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**Don:** You grew up in Massachusetts with two younger sisters and played tennis. Was it a competitive household?

**Dawn:** I was the oldest of three girls born to a father who was one of four boys playing competitive baseball. He grew up in a farm in Maryland, with his father, uncle, and my cousin playing minor league baseball, at the time for the Baltimore Orioles, but very competitive family. My father, he played baseball, but he wasn't as into it as his brothers and father, so he ended up getting into sailing. Getting into tennis, my father finds himself going from this macho family of four boys in Maryland, to living in Massachusetts and having three girls. My two sisters had some medical challenges when they were born and just weren't as athletic as I was. So, I became the hypothetical son my father never had. He was just always taking me to watch the Red Sox and Frank Robinson, playing tennis with me, and he even taught me to ski when I was four years old. So, I really think I was very lucky. My love of sports was transferred from my dad.

**Don:** You went on to attend Dartmouth, just three years after the campus allowed women and you were one of the 100 women in a 95% male campus. What was that experience like?

**Dawn:** So, I went to visit a high school friend of mine that was a year older than me, at Dartmouth, and I was trying to think of where I wanted to go and of course, I had to go to Princeton because that was a big tennis playing school. But then I saw Dartmouth and I just fell in love with being in this beautiful landscape in the mountains and river. So, I applied early decision to go there and got in really not thinking about the fact that it was of many schools late in the game, to accept women. Coming from a public high school, it's 50-50. I really didn't even think about it. So, it was a little bit of a culture shock, I have to say, when I got there, and I realized that there were some undertones. I would say that it was during the late 60s, that the men on campus voted women to be part of the school. I am sure the school had done an analysis saying financially, it would be smart. By the time they did it, the men that had decided to go to Dartmouth went to Dartmouth because it was an all-male school. So, for them, they were not as gun ho about these women coming and so I do remember how they used to call us "Co Hawks". So, for the first Halloween I dress up with my roommate as a little pig, and we go around to the fraternities thinking, "Oh, isn't this so funny?" Oh, God, they did not think it was funny at all. They took it

very seriously. So, I guess I had a lot to learn about, especially about male bonding and male culture. I found my space in sports, and sports was a great savior. I will tell you that having competed since I was 14, at sports, it gave me a way to deal in an all-male environment, or if things didn't go the way I wanted, it taught me to stand up for myself. I was much more aware of how I thought things should be. I don't think anyone described me as nasty. I would just sort of chart my own course and if somebody didn't agree with me, I'd find a place where they do.

**Don:** What advice would you give to young women looking to climb the ranks in any male-dominated industry?

**Dawn:** I would say you have to be your own person. You will not succeed if you're not leveraging what makes you who you are and the strengths that make you who you are. Well, a lot of companies will talk to you about how you work on your weaknesses. I'm all for that and proving the weaknesses, but you really should weigh in on your strengths. Same thing in tennis. My forehand was my killer. My overhead was my weakness. I like to think it's gone now but at the time, I learned how to play for that. I think it's the same thing in business, which is to understand what you're good at. Go in, be yourself, and be inquisitive, ask questions. We have talked to younger women entering business today. Sometimes things happen to them, and they think, "Oh, it's just because I'm new" or "I shouldn't say anything because I'm new." But I think a lot of companies really want to hear from younger people there. They are very critical to their future. So not being afraid to ask in a very positive way is important. I think enter, understand your strengths, be inquisitive, ask if something's going on and you want to get involved in it. Try not to be quiet and shy in the corner.

**Don:** You played golf, squash, and tennis at Dartmouth, and in your junior season Dartmouth tennis had a 14-1 record! Is there a specific "best moment" you remember from that season?

**Dawn:** I think what's interesting is that we weren't very focused. We were a new team. We played in a small college and ended up going to a small college national. I think we were more focused on having fun, winning, and deciding who should play the right positions, prime things. I think it kind of crept up on us. What I remember about that year, is we were still pretty new, we're getting used to each other. We were really excited because we had another new class come, giving us more talent. We were really just focused on figuring out who is best playing singles, who's best playing doubles, just working on our pro. Our focus was doing the best we could do because we were a young new team. I remember being surprised when the coach at the end of the season said, "Hey, congratulations, won the division, and you guys finished 14 and one," and it just wasn't our focus. I think it was just such a pleasure getting the team up and running, and maybe we would have done worse if we had been all stressed out thinking that we were trying for the title.

**Don:** In a Forbes interview you said, "Unlike team sports, tennis requires its athletes to take complete ownership of every decision. When you are playing tennis, it's you out there on the court... There's no one else you can blame. You either do it or you don't do it." Did tennis allow you to develop that "ownership muscle" that you could apply into team settings later in your career?

**Dawn:** I'll answer a little bit more broadly, which is, I think that to be a successful leader in business you need to be able to chart a course. You need to get everybody's opinion, get all the data. But in the end, I think organizations sometimes try to do too much. What you need to do is to simplify and focus on "This is the field we want to take." This is what success looks like. That's really what a leader has to do. To me,

it's incredibly about teamwork, freeing people, and letting people have the power of making their own decisions. Figuring out a better way to do things in pursuit of the overall goal. So, I think when I think of tennis, there's that moment when I can't blame anybody. It's whether you do it or you don't do it. Easy matches pretty easy. Great competitor, I'll do my best. I'll be happy if I lose four and four, but those really close matches, it's up to you. I think it taught me tremendously about the importance of focus and figuring out what your strengths are and sticking to those strengths.

**Don:** In the same article, you said tennis taught you to go with your gut instinct. Was there a moment in tennis where this instinct led to success? How do you use this skill today?

**Dawn:** Many times. One of the things about being professional in more than sports is how you have a lot of data and you have a lot of input. Sometimes there's not a right or wrong idea. There's picking a path, and then how it's executed results on whether it's successful or not. But sometimes I've had to rely on an instinct as to whether that's the right way to go. I can think of two circumstances in my career at Pepsi where my gut really helped me. One of them was, for many years at the time that I ran Pepsi, our bottlers were independent company. Some of them were publicly traded with over a billion dollars in sales, and some were small with ten. The problem was, as our retail customers were getting more and more sophisticated, the requirements they were putting on bottle system was fairly straightforward and easy for the larger bottlers to handle, but the smaller ones were struggling. The larger bottlers thought, "If I keep squeezing, and I don't help my smaller bottler, they'll have to sell. Then I can buy them and that'll fuel my growth." So, it was a system which was the antithesis of teamwork. It was, "I'm going to hurt you so that I can buy you." My gut was that does not feel right. It doesn't feel like a good winning strategy. As I thought about it and as I got to know some of the smaller bottlers, I came to the conclusion that the fact that they made 10% less one year than they made the year before wasn't going to signal getting out of this business. It was a family business that had much more to do about whether the next generation coming up wanted to run the business. So, I actually got together with the larger bottlers and we agreed that we had to do something differently here. What we did was create a purchasing organization that would buy materials for the small to largest bottler at the same cost structure so that they could be more competitive. And the systems that were built to integrate with customers by the largest bottlers would be shared with smaller bottlers. I must tell you; it was a \$50 million a year savings to start with. Hardest \$50 million ever to give away because of the distrust among the smaller thinking that they would not be treated well by the larger. But we got through it and I think it came down to, in the end, the instinct that something that was adversarial had to function like a team wasn't right. It turned out to be really important to Pepsi. Being able to work with our biggest customers and gain share over coke for five years. Otherwise, we would have given an easy way to cope with who was more aligned to the system.

**Don:** While you were competing at Dartmouth, you played under a couple different coaches—Chris Kerr in tennis and Angie Kurtz in squash—and you were exposed to different styles of leadership. Any specific lessons you remember from each coach that impacted your own style?

**Dawn:** It was probably my first exposure to such a juxtaposition in leadership style. What did I want at 18, 19 years old? I don't want to think about leaders. But the first coach, I won't name names, but she was a drill sergeant. I don't think she actually was that good tennis player per se. She certainly knew how to coach, but she believed in getting us in shape. I show up on my nice little tennis team in my high school. I show up and we're going to be asked to run stadiums before every practice. Well, this was not

a popular thing among the team to go up and down the stadiums in the football stadium. I mean, really hard, exhausting. She would just be that drill sergeant, "Go do it." So, she wasn't that beloved as a coach. But as I look back on it, we needed to get more in shape. We needed that. The drills and the way she did it didn't make us better. Now, the second coach had a very different style. The second coach was the one that had more of the success. The squash coach, she was much more of a believer in complimenting people. In pointing out what was working for them and encouraging them to lean in and continue to do more of what was working for them. She was a beloved coach, people loved her. What I did take away is that sometimes you can be beloved, but it's still good to have a tough conversation when you need to have a tough conversation. You're not doing anyone a service long term by not pointing out something everyone needs to get done. But I like to think that's me you know, sort of the blending of the two. Being a tough cop when you need to be and being an encouraging person in the end for team building.

**Don:** You know the premise of the podcast is that a disproportionate number of Fortune 500 executives were actively engaged in sports at both the high school and collegiate level and that that experience helped shape the way they lead today. Do you agree that being an athlete has helped make you a better leader?

**Dawn:** Yes, I think you're always shaped as a leader from new experiences, which all add in making you better. So, I know that for sure it shaped me. But I also know that every business experience helps shape me. When I talk to young people, I say I sleep when I look back on my high points in my career. Some of the times that I learned the most, and grew as a leader, and grew as an employee, when things didn't go, right. If I think of tennis, easy to go out and win the matches, love it. Harder to go out and win that match where you're in the third set, and tired. Everything counts. So, I think that when I've had difficulty and what I've learned from doing that, I learned more from that than when it was easy.

**Don:** In episode three of the podcast, I interviewed the highest-ranking woman in the oil drilling industry, Kim McHugh, and she shared the most incredible story (that actually led me to you!) You were the keynote speaker at a GE executive women's leadership summit, and you asked the audience a question, can you share that moment with our listeners?

**Dawn:** They had asked me to talk a little bit about my career and what I had learned. Since sports for me was so influential, I asked the room, "How many of you played sports growing up?" I was not surprised when the majority of the room raised their hands. Since then, I've done other speaking events. I've been hired by companies to come in where they have most of their business with men, and they want to develop their business with women. I always ask the question, particularly when I have an audience of women, "How many of you played sports?" I think it's now been correlated by panelists and some other organizations, but there really is a connection. I think if you look at the women, they're 41 women running Fortune 500 companies today. I think that's the number. My good friend Lauren just got named head of Dick's Sporting Goods in Hobart. But if you ask them, over 90% of them played sports or like Indra Nooyi did cricket and did competitive ballroom dancing. I mean, there's lots of different ways to define what sport is, but I think the reason I asked is because I think there are things you learn in sports that are very translatable into a business environment. I would add as well that for me going to a largely all male college, entering advertising, which today is over 50% women, but when I joined it was minority women, going to Pepsi with a bottling system that was one female bottler for 99 male bottlers, to then going to the NFL. My career turned out to be heavily male skewed. I think a lot of this, the

competitiveness and how to deal with people and how to work in a competitive environment has just served me so well going into environments that are more male. It's made me feel comfortable entering their environment. Based upon having played sports with them and learning some of the things I've learned in sports that, you know, frankly, a lot of boys learned growing up too.

**Don:** How did your business relationship develop with Roger Enrico, the former CEO of Pepsi?

**Dawn:** I've been very lucky to work with tremendous leaders. I've learned something different from each of them. But in the case of Roger, I met Roger when he was my client. I was working on the advertising agency side. My client was Frito Lay. I worked with Frito Lay for about five years. Steve Reinemund, who was later, after Roger and Rico became CEO of PepsiCo, was running Frito Lay at the time. He called me up and asked me if I would consider running sales and marketing for Frito Lay International. That was a big step. I had just become head of the New York agency, the first woman, 38 years old, running a large male dominated agency trying to change this culture. It was a big shift for me to go to Frito Lay into Pepsi. I remember sitting down in Rogers's office and he obviously was brought in to be the closing guy, "Get her to take it." I asked him, "Roger, you have a lot of friends I know on the agency side. So, you know the world I'm coming from, convinces me that I should go to PepsiCo." He was a very straightforward, very sort of wise person and I'm sure sometime over a year, when I was working with him, I told him how much I liked the people of PepsiCo. But his response back to me was not, "You'll make a lot of money." Not, "Oh, we're so much better than advertising." His response back was, "I can't make the decision for you. But what I will tell you is that you end up spending more waking hours with people that you work with, than you do with your loved ones at home." He said, "So I've always found it really important that I think about," and these are his words, "by who you want to hang out with." He said, "I would have you think about people that you're hanging out with in your current job and the people you've known and met at Pepsi, and ask yourself, "Where do you feel you fit in and who do you want to hang with? Because you're going to spend a lot of time with them." And I didn't expect that answer at all. But I thought that that was actually quite wise. It was what I liked about Pepsi. It was about kind of thinking about the softer side of things versus the analytical side of things. I was a cultural fit with that organization. I left his office, and he was a closer, I said, "Yes." So, he's very influential. He taught me many things. He taught me that you can make big changes to big things, and upgrade success. You can make big changes to small things and have some success. But if you make small changes to small things, you don't get things done. So, as you're assessing what you want to do in the world, do a few things globally, and do it well. When he was hired to turn around Frito Lay, he looked at it, he said "You know what? They have engineered in taking money out of the product, but little by little, year after year, it engineered quality out of the product." He made the bold decision to do a major cost reduction and let go of a lot of people and put the money back into the product to make the product better. Then to use money to announce that to people. It was an enormously successful turnaround for Frito Lay, and I've taken that such to heart.

**Don:** You became NFL Chief Marketing Officer in 2014, and the league finds itself in the middle of several significant controversies. Among the biggest: The Ray Rice situation. How did you think your voice impacted the way the NFL responded?

**Dawn:** So, first of all, a little background. When I joined the NFL, I had worked with Roger Goodell to make Pepsi, the National sponsor of football when he was head of sponsorship. So, we knew each other, and he called me; there was trust. He says, "I want a senior woman on my staff. And I'd like somebody

who knows us and knows the brand and know sports, but doesn't come from the industry that will bring an outside perspective, would you consider it?" Obviously, it led to me deciding to do it. Just when I said I'm going to do it, I said, "But you have to know, I know we're in the middle of the season, but dad's been deceased for a long time, and I promised my mother for her 80th birthday that I would take her to Africa on a Safari, and I can't disappoint. So, I cannot join you the first of October, I can join you the middle of October." He said, "No problem." I got in a plane and when you're in Africa, there's no cell service. So, you're not talking to everybody, you're just unplugged for two weeks. Well, that was the two weeks that the Ray Rice video went viral. When I landed back in Amsterdam on my way back from that trip, my phone lit up. So many people said to me, "Well, you're not going to join the NFL, now are you?" My response was, "Of course I'm going to join them." It's one of my one of my beliefs in business, which is when things are tough is when you can have the biggest impact. Yet, I didn't have all the ideas. I came back to a team that was already functioning and thinking about "How can we help and contact organizations who really knew a lot about domestic violence." What happened with Ray Rice video is that it exposed a problem in America, of a significant frequency that wasn't being talked about. It was a closet issue. So, what the NFL started to do, and the players started to raise their hand and say, "We want to do something to help because we do not want one person's activity to brand all football players as "Oh, they're aggressive on the field, therefore they must be aggressive with their girlfriends and wives." They were clamoring and so I came when they were already doing some things. I take no credit for that. But what I can say I did is told them to lean into it. To do it in a bigger way. I said to give more of our media time to these ads talking about helping to educate on domestic violence. T two things happened. One, we had to get the national conversation going about domestic violence. And then toward the end of the season, we had to educate people that innocent bystanders who see it going on are actually really part of the solution to getting somebody to get help if they're in a violent situation. In the end, we were deemed to have been doing a good job and the public had kind of gotten over being mad at the NFL and our female fans are seeing us really do something and do something significant. So, we couldn't let this be a one and done. We had to go back after next year. Our biggest flat platform is the Super bowl. We planned on putting an ad on the Super bowl that actually addresses domestic violence or public service announcement. There was a lot of controversy about this because the Super bowl is about people being entertained and drinking and this is not going to be an entertaining ad. But we got alignment. That was the right thing to do. We put the ad, a very serious ad on. It was a 60 second ad. I think that cemented people's belief that we weren't doing it to cover a problem. We were genuinely, as an ecosystem of players clubs and the NFL, trying to make a difference. That ad turned out to be one of the top 10 favorited.