agency. So you know I was in charge of a lot of people doing a lot of good things at the time it was a State Department of disabilities and special needs so it took care of a lot of people that really needed that. But you know he was I would say pretty demanding in terms of how he took care of those people and how he ran things and the expectations that he would have. So I would say they were both successful.

MG: Ok.

BB: Yes.

MG: Sister

BB: My sister is a teacher now. Middle school teachers five years younger than me.

MG: So you come from a teaching family

BB: Oh definitely.

MG: Your teachers well.

BB: Yeah

MG: Yeah. Do you like the word coach. Is I mean a really important word in our life you know. Right. Sure and I want to talk to you about this the other term life coach. And I know life coaches are listening. I apologize for this but I get concerned I get concerned about the level of training required to be able to really influence other people's thoughts kids. Not withstanding that for just a moment. You're a teacher. You teach people how to become really proficient in the thing that they do. But you've also got a way about helping others understand how to live more so than just do.

BB: And so I like to think

BB: so yeah definitely think of myself as a teacher.

MG: Yeah you do. OK. All right so let's do something fun. Age 11. What was it like for you at age 11?

BB: Age 11. I was and I was just starting to swim because we had moved to a new neighborhood that had a neighborhood pool and in the summer I just basically spent most of the days hanging out at the pool and when I was there one day somebody said you know we have a swim team

here it might be fun if you try to. OK. And I did. So that was kind of the beginning of the swimming journey.

MG: So age 11 is an important age for you.

MG: Yeah.

BB: Because it's also when you met somebody who was extraordinary [Inaudible]04:59 ended up being the world's best for that.

MG: OK let's put a pin in that for a minute. OK. So if you could do the chapters of your life. Yeah. And I don't know how many chapters you've had. You're obviously in your 30s.

BB: Thank you. Plus 20 bucks. There you go.

MG: OK so so you could do five chapters like each decade or you can break it up however you want it. How would you do the chapters of your life? That's interesting.

BB: Well you know the first 10 years were just like I just felt like I had a normal childhood. I played with kids went to school had family activities started taking piano lessons the usual things. The second 10 years I became more interested in certain things. I actually got very involved in music and still am to this. I studied music in college composition but it had some very strong teachers in music in high school who really I think shaped me even today. And we

can probably talk about that a little bit later. So I would say that 10 years is very formative for me because I had a great appreciation for what it was like to be immersed in something and I was actually doing it on two tracks I was doing it in swimming and I was doing it in music and I was going to school. So for that period of time, I think it was very formative for me.

MG: OK. We are quick.

BB: Yeah.

MG: did you. So how would you label the first the first chapter

BB: first chapter is discovery

MG: and the second chapter is

BB: imagination

MG: I know where you're going so good that you're fully into your model.

That's right.

BB: It is.

MG: It is. It is. Yeah. I love your model.

BB: Way. Thank you, I appreciate that.

MG: So let's interrupt right now and say Say your model. You've got like three face.

BB: Well. You know there's discovery there's imagination. I called the challenge phase and then that leads to a high performance. So there really four I guess.

MG: Yeah. OK are there four.

BB: Yeah I would say there are.

MG: I think that the way I think that it's not necessarily linear and I want to get into the weeds with you because every one of those phases that you just talked about it's like they're always part of the play.

BB: Oh yeah

MG: like discovery in the early years of course imagination got to. And we also need both of those as we get really proficient as well. So it's not like once you go through discovering imaginations over it's over. So you talk about that as well. But to

BB: I talk about it all the time

MG: that it's an inner life it's an iterative model.

BB: Exactly. And it's it's a cycle really.

MG: Yeah okay. The process

BB: the process is about.

MG: Yeah it's funny because it sounds so soft.

BB: Yeah.

BB: When people say it's all about the process. Yeah, it is. Because let's talk about you. But you got to get the outcomes to keep going. Sure. And the softness drives me nuts. It is. I don't know how I want to be quiet. When you talk about the process. What comes up for you.

BB: Well it's pretty much everything I do on a daily basis. It's the decisions we make about how we're going to spend our time what standards we have for ourselves and we're spending that time the type of things we're going to choose to do how we approach competition. All of those things and really the process is all of the things that we control.

MG: Yes

BB: the outcomes are largely not in our control except for by way of the process by having prepared well

MG: when you do goal setting And I know you enjoy goals and sure do you focus on both outcome and process. And I'm guessing that you use but please course correct me I'm guessing you use outcome but then triple down on process

BB: exactly

MG: one goal or maybe two on the outcome.

BB: Well I think everybody has. There are two major kinds of goals right. There's like your long term sort of we call it the dream goal you know and that is the goal is out there in the future that drives you. It's actually not particularly. It didn't have to be particularly specific but it's exciting

and it's sort of I call it like an emotional catalyst. Right. So for every swimmer it's not every swimmer but I want to swim in the Olympics so that's out there at least in the programs I run. It's out there. Every day the kids come in and there are pictures of Olympians on the wall that were on their team and every 8 year old thinks are going to be one. So that's a great thing. Now working back from that we kind of use more kind of short term goals and I would say a year is about as far as you could specifically plan for most of the athletes that I'm working with. I mean I have a four year plan. But as you get into year 3 and 4 it's very general and broad. And we have some targets that we know we're going to have to be good at. But the main targets are within this season are training year and then we would work back from those two. The most important goals you have which I call immediate goals which are what are you going to do today. And if you ever looked at like say Michael Phelps I should brought a picture of it but I have a sheet of paper from when he was I think 12 years old and I took the group through a goal setting process. And I said OK at the top right your dream goal and Michael wrote My goal is to swim in the Olympics. And I said What is your main goal for this season is as my goal is to make junior nationals. Well what does that mean. It means I need to swim a certain time in this event. So he picked three events because they swim a lot of events and then I said for each event write down three things that if you do them and practice you will be guaranteed to reach this goal and that's where the rubber meets the road. Right. That's the best part because that's where we spend all of our time or on those objectives that are going to help guarantee that you reach the goal. If you do it in training. So I'd say that's where we spend most of our time is on the process.

MG: And do you track those with them.

BB: Oh.Yeah.

MG: Every day every week

BB: usually in touch with them almost on a daily basis.

MG: Do you do one to 10 one to seven one to five on checklist. Yes. No.

BB: No it's more. I know exactly what their goal times are. And when we're doing a certain set in practice I will be kind of checking on them to make sure they're swimming at the correct speed at the correct stroke count at the you know tempo whatever we've decided the parameters are and then helping them kind of stay on track. I see my role you know all of this goal setting is like it's kind of like a roadmap and I'm the real guys. I'm the voice saying you know turn right turn right while they're going the other way sometimes recalibrating. I know recalibrating. OK let's get back on on track so I feel like the coach's role is to know their goals and to remind them of them on a daily basis and to also kind of help them tweak them if they need to be.

MG: Gotcha. OK. All right. And then you recalibrate on a regular basis.

BB: Sure.

MG: But you're setting for your goals with the one your focus.

BB: Yes exactly.

MG: And then the dreams goals as you. We use the word vision.

BB: Of course

MG: just creating like a vision of what you would like your future to look and feel like.

BB: Yeah

MG: and it sounds like it's part the same thing.

BB: Exactly. You know nobody gets out of bed in the morning to finish their 200 freestyle and 53 seconds. I mean that's a great thing to do and if you do that you'll likely someone Olympic team. But you know to be the best ever. That was Michael's a good evolve to that.

MG: So that was the dream goal

BB: the dream goal after. Yeah. Well first it was the swim in the Olympics and once you've done that a few times it kind of gets old you've got to come up.

MG: Yeah

BB: but it was like and this is a little bit interesting because it touches on something we discussed at breakfast. We were going into the Beijing Olympic Games. I think this was the year

before and we had called the main parts of our team together which were at the time Michael myself his mother and his our agent Peter Carlisle and the Hague. And actually I think our publicist Drew Johnson there too had come to Ann Arbor where we were training I was coaching at University of Michigan and the purpose of this meeting was to kind of just figure out what the story was going to be going into Beijing because there were a lot of external expectations about what Michael could or could not do. And we had our idea that may or may not happen. And so what we wanted to talk to Michael about was how did he want the expectations to be managed. Because we could put it out there you know eight gold medals or we could just continue to say the thing that we did the last Olympics I just want to win one gold medal and just do my best and those kind of things. And if you know if you do number the first thing and kind of lay it out there then you're laying it out there. And you know Michael sat in that room and we had all talked about it a little bit and they kind of got quiet and I just remember so clearly him saying it. I never believed anything more than I believed it when he said I want to be the best ever and that became his vision and that's what happened. There was no

MG: when you think about that type of gold best ever. Do you over inducts on better than others Or my best self

BB: his best self.

MG: Yeah.

BB: It's all based base for us it was based on times.

MG: So if he could crack whatever level then it just so happens that nobody else was doing it

BB: Well right. And if he got beat he got the you know that's it. You know what really had many swims where Michael was one of his best films ever. He was third in the 2004 Olympic Games in the 200 free but that was just a super high quality swim for where he was at that time well above what he had done before. That might have been his best swim in the whole Olympic Games. You know we never really define success relative to other people is really relative to what our expectations for ourselves are.

MG: I'm not in my head because yes it's really hard

BB: it's super hard.

MG: It's really hard to have that discipline. I know the science I know how important what you're saying is it's right on track royal money and right on the money. And when you see other people doing better or worse or whatever it's easy to go if they're doing worse. Like OK good, I'm on the right path. You might not be from because they might catch up later or whatever they like to act like you face. But it really requires a deep discipline to be able to focus on your standards.

BB: Sure.

MG: How did you create that environment.

BB: Well I think we created that environment because largely the whole team is based on that. North Baltimore Aquatic Club where we spend most of our time. Even from a young age we were teaching young swimmers to well number one they had to know their own times they had

to keep track of their goals. They had to basically own the process of what they were doing right because they're the ones at the end of the day who are going to get up on the block. I'm not going to be up there. You know it's like they have to learn us. They have to own it. So to do that you have to focus on what you're doing how you're better today than you were yesterday. What are your goals that are coming up. Are we on track to reach them if you reach them. What is next if you don't reach them how do we go back and kind of reap cool things so you can reach them. And I thought that while all of our Olympic swimmers Alison Schmidt Michael all of them are sort of raised in this model of you know it's against you against the clock. And even though competing is great and we love to race and that's a fun thing. At the end of the day the quality is going to be you know what was your effort and how did that relate to what you were capable of doing.

MG: Yeah I had something in effort and capability. I love those two. And then I add one more element which was what level of command did you have.

BB: Yeah.

MG: And so I like the idea that Lir. At first I have to explain what that is to people which is like did you have command of your mind. Sure. Did you have access to your craft and if the effort was high and you had high command and you of your mind and access to your craft. That's like. For me it's like OK that is. Those are the two parts that determine I guess or influence potential.

BB: For sure.

MG: There's obviously genetics. That's right. OK. You know like as if genetics aren't important. But the two things that we can control

BB: exactly.

MG: So I want to get into the command piece with you. Yes. Like how did you help your athletes have greater command of their their inner experience so that they could access their craft? When do you want to go there now?

BB: Yeah yeah yeah for sure yeah. This is going to be part of my definition of mastery later but that's ok we can definitely talk about it because a big part of it. I think we create an environment in training and on a daily basis where they're asked to sort of test their command. You know we put them in situations where they have to be comfortable being uncomfortable where they're at the edge of their capabilities and where they are really met a lot of times struggling to maintain that. I think that's where they learn the most about what they can do and what they can't. And that's my job as a coach to to sort of set up these practices so that they get that simulation of the race sort of stresses because ultimately that's the most important thing at the high level meets really an enemy.

MG: How frequently do you create those scenarios.

BB: Not every day or they can't take it. I would say probably in different ways. Two or three times a week

MG: Ok.

BB: or a couple times where they are really going to be up against and they're going to have to perform

MG: do use physical exhaustion to get them there or do you use some sort of other environmental mental creative. I don't want to use the word manipulation but in the purest sense manipulating the environment [Inaudible][19:23 ] to be as close as you possibly your laughing like like. So what ways do you create that physical instability

BB: Well. the physical instability would be that's easy. I can just make the rest interval sure you can do a lot of things just stress them. What I think is key is you know even if they're doing sometimes on the days where the work might not be maximal from you know blood coming out your ears effort level I might raise the bar on technique. You cannot go over ten strokes lap. We're starting over some stuff built in well. Or just you know not penalties. I don't think I'd just standards. Right

MG: standards. So you know that stuff they don't execute it at some level

BB: do it again

MG: which is like in behavioral terms of punishment.

BB: Exactly. Yes.

MG: Yeah OK.

BB: And I think another thing we might do is let's say Mike you're in practice and I said OK we're doing ten one hundred. One every four minutes maximum effort. And I want you to be under one minute. Is your time. OK. And we're going to go until you get 10 under a minute so you can choose the first ten or you can just keep going all day I have all day. You're not leaving here. So you go 10 under a minute

MG: and when they get out of the when somebody gets out of the pool on the fourth one and says forget it how do you manage?

BB: they don't do that because they know they can't come back. They want to be part of the program they're part of the program. But you know what happens is I actually this is a real life story on that same set. I had a young lady Sierra Arangi I'll mention her name because she's an Olympic gold medalist in Rio. But in the when she first came to me we were doing this very practice on a Saturday morning and I said you're going to have to break a minute and then in her case it was break a minute on one of them you have to break a minute before we're done with this set. She's going 101. OK. So she does. Everyone does 10. Everyone else is done. She keeps going and she's. We do 10 more gets to 20. This is maximal effort right. She's kind of crying but she's still going and I'm not really I'm just trying to keep it pretty matter of fact. Now that was one minute point for not 59. One was a minute point oh I didn't count it right I was being a real bastard. But anyway I was just want to see how far I could push her on number 24 she goes a 58. So it was that physical problem. Was she less tired on number 24 than she was on number two. No it was a concentration and a stroke issue she had to work out. So by putting her in a situation where she had to figure it out that's mimicking what happens in the big races. That's the level of stress where you're going to have to solve a problem under kind of dire conditions for yourself. And that's what she did. So that's my job to create those circumstances.

MG: It's rare that we get the experience in modern times where we are left with just our hands and our feet in our head to figure something out. Exactly. And for me those are really special moments where it is maybe it sounds crazy. I don't know. I don't talk about this a lot. But those opportunities where it's my head my hands and my feet and sometimes what feels like a very barbaric isolated experience like the most ancient test to man and woman is do you have what it takes to figure it out. And the only way to get to those places to really know is to go through some gauntlets

BB: exactly

MG: to go through some really tough times to know that I can sort it out. What have you done to create multiple championships. What do what is it for you.

BB: I really think it's just too I think this sounds corny but it's just like how we do it. It's our way of life it's our culture. I guess you want to use the buzzword but that's what it is. And people know that when they come into our group that's what the expectation is. That's what we are here to do. It's our mission and everything that we do is geared towards that. And I don't do it the way some other coaches do it. And there are some slimmers quite frankly who are super talented that don't click with my methods. And that's perfectly fine. We help them find a place where they can be happy here or you know do well and but there are some that just click immediately with mine and those are the ones that tend to gravitate to my program. They know that they're going to be expectations. They know that the intensity level. I said that really southern intensity level sometimes go back to South Carolina on a daily basis the intensity level is going to be high in some regard. That doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be swimming at top speed every day doing something but it means that they're going to be some demands on them and parts of what we're doing that are going to be higher than the average. Probably all the time.

MG: Did you create that because you knew that that was important. Or did your early athletes shape that with you?

BB: I think that's it's two things. Number one I was very fortunate to work with three different mentor coaches.

MG: It was just music or

BB: swimming and the music because the music people were way more ruthless than the swimming people away. I mean that's one of the reasons I got I focused on swimming was that I really liked the people and the environment and swimming better than music. It was cutthroat out there. But I worked with an Olympic coach his name was Paul Bergen and he was considered an incredibly demanding coach but incredibly successful. I mean probably 10 or 15 world record holders and you know over numerous distances and events and a great thinker about the sport and every minute I was his assistant coach he was pushing me in some way and every athlete on that deck every minute of every practice. I actually think to the point that it was unhealthy at times. So I've kind of used that untempered by. I do it but I do it selectively. I later worked for David Marsh who's still a famous coach here in Southern California now and he is much more in tune I think to the mental side of things. So he could motivate people to do anything. Certainly worked hard but just in a different way but his approach is much more mental. And then I worked for another Olympic coach Murray Stevens in Baltimore where I kind of cut my teeth there and he was much more of a technician. But again with these ridiculously high standards and I think ultimately I've toned down off of his because with Murray everyday you're expected to do something near your best race effort every day and a lot of people just kind of fell apart doing that so I've used that and took the best of all three of those and sort of put that into my thing.

MG: OK so technical intensity and mindset.

BB: Yeah

MG: those the three

BB: yeah sure.

MG: Those three teams represented the

BB: exactly

MG: and so so part of your formula becoming a world-class coach is that you've been mentored that around other people that are highly skilled.

BB: Sure.

MG: You distilled the thing that was their essence if you will sack and said OK well I can't have all three of those 10 out of 10 if I kill people or blow them up in some way. So then you temper those down so that they fit

BB: right. OK.

MG: Brilliant. So high standards for technique high standards for intensity and high standards for mindset.

BB: Yeah.

MG: Does that sound like your culture. Yes. OK. So with those high standards. Thank you mom and dad. Yes. With those high standards how do you help people manage the long game. Got it right. So every day you know day in and day out high output. How do you help them manage the long game.

BB: Well I think I number one am a good enough observer of what's going on now that if they're struggling in a way that is dangerous. I deal with it I don't just turn a blind eye and let them just die. You know so I will be modulating things to adjust some of those things because the athletes one of the things I'm most proud of as I have some athletes that have been with me for Michael 20 years Allison Schmitt 10 years Arangi eight years I think yeah maybe not yet. I know them so well that when they walk in the door for practice I can look at their eyes and tell how practice is going to go before we even get water.

So I'm already kind of preemptively thinking maybe this isn't a good fit maybe I'll just this for some person or maybe they're ready to go OK let's put their pedal down you know. So I'm probably prejudging and I'm also judging how they know what their demeanor is like before practice. I'm a big believer in that I observe these athletes all the time particularly just before practice you know when they're stretching or getting ready or how they talk to each other before and you can tell if someone's struggling during that time because they won't be very talkative and they'll kind of be the walking dead. And you know if the whole group is like that I will throw the practice out and do something else. They don't believe that but I actually do do something. But there are times where you just push them you know. But I think in general that's how you keep them going in the long game is that you're monitoring on a daily basis what they're doing and trying to keep them near their the best level they can be given where you are in this particular

year. And some people are very tough they can just go forever. You know Michael at his best will be on a scale of one to 10. You know he would be probably seven or eight every day on output to output intensity and then there would be one day every six weeks or he would be a 2 and then I'd kind of finagle that for a day or two and then he'd get back to and keep going whereas I have some other people that every week they're going to kind of break down if I keep pushing them too hard and maybe I'll build in a day and midweek where they're a little less intense or you know I do something to kind of get them through the week. You know in whole not falling apart I guess. So that's it's kind of an art.

MG: Would you consider you and Michael in some ways. So obviously coach-athlete relationship

BB: Yeah.

MG: in some ways in your culture are you, partners.

BB: For sure.

MG: Yes so you use set

BB: and not just Michael all of us all the all the athletes by the time they reach a certain level we are in this we're in a partnership

MG: Ok for culture or for output.

BB: Everything

MG: ok.

BB: Yeah I mean like those and really for life as well you know that people have done a lot of work now with our national team and with Olympic teams and you know the USOC and all these people and at the end of the day the thing that drives performance at least in swimming and I would say in every sport is a coach-athlete partnership. It's not a system. It's not a supplement. It's not of weight training program. It is a coach and athlete partnership. And on a daily basis how that works.

MG: Yes we know from science of psychology that therapeutic outcomes like what happens after people leave their time together. That is something I think it was 87 percent don't quote me on that right now. But some high number let's say above 60 percent of outcomes are based on report on the relationship or on the on the kind of inherent trust that people build to help. What to help explore because we have a high regard. There's your discovery that piece the high regard allows people to really discover to use their imagination to create possible versions 4.0 5.0 themselves.

BB: Yeah

MG: Yeah. that's brilliant. OK so what do you do to enhance the quality of the relationship in this high standard high output environment that you're creating.

BB: Number one thing I do is I am completely honest at all times. I don't ever bullshit anybody that is hard to do sometimes.

MG: That's really hard to do.

BB: And people say how you. Michael stayed together so long. That is why the cards have been on the table every day every minute. The whole time and I think that I'm genuine I'm authentic. People see me sometimes I think they think I come off as like maybe rude but certainly brusque but I just tell it like it is. If you're not doing the job I tell you-you're not doing the job I'll say hey you told me your goal is to go 145 in a 200 free 154 isn't gonna cut it. So either changes your goals or change what you're doing. I mean it's pretty simple.

MG: I Love it. It is simple. So we get caught in relationships. When we think we have to say something to help them as opposed to be a mere mirror and a reflection and in a tune like almost like a tuning fork.

BB: Exactly.

MG: Yeah. Does that seem fair. Do you like that. Seems

BB: absolutely fair

MG: yeah okay. And do you. OK. If you're going to hold up the mirror there are times when people don't want to look in the mirror and I'll think of myself I think lots of people like I know what I'm doing is not what I said. I think I could do. So now I've got this dissonance.

BB: Yes.

MG: Either I listen to you or I was wrong about what I said if I said I'm going to do a sub to whatever it is. I didn't know if. I don't know if that's really possible. I thought it could be you thought it could be. Am I just a look. If I am I'm kind of lazy and I'm not getting there. Am I afraid of success. Am I getting my recovery systems wrong. Like what's happening. So how do you with all the variables that go into place. Do you ever pull back the mirror or do you always hold the mirror up relentlessly so

BB: I pretty much relentlessly hold it up. But then I say How are you going to fix this how many hours of sleep a night are you getting. What's your nutrition like. Or you go into some kind of stress away from the pool because you don't seem like yourself and maybe the goal is not right. But we're pretty good at setting these goals now. I mean you know we're kind of fairly reasonable and you know so you know I don't think that's normally it. But you know I can honestly say this now as I've done this for several many years some of the athletes that I am closest to now that this is over are the ones that I was just mercilessly hard on at the time. I mean there were some for whatever reason. I was just determined to get them to do something they were kind of a hardheaded that they wanted to do something but maybe their way. But at the end of the day they knew I was looking out for their best interests at least in retrospect if not at the time. And so I feel like there's something powerful in that that they always know when they come to me that they're going to get pretty much what I think the truth is that I'm not going to try to. I just don't believe and try to help somebody by lying to them about their situation. I don't think that helps anybody.

MG: Brilliant ethical code

BB: No.

MG: Yeah and performance code. What are some of the hardest times that you've been through with Michael? He might not he might not even know them. I'm imagining your relationship is such where he wouldn't know them but this is not about things he's done wrong or right. It's like your challenges with the best in the world in his sport for how many years.

BB: Well four quads. [Inaudible][35:35 ]Twenty five. Well, he went to five Olympics those 20 years I coached him from 11 to 31. Seems ridiculous.

MG: Real relationship.

BB: Yeah it's a relationship. I think the hardest times were when the hardest times were when I felt like he like cut me off and we couldn't have that dialogue. There was a period of time between 2008 and 2012 where basically he'd just go a wall.

MG: And so you were left isolated from that expert.

BB: Exactly.

MG: Yeah.

BB: And then when we come back it would be awkward and of course, I handled it exactly wrong for the first two years. You know I would just like to do. Well, Michael would best practice and write and you have to understand I'm going to say from 1997 until 2008 Michael may have missed three practices in that entire period. Just three.

MG: And if I remember correctly you would practice every day

BB: [Inaudible] [36:52 ]every day because there's a lot of days.

MG: Christmas

BB: isn't Christmas New Year's everything. So there are probably three practices where he just didn't come for some reason. So it would be I mean during that time if Michael didn't come for practice we would call the police or something you know it would be like call the National Guard. He always comes to practice. So it would be something some super extenuating service

MG: that sounds

BB: [Inaudible][37:13 ].

MG: It sounds rare.

BB: Yeah it is very rare. It was super rare

MG: so healthy or not healthy

BB: maybe not healthy in the long run

MG: for you too

BB: Yeah for everybody

MG: for you to

BB: because it just we just I mean it clearly helped us get where we wanted to go. But what it did was after 2012 when he would miss a practice or two he would come back in and I would give some really wonderful input like you're throwing your whole life away in your career and feel good about that. How do you think that went over your head had just got terrible?

MG: Where did that come from for you. I see you've got high standards.

BB: I got it from maybe a little bit from my parents like I was raised to do what you're supposed to do.

MG: But this sounds crazy.

BB: Yeah know this is a. I think

MG: it sounds like you got caught in your.

BB: No I totally did. Probably did because it is quite frankly by that point it was like Michael was like this is a terrible example. But I always think of it as like Goldman Sachs too big to fail. We're doing everything we can to keep this going because not only at that point was it about the performance it was about business it was about his future really his future because this is when he's making his money. You know I mean he'll do well all along. But at that point it was kind of like you know we had overcome some problems after Beijing. He was sort of back on track but not really. And this is just 2012 Olympics is going to be super important for him. So I think I just I just got out of everything got out of perspective. And quite frankly I think my feelings were hurt because he wasn't there.

MG: This is where the relationship was confusing to you

BB: exactly

MG: to you.

BB: Right.

MG: And he needed separation.

BB: He needed separation.

MG: OK.

BB: And I needed practices. Well you know that there was not a very good combination. In retrospect, you know

MG: this shows up with parents as well. Parents and kids the closer the control and leash if you will that sounds terrible.

BB: Yeah.

MG: OK. So the tighter the controls the closer the leash the further the kid has to break free. The more the more energy they have to do to break into freedom so they have this not the least is exactly what happened. Yes. So what do you do. You go get piercings first and then they get a neighbor you bleached your hair dye your hair. And then maybe run with a rougher crowd. Then you take some other risk then you have tattoos.

BB: [Inaudible][39:40 ] He went to Vegas. I don't know what happened there. You know what I'm saying. But yeah you're actually right.

MG: Is this when he got into some of the public challenges.

BB: Yeah you know it kind of led to that it started hanging out with some people that probably didn't help him focus about his goals very much. And you know in retrospect I totally understand because it was like seriously after Beijing I came home and just couldn't wait to get started again 2008. Yeah but Michael came home and it was what he did a lot of appearances and stuff and you know all that was good but it was like from his standpoint he was too young to retire after Beijing which would have been a perfect ending point right. Eight medals eight gold medals. Perfect. But he was too young and quite frankly had the potential to do so well if he did another Olympics it was just a given. He was going to go to 2012. By every every purse. I mean even if he cut his performance and how even happened he really. Yeah exactly one gold medal is extraordinary. Yeah. But you know he did it. But the expectation from virtually everybody and even from us a little bit was like data when eight again standard eight now for doing this we should do it to the best we can do. How do we do that again. And he and I both just I would sit at home and say this is impossible it's never going to happen again. It barely happened before and only because a lot of things the stars aligned right. So number one he was kind of trying to find himself so he was reiterating porphyry on that this in a discovery phase again and I was trying to be a challenge face. You know what I mean. So he was trying to figure out who he was as a person. Where we he was going to go and I was just trying to keep my foot on the pedal to keep the performances going. And that dissonance was just terrible for everybody.

MG: Looking back

BB: Yeah.

MG: would you have if this happened again day and you had an extraordinary athlete that did an extraordinary thing. They didn't know how to tell you that they needed some time away to this cover to go back to the discovery phase would you. What would you set up differently to create that space? And would you would you try to pull them out of discovery or would you say good for you stay in discovery because we're going to get better imagination here. You know nine months whatever.

BB: I we definitely have done that. And I actually would have. The only thing that I would have planned right I was said you know the problem that I feel like Michael, in particular, has faced after every Olympics and not just 2008 is that and all Olympic actually I could draw this. All Olympic athletes. Here's how it goes. You're going to spend years and years preparing for this week eight days. So you've spent eight years. Maybe it's four years maybe it's 12. Whoever you are on your trajectory. Alison Schmitt's perfect example you go to the Olympics. You accomplish the mission. Everything is great.

MG: OK meaning you're there you've got the camera

BB: You are there

MG: You got the suit

BB: No I'm sorry about you to win the medal.

MG: OK so you've got you've gone and you've executed all

BB: everything is executed. Here's how it ends. For Michael the second. The last gold medal is won. He is whisked away by NBC or somebody else and then he goes on and on and on and on in for Beijing it was six straight months. There was not one minute for us to sit down and say wow that was awesome. So proud of you. Let's take a week off. What I do and all the other coaches do I'm on the first plane out of there the next day after swimming I can't take anymore. We've just been to the camp. It's like I got to get out it's three and a half weeks. We just leave. Yeah. And so they're left by themselves their support system is gone and that they have other people their agents or whatever but they don't get a time to debrief and oftentimes these are 2:00 AM interviews Exactly and they don't get a chance to figure out what's next. Alison Schmidt who's now Wells spoken advocate for mental health and particularly in high performance athletes. You know what could be better. She went to an Olympics she won three goals two silvers and individual gold medal the world record in something. But I think maybe in a relay. But she goes back to Athens Georgia to school. University of Georgia and she just wants to go back to her normal life. But that doesn't exist anymore. And from my standpoint like Hey what could be better from her. And boy what could be worse my whole life is gone. You know what I mean is very difficult for these guys.

MG: OK. Tell two stories real quick. But you're sharpening up something about for me the importance of the second part of the dream-like enhanced that you saw I say vision. You say. Probably exactly the same. Sure.

BB: OK

MG: so Matt I want to be an Olympian you know. But then what will that be like Right. Like making sure that that sharp and I learned this from the rebel Stratton's program is a feel Felix Baumgartner jump from the edge of space 120000 feet first person to ever do it early in the process. We started to talk about what he's doing next. After this jump is successful what's that going to be like? And that. Looking back like OK yes I've read. That's really important to do and really great minds have said that make sure you do that. It was the first time I've seen it really play out in that it worked. It's so easy not to do this because there's a fear in some ways that if we take our eye off the ball then you know are we starting a parallel track of getting better at that second thing.

BB: Well what's the essence of preparation or one of these events. Focus on the here and now not tomorrow not yesterday. What are you doing today. And so the entire focus all the way up to the event is only on right now and then during the event it's specifically right now so that you get to the end of it and like you know me as a coach I kind of have a natural progression of what I'm going to do I'm going to go back start coaching some people some new ones or come through the old ones might come back. So I kind of know what I'm going to do. But these guys who maybe they're finished with college and they spent four or five more years or 10 years doing this and they know they're not going to be coming back to the swimming or maybe they are but it's very difficult to know what the next step is because we and we have drilled into them that the here and now is what matters in the here and now is uncertain after that because you know when they know they're going to the pool twice a day lifting weights and doing this it's easy to kind of do that afterwards if they don't have some thought about what's next. I think there's a problem. So I love the fact that you did that. And that's actually something I'm trying to work on now. It's it's it's a pervasive problem.

MG: It couldn't be more obvious in the NFL that the statistic is somewhere around 87 percent of people that leave the league are divorced or broke or both within two years.

BB: Wow.

MG: So if you decode what did that 13 percent do that are successful in that transition is that they took the every Sunday. Every year there's a mission a mini mission and in a larger mission right. So every Sunday.

BB: Yeah.

MG: OK so then that works. That's working for them.

BB: Yes.

MG: So we need when they're when they transition out they need a new mission.

BB: Exactly.

MG: So what is that dream vision whatever words we want to put together. What is it and to be is and to use those same patterns that you found for success exact with world-class athletes that we can all use. Sure. Right. So what is your mission in life if your mission is really clear then or your dream or vision is very clear then you will put in the hard work. If if the thing gets your heart thump a little bit

BB: exactly.

MG: So write it down. What do you do you ask him to write it down.

BB: I do ask him to write it down but I'm not. I mean yeah I ask him to write it down because I actually liked to put some or where they just kind of run into it a lot.

MG: Yeah they see it a lot.

BB: So yeah

MG: but it's not a time and more of a goal.

BB: Yeah

MG: it's an Olympian or you know what if you're not an athlete what would you suggest as an example of a dream a vision a mission for

BB: everybody might have something like for you to paddle board to Catalina Island.

MG: That's not big enough that's like that's like a funny vent that I'm there.

BB: Yeah. But I mean you know I'm trying to think like be what

MG: it is part of

BB: it's part of that.

MG: No like it gets me up it gets me in the morning

BB: excited about it it kind of leads to all kinds of good behaviors right. Probably to make this island. So yeah I just think that people have things. Everybody has something that means something to them and that's what the key is to find that whether it's you know I don't know learning how to play piano or being the best teacher you can be or starting a business and seeks succeed. I mean to all of those things. And then once you've kind of got your target in mind your vision your you know dream whatever then I'm thinking to work back and go through all the four phases right. Maybe the discovery is coming up with your vision imagination maybe those are your kind of formulating those and then you kind of challenge yourself to put it on legs under it.

MG: Okay. How could you finish the statement?

BB: Yep

MG: and I I'd like if you could either speak to parents and or business professionals.

BB: Sure

MG: And maybe we split these up to be more something more concrete. If you knew what I knew.

BB: Yeah. If you don't mind what I do know

MG: if you knew what I knew and

BB: what I knew if you knew what I knew when

MG: like as as-as I'm 50 some year old man and creating world-class cultures and supporting world-class athletes and challenging them. If you knew what I knew Mom or Dad.

BB: Yeah

MG: let's go there first.

BB: He'd be very careful about what you say to your kids.

BB: I love. It. OK so they live they really do listen. Whether you think they are or are not in it they internalize it so greatly.

MG: OK teach teach like teach us how to speak better. Yeah.

BB: Reward their effort not their don't. Don't tell them they're smart or they're not smart or you know they're talented or not talented you know reward them for trying hard for being interested in things encourage them to be curious and don't squash that ever you know once the fires lit fuel it and give them teachers that do the same thing.

MG: OK. Yes yes yes yes. Everything you've got a 9-year-old and I'm a new parent.

BB: Sure.

MG: Nine years into it. Yeah. I'm grateful I've studied a lot about like how people work. And there's a there's still a part of me that looks out at other like his peers. And I think the parents are crazy because they're like we have to win this game. He says it's like a basketball. Like what are

we doing? All of a science and research would say stop it's had a fight actually to get great. You need to be able to play this game for a long time. So figure out what you're going to really enjoy again. And I see these other kids the parents are like win win win win. What's the score that the other everything that's counter right? And I start wondering to myself I know. You and I have probably seen and felt very similar things in many environments.

BB: Yeah.

MG: That we're going to not our heads what we just said and there's good luck as a good researcher. But we drink some sort of kool-aid or are you certain that that is the absolute right way to raise young minds to explore efforts reward effort and help them create something that they can feel that they have some sort of volitional control.

BB: Yeah. I'm sure they are.

MG: Sorry. You know how pendulum's

BB: I'm sure that that's right. But I also think that there's an element of I want to say discipline. Right but it's about self-discipline and it's not necessarily just you know how would I say this. I think that you need to teach kids that commitment is important but commitment is relative. So when we have 8 year olds that join our team in North Baltimore Aquatic Club which is considered the most high powered Age Group Swimming program and everybody thinks that every good will be on the Olympics. We asked the eight year olds to come for three times a week for one hour we'd like for you to come three times a week for an hour. We'd not we don't want you to come ten times a week. We don't want you to come three times for four hours. We'd like for you to spend an hour three times a week maybe two sometimes you know I kicked off the team if you miss what it's not a big deal but that's your commitment level now. By the time you

are in the top level of high school swimming as you may ask you to come ten times a week for three hours or two. You know he has big time but you've gradually learned that making the commitment is important. And it's part of this process. But I think you do it in a safe way like these little league kids. What's important to your get go to practice. You have practice today. We're going to go. Why. Because you signed up for this. This is what we're going to do. They have two practices a week for 10 weeks and this is where my parents would come in when we talk about their standards. I remember many times where when I was on his age group swimming team when I first started for whatever reason I just wouldn't want to go to practice. And we always went to practice if it was kicking and screaming. We went to practice because we had committed to do it and they would say something like well at the end of the season if you don't think you want to swim. No there no problem. But now you've made this commitment to the team and this activity and we're going to see that through. And I think that was a huge that's a huge part of success. It doesn't have to be. And again the commitment was that time was three days a week for an hour and a half of whatever it was. So I feel like that goes along with the discovery process that there is some level of personal investment in it. It can't just be going from one thing to the next and the next and I don't really feel like it today so I'm just not going to do it. I don't think you're raising people who are very high performers that way maybe they're going to find a way another path to do creative and wonderful things. But I think I've noticed in sports and I feel like it's in music and I feel like it's in school honestly that you know if there's an appreciation for the self discipline of the commitment that's what's going to stay with them for the rest of their life no matter what. Do to stay with them and their marriage is going to stay with them in their job it's going to be part of who they are.

MG: What are some definitions of a world-class coach what is characteristics or defining features.

BB: I think a world class coach is a keen observer of human behavior. I spend a lot of my time just watching people listening to what they say to me and each other and trying to get a real feel for who they are and where they might be based on that.

MG: One of my observations. Use your word is that you guys ask more questions than give statements. How do you do the same?

BB: I'd say that's true.

MG: Yeah. And then the questions are not random. There's a purpose behind the questions. And it's to help understand what this world-class talent is seeing and feeling and thinking.

BB: Exactly. OK.

MG: And then and then when you do make statements you tend to be pretty accurate. Yeah, there's a precision to the statement whereas a recreational coach they talk a lot more and the things that they say are not really precise and accurate. I completely agree. OK. So the delta between the two it's questions and the precision of language. And then there's also a level of insight and like they like class coaches really do understand their craft. Do you think they understand the world better and humans better? Or is it just humans that are dedicated or just their craft and gets all of that.

BB: I think we definitely understand our naysay our world. You know with that are you know that I think I know pretty much everything that happens within my little 50-metre pool you know. And once people are in there and we spend a lot of time in there and then we go to some other mates and spend a lot of time together. You just you get to you get a sense for it. You know a lot of us you know just experience right mistakes. Who is that guy?

Niels Bohr you know an expert is someone who's made every mistake possible in their field. I don't know who made everyone but I'm narrowing yet on it. I'm getting close. So you know I think that you're just the more you do it and the more that you're doing it with these high

performers you just get a feel for what makes them tick. And it's not always the same but they do have some similarities. I think what makes you tick would be driven by

BB: me. I'm driven by achievement. But just seeing what's possible. You know. I mean when I think back on some kid with some swimming talent in this unknown coach and in a nondescript pool inside the Baltimore beltway where that took us it's kind of incredible and it was only because we just kept raising the bar and said well maybe we could do this.

What do you think. Think somebody could do this. Could anybody ever swim 151 and 200 fly when the world record was 155. We asked that question all the time. Well, how would you do it. And then we start you know so. So I feel like I'm what drives me is pushing the limits of what's possible.

MG: And so do you get to experience that on a daily basis or is that only on the rare occasion where there's a limit setting Public or private

BB: every day because every kid I coach has those.

MG: OK. And then where you said look at where it's taken me where has it taken you

BB: all over the world. Met the prime minister of Great Britain the president of US. You know it just it goes on and on to just have experiences and to basically be part of something which in a visceral way has changed the world. You know Michael has a platform now to talk about mental health and water safety an infant drowning in all of these things. We could actually impact the greater good. Through our sport.

MG: When's the last time you had a sense of peace.

BB: Oh. Recently Sunday morning

MG: Yeah. told me about.

BB: Yeah. I just you know I get up. Usually, I get up the same time every day which is 4:15. It's pretty early and on the days when I don't have a practice like this Sunday, I normally will. On a very long walk like five miles through Old Town Scottsdale a beautiful place to walk on this canal early morning when I listen to podcasts only hear your voice quite a bit during that time. But. Sometimes this music. Just whatever I feel like and at the end of that I normally get up have a cup of coffee. That's the first thing I do and I just try to reflect on just where I am. How are things going? What would I like to accomplish today? Maybe or what does that mean. Or maybe even think back to yesterday or whatever just but just have some quiet time where I just kind of let my mind go. You know I don't try to consciously think about things that I do my walk at the end of that I end up in my backyard which is a beautifully landscaped desert landscape in Scottsdale and I'd sit and watch the sun come up and have a second cup of coffee and I can honestly say I'm truly at peace when I do that. Beautiful think that I think God has to do with the bigger picture of my life. But you know that was the last the last time.

MG: What are some of the hardest parts of your life. Because on paper it's like wow.

BB: The hardest parts are I have this inner need to just be hyper-focus on this one thing which would be like the swimmers and the training and I know that quite frankly the more time I put into that the more it's going to help those kids. But because of my position now and the other

things, I'm doing I'm pulled in a lot of different directions. So I have to make some choices about what gives them what doesn't. And I think that's the hardest part.

MG: How do you take care of yourself.

BB: I try to exercise. Now a lot better. I'm trying to eat better every day. I have a little rule. I try to listen to music every day. Good music. I try to read something every day that has nothing to do with swimming. Sometimes I've read about swimming too and you know I try to keep my mind open to a lot of different things. So while I've spent a lot of my time being kind of hyper-focused in this one area I give my brain breaks throughout the day to kind of go away and then come back to it.

MG: What do you read and what do you listen to. I mean what are you reading now. What am

BB: I reading now. Actually, I'm just reading this book. I just got a book called The Mind side manifesto. McCabe send it to me as the psychological you know psychology book. I tend to read nonfiction That's what I read into it

MG: is a couple of gotos that you hand out to other people that you

BB: I do a lot of coaches ask me and you know there's a great coaching book tutor Bomp a theory of

MG: His performance profile methodology I just love it.

BB: Sure

MG: Yeah. Ok.

BB: of training. OK. I mean you know I always hand out mindset Carol Dweck. I had the team read it last year This time we did get Angela Duckworth on here. So I'm tending to try to read things where I learn about something and usually about psychology.

MG: How good are you with psychology.

BB: I'm pretty good at it.

MG: Yeah. Undergraduate degree in psychology And then there's a difference between being like a psychologist and a highly skilled person that has a great relationship with others that knows how to amplify and celebrate you know their potential.

BB: I think that's kind of where I am that's where I don't diagnose abnormalities and stuff but you know I do think I'm pretty observant about tendencies and how people tend to react to certain situations like. And we were talking about it earlier. You know I try to use the full toolbox and there are some people that are on my team who I would never ever raise my voice to or say a cross word to or push them in a direct way because I know that they will just shut down if I do

that. There are some people who the only thing they will respond to in that environment is something a little bit more to get their attention. And I will do that in a directed way not like in a just like I'm using a chain saw way but there is a chainsaw in your toolbox. Be careful how you use them. So you know I feel like I'm getting much better now in my advanced no more experienced age of knowing what each individual needs and how they respond or if I do one. And it's the wrong thing. I know how to fix it. Yeah. You know. Because you don't always get it right. You know what.

MG: What mistakes are you afraid to making in the future.

BB: I'm afraid I'm making mistakes that really hurt kids I hate this we're on the say self-esteem. Yeah I mean I just feel like it's so it's misused in a lot of ways but I don't want to do something to squelches their drive or their fire inside to do something. And I've probably done that in the past. I know I've done it.

MG: How how do you make that mistake. What do you do?

BB: Just say something really harsh or just like just try to you know when there is a down moment pile on

MG: yeah you know you know I've heard over and over again. So I've been fortunate enough to be in this experience with Microsoft for and I spent time with well not I alone but like thousands, tens of thousands of people over the course of two years and I won't get the exact number because it's a little bit of a recipe here. Sure. And I would often ask what's the difference between a great coach and a great coach. You try to understand this. You know what they say about the not great coach. When they were in it for themselves again they were in it for them not me. And that is when I know I think the mistake like thinking about like well how is this going to affect

you. It's very different than oh my gosh this isn't going to work out for us sakes. And the US has ruined me. Yeah yeah. That's the like the error. In any relationship.

BB: I totally agree that that's a good way to put it. Yeah.

MG: I love what you just said there. OK. So can you finish that thought If you knew what I knew but didn't speak to like business business people yeah?

BB: You'd focus on the process and not the outcome.

MG: I need the outcome

BB: though to get the outcome If the process is successful and you are doing the right things the outcome is going to be a natural byproduct of that.

MG: OK I've heard that before. Yeah. Yeah, I heard that before and yeah yeah but business is different.

BB: No business is not different. It's exactly as

MG: we don't have a championship.

BB: You do its sirrah into the year PNL.

MG: OK well we don't have practice. Now you do every day you go in there and you spend eight hours a day doing something.

MG: Well I don't have a feedback loop.

BB: Yes you do. If your boss has set it up properly or someone has to set it up properly. Righ So that's what failing businesses are they don't communicate they don't have a sense of purpose they don't have a vision for what they're doing. Right.

And there's you ask about it and the feedback loops are not accurate. There may be quarterly for sure. How are you going to get better? Four times a year you get told what's not working. Exactly. OK. Brilliant. It's so good. No thanks.

MG: I'm enjoying it. I have to.OK. I want to know about Dr. I want go back to that because you said achievement. Are you more externally driven or internally driven

BB: I am more internally driven.

MG: Are you saying that because you're supposed to say no

BB: No because I know I honestly believe I am. I have certain just here's a great example.

Well, I think it's an example I after the 2012 Olympics which I told you know Michael we had gotten through and actually had a pretty good result. But getting there was extremely difficult. And as you know I had spent the better part of at that point. I don't know my career probably 20 years 25 years working this nonstop. Very few days off. Very few any vacations like no happy hour. No nothing. And I had decided after lunch and I was going to give myself a break. And I was in a position to. So I didn't coach at all from the London Olympics until May of the next year. So it's about nine months took completely off and had complete freedom was my schedule. I mean I did some appearances or whatever. There were a few things that I could basically decide every day where and what to do. I bought a place on the beach in Delaware Rosabeth and thought I was good. And I did love going down there. But I remember right after I went down to the beach place and kind of got looped in. I was like All right. Tomorrow I'm going to go down the beach. So I went down there. Like I don't know I came up so early saw when like 10 I'd have been up for like you know six hours. And I got my umbrella. Lots of sunscreens as you can tell I'm not a sub person so I'm sitting there and I've got my book and it's awesome. I'm like This is the best. This is what I've needed so badly. And after an hour I was like OK that was fun. But you know I have a place at the beach and all this time so I'm going to have to stay at least another hour. And after 30 minutes Mike I'm going to make myself stay for two hours because I have to because now I'm having a good time. So I may I cannot vacation is my point. I have to be doing something

MG: sounds really fun.

BB: It is awesome. Oh, my God. So I have to fight. I'd love to like. I like to cook. I like to run my bike. I like to do different things like that but I really have to have something that's occupying my mind and that I feel like I'm learning and kind of growing from. And I think that's my motivation.

MG: How long were you coach.

BB: Probably till I die.

MG: Will you coach on the pool deck or were you going

BB: I want to go for a while on the pool deck because I really love it. You know and I've spent a lot of time in my career trying to not love it trying to say well you know you could do something else. You should. I don't know. There in a number of things I can do.

Yeah but I just at the end of the day I love being on the deck and interacting with these kids on a daily basis.

MG: Where does pressure come from

BB: comes from outside. It comes from but when you start to pay attention to external causes of things that happen

MG: how do you help yourself Indoor Michael Allison and other athletes be more connected to the internal signal

BB: to be quiet to hear it right You've got to put yourself in a frame of mind where you can do it and I think I encourage them to do a lot of relaxation techniques and I think it's in those times where they get in touch with us.

MG: What are those techniques that use

BB: more breathing so as more breathing progressive relaxation tighten up your hands. Very basic. You know I told Michael I didn't teach him actually had his mom do it before he went to bed at night when he's like 11 and I had her start reading this progressive relaxation thing. After about three times before he did the first thing, you'd be asleep. He gets so. So you know he's very good at that.

MG: And it's a skill that he obviously still uses.

BB: I mean he definitely can put my favorite example is Michael it

MG: How did he broke his hand.

MG: He had surgery on the hand and I was there with him.

BB: And I went back to the recovery room. Everything is fine. How do you break it up. Fell in the ice in Michigan. Oh great. So we don't have that in Phoenix but we're in the recovery room and he's all hooked up and we're just looking at his heart is like 80 you know because it just came out of surgery kind of and the Doc came in and said but when your heart rates under 50 you can leave probably be another hour or so. And Michael went. As Ari went to live 45. Because I can only go dogs like

MG: yeah

BB: you're out. It's also totally done that.

MG: So he's very skilled

BB: very skilled at and is resting Ariz. Thirty-six years. OK. So relaxation strategies what else meditation. I think those go hand in hand. And I try to I personally work on some meditation but I don't do it really formally and I don't have like a monitor you know I as someone described to me meditation of focusing on your breath and allowing thoughts to like come into your brain. But as they come in you just let your breath kind of blow them out you know like hello and goodbye. Exactly. And that really works for me. Yeah, that's great. That's a great idea.

MG: And you know the art part of mindfulness is starting over 1000 times exactly you know hello and goodbye into a place where all of a sudden those clouds. Like if the thought as a cloud. Yeah, they just start to get a little more still here. So what is the signal for you like the noise signal to noise ratio right? The distractions from the pressure conversation we're having are external. What is the signal?

BB: That's a hard question

MG: Yeah that is a hard question yeah. Thank you. Yeah yeah.

BB: I think the signal is your breath right. It's it's the inner you go with within yourselves.

We have this where we got this what we used to have this T-shirt at our club and it said the solution lies within us I think that's completely true that you have this belief that you can kind of solve whatever problems out there. But I think the signal and the way to tune out the noise is to just get back to your most basic your authentic self. I've heard it express you know your learned state at your and your authentic state is a learned state. And there's another state. What are those called was the other one that's when you want to be and you don't want to be in your clean state where you learn how to react. I say authentic to that I like other itself and I think that's what it yeah. Yeah. And imagery I know you love it you know I do use imagery.

MG: Before we go there let's talk about pre-performance routines, Scherff. Do you support them?

BB: Absolutely.

MG: Yeah

BB: I don't. By the way.

MG: OK. So I'd like to have this conversation.

BB: Well I'm going to tell you part of this is just it happened. If you watch what Michael does behind the blocks at a swim meet today it's the same thing he did at the first meet I ever saw him do. He goes behind the blocks. He has his headphones on. He stretches his legs in a certain way. He goes through this other routine of kind of little just basic stretching movements. Then he gets up on the block and he slaps his arms like three times and then he swims.

MG: And what is he doing internally when those movements are taking place.

BB: I think it's just honestly I think it just keeps him from being nervous standing there awkwardly just gives him something to do in that space because it's an interminable amount of time from the time they walk out to the time they call everybody's name. They actually get on the block and cement. So I do think that's part of it. And he is absolutely putting himself into a state. If he's not there already and the way that I kind of know this is if he go back and watch the video of the really iconic race of 2008 the 100-meter butterfly where he won by 100 to the second the competitor Michael Cabbage is in the next lane. And he had noticed that Michael was always standing on the side of the block with his leg up on the kind of steps that they have inside the block and looking sideways. So Michael Gavish position himself so he was doing the same thing looking right into Michael so it's like they're staring up for the race.

And I just kind of noticed. So the race goes off. You know it happened and after I'm talking to Michael and I was like What did you think when Cavett was staring you down before the race like that. And Michael honest to god says was he looking at me.

So he was clearly in another. He didn't even see the guy eight feet away right in his face. He was in another shoe store owners too. I think that's what the routine does.

I also take it further and the thing that I wear I think it's important is in the hours leading up to my athletes always do the same warm up. They do it at the same time. Before the event starts like we did Michael's classic warm up. We arrive at the venue two hours before he will do some kind of stretching and limbering up exercises for about 30 minutes at an hour and a half before the event. He will do his primary warm-up which is the same thing every meet. I mean since he was 12 he tweaks it a little bit but it's the same thing. He will get out dry off after about 30 minutes. He'll put his racing suit on then 30 minutes before the event he gets back in the pool and does maybe I don't know five or ten minutes worth of the light stuff warming up. Then he puts his warm-ups on. Then he goes to the ready room does this every race and what this does is it makes everything automated. They don't have to spend one ounce of energy on what to do to warm up tonight. They know exactly it and because they do the same thing all the time they have a good feel for. Do I feel good? Do I feel bad? Should I maybe do a little something at the end where they have some leeway to get their heart rate up higher or maybe they just feel great and they call it. So I think it's super important and every one of my athletes has one of those. It's not exactly that way but it's pretty much like that.

MG: Do you ask them to write it down or does it organically just kind of

BB: organically happens. And then I start asking them about it. What is your routine? What is your routine? You know when are you getting in. And then after a while it's just like like I know Alison Schmidt she's going to do about the same thing but she's going to get in an hour and 40 before because she needs 10 more minutes to put her suit. You know it's just like the limits. So you know it just it's little tweaks on stuff like that and it's largely about timing because what I want them to do is from the time they get to the venue in that lead up to the actual race I want all of that to be automated. I don't want them. I want them to be able to conserve emotional energy. That's the key element at these races conserving emotional energy and conserving psychological energy I don't want to spend any time on distractions of any kind. And that way if a distraction comes up that's not part of this thing. They have a lot of resources to deal with it and they can get to go back to their plan. You know the bus came a little late. OK, we'll just adjust this a little bit. But we know what we're going to be doing. So I feel like it just makes some really really solid when they get up there right. They just go move through it builds a great case for your mother. That's why we do it.

MG: Yeah every case for it. And then what are the thoughts that accompany or proceed. The ideal mindset for I want to ask for let's say, Michael, since we're talking about. And then you as well. But what are the types of thoughts that that influenced the mindset? And there's two parts to that.

BB: What is the mindset and what are the thoughts the mindset is trying to achieve honestly a state of peace. I try not to interject anything into that equation that's going to make him think about something.

MG: OK. Is this case or not we're talking about Michael forget about Michael so his ideal competitive mindset is a state of peace.

BB: Well when I say peace. Michael will absolutely tell you he doesn't think about anything and he listens to music to try to clear his head of everything. During this buildup to the race and during the race.

MG: So he's thinking about the music then.

BB: Right

MG: so if the exact essay and you know like if there's some lyrics and the music is he listening to them please listen to it. Yeah but I don't know that

BB: he listens to it it's all like via inspired it's just more like a vine right. Oh yeah. All right. And then that's just a feel for that period in his life. Yeah like wherever he is yeah cause it changes me too. Yeah. Sometimes it's Kanye sometimes as country or you know I mean it just depends on where he kind of is. OK so then what are the thoughts that lead to him. You said it again it's a piece of. Yes.

And I guess I don't want to I usually say relaxation but which.

But I'm talking about relaxation right before the biggest event of your life it's a different relaxation than when you're on the beach or vacation. You know what I mean.

It's physiological Yeah it's a state I'm trying to move them more towards the deactivated physiological state versus the over activate Teseo that's what we're doing and you're probably intimately familiar with the Yerkes Dodson inv. you to get scale and then so are you helping them find tuna five exact less on the scale is that.

Yes. And I think it's going to be so easy to go over there. I'm always trying to get him to calm down. Yeah, I've only had a couple of athletes I have to jack up on that scale me too. And they're retirement age. Well, are they just like are so under. One very Olympic gold medalists like Coach was like that and I would have tried to get him to do it. I'd have to start talking about the outcome.

I mean like it's you know this is your career. This is the only chance you're going to get. It's a rare prize. You bet. It's very rare and I never even have that talk ever. I would never talk to anybody else.

But for him, I switch it totally to the outcome because I gets his tries to get him a more activate. Was that the most dangerous thought the most dangerous thought is what's what happens if I don't achieve my goal. What're the most productive the most productive thought is What am I going to do right now whereas my focus needs to be right on this stroke of this race right now and then the interplay between task at hand and internal awareness?

MG: You have to have have two is a big word. You have to have some solid awareness of your inner state to maximize the expression of the test. Certainly appellation of the test. So whether it's hip rotation reach you know shoulder reach or whatever like there has to be some sort of output that you're working on. Yes. So what. But if you're too internally aware about your thoughts about your breathing or you never kind of get to that output phase. So how do you do you talk about that interplay like you can get too caught in your own head.

BB: I do some people not. I notice that the high performers are hyper-aware like I'll give you a perfect example. And Michael's always the ridiculous example but in our pool in Baltimore we have a 50-meter pool and there's a thing called a Bulka which is a false wall in the middle which divides it into two pools bases. We're at the far end Michael's swimming really hard being really hard at the 60 or 70 meters away there's a glass wall which leads into the lobby. There's a front desk. There's a ton of people in there.

Michael is swimming this ridiculously hard said and after one of the repeats when he has about five seconds dresses like de my mom just come in the front door of the building all the way down there. I'm like What the hell is that. Who does that? Right. But he's acutely aware. So what I'm saying is I think if they like that then you don't have to worry about them being in touch with you know the task at hand or anything else. They're very aware but they're relaxed. I think that's the key. You want them to be because they're racing Michael's very aware of what people are doing like I I remember distinctly this race in Canada where Ryan Lochte and Michael both swam the 200 I.M. and this was the first time that Ryan was really challenging Michael. And it was dead. It was just super super close. And they swam and Michael ended up winning. Ended up breaking a world record. Ryan was right behind him as a super intense race. And they both got out and they're like walking back to the warm down pool and I met them there and they're just laughing at it. Yeah, I knew and you looked over at me at the 150 while it was all over. You

know like they look at each other and they know what they're doing in the middle of what the incredible exertion. So they're very aware. And I don't know if that's their they're high performers because they are aware or they're aware because they're high performance. Don't know.

It is a chicken and egg. Speaking of chicken and egg I don't want to be rude.

I say this to Dan but I want to explore this with you because when I think about this as well in my own career my own life and so I've been fortunate to be included and part of some extraordinary projects with extraordinary performers. Yeah. And some that have changed the way we understand the world and some changed aerospace and some changed the industry and some have changed family legacies.

MG: So okay. And then they'll point and say Mike thank you so much Buckley privately whatever and then I start to wonder because I just lucky I have studied this stuff for 20 years like I've got some stuff. It was. They would have gotten there without me. Yeah.

That I help that or not help. OK. So you know where I'm going.

BB: Oh yes sure.

MG: OK.

MG: So you you connected to the best in the world.

BB: Yes

MG: for 20 some years.

BB: Sure.

MG: Amazing thought. Do you ever wonder if your your stuff helped didn't help? Does that ever get confusing and you've got a great line that I've read or shared with you? So. Can you talk about that just a little?

BB: I can. You know I think early on in my career when we were just sort of getting going but Michael was starting to show his real ability. I used to read these message boards about swimming and now I've since I'm an adult now I don't read the message boards because they're usually about me and they're negative. But you know just don't do that anymore.

Well, I've got a lot of better when I stopped doing.

But somebody says you know Bob Bowman can't coach the janitor could coach Michael Phelps. And I thought to myself as I read that yeah. But could the janitor coach's mother.

MG: I love it. Yeah.

BB: That was our part getting everyone getting the team together and getting them all behind us and understanding what we're doing. He knows there's so many parts of it right. Not just putting

him in a pool and saying swim. I mean Michael probably would have been a good swimmer if we dropped him off at a lake somewhere and said swim for two hours every day. But you know I feel like the sustained success that he had and the you know Michael broke world records for over a decade every year that's just never done in our sport. And I think that and in many different events, I feel like it certainly impacted that in some way. But yeah you know it's I feel like your greatest strength is your greatest weakness. Sometimes as my philosophy so was my greatest strength. You coach Michael Phelps all these medals. What's your greatest weakness? You can only coach Michael Phelps style. Which really isn't true if you look at the record

MG: and you've had

BB: some success with other people. And quite frankly that's why I'm coach and Arizona State University right now. I took a program which had been kind of floundering and no one could say I took over a ready-made program and just kept it going. So, whatever happens, there will be what it is. So we'll find out if I can coach or not I suppose

MG: you love your lighting up.

BB: I love it.

MG: You like that challenge.

MG: I love that challenge. OK. World class performers yes you included what is the common thread to drive people to work this hard what is your what are your insights there.

BB: That's a great question. Wow. It's a hard one. It's complicated but I think the comment is almost not fair

MG: it's almost not fair.

BB: like it might be different for different people.

MG: But let me say real quick. It's the question I've been asking myself for 20 years.

BB: Yeah yeah. I don't know. OK look at that even

MG: but I'd love to see where you go.

BB: I'd like to think about the common thread in high performers is that I kind of go back to my personal experience and you know maybe I'm a high performer or maybe I'm not. But

MG: do you see that to throw it away.

BB: Well no no not at all. I'm just saying like you know I'm a hybrid. I work with high performers. I don't know maybe I'm a high performing coach that helps them high perform. It's like. So that's what I was coming from that. For me it's about seeing what the actual possibilities are how far can this thing go and that's what the cool part of me because every time I take a step beyond what I think I could do that motivates me to work super hard for the next step and that's that is that process or that inner just satisfaction is what drives me. And the interesting or a different part about what my success is is tied to other people whether they do it or not you know or how you know that with the Coliseum as is the program can do it. But I think that has to be part of it that everybody has this desire. Well, at least high performers have this desire to see how far they can go how what is the limit. Do we even know?

MG: Do you think that there's dysfunction underneath it. Think about this often. In a normal world having such structured routines before you do something is a disorder called OCD. And the problem with OCD. The difference though is OCD in the normal world gets in the way of the function daily functioning OCD on the pool deck actually facilitates the thing that they're about to go. It doesn't stop them it facilitates it. Right. So but is that I don't know. There's some sort of craziness Yank underneath the tip of the arrow performers in the world.

BB: There's definitely something because they are by definition different than the norm. Right. I mean they and that has to deal with their psychological makeup their emotional makeup certainly their physical makeup we know that. So there have to be. And when I say abnormal I don't mean this in a bad way just not normal just not average not average about. I don't know they're above average or below average but there are definitely some differences psychologically and emotionally in high performance.

MG: This is going to sound counterintuitive but if there's a thread that there's some sort of dysfunctional split fracture or something in their earlier life now normal psychology says let's heal that yet OK. And what I'm about to suggest is no let's let's get in touch with it. OK. Let's get in touch with your crazy.

BB: I think that happens all the time like that. But let's let's No. Yeah. So it doesn't burn you but you can use it to burn brightly. Yeah. And what does that mean? It's like well where does pain come from for you. Right. And if we can not try to undo it from an outcome that will never happen the outcome will never undo the inner pain. Exactly. You're nodding your head like yes I've been there. Yeah. What do you mean? Well I mean I've had numerous athletes who are dealing with issues which I think are kind of driving them to perform.

And there's and maybe even him I'm sure in my life I don't know if I can go that deep that I had this pain but I was definitely helping them do this. You have this belief that if you accomplish this huge goal that somehow your life is going to be different and it's not it's the same. You have the same bills maybe make a little more money maybe you have some more opportunities but at the end of the day you're you're still you're still shaving in the mirror.

BB: Exactly. You're still doing what you do. So I see that all the time.

MG: Yeah. So what would you suggest people get in touch with their crazy or just say now just bottle it away. Work hard now.

BB: Working hard is a good antidote for many things but probably they should get in touch with that I think at some point.

MG: OK. What is OK before we go on to the next day. Is that oftentimes I think the worst thing we can do as friends to each other is take try to take away the pain it'll be OK. That's ok. Oh, this sounds awful. This looks like it feels awful to you-you know. Wow. I agree with that. And then just let them not let them encourage them to feel it and then say well what do you want. How do you want to do this differently?

BB: Yeah I'll use an example and I'll use Alison because I know she wouldn't mind at all about this and she's kind of we've actually talked about this and Alison who has suffered from depression you know and pretty severe depression post the Olympic Games. I started with her when she was 14. And from day one she is this the sunniest brightest breath of fresh air every day all day. And she made the 2008 Olympic team in high school.

And everything is great. And we're on top of the world and we're in the training camp at Stanford. And all of a sudden her roommate is knocking on my door one afternoon and she's like you need to come talk to Alison right now.

I was like Whoa I've never even seen her not smile the entire day. So I go and she's crying she's very upset. And I did the quintessential what every man does when you know the woman starts crying and that is OK just to make it stop let's say whatever it takes to make it stop. Well you know the the the I should say the immature man or you haven't figured it out and then try to solve and then try to solve the problem. So anyway I did actually solve that and because her problem was she was homesick and she didn't feel like she belonged on the Olympic team. So it was very easy. I said Well here's the list of the people are swimming in the Olympics and you're ranked number three in the 200 free zone think you belong here. And she's like Oh OK. So that's all that. The point is she came back four years later we're getting ready for 2012. And she had another episode like that in training and it was like we were training hard and I was pushing them in Colorado at altitude and all this stuff is going on and in between. I had talked to Terry McKeever my good friend who coaches Cal Berkeley and you know she suggested a book called The Female Brain. So I read it cool book has a cool book but you know what I kind of got from that and dealing with Alice that time was she doesn't want me to stop her crying she just wants me to say anything she just wants me to be there. Once I started doing that. We connected on a totally different way and she's like thanks for doing that. Like I just stood here. But yeah you know that's what she does need the support. It wasn't about trying to work through all these issues at the time. It was just like I need you to hear me out and just be there for me. And I think once I started learning that it made it a lot better. So I think there are ways that you're going to deal with athletes. Certainly, the men and women are very different in that regard. You'll never have that. I mean I haven't had an episode with a man like that yet where they did that and we needed to do that but they do it differently. Brilliant Yeah.

MG: OK. Is there a word or phrase that guide your life. This is really about a philosophy.

BB: Yeah. Process. More important than the outcome for sure is that a philosophy that is my philosophy I hate to beat a dead horse but it's really true and it's how we run everything we do.

MG: So OK. So clear. And then it provides like OK how do you create a world-class process. And then so that's your model Yeah. The four phases the story imagination and imagination challenge and then hyper balance and lessons. And then you've got tactics the inside of each one. And if somebody is not in an uber-competitive world-class environment but they are working hard in their life what would you suggest that they do to make their life better.

BB: They can use the same process that they can absolutely use it and they can find some people to help them get some feedback. You know it might be tougher in some situations as others. But I honestly believe that process can work in anything it works in music. It works and business that works in sports.

MG: How important is it to have a mentor or someone that's thinking about your well-being.

BB: I think it's really critical and I think the reason that I sought out those mentors in swimming was because I had been brought up in this musical background where it's very important the teacher-student relationship. If you read the biographies of any great performer they're going to stay studied violin with Dorothy Delay at the Juilliard School. You know they're always going to list their teachers so they're kind of lineage is kind of traced back through their teachers. And for me, I wanted to do that I wanted to to really learn.

And the reason that you do that is one you understand how they think about it and when I was with any of these teachers I was never trying to like make my own brand or do my own thing. I only wanted to learn how to do it their way.

Like I wasn't even thinking I was like when I'm with Paul Bergen I want to learn how to do it. Paul Bergen's. And then one I'm David Marsh I'll do it. David Marsh's way 100 percent. I would completely invest in learning how he does it and how. And then along the way you're kind of filing the things that you thought are really effective and kind of getting rid of the things that you didn't. But I feel like that's a key part of mentorship. And frankly, it just saves you time because all these mentors have been doing this and they have made mistakes and stuff and you just don't have to make those same mistakes you can make your own. There are plenty that you're going to make on your own but it saves you a lot of time and effort knowing that you know. I don't know. Try to think of a good example but there are a million of them but you know Paul Burgan would say you know we once went to a meeting was going to be in California and we were living in Cincinnati so I got the girls up at 2:00 in the morning so they could warm up at the same time it would be you know or whatever.

Don't ever do that just to sleep. You know you those kinds of things.

MG: Is that OK. All right. Can you talk about we've talked a lot about working hard? Yes. Can you spend a little bit of time on recovery? Sure. Just talk about the recovery the importance of recovery and what recovery means to you and how you help people recover

BB: when recovery is so critical because 50 percent of the process the training is when you're giving the stimulus the added adaptation occurs during a recovery period. So what I always tell my athletes you know the benefit of this practice is not what you just did over the last two hours is what's going to happen over the next eight or 10 hours or more 24 48. So recovery is critical. And the way that you go about different modalities I think is also important. Nutrition is number one for me hydration and nutrition. That's the first thing we would address. Trying to take in the

most high-quality nutrition you can get at the proper time. These days we're looking for organic or you know those kinds of things. So I think that's important. And then there are other a ton of other things that we're using now. Cold tubs we use cupping Crassus and technique and on and on and on. There are any number of things you can use but the way that you approach the periods between the training sessions is really going to determine the effectiveness of the training sessions

MG: and then vegetable-based protein against healthy fat-based as I.

BB: Yes exactly. We like to use. We definitely want protein included in it but we're trying to find ways that aren't maybe heavily milk based and we have some products that we use on food want to talk about here. I mean you know we use the of the Targa which is a great and a lot of them have some reason. But it's a plant-based but it has protein in it so it stimulates recovery faster.

MG: OK. How important sleep and

BB: critical absolutely critical. There's a direct correlation between number of hours of sleep an athlete gets and the quality of their performance guarantee you or anyone, not any person.

MG: OK. Thank you. I know we're going long on this topic. I've got to tell you this is this is. OK. How. How important is the mental aspect of the game from your lenses So we got physical technical strategy and mental

BB: mental Well it's critical and more so as you get higher up you know I would say when you're an age group swimmer and I'll just break it into two parts right to make it simple like

when you're first starting out and you're 9 or 10 years old. 90 percent of its physical you're learning how to do the skills and 10 percent might be mental. How to have good manners and practice and then as you move up the scale that ratio changes. So when you're at the Olympic Games I would say is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical.

MG: And if you were to suggest people go on the path of learning mental skills where would you start them. And what would you hope what other skills would you hope that they would build along the way?

BB: Well I would start them first on learning how to do some sort of relaxation technique or visualization. I think that's really important and maybe a progressive relaxation technique. There are plenty of things that they can do meditation those things I think. I think it's really powerful and I think you'll find that most successful people are spending time during their day working on that. I like, of course, some sort of goal setting technique and I don't know that you have to make it super complicated it can be very simple. But I think there has to be something there to give you a little bit more structure and more. Quite frankly feedback on what you're doing because if you don't have very specific goals it's hard to know what you're accomplishing on a daily basis.

MG: So that would be the next thing when you do when you teach imagery. Is there a particular way that you teach.

BB: I teach you very simply. I tell kids it's like Well you're watching a movie. Right. But it needs to be very vivid you need to be in it you need to smell it taste it the more because the brain can't tell the difference between something that vividly imagines if something is really right. That's the whole purpose. I've learned several things through my career. And you know Michael I think is the greatest visualizer of all time. And I learned later after he had done the Beijing Olympics that he will visualize the race going exactly the way that he wants it to go and he will do it as if he is actually in the water. And also as if he's watching himself in the stands. You know

like from above or two different two different perspectives. But he will also visualize scenarios where things go wrong in the race and how he will respond to it. So he has a whole database of these visualizations that he can call upon you know at the critical moment and it won't be conscious because he's rehearsed it time and time again he's from these races hundreds of times in his mind. So it'll just click when it matters.

MG: Do you have a sense of how much time he spent on a regular basis doing it.

BB: Was it a daily [Inaudible][J]. Well, it's definitely Daley in the lead up to the event. I would say he also uses his videos of his best races. He would always ask me for the videos of his best races. About two months to six weeks out And I know that started the process and after that he would be probably every day visualizing he got so good that he had in the middle of the day because at night he would get so jacked up he couldn't go to sleep after you know because it's pretty emotional too.

MG: Same thing if you're doing it right.

BB: Yeah.

MG: You're going to switch on your getting switch.

MG: Doing that is not the

BB: time to find time to date. And I would say other than that he's probably doing it maybe once or twice a week

MG: and then you have a sense of how much time he's allocated ominous.

BB: I have no real idea. I'm going to say 30 minutes. I don't think it's a big. I think he might take one race a day. You know ABS two two or three times and they're not that long.

MG: And you can segment it out. You can if you wanted to you could just do walking on stage.

BB: Yeah for sure. Oh yeah, you can do it. Oh yeah. You know like sometimes being on stage given your speech sometimes you know like you said sure OK I will say about visualization. One of the things that we try to do is tie that into the training because at.

Certain aspects of the practice when we get like say they're doing this very long set. And there's one repeat left at the end which is like say it's I don't know 100 meters and we want them to try to replicate the time they're going to swim in the race in the 100 meters. I would say something like. All right. Play the movie now your last 100 to 400 I.M. you know and try to visualize why you're actually physically doing this and whether the time adds up or not if it does that's fine. But if not you're at least getting your brain to carry that into what's physically at.

MG: OK here's a big question. Yeah. It all comes down to

BB: the process.

MG: You make it very simple don't you.

BB: That's I try to do

MG: which is the process is really about now.

BB: Yeah.

MG: How well are you doing now. So like if we if I ask this question about now how are you doing now on doing

BB: I am doing great.

MG: Yeah.

BB: I could do this all day. You mean specifically, now these are the most important questions about my life's work so I love it.

MG: What question have I not asked. That's really been the front and the back of your mind for a long time.

BB: It's a great question.

MG: So we've covered a lot of questions.

BB: I like to carry a lot of ground.

MG: I got one for you

BB: Yeah.

MG: What are you most hungry for. What are you aching for? Like what is your heart searching for?

BB: My heart is searching and this is honest to God truth. To

MG: know almost everything else is a lie.

BB: No no but I'm just like some people I tend to be like. I feel like people perceive me as being like almost machine-like like Mike all right. Like we move from one thing in the process and do your goal and does that. And I want the athletes who come through my program to leave it with a skill set that they take beyond swimming as absolute truth. And it's really why I'm teaching now issue and while I'm continuing to coach kids I really don't have to do any number of different things.

MG: What are you doing an issue like what's up program look like.

BB: We're rebuilding a swimming program and I'm absolutely loving it because I'm getting to really teach again. Getting to bring in some talented athletes and kind of start over my career I have some that you're going to know about in the Olympics that I'm coaching right now. But it's just been a real nice reset for me in a collegiate environment which I love it because I feel really stimulated by it. I'm involved in other aspects of campus other than just the swimming pool. And it's been really great.

MG: I would imagine the people that go there are going to get an extraordinary program based on your body of work. You're inside like imagine that that's going to be a great place to learn.

BB: Well that's the idea though.

MG: Do you have a favorite story that comes to mind about you and Michael.

BB: So many try to think oh he'll kill me for telling this. But this is my favorite Michael because it just when he first started to improve. Right and really get good and we were starting to think about this as you know he's going to be really special. But he was maybe 14. So I was trying to just keep everything really calm and just kind of keep everything you know we were at a meet and at Orlando the junior nationals. And Michael had gone over and he had swum the 1500 meters is a very hard race. I mean it's the longest race I was making him swim because he had to toughen up and I was I mean a winner. And he swam like a man's time. And at the time I think Michael was wearing like a size 22 swimsuit which is like a postage stamp right. He probably weighed 120 pounds is this a skinny little nothing. And I remember he finished the race and we walked literally across the parking lot to where a hotel was just right next to the pool. And he was wearing tennis shoes. This tiny little brief suit and nothing else. His hat McGee had a Michigan baseball hat on and he had just done this whole big program and the ME was like he had just really done well and it was one of the first meets that we had actually traveled together. I mean because we've done a lot of local things we were younger and I remember I went to my room but he was going to go down here to go down the hallway for something to get something and he couldn't tell. But I just saw him skip down the hallway. He was like the happiest little kid in the world. And I thought this guy loves to swim and that's what he ended his career with that kind of joy and kind of lost that in the process of all this other stuff. So I always think back to that and I was like I was so glad he got back to that because at the end in Rio he was really like that kid what a really cool story.

MG: What a really cool story that you got to see both Skips.

BB: Exactly yeah.

MG: That's a privileged privileged position to be in someone's life

BB: for sure. Absolutely.

MG: Success is

BB: success is getting close to your potential. I don't know if we ever all reach it.

MG: You know it's just a really hard thing to think about.

BB: I mean I guess it is getting some percentage of that whatever that is

MG: like how do you do that for yourself. Like what is your potential.

BB: I don't know. I honestly think that my my main you know I used to live a life of like checking off these boxes right. Have someone when the Nationals the junior nationals to this the Olympic medal gold medal. And you chop checked off all these boxes and now I feel like I I want to lead a life more of influence. Right. I'm at a point now where that's my greatest strength. So the more people I can positively influence the closer I am to my potential or I'm you know giving my biggest gift or whatever it is using my tablets. OK.

MG: How do you finish this. I am a coach a teacher.

BB: I would say a teacher. I'm a teacher.

MG: It's like a John Wooden thought to a teacher.

BB: I definitely think of myself more of a teacher.

MG: What are you teaching.

BB: How to live. Basically hopefully outlive successfully. You know. I'm teaching people that their life can be more than just what the average bear does

MG: which is focused on the outcome

BB: exactly which is focused on the outcome. Exactly.

MG: This was just I don't know. I won't say what this as recently as a Seattle Seahawks coach Carroll story and we come in from a game where we won but it was shabby and was not clean nothing crisp about it but it was a win. Yeah. And the next day Coach Carroll is in front of the room and he says it's you know we won.

BB: We'll take it because hard to

MG: get a win in the NFL. You know it's like a gold medal. It is very hard. Yeah, they're all heart. I'm not talking about a win in the NFL battle but you know it's like they're all Oh yeah you know. And so he says if we focus on the outcome we'll be average we'll be like everybody else. So let's not be distracted by this when the exact let's never be distracted by a win or a loss. Let's double down. Let's be really clear about how we're going to get better.

BB: Sure.

MG: And I bet you're like you're nodding your head. I love it. Right. And that's great. Yeah. Nice clear insight.

BB: Exactly

MG: Yeah.

BB: I Love it. Process

MG: process process it but it's not I don't hear you ever use the word perfection.

BB: No

MG: no. You're really about improving

BB: I am about improvement. I'd be better tomorrow today than you were yesterday. Be better tomorrow than you are today.

MG: If you had a chance to ask somebody who's a master of their craft. One question. What would that be?

BB: How do you spend most of your time.

MG: Yeah OK. Back at you. How do you spend most of your time? This is like a total cheat by me. But how do you think

BB: you know what I'm in this thing. I'm actually in the 80/20 right. I'm trying to spend 80 percent of my time on the things that are going to give us the big results instead of spending 80 percent of my time as I was getting as 20 percent a result. You know what I mean is like I want to spend my time on things which affect my athletes the staff everything I'm doing in a meaningful way instead of just you know going to meetings or trying to get a paycheck or all of those things. So it kind of goes back to my influence right. I'm very conscious now of how I spend my time during the day. And am I spending it on something that really matters to what we're doing? Now there are some things that really matter like writing the training program for that date that really matters to me. That's the first thing I do when I get there. It's I shut the door turn out the phone and I spend an hour doing that. And that's probably the best hour of my day because I just absolutely love doing that. But after that, I am really conscious now about not taking meetings and are going to go anywhere not wasting time on things that my assistants can do and do well

and really try to make sure that my impact is on the student-athletes most directly. So this is what I'm doing.

MG: Great.Brilliant. What do you hope sports psychologists could do better.

BB: I think sports psychologists are like every other specialist you know we have biomechanist and physiologist and you know all these other strengths coaches psychologists nutritionists all of which are important. But you have to realize that you're a slice of a pie.

I used to have this guy like very well known like biomechatronics in swimming or to buy a Mac and as the swimmer is only like a stick figure right. They booted their arms legs a certain way and to the physiologist, they're just like heart and lungs right there is like a system or this and I'm the one who has to put all this together. So everyone needs to appreciate that they're a piece of the pie they're not the whole pie.The psychologist is not going to be everything by him. This does not all fit into the you know the big picture. And I think really my job is to kind of apportion all that out make sure it works.

MG: Do you see yourself more as a general manager or like somebody who's coordinating the Poles experience or driving the culture.

BB: Well I definitely drive in the culture and I think I'm but I am coordinating those things because I think that affects the culture right. Those are things that are critical to our culture.

MG: Ok. Brilliant. What are the keys to mastery? How do you define or think about this concept of mastery?

BB: Well I actually have thought about this. Coincidentally I honestly see mastery and like low in the interim. The right is self-actualization you not only well over time you've developed this physical skill set in our world but not only do you have the physical skill set but you have the emotional maturity and experience and you have the psychological experience and capacity to use all of everything at an optimized state. So I think it's being self-actualized in your activity

MG: Brilliant. Bob Thank you, Senator Sessions. This has been really fun. So thank you for the time and the insight and the wisdom that you've shared. And where can people connect with you?

BB: I am on Instagram and Twitter at Coach underscore BOWMAN

MG: BOW

BB: BOWMAN

MG: and OK so that's Instagram and Twitter. Your book title of your book

BB: The Golden Rules makes sense for you.

MG: How did you come up with the title.

BB: Honestly I didn't it did it They helped me come up with it just I think once we looked at what the content of the book was. It made perfect sense.

MG: That is Great. Okay. And then Amazon where do you find Barnes and Noble. Amazon yes. OK. On your Web site as well.

BB: You can look at my Twitter handle gives you a link to it too.

MG: OK. And then what's next.

BB: I'm building this program with Arizona State. We're also kind of now getting back into preparing for the 2020 Olympic Games so we have a group of athletes are going to start doing that. So back to the real grind.

MG: I love it. Lot last little segment here questions. What is your crown jewel the thing that is this is like a brag question for a moment? But what does the the thing that you're exceptional at or really understand or look like what is your crown jewel? I don't know another way of saying it.

BB: I am undeterred by setbacks I just keep going.

MG: Awesome. Yeah, I mean really cool how about Allison's. What is her crown jewel Geomagic

BB: her crown jewel is that she cares about other people so much. She is a truly empathetic person.

MG: Microscon jewel

BB: Microscon jewel is his ability to imagine things that were never done and just kill himself to get there.

MG: Oh. Superb. Ok. I wish you the best success and [Inaudible][2:00:09 ]

BB: Ok

MG: I don't know if we see each other for another Olympics.

BB: I hope so.

MG: Yeah. Ok. And congratulations about your work and how you impacted other people and the time we spent together how impacted me. I want to say thank you again.

BB: Thank you. It is been an awesome.

MG: Ok. folks that's has been listening you can punch over to finding mastery.net to have similar conversation as this and you can find me at Michael Gervais on twitter and on Instagram is at finding mastery and if you have not spent time yet head over to findingmastery.net for slash community and we got a whole tribe of people that are supporting and challenging each other on the path of mastery. you can also hit us with minutes of mastery so clips of 2 minutes or 3 minutes or less from more class thinkers and doers and probably we have gonna lot of them. So, thank you. I just want to appreciate everyone for spending the time to invest themselves and truly using the time to utilize our boats or contributing a thing to ourselves and to others. So  
Awesome!