

BWF_John Beilein Transcript

John Beilein: [00:00:00] I say people will leave your team, if it's just a team. I think people are more hesitant to leave a team if it's their family and you got to create that culture of love. Use the word love, hug it out and just build relationships, relationships, relationships with your team, your managers, your janitors, your staff.

They'll have to work harder for you, do more for the team, but also not be as apt to go somewhere because they're happy.

Tim Spiker: Sometimes the most impressive thing about successful leaders is the humility they have to never stop learning from others. I'm your host, Tim Spiker, and this is the Be Worth* Following podcast.

On this show, we talk with exceptional leaders, thinkers, and researchers about what actually drives effective leadership across the globe and over time.

[00:01:00] Annually in the month of March, in honor of the NCAA basketball tournament, known to so many as March Madness, we get our leadership lessons from the world of college basketball.

And today, we have a giant from that world as our guest. You just heard from John Beilein, one of the most successful college basketball coaches ever. For over 30 years, he coached at every level possible. High school, junior college, NAI, NCAA Division III, NCAA Division II, four stops at NCAA Division I schools, and then finally, a stint in the NBA.

Beilein's final college post was at the University of Michigan. where he twice took the Wolverines to the NCAA championship game. In all, Coach Beilein amassed more than 800 wins in his career as a head basketball coach. In 2019, Coach Beilein was honored with the John Wooden Keys to Life Award, given annually to a member of the college or pro basketball community [00:02:00] who best exemplifies the qualities of character, integrity and leadership.

And, in 2022, not surprisingly, John Beilein became a member of the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame. During this episode of Be Worth Following, you'll hear how, over time, Coach Beilein changed his approach to basketball strategy. But that wasn't the only thing he changed. You'll hear how he changed his approach to leading his teams and developing the culture of his programs as well.

In Coach Beilein, you'll hear from a wildly successful leader who remained open to learning from others, even after he had hundreds of wins under his belt. And you'll hear how remarkably intentional Coach Beilein became about developing relationships with his players. Now, before we get to my discussion with Coach Beilein, I need to give a little public service announcement.

If you've hung around this podcast for a while, you might've picked up on the fact that I love the world of college basketball. And so, as I [00:03:00] was visiting with Coach Beilein, I could not resist asking him about a very unique moment that happened for him during the 2013 NCAA National Championship game.

And from there, we went into a very college basketball specific conversation. So, knowing that the focus of our podcast is leadership. Here's what we've done. We've taken that segment of my conversation with coach Beilein, and we've moved it to the very back of this episode, even after my normal sign off at the end, so that those of you who want to hear it can just continue listening and catch that there.

But for those that are here specifically for the leadership content and don't care much about college basketball, well, you won't have to listen to that segment. Having said that, let's get to my conversation with coach Beilein, where he begins with a quick comment about why he went into coaching in the first place and how an expensive buyout in one of his contracts created added pressure for him to win and win and win as soon as possible. [00:04:00]

John Beilein: The only reason that I wanted to be a teacher and a coach is I had amazing teachers and coaches in grade school, high school, college, and they just wanted me to be like them. And then as I went through the process of, you know, high school, junior college, division. I guess it was NEI at the time, but Division III, then Division II and four different schools in Division I. I got to Michigan and I had to change how I led. I got myself into a predicament where I owed West Virginia a lot of money because of a part of my contract. And so, I had to pay them back. So, I couldn't afford to get fired. And my back was to the wall, and I had to find new ways.

And I started to embrace leadership, a guy named Jeff Jansen with as a [00:05:00] leadership coach and Dave Brandon was my athletic director at the time at Michigan, both of them had me think about leadership. And I began to study it more. And my assistant coaches as well, Tim, they encouraged me to hurry up the process.

And the only, the only way we would, we could hurry up the process of winning would be intentional about teaching culture, showing what leadership looks like and not worried about the next recruit or the next play, but intangible things off the court. So, I think there's, everybody's been involved in this thing virtually a lot of people have touched my life. Okay. But I did make a dramatic change in 2010 of how I led.

Tim Spiker: You know, I don't think very many people would look at your life and career coach and see all the success that you had, all the things that you've done, all the awards that you've won, all the games that you've won and think at that stage in your life, because you [00:06:00] mentioned you've coached at every level that exists.

And yet what you're saying is, further along towards the back end of your career, you made a meaningful shift. That's a pretty amazing story that not a lot of leaders have. Most of that usually comes earlier. You were still open at a later stage in your life, I guess, is my point. How do you stay open to learning like that? Talk about that a little bit.

John Beilein: Yeah. I mean, prosperity can get in the way of your growth, and you think that when I went to Michigan, I thought, well, I'll just keep doing what we're doing. And actually, it happened a little bit. We're after a typical type of first year where we were 10 and 18 my first year, but it was, you know, a bunch of freshmen out there trying to figure it out.

Michigan had graduated five starters from the senior class. So we were starting over. And trying to do [00:07:00] that, it was hard, but the next year, heck, we went to the NCAA tournament. We went to the second-round sort of said, well, we fixed it and here we go again. And we did it. And then the next year expectations were high, and we did not do well.

And I had to change, and it was more of the necessity being the mother of invention than some drastic thing. Cause I actually thought when I, when I embraced this change of leadership and culture, but intentionally teaching it, it was corny, wasn't going to work. Talking about championships every day with my team wasn't going to work because it was so far away.

And sure enough, we talked it, we lived it and it happened. We're one of the big 10 championship in 2012. We made this fundamental change in 2010. I mean, there was times then what I would be like, we'd talk about champion champions in 2010, and I would say. [00:08:00] There's no way this team's going to win a championship.

And sure enough, there we did, we did it in 2012 and then we're in the final four to 2013. So, it happened because I had to make changes and I think a lot of people get stubborn. They don't want to change their ways. We really embraced the growth mindset at that time. That had never been something we'd embraced as much as we did once we got to Michigan.

Tim Spiker: Well, I want to unpack that shift because I think it's significant. But as you, as you say, looking at your team in 2010, I've talked with folks at coaching before, and there's that old phrase of why not us? Why not now? And I know there's been many coaches that have looked at their team and said, well, I'll tell you why not us? And why not now? I got a, I got a lot of reasons for why not us? Why not now? But talk about, you talked about growth mindset. What, what were some of those, if we just kind of walk through them step by step. What was the difference in terms of how you approached and pursued leadership and culture coming out [00:09:00] of that 2010 season that wasn't necessarily a part of how you thought about leadership, you know, three or four years earlier.

John Beilein: Well, I began, I think coming out of there, we've been, I began delegating more, I, I looked at my weaknesses and said, I have to let others take over in these areas because really some of what people say were my strengths, I guess, was, it's just be really simple. Offense. It was really something that I looked at offense all the time and defense, you know, we incorporated 1-3-1 zone, like back at Richmond.

And it was amazing how well it worked for years, but all of a sudden it wasn't working. And I had to get, I realized that man to man defense was something we had to get better at. I had to get better at. But I got help from three assistants, Bakari Alexander, Val Jordan, and Jeff Meyer, and let them sort of help me [00:10:00] emphasize it more.

We still weren't, didn't become great at it until later on in that decade, but we improved enough that our offense, you know, would even be better. And what I realized was it allowed me to spend more time on offense and we could become better at it because I delegated more defense.

Tim Spiker: This is really interesting, coach, because again, I think that folks might look at the level of success that you have had and not realize that the leadership development process is a journey for you, too.

It's not just a journey for everybody else, but for you and your staff as you're learning and this idea of what are my strengths? How do I lean more into those

strengths and how do I allow other people to do the things that, that I'm not as good at? And especially, you know, we'll get into a little technicalities around basketball and for those that are listening that aren't as familiar with the game, I'll bring you along, but a 1-3-1 is a unique zone scheme that not a lot of people play. [00:11:00]

And that was a hallmark of John Beilein teams. Having that be something that you were known for and had success with, how did you get into the space of, okay, I got to let go of that. It's not going to work here the way it has worked for me at Richmond and all the other levels, West Virginia, but here now with this team, I've got to do something different.

How did you let go of the thing that had been successful for you in the past?

John Beilein: I started to study analytics a little bit more, realizing that one thing you don't want to give up in basketball is threes and layups. And the 1-3-1 zone, if you're not good at it, gives up threes and layups. And started to understand this, and it was so difficult to teach.

There were so many nuances to it. That you can't be good at both that and man to man. So that's where we decided we can't give up threes and layups. [00:12:00] And you also have a team that buys into it a hundred percent too. When we had the West Virginia, when, when we had Patrick and Johannes running those lanes back and forth on the wing the hardest, they would just do it all day for us.

And you had guys at the top, like Tyrone Sanding, Mike Ganzi and Deshaun Butler just taking the ball from people. And also, we didn't have that. That mean guys out of Michigan weren't good players. They didn't have the it either. And so, the combination of things, but it was just looking at the game, studying analytics, saying, this is something we got to change.

And it wasn't like a hard decision. It was one that was let's, let's just do it and use the 1-3-1 as a gimmick. Cause we did pull it out a couple of times after that, but our base defense had to be man to man. And so the only reason Tim, I was able to coach for 45 years, cause I embraced change.

I was a [00:13:00] man to man and two-three zone coach going into Richmond. And then we went to the A-10 and I said, we can't win in this A-10 without doing something different. So, we reinvented the 1-3-1 zone because nobody used it. And for a period of, you know, probably seven or eight years, it was magical how well it worked.

But then things changed, and you go to the Midwest, and we got more guys that can shoot and pass, it seemed like, or people got used to it. And it was okay. Now I got to make another change, a change to the 1-3-1, when I didn't know anything about it. Now, seven or eight years now, I got to change again.

That's really a key to leadership is something's never changed your values and things like that, but you've got to embrace change when you, when you see it's evident.

Tim Spiker: Yeah. Well, let's draw out that dichotomy. Cause I think you make a really good point here. There are things that can change, need to change as I pay attention to things like analytics and as we grow and [00:14:00] learn more or look at our personnel, but you also mentioned the things.

That can't change that won't change that you want to stay the same. And you mentioned the word values. Talk about some of the things that for you as a coach, you would say, you know what, no matter the other things we're doing, we're not changing this set of things. What's in that set.

John Beilein: Oh man. Well, it's, it's the core values that give my assistant coaches credit here. We all sat down and said, who are you? Co she, and this is what I talk about. Now you've got to get a PH in me. That's Brian Townsend, our Director of Basketball, talks about this when I was at Michigan. You get a Ph in me, I mean, know yourself before you can go out and coach. And one of the things that had become like a staple of all our teams and our coaching staff was integrity.

And this is something you cannot, you just can't go up and down with your integrity. It had to be an everyday thing. So well, integrity, sir, it would mean, okay, well, you [00:15:00] mean you got to tell the truth? No, it means that you have to do everything honestly, touch every line in sprints. Prepare the same way every day for every team, every practice.

You tell your team it's going to be a two-hour practice. You can't go two and a half hours on that day. Those are the type of things. They know, hey, we were always early for practice. You know, that's integrity. Once you set that, say, well, I'm going to do that. Those values are important. So that was, that's like always was the most important, but other ones that came up along that way, where we were going to be unified, we're going to be the team, the team, the team in Michigan.

We were going to have great passion was another value. We were going to love Michigan, love basketball, love each other. We were going to work really hard. People say we're going to outwork people. You're not outworking people. Everybody works hard. So, if you don't work hard, [00:16:00] you're going to fail. So that's like, keep up with people.

You're never going to outwork them. Everybody works hard. That is any good in basketball. And then we are going to have an attitude of gratitude, appreciation. So those five core values of unity, passion, appreciation, integrity and diligence, working hard. We're going to be our five core values. We're going to teach it to our team daily, intentionally teach it daily.

Instead of for years, Tim, I'd lived it through osmosis. Our teams were like that. I recruited kids that had those values, but we never spoke about it. This time you're intentional about. Recruiting people who would embrace it, right. And live in that, that life, but teaching it.

Tim Spiker: So, you're saying, well, if I'm hearing you correctly, that from a value standpoint, there wasn't a big shift except for you decided that you were going to be [00:17:00] overt and consistent in talking about it and being in dialogue about it with your team. Am I hearing that correctly?

John Beilein: Yes. Again, our back was up to the wall, new athletic director, Dave Brandon. We had only been to the tournament once, and we had five freshmen coming in to play. We had no seniors on the team in 2010 and 11, and there's no way we were gonna just go win that year if we didn't do something different, because it would be three out of four years.

And it looked bad. And all of a sudden, we made this fundamental change. And it's funny because we were one in six in that year where we turned around, we were one in six in the Big 10. When we went up to Michigan state and won in a game, we were probably the decided underdog by 20 or 30 points. We went up in won.

Tim Spiker: You know, coach, you're reminding me of a story of something that I encountered earlier in my career. I'm sitting across the table from a junior executive in organization who has a [00:18:00] lot of loyal followers in, in the company. And we're talking about the need to intentionally drive the culture of the organization.

And I remember him saying to me, it'll just happen. Effectively, we don't need to talk about it. We just, yeah, we need to live it out, but it'll, it'll just happen.

And I remember thinking at the time, what a missed opportunity. No, we need to articulate, obviously we need to set the example. I can't be violating the principle myself, but we have to take responsibility for the culture of this organization, which means we've got to talk about these things.

And, and your story is screaming that idea to me as, as you unpack it here.

John Beilein: Well, it's so and today with the transfer portal in college basketball's example, but also in culture. Where people will change jobs so quickly, sometimes not for the right reason. I say, people will leave your team if it's just a team.

[00:19:00] I think people are more hesitant to leave a team if it's their family and you got to create that culture of love, use the word love, hug it out, man, just get to know, build relationships, relationships, relationships with your team, your managers, your janitors, your staff. They'll have to work harder for you, do more for the team, but also not be as apt to go somewhere because they're happy.

You see this so many times people are leaving programs, and they think it's for the money. No, it's a culture. that was there that didn't scream, I love this place. It was like, yeah, I'm a basketball player there. And that's, that's what's so important. So yes, being intentional about it is, I think it's even more important now than it's ever been in, as far as leadership.

Tim Spiker: Well, you [00:20:00] mentioned the word relationships, relationships, relationships. And I know that you have had a mantra around the relationship between rules and how the quality of that relationship is. And you have a little mantra around that. Can you talk about that a little bit? Because I think, you know, the things we're talking about here, we can talk about college basketball, but they also apply in life, in regular adult life with other adults and organizations. So, so unpack that for us a little bit, if you could.

John Beilein: This is, this is actually happened back in West Virginia and thankful. I think through luck, some things happened at West Virginia that made us good, but we did have the culture going in the right direction. But when I first got there, we made all these rules. It was a bit of a mess.

Gale Catlett, great coach at West Virginia had left the year before. The team, you know, inherited a culture where guys were flunking out all over the place. It was not good. [00:21:00] And I went out way recruiting and fundraising for the university right away. And I made these bunch of rules, you know, we're all

attending class. We're all early for everything. We never miss a study. All these things. And Jeff Neubauer called me and said, he was my top assistant at the time. He said coach, nobody's following any rules. Nobody's going to class. They're not answering phone calls. They're not doing any of these rules. And he said it, or I said it, but we followed it after that, rule without relationships equals rebellion.

And it was like, I knew virtually nobody on the team. We had just been introduced. It was two or three days later. I didn't know hardly anybody. And yet I'd say, you got to do this, this, this, or you're in trouble. And I realized I had to come back in. I had to say, doesn't make a difference about recruiting.

The most important people I have to recruit right now are the guys on my own [00:22:00] team. And it doesn't make a difference if we raise money for the university. This team needs the coaching staff to build relationships. So, that became a quote that we used after that. And really every, every freshman you would get when you have all these rules that maybe they've never had to be 10 minutes early for everything.

Maybe they've never had to present themselves in such a way or go to study office and all of a sudden you're making them do this. You better have a good relationship with those incoming student athletes, or you're going to lose them. They're going to rebel.

Tim Spiker: Yeah. So, what does it look like from a, from not only your staff's position as assistants, but for you as the head coach building relationships with, you know, 18 to 23 year olds, what, what does that process just to, cause I can just hear some people saying, okay, that sounds great. But in your, what did that actually look like to build those relationships?

John Beilein: We [00:23:00] became using the SMAC objectives that I learned from Dave Brandon again, find things that were specific, were measurable, were achievable and compatible with our, that was the SMAC, S M A C, with our team. And what we did is we put up charts.

Someone has to have breakfast or lunch or dinner with each player this month and not talk basketball. We need to have coach to coach interactions, whether it's a, you know, a white elephant type of Christmas party, anything that we can have to have staff meetings, family things where we can build a culture within ourselves.

But there's actually a checklist up on the board that we had to check off things. And that's specific things we were doing, have lunch, but it was also measurable. Well, who did [00:24:00] it? And it was so elementary to do this, but it worked that once we started checking these lists off, that our relationships with players changed.

The whole coaching staff had different guys they had to build with and report back to me, but then I had to do it or they, they would say, hey coach, you need to have breakfast with someone. And so that's what you do. I'd go out and have the breakfast with someone, visit their apartments. Kathleen and I visited them and their apartments just to like, look around and talk.

I had it in my mind to always go out on the court and try to talk with different people about non basketball before practice. But that was something that it was intentional by me. So, that's how it all happened. Simple daily, don't walk by anybody, you know, without saying something. I think there's a thing for the Ritz Carlton, I think within 20 feet [00:25:00] smile, if you're in 10 feet, say good morning or good afternoon or something. That's easy to do, but it changes things.

Tim Spiker: Tell me a little bit about, you know, the inner workings of your perspectives and beliefs. And the reason I want to touch on this is because I'm just imagining a lot of leaders listening who are thinking a little bit like here are all the boxes I have to check to have relationships.

But when I hear your story and, and know a little bit about your story, even before we got a chance to visit today, what I know is that there's a sincerity underneath the plans. So, what is it about how you think about the young men that you got to coach that allowed you to care enough because we know that the college athletics is a major business and we know that coaches are making a pretty serious living doing it.

And I think there are many coaches out there, just like there are many business leaders. Who are utilizing the people who report to them in order to achieve things from finances to [00:26:00] other things. And in some cases, there's not a lot of relationship there. So, you're talking about, you know, how do we spend time? How do I have meals with folks and how do we be in their space and their dorm room? And how do I make sure I'm communicating with people?

But my suspicion is that this is more than a check the box activity for you. So, what is it about your belief system? That has you kind of wanting to connect with these young men.

John Beilein: I would think back, Tim, many times about where some of the teams that I had played on or coached that had tremendous success, going back, what made those teams successful. And then once you define those things that happened, you end up saying, okay, let's do that because it worked. It worked before. I have a JV basketball coach named Ed Wappen, bless his heart, Ed Wappen, who he taught me history also, [00:27:00] but he also know I love sports.

We both loved the St. Louis Cardinals and besides coaching me, and he knew I loved history and he would talk to me about these things all the time and my family. I saw him in mass every Sunday, he was like a great inspiration to me to be like him. But I thought about, I want to play so hard for this guy.

Because we have a relationship off the court. And so, things like that drove me to, all right, I'm going to do it just like that. And so, I think I was blessed with some intangibles there or a family, you know, I'm one of nine children and you better have relationships in order to be the eighth of nine kids.

And so, I really was born into a situation where it was important to do that. And my mother and father, how they cared about other [00:28:00] people. I think back about the times we had people living in our house. I didn't know why, but I thought it was normal that somebody would take somebody in for a couple months.

Now we had nine kids. My mother was taking somebody in, not for money, because there was problems in someone else's house and they needed a place to live. Who does that? But you, you sort of grow up around that environment. And that's what sort of got me want to be a coach, but then realize coaching how you could affect people the rest of your life.

You don't always remember every player. You know, every player remembers everything. I'm coaching against Wisconsin. We're both in the top 10. It's a home game in like 2017 or 18. I have one of my players, Scott Geist, called me and said, hey coach, A few players from our JV team 40 years ago, want to come to your game this weekend.

I said, well, do you need tickets? He said, no, we already got them. So, I said, fine, let's meet afterwards. [00:29:00] I'll buy you all dinner. I didn't know that 13 of the 14 young men from that team in 1978 was going to come to the game. Wow. And as we talked, and I started to apologize to them about how I was tough on them.

We had six feet of snow one time, Tim. And I had, we had practice and I said, find a snowmobile, get a neighbor's snowmobile, but you better be here. They stopped me and said, coach, you changed our lives. Don't apologize for anything because you made us who we are today. That's when you start saying, oh, I get this, this is bigger than just basketball. And then when you coach. With this is bigger than basketball, you naturally do some of the relationship things we're talking about.

Tim Spiker: I think I'm going to share that story with my kids. And we're just going to make a phrase in our house that when it's time to figure it out, I'm just going to say, find a snowmobile, figure it out. Like that's, that's, that's your job.

One of the things coach, that I've admired about you and even had a up close [00:30:00] interaction with at one point is you mentioned appreciation and gratitude earlier, and there are people that achieve the things that you have achieved that. I think there's a great temptation to lose track of the things that you've accomplished or lose track of the people along the way who've helped out.

I remember vividly, I was in Albuquerque when you were in the sweet 16 and playing to go to the final four. And I remember bumping into you outside the hotel you were, I don't know where you were coming back from, but it was, it was day of, we played Louisville to go to the final four. And I remember it was a 30 second conversation that you and I had, but I remember walking away from it, just being so, so impacted by here's this guy that's on the doorstep of this great accomplishment.

And the number one thing you expressed in those 30 seconds, as we chatted was Gratitude. Was gratitude for the opportunity, gratitude for being in the position. And, you know, this is, you know, this is probably five hours or [00:31:00] so before the game at the hotel. Where does, where does that perspective on gratitude and appreciation, where does that come from for you?

John Beilein: Oh, I think it comes from my family, from my mother and father. When you have parents that grow up in the Depression, in World War II, and you have nine brothers and sisters, eight brothers and sisters rather, you just, that was an everyday of how, we looked at life. It was amazing. It might be a baloney sandwich.

How about a bean sandwich? Have you ever had a bean sandwich? Just backed beans between bread. I have not. We always knew how lucky we were to have that bean sandwich because there used to be this thing where bums, I call them

bums, hobos would travel on the road in front of us. And they knew my mother, they left some sign out front that my mother would give them a sandwich if they [00:32:00] stopped at the door, there were some secret thing and they would stop and my mother, I remember my mother giving them bean sandwiches and they were so grateful for a bean sandwich, but it was more bologna and bologna pickle sandwiches that we lived off of.

And it was like, we had great gratitude for that because that's the way my mother and father were. My mother grew up in one of 13 children in the depression. So as a result, it's like something that just, maybe it was in our DNA too. I mean, I'm a believer in that. That's that stuff is passed on in DNA from generation to generation.

And so, it's happened there. And then once Tim, in my years of becoming a coach, how do you become a better coach, better lead? You start reading about it and you see the effects of gratitude and how it affects others but affects those who are giving [00:33:00] gratitude. It changes everything, how much better they feel.

There's all kinds of study on this. Kim Cameron, one of the most amazing teachers of leadership at Michigan, does talks and books on leadership, talking about the positive effects of gratitude when you give it to others. So, once you start being a leader, you start reading about it. You said, that's what my parents were talking about. There were just no studies about that. That was just how they felt.

Tim Spiker: So, it was one of your, one of your five values. How did you pull young men further along into the space of gratitude? Cause that's really a, you know, that's an inner deal. That's how do I look at others? How do I look at situations? How do I look at myself?

How do you develop that? How do you work on that with inside you know, another person that you're leading?

John Beilein: Well, I think we were recruiting people. So, I think anybody in the business world that's recruiting people. I mean, that's sometimes can be seen in an interview. You know, when people talk about that.

So [00:34:00] once you get people who come from that type of culture, where they're appreciative of the opportunity to go to Michigan, to go to West Virginia, Richmond, all those great canisius, all the great places I coached at,

it's already there for them and then they see the coaches live it, but you mentioned to it also, you know, about how they are.

You speak about that in the beginning. And give examples of what gratitude has done to your life. And it can do that to theirs too. You know, just go talk to your roommate who's got \$30,000 worth of loans every year, does not have, you know, any cost of attendance, money, or a free scholarship and see what, how he thinks about it and give examples.

And that's something that through different ways, we would find different ways to teach that. And it would be of our five values. We were trying to teach one almost every day. So, gratitude would come up weekly.

Tim Spiker: [00:35:00] Yeah. You know, one of the things I'm noticing as a parallel between you and coach Keady, who I had the privilege of playing for, is that we always had an emphasis of the day before we started practice.

We wheel the whiteboard out on the court and the emphasis of the day. And once in a while, the emphasis of the day was about basketball, but not very often. And this idea of how do we leverage things like athletics to teach life lessons to young men that are trying to figure out their way in the world and trying to understand, you know, what's true and what's not and, and integrating that is really, it's really encouraging to hear.

John Beilein: I mean, I think it's the obvious thing that those are put in a leadership position. This is Dave Brandon quote again, leadership is not a position, it's a lifestyle. And if leaders do not understand. This is not something there's not born leaders. There is not. You throw some money around at give them raises or do so.

That's not [00:36:00] leadership. You have to work at it and study it and really becoming understanding what happens. It's like a great mathematician saying, okay, I've done all the math I can do. I don't need to do anymore. They're always trying to do more. And it's the same thing when you're into this position, you can't just say, all right, here I go.

I hope I got what it takes. You need to study it and become better at it. Talk with other people. Don't be the smartest person in the room that says, I got this. You have to be vulnerable here. Vulnerability, a strength of leaders, an absolute strength to go outside yourself and try to study this, this very important concept more, to be effective.

Tim Spiker: I'm blessed to know a number of people in and around the college basketball world. And I've got to say, as we wrap up this episode, what a quality human being John Beilein is. We are [00:37:00] so blessed that we got to visit with him and he's just such a winsome guy. It is not surprising to me that over time he won game after game and had players who were willing to run through a wall for him because you just heard over and over again, this idea of people and relationships and the way that he sees people.

And I'll be honest, there's a lot of people in that space today in that profession that are more or less using players to achieve an outcome. And while that sounds really harsh, when you say it about a college athlete, it's not that different than what we're tempted to do in business. We're tempted to use people in order to get things done such that we can be compensated and have a good life for ourselves and for our families.

And if we take the edge off of that idea a little bit, in terms of like, I'm plotting in the morning when I wake up, but I'm plotting to use somebody. [00:38:00] I think there's probably not a lot of people, not, not so, so many people that are doing that. Some are, but, but mostly people are just trying to do what they need to do every day.

But I think that's, that's part of the lesson here is if we're not proactively for people, then probably we're leaning towards that category of using them. And John just has a completely different perspective and I think it shows in the quality of relationships and I think over the years, over and over again, that has translated into wins on the court for those investments that he made.

So what a privilege and pleasure it is to get to visit with him. Given that, as I, as I wrap up here, there's two other things that I want to make a point about. One has to do with. The successful things from the past, and when do we need to let go of them? You heard John talk about various schemes, especially defensively and how he had success with [00:39:00] a unique defense, the 1-3-1 zone, and how he perfected that and worked at it, but eventually got to a spot where he had to let go of it.

And it became a sidelight, a gimmick, as he put it to use once in a while. Even though it had served him so well in the past. And it just got me thinking, what are the things that I lean into as a leader? What are the things that I push my team towards and myself towards in order to repeat success of the past that maybe, I need to think about letting go of that. I need to be not so married to what are the strategies? What are those things that I might've even said were

tried and true for how I show up and think about as a leader that, that I need to now let go of.

One of the things I think of for our own company at the Aperio is how we do decision making. You know, we've had the opportunity to [00:40:00] grow the team and that's been a great blessing and in that regard, we're in a new time. And so, kind of the speed and manner in which we make decisions has served us really well in the past. And of course, we never want to be the, the pokey little puppy on, on making decisions.

We want to have speed, but the way that we involve other team members, I'm thinking of some things just this week. Where, you know, my, my gut level reaction led to a quick and clear decision. And while I don't think the decision will change in the future, that kind of methodology of pulling the trigger on things is probably something that has served us well in the past, but I need to let go of a little bit because the circumstances are different now.

Well, we've got other teammates that we need to consider or, you know, from, from John's perspective, people were adjusting to that 1-3-1. And so, he needed to look at something else. And so how do we, how do we look for and find the things that have been successful in the past, [00:41:00] but that we are too tied to, too married to right now and we need to be open. What are those things?

And so I'm so appreciate that John was willing to let go of something that he was well known for, frankly, and consider a better way that would be better for his team in that moment and moving forward. So. What are those things for you?

I also am really struck and kind of this leans back a little bit to some of the relational things I was saying a few, a few moments ago, but the idea of, of how John laid out the staff and what does it mean to actually build relationships for them, it was, we're going to go to meals with folks. We're going to spend time with them in their environments. There's, there's nothing about a college basketball coach's job description that says, you must do these kinds of things. But John concluded that rules without relationship equals rebellion. And so, he [00:42:00] wasn't going to say, we're going to have no rules.

Then he said, we need to up the relationship part of the equation. And that means a tangible investment in relationships. And here's what that is going to look like. We're going to get to know our players. And we're going to hold one another accountable to doing that. What I love about all of that is that not only that it's so intentional, but that there is a plan to it.

It's not just a generalized statement of we need to build better relationships with our players. No, it wasn't. It wasn't just that. It's like, here's how we're going to do that. And we're going to check in with each other and we're going to hold each other accountable. And so there was a laid-out plan. So that leads me to the question I want to leave you with today.

And that is this. As a leader, do you have a plan for building better and better relationships? With the people [00:43:00] on your team. This is Tim Spiker reminding you to be worth* following and to follow us wherever you receive your podcasts. If you've heard something valuable today, please share our podcast with your colleagues, friends, and family.

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I want to know what's going through your head. When you're in the national championship and Spike Albrecht is going crazy of all people, I mean, that is one of the most unbelievable halves of basketball ever. And here comes, I think he scored 17 points. That was something crazy. Like as a coach, you've watched your whole season. You know what Spike has done and not done. You know what he can't, what's going through your mind as you're watching that.

John Beilein: You know, when Coach Pitino called timeout after one of them, I [00:44:00] looked at my bench and I saw Esau Okune, a walk on, who, I was playing Spike in front of him, because Spike had just earned it.

And I looked, and he had this smile on his face. And he said, he's saying like, this is one of the greatest things I've ever seen or something. It was something that that effect, but I'm watching the game so much, I'm in amazement, but I can't like show that as much, but I don't know if you, if you heard me, I went in at halftime and we had been up like 10 or 12.

Luke Hancock, another under recruited kid, had hit three or four threes for Louisville, and we were up by a couple after being up by 12 or 13 or whatever we were up. And Tracy Wilson said to me, what happened to your lead? I said, are you watching this game? I said, this is an amazing sequence of events that Luke Hancock [00:45:00] and Spike Albrecht are both the heroes of this game when they couldn't even get a Division I scholarship offer.

And that's, that's how I answered her question because it was just, there's times, and we had a guy, Johnny Curran, who played for us as a walk on at West Virginia. And he had a shot the end of the first half in front of his parents and is the workers for his parents to end the half at Syracuse. I went into the locker

room, I said, John, if I never coach again in my day, but in my life, this is the way I would like to have it ended. It was halftime. You hitting that shot made me so happy that this is a great way to end coaching, but I got to coach the second half. So, we're going to do this, but there's moments where you just want to stop and say, that's it. When he had his last three, they called timeout, and it all ends right now. Cause it's okay. It's, it's amazing.

Tim Spiker: Oh, that's great. Well, speaking on behalf of all walk [00:46:00] ons for all of time, I will say it is so fun to play for coaches who understand that we're down there at the end of the bench, hoping to..

John Beilein: This is one of the biggest problems right now.

And I spoke about this in the big 10 network now. Coaches, there's this, it matters in your index, how much you beat people by. So, you could be up by 25 with three minutes to go. And if you go in and your walk-ons do it many times, they do, blow that lead down to 15, it affects your chances in your seating.

And I said, this is the, those are some of the happiest moments for starters, for teams. Who will ever forget Steve Izzo's layup for, for Michigan State a couple of weeks ago. That is what makes teams great, the culture of a team. And that's, what I don't like about the index. You should be able to, up 25, four minutes ago, you should be able to unload the bench and let those guys [00:47:00] play.