THE BEST OF — EPISODE 331

Phil Andrews

CEO, USA Fencing

On episode 331 of the Digital and Social Media Sports Podcast, Neil chatted with Phil Andrews, CEO, USA Fencing, who leads the sport's national governing body in the United States and its growth toward the LA 28 Games.

What follows is a collection of snippets from the podcast. To hear the full interview, check out the podcast on all platforms and at www.dsmsports.net.

Phil’s Career Path

“It's funny, I get asked that a lot. How do I get into this thing? What was your journey? And I have to say, my journey is the one less traveled. It's a winding road.

“So you're thinking, wait a minute, that guy sounds British. I thought you said USA Fencing. And you're right. It's the weird story of how a British, primarily ice hockey player, who was probably not the guy you would think would run a sports organization growing up, ended up doing what I do.

“That's sort of where I started. I started my career in the professional ice hockey league in the UK called the Elite League. Basingstoke Bison and Coventry Blaze. I think you live out in San Diego, so when the Gulls came back, one of our teammates at the time, our goalie Trevor Koenig, was very excited, because I believe he's got his shirt retired at the Gulls. Which is super fun.

“So it started there, went out after that into sort of corporate Britain, for want of a bit of terminology. I ended up at the University of East London right around 2010, 2011, before the Olympic and Paralympic Games, London 2012. And then ended up doing a lot of work with Team USA and a number of other people in London. I found out my market value, because most people come back home with those little Big Bens, it's about £5. So I'm guessing I must be worth about £3.50, since I got kind of brought back as a souvenir.

“Then I spent ten years with USA Weightlifting, and what a wonderful community that is. I really enjoyed my time there. A cup of coffee as the interim director general of the International Weightlifting Federation, and then came here to fencing, almost four years ago to the dot. With the idea of sort of turning around the business at the time, and the NGB, and growing the sport.

“Now we're heading into what will become my second home Games. It's sort of weird to have that, and it's actually quite unique. The last home Games was sort of like 2002, so there's a few people around. Before that it was ‘96. But I worked on home games in ‘12. There's another colleague, a former colleague of mine actually at USA Weightlifting, called Pedro Maloney, who came in from Brazil. Of course he'll be on his second home games as well. There's a fun story behind that one. I actually technically worked for him during the Rio 2016 Games, and then at midnight at one point it swapped, where he worked for me. So a lot of our mutual friends had some fun with that.

“So it's an interesting dynamic coming into a second home Games, and of course, first home Games here in the United States. And then we're on this road to LA, and have looked at the ways that we can grow our sport and how we can do that efficiently. Because ultimately we're a non-profit and we don't have a huge marketing budget, so we've got to be scrappy. That's a little bit of the flavor of the background.”

Leading a Sport You Didn't Grow Up In

“I think it's a feature, but only if you make it your mission to get inside that community and inside what it looks and feels like. How do they think? What do they care about? What does the saberist care about versus not care about? What does a para fencer care about versus an able-bodied fencer? What does a college fencer care about versus a pre-college fencer? What do veterans, which is over 40s, care about versus non-veterans?

“And within that, what does a veteran who is 78, 79 years of age, going into the Vet 80 category, which is contested here but not internationally, care about versus a Vet 40 who's 41 years of age just starting out? Those are two different cats. And what affects a fencer in New York City, where fencing is super deep, versus a fencer in Des Moines, who has very different challenges?

“So you have to dive in and really become part of that community. But coming in from the outside, I've done it twice. And then in a way, the third time I was from within the community, which was in hockey. So I guess I've had both sides of that. Your advantage is a small sliver of knowledge, but knowing what you don't know, if that makes any sense. And then just diving in and going and talking to people.

“The danger, if you come from within the sport, and it's not a bad thing, I like my teams to have a number of people from the sport. We just hired a foilist who was at the fencing club at CU Boulder. I like having somebody who stepped on the strip and knows what that is, and I like having a mix of people from the sport and not from the sport.

“The danger as a leader, though, if you're the CEO, not a board member but a CEO, and not an employee but the CEO, can be that you come in with sort of preconceived ideas based upon your 20 or 30 years in the sport. So your preconceived notion is that because I am a weightlifter, fencer, judoka, whatever it is, my vision of this sport comes from that experience. The college you went to, how you got there, what it felt like for you going through that. And there's some huge advantages of having that experience.

“The downside, especially in a multidisciplinary national governing body like us, is that the experience of a saberist and the experience of an epeeist are fundamentally quite different. And the para fencer and the able-bodied fencer are fundamentally quite different.

“So this is a very long answer to a very short question. Yes, I think it was an advantage for me personally coming from the outside. I don't think that's necessarily the case for everybody, but I find it an advantage.”

What a National Governing Body Actually Does

“We're non-profits, we're mission driven, we're owned by our members. I think that's really important to remember. Our members are fencers, they’re parents, they’re referees, club owners, coaches. Those are diverse sets of people and diverse sets of needs, requirements, desires, pick your descriptor.

“Most people know national governing bodies of Olympic sport if, first of all, to establish, if they know a national governing body even exists. Once they've got to that point and realize we're not actually directly part of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee or LA 28, those are distinct organizations from each other, and we're distinct again. We are linked. We are certified as a national governing body by the USOPC, but we are not part of them. And then realizing, oh, wait a minute, the Olympic and Paralympic Movement doesn't actually get funding in this country from the government. We're one of the few that don't. So that's like educational pieces to get through to even establish that we exist.

“But when we get there, most people know us for going and winning lovely shiny things in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and that's fine. That is part of what we do. But there's actually 144 national teams, U.S. national teams, that we send every single year. Right from veterans to the Veteran World Championships and Pan Am Vets, down to our youth Pan Am, which is our youngest age group, through to the cadet series. And we even enter, of all things, the European cadet circuit as USA Fencing. We have a junior series and then the senior series, of course.

“A lot of people don't realize that a senior level fencer is going to compete about eight times internationally a year and probably four or five times domestically. That's different in different sports, but a lot of NGBs will have that sort of large volume of sport that they do. That's part of what's called their international federation. In our case, the FIE, Fédération Internationale d'Escrime, French for International Fencing Federation.

“And then you have all of our domestic events. So 11 national events and international events that we host, 139 regionals, and then over 1,000 local events across the country, which is a huge ecosystem to manage.

“So if you think about that, over here you've got national teams, the development of national teams, the management of those national teams, which is fairly complex because we have a huge country with people training in vastly different locations. That's developing people to go and win medals for Team USA.

“Then you've got the ecosystem of fencers today. That's actually who owns us. That's our peeps. Those are the people who set the tone really for us, and the people who we must listen to. And this is where you came to, is it an advantage to be from outside the sport? Maybe, if you're going to go and listen to those people, and the people who love the organization and, more importantly, the people who don't. So that's the current ecosystem, looking after their needs. What do they care about?”

“The current ecosystem of fencing to me is all of that. Most NGBs, and I think to a degree, at the forefront, are the current members. So you are currently a member for some reason, which means you're doing something in the sport. It means you're a coach, a referee, a competitor, a mom or a dad. Sometimes a competitor. And a competitor can mean I do this once a week, it's my hobby, I picked it up when I was 26, I'm now 31, I do it, this is great, I like to occasionally go and work out in fencing. It could mean I am doing this six days a week, two times a day, I'm competing overseas, I'm a junior and a senior, right now I'm also in college, I might be at Harvard, I might be at Wayne State, whatever it is. So your life surrounds fencing. And it could be anything in between.

“The clubs are different too. We have multi-site clubs who have hundreds and hundreds of members, where they're very serious businesses. You also have more sort of church hall style clubs. Both of those have value, both of those are our members, both of them need service.

“So that's a whole ecosystem of looking after the membership. Growing that membership is part of that, but looking after their needs, [too]. Good example: our world cares a lot about college. So when we talk about college expansion and college opportunity expansion, you are a little bit growing the sport, but you're really servicing the people in it, because that's what they want to see.

“And again, that part's really important. Why? Because when you put your strategic plan together or your business plan together, technically it's going to be your board and you, and maybe your committees are involved, but you should be really involving a lot of your ecosystem through your board, through your committees, but actually also your entire membership of your organization. So therefore you're factoring in your veterans, your national team members and so forth.

“And don't get me wrong, Olympians and Paralympians are incredibly important. Those people have given their life to achieve something, which is the PLY, the OLY at the end of their name. Our elite athletes are super important too. But the entire ecosystem is just as important in a very different way.

“And then the third part of it is growing the ecosystem, which in a way serves the top bit, and it serves the high performance as well. Because of course, the more people you have in the top of the funnel, the more they're going to come out at the bottom, or the other way around, whichever way you want to put it. And if you're bringing more people into the ecosystem, the ecosystem grows, clubs get more successful. We've seen the positive, and to be fair, the challenges of growth in the last couple of years in fencing.

“So again, I've given you a long-winded answer, because an NGB is a little bit complex. But really NGBs are about all things that touch that sword. If it touches a foil, an épée or a saber, we should be about it.”

“And some NGBs don't have it. So I came from weightlifting, no college system. So it is a huge advantage, and I think that helps me see the value in fencing. Whereas coming from, I don't know, maybe a swimming, where swimming has its challenges in the NCAA and its advantages in the NCAA, but it's generally very healthy, then I don't think I would appreciate the impact and the privilege of the NCAA system as much as I do coming in from a sport where I didn't have that.”

The Business Model: Where the Money Comes From

“Non-profit does not mean you make a loss. Non-profit means you have a budget, and you know you're going to run pretty close to break even. We drive a small surplus, but not a massive one. My sort of saying, and I stole it and I don't even remember who from to credit them, is that non-profit is a tax status, not a business status. It does have its advantages and disadvantages.

“But getting to the point, we don't have government funding. We get about 6% of our budget from the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee through what is basically a grant system. So that really helps fund those very, very, very top athletes, and then we'd have to top that up. Their goal is to fund Team USA at the Olympic Games, for Olympic and Paralympic success, in obviously both the summer and then the winter Games. So they're making investments and wish to see that outcome.

“The rest of it comes from membership, events, philanthropy, so our foundation, and now commercial partnerships. We also have some pretty significant merchandise business now, retail business, which we've built over the last few years, and then some sort of what I would call miscellaneous income of different services that we provide.

“That'll differ in different NGBs, but that's our revenue stack. And you'll see different ones get funded in different ways. The most extreme example perhaps is the USTA, which is technically an Olympic national governing body and technically a non-profit, but has this small weenie event some people have heard of named the US Open. But it also is a membership organization just like we are. It also has a mission to grow tennis just like we have.

“So you have that dynamic of an organization like the USTA, which is I think something in the region of a $500 million turnover or revenue organization, compared to us. And then we are big, very big, compared to some of the other smaller NGBs. We're sort of top end of the middle group.

“US Soccer is another huge one, very commercially focused. They don't actually have individual members, they're an organization of organizations. But most, the average, looks a little bit like us, where you have membership. Some will prioritize or will have a significant commercial stack, like a US Soccer or U.S. Ski & Snowboard. Some will lead with grants and philanthropy, which, for example, USA Archery.

“And there's others where they've reached a business model which is not events. Everyone will have membership, or practically everyone will have membership. But for example, at USA Weightlifting, the biggest revenue driver is their education system, because you can use weightlifting in so many contexts of strength and conditioning and CrossFit and HYROX and all those places. Whereas in fencing, if you wish to learn to coach fencing, you're doing it to coach fencing.”

The KPI That Matters Most

“I'd say for me, participation and membership is probably the number one. You obviously want to be above your budget, or ahead of your budget and what you said you were going to have as the outcome. To me, that's the bottom right-hand corner number. If we're a little over in something, we're a little under in another, okay. So the bottom right-hand number has got to be the most important.

“And you have a ton of variables in that. Things like travel, especially in an organization like ours, vary wildly. We've had a lot of problems with that recently. There's always governance and legal and rules-based issues, which take a lot of time and stress to work out.

“But ultimately, if you say you can look at one thing for how you're doing, it's how is membership trending? Is it up or down? And I think one of the reasons that is acute right now is because of the LA 28 Games coming into the eye.

“Having been through two home Games now, there are two cycles. The phrase that was behind London 2012 was "inspire a generation," and I sort of watched how that evolved in the UK. Not everybody who's involved in fencing has an Olympic dream, or necessarily even really cares about the Olympics and Paralympics. They might be there because they just love the sport of fencing, or they are there because of college. But it does afford us some unique windows of opportunity where people are willing to look at an Olympic sport in a way that they weren't necessarily without LA 28.

“So that's really where I think now is the time to build that, where we can take advantage of some areas where we wouldn't otherwise be able to take advantage. Right now, that's definitely the most important to me. Is it trending up? Is it trending down? What is the plan to grow that? How are we taking advantage of these moments in the next couple of years to drive people to the front door of a fencing club? So it really is, to me, the single most important thing that we have.”

How People Find Fencing: Awareness, Then Connection

“One of the things to me is, it's awareness first. So you've got to see fencing as something, know fencing exists, know it's an option.

“Second is connection. What I mean by that, I'll give a fairly extreme one. We have a lot of people that find fencing via film and entertainment. So Wednesday on Netflix, KPop Demon Hunters, Star Wars. What we find is they usually need a "yes, comma, and a dot, dot, dot" Because simply watching Star Wars and thinking a lightsaber is cool is not sufficient to have some interest in what looks like fencing. Having somebody who then goes, I'm a fencer, I can take you to my local club, it does saber is that connection point that you then need.

“Even with Wednesday, where it's explicitly fencing, you need somebody in your circle, be it mom or dad, be it a friend, be it a college, be it a school, that points you in the direction of that fencing club and gives you the opportunity to put a fencing weapon in your hand.

“The reason we created Fencing Across America during Paris 24 was to bring the party to the people. We set up shop in Grand Central Terminal and in Wollman Rink and in American Dream Mall, and 15 places across 13 cities, all the way from Orange County, California, over to New York, and down as far as Atlanta. And we'll be doing that again in 27 and in 28, across quite a large number of cities, to bring fencing there.

“Why? Because it looks really hard to try, but it's actually not. You throw on the gear and away you go, and it's actually really simple. I kind of give a comparison to piano. It's easy to do those initial scales, but you're not going to play Carnegie Hall the next day. Same thing here. To get really proficient at it, it's a skill-based sport. But to have a go, it's actually pretty easy. And you've got to have that connection point.

“I'm quoting Maia Chamberlain, one of our Olympians. We did an event at the Museum of Chinese in America in New York City, and she said, How'd you get into it? Well, my mom saw a fencing camp in the local magazine or newspaper that they lived at the time in Menlo Park, California. And she goes, well, I like Star Wars, I like Pirates of the Caribbean, I'll give that a go. But she needed the two things together to make that work.

“So you get a lot of people, I knew a friend, the entertainment side, they go to a college fair and the college club got them into it. That's actually a surprisingly high volume, especially for fencers who then go on to be veteran fencers. There are some who are just simply, we researched the best way to get into college and we landed on fencing. And there is always going to be a degree of word of mouth. But the two things that go together to get you to the front door of a fencing club are absolutely awareness and then connection.”

Churn, Net Gain, and Keeping People in the Sport

“So you think about that like net gain, right? You're going to lose some people. Churn rate, net gain, basically the same measurement.

“I worked a little while in sort of the health club industry, and that game was always how we looked at that. Thinking around the idea of, how many members have we lost this month? How many members have we gained? So what's our net gain?

“I think that's a really good way of looking at it, because you're going to lose some even if you're perfect. In other words, people move to a town that's not got a fencing club. They move countries. If you move outside the US, well, we're probably not your NGB anymore. Your life happens. In adults, family happens, kids happen, job changes happen, and that changes your ability to lean in.

“In the younger years, I met somebody here in Denver, where I live, who tried fencing, loved it, went to a camp. It's called Pirates Camp, done by Denver Fencing Center. Absolutely loved fencing, and the timing just didn't work out for them. The way their life works, they commute to a school that's 35 minutes from their house, and then they're a phenomenally talented Irish dancer in this person's particular case, and that's another 35 minutes the other way. And the nights where they practice at DFC don't work out. So sometimes it's things like that that just, you lose a member because of it.”

“But to your point, you can lose people for any reason. So you've got to do all you can to retain. You really do. And that comes back to serving your community and doing everything you can with them. But you are going to lose some people, so you've got to look at how do we keep those people engaged.

“A particular place we do that in fencing is after college, because a lot of our folks are coming out of these very, very top-end colleges. Most fencing colleges are less than 16% admission. And so as a result, they're coming out of a Harvard or Columbia or Notre Dame, or even the club level somewhere like a University of Denver or Cal Berkeley, and they're going into high level careers, and those careers are intense.

“So two things come off of that. One is the challenges for our elite athletes. You've got a Bryce Louie at IBM. You've got Lauren Scruggs, who's an Olympic champion and silver medalist individually, who's working in investment banking. Those are intense careers where that early area is really intense and really important. And Marcello Olivares is also on our world team, same thing, also in banking. So those guys are having to put in a lot of hours, a lot of time, both in fencing and those careers, and then fly around the world and fence for Team USA. It's nuts, and good on them, and good on those businesses, by the way, too, for giving those opportunities. So give a shout out to IBM, and to Lauren's business and Marcello's business.

“But you've also got a lot of people who aren't at that level of the sport, who were great NCAA athletes, but now, okay, I've graduated from, let's just use Northwestern, maybe I've moved to Dallas, Texas, and now I'm intensely in my career. Well, you've got to build that. A lot of people will have to make that choice. And by the way, that's also the time I might be forming my long-term relationships and then building a family.

“So we started to email people, even expired members, when they turned 40. It was my 40th this weekend, so I actually got an email from basically myself. It was, hi, you're 40 now, welcome to the veterans. Which I thought was phenomenal. It made me laugh, but that's part of the idea.

“And we're trying to build, and we're not there yet, one of our members pointed out to me that a USC Trojan, University of Southern California, there's this atmosphere of Trojans that if a Trojan calls you, you must call back. It's like the Trojan code, basically, that you must respond. We're trying to create that for fencers. So it adds extra value to their experience in fencing, but also drives connection as a fencing alumni, that even if you're not picking up a weapon every week because you simply don't have a circumstance or a time that allows that, you can be part of this community and part of what we're doing. I think that's a really important piece of it. And actually, we've got a donor who's working with us on that, who's got some experience in that too, which is amazing.

“We did our first NCAA reception, and around that, and we built with Deloitte a database of about 5,000-ish alumni, most of whom we did not have in our database, because back in the day we haven't kept good enough records. And it's amazing who you find.

“I was at an entertainment conference presenting on the idea of this crossover between K culture, particularly K entertainment, and fencing, and how those two things are interacting. It was very interesting for everybody in the room. And then there was another gentleman who worked for a very large streaming business, and he had a queue to speak to him, left his queue and made a beeline for me and goes, are you fencing guy? And I'm like, well, I go by Phil usually, but I'll answer to that. And he goes, I fenced at Haverford. And I was like, wow.

“It shows up in the most interesting of places, and that's a guy that can help us as a sport. It's a guy who we can connect with really well, but also a guy who, if you want to go into that world of streaming, tech, entertainment that he's in, that's a guy who could hire fencers. Most importantly.

“So that's where I want to create that sort of alumni network and really see that community just go forward, rather than, oh, so you're done with college — bte. That long-term value is really important.”

Competing for Attention: Fencing's Unfair Advantages

“It's been a journey with fencing. One of the things I frame is that with LA 28, with the Olympic and Paralympic Games, we go there and we compete absolutely as one Team USA, under the US flag and the five rings, the three Agitos, under the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee banner. But in many ways we compete with each other for, frankly, attention.

“There's going to be some who naturally attract attention. For example, gymnastics. Gymnastics is a sport in the US we get excited about. It's now embedded really as part of our Olympic culture, and has been for many years, since the sort of Mary Lou Retton era. And Simone Biles obviously, arguably the last few games, has been the superstar, and deservedly so, of the entire Olympic Games. What a great privilege to have been working in Olympic sport in the era of Simone Biles performing. It's been great. And there have been some great people and personalities on that team. Laurie Hernandez, we've had her fence right outside the Duomo in Milan Cortina 2026, actually against Lee Kiefer. That was a super fun one. Got about a million views.

“So coming back to the point, we're trying to find ways where we can use fencing's uniqueness as arguably the most cinematic sport in the world to drive more people to try it, frankly. But what I'm really trying to do is, is it the one press article that we might get in the Associated Press or what have you? That's great, it really is, that's important, it's useful. But what I'm really trying to do is get people to the front door. I want to be able to show at Manhattan Fencing Center or Denver Fencing Center, or Los Angeles International Fencing Center, or Rain City Fencing Center, wherever they are. We have nearly 800 of those all around the country.

“So it's doing things like the iHeartMedia deal, which then spread to U.S. Ski & Snowboard and to US Figure Skating and others. That drove a hell of a lot of awareness for fencing, and it actually drove a little bit of connection, because we were able to put tryfencing.org in there. Then we did Cumulus, on Westwood One. That's how we found Ryan Harris. Turns out Ryan Harris is a commentator here, and he's a former Denver Bronco, lives here. And his son had tried fencing and loved it, and he needed to find a club, and he mentioned that. We only knew it because we got an excerpt of the audio on the advert, and it had a little bit of commentary on the end of it, and it was Ryan talking about it. I'm like, who is that? And he's been awesome.

“Dietrich Weiss, who does the fencer celebration, he came in and fenced recently. So we had this really good journey of people who've leaned into fencing.

“And that's a uniqueness of the way fencing looks, the fact we have the mask. I can send a fencer, but I don't have to send necessarily Lee Kiefer. If I'm going to do an interview, okay, I need to call Lee, I need to call Mitchell or Meyer or somebody like that, or Bryce. But because of that unique thing that we have, that mask advantage, a fencer could be anybody. Or it could be somebody like you. Think about The Masked Singer.

“That's a huge part of it. And what else do we have that's unique? Well, we were the first sport to do Comic-Con ever. And the reason we did it is because we were able to have that connection with fencing and film.

“I actually was on that panel, which was a bizarre experience in the first place. Just wild to talk about the growth of fencing and that link. But you had Bruce Dickinson from Iron Maiden, lifelong fencer. You had Liam McIntyre, the new Wolverine (in X Men) who was Spartacus, that's how I learned to fence. You had guys like that on the panel. Asher Grodman, who fenced at Columbia University, who in [TV show] Ghosts. Great guy.

“So we've got all these people who've been amazing to the sport and really wonderful to have engaged in the sport. And then, of course, you now know about the Mandy news as well. So Mandy [Patinkin of Princess Bride] will be an honorary captain. ‘My name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father, prepare to die.’ Or in this case, ‘My name is Mandy Patinkin, I learned to fence, prepare to try.’

“So we've leaned into some of these things that make us truly unique compared to some of our other sports. And if I was working in cycling or triathlon or archery, I'd be looking for that unique thing there. Don't get me wrong, everyone's got to take advantage of what they have and do what they can to make the most of this opportunity in LA 28.

“So I think that's probably the lens. How do we do this in a way that's affordable to the sport, that benefits the sport, benefits our clubs? We can't go and buy $50 million worth of advertising. We just can't. We don't have that budget. That's like three, four times our annual operating budget. What we can do is go, Hi, Mandy, would you come and be part of our team at the Olympic Games? But in return, would you please help us grow the sport?

“Now, Mandy happens to be one of the nicest people I think I've ever met. The first day that we were due to speak, I lost my voice. And I said, I'm really sorry, would you mind if we spoke tomorrow? And the next thing I know, I get these walls of text of what Vicks I should use and how I should mend my voice. And I'm thinking, I've never met this man in my life so far. My first thought was, and I told him this the next day, I said, you and I are a little different. He goes, how? And I said, well, when I'm trying to recover my voice, I'm trying to have a conversation, maybe with you, maybe with my wife, my daughter. I'm not trying to go and sing on Broadway. And he just laughed. You and I are different animals in that sense. But he's been really kind to our organization, really kind to work with as well.

“But so many people have. A lot of creators. We've got this Creator Showdown coming now. We've got 300 million followers across those folks who are leaning in, plus a bunch of cameos from some LinkedIn voices, some of the folks who fenced in films, some people who are, quotation marks, people of note. There's a K-pop star showing up. So there's some interesting people coming in to do cameos there. And the idea is that we'll have probably somewhere between 60 and 100 million views of that particular event.

“And then Miles Chamley-Watson, right around the same time, started the World Fencing League. His connections and his career have really helped the sport generally. So we've got a lot of people we work with showing up to that event as well. But also you have people like Lewis Hamilton, who happens to be one of Miles’s very best friends, and Kim Kardashian showing up. So again, you've got more and more momentum and eyeballs in the sport.

“So for me, this sort of marketing drive, whatever terminology, is how do we innovate as a sport, especially in a sport that is, I think our organization is about 136 years old at this point. How do you bring one of the oldest sports in the world into a modern era, make it relevant for a six-year-old who's looking at KPop Demon Hunters or Wednesday on Netflix, or whatever it is that they're looking at that day, and make it relevant for them? How do you make it relevant for the parent who's going, okay, youth sport today is expensive, no matter what sport you do. Where should I invest my time and effort?

“And importantly in fencing, fencing does tend to appeal to folks who, no sport really speaks to them. The nickname is physical chess, right? So how do you reach people for whom baseball, basketball or hockey isn't speaking to them? Those guys aren't lazy in any way. It's just they're individualistic. They may not have a body type that speaks to those sports. And currently, sometimes they might be doing robotics, or they might be doing chess, they might be doing music, they might be doing drama. And sure enough, I don't find it coincidental that those two creative sides, we seem to have a lot of those. And then we have a lot of people who have fenced and are in sort of the dramatic side. I joke that Juilliard in New York City, the one sport they could put a legit varsity team out in is fencing.

“So to me, I think the theme is how do we grow the sport, how do we grow our NGB, which highly, those two things are the same. How do we bring more attention and, frankly, honestly, respect to the sport as well? People think fencing, when I came here, people said, no, wait, did you go to a smaller sport from weightlifting? I'm like, no, it's actually bigger. And that's no disrespect to weightlifting. Again, I love that community. It's a meaningful ten years of my life that I will always cherish. And we brought some weightlifting, as I call it, the weightlifting mafia, into fencing. We have four of us in the organization. But it is very different, and it is a sport where it needs to be better shown across, and now with new technology can be as well.”

Participation First, Fandom Second

“My priority, first and foremost, is getting people into a fencing club and trying fencing. Because our world surrounds participation in sport, and we really are participatory in nature. That's what our model is.

“The way I explain it very succinctly is, soccer has 4,000 people in the stands and 11 people on the field of play. I have 40,000 people on the field of play and 11 people in the stands. But guess what? The rest of those 40,000 are also fans. I think the number is something like 16 million people are members of national governing bodies. So those are super fans, in a way, those Olympic and Paralympic sports.

“So I would say that participation will always very likely come first in fencing. But fandom is a part of what we do. I think the issue for us, and to a degree for sports like us, is building infrastructure that speaks to fandom.

“Now we're building out Belcastel, which is our direct-to-consumer platform. Previously it was really hard to watch fencing. You had to really dig to get to it, which meant you're usually someone who does it, because that's how committed you are. Now it'll be much easier to go and find it and see it and watch what you want. The TV show that we have makes that easy again. So you talked about it earlier, making it easy for people. And we aren't fan led from that perspective.

“So creating that infrastructure of, okay, now we're creating spectator stands. Now we're creating for the first time this year an event that we hope will stay in its same location, which is a New York, New Jersey Cup. It's our number one metro area. So there's a lot of reasons why New York is advantageous. We have a base there, we have a lot of fencing alums there. But also, obviously, there's a lot of media and brands in New York. So that isn't offensive in any way either.

“So building fan base is something that we're trying to do. I will say, I think participation comes first and fandom comes second, because of that lack of infrastructure. And that's where potentially the World Fencing League that Miles started, and us, have an interesting middle ground. Because ultimately, if they can get to a point where they're placing events in New York, in LA and San Francisco on a consistent basis, and therefore they're driving repeat fandom that attaches themselves to those athletes and to those areas, that helps us. Because now we've created, okay, not under our banner, but under fencing, there is a fandom banner.

“I think there is a working equivalency to that, which is SailGP and US Sailing. And then another one, which is LOVB volleyball and USA Volleyball, I think. So that's where you're seeing this sort of pro investment and pro leagues coming up and perhaps owning that fandom model, and then us owning the participatory model.”

Building Stars in a Sport Where Everyone Wears a Mask

“Consistently, sports need stars. They do. And sometimes it's a little unfair, in a way, the way that stardom works in sport. A lot of the time the star of the sport also happens to be really good at that sport. Sometimes it's somebody who's got that personality that goes with it. And you see that right across sport, professional sport, not professional sport, etc.

“To me, if you're not a fan of Lee Kiefer, you should be. She's one of the very best of all time, if not the very best of all time, foil fencer in the world. And also definitely the best female foil fencer in the world, or foil fencer, in terms of the US, ever. Mariel Zagunis, in saber, would rival her across the three weapons. But Lee is a tremendously warm, intelligent, friendly, giving human being. Oh my God, you couldn't ask for better. And her husband Gerek, who's a five-time Olympian. You couldn't ask for better ambassadors for your sport. And she's got a healthy following, and she does get some great support from brands during the Olympic and Paralympic game run.

“However, and I'll go on my small rant for a moment, in any other country, Lee would be the national hero. Almost any other country. But because we win, and we're fortunate enough to across Team USA, so many medals, people don't necessarily know Lee or Nick Itkin or Lauren Scruggs. And those should be people who get stopped going down the street.

“So to your point, this is sort of part of the push into the media as well, of build those media relationships starting now, and build them to the point where we can call on those in the run to ‘28 and in ‘28. Fun fact, fencing had the most appearances on CNN during the Paris 2024 games. And it was very simple. The reason why is because we built a relationship with them, and we made an effort to make sure they were included in the media tour after a medal. We got to them before the games started, so they took some of our non-medalists, which in US terms is a little unusual. So we ended up getting well over half of the features on CNN for athletes, actually our athletes, which was tremendous. But it was building that relationship ahead of time and having the trust of their producers was really important.

“The other elements were, when we're doing our creative stuff, like Creator Showdown, yes, we've got four of our most social forward athletes, don't get me wrong, but we're going to be building their following in fencing through them.

“This is where I think with Miles, there's been a history in sport of international and national federations a little bit pushing away or pushing back on some of these athlete-run leagues, or these efforts that a star has to build their own thing. And I think that's crazy. Because more fencing is good. Then it's my job as USA Fencing to persuade somebody to come in to watch us. We're lucky enough that most of the fencing world does go through us in the United States. But more eyeballs on fencing, the better. And Miles Chamley-Watson showing up and stealing the show at the Met Gala does not hurt us. And similarly, it doesn't hurt us that you've got people like Katy Perry showing up basically dressed as a fencer. Those are things that indirectly help us. They don't directly help us, but they do indirectly help us.

“And then again, Miles as an athlete, I go to places where they go, Oh, that's that guy, a fencer. But also, every sport to grow needs those stars. It's important for us to help build people into that. Look at Bryce Louie with how he's grown. Some of that's come through the collaborations he's done, where the people who are following an Andrew Fung or the Gardner brothers or so on, now are seeing Bryce. Seeing Bryce fencing, but also seeing Bryce. And that's really important. The same thing for Maia Chamberlain, for Lauren Scruggs and Lee Kiefer.

“When Lee and Laurie Hernandez fenced outside the Duomo, you had a lot of factors. You had an iconic Olympian in Lee Kiefer, an iconic Olympian in Laurie Hernandez, two phenomenally good human beings. That background and backdrop of the Duomo. You're in a city with the Olympic Games going on, with two summer Olympians doing a summer sport in a city that's known for that sport. A lot of factors made that a really great two minutes of time. And it took some organizing, don't get me wrong, but both of those individuals were up for it.

“It also takes those athletes leaning in. Some athletes really want to focus on their sport, and I get it. You are trying to be the very best in the world at this thing, and you also are trying to do either education or work or all of these other things. That is a lot. I'm trying to be a good CEO and an even better dad, and hopefully along the way a great husband too. And believe me, balancing those three things, and I might want to sleep at some point, maybe take a shower — it's rough, it's tough to do. So trying to do that as a regular human being, and trying to do that as an Olympian level athlete, or national team level athlete, and working, and all of that. My word, these people are committed. And then, by the way, would you do all this media stuff? That's a lot. So fortunately, our athletes have really leaned in, and that's what it takes to grow.

“And you've got to help grow those superstars. You think about Drive to Survive. That grew Will Buxton, yes, but it also grew a lot of those folks who are on the grid, who brought out their personalities. I don't think necessarily it grew Lewis Hamilton, I think Lewis was already really a superstar. But it was certainly people who came through that, a Jenson Button as an alum, for example, David Coulthard, folks who when I was young, I saw them drive, and grow up in a country where F1 is as popular as NASCAR is here. And it also grew the sport in the UK too, by the way. It's just a different level of production, a different way of thinking about it. When F1's previous philosophy was more about the teams and about F1 as a brand. Now F1 as a brand is flipped, and it's like, yeah, by the way, have you noticed that we have Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso and Max Verstappen? And all of that comes through that way. And then secondarily, by the way, we have these teams. And tertiary is actually F1.

“The equivalency is, the primary is Lee Kiefer, the secondary is Bluegrass Fencing Club, the tertiary is USA Fencing, then the FIE, then the Olympic Games. It's actually the inverse.”

Trade Press and the Business Narrative

“I think it's important to have respect for the sport, respect for the business. And ultimately those open doors.

“Over the last two weeks, you've seen the announcement of the Creator Showdown, you've seen the Digiday article come out about that, the Mandy Patinkin article come out in Variety and a number of other outlets. And that's opened doors. It honestly has.

“It's interesting, somebody yesterday or a couple of days ago told me an anecdote about a Premier League football club in England that, until they had their particular company come in, had never done a single outbound call in media, in commercial. And I can figure out pretty quickly who it is, just because of some of the personalities I know from those clubs over the years. But that still blows my mind. You have to get out there. You have to tell people about you. Your job is to be an evangelist for your sport. It literally is your job.

“So NGBs, minor sports, challenger sports have to. That's how SailGP got good, that's how LOVB got good. They went and they told people about what they do. You can't expect somebody to lean into what you're doing without you going out there and telling that story.

“So I think the business side is important in a very different way to the athlete side. That's you're looking to open more doors for the sport. The athlete side, you're trying to promote the sport and the athlete, and that's really important. On this side, you're trying to reach the people who can open up opportunities for the sport, in order that you can do the stuff on that side of the house.”

“And you hear around different places, and not just the Olympic and Paralympic movement, like, Oh, USA Fencing's got momentum. And I don't quite know exactly what they mean by that usually. But that's, you do want to hear that.

“And you also want to think about, even with brands, you want brands to think about a sport that's going in the right direction. With Olympic brands, one of the things that Olympic brands can do to help us, they don't even need to sponsor us. But if they select Lee Kiefer or Miles Chamley-Watson or Nick Itkin or Maia Chamberlain to be their face, or one of their faces, for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, that's still helpful. Because now their adverts and their media buys are going to feature Lee Kiefer or Maia Chamberlain, or wherever it might be. Guess what? That's more eyeballs on fencing.

“But then, where are they reading? They're not necessarily reading some of this stuff over here, which is the sort of more consumer facing stuff. They might be as a consumer. But they are in Sportico, SBJ, Digiday, Adweek. That's where they live.”

The Plan for LA 28

“The good news is, Bryan Wendell on my team, who's this phenomenally talented, now promoted to CMO, chief marketing officer and chief of staff, as our comms director, he's been through games, so he understands how that works. We've just brought in a head of content who is phenomenally talented on video. Nicole Kirk has been through a Paralympic Games. So we deliberately sent one to the Olympics and one to the Paralympics. They both got that experience. I've done a home Games, and now going into a fifth Games, and a little long in the tooth. But we've got some experience in the team, which is helpful. We've also got some building relationships, which is helpful.

“So it should be a steady thump before the games. We want to use opportunities like the Showdown, opportunities like the fact we have people based in New York, to be able to be easy access for media, easy access for media to athletes. We want to make it easy for people like the USOPC who have influence, the IOC who have influence, the FIE who have influence over where media goes, brands who have influence over media. We want to be the easy phone call for them. We want to be the people where they know that they can text us, call us, and we'll make things happen. So that's one.

“Number two is we need to be different. You've heard that from me a couple of times. So we've got a couple of surprises in store for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which we will show our cards on closer to the time. But I think one of those in particular is going to draw some significant attention.

“We are going to push hard between now and the Olympic and Paralympic Games to bring attention to the sport. And again, that momentum will carry in.

“We are going to be locally present too. So there's going to be opportunities for your NBC Portland or your NBC San Diego to cover their local folks through the Fencing Across America tour, and through local fencers. So you can bring fencing home, not just in Los Angeles, but in New York, San Diego, Denver, Portland, Seattle, wherever it might be. All of those factors are really important.

“So we do have a battle plan. I would say at the moment it's more of a battle pl–. But we are getting there, I think.”

Most Memorable Campaign from the Coventry Blaze (hockey team in England's top ice hockey league)

"Oh my God, that was such a fun place to work. And I didn't notice at the time, but it's been so influential on my career.

"I would say doing the Citroën deal. Citroën is the equivalent of, I don't know, Chevrolet or Buick, or that type of, it's a car company, basically, a French car company. So we got them to be one of our major partners. That deal kind of went all the way up to the French headquarters of PSA Peugeot Citroën. And yeah, being a pretty early career guy doing a deal like that, which made a real difference to the team for many years afterwards, was very rewarding."

“It was really useful, because then all the athletes had a car, and then each of those cars had a big giant dragon along the side. So it's promoting us. It was a really good partnership. And rewarding because it was with Citroën, as opposed to it was with necessarily like a second hand car dealership, or a rental car. I mean, those are great, there's nothing wrong with that. But it was nice that that got out of the local level and into a level where it was meaningful to Citroën, and it was meaningful to Coventry Blaze. And I left the organization pretty shortly after that, so it was meaningful to see it last a long time.”

Will College Sports in the UK Ever Be What It Is in the US?

“It's a different culture. It wasn't built the same way. It's not viewed in the same way.

“Over here, in many ways, it's a marketing tool. It's a very clever marketing tool. But if you think about it from a pure business perspective, that's what it really is doing. It's the brand of the university. It's germane to what they do. In others, it's an enrollment driver. In the UK, it's a service to the students. It's a student services aspect, and that's okay.

“First of all, look at the infrastructure. In London, when we built out UEL and the SportsDock, we did that in part for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. And very proudly, we are the number one sports university in London. And it's really good for London. There are two universities, at least in the UK, which have really great facilities: Loughborough and Bath, who are two known-for-sport universities. But even then, if you picked up Loughborough or Bath, which are excellent, and you put them into the US, they'd be fair to middling at best.

“I remember talking to the AD of the University of Michigan. This man has a 100,000-seater stadium. This was a long, long time ago, back before I moved here. But no one has that. The professional teams don't have that. Wembley Stadium isn't that big. Old Trafford is not that big. So it's a different culture.

“I think the other thing is, college sports in the US, for a lot of places, fills a local need. And in the UK, soccer has that same feel. We have 20 teams in the Premier League, but we have 96 in the Football League. So if you think about nominally, Britain, or England and Wales, that's not even counting Scotland, England and Wales is roughly the same size as California. And I know that's not quite exactly right. Imagine you had 96 NFL teams in California. But then cross-reference that with the amount of colleges, and suddenly you're going, oh, this is filling that same need.”

The Biggest Moment in USA Weightlifting History

“It's tough. There are three or four that come to mind. Definitely in recent years, Olivia Reeves' gold medal in Paris. That's a phenomenal moment. That was tremendous. I was involved when Olivia was starting. She is, again, much like Lee, a tremendous human as well. You select the athlete who's best based on their athletic abilities. It's always nice when they're a great person.

“So I think Olivia's moment. There's a few over history, certainly with John Davis back in the day, and Norb Schemansky, and Tommy Kono. But in recent years, I think the top three, the first ever gold medal for women's weightlifting, period, for Tara Nott Cunningham. Unfortunately she didn't win it on the field of play, because there was a doping test on the Kazakh who won. She got awarded her medal in the village. Unforgivable. The dopers will always rob the clean athlete of that moment. And that's a lot of value that they rob an athlete of.

“And then I think third would probably be, in many ways, CJ Cummings' breakthrough, world record and world championship, in 2016. That started the gold rush, as it were, that announced Team USA was back. Between him, Mattie Rogers, Kate Vibert, Harrison Maurus, those are the folks who built the house that is now USA Weightlifting as a performance organization. And those guys deserve a lot, and their coaches and the teams that sat behind them. They were great. And those are the folks on whom people stand now. They set the tone. It's a big, big part of how Team USA went from being accepting of being 24th, 25th, 26th, and that was okay, and those guys said, no, it's not. We're the best in the world and we're going to show you.”

Weightlifting in the Post-GLP-1 Era

“That's an interesting question. I'll be honest, I haven't given that much thought, because my job now is to spend every waking moment thinking about how I grow fencing, not how I grow weightlifting. But I think the short answer is yes.

“You go back to what I said earlier about fencing, and you find what's unique and what can help, and that's an opportunity. One of the things that befalls a lot of national governing bodies, weightlifting included, certainly, but table tennis is another good example, is where you've got a lot of people who might be doing something that resembles a sport recreationally, and converting those people. It's not terribly different to our thing with film. There's a lot of people who like Star Wars. How many of them can we get to do saber?

“So what is the click? What is the pull into weightlifting from there? CrossFit made that so good and so easy, because of the way that CrossFit set itself up as a community, the fact that the snatch and the clean and jerk were pretty regularly included, the fact that they gave the gyms enough freedom to do a lot of what they wanted, so starting a barbell club was easy for them.

“That's one of the reasons that building that huge coaching education series was able to happen in weightlifting. And therefore what happened? People are going to those courses, they're spending a weekend with an awesome coach or an awesome former athlete who's now a coach, who's teaching them all about it. Then they've got themselves a mentor. Now they're going back to their gym, they're spreading the snatch and the clean and jerk. Suddenly that grows as part of the program and what they do.

“So part of the challenge, if I put my weightlifting cap back on for a second, part of the challenge that I might see right now is, with sort of rivals having come in like HYROX, who've seen how CrossFit has done really well over the years and have now come in with these rival series, how does weightlifting play in that space? And I don't have an answer. But that's sort of how do you make something out of that?

“To your point, I, on and off had a little bit of a thought of, oh, this is interesting with GLP-1. I've never, ever come to a conclusion. How ethical is GLP-1 in terms of weight cutting for a weightlifter? But even for bodybuilding, less so, because quite candidly, there's been a deregulation of the doping culture, or doping in there, for many years, in most. Let me be clear, there are ones that do natural. But with doping-tested sports, doping-regulated sports, how is that a clean playing field question mark?

“So to me, those are the questions that I've thought about more than your point of the post GLP-1 era, or they've been around for a couple of years now, people are like, okay, now I've got to get back into the gym and I've got to do this and that. And I think there is opportunity there. I think that's probably the basis of it.

“Do I have a great way of how you might think about taking advantage of those opportunities? No. But I will tell you this. You've got some ingenious gym owners out there. I'm sure they're going to figure it out. And there's some really great people there at USA Weightlifting who will, I know, jump on some of that. That's where they may have an opportunity.

“And you think about, okay, we're now in 26, the world's moving so fast. I think sport, and I'll finish with this, weightlifting might have more opportunities with the GLP-1 side, in the post GLP-1, to your point. But I think we all have opportunities as physical culture, physical sport, physical activity in person, and connection, real connection.

“I do think that, while I am certainly not anti-AI in any way, shape or form, I'm very much for things that can make us more efficient, I do think there's an opportunity for sport writ large to be at the forefront as we turn that corner, and sort of be that community, be that aspect of physical life, be that aspect of connection that people are seeing a little bit less and less of with, ultimately, things are online and the internet and sort of the AI world.”

The GOAT Fencer

“I don't think I'd have much controversy in saying, for women, Mariel Zagunis, closely followed by Lee Kiefer in the US. And I don't think I'd have much competition in saying Peter Westbrook on the men's side.”

The Fencer Whose Social Media You Should Follow

“Oh God, now you're making me make tough choices. I hate when people put me into one athlete, so I'm going to give you a few, if I'm really honest.”

“Miles Chamley-Watson (@Fencer). He's our best known fencer. You'll see him hanging around with Lewis Hamilton, and building the World Fencing League, and doing interesting things with the Met Gala and stuff like that. He's a really interesting guy. So definitely @encer.

“Lee Kiefer (@leetothekiefer), the very best fencer on the planet. She's just about to have her first child with her wonderful husband, Gerek Meinhardt.

“Nick Itkin (@nick_itkin), Bryce Louie (@bryce.louie), Lauren Scruggs (@saucyscruggs), Maia Chamberlain (@maiachamberlain), Mitchell Saron (@mitchellsaron.”

The Most Viral Fencing Content

“Oh yeah, that's easy. Miles Chamley-Watson versus Snoop Dogg. 22 million views, I think it got, on Instagram during the Olympic Games.”

Best Meal in Colorado Springs

“Rabbit Hole. Get the meatloaf.”

“Rabbit Hole is very subtly themed after Alice in Wonderland. But it's called the Rabbit Hole. So you literally go down into like a basement underneath the street in Colorado Springs. And the food's really good, you can order anything there, it's really good. I always get the meatloaf.”



The Biggest Leadership Lesson

“There's a lot. Honestly, there's keep evolving, keep learning. I know that sounds cheesy, but there is always stuff you don't know. There's always stuff you're going to learn. There's always challenges that you're going to go in the next day and not know what to do and have to figure it out as a leader.

“When I was in my 20s and I was already leading organizations, I kind of dismissed a little bit of experience. And now I'm entering my 40s, I see a huge value in the experience. But I also see huge value in the new ideas that younger generations can bring.

“I'd say the other ones are people, people, people, people, people. And care. Care about what you do. Care about your people, care about yourself, care about your family. It is so important to care about your people in your organization. Defend them. If you're a leader of people, and that's both your members and your culture, and your staff and your culture. Defend them both. Be in front of them. Be their person.”

Under-the-Radar Fencers to Watch for LA 28

“I'm going to do two or three again.

“It depends on if you're looking from the fencing perspective, where we already kind of know these people, or if — I had a conversation the other day where I named an athlete to somebody in the sort of, how should I put this, viewership development world is probably the easiest way of putting it, for the games. And I was shocked when they said that they didn't have them on their radar. I almost fell off my chair.

“So I'd say Jalen Liu in women's foil is a huge up-and-coming athlete. Young. She's 16 or 17 now, I think she is. She's already a world gold medalist in team. So I think Jalen's going to be a breakout star.

“I'm sort of at the moment discounting our number one ranked athlete pretty much across everywhere. In épée, Hadley Husisian. Washington, D.C. and Princeton University.

“In saber, Daria Lukashenko, who's [in] New York, out of Saint John's. In women's saber, maybe Lola Pasek from Notre Dame and northern New Jersey. Again, Maia's number one, so I'm discounting her for a second.

“Men's foil, I think there's going to be a really interesting battle to make that team. I think everyone knows Miles, but Miles is not in the top four right now, so don't count that man out. He's a former champion. But maybe since he's not really completely on anyone's radar screen right now, in terms of breakout star in the games, if he makes it, I think Bryce Louie, because of his personality. Like Miles, he's so personable. He's got this comedic aspect to him. I think if he makes the Games, he'll be a big star. But it's going to be tough, because that team is so competitive. Both our men's and women's foil are very competitive to make.

“So if you're looking at who's going to make the team, who are the folks up and coming, Marcello Olivares has made this year's team, but I still put him in that category, and Chase Edna.

“I think there's a lot to watch in fencing, of these people who are coming up. You'll see, like Maia Weintraub, she came up the inside, pretty much made the women's foil team, did extremely well, got subbed in on injury in the match against Italy. Basically we went from pretty well equal against Italy to absolutely kicking their butt. And in our world, that's huge. I mean, that's like beating the US in women's basketball. It's massive.

“So I'd say watch fencing, basically. But yeah, I mean, Bryce, Daria Lukashenko, Hadley Husisian, Jalen Liu. Any fencer listening to this is going to be like, Jalen Liu's an up-and-coming star, are you insane? But for the people outside fencing, that might be true.”

All-Star Follows

“I'm a big fan of Sportico in general. I find a lot of their content really interesting, the way they think about it, the way they write it. Rachel Axon (Sports Business Journal reporter), pretty much anything she does, and her deep knowledge of the Olympic and Paralympic Movement and women's sports, I really appreciate.

“Marketing Brew (newsletter) specifically, as opposed to just the Morning Brew, is one I like a lot. The Excellent Leadership podcast, by Excel Advisory. The quality of the people they have on and the leadership journeys they've been on resonate a lot. And it's going to come a lot based upon what I do for a living. But more than once I've reached out to that person who's on the podcast, like, hey, can we have coffee? Because you learn from people, right? So, love that podcast.

“I was actually on Rapid Response recently, which was really cool, because I listen to the podcast. I won't listen to my own episode, because I kind of hate my own voice. So I've been on that, Masters of Scale. And they've actually subsequently invited us to be part of their conference. So that's really a cool one.

“So those are good ones. And there's more. There's some really good stuff out there. To me, I'm always looking for what can give us an edge. What are we not thinking about that other people are, inside or outside of sport? I like to spend time, when I can, and honestly at the moment it's just so busy, which is a good thing, looking at those articles, or looking at the writing of people, or interviews with people who've got that experience of doing something new. And especially people who go, this is what worked, and this is what didn't.

“And that's another thing. We talked about leadership lessons. Put your hand up and go, I was wrong. You can't be wrong all the time. You can't be wrong every single time. But you are going to be wrong a lot of the time. And that's okay.”

Where to Find Phil and USA Fencing

Find Phil at Phil Andrews on LinkedIn and then @a.phil on Instagram.

USA Fencing is @USAFencing across the board. Fun fact: They'll be launching soon on WeChat and Xiaohongshu

THANKS

Thanks again to Phil for being so generous with his time to share his knowledge, experience, and expertise!

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