



Season 1 | Episode 2 | Bottom Line

Jay Hitt, Student: We went from having an entire semester of travel and good stuff planned to being canceled in like literally three or four days.

Dan Pope, Lubbock Mayor: That was one of those moments where it just slaps you in the face and you're like 'okay, wow this is real'.

Whitney Longnecker, Director, Study Abroad: The difference with this was the scale. Nobody knows when coronavirus will truly be in the rearview mirror.

Steve Presley, Director, The Institute of Environmental and Human Health: American is done with COVID but the virus isn't done with America.

Lawrence Schovanec, President, Texas Tech University: What is Texas Tech? It's a community of people that love this school and they had experiences that changed their lives.

(Music)

Peters: IN THIS EPISODE, WE ENTER THE WORLD OF SPORTS. HOW LOST SEASONS AFFECTED FUTURES OF STUDENT-ATHLETES AND THEIR ELIGIBILITY... AND THE DEVASTATING FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THOSE CANCELED SEASONS ON THE BUDGET FOR ATHLETICS. WE DIG IN TO SHARE STORIES OF RED RAIDER TEAMS SPREAD OUT ACROSS THE GLOBE... FROM HONOLULU, HAWAII AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI TO ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO AND MORE... AS THE COUNTRY FACED AN IMPENDING SHUTDOWN, WHAT IT MEANT FOR US ALL. THIS IS EPISODE TWO- BOTTOM LINE

(Music)

(Basketball Game Sounds)

Peters: MANY OF US IDENTIFY MARCH 11TH AS THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 FALLOUT, ESPECIALLY AS IT RELATES TO THE WORLD OF SPORTS. AND THAT'S WHERE WE BEGIN THIS EPISODE. THE STORIES YOU'LL HEAR IN THESE INITIAL MOMENTS HAPPEN OVER THE SPAN OF AROUND 24 HOURS. THAT'S HOW QUICKLY THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE NCAA WERE FORCED TO MOVE, TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT WOULD HAVE MASSIVE RAMIFICATIONS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. AT THE TIME COVID PUT AN END TO SPORTS, THREE PROGRAMS ON CAMPUS WERE RANKED IN THE TOP 25. TWO IN THE TOP THREE.

(Baseball Hit)

Sports Reporter: ...On a go-ahead double from Braxton Fulford.

Sports Reporter II: He forces the foul. Watch this pass!

Peters: AS WE GO BACK TO THAT DAY, WE BEGIN IN KANSAS CITY. THE HOME OF THE BIG 12 BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT.

(Music)

Sports Reporter III: McCullar drives it anyway and gets to the bucket!

Peters: COLLEGE BASKETBALL FANS WILL SAY THERE ARE FEW THINGS MORE EXCITING THAN MARCH MADNESS. THE TEXAS TECH MEN'S TEAM HAD JUST MADE ITS FIRST APPEARANCE IN THE FINAL FOUR AND THE CITY OF LUBBOCK WAS HOPEFUL TO WITNESS ANOTHER DEEP RUN IN THE POSTSEASON. FOUR MEN'S TEAMS SAW THE COURT ON THAT FIRST DAY OF THE BIG 12 TOURNAMENT-

(Basketball Audio Play-by-Play)

Announcer: 6 Seconds, finds a window. Lewis doesn't get it off. Oklahoma State comes from 10 down in the second half.

Announcer II: A valiant comeback from TCU comes just short as the 10 seeded Kansas State Wildcats hang

BUT THE WOMEN, WHO WERE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN TWO DAYS AFTER THE MEN, WOULD NEVER GET

THEIR CHANCE.

THINGS IN THE TYPICALLY ALIVE AND VIBRANT KANSAS CITY WERE STARTING TO DIM.

AND, ON THE NATIONAL STAGE, THREADS WERE UNRAVELLING EVEN MORE QUICKLY.

Kirby Hocutt, Director of Athletics: I remember that night I went to dinner in Kansas City with Dusty and Lesha Womble...

THIS IS ATHLETICS DIRECTOR KIRBY HOCUTT...

Hocutt: ...and I remember on the televisions in the restaurant, the NBA games were on, that's when the Oklahoma City

Thunder game was canceled before tipoff. That was really the start of 'what is going on here'.

(Audio of Oklahoma City Thunder game)

Announcer: A discussion and a delay here in Oklahoma City.

Announcer II: They're saying 'the game hasn't even started' or they're saying that Ruby Gobert and several other players

may have been ill.

Announcer III: As soon as we get any kind of information, we will pass it along.

Announcer IV: The game tonight has been postponed...

Peters: THE NEXT DAY, ON MARCH 12TH THINGS INTENSIFIED JUST HOURS BEFORE TIPOFF BETWEEN TEXAS TECH AND THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, KIRBY WAS MEETING WITH OTHER A-D'S IN THE CONFERENCE.

Hocutt: Right then, the Kansas medical advisory group advised that we cancel the tournament. I remember stepping away and calling Tony Hernandez, our Deputy Athletics' Director...

Peters: Where was he?

Hocutt: ...He was at Sprint Arena with the team for tipoff.

Peters: HE JUMPED IN AN UBER WITH THE ATHLETICS DIRECTOR FROM TEXAS...

Hocutt: ...I went one way to our locker room, and he went down to theirs.

Peters: BY THE TIME HE ARRIVED IN THE LOCKER ROOM, THE TEAM HAD ALREADY KNOWN. AND THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT WAS OBVIOUS. MARK ADAMS WAS IN THAT LOCKER ROOM. HE'S THE HEAD COACH NOW, BUT THAT YEAR HE WAS AN ASSISTANT.

Mark Adams, Head Coach, Men's Basketball: The thing that hit home with me the most... I remember Davide Morretti... COVID hit in stages and Italy was getting hit really hard by it and I could just see the worry and hurt in Davide.

Hocutt: We went into Coach Beard's private locker room and talked for a few minutes, and I remember his daughter Avery, who was a freshman at Columbia at the time, she was sitting in a chair. I said 'Avery, what are you doing?' and she said she was in class. I said, 'let me see'. So, she turned around her computer and I saw the chair with her professor. Little did I know that was a glimpse into what our world would be.

(Instrumental Music)

Peters: BY THIS POINT, THE NBA HAD INDEFINITELY SUSPENDED ITS SEASON. AND THAT WAS A BLARING STATEMENT. TEAM WERE FEELING CONFLICTED... WOULD THEIR GAMES, PRACTICES OR TOURNAMENTS CONTINUE? ALERTS WERE BEING ISSUED ALMOST BY THE MINUTE. WE ALL REMEMBER THE CONSTANT BUZZ OF NOTIFICATIONS FROM VIRTUALLY EVERY NEWS AND SPORTS PLATFORM AVAILABLE. LEAGUES ANNOUNCING CANCELATIONS, TOURNAMENTS BEING CALLED OFF... SPORTS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE WERE BEGINNING TO CRUMBLE.

(Birds Chirping)

Peters: IN PHOENIX ARIZONA, MEN'S GOLF COACH GREG SANDS AND HIS TEAM WERE TRYING TO REMAIN OPTIMISTIC. THEY HAD JUST ARRIVED AT THE GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY COURSE FOR A PRACTICE ROUND.

(Golf Club Hitting Golf Ball)

Sandy Scott, Student-Athlete: "My name is Sandy Scott and I'm a senior here at Texas Tech."

Peters: SANDY IS A STAPLE OF THAT TEAM; HIS LIST OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IS BEYOND IMPRESSIVE. HE HAD REAL HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS OF HIS TEAM DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL THAT SEASON. THEY WERE SET UP FOR IT.

Scott: We got off to a got off to a really nice start...

Peters: WE MET WITH SANDY AT THE CLUBHOUSE OF THE RAWLS COURSE NORTHWEST OF CAMPUS.

Scott: Coming into the spring we were confident we could push for a national title.

Peters: IT'S HIS HOME COURSE, HERE IN THE STATES AT LEAST. LUBBOCK HAS BEEN HOME FOR THE SCOTLAND NATIVE FOR FIVE YEARS. AND IF YOU LISTEN CLOSELY, YOU CAN HEAR GOLF ON THE TV BEHIND US... OR MEN MEETING FOR AN EARLY LUNCH INSIDE BEFORE HEADING OUT FOR AN AFTERNOON ROUND.

Scott: While we were traveling there all the NBA stuff was going on and we were watching on TV thinking 'oh man, this is crazy'. We get onto the range for practice round and we hear rumors that two or three teams have already pulled out. Their AD's have pulled them back to their universities. We started the practice round and on the second hole our coaches told us the tournament was canceled so we were pretty much just playing for fun then.

Peters: HE COULDN'T KNOW IT THEN, BUT THAT WOULD BE THE LAST TIME THEY'D PLAY TOGETHER THAT SEASON.

Scott: So, we finish the practice round and our season is over all of the sudden. It was all in about 24-hours that we were told it was from go to nothing, almost. It was really strange.

(Softball Hit and Cheers)

Brooke Reed, Director, Texas Tech Softball Operations: We are living our best lives in Hawaii, not aware of the severity of COVID at this time.

Peters: THIS IS BROOK REED, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR THE SOFTBALL PROGRAM. BY THE WAY... SHE WASN'T KIDDING, THEY WERE PLAYING IN A TOURNAMENT HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII. IT'S HARD TO LIST ALL THE THINGS SHE DOES IN A DAY- THERE'S TOO MUCH. BUT SHE ACCURATELY DESCRIBES HERSELF AS THE CATCH ALL- THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN HER TEAM AND ACADEMICS, THE BUSINESS OFFICE, COMPLIANCE... AND SHE ALSO COORDINATES TRAVEL. IT'S A LOT. OKAY, BACK TO BROOKE...

Reed: Yeah, I think it was on the 11th, we played Hawaii, which was a great game. We won that game. Still have 4 scheduled throughout the week.

Peters: THEIR COACH GOT A CALL FROM ADMINISTRATION. IT WASN'T GOOD NEWS. THE PLAYERS AND STAFF SOUGHT ANSWERS AND GOT THEM FROM THE SAME PLACE THE REST OF US PROBABLY DID- SOCIAL MEDIA.

Reed: We get the news on twitter, social media that things have been shut down...

Peters: THEIR RETURN FLIGHTS HAD ALREADY BEEN BOOKED...

Brooke Reed: "Because we still had another like four days in Hawaii, but the flight options couldn't get us all back."

Peters: SO, THEY KEPT THEIR ORIGINAL FLIGHTS AND SPENT THE NEXT THREE DAYS IN PARADISE.

Brooke Reed: "Then once we get back and I'm like okay this is real. Like REAL real."

Calvin Robinson, Sprints Coach, Track & Field: Alright, I'm Calvin Robinson, I coach the men's and women's sprint and hurdles groups here for the Track and Field team.

Peters: COACH ROBINSON HAS BEEN HERE AT TECH FOR ABOUT 6 YEARS. EVERYONE CALLS HIM COACH ROB, AND I'LL DO THE SAME HERE.

Peters: Are you ready to go back to March of 2020?

Robinson: Yeah, if you want to remind me, we can definitely go back... We were in Albuquerque, New Mexico getting ready to start the NCAA Division 1 national championships for indoor track and field.

Peters: TRACK IS SPLIT UP INTO TWO SEASONS- THE INDOOR SEASON RUNS FROM JANUARY TO MID-MARCH... AND THE OUTDOOR, IN THE SPRING FROM APRIL TO MID-JUNE. 6 MONTHS BEFORE COACH ROB'S GROUP SHOWED UP TO THE INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP-THE MEN'S TRACK TEAM HOISTED ITS FIRST EVER OUTDOOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY IN

2019. SO, THIS MEET- THE INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP- WAS IMPORTANT FOR HIS TEAM. IT WAS GOING TO KEEP THEIR PROGRAM NATIONALLY RELEVANT, TO VALIDATE THEM ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THIS MEET WAS THE BEST OF THE BEST.

(Track Gun Sound and Cheering)

Robinson: We always describe indoor championships as the toughest meet to qualify for.

Kaylee Hinton, Student-Athlete: Indoor you have to be the top 16 in the country of all Division One...

Robinson: 16 athletes in the entire country go in each event.

Hinton: It is a game-changer.

Peters: 16 TEXAS TECH ATHLETES HAD QUALIFIED FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER. 3 QUALIFIERS IN THE MENS' 200 ALONE... THAT IS IMPRESSIVE. THE DAY BEFORE THE MEET STARTED, EVENTS PLAYED OUT LIKE A BAD MOVIE.

Hinton: Then we are seeing tweets that the Big 10 has pulled out, the PAC 12 would then, any Ivy League schools were no longer going to come.

Peters: KAYLEE HINTON REMEMBERS ALMOST EVERY DETAIL. SHE WAS THERE AT THE INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.

Hinton: I was in my hotel room putting on my tennis shoes, coach Thomas told the jumps group to meet in the lobby within 5 minutes. I could kind of tell that something was off. Coach Kittley is pacing... they tell us the meet is canceled and we are going home. I went to the hotel bathroom and just cried; I was so frustrated. Like why... this is the first time I get this opportunity and it's taken from us.

Robinson: The first person I told, because she was right next to me, was Gabby McDonald. If anybody knows Gabby's story- that was a big opportunity for her. She transferred here, struggled at her previous university, never qualified for nationals as an individual. She had a phenomenal first year here indoor and had gone in ranked fairly high in her event. She was hoping to come out of that thing an All American. She was the first person I had to tell. That was.... one of the toughest days because you have to tell these athletes who have worked so hard.

Peters: GABBY LOST A LOT THAT DAY. THEY ALL DID. THERE ARE SO MANY STORIES OF HOW THESE STUDENT-ATHLETES END UP HERE, BUT THEY SHARE A LOT OF THE SAME GOALS. AND TO MAKE IT TO THIS MEET IS AN EXTRAORDINARY FEAT. BEING THERE WAS A LONG TIME COMING FOR KAYLEE. SHE HAD FINISHED 17TH, 18TH SO MANY TIMES IN THE PAST... JUST ONE SPOT OFF QUALIFYING, A MATTER OF A FEW SIMPLE POINTS. SO, THIS WAS ABOUT PROVING SOMETHING... MORE TO HERSELF THAN ANYONE ELSE. THAT'S WHY IT WAS SO HARD FOR HER TO GET PAST.

Hinton: I'd say hopeless, it was hopeless. I never stopped caring. I'm not a negative person and I can always see the bright side of things. But I just felt hopeless.

Peters: AROUND THE SAME TIME THE TRACK TEAM WAS DELIVERING THE NEWS TO IT'S ATHLETES, KIRBY HOCUTT WAS STANDING BEFORE MOST OF HIS HEAD COACHES IN A ROOM ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE FOOTBALL STADIUM.

Hocutt: And I remember sitting in the J.T. King conference room and looking over at the faces of our coaches, I'll never forget Tim Tadlock sitting along the right side of that room against the wall with his head in hands, devastated.

Peters: COACH TADLOCK AND THE BASEBALL TEAM WERE JUST OFF AN APPEARANCE IN THE COLLEGE WORLD SERIES THE YEAR BEFORE. IN 2020, THEY HAD MAINTAINED A TOP 10

RANKING ALL SEASON. THEY WERE TALENTED, AND DEEP... SOMETHING THAT COULD MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE LATE IN THE SEASON.

Hocutt: He knew he had a team that would compete for the national championship.

Peters: TEAMS HAD MADE THEIR WAY BACK HOME BUT THE SHUFFLING WASN'T OVER BY A LONG SHOT. HUNDREDS OF STUDENT ATHLETES WERE NOW MAKING PLANS TO HEAD HOME- SOME IN TEXAS, OTHERS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES. AND SOME BEYOND. AMONG THE 17 SPORTS, THERE WERE DOZENS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATHLETES IN THE SPRING OF 2020. 2 LIVED OUTSIDE THE CONTINENTAL US. NOW, IN A GLOBAL LEVEL 4 TRAVEL ADVISORY, THE PRESSURE WAS ON FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS TO GET HOME- IF THAT'S WHERE THEY WERE HEADED. AND SANDY WAS ONE OF THEM. HIS FAMILY WAS WAITING FOR HIM IN SCOTLAND.

Scott: Back home, our country was tightening up on restrictions. All the international guys are wondering if we could get home in time before they locked down the country. That was a big worry. Not long after we were on lock down. We were in lockdown for 10 weeks, it was really strange. I've never seen the airport so quiet or my flights. It was spooky.

Peters: HERE AT HOME, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT KIRBY WAS FACING A SCARY REALITY OF HIS OWN. THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT WAS APPROACHING AN INEVITABLE FINANCIAL CRISIS. HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO COLLEGE ATHLETICS...FOOTBALL IS THE ECONOMIC ENGINE THAT FUELS EVERYTHING. SO, LET'S TALK ABOUT TEXAS TECH FOOTBALL FOR SOME PERSPECTIVE. FOOTBALL GENERATES BETWEEN 75-85% OF ALL REVENUE OF THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT. IF YOU SELL OUT JONES AT&T STADIUM- SEATING AROUND 60,000 PEOPLE- FOR EVERY HOME GAME IN A GIVEN SEASON- YOU ARE LOOKING AT GENERATING BETWEEN 30 AND 40 MILLION DOLLARS. THAT DOESN'T INCLUDING TV AND SPONSORSHIP REVENUE. IT WAS REPORTED IN THE AVALANCHE JOURNAL IN APRIL OF 2020 THAT THERE WOULD BE AN ESTIMATED 6 TO 8 MILLION-DOLLAR CUT TO THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT'S OPERATING BUDGET. THAT WAS ASSUMING THE FOOTBALL TEAM WOULD COMPETE IN 12 REGULAR SEASON GAMES.

Hocutt: That number was accurate at the time. What happened is we ended up having 10 games, not 12, at 25% capacity. So, what we had projected to be 6-8 loss, ended up being...

Peters: IT ENDED UP BEING LOT MORE THAN THAT... MORE THAN ANY OF THEM EXPECTED. IT WAS AROUND 20-25 MILLION, ACTUALLY. THINK OF THIS MORE AS A DECREASE TO REVENUE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR. KIRBY WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SOME CUTS TO THE SALARIES... AND THE STAFF.

Hocutt: You think about it 24/7 you wait as long as possible. Reducing salaries or positions was the absolute last measure that we wanted to take.

Peters: THERE WERE 21 PEOPLE WITHIN THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT WHO LOST THEIR JOBS. AND IF I COULD SPEAK CANDIDLY WITH YOU FOR JUST A SECOND, MANY OF THEM I KNEW WELL. MOST OF THEM HAD FAMILIES TO SUPPORT, OR FAMILIES THEY WERE STARTING. THESE WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE GOOD AT THEIR JOBS, WHO WERE VALUABLE IN THEIR WORKPLACE AND THAT MADE THIS DECISION EVEN HARDER. BUT THIS DIDN'T JUST HAPPEN AT TEXAS TECH... THIS REALITY PLAYED OUT IN ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IT REFLECTED THE TRUTH OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS SURROUNDING COVID.

Hocutt: We as a profession, intercollegiate athletics, we provide more scholarship opportunities in this country of anything, outside the GI bill. Without the revenue that's generated from the sport of football you don't have the resources, the revenue, to provide educational opportunities, to provide jobs.

Peters: AS FAR AS STUDENT-ATHLETES GO. NONE LOST THEIR SCHOLARSHIPS. THE NCAA WOULD ANNOUNCE THEIR DECISION TO GIVE THAT YEAR OF ELIGIBILITY BACK TO THOSE STUDENT-ATHLETES. IT WAS AN EXCEPTION YEAR. IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO- BUT IT WAS COMPLICATED.

Robinson: The biggest challenge and I'm thankful I don't have to deal with it directly is how to find scholarship money for these students to return.

Peters: ROSTERS ARE TYPICALLY A SET NUMBER; EACH SPORT HAS A NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS AND SPOTS AVAILABLE. WHEN YOU EXPAND A ROSTER SIZE, INCREASING THE NUMBER OF ATHLETES, EVEN JUST FOR A YEAR, YOU REQUIRE A BIGGER BUDGET, CREATING EVEN MORE FINANCIAL STRESS. ACTUALLY, KIRBY EXPLAINED IT PRETTY WELL.

Hocutt: Let's just talk about men's basketball. Men's basketball can have 13 scholarships, so if you have two seniors that were affected by the pandemic and got that extra year of eligibility... next year, we could be at 15 scholarships for Men's Basketball. This coming year...

Peters: MEANING THE FALL OF 2021, SPRING OF 2022.

Hocutt: ...the NCAA has taken the roster exemption off the table, so you can provide them with that additional year of eligibility, but now the NCAA is saying you have to be back to 13 scholarships for men's basketball. That creates some very challenging conversations for our coaches. It was like the NCAA washed their hands.

Peters: SANDY AND KAYLEE WERE AMONG OTHER TEXAS TECH STUDENT-ATHLETES THAT RETURNED TO COMPETE FOLLOWING THE COVID YEAR. KAYLEE KEPT TRAINING FROM THE TIME THE SEASON WAS CANCELED UNTIL TEAMS CAME BACK IN AUGUST OF 2020. SHE WAS GETTING BACK IN SHAPE FOR THE INDOOR SEASON THEY EXPECTED. BUT ONE WEEK FROM THE START OF FALL TRAINING, SHE BROKE HER FOOT. SHE WAS LIFTING IN THE WEIGHT ROOM AND THE BAR HAD SLIPPED... IT CAUSED TWO COMPOUND FRACTURES... I DON'T TELL YOU THIS PART TO MAKE KAYLEE A VICTIM, OF BAD CIRCUMSTANCE OR ANYTHING ELSE... SHE DOESN'T SEE HERSELF LIKE THAT. SHE WAS PERSISTENT IN HER REHAB AND RECOVERY... AND WHEN APRIL CAME AROUND, SHE HAD WORKED HERSELF BACK INTO SHAPE.

Hinton: I know at the beginning of the season and the thought that had been haunted my mind while my foot was broken, and I was in a cast was 'every meet has to count because this is my last year.' One day after practice, I just looked flustered, I know I did. Coach Kittley said 'are you doing okay?' and I told him 'Yes, I just haven't PR'd in anything in 4 years now, want to make you proud'. He told me that there's nothing I can do to make him proud, I've already done that. He said 'I believe in you and I love you just go have fun. As soon as I let that go and just started having fun everything went up. I scored my second highest heptathlon I've scored.

Peters: THAT NEWFOUND FREEDOM WAS EVERYTHING. SHE ALSO QUALIFIED FOR OUTDOOR NATIONALS IN 2021. AND FINISHED 15th. IT'S REMARKABLE TO COME BACK FROM NEARLY A YEAR OF NOT COMPETING AND DO WHAT SHE DID. IN THE AMOUNT OF TIME SHE DID IT. SHE GRADUATED LAST MAY WITH HER MASTERS... AND GOT ENGAGED.

Hinton: He told me that this was just a preview of what our life would be like married. Then he got down on one knee and asked me to marry him.

Peters: SHE'LL MOVE ON FROM THIS PLACE WITH A LOT OF EXPERIENCES THAT DEFINED HER. BUT NONE MATTER MORE THAN THE RELATIONSHIPS. IN SOME WAYS, THAT ADVICE FROM HER HEAD COACH AFTER A ROUGH PRACTICE... IT CHANGED HER.

(U.S. Open Golf Tournament Music)

Peters: IN A TIME WHEN WE WEREN'T ABLE TO WATCH SPORTS IN REAL LIFE- THE PANDEMIC BROUGHT GLOBAL EXPOSURE FOR SANDY SCOTT. IN SEPTEMBER, 6 MONTHS AFTER THE START OF THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, HE REACHED A NEW HEIGHT.

Scott: I found out when I was home in mid-July... Based on world ranking and top 7 amateurs got to go in.

Peters: HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE US OPEN. DID YOU HEAR THAT?... ONLY THE TOP 7 AMATEURS IN THE WORLD QUALIFY AND HE WAS ONE OF THEM. SANDY IS THE FIRST ACTIVE RED RAIDER GOLFER TO COMPETE IN THE PRESTIGIOUS TOURNAMENT.

Scott: "It felt natural to ask coach Sands to go with me, he has been such a role model for me here at Texas Tech. He made it more comfortable for me, it was great to have him there."

Peters: GREG SANDS WENT FROM COACH TO CADDY... BEING ABLE TO COMPETE IN THE OPEN WAS A LOT OF THINGS FOR SANDY- IT WAS EXPERIENCE AGAINST THE WORLD'S BEST, IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUT ON A SHOW. BUT IT ALSO PROVIDED SOME CLOSURE. THE ABRUPT ENDING OF HIS SENIOR SEASON CHANGED ALL OF HIS PLANS. BUT THIS TOURNAMENT WAS A LOOK PAST THE NCAA, A LOOK INTO HIS PROFESSIONAL FUTURE.

Scott: Ultimately that ended my college career, not knowing I would get a year back. That's the end of college golf. The end of amateur golf, I thought. I thought I was turning professional after that year. I just wanted to do more for college golf, especially for Texas Tech.

Peters: HE'S NOT DONE HERE YET THOUGH. WHEN THIS PODCAST IS RELEASED, HE WILL BE BACK COMPETING FOR HIS TEAM, AND COACH SANDS. HE HAS UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND THE REST OF US GET TO WATCH WHILE HIS TEAM FIGHTS FOR IT. SOMETHING GOOD CAME FROM THE PANDEMIC FOR SANDY. AND THAT WAS TRUE FOR BROOKE AS WELL.

Reed: It's a lot, yeah. In season, there's not a single day off. My friends always say 'you can't make it? Don't you have vacation?'... I have plenty of vacation, I just can't take it right now, I can't just take a weekend off. Like, we have five games that weekend.

Peters: WORKING IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS IS FILLED WITH DAILY CHANGES. IT'S ORGANIZED CHAOS. RESPONSIBILITIES HARDLY SUBSIDE, EVEN IN THE OFFSEASON. IT'S A LIFESTYLE, AND ONE THAT SHE'S COMMITTED TO. AFTER SHE AND THE TEAM GOT BACK FROM HAWAII...SHE SPENT THE FIRST 14 DAYS IN SELF ISOLATION, THEN DROVE THE 10 HOURS BACK HOME TO LOUISIANA. SHE STAYED WITH HER PARENTS, SPENT EVERY DAY WITH THEM, AND GOT TO SEE HER BROTHER AND HIS WIFE. IT WAS THE LONGEST SHE HAD SEEN HER LOVED ONES IN YEARS- SINCE SHE LIVED AT HOME IN HIGH SCHOOL. SHE STAYED THERE FOR FOUR MONTHS. GOT INTO A ROUTINE, WATCHED SOME SHOWS- LIKE THE REST OF US, DID A LITTLE READING... NOT A LOT, BUT SOME.

Reed: I did read... I got interested in enneagram. I read a book on that. Karli got me into it,

Peters: THAT'S KARLI HAMILTON- SHE JUST GRADUATED.

Reed: She had me take it and I was two and she said 'I'm two' and I'm like 'I'm not two'. I must have answered the questions wrong.

Peters: SHE'S A ONE ACTUALLY. AND IT MAKES SENSE WHY SHE'S SO GOOD AT HER JOB- ONES ARE NEAT, ORGANIZED. A PERFECTIONIST SOME MAY SAY. I'M DEFINITELY NOT A ONE... FOR THE RECORD. BUT AFTER ALL THAT TIME AWAY- SHE MISSED IT, SHE MISSED HER FRIENDS ON STAFF, THEIR TRAINER JENNA, AND SHE MISSED THE PLAYERS.

Reed: I think just being around them, I've noticed I'm happier being around them. For me to come to work and see them, it's fun for me to see them pass by my office with their little antics. They're just fun to be around. I feel like myself again.

Peters: COACH ROB AND HIS WIFE HAD THEIR SECOND CHILD IN APRIL OF 2020- A BABY BOY. HE CALLS HIM THEIR PANDEMIC BABY.

Robinson: I'm at the hospital like 'How safe is this? How safe is that?' I went from March to April and gained a whole new level of stress. I'm at home doing dad duty- I'm stressing over everything. Packages come to the house and I'm spraying it down. Nothing comes in the house, it was overprotective. He didn't see the sun till he was 4 months old.

Peters: IN NOVEMBER OF 2020, MARK ADAM'S WELCOMED HIS FIRST GRANDCHILD—HIS DAUGHTER LIVES IN MIDLAND WITH HER HUSBAND.

Adams: I never dreamed, Taylor, that I wouldn't be there for the birth of my grandson. It was like 'we're going down there...' then it was 'no you can't go down there, they're not going to let you in the hospital' I was thinking 'what floor are they on? Can I look through window? Can I get a ladder and look through the window or something to see my grandbaby?

Peters: HE WASN'T ABLE TO HOLD HIS GRANDSON FOR ABOUT A WEEK AFTER HE WAS BORN... BUT COACH ADAMS TELL YOU IT WAS WORTH THE WAIT. ALL OF HIS FAMILY WILL BE IN THE STANDS THIS SEASON TO WATCH HIM LEAD THE RED RAIDERS ON THE FLOOR FOR THE FIRST TIME AS THE HEAD COACH.

Adams: I get goosebumps just thinking about that because it has always been my dream to lead this program but it's also a lot of responsibility and burden to go with it, there are a lot of people counting on you. There are a lot of hard-working people here, there are tough people out here and I think they'll appreciate a team that puts on their hard hats and grabs their lunch pails. They go to work, plays hard and they do it together.

Peters: KIRBY WANTED TO PROTECT HIS FAMILY DURING THE PANDEMIC, JUST LIKE COACH ROB AND COACH ADAMS... HIS OLDEST SON GRADUATED FROM FRENSHIP HIGH SCHOOL IN 2020, WENT ON TO PLAY FOOTBALL AT ANGELO STATE. HIS FIRST YEAR IN COLLEGE WASN'T ANYTHING LIKE HE HAD PREPARED FOR.

Hocutt: In college athletics, in sports in general, you have to be resilient. If you play long enough you will face defeat and you'll come up on the short end and you learn to be resilient, you learn to learn from that day and adjust, you move forward the next day and get stronger.

Peters: NEXT TIME ON FEARLESS...

Aliza Wong, Interim Dean, Honors College: Epidemiologists have been warning us for centuries that this would happen.

Daniel, Student: It felt like I was falling and trying to grab onto something. I felt like I was drowning.

Joe Heppert, Vice President for Research and Innovation: One of the things that stood out to me during the pandemic is that life went on.

Holly Baker, Instructional Designer, Video Production Lab: More than anything, the theme that emerged for me out of COVID is 'yes we can.' We did it. We didn't just do it, we did it well.

Peters: FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY THE TEXAS TECH OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. IT'S HOSTED BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS, WITH SPECIAL HELP FROM ALLISON HIRTH. FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION – FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.

Peters: HEY, IT'S TAYLOR. THANKS FOR LISTENING TO FEARLESS... DON'T FORGET TO LIKE, REVIEW AND SUBSCRIBE WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR PODCASTS.