

101. Kyle Kavanaugh: Recruit Everyone Every Day

Gavin Kelly

Hey everybody, you're listening to Beyond 1894. This is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. I'm Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications. Our guest for this episode the one hundred and first episode, no pressure following up the big 100, by the way, is Kyle Kavanaugh from Louisiana Tech athletics. He is the senior associate ad for External Affairs slash Chief Brand Officer over there, working out of the TAC with his team. Kyle, thanks for being here today.

Kyle Kavanaugh

Absolutely. Thanks for having me, man.

Gavin Kelly

So I think one of the big reasons I wanted to have you on first of all, happy work anniversary plus one day for the current role you're in. Thank you. I think I remember the sort of week that you were getting settled into the role you're in now and you kind of came to my office and talk to me kind of about your vision and sort of mentioned that, you know, your background wasn't in this role. But you, we're confident that you would be able to kind of find your way, because that's what you've done. You know, you've you've, you've made your way here at Tech, and you have a background that is very coaching base, but you've also done a little bit of everything, I think, in a way, so we're going to talk about that. But let's start from the beginning. Because I think you bleed tech blue. And I think that's evident in the way you approach your job. And the people around you and your team over there in athletics. So start from the start, talk about growing up and kind of finding your way to tech.

Kyle Kavanaugh

Absolutely. Yeah, bleed tech blue. Even before I was born, so my first my first tech football game, I was actually in the womb in 1984. And I was named after the quarterback I think was called Ghandi at the time. Okay, so my parents named me after a tech quarterback. My parents have had the same football season tickets for over 40 years. You know, my grandmother worked in the registrar's office for 30 plus years. So my dad is from Ruston, I grew up in Benton, Louisiana, about an hour away. But you know, spent half my childhood in Ruston and coming over seeing grandpa grandma, my cousins and uncles and I spent many, many mornings running around Keaney Hall, you know, with my cousin Jason with grandma and her office and just spending time on Tech campus. And I think it was a bit of a destined thing for me to come to Louisiana Tech. But of course, as most teenagers get, you know, they want to kind of do their own thing. And so, you know, I was I was playing basketball in high school and I was in the band, I was a drummer. And you know, who doesn't want to play college basketball, right? So there's not a lot of not a lot of spots for 510 and a half on athletic guys who can shoot decently. So I was, you know, I was looking at some d3 schools and NAIA schools and want to keep the sport dream alive. And in some ways just because hey, I've texted my whole life, like I don't want to go there. I want

to go off and do something else and kind of do my own thing. But, you know, at the end of the day, Tech was home. And this is where I wanted to go. And I was fortunate enough to get a music scholarship to come to Louisiana Tech. So I did four years in the band of pride. I was a snare drummer, I was on percussion ensemble, I was in the service organization for percussion, which is called Five router router. I was actually the vice president of that for two years and the president for a year and then got my undergrad and biology education. I was going to be a physical therapist. I got a lot of teachers in my family and everybody was like I you know, be a doctor, somebody's got to make some money to take care of us. You know, we all get older, don't teach, we got too many of those. And so I came here and enrolled and biology was going to be a PT. And after about a year I was like, Man, my heart's just not in that I want to work with people in a different capacity. I wanted to coach and I wanted to teach and so I switched over to biology education, got rid of about nine hours of physics, which was great and rolled over into the education world and got my undergrad in that and was trying to get my foot in the door coaching wise and that's when Louisiana Tech hired Kerry Rupp as the men's basketball coach, and they were looking for a couple of gas' really on the academic side to run study hall and, you know, check classes and that kind of thing. Jim Robinson, who was the band director here at that time, walked over to Curtis candies office when I was interviewing for that GA spot and he walked in, he said, You don't hire this guy. You're crazy, like give this kid a shot. And I'll always be indebted to Jay Rob for everything he did for me in my four years here in the band, but also just him taking the time to walk over and do something like that. And I think you know, life is interesting and weird and you don't end up where you think you're gonna be. I never thought I'd be doing what I'm doing right now. But you've got to be lucky and have some really good people in your corner. They'll take shots on you and I think that's that's been a perpetual part of my story is that I've had I've been very fortunate to have a lot of people go now and take take a chance on that kid. And J Rob was definitely one of those and coach Conde and coach Rob, you know for giving me an opportunity to jump in. And so I ran Sunday study hall and tutored and check classes and did that mostly for my first year and then started getting a little bit more responsibility helping with some recruiting correspondence and doing a little bit of help Cody figure who was our ops guy who's now at Kentucky, as an assistant coach, you know, he was really great to me and just kind of looping me in on the basketball side of things, you know, you you grew up playing a game you think you know it, then you get around people who are smart, and you realize what you don't? What are you don't know. And so I was just consumed by it for those two years and graduated with my masters, you know, again, wanted to be around college ball and have this one will do but let's get married in June, I needed to find a job. And so we got we got married, just celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary on June 27. So we were getting married in June. I didn't have a job in August. And so it was like, Alright, we gotta gotta figure something out. So I actually got a job teaching as an assistant and was an assistant basketball coach at Ruston high, so fortunate to stay here and did that for a year and then got the head coaching job at Cedar Creek basketball and taught some junior high science and was there for seven years, went over to Sims burrow, stayed in Lincoln parish, but moved up the road a little bit and got to coach some basketball there and was very fortunate, we were very, very talented. One back to back state championships. And a guy by the name of Jordan Crawford was on that team has been on the ducking dogs for the last couple of years. So it's been great seeing him grow and mature and getting to you know, live out his dream as a collegiate athlete. And then I went back to Cedar Creek for about two, two and a half years, got my daughter into school there got out of coaching, which was a really difficult decision. But you do weird things for your kids. And that was the right move for us and the family at the time. And so

Gavin Kelly

it was a very kind of family driven decision. Time management and that

Kyle Kavanaugh

sort of time. Kendall was four at the time, you know, and just Yeah, you've missed four years of her life really. And you know, even if you're that's the really difficult thing about coaching or being an athletics in general, but, you know, that goes by really fast. And it's just like, Man, I got a chance to walk my daughter to class every day and pick her up at three o'clock. Like that was something that I just couldn't pass up. And you know, I'm not gonna lie winning was was a lot of fun. Yeah. But had done that. And, you know, the interesting thing was, I had been let go from my job at Cedar Creek from the coaching side, and went from dealing with that to winning a championship less than a year later, and would have thought, Man, this is perfect. Like, what else could you want? I realized after winning one, I wanted a second one. One a second one, the first thing I wanted was, I gotta have a third. And I kind of realized like, man, that's never going to go away, you could win nine in a row. And when you don't win the 10th one, there's going to be disappointed there.

Gavin Kelly

It's like the Brady quote, what's your favorite Super Bowl ring, the next next one

Kyle Kavanaugh

100%. And there's a competitiveness to you. But it was it was just a bit of a pride and an ego check for me to say hey, man, like this is, this is never gonna go away. Like I thought winning was going to satisfy something. And in a lot of ways it did. And in a lot of ways it didn't. And so it was like, No, this is it's time to hang out with with my family more. And so I say just teaching not that there's not a lot of effort that goes into that. So I was teaching seventh grade life science and did that for about two two and a half years. And then Malcom Butler called me over Thanksgiving and he had a position open up and communications to be one of the sports information directors for football. And I thought man, there's no way like I don't know how to do that. Like that's the learning curves too steep or I'm not in that world or I don't know. And so he was like, Man, you you bleed tak you've got a certain skill set. You know, in between getting out of coaching and teaching I had started a couple of businesses to kind of keep the itch going for me we were as sort of like a coach consulting business where I was still getting to work with a lot of athletes and a lot of coaches and had done a lot of leadership and character development work at school the schools that I was in and so it was trying to expand into that and and ended up partnering in a three on three basketball business and so that's how I was kind of scratching that itch a little bit but had taught myself graphic design was doing some writing had gotten into marketing you know had been running my own business and so that's where sort of that skill set you were preparing yourself you didn't even know I had no idea right and and which is really funny and interesting looking back now but I was prepping and sharpening those types of skills you know little did I know and Malcolm was like, you know you've little older more mature you know, you've got a skill set will teach you what you need to know.

Gavin Kelly

So that connection with Malcolm I mean, I'm guessing he's been in wrestling for forever and you've been wrestling ever I guess it kind of How'd you guys end up crossing paths to the point where he got to thinking that I need an Sid. Calm i be i gotta call Yeah,

Kyle Kavanaugh

well, I guess you know, you get to the lowest option on the list. You're you're just you're scrambling or you're scraping the bottom of the barrel but no, I've known Malcolm for a long time. We're actually on a golf trip. We just this past weekend. And we're in Alabama, in a really, really cool trip that he's been doing for almost 25 years with a group of friends. And I've been on I think this was my ninth year. So I've known him and been around tech a long time. And of course, when I was a graduate assistant, he was still, you know, working with Lady textures and been around so our paths had crossed and we knew each other to a certain degree. And, you know, I guess he just looking for somebody with a certain set of skills as they would say, and hey, I can I can teach you the content stuff. And so, again, lucky enough to have somebody to say, Hey, I believe in you, I think you can do this and so took the shot on it and was was difficult to leave that life behind. It was one thing to leave coaching. It was another thing to leave education altogether. But it was a chance to get back to tech. And that's that's really what it was. It was it was Division One collegiate athletics and this was home. These are my Bulldogs, my lady textures, and get a chance to tell those stories of those athletes. You know, I mean, Angela Roberson not taught her freshman biology, Caitlin Cooper just graduated, I taught her AP Biology, there's a ton of athletes that were in Ruston control Bryce, who played football here and one on the NFL. I taught him that first year at Ruston. And so it was just neat to see like those kids grow up and still get to be around them. And just an opportunity I couldn't pass up. So it was a leap of faith for sure. Did that for about a year and a half was originally supposed to work with football when Coach Combi got hired and our women's basketball Sid left two weeks after I got here. So Malcolm was like, hey, congratulations, you get to hang out with all these extras now. And so it was very fortunate, you know, Brooke, Coach Brooke was was extremely welcoming. And, and let me into her program and got a chance to be around the lady textures. And that was like a dream come true and finished up the year and was like, hey, Malcolm, I'm, I really enjoy this, Can I stick around with the women's basketball team. And we were very fortunate to find a talented SID to handle in Hunter Cornelius and to handle the the football side. And so I got to stick around with women's basketball. And that was unbelievable getting to, you know, get to see that again. And so it was weird, like I've given up basketball a couple of times in my life. But it's always come back in some form or fashion.

Gavin Kelly

So during this, I mean, because you mentioned the kind of transition out of coaching was was family and time related. And Sid, I mean, a lot of those athletics jobs are put in Sid who's traveling with the team a lot of times and you know is on top of practices not and games and everything in between and press conferences. How How was it switching back to sort of a very time, you know, intensive,

Kyle Kavanaugh

it was an it was a very big adjustment, I'll tell you and then you have to credit Meg and my wife and Kendall for being able to tolerate it. The one biggest variable that was different is when you're you can be an Sid, you can be a marketing, you can be an assistant coach, but when you're the head coach, it's all on you. It's all consuming, everything stops with you. And you It's you can't get away from it. And

being an SID is extremely, extremely time heavy. I mean, to ATMs on the roads being gone, like it was a lot. But there were some still some differences were like I was still more present at home than I was when I was a head coach. Just because you you can you can leave a little bit of that work off to the side from times. But traveling was was really, really difficult. And that's when you know, Dr. Wood when he was here, approached me about this marketing position. And kind of switching over to the external side. And it was kind of the same thing like no luck. Yeah, I'm not gonna do that. There's no way like, that's, that's not for me. I don't think so. But there was a huge travel component. I mean, I still work more hours in a week than I than I ever have in my life. But I'm not on the road as much as I was. As a communications director. I'm at every home event and I'm at a billion other things but I can be more present with with Kendall like she can come to events with me, right? You know, like I that's the big thing difference between teaching like you're tied to a bell schedule, I can go to bathroom when I want to I can go get a cup of coffee and come record a podcast. Yeah, the day like, you can't do that, you know, when you're you're tied to a bell schedule. And that's where this has been so much fun to me is because yes, you're you're tied to schedules, athletic schedules and meeting schedules and this and that, but there's so much more like creative control and freedom in this life than my previous one. And that's where I've really felt like I've kind of been kind of reborn in a sense, and taking a little bit of all those skills from all those spots along the way and they've all kind of meshed together. And like, you know, when I was talking with the doctor would and the executive staff on you know, would this be a fit not just for me, but would I be a fit for them? And sort of the the pitch was, you know, I'm a I'm a biology teacher, and a basketball coach by trade. But I coached Junior football, I coached track. I coached six years of tennis. I taught biology out of 13 years in the classroom and biology was what I taught the least taught eighth grade or science seventh grade life. AP Bio taught row geography, I taught us history. I taught health, I taught PE, I taught civics, I taught free enterprise, like you get stuck with a social studies certification, they'll put you anywhere, especially if you can drive a bus and have a CDL. And so it was just, it was sort of that same kind of thing. Like, the job titles have changed, the rooms have changed the the nature of the jobs have changed. Like I sound like I'm 80 years old, I'm only 39 Like, but it sounds like I've been doing stuff for 40 years, you know. But at the end of the day, like all of those contextual things change, but at the end of the day, it's all people. And it's everything is people driven at whether whether you're a coach or teacher, you're in marketing, you're in communications, it doesn't really matter what you're doing it, it all comes down to recruiting relationships, and being able to connect, manage, and lead people. And that's what I really kind of realized that notices. I always thought I was called to be a basketball coach, little did I know, coaching basketball was just a necessary step in the journey. Yeah, to kind of get me here. But it was the lessons of running a practice plan, getting beat by 45 on the road and having to turn around and practice the next day and get your guys to still believe in what you're doing. And having a vision and having, you know, a goal and being able to put that into practice. And, you know, having days where you agree with people on days that you don't agree with people and being told what to do and having to tell people what to do and all of that stuff, like it encompasses life. And it's it's, it's parenting, it's, it's being a husband, it's a little bit of everything. And so that's where I feel like the journey has been very disjointed in a lot of ways, but also extremely well rounded. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

I think that's kind of that kind of leads into my next My next question, because I think that part of what has made you flexible in your career and able to take on jobs that maybe were new, but you're

confident in, well, I'm gonna learn what I have a skill set that's moldable. And I can I'm gonna be able to learn what to do. And people believe in me, because they're asking me to do this. And that's already a good sign. And I think a lot of your philosophy for yourself, but also, when you get to a point where you have to lead teams and lead people is rooted in your coaching background. So talk a little bit about how moving into athletics and moving into this marketing role. Your coaching background has influenced the way you've managed yourself and your team. I

Kyle Kavanaugh

think service is the word that that typically comes to mind and like leadership and sort of New Age leadership, there's a difference between a boss and a leader, you know, and you probably see a lot of content or read books on that and like motivational speeches. And I think it's you have to kind of set that aside, you have set your own ego aside. And again, to me, that was the that was the greatest test for me was getting out of coaching. That was a that was straight up a 100% ego driven decision. And if I get a coaching offer tomorrow, and decided, yes, I want to coach that's going to be feeding Kyle's ego. That's not necessarily what's best for Meghan Kendall, my family or myself, like me, as a person, it was straight up being ego driven thing like, Hey, I gotta go prove that I can do this over here. And I think, as a coach, you have to yes, you're competitive. And yes, you've got to have a lot of confidence in what you do. But you have to be able to set yourself aside and be willing to serve others. And I think the other thing is, is you realize when you coach or you teach or any of these things, you make a lot of mistakes. I mean, it's what time is it? 1151 in the morning, right now, I've already made sure half a dozen mistakes here, you know, and being able to understand that that those mistakes and that that failure is not final, like there will be another there will be another day to practice there will be another game like you can't get too high, you can't get too low. I have won games I'm not supposed to win, and then had a complete letdown the next game because we got too high. We've lost games that we weren't supposed to lose and then bounce back and one because we didn't let it get to us too much. And it's very similar in this role, like just directing and coordinating a football game like how much you don't realize how much stuff goes into putting on a live show. Yeah, like a football game, the video boards and Pa announcers in music and band and dance line and football in media timeouts and TV

Gavin Kelly

driven all timing base and it's all Yeah, it's a plan, you

Kyle Kavanaugh

have to have a practice plan. But at the same time, plans are great until you get punched in the mouth and plans and variable you're going to get derailed by something, you know, we've got a Learfield asset that we've got to get taken care of in this time out. But we score a touchdown and we need to play the fight song or we're going to lose time or a guy gets injured and note you can't do anything during the timeout you know, hey, what are we going to do? Like you've got to be able to make quick decisions. And those decisions might be right or wrong. But they you got to be able to make a decision. You know, the worst only thing worse than a than a bad decision is no decision at all. And you've got to be able to kind of roll with it and then you've got To the team that's around you, they have to be able to see and understand kind of what the greater plan is. So they at least believe in where we're heading. And I think that I mean, that is 100% coaching and teaching and, and regardless of the sport, the content, its US history, its biology, its tennis, its basketball, its marketing, its communications. Again, at the end of the

day, the the title is different, but the job itself is the same. And you, you get beat a lot when you coach, and I had some lean years, man, I'm telling you, we got beat a lot. And then you get a chance and you flip over and go Sims burrow, and we were 72 and 10, and two years with two rings when the 38 and three and one year we were minute winning more games and a couple of weeks than I was winning in a season. Sure, you know, at previous spots. And that success, you have to learn how to handle to, you know, it's it's difficult bouncing back from a loss, but it's also really difficult, sustaining success, you win 10 games in a row, that puts more pressure on that 11 If you're looking at it from a totality, but if you just if that 11th game is just the next game, then all of a sudden, it takes a lot of that pressure off. And again, they're they're just I've been completely blown away by how many similarities there are to getting through a basketball season on an external side to getting through a basketball season from a coaching side.

Gavin Kelly

Just focus on the next game. Next game is doing well this game. Yep.

Kyle Kavanaugh

And through the sort of business philosophy, life philosophy, and one thing we say a lot is we want to focus on the next best decision. And we try to be really intentional about not saying right or wrong, because my right might be different than your right, sure and my wrong and our life experiences and how we've, you know, grown up and things we've seen and things we've been told and our values and this and that, like our right and wrongs might not necessarily line up and I can make a decision now might be the right decision. But I won't really know till years down the road was that a quote unquote, right or wrong decision? So I think you can take a lot of pressure off that, but just say, Hey, make The Next Best decision. Yeah, that you can. And it really is kind of freeing in a lot of ways. And I know that I don't have to look back and go, yeah, that probably wasn't the best decision then. But at the time, I was doing what I could. And I really think that's been just mentally kind of freeing and unburdening. And it did takes a lot of pressure off. And I think you can, you can kind of give yourself a little bit more grace, when you go about things like that. And then you also find that you have a little more success. Yeah. Because it's not this duality of black and white of like, that's either right or wrong. And there's a little bit more gray area life is very nuanced, and contextual and dynamic. And it's, it's constantly moving. And, and again, I think this job itself mirrors that pretty well.

Gavin Kelly

I think, you kind of, you know, you talked about being in the middle of a game and doing game management stuff from an external side from a marketing side. And I think to when you're in a leadership position, you have a team, and especially if that team is comprised of young professionals, GA's, student workers, you know, they're gonna look to you as an example, and I think, when decisions have to be made in a second, and everyone's kind of scrambling, calmness is important that you know, you talked about, you mentioned it, and I immediately flashback to all the hours I've spent on a headset. And, you know, like you said, this timeout happens, well, we just burned a timeout and TVs doing this. And we're doing that. And it's like, the sponsor needs to hit here and all that sort of thing. And sometimes everyone on the headsets just kind of like, well, what do we do, and someone has to be the kind of calm voice of reason, and just say, well, we're going to do this. And if it goes this way, this way, what like we the decisions been made, and I think that gives opportunity for? Well, then maybe

you have to step off the headset for something and then your second in command is going to be in charge for a minute, and then something happens, then they get to be like, well, Kyle did it this way we did it. So now I'm more confident in making a decision now. And I think that sort of that trickle down leadership is something that's been evident. And I'm sure you intentionally try to do that. But also like, it's probably just passively part of the way you operate in your job.

Kyle Kavanaugh

Well, I get I go back to like, you know, we have a bad call and a game, how I react to an official is gonna model how my players are going to react to officials. And I'll be the first to tell you right now I got way more tentacles in my coaching career than I care to admit. Some of them were earned. Some of them were not. But that mean, again, that's a big lie. And you see like, Well, why are my players acting this way? Well, they're just doing what their head coaches doing. Like they're modeling that and that was a great lesson. And that was something that I was very conscious about those first few football games, because I was like, we're all we're all new at this. Like I had a brand new staff that the day I got this job. There was one person in the marketing department and she was an undergrad student worker. That was it. We got into August and had no staff we're trying to put this thing together, were in a week zero games or a week earlier than what we typically are. It's on national television on CBS. I mean, it was a, it was a mad dash scramble to make all this happen. And at the same time you your head spinning and you're going like, Man, this could be a disaster. But even if that's in your head, you can't let other people know that this could be a disaster, they've got to know, everything's gonna be fine. Don't get too high, don't get too low. As Jarrell would say, like, the main thing is just not get a little too excited. Just stay calm, right. And what I realized was, You're not just trying to get through that job yourself. But you also you're trying to succession plan, like, we don't have a lot of depth here, not a lot of vertical depth, not a lot of horizontal depth, and people are going to have to, I think I counted up, you know, on the from the first event last year to the last event this year, or 290 days in the calendar. And we either produced hosted, or assisted with 208 events on campus. That's 108 290 days. And most of those are on the same day, we might have two or three, four things happening at the same time. You cannot be in multiple places at once and somebody's going to get sick, you know, Grandma passes away, kids are sick, your flat tire, you're moved, like life happens and people have to be prepared to step in. And I've never really liked the the term step up, I kind of like more like step in, I don't, I'm not expecting you to do more than you're capable, I'm expecting you to rise to a certain level and then just be you. I'm not expecting you to be more than what you're what you're not. And that was definitely on my mind those first few football games, because I knew like everybody is going to be watching to see like, if this happens. This is this is going to be the new norm, we need a standard. Yeah, we need a standard. And whatever happens happens. And if somebody else has to jump in and do this. And of course, what makes that difficult is we don't know what's coming at us, I didn't realize that a guy was going to get hurt. And that would take us into a media timeout. And we got to get the water burger thing on the field. And people are going well, I need this. And it's like, Well, I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to, we have to start we'll get it in. And then you got to shuffle and move. And just, it's amazing, like the number of decisions that you have to make. And then you have to be very cognizant that a lot of people are watching you make those decisions. And that's funny, you mentioned the headsets, there's 12 people on a headset, and it was either all 12 people are talking at the same time, which creates its own, you know, distance dissonance and noise and chaos, or nobody's talking. And there's not a lot of in between. And, you know, you want your staff to be able to speak up with a suggestion, but they've also

got to understand like, now's the time, now's not a great time, or I don't need four people trying to give a suggestion right here. And at the end of the day, that's, excuse me, I think that's the other thing, from a leadership perspective is you've got to be okay with, if I make this decision, and it does not work, I gotta live with it. And I got to be okay with that. And that is where that leadership trickles up in my mind. Like, I have to be confident that my boss, and my boss's boss, and my boss's boss's boss, like understand that there is a bigger plan at play here. And that's why we have a billion meetings and we talk about expectations and communication. And so a decision that is made isn't as big of a surprise or an unknown as best we possibly can. Like there's been at least some conversation on some stuff. And obviously, you're going to run into things that you haven't been prepared for or been able to talk about yet. Because you can't cover everything, you just try to go with the flow. But again, that's where I think if I've been unlucky in any kind of way, I have had a lot of really great leadership, mentorship here at Louisiana Tech, and in a lot of other roles that understand that kind of stuff. And I think I've been able to kind of be me because of that. So in turn, I try to model that. So anybody that might report to me or be below me, they can you have some of that same comfort and confidence.

Gavin Kelly

You mentioned leadership. And I think that ties into the larger picture of your first year in this role your year one went through an athletic director change with the university president change. I'm kind of just curious, if you've got 123 kind of big things that you learned over your year in this role, your first year, or maybe maybe they were it was because it was surprising to you something you didn't expect or maybe just something you learned about yourself or the way things operate around here. Give me kind of some nuggets of wisdom that you can learn in this year.

Kyle Kavanaugh

Well, one thing that I think is extremely important is just in a world where you have no time being very intentional to carve out the time to just reflect and think back on everything that's happened and it might be reflecting right after a game and again, this is no different than like an after action review or a game DB for watching film or something like that from from previously coaching or even when I would even I was teaching like Hey, first hour went really well, second hour didn't, but second hour is different than first hour, like, there's different kids or it's a different subject or it's different time of day, you know, they, they ate lunch, and then they didn't know they just came from for PE. And I think the thing is just understanding that there are so many contextual nuances to all of this stuff, and being able to take the time out, and just be intentional about reflecting on okay, I made that decision, what I grade that as a next best decision or right or wrong, and you get comfortable with your ad, and then you get a new ad. And then you get a new president. And you kind of, you know, there's, to me, there's a difference between culture and climate, like culture is the deep seated, it's been here forever, yada, yada, it's hard to change culture overnight. But climate is the now Yeah, I can change the climate of the room like that with the next thing I say, the tone of my voice, the way I say it, all this and that, I think, just being able to sort of remove yourself from it, take a step back and try to see things from a 30,000 foot view, and reflect on those things and know that I feel pretty good today. But a month from now, things might be totally different. We might lose staffers and we might have to hire new people. And we're gonna have to bring new people into the fold. And so it's, again, it's a different job, but it's the same thing. And I just keep coming back to that, that it's dynamic, it's fluid, the moment you think you're getting comfortable, that's when you're gonna get rocked with a change. And I felt like I was finally getting my legs under

me. during basketball season, our student workers that we had, we had built a student worker team, they were learning our basketball games, by the end of the year, we're like 95 Auto percent student work driven, right? Like the adults in the room, were able to kind of take a step back, and it was just, we were finally feeling like, we were getting our stride. And then we go through an athletic director change, and it can just it can rock you because then you think like, Okay, well, this something's gonna be different. Like, you know, the the, we finally pick up on the feel of the game or the tone of the game, and that stuff's going to change. But at the end of the day, and this might be Lesson number one, the brand is the brand, the brand is perpetual, the brand will be here, coaches will come and go athletes will come and go college athletics right now is it's insane to even try to keep up with what's going on. You want to talk about dynamic and fluid? We don't we have no idea what athletic things are. Yeah, yeah. And the fact that we just don't know what that's gonna look like, and you've got to be willing to sort of roll with the punches. But at the end of the day, our responsibility is to this logo, to Louisiana Tech, athletic brand, to the Bulldogs and the lady textures. And you've that sort of has to be your North Star, that's what you need you you have got every decision that needs that is made, is to either protect or advance the brand. And we say advance the brand, 4 billion times during the day, if what are we doing it? Well, it needs to advance the brand, it is about pushing the Louisiana Tech athletic brand further. And yes, the way we go about that might change with a president or an athletic director or a new external head or new communications office or new creative video or anything like that. But at the end of the day, the brand is the brand. And that's what we're all here trying to do. And so we've got to, we've got to keep that at the forefront of our mind. And so I think once I, once I sort of figured that part out that made a lot of the decision making a little bit more was a little easier, just because you could focus on like, Okay, how is that going to affect this? Because at the end of the day, this is awesome. Representing it. Louisiana Tech's been here a lot. Yeah, way, way before I was here, and it'll be here way, way after I'm here that the goal is to just try to do what you can and make it a little bit better. You know, by the time you're done with it, and you leave.

Gavin Kelly

I think yeah, that's a good point. We we kind of talked about that in our office to the new marketing communications office, and we throw around the phrase for a few years now that we're shepherds the brand, you know, we're responsible for protecting it. But also, like you said, kind of advancing it. And it's the responsibility that people who work in marketing around here, whether it's here in athletics, or wherever, they don't take lightly, so it's good to hear that. One last question. I've never done this with a guest before maybe Oh, yeah,

Kyle Kavanaugh

maybe we'll let's let's just try it.

Gavin Kelly

We will take this out. Maybe we'll even and we'll see. So I'm responsible for naming these episodes, and it's, you know, the person's name, colon, and then the title episode title. It's usually something they said a phrase that kind of stands out. It's something that has to be the right mix of kind of catchy but not taking yourself too serious and can't be too silly. Whenever you know, you get it your marketing guy. So I'm going to ask you right now, if you could title your this episode, maybe it's a phrase you've already

said maybe it's something that you just kind of to stick with you in your own head, it would be episode 101. Cow Kavanaugh, colon. What goes there?

Kyle Kavanaugh

Hole? Man? That's a great question. It's kind of like the autobiography question. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I, my mind, recency bias goes to advance the brand, because that's what we're gonna set out to me to, you know, I love the phrase recruit everyone every day, because that's sort of a business and a life philosophy. Because again, at the end of the day, the the job is different, but the people are the same. It's so recruit everyone every day is something that I throw around quite a bit. But if I was poking fun at myself, I'd probably say, jack of all trades, master of none, because kind of getting thrown around a little bit. But if I could, if I could, if there was like, I guess one central theme that I would want people to take away from this is that the people are important. And again, they're going to change in the brand is there but Louisiana Tech, what is Louisiana Tech made of its people. And that's where I keep coming back to recruit every one every day. If we have to do that with our student workers, I have to do that with the head coaches that I work with, I have to do that with my own ad, he has to recruit me, we're recruiting each other right now. You're trying to recruit people to listen to this podcast. It's what the university side of communications is doing. It's what Texan town has been a part of, yeah, it's what these tech talks have been a part of. It's what a marketing plan is all about. Athletics, and business and life are the same. It's all recruiting. And recruiting is relationships, it's connections, if I can make a connection with you. And I'm not going to do that just once I'm going to it's going to be a perpetual cycle, a connection leads to the conversation, that conversation builds a little bit of trust between you and me. Yeah, that trust eventually breeds respect. And once we respect each other, now we're in a relationship and that that relationship, whether it be from you know, Coach, to player or brand to, to fan or anything like that, at the end of the day, that's what we're all here trying to do and strengthen it. So that's the phrase that I sort of perpetually have in my head. That's good.

Gavin Kelly

I appreciate that. So good. Always good to keep your marketing brain kind of work.

Kyle Kavanaugh

Put me on the spot. That's good.

Gavin Kelly

we've talked about time, more than once today, I appreciate you carving out some time to be here on the podcast with us. You and I think Gerald were in the room, when we were finishing getting set up for episode 100 With President Anderson and Mayor Walker. And you guys, were kind of on your way out. And we kind of did a fist bump there and said it said hellos. And then when we were tearing down, Dr. Henderson asked who was going to be next we don't have the next person scheduled. I said I've been in touch with with Kyle about it. And he said, man talking to talking to Kyle, every time you talk to Kyle, you feel better about yourself and you feel fired up. So just a little that's for you. And I agree, I have to agree. I've it's been great kind of working alongside you from over here, but as much as I can over the last year. So I know you're looking forward to this next athletic year. And I know it's gonna be a whirlwind because it always is. But I know you've you've built something over the last year and that

you're kind of just going into it with just a bolstered sense of confidence and a team that I think you've been able to have some input and putting together and that makes a big difference. So

Kyle Kavanaugh

if I could go quick, let me shout those guys out. Yeah, because, you know, again, you can only win so many games as your as your talent sort of allows and I think a big part of leadership and coaching is you got to get out of your talents way and let them work. And you know, Jacob and Carly who has moved on from us at Mississippi State. were incredible in just trusting a new guy again, like you you have to be lucky in a lot of senses to have people that will put their faith in you and those two right there were instantly right away like okay, we were following you. Let's go. Brandon, who's now in that role. June Josh Whalen, our creative video team. And if you guys have not been following our social media channels and looking at the video content that we put out this last year, it's big time best year and create a video that Louisiana Tech's ever had. And those three guys are directly responsible for that under June's leadership and we want to talk about advancing the brand. Yeah, those three guys right there are responsible for a huge part of that. And so really, really, really appreciate them. And that was sort of our core and central team along with our a lot of our student workers and we're very excited man. We're about to bring in a new broadcasting on to this thing and the communications department, Kane Hunter Branford, Kevin over there appreciate every single thing that they do and to the athletic department at large. Just want to take a quick second to shout those guys out. Wyatt and Gerald are the internal guy. I mean, you could go on and on it. It really does take a village to make this thing work. And we've got a lot of extremely talented, hardworking people that nobody gets to ever see and have a chance to thank them. So if you're listening out there, maybe you don't get the run into somebody like Wyatt but just mentally give him a fist bump, when you see something going on, because it takes a lot of people to do this,

Gavin Kelly

yes, they deserve it. And when you're at a tech event, know that everything that you kind of just assume is happening is just a passive part of what's going on. There's somebody behind it, you know, I think that's one part of athletics marketing gets overlooked. From the, like, we talked about before the music to the sponsor, activations, to the timing of everything in the sequence of everything. And you when you go to 100 games as a fan, you get to just wear that's just part of the game. It kind of just happens for you. But I think, you know, taking a moment to recognize that someone is responsible for them. So it does take everyone and we're all part of the same team and I thank you for being our team and thank you for doing what you do. Thank you for making time for us today. Kyle. We'll see you around good luck this season this year. Go Dogs

Kyle Kavanaugh

Go Dogs, Go Lady Techsters

Gavin Kelly

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