



**Don Yaeger**

Bill, thank you for joining us.

**Bill George**

It's a privilege, Don, good to be back with you. Thank you for having me.

**Don Yaeger**

I've learned so much from you over the years and looking forward to more even today. You know, Bill as I looked at it, and I read about your high school athletic career I saw where you played football, basketball, tennis, right? We live in a world today where so many people, parents, and even coaches are telling children specialize, pick a sport, 10,000 hours, right? Do you think it was to your advantage that you played multiple sports had different teams, different teammates, that you learned on different fields?

**Bill George**

No doubt about it Don. I can't remember a day in four years of high school that I wasn't playing a sport. I mean, when we have done with football, we were getting ready for basketball. And honestly, when basketball season was over, we were out shoveling off the tennis court so we could get out and play tennis and I was hitting against the wall in the gym, a brick wall to get my strokes back. But my relationships were very close to the other people on the team. And I was not a great athlete. But I learned how to win how to lose and how to get better. I remember in ninth grade football getting run over in a drill. I mean, I weighed 110 pounds, and my father suggested I should go out for manager. I want to I wanted to be with the guys. So, I did. And it took me a long time to finally make the starting lineup in my senior year. But it was good growth experience to learn that you're not very good at something. School came so easy for me that I didn't have to work very hard. But in sports, I really had to work hard to do anything even to stay on the team.

**Don Yaeger**

I loved the way you put it right. You had to learn how to win. You had to learn how to lose. We understand that. But then you said you had to learn how to get better. And I think that's sometimes a missed discussion point in why sports can be a value to a young person.

**Bill George**

Yeah. I think particularly when you're not great, you have to work at it really hard. I remember sitting in the gym when it was snow and ice on our courts and hitting the ball for hours against the wall, and hours and hours, you know, but I just had to work at it. But it paid off in the end.

**Don Yaeger**

Yeah. And after high school, you went to Georgia Tech, and you joined the tennis team. Two questions. Why Georgia Tech, other than the fact that there was no snow? And why tennis?

**Bill George**

Well, I wanted to go to a great engineering school, and I visit a lot of them. I really liked the people at Georgia Tech. And in some ways, I wanted a fresh start for myself. And so, I went 800 miles away from home. I meet a whole group of new people, and I had a great experience and I was a walk-on in tennis, but it was fun. I enjoyed it a lot. We used to take a spring tour to Florida every year during our spring break and that was great fun. The best I did— I just played two years because I get so involved in activities. I could see myself not going too much further— but I played number six singles and have to the semifinals of the SEC, which is a very competitive conference. So, it's not a great accomplishment, but it was a good experience.

**Don Yaeger**

Yeah, and for those who might be listening, who are thinking: *Georgia Tech SEC?* Georgia Tech did leave the SEC to go to the ACC a number of years later. And when one of those who work with us on the research team saw that you played the SEC and Georgia Tech, they were like, there must be a mistake. So, I thought that might be a good point of clarity. One thing that really struck me about your time in those couple of years at Georgia Tech is that you experienced the coaching change, right? You had one coach the first year and then another coach, the second year first coach was Earl Bortell, and he left and was succeeded by Jack Rogers, how did you and the team adapt to that change? And what did you learn watching two different coaching styles as the young person that might one day apply to what you would ultimately experience.

**Bill George**

Well, Earl Bortell is a teacher and was neither a great tennis player and a great coach. Jack Rogers ran the whole Tennis Center in Atlanta. He trained a lot of great people coming up. He was a real coach. He was a professional coach. I learned a lot from him. He was very challenging about tennis. But he was good. He was very, very thoughtful and a very good coach. And when I came there, they were only giving out a couple scholarships to tennis athletes, then the rest went to basketball and football. And he started giving out more, but he really built some great teams. And over the years, they did really well, far better than I could have ever done.

**Don Yaeger**

So, it was intriguing to you. Right? I would guess to go from someone who was a good thought person and a good teacher to someone who had specialty skills.

**Bill George**

Yeah, my son's a doctor. And if you want to be a great doctor or you want to become a great cello player, or you want to become a great athlete, you need to learn that the best— great soccer players, great athletes have great coaches. And I think there are very few exceptions of just people that are self-made. They have coaches that help them along the way or point out their weaknesses that are tough on them. They're challenging. The good psychology coaches as well, and Jack Rogers was that person, he developed a lot of great tennis players. He gave a lot of experience and I think you have to do that. But I think the same is true in life too. If you want to be a great leader, having great mentors is a tremendous advantage.

**Don Yaeger**

In that sense, Jack Rogers was able to not just work on your stroke but your mind and to help you get your mind right.

**Bill George**

You know, tennis is a mind game, you get in the third set and you're struggling, and you have to dig down and pull it out. I think a lot of sports is like that in a soccer game. We've been running for 90 minutes, you have 10 minutes of extra time or five minutes extra time. You better give it all you have. your team's going to lose. We have to have a coach that said finish strong and anything in life. If you want, I tell CEOs towards the end of their tenures finish strong, give it everything you have – go for it. And I think the same is true in sports. And you'll find I think the winners are the ones not necessarily the greater natural ability, but the ones that have that tenacity and that commitment, that willingness to work really hard, but also know how to win in the end.

**Don Yaeger**

Then you enter the corporate world, but your interest in athletics was always there. I know that later, you would actually become a coach, which is something I'm excited to ask you about here. When you were EVP at Honeywell, and even CEO of Medtronic, you invested yourself in coaching youth soccer, and a part of it was because of your own sons, but you spent 12 years throwing yourself into coaching young people. I saw that some of the teams that coached was made up of children from the inner city. They had been used to losing but by the time the growth they were experiencing was complete, you had several clubs finished the final eight nationally in the UAE teams, right? What would you credit for the ability to turn a team around like that?

**Bill George**

Well, I got into coaching Don because my sons were playing, and the coaching was so bad that I couldn't stand it. So, I said, *Look, I'll volunteer*. I didn't know anything about soccer.

**Don Yaeger**

Had you ever played soccer?

**Bill George**

I never played soccer in my life. I went back and found some letters had written my mother from camp about much I enjoyed soccer, but we had no soccer at our school. So how do you coach a sport you never played? This is really hard. And I was going back to reviewing soccer tapes and the famous Dutch coach will cover and seeing drills for the kids and how to teach him how to play soccer and it was great fun, but we were losing so badly. We go out in the suburbs and get kicked. Eventually we got better. We got better organized and then all of a sudden, we started winning and players from around the city. Can we join your team? I said sure. And then we had some from the suburbs. Yes! Really you want to join us. A top player like, yeah, we'd lived in Belgium and we took our teams early on to Russia, the first youth team ever to go to Russia. And my younger son was 13. And went to the Netherlands and Russia. They learn what real soccer was like, I tell you. The next year, we took him to Sweden to a big tournament over there, and Stockholm. And that was a great experience for the kids and for all of us. We did these exchanges for USA CUP with teams from Russia and Sweden and Mexico and Sweden and Mexico and a number of countries. I loved it. I love the experience. I love helping young men and young boys become men. And many of them are going through divorces, you know, a lot of pain. You never can replace someone's father, but you have to be there for him. And some of them had anger management problems, and they had to learn a thing or two. That was a great experience. I confess that when they got to under 16, I realized I'd gone to the limit of my ability to take these kids and a lot of had potential to play college soccer. So, I brought in a college coach, a guy named Tom Angstrom, who was fantastic. Not only a great coach, a great psychologist, in fact, everyone on our team either played D1 or D3 soccer. The team went to the Final Fours d3 for amateurs, but number of them played for the best teams in the country. Now at Duke and Indiana and schools like that. Every single one of them said Tom Angstrom was a far better coach than they had in college, really. And he was tough. I'll tell you we got to the regional championships and we thought we had a shot at it. We got knocked out the year before we've won the state championship. He had heard from the other guys that one of our top players was smoking pot and who stopped score and he said you're off the team. You're not playing you go sit over there in the bench. You can watch the game if you want. But you're out. He was very strong and that particular tournament we wanted to come to the finals in our hometown final forum we lost in the championship game. I think we lost ourselves in semis. But to learn about Life and kids have to learn how to lose. And I think one of the drawbacks and women had in my era is they never had a chance to play competitive sports, team sports, they might play individual sports, but they didn't play team sports. And they always had to win. And you have to learn how to lose. You never saw a good athlete that didn't learn more from losing than they did from winning. And you go back and recreate that experience and say, what could I have done better? And what could we have a team done better? And I think that's a great learning for life, about how to compete, how to give it your all, how to lose how to pick yourself up and come back the next day and when the game

**Don Yaeger**

You know, what really struck me is that you as a leader and realize you had reached your upper limit based upon what you knew. So, you knew it was time to hand the reins over if this team was going to progress. Ego could have kept you there.

**Bill George**

Right? Yeah, but the team when they gotten that far became his assistant. Oh, it was good. Why not? You know, we had a lot of fun. And then we took our team at 18. We went to France for a tournament. And that was a great experience, too. It is just good for these kids. Because let's face it, it is the game in Europe. So, having gone to all these European countries, they saw how important it was. And we even had a couple of Swedish kids come over and play for us one year, just so they could live with teams and learn how the game should be played.

### **Don Yaeger**

You wrote and shared a piece with me. And I've already expressed to you how much I learned just reading it. All I know about leadership. I learned from soccer, which is fun now, especially that I know you didn't play it, literally picked it up and bought videotapes, you could try to learn what other coaches did. And it's loaded with leadership advice, either one or two of those nuggets that you recall, or that you can think of the traits, the 16 traits that you can share here with our listeners that stood out things you learned in that coaching experience.

### **Bill George**

When our kids were 8, 9,10 I was a terrible coach. I was yelling at the kids the whole time do this that pass that Johnny do this from the sidelines. And I learned later, the best coaches, they're challenging players during practice, they're giving them advice or pulling them aside. But in the game, you have to let them play the game. You have to let them work together as a team. And the key is getting the right player in the right position where they can use their best abilities what I call their sweet spot. You may have someone who is a left fullback and you don't want to put that person up a striker you may have a person score, you don't put them on defense or even certainly on goal. So, you have to find the right position but then you get the people to play together. And in soccer, if you have a star that wants to keep the ball himself, you're going to lose every single time. You've have to find the open person you have to run to space. It is an incredible role model. I think same is true of basketball same as to a football, the same lessons apply. But then once the game starts, well, I have to play the game. You can talk to him at halftime, you can make a couple of substitution changes. But basically, you have to let the players play the game. I learned that at Medtronic, too, because I came into Medtronic with a lot of ideas and want to make a lot of changes. And we did and improve the team, we had to get better talent. But we were not playing the team are constantly each other's throats and we had to bring them together as a team do some off site, that same role model applied beautifully to business. And then I remember my fifth anniversary of Medtronic, they actually emulated a soccer field and they told me to stay on the sidelines to about the details, let them play the game, which was a good lesson for me. I think I'd been there five years at that time.

### **Don Yaeger**

Wow, that is something that's fun that they obviously knew that that's where you learned that lesson too, which is awesome. So, I will share I had a chance to come study under you at Harvard and learn in your class there and over the years. I read leadership books all the time. The best book I've ever read on leadership is your book True North. And even today, when I do executive coaching, it's the first book I send to my clients. How did your sporting experience influence the lessons you taught in that book about principle-based leadership?

**Bill George**

Well done. I learned that the key to business leadership, I don't claim to know a lot about political leadership. But I've studied and known literally hundreds of business leaders and interviewed I think, total 172 people for True North. And remember, my colleagues at Harvard, who are all pure academic said, they'll go out and find the traits and characteristics for successful leaders. And I remember talking to a guy named Dick Kovacevich, Dick had a Wells Fargo Bank and the good days he was together build it before they have into trouble under a successor. But I said so dick, tell me what are the characters that you made you so successful, most successful commercial bank in the United States? He said, Bill, I don't want to talk about that. Let me tell you where I learned leadership. I didn't learn leadership at Stanford Business School. I learned leadership on the athletic field. And he said I played three sports and I did everything I could. I was a very good athlete, but I really learned leadership right there. And I learned about customer service in the corner grocery store. He said I learned it I was like, excellent quarterback. If you have 11 quarterbacks on the team, you will lose every game. You need to have the best person, the best position, the best right tackle, the best tight end, and the best linebacker. So, he said, that's the role model. I took the Wells Fargo model, when building the best team, he said every person who works for me has to be better than I am.

**Don Yaeger**

Wow. Well, I will be picking your brain on that before it's over. That's for sure. You mentioned Tom Angstrom. But was there a coach or a teammate who was a great influence on your sports journey when you were participating in sports and not coaching necessarily?

**Bill George**

I go all the way back to high school. We had a basketball coach called Frank Kooten. I wanted to go to basketball, and I practice in practice, but I was never great. I should have been cut from the team. But he kept me on the team that I work so hard. And I really learned a lot about life and about hard work, even if you're not getting to play every game. And he taught me a great deal about that. And even I was on the bench much of the time. But I remember my senior year, I was so proud because I got what's called the varsity club award for combined athletics and academics. And I did have a teammate who was a far better athlete than I was it was just pointed out to get it. And I remember he stood up there and he said, I never saw a kid work harder in anything than Bill George did in sports. And that was a great compliment. And I tried to take that all through my life when I went to Harvard Business School and had to learn how to teach which I didn't know anything about teaching. I knew nothing about writing. I started writing a book. It is about hard work and applying yourself to get something done to achieve a goal. And I think sports is no different. That's why a lot of great athletes become great leaders. I think it's the opposite. Just be clear, it's the opposite of the 1980s and 90s role model of the dominant leader, the all-powerful person that's directing people, you do this, you do that. That's why I use that soccer analogy. It's not about that. And I think being a great coach. And even more true today, in 2020, the best leaders are great coaches, they know how to coach people, they know how to say Don, you're not giving us your best right now, I know you can do better, you have a lot more ability, you're going to have to give us your best, we'd need a lot more from you. That's okay, your time you got to be tough, and they can say, hey, you did a great job on that, go for it, or step up and take that next level job. So, I think the best leaders today are great coaches of their people. And it's the opposite of the old role model, which is the dominant person

**Don Yaeger**

Command and control.

**Bill George**

Yeah, exactly.

**Don Yaeger**

So you know, the premise of this podcast is that a disproportionate number of Fortune 500 executives were actually engaged in sports and at either the high school or collegiate level and that experience shaped the way they lead the day and you've probably done as much studying of executive experience in the writing of your books as anyone I've ever met. So, I'd love to ask you would you agree that in your study of leadership that sporting experience played a great role with many of those executives, you've had a chance to study?

**Bill George**

Oh, no doubt about it. I see it all the time. And by the way, today, it's not just men but women. This may surprise you. But Indra Nooyi but raised in India went all the way through Indian Madras Christian college, she was a great cricket player. That translated her when she got under the pressure at PepsiCo. It's women and men today that emerge as really great leaders, because they have that competitive spirit. Not the smartest person does well in business. In fact, I think in some ways, if you're too smart, it can be inversely proportionate to leadership success, because you tend to dominate people with your intellect, rather than encouraging them like a good coach would, because you know what it's like. And it's that competitive drive to say, we're going to find a way to get this done. We're just going to dig down. And so many of the people that worked for me over the years were excellent athletes in many of the CEOs I've worked with and coached now that have come along are really excellent athletes too. And I think that you're absolutely right. I think there's a direct correlation. I think it's not well understood. You're one of the few people that really has pursued this Don so that we really look at it for what it is, and it's not about being the very best mostly skies. Maybe Kovacevich was an all American but a guy like Doug Baker's build Ecolab, fantastic guy was a star hockey player, Geoff Martha, the new CEO of Medtronic, captain of the Penn State team. Okay, that was a long time ago. I mean, that was 25 years ago or 28. But Geoff takes that role model today. what it was like to get knocked around to get pushed against the board to pick your hop on the ice and come back. He's told me stories about how they down and he just got the team to dig down and find a way to win. And I think it's like that in business. Athletic experience really helped me a lot.

**Don Yaeger**

So we're going to pivot and we're going to go to the second half of the podcast, which is where I'm going to ask about how some of those sporting lessons specifically from storytelling, if you don't mind, impacted the way you led in your time in the executive world, you did write in that piece about soccer about putting each player in their sweet spot. Is there a story or a time that you can remember in your leadership, we're finding that sweet spot for a person applied, or one of the other lessons applied into some way that you built the teams that you built?

**Bill George**

Well, I must say it apply to my own case at Honeywell, I had the skill set, but I wasn't passionate about the businesses. took me a while to figure that out. My goal is to become CEO of this great global company. I was on that track. But then I realized I really wasn't happy because I wasn't passionate about the business. I got to Medtronic much smaller company and stepped down, you could say, I was in number two role not number one. But there, I really became very passionate about the business, I had to learn the business from the ground up. So, it became my sweet spot. It was a place where it was just right for me. We were very people oriented. Honeywell, for me was all bureaucracy, and I take bureaucracy to many layers. You're not really engaged, in Medtronic, I was deeply engaged with leading doctors all over the world, with all of our engineers and creative people and production lines. So, I got very personally involved saw some 700 procedures. And so, I think it's that hands on experience. See a great coach. If you watch great coaches, they're really engaged. They're not sitting up in the press box done. They're down on the field. They're talking to the players. And they're saying Don, you could have done better than that situation. I'll go sit in the bench for a while and put you back in later. But they're right on top of the game and everything's real Time. It's not like Oh, we got five years it No, no, we're going to win or lose in the next 15 minutes I can tell you. So, who do I have to pull out? I remember I had to go out and recruit a new CFO at Medtronic, the guy named Bob Ryan and he was fantastic. He brought all kinds of skill sets we didn't have I didn't have no one else in the company yet. So, building a team like that bringing a guy like our columnist head of international eventually became my successor. He brought tremendous big business skills from Abbott Labs. We had a vice chairman Glen Nelson, I had promoted from EVP and the vice chairman was just a great thinker and strategist and deal maker and putting these people together sometimes they fought like cats and dogs, but it's okay my job as a coach, let them fight it out. But okay, now we're going to we got a decision everyone's going to get on board. Okay, one them didn't like the decision to acquire this company. Yeah, but we got to get behind it. And you're all going to go out and back it up. 100%. So, I think when the team decides what to do, then you got to be totally united. Frankly, if you can't get on board. About a really important issue on values or on strategy, then you may be better off working somewhere else. And I had a few people that I adore that weren't on board that really didn't want to do business ethically, like we wanted to give up business overseas where people are paying bribes. Not in our company. I don't care if our competitors are either staff side who's on the team and who's not not everyone's cut out to be on this team, you maybe can be great somewhere else, but you're not going to be great here.

**Don Yaeger**

But you found those who had their sweet spot and you...

**Bill George**

Tough calls. And you know, the other lesson you learned from Sports done is there are great athletes that have peaked and seeing when they've peaked and say, Okay, it's time to move on. And we need to give this young person a chance we need to promote this person has got tremendous capabilities, promoted a woman named Chris Johnson had never had a line job in her life. Boy, she was a fantastic leader. She built our most rapidly growing business. But people said Why are you promoting her she's never run anything in her life. She had the potential. She delivered. She was fantastic.

**Don Yaeger**



That's awesome. And as you said in your note, right? It's all about finding and putting them in the right seat. That's awesome. You know, in college you already alluded to this amazing little run for you was in that SEC Tournament, you make it but then you, you know, you literally suffer a loss. It happens in business too, right? You talked about learning how to lose. Is there some lesson in business where you had to learn how to lose in a way that was good for you?

**Bill George**

Well, we were going to do acquisition company called Boston Scientific, and it was the owner control of 40% of the shares that founder, he was a billionaire. And it was a perfect strategic deal, a great financial deal. But some people on our team had some reservations, but I persuaded them all to get behind it really go strong with them, talk to their people. And I spent all like 15 hours negotiating with this guy. Finally, I realize some of my teammates were warning me this, but I was so committed to get this deal done. That it was not going to work. Because his values and the culture he had created are diametrically opposed to Medtronic. And it was going to take a long time because it was a 15 \$17 billion deal was going to take a long time to get their culture around to the Medtronic Mission and values. And I decided it wasn't worth it. So, I walked from, I'd had our board involved, we did three or four meetings with our board. And I just said, it's not the right deal to do, we're not going to do we're going to walk out. And he begged to come back and I said, No, it's over. Then after that, we went out and spent \$13 billion on buying a series of companies over the next year or so year and a half. And it was the best thing ever having to try we diversified. Instead of getting that one field. We diversify in about five other fields. And we really set up the basis for the company this today. That's a \$30 billion company revenue wise, because we had to lose and in fact, I had to lose that deal.

**Don Yaeger**

And lose for you. I mean, I'm sure there was an emotional investment, right? Yeah.

**Bill George**

Too much.

**Don Yaeger**

If you've put so much into making the deal happen sometimes Not making it happen. It tears at you inside.

**Bill George**

Yeah, it does. I want to do it too much. And some people are trying to advise me against, and you have to listen to them in the end. I did. But it took a while for me to get there. You can get too committed to something; you have to realize sometimes you have to lose to win you take a step back. Somebody said sometimes to get to the top floor, you got to take an elevator down a couple of lights and then take the other elevator. So sometimes you have to do and so we did.

**Don Yaeger**

Yeah. In your book True North. You talked about crucibles. And it's one of my favorite discussions, the moments that change you in a BB&T Leadership Institute interview that you did you shared one of

those when senior teammates of yours at Georgia Tech pulled you aside. Tell me about that experience what they said and how it changed you as a future leader.

**Bill George**

My father grew me to be a leader. I'm the only child of older parents and he put everything he said Son, I want you to be the leader I never became, and I remember never stuck to lead anything. finally put my hat in the ring to run for president senior class at the high school and lost by margin two to one, which I hated and went to Georgia Tech and ran six more times for office lost all six. So, I feel like a real loser.

**Don Yaeger**

Abraham Lincoln.

**Bill George**

And I'm a winner. I hate to lose I have to tell you. I don't like losing. So, the seniors pulled me aside and said, Bill, no one's ever gone to work with you, much less be led by you. Because you're moving so fast to get ahead. You don't take time for other people. It was like I was building a resume instead of a life. And that was a hard blow. And I spent a number of months agonizing over that talking to a lot of people rejecting me, trying to understand my mistakes, put together my own self-help program. So, the best thing I ever did in terms of becoming a leader, and it opened up the door to a lot of opportunities. That was my sophomore year, my junior and senior year, and I'm into graduate school and then off into business. But if I had learned those lessons, then I would have repeated them a lot later on because I had to learn. It was not all about winning the election. It was about Doing the right thing and building a team building an organization where people have confidence in you, they're willing to put their trust in you, to me and leadership. Everything is based on trust. And why would you trust someone if they can't trust you and vice versa. So, this becomes, I think, critical as a leader. It's not just about winning. It's about building a trust with your teammates. They will give you everything they have because they trust you.

**Don Yaeger**

And tell you how honored, how blessed you were that they spoke truth to you.

**Bill George**

Yeah, they really did.

**Don Yaeger**

It's easier just to say we're graduating.

**Bill George**

Yeah, he can have his own problems. Yeah, but you have to learn those hard lessons. I think almost everyone I know Don has gone through some form of crucible in their life. Absolutely— and that's what they learned. Again, it's back to the sporting analogy is like my wife says, I don't like competitive sports. I said: *You mean you like tennis where there's only one winner and everyone else loses.* I said, No, that's what it's all about. World Cup soccer— there can only one can be one (winner). You know, but you learn what it's all about, if you don't learn that you think you have to win every time even if you have

to cheat to win, man, you don't want those people around either, because they've never learned the lessons of life. See, it's not really about winning or losing. It's not learning the lessons of life that sports teach you those lessons of life. There was a kid we had in our soccer team was a really smart kid, but a lot of the kids didn't want to play with him. We had to say, look, TJ, you want to win, you better figure out how to pass the ball. Yeah, but I'm better. We said, you don't understand the game. You have to find the open person. You have to work with everyone, no different in basketball. You know, you have to find the open man. Don't give it to one person to take all the shots. And that's key to a winning team. Why do some basketball team defeat others that have more talent?

**Don Yaeger**

You know, that's very, very true. Philanthropy— I know you and Penny are great and active in the Minneapolis and other communities. When you think about philanthropy, sports business, all these pieces of your life. How do they intersect for you?

**Bill George**

Well, I feel like I've been blessed. I had that opportunity. I learned some tough lessons along the way. And I finally went to Medtronic and did very well financially because the stock did well, I didn't make much money on salary, even at bonuses, but the stock did very well. So, we feel like we need to give back. Don, you can't take it with you. I don't care what your religion is, or no religion. You can't take it with you, Penny and I just see opportunities to give back and a lot of it. We start here in Minnesota, we do it all over the country, sometimes all over the world, but it's really to give back and help other people. So, one of the big fields we're investing in is leadership. How do we help more people become leaders? How do we help people that don't have the opportunity? How do we take entrepreneurs that don't have the opportunity? And how do we help socialize? How do we help other people and our philosophy of our foundation is to invest behind leaders to make a difference in the world? So, my wife's field is healthcare, she's trying to invest behind people that are transforming healthcare, but you find with great leaders, if you do that, the whole thing comes around. Even a great organization is going to atrophy over time. It's no different than a coach. You have a bad coach, the team is not going to perform well.

**Don Yaeger**

Now it does help to have good talent, right?

**Bill George**

It helps to have good talent. Good coaches attract good talent to let's be honest, that's true in life and in sports. Yeah.

**Don Yaeger**

You talked about coaching and teaching between your two coaches in tennis at Georgia Tech, but they do draw a lot of similarities to each other. Are there lessons and coaching that you learned that help you as you teach and lead at Harvard?

**Bill George**

No doubt about it. I try to pass these things on. It's like the coach's role is not to exert power over other people. We went through a couple decades where it's all about exerting power over other people.

You're not going to be successful in business today unless you empower all the people in the organization. I guarantee if I take an organization of highly empowered people, they will out compete a team of individuals every time— in business, in sports, you name it – because people are going to give the best they have. But again, it gets back to the trust, unless they trust their leader. They're not going to give everything they have. They may give you their brains, but they're not going to give you their hearts and their souls, and winning teams have the heart and soul of everyone on the team— I will invest my life in making this become reality. That's what I think really is to determine leaders today, that capacity to empower people and to get them aligned. We have a goal here, and it isn't just about winning a tournament, it's about how we performance but the values the mission, and I think that becomes really critical for leaders today.

**Don Yaeger**

Totally agree. Are you writing a book right now?

**Bill George**

I am. This the most challenging book. I'm writing with Michael Porter, the famous guru on strategy. So we've interviewed a lot of CEOs that have come to our courses and tried to bring the practical lessons on how to be a great CEO, which is a metaphor for how to be a great leader, because I think a lot outside people peering into corporation don't have the insights and all the things we do are confidential, you know, nothing's going to be probably so that's the people's permission. But, I think having that deep insight of what do, and when you find yourself in trouble, who do you call on? How do you build the culture you want to have really critical? And how do you stay human? I think one of the big challenges CEOs face today is how do you stay human? How do you stay humble? Stay down to earth. How do you have genuine empathy for people who are going through tough times? How do you have compassion for the customers you're serving? If you don't have those qualities, you won't be a great leader today.

**Don Yaeger**

Bill George, I have learned so much from you over the years.

**Bill George**

I've learned a lot from you too.

**Don Yaeger**

What an honor is spent this last few minutes with you. Thank you for sharing it. I'm honored to have you as my friend and to call you my mentor.

**Bill George**

Thank you, Don. Keep up the great work. You're doing really makes a difference.

**Don Yaeger**

Thank you again.

**Bill George**

Thank you. Appreciate you