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**Don:** You were a three sport athlete at Angola High School in Indiana, playing baseball, basketball, and football. In today's world, where people are telling their kids to specialize in one sport all year round, do you think it was to your advantage that you played three sports and that you had so many different teams and teammates to manage?

**Matt:** First of all, high school sports have changed over the years. The athletes seem so much stronger, faster, and bigger than I recall. I feel that playing three sports was a huge advantage for me. It kept me busy, focused, allowed me to interact with some really diverse and different coaches, and broadened how many teammates that I really was able to meet and develop a friendship with.

**Don:** I know in getting ready for this interview you shared that your Connie Mack baseball coach, Colin Lister, had an enormous impact on you. Tell me about Colin. What made him so influential?

**Matt:** Colin influenced me in multiple ways. He's very approachable. First of all, he took a chance on me. I was the only person on that Fort Wayne All Star team that came from a small school an hour away. Every other teammate was from the Fort Wayne larger school. So, he took a chance on me because he knew that if I was willing to drive to practices two hours away that I must love the game. He was really like a father figure to me. Just a very generous man. Right before I was making a decision of where I was going to play baseball in college, I leaned on Collin for advice, which he took the time to give. He made phone calls and wrote a letter for me. He had a powerful network, helping me end up in Coral Gables, Florida. I just remember when I was trying to make that decision, the words Colin told me, that I will never forget, "Matt, don't worry if you make the right decision, just go make the decision." Those words have helped guide me in my business career too. I'm not always looking over my shoulder because

we all make a lot of decisions and you can't worry about whether you made the right one. You just have to go make it.

**Don:** Many athletes are able to push themselves beyond their personal limitations because there is someone out there who has inspired them, whether it be a teammate, coach, or family member. Was there someone like that on your journey for whom you found yourself playing?

**Matt:** I would have to say that my inspiration to play hard, work hard, and achieve goals was from my father. I just wanted to make him proud. He's proud of all of his children's accomplishments, but I've learned to hear him brag about what I'm doing, so I know that I must be doing something right. He pushed me for sure. My other inspiration might have come from Pete Rose. Now, Pete certainly, today has some challenges and there's a lot of people that are on the fence with Pete Rose. One way or the other, gambling is banned from baseball. Though I'll tell you, no one can argue with the way he played the game. I was a Cincinnati Reds fan from a young age because my grandfather and my dad took me to my very first games at Crosley Field and then my first World Series at Riverfront stadium when they tore down Crosley and built Riverfront. It was easy to be a Reds fan, by the way; In that era, they were the big red machine. Pete Rose, I just loved the way he played. I slid headfirst a lot. I did that because if it's good for Pete, it's a part of my game. So, hustling was partly learned from Pete.

**Don:** At Miami you played under Hall of Fame Coach, Ron Fraser, known as the “Wizard of College Baseball.” You don’t have to be around a winning culture long to recognize what makes it special. What did you learn about that culture that you use in your team building environment today?

**Matt:** I learned that culture starts at the very top of the organization. No mistake was that of Coach Fraser, his assistant, Skip Bertman, or any of the coaches. They instill this culture that everybody on the team has to be looking out for each other. There's no "I" in “Team.” I've taken that forward and since my time with them was so short, I don't have a ton of stories to share with you about the baseball culture. What I took forward was that everybody on the team has to be committed, accountable, and they have to take actions every single day that are good for the team, versus a self-serving gain or self-serving attitude.

**Don:** Was there a challenge from the athletic side of your life that taught you something that you were able to bring to the executive part of your life?

**Matt:** In my athletic career, I would probably think back to high school. We had a really good basketball team. I mentioned the Hall of Fame Indiana coaches that I played for my senior year. I really wanted to start. I was 5’11, but our team was made up of two 6’1 and 6’2 guards, and they went up from there. So, I had a really tough time breaking in that starting lineup, but during my senior year, I really wanted to start. Again, those other two guards were so good and so skilled, and I had lots of thoughts about “Am I wasting my time?” “Should I go just pack my gym bag and call it a day?” Because nobody likes riding the time. But you know what, I stuck it out because I knew that I had a role with the team and my role was to make them better. So

what I took from that experience, that challenge, into my business career, is that things aren't always going to work out and you're not always going to get the nod. You have to persevere. You have to build a strong team to elevate your game. You also have to make sure that your team recognizes that it's all about the effort that you put in. Everybody has a role that you stick to and good things will happen eventually. So probably my best example.

**Don:** In 2017, Synnex acquired the company you were working for. There is a lot of friction and challenge that occurs in a high level acquisition. How did you keep your team positive? What advice would you give to leaders going through a merger or acquisition?

**Matt:** In fact, in my career, I've been through multiple acquisitions. What I've learned is that you always want to be on the writing check side of that equation. That's not always in your control. My advice for other listeners of yours is that you have to stay calm. You have to always view that glass as half full in an acquisition or merger. It's going to be a lot of work. I've always tried to make sure my team knew that it's an opportunity to learn new things. You're going to meet new colleagues, which is going to expand that network that I have always instilled, it's really important to build, and it gives you a chance to prove your value. So I've always led my sales teams that I started with decades ago, with a core base of 11 ground rules for success. And those eleven ground rules, they have to buy into, they have to understand it, or they're really not a good spot on my team. I made sure that they knew that those ground rules are still going to apply, whether it's the former company, which was called Westcon, or a multibillion dollar distributor. I let them know those core ground rules were still going to apply in Synnex. So as long as you're just sticking with those, you continue to grind, pay attention to the execution, don't let the distractions interfere with your work, and show your value, you're going to continue to thrive. My last advice to any leaders that are going through a merger or acquisition is to plan early. Plan often and just make sure that you execute on those plans. Be prepared to alter the course because the best laid plans are going to need adjustment.

**Don:** Just like sports, sometimes in business, losses are essential and require the team to come together to analyze their weak points in order to become stronger. At Synnex how do you bring your team together to analyze your weaknesses and become stronger?

**Matt:** Well, for one, at Synnex there's a great culture that inspires really good teamwork and communication. A lot of us hate to lose. Most of us, that I've seen in leadership positions, probably hate to lose more than we enjoy winning. So there's a wealth of information that Synnex has built over the years. They have a lot of custom software that every employee uses that helps analyze the information and metrics of their businesses. Everyone has a profit and loss mentality to run their businesses and keep a sharp focus on the margins. As an IT distributor, believe me, the margins can be really thin so we have to operate efficiently. We have great systems in place to do that. All the executives in our company have quarterly executive meetings where we not only look back at how we did in that quarter, but what's the next quarter going to look like? We then adjust to make plans for the next quarter. It's a mentality that's just ingrained in our leadership. So paying attention to the details really does

work. Because Synnex has now recorded 140 profitable quarters in a row. When you do the math, that's over 30 years of profitable business in a row. Really proud that we do look at the losses, we take action, and try to correct them. There's a good culture of, let's win together. It's a great place to be.

**Don:** Obviously to have an executive position at a company as big as Synnex is very time consuming, but there is a lot of discussion over the years of how leaders manage work-life balance. I know you have a wife and three kids. What advice would you give us?

**Matt:** My advice to them is: a good life balance is tough. It's really tough. You have to work smart and you have to work hard, but once you are with your family, you have to be present. You can't continue being engaged in work and still have meaningful family time. You have to listen to what your family's talking about, get asked questions. Most importantly, you just have to be thankful that you have time with them. Because, in a blink of an eye, you think about your children and your family that might be challenging at the time, or time consuming, they're all going to be over so quickly. Kids are going to turn into young adults and those times that you missed because you were so piled into your work-life balance, and it was tipped on the work side, those times you just can't get them back. So you can only look forward and go make some new memories.