



Don Yaeger

Louis, thank you for joining us.

Louis Carr

Thank you so much.

Don Yaeger

I appreciate it. I know how even in these crazy times you are busy so thank you for being here. It means a lot.

Louis Carr

Well, this is important and fun.

Don Yaeger

Well, I love our relationship and the idea that I get a chance to ask you some questions. Going back into your history and reading about you at Lane Tech in Chicago, you were co-captain of the track and field team and a state champion. So, my question is, when you were a child growing up there in Chicago, can you share with us why track and field? Why did you gravitate there?

Louis Carr

Well, it really was by accident. Now I was on the football team and I was pretty good, but I broke my arm. So, while I had a cast on to try and stay in shape, I started hanging out and running with the track team. Who knew that I happen to be pretty fast? So, the coach said, "if you can run that fast with a cast on, what could you do without a cast"? I didn't take it serious because I'm just hanging out with my friends just trying to stay in shape. And lo and behold, after a few months, I thought about how I didn't have to get hit anymore and said, "Why don't I focus on track". Everything else is history.

Don Yaeger

I like that it was a place to use to not get hit. That's a great way to see track is your future. What about the individual competition aspect of track? Did you find it attractive?

Louis Carr

Well, I think for me is that it gave you the opportunity to show your individual talents but participate in a team sport. So, we ran sprints, we ran relays, but it was the camaraderie that really pulled me in. And it was just a lot of fun. You know, there were days in football practice where it wasn't so much fun. You know, it's cold outside and you're getting hit. Some days, it's raining and it's all mud, but those days were far and few on the track. And we had a huge track team. I mean, we had about one hundred and five runners on our track. Yeah, we had a big, big team. We were a part of a big High School, Lane Technical High School in Chicago. And you know it's big Don when you go back after years and it still looks big to you. So, the school was built for us housing kids. At that particular time, we probably had about fifty-five hundred to six thousand children that attended the school. So, it was a big school.

Don Yaeger

Yeah, well to be in a place where you could help that team win a state championship had to be pretty impactful and I have to say I loved looking at your yearbook photos with our research team. What they brought back to me, and I've known you for a few years, but to see you in those short shorts man, that was something. I know you were involved in both, as we talked about individual and relay events, but the greatest success ultimately, if you really want to measure it by times and championships, was that relay team, where you set a national high school record alongside your teammates, as I saw were, Kevin Newell, Dennis Kern, and Tim Klein is that right?

Louis Carr

Yeah, that's correct.

Don Yaeger

So, what did you learn in working together in that four-person team that would ultimately stick with you?

Louis Carr

Well, number one, what I learned was goal setting. We came back to school in September of 1973. We had won city championships in 73 and 72. And over that summer, I had dissected our relay times and said: *You know what, we have a shot of breaking a national record.* When I came back to school, I wrote the time 3:19.5 on a piece of paper and taped it to my locker. The previous record was 3:20.1. By Boys' High School in New York. And when I started the conversation with my teammates, first they thought I was crazy. Then when I had the conversation with my coach, he thought I was crazy. He said, *No Louis, you guys are good, but that's a whole other level that you would have to go through.* I think our fastest time the previous year had been like 3:23.5 or something like that. So that means we would be talking about knocking off like, three, almost four seconds to be able to hit that record, and that's a lot. So, as we worked towards it, we practiced with the cross-country team and we really leaned into weights as we got into the season. So, lo and behold, the time started coming down real fast. Compared to every meet we had the previous year, we were breaking records, right. So, a month before we broke the record, we were at Proviso East High School and we ran 321. I was playing around on the

ranking, and when everyone saw that we ran 3:21, they were like we really got a shot at this. Once we went to the city championship, they said it's either here or never. We were up against the toughest team in the city, Philips High School and against the toughest anchor leg in the city, a guy by the name of Eddie Hatch; it was a packed-out arena— what it taught me was goal setting, focus, discipline, and to believe in yourself like nobody else. That was something that manifested itself right before our eyes as we worked towards that goal and became more confident every single week. You're talking about swagger. When we walked into arenas, we had everybody's attention because we had swagger. We went that whole indoor season undefeated.

Don Yaeger

Wow. What was ultimately the time you ran?

Louis Carr

3:19.5 - what I had wrote on a piece of paper.

Don Yaeger

Wow. And that record, it doesn't stand today right?

Louis Carr

It's been a couple of decades.

Don Yaeger

Decades, I remember reading that. So, I'm intrigued by that idea that, you know, you set a record, but they don't last. But the things you learn, they do last, which I think is really the thing that I love so much about sports.

Louis Carr

And I think there's one more thing that I learned out of that, which is the joy of teamwork. You know, a lot of people Don, as you know, they see these athletes break down crying at the World Series. They see when they win the Super Bowl and when these grown men, you know, are just bawling, crying all over the place. People who have never participated in a team sport, sometimes just don't get it. I get it because I did it. But that camaraderie, that sacrifice as a team, the time that you spent working towards those particular goals -- and it's usually not a short period of time, it's a long period of time -- the emotions that you see whether it's on the court or on the field or on the track, all of that comes together at the moment of competition. And you see that joy come out in a very emotional way when all of the sacrifices pay off on a very special winning day.

Don Yaeger

Yeah. You know after high school you went on to Drake University and the Awards kept coming including you being the Missouri Valley Indoor Champion for the 200-meter dash twice, but it wasn't records that led to the story that had the greatest impact on your life. In fact, I would really love if you could share with our listeners a story about checking into a track meet in Mississippi and the teammates who stood up for you.

Louis Carr

Yeah, you know, we talk about sports, in most cases, not 100%, but it's one of the few areas on the planet that's colorblind, whether it's football teams, basketball teams, whatever, but most of the time that's colorblind. We checked into a hotel in Jackson, Mississippi and this, you know, was in the mid to late 70s. The hotel manager tells my coach, "you keep that boy in his room because we don't let our boys run around here, so you keep him in the room and make sure he doesn't go out". I chuckled to myself because I had come from a place where I was very confident, not only about sports, but I was very confident in my blackness. And in my culture, I was very very confident; you couldn't shake me even if you tried, but my teammates were shaken to the core. They really were upset. They were apologizing, while I was joking and laughing with them, as athletes do, while they apologized. They didn't want to let me stay in the room by myself. They all wanted to sleep in there with me to protect me and what it really showed was that our commitment as teammates went far beyond records and racism. They really felt that my value and my contribution was something special and who I was as a person was something special. It taught me a real lesson: that in life, there are good people, there are bad people, and they come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, but that sports really breaks down all those barriers about who people are. And I think one of the things that is happening in our country and has been there for a long time, is that value proposition is wrong. Most of our countries see color, they don't see value. And I think if they looked at the contribution that African Americans make outside of sports, if they understood historically that African Americans are inventors, and saw the contributions that they have contributed to this great country, I think a lot of the issues that we are dealing with today would not be there. Because they would see the value, they would understand what our contributions are, and how have they've been in this country for a long time. It would just create a better environment for people to live together, work together, and operate together in all aspects of life. So it is that value proposition that I think people see in sports that helps it be colorblind for most of the time.

Don Yaeger

I have to tell you, my favorite part of that story -- and I have worked with you, so we've had the chance to talk in the past about this story -- is to tell listeners how you ran the next day.

Louis Carr

it was a fantastic day to the point that I was trying to show that man at the desk my real value proposition. We had a hell of a meet. The next day I won about three or four races. My teammates were overjoyed and excited for me. They knew what I was trying to prove. They understood my coach was overjoyed. And I think it was something special that we all experienced. I experienced their affection and their value proposition for me, which was way beyond what I thought it was. And they learned that "this is a great guy. He's not going to judge us like the guy that he just met at the desk in the hotel did. He's able to separate people based on how they act. What they do versus the color of their skin".

Don Yaeger

You know, I saw a tweet that during your running career you had the honor of being coached by Wilma Rudolph, the first American woman to win three gold medals in a single Olympics in track and field. Tell me about her, the experience, and what you learned.

Louis Carr

Well, first of all, she's an extraordinary woman and extremely mature in how she approached the sport, understood teamwork, and worked together, understood discipline -- both physical and emotional. That's the first time that had been introduced to me. And the other thing was the refinement of the sport. Those of us who participate in sports, you know, there's a thing called raw talent. There's a thing called just working harder than everybody else. And then, when you add what you call refinement, where you really start to learn the mechanics, and the technical aspect of the sport, that's where you really start to shine. Wilma Rudolph taught me the technical aspect of the sport, the refinement of the sport, the emotional aspect of the sport, not falling apart in a race, not getting so upset that you can't be focused on the next race. She taught me great form, how to hold yourself together physically, mentally, and emotionally. She really gave me that next level of coaching that I had never experienced before. So, it was a true honor and a privilege to have been coached by her, not just because she was an Olympian, but because she was a great person that really understood all the mechanics of being great.

Don Yaeger

You know, I love the teaching of how to hold yourself together, because sometimes we get so lost in the moment that we cost ourselves a future moment. So, were there other coaches or teammates that motivated you who you still think about all these years later?

Louis Carr

My high school coach by the name of Barney McCall. There's a moment that I always talk about when he drew a line in the sand, and he was screaming at me because I was joking around and goofing off. He said, "Louis, I need you to make a decision right now. Whether you want to be good or whether you want to be great". I had never been asked that question and I never thought it was up to me on whether I'm good or whether great, but I responded to him with this question: "what do the people who are great do versus the people who are just good? And he responded with "Louis, you told me your choice. You want to a be great line up and to do what I tell you to do." It empowered me Don, that I had the choice. As a young black kid, I'm like, No one has ever told me that I have the choice on what I was going to be good at and what I was going to be great at. Matter of fact, in my life, I really just thought about being good. But he elevated my thinking, telling me that there was another level and that I could possibly be at that level. I think the time that he spent with us and the conversations that we had about everything, whether it's about race or about traffic. I had no desire to go to college and all my friends kept telling me "no" and "stop telling people that, stop telling that story, because you're around a lot of young people, so stop saying that". I just wanted to graduate from high school, get a good job at the post office, Chicago Transit Authority, or United First. Those were the good jobs back at that time that African Americans had, so that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to get a good job as quick as possible. He is the person that said, "Louis, you know, you're good enough to go to college for free? No, no, no, no, there's going to be a lot of colleges that are going to want you and you won't have to pay a dime". It put that seed in my mind. I wasn't sold probably until after I had that success my junior year that made me think, "maybe this is something I really need to think about". So, I have to be thankful and grateful for him as a coach that he planted a seed of knowledge in me and the desire in me that I didn't have.

Don Yaeger

Is he still alive?

Louis Carr

I'm not sure I haven't seen or heard from him for many years.

Don Yaeger

He would be so proud of this. These are the kinds of moments where you would love to be able to pass these things on. I want to ask you, you know, it's been 42 years and I'm Sorry, I didn't mean to rub that in, but since you last ran for Drake, and for most people that I know of that have that competitive nature as you do, it doesn't go away. How do you express your competitive fire today and what does that willingness to be competitive today say to the team you have working with you at BET?

Louis Carr

I have the privilege of having a great team and as they sometimes tell me, "we're going to follow you even when we don't understand, or we don't agree, because your record speaks for itself, but your commitment to us, to the job, tells us that we have to do even greater than your record". So, what I try to do is take some of the things that I've learned through sports and apply it in business. Some of the obvious things are discipline, focus, hard work, commitment, but also some things like goal setting, breaking records, so that when you show up places people know that you're in the room, they feel your energy, they feel your success; I really try to make sure that we are competing against ourselves. Just like when we ran 3:19.5, 3:21 or 3:24 all would have been great, right? But to shatter it was that greatest feeling of all time. So, I manage my team in a way where no matter what the circumstances or obstacles or hurdles that are in our way are, they don't apply to us because we're special. We're highly favored and success in every environment is destined for us even in this time of two pandemics, one called COVID-19 and the other called racism in America; two pandemics that this country, nor world has ever seen. One is bad enough, but two, you know, almost way too much. It's devastating. I try to motivate them, you know, there are a lot of obstacles with one pandemic and there are some obstacles that we shouldn't be able to be overcome, but that doesn't apply to us because we're special and blessed. If we execute on the fundamentals, every single day, we will exceed anybody's expectations. They believe it. They go at it every single day like that. We give reports on a weekly basis, and somebody said: *It looks bad*. Somebody will step up and say: *But not for us. It looks bad right now, but that's not going to be how we're going to end this story*. So, I have this privilege of guiding people who have bought into those goals and objectives; our mission is bigger than profit and loss. Our mission is to show other people and have them see us going through obstacles and achieving things that nobody would believe we should be able to overcome. So that's the excitement, because that's what sports is, at the end of the day, somebody's going to get hurt, they're going to get a bad call, but you never give up. And you never believe that those type of things can stop you. So, it's exciting to be a part of an environment and organization and lead people that believe that we are just destined to be a very successful group.

Don Yaeger

Thank you for mentioning the situation with the second pandemic because to me, it's been an eye-opening experience. This has been an unbelievable and teachable moment with my own children. Be open to opportunity within my own team to engage and discuss with some of our African American members. Tell me like everybody says, walk a mile in somebody else's shoes. I can't walk a mile in your shoes, so it was, it's been really, really a powerful opportunity.

Louis Carr

Well, I am very inspired and hopeful because we are being led by young people all over this world, not just this country. They are resolute and they are committed. I wrote an industry letter last night telling them not to let the young people down. They are doing their part. Those of us who have access and influence in corporate offices, suites, and CEO suites, do your job. They are so inspiring that we as corporate leaders have to do our part. They've opened up the door for us. We just got to close the deal. Do it.

Don Yaeger

I love it. You know, the premise of this podcast is that a disproportionate number of Fortune 500 executives were actively engaged in sports at high school collegiate levels and that that experience helped shape the way they lead today. Do you agree that being an athlete helped make you a better leader and as you're hiring team members does whether or not someone has participated in sports catch your attention?

Louis Carr

I do agree – overwhelmingly – that participating in sports gives you a better opportunity than most to be successful. I think those basic fundamentals like having goals, teamwork, discipline, and focus, set you up a little ahead of the competition. I also believe that how you build teams comes together there. I am proud to say that I have the most diverse sales team in the media business. And now that didn't happen by accident, as you know, it happened by plan, by strategy. I probably have the most female leadership team in all of media, even more than those teams that are led by females. And that didn't happen by accident. When you look at our ratio of African Americans to non-African Americans, we're the best in the business, and that didn't happen by accident either. I wanted to bring together different views, backgrounds, and opinions, so that we all could be challenged in a way that expands how we think, how we look at our business, and how we look at the world. Because I do believe that people who are basically whole as a person just make a better businessperson in general. They look at things differently; they're open to different ideas and different strategies. They're much more flexible than other people. So, I think putting together this diverse team, with diverse backgrounds and genders, really has also been a great key to my success personally and the company's overall success.

Don Yaeger

Now, I'd like to pivot a little bit to learn about how some of what sports taught you can be applied to some of the leadership challenges you've faced over your career. I admire the way you worked your way up the corporate ladder from being a customer service representative at Bankers Life to now, here you are as president of media sales at BET. Can you tell us a story about how something from your sporting background influenced the way you worked up that ladder?

Louis Carr

Well, I think the most important thing to me Don, that sports taught me is like that movie *Any Given Sunday*, any given weekend, it could be yours. So, no matter what happened last weekend, even if it's a loss, this is a different weekend, a different opportunity to be successful. So never dwell in your past. And that's how I look at life. Just Because you had a bad week, you had a bad month, you had a bad quarter, you had a bad day, doesn't mean anything about the future. Because you pick yourself up, you dust yourself off, and you go out and be

great once again, as long as you are doing some of those basic fundamentals that gives you a foundation to build upon. I think that's just how life is. I look at it in all aspects. You know, you have times when you overeat and you don't work out, then you said I have to get back on I got to get back on the wagon. And you go back in there, you change your diet and take carbs out and you take sweets out and you hit the gym. That's how I look at business. And why most of the time. I'm never down. Yeah, do I have some bad weeks? Yeah, do I have bad quarters? Yeah, but the race isn't over. It's not over until it's over. So that's how I look at life. And it's just one big opportunity. And that's how I stay positive.

Don Yaeger

So that idea that each week, each quarter each, whatever it might be, is a new and creative opportunity for you to, to present yourself as like it's a new meet, like it's a new race, right. I like that. I love that.

Louis Carr

And that's what's so important Don about what you do as support. We all need people who can look at us from the outside in. I remember when I was in college, and I had coaches and I would have a bad race. I would go to my coaches and say what happened? What broke down? Was it in the beginning that I go out too slow, that I coach too much in the middle that I fall apart at the end? So, to be able to have consultants and people who you partner with who want to bring the greatness out of you. I think it's truly an exceptional opportunity for those of us in the business world to say, Hey, take a fresh look at this and tell me what I may be missing. And I've always done that. As you know, I've had many personal coaches in my life, and they've had a tough job. But I think at the end of the day, they think it was worth it. And I think it was worth it.

Don Yaeger

You've also put together this incredible run of success at BET. I referenced it in the intro and it's hard. It's hard to be a great one, right? It's really hard to stay great. What are some key elements in that sustained excellence journey that you might offer us that allowed you not to ever get comfortable in your environment, which obviously we know is one sure way to end up in the losing column?

Louis Carr

I think number one, the easiest things are, you know, goal setting. But I think number two is having goals that are bigger than yourself. Having things, you're trying to achieve that really go beyond the numbers and the budgets, being able to say, you know, what is my impact beyond P&L? How am I helping people grow? How am I helping people be greater as a person? What am I doing for my community? What am I doing for the world? How am I showing up that will motivate people, not only internally but externally? What am I doing for the next generation of leaders and what am I doing for the next generation of young people, making sure that those goals are closely aligned to whatever you're doing for your job, as you know, I do an awful lot of things outside of BET from my foundation to men's conferencing, to mentoring to a lot of different things? That's all connected. Because at the end of the day when you look backwards, you don't want to be this one trick pony. You want to be able to say, *Hey, I impacted this young person. I impacted this organization; I impacted this community.* Also, to be a business vision maker, we talk about what vision makers did for me, you and I have had that conversation. I've told you it's a debt that can never be paid. I was a kid growing up that didn't have a lot of goals and vision until I got into sports. And then people along the way, continued to paint different possibilities

for me, and put them in my mind. And I happen to be a person that this continues to happen to, even at this age. I mean, I meet people all the time and I say, *“Louis, you need to do this. You need to do that, Louis, you have opportunity to do this, Louis we're inviting you here.”* And you go like, *“wow, wow.”* Those are people that we all run into in our life that see something in us that we can't see in ourselves.

Don Yaeger

You know, you've had some great mentors. We've discussed this in the past of people who have taken you under their wings in certain ways, right? Who mentors you today who gives you inspiration and guidance when you're out there looking and say these are people that you draw from? Who are some of those that you would mention?

Louis Carr

The founder of BET Bob Johnson, he's one that continues to tell me Louis don't be a one trick pony, be able to do many things and have lots of impact in multiple areas. Ron Williams, the former chairman and CEO of Aetna insurance company, he's a mentor that really guides me through different financial things. I have a personal friend by the name of Courtney Hollowell, Dr. Courtney Hollowell, one of the smartest people I know, and I don't use that word loosely. But he can get things and other fields outside of medicine, just like that. He's on the frontlines of this COVID-19 pandemic. And when you talk to him, first of all, you wouldn't know he's a doctor in the midst of this pandemic because he's so upbeat all the time. And you'll be talking to him and he'll say: *“Oh man, I have to go because I have to get dressed to go to war, and it's going to take me about twenty five to thirty minutes to put on all the things that I need to put on to protect myself, but I hit you back later! Alright, stay safe”*. He's going to have that upbeat attitude as he's going into the hospital, and he's going to see patients and he's going to do surgery on some of those patients. So, he's one of my mentors whose attitude and positivity is always around. So, I have a lot of mentors that continue to encourage me today, and I'm just blessed because of it.

Don Yaeger

You certainly are also I love your commitment to the community. Your internship Foundation has always been one of those things that I have loved the way you continue to personally fund internships, to keep that next generation fired up and then you pour into those interns as they're doing. So, is there one of those interns that we've talked about some of these people, some of them older than you? Who are inspirations to you and has there been an intern story that you would offer and say, *“this is a lesson I learned from some young person that inspires me as well”*?

Louis Carr

I learned something from all of them. You know, I think that's what keeps me connected and keeps me young, no matter what my age is because I'm always looking to get something out of them, not just to give something to them. So, I've had many stories where I walked away, so proud because they're sometimes well beyond their age, their knowledge, and their understanding of life, right? And that really excites me when I see that, and you know that their parents and their whole village had something to do with them going well beyond their age. As you know, there's a young man who works for me who we took a real chance on. We gave him a job that was bigger than his experience. And everybody told me *“no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, don't do that, it's going to be*

embarrassing to you". But I took a chance because so many people have taken a chance on me. As we look at what's going on in the world today I had a conversation with a group of business people as they're trying to come up with solutions and trying to understand these young people who are protesting all over the world and what I told them, number one, "listen, we must listen to our young people. We must Let them have a voice; we must bring them to the table". Because as I said, "as we try to teach them, we also have to be able to learn". And this young man that I took a chance on who continues to work for me today, he's still learning, but he's doing extremely well because I wanted to take a chance and take a risk that I knew most people wouldn't do. And I think as we look at the future as a country, you need to take a chance and a risk on people who may not fit the overall qualifications that you've already lined up. Because they may not be the qualifications that's going to get you to a successful track record or meet your successful goals. So, you need to look at them differently. I challenge businesspeople all the time because one of the things I look at is where I'm at now. People say: *"Louis is so refined, he's such a great communicator, he does all these different things", but some of my personal coaches would say, "well, you should have nowhere all right"*. So, I understand that it's a journey. And it's a process. And I'm always learning from my interns. Because you know, that's a passion for me.

Don Yaeger

I know it is. Louis, thank you for sharing your journey with us today. Thanks for your leadership with so many things. Thanks for your friendship and thanks for this time, man. This is everything I could have hoped for and more. You've come a long way since those short shorts I'll tell you that. I'm also grateful for the wisdom you shared and how sports played that role. Got you to college got you to cross that line when that coach encouraged you. And today, we are all better as a result. Louis Thank you.

Louis Carr

Thank you, Don. Appreciate the opportunity.