

Welty Peachy.mp3

Tim Lightfoot. Hello and welcome to the weekly Podcast from the Huffines Institute For Sports Medicine and Human Performance. I'm your host, Tim Lightfoot and every week we bring you interesting individuals from the world of sports medicine and health and general and today again is no exception. We are are privileged to have Dr. John Welty Peachy with this today on the Podcast. Welcome to the Podcast, John.

Welty Peachy. Thank you very much. Pleasure to be here.

Tim Lightfoot. Well we're glad to have you. And as we do every week I'm going to give a little bit of an introduction, tell people why you're here. Talk a little bit about you and then we'll just jump into the conversation.

Welty Peachy. Sounds good.

Tim Lightfoot. Dr. Welty Peachy is currently Assistant Professor of Sports Management in our division of sports management here in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Texas A&M. His PhD is in sports management from the University of Connecticut. Dr. Welty Peachy has a really interesting and diverse background. He was a former vice president for the International Operations and Program Development at the Institute for International Sport in Kingston, Rhode Island. He has done a variety of different athletic things over his life. He was a national level bicyclist at one point. He actually ran on two legs across America, which we are going to start off with in a minute. And recently he's been honored...it's a little bit bitter sweet for us. We wanted to hurry and get him on the Podcast because he will be leaving Texas AM soon to go to the University of Illinois in Urbana Champagne where he is going to be one of the key cogs in the development of the Center for Sport for Development and Social Change. And so, thank you again for taking the time John to be with us.

Welty Peachy. My pleasure.

Tim Lightfoot. [Yeah. Let's start with the run across America. You actually ran across the United States.](#)

Welty Peachy. [We did, we did. A buddy of mine and I did that and it actually...was sort of the impetus that sparked my interest in working in what we call Sport for Development and Social Change, so. Now this is awhile ago so I definitely couldn't do it anymore,](#) but my buddy and I, we were marathoners in college and did a lot of running and...but also had...both of us had a strong interest in social justice and something that we were both very, very passionate about and interested in particularly with issues regarding homelessness and had both done some volunteering and work with that. And so our senior year we started to sit around as you do when you're seniors [??? 0:02:58] what are you going to do with your life, you know, after you're done. And one night late at night in the dorm room we concocted this idea as like well how could we

use our running to try to make some type of difference in society? Is there a way that we could do that? And then we started thinking about well, you know, has anybody run across the country before? No. Has anybody run from the west coast to the east coast? And...there were a few but...so we said, well could we do that and use it as a way to raise awareness about homeless issues in the United States? So we approached a couple of organizations that work with homelessness in a couple of cities and they said, yeah, you know, we'll sponsor you. You know, we'll be onboard with that and so we got sponsors and got donations and ran from Portland, Oregon to Boston, Massachusetts through sort of a circuitous route at about 4,000 miles over about five-and-a-half months and spoke a lot in communities, in schools and in the media and such to use sport as a vehicle to call attention to the plight of the homeless.

Tim Lightfoot. Well that's kind of an interesting approach and I'm not sure...and, you know, I think it wasn't until I met you that I'd ever even thought about doing that. But, you know...and you use the phrase caused related sporting event in some of your writing, which is really much what you were talking about here when you were running for a cause in this case. How can sport effect society like that?

Welty Peachy. Well it's...we always say it can but it can't do it in a vacuum. And so we say that sport has some type of power, sport has something that we identify with. That is why we all love it [??? 0:04:46]. And whatever fashion that we are, whether it's management or coaching or being an athlete or sports medicine or whatever it is, there's something that draws us to it. It's very visible. You know it's something that we highly identify with and that can be a very powerful thing to create awareness. But it also, through participation it can be a very powerful thing.

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Not just through the health benefits that you gain and the fitness benefits that you gain but through the other outcomes that can happen through sport participation such as increase self-esteem, a creation of social networks that you didn't have before, increased belief that you can do something and it's succeed. We call that self-advocacy. So sport can play a role in producing some of these outcomes not just by itself, as we always say, but it has some capacity to do that. And so it can be a really interesting tool to use when you think about how we can affect society or how can we help society to help with various development agendas. Whether it's, you know, helping people that are marginalized or homeless or immigrants or others that are disadvantaged. Using sport to help reconnect them to society and then that being the impetus to get them more re-engaged whether it's using it as a piece mechanism in a third world country overseas, whether it's using it in a community development capacity in communities that need programs to help build a community cohesion and various infrastructures and things. So...but we always say it can't be just the only thing that you do. You know it has to be partnered with other social service projects and stuff but it can be one cog that can help to create positive change in society.

Tim Lightfoot. So it's just not a one time effort and...

Welty Peachy. No it's not a one time effort.

Tim Lightfoot. ...then the effort goes away and nothing happens. Yeah.

Welty Peachy. Right. And it's just not saying that sport is the best and the only tool that you can use to make society better. We're saying it is a tool and if we use sport with other things, other...we call them engines of development or other ways, it can be something that can reach people that we might not be able to reach before. Like, for instance, I've done a lot of work with sport and homelessness, particularly...

Tim Lightfoot. Okay. Yeah, come back to the homelessness.

Welty Peachy. ...sport as soccer, right? And using soccer to help homeless folks and...

Tim Lightfoot. Well let's give a plug out to Street...what's the organization?

Welty Peachy. Street Soccer U.S.A...

Tim Lightfoot. Street Soccer U.S.A.

Welty Peachy. ...is the organization. And...

Tim Lightfoot. And we'll put links on that...to our...in our show nuts. Yup.

Welty Peachy. And we've done a lot of work with and it's an organization based in New York City under the umbrella of Help U.S.A. that works in 20 cities around the United States and uses soccer as a means to help homeless folks basically make positive changes in their lives and get off the streets. And so we've been doing some research projects with them over the years which we can talk about. But...

Tim Lightfoot. So the participants in this are primarily homeless individuals?

Welty Peachy. They're homeless folks, yeah. Homeless folks and they play on teams in the cities and participate in recreational soccer leagues for the most part. And the coaches are volunteers and the coaches for the teams might be case workers at social service agencies and such. And the impetus is using soccer here to reach out to a set of homeless folks that have shunned sometimes other forms of intervention and have not engaged with that. But all of a sudden here is something that, yeah, you know, I used to play soccer in high school, you know? I was pretty good, you know? Maybe I can do that again or something like that. And so it kind of reaches, you know, a set of folks that sometimes traditional programs when you think about Outreach, different programs miss in some respect so it helps to kind of re-engage them. But it's not the only program that they need to be part of but it's something that provides a hook, it brings them in and then through that then they're connected to other forms of social services that...

Tim Lightfoot. It's an entrée into other stuff.

Welty Peachy. Right, that are really, really important but the sport is sort of the impetus. So we found some really encouraging things in our research that we've been doing with them over the years about...

Tim Lightfoot. Such as?

Welty Peachy. Outcomes of this in such as that through this engagement, through say homeless folks, men and women and youth playing in soccer it does a couple of things over time. It helps to build the self-esteem and confidence that one needs again which you lose when you're on the streets. And that's really important for being able to have the motivation to do anything, you know? To get a job, you know, to want to get off the streets. You know to want to further your education. And so that's really important. It also builds trust and that's something that...

Tim Lightfoot. Because you especially have to trust the people you play with and the people that organize it.

Welty Peachy. And the people that you're working with.

Tim Lightfoot. Sure, yeah.

Welty Peachy. And that's another thing that is lost when you end up being on the streets is that trust in humanity that perhaps we all take for granted. But that can be lost and there was a really neat quote that one of the homeless players talked about when I was talking with him and he said, you know, through playing on this team it's helped me to re-engage with humanity. And I think that's really powerful when you think about say you're on the streets you kind of lose touch with, in some ways, what it means to be, you know, a part of humanity and race.

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And you don't have some of the things that we all take for granted. And then through this experience that started to re-connect this individual back into humanity. I think that's really powerful and I think shows what, in this instance sport soccer can do to help reach out and help form those connections again, those networks. But it can't just stop there. You know it's what happens after that. You know the follow-up and how we connect them into various social services that are needed and such. But sometimes that just...feeling good about yourself again, you know, can be what the starting point that's needed.

Tim Lightfoot. Well, you know, that's a really interesting point. We interviewed a guy named John Fox [??? 0:10:48] wrote a book called The Ball, which talks about the role of play primarily in culture and that's what he talks about is these big multi player games that they had in the old say old [??? 0:10:59]. It was like the communities would play against each other, so there were like 300 people on a team and they still do that to some extent. And it provides such a connection

point for everyone in the community. And so this is...I'm hearing that's what you're saying with these kinds of outreach efforts that it helps re-connect people back with the community.

Welty Peachy. It does. It helps re-connect them...

Tim Lightfoot. To humanity for that matter.

Welty Peachy. To humanity. But you also have to pay attention to how it's done and that's something that is really important that really like to stress is it's not just doing sport. How it's typically done might not be the best way to go about it. So you have to pay attention when you're saying using sport in a development capacity, but how you do it. The processes and mechanisms are really important. So, for instance, we observed...street soccer has a national tournament each year. It began in Washington, D.C. and now it's held in New York City. They play the finals at Times Square, which is really cool. Think all these homeless guys run around, and women in Times Square playing soccer. And so it really calls attention and awareness to it. But anyhow, our first year we started this research project. We went to the cup in D.C. and interviewing players about their experiences before and after. And we observed during the matches that there were some losses that were like 12-0, 15-0 and really lopsided losses and we talked to these players afterwards, like after the event and they were just like despondent. You know just discouraged saying, you know, this...who's got...it just did nothing for their self-esteem and self-confidence and started to think, you know what? With the development agenda, when you're trying to help people feel better about themselves, mainly you think about how we use sport. You know is that what we want, you know, 12 their losses, 15 their losses? And so we started to talk with the organization about looking at how do you structure this? Can we give medals to everybody, you know, regardless of whether you win or lose? Can you recognize participation or in some ways? Can you make it so that just being here, you know, being in the experience, is rewarded and important immaterial of what the outcome is, win or loss? And so they did a lot of things to change that and I think over the years that's become more engaging and minimizing those 12-0 losses, which really do nothing. We all hate that, you know?

Tim Lightfoot. Right. Well some competition is good but too much kills what you want to do. Yeah.

Welty Peachy. Some competition is good. Right, particularly in this context. And so you have to pay attention to...and that's what we're trying to determine with research now is what are the best ways to organize sport to achieve developmental outcomes, you know? So we know that there can be positive outcomes but now what are the best ways that we can do that? What are the mechanisms and the processes that we should use for that?

Tim Lightfoot. You know this conversation maybe to somewhat...may be foreign to some people. I mean they may not have thought about it in this way. But in reality, I almost think that almost most adult related exercise nowadays seems to be organized around this. I mean you hear...I constantly hear of people ...you know, will you sponsor me because I'm going to go try

to run a marathon for leukemia. Or we're going to do this for this cause. There was a 24-hour walkathon a few weeks ago to offset cancer and so it seems like this without us knowing it has actually become the overriding reason why people, adults in particular, do any kind of activity.

Welty Peachy. Well, you know, I think we like to be associated with positive things if you think that humanity is good, right? And we...and you see that in disasters just like with the tornadoes up in Oklahoma recently and sometimes it takes a crisis to pull people together and to want to do something. But if we operate from the assumption that, you know, we're all...we're good people, right? We do want to help others.

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And I think you're right. I think we're seeing more and more of people in sport or physical fitness or activity thinking about well how can we...how can I be motivated to do something that's actually going to make a difference perhaps? You know get those...like my daughter just did the jump rope for heart and so getting all the sponsors and the grandparents and parents. Well, that's great. You know that's one way that we can engage in such. So it happens on multiple levels, you know, I think and I think we're starting to recognize that a little bit more.

Tim Lightfoot. Well it's interesting that people won't be motivated to do these things for their own health. I mean you can tell them all day long this will make you healthier, live longer, yada, yada and yet you say which you can help people have breast cancer or whatever. They go, okay great, I'll go ask people for money and then I'll go do this myself. It's kind of an interesting paradox to some extent.

Welty Peachy. It is. Yeah.

Tim Lightfoot. We won't help ourselves but we'd rather help each other.

Welty Peachy. Uh-huh. And I think that's again points to, points to the goodness of the human race in some respects, so. And how can sport fit into that?

Tim Lightfoot. You know one of the...I guess to change the discussion a little bit, one of the things that you've done is you put together a [??? 0:16:04] for DVD I believe on how parents could work with their children in sports. Let's talk about that for a little bit because, you know, when I talk to people that have kids and sports, one of the things they say if we get rid of the parents we'd be doing okay, kind of part of that. What advise do you have parents that have children that are in sports of some kind? Open a new question for you.

Welty Peachy. Yeah. Very much so as my daughter is just sort of moving into that, so I should speak to myself. But I say primarily, you know, it has to be...but what is the real reason that your child is in sports? You know is it for you or is it for them, for him or her?

Tim Lightfoot. Good question, yeah.

Welty Peachy. And if it's for you, then if you're trying to live vicariously...there's a big word...but if you're trying to live through the accomplishments of your child, you know, in whatever it is, whether it's sport, music, art, whatever, then we have a problem because then we get into the position of parents doing wild and crazy and whacky things which we read about, that happens at Little League contests and Pee Wee Football and You Sports and coaches, you know, trying to live through re-ignite or re-ignite our, you know, passion for sports and our playing days that we had in high school or college. And so, we have to separate that a little bit. And I think that's one of the key pieces of advice that I would have and I think that others would have is, you know, we have to separate that out. And we have to allow our children to explore too and not push them too hard into one thing that is what you want them to do. Because then we lead to burn out and drop out, lack of fun, which is the main reason that kids drop out of health and fitness and sport. Push them too soon to specialize and all of a sudden by age 14, 15, 16, 17 they're done and they don't want any more to do it because it was dad's passion or it was mom's passion to be a gymnast. It wasn't my passion for it. So that's where we have to be really careful. So I think it's, looking at that separation a little bit and really trying to identify what your child's really interested in, providing those opportunities for them. And then stepping back and let them strive and fail and make their own mistakes and learn and let them have that experience and that you don't have to control it.

Tim Lightfoot. And there are valuable lessons in them failing.

Welty Peachy. Very valuable lessons because we know that's what sports about, because nobody wins all the time. Yeah we all fail.

Tim Lightfoot. Except me.

Welty Peachy. Except you, yeah, yeah. It's definitely not me.

Tim Lightfoot. Not me for sure.

Welty Peachy. Yeah and it's a good lesson to learn. I mean because life is full of successes and failures, you know? And we use those failures to learn from and then hopefully we improve what we do and move forward. But we all have them and we have those parents that let our child's fail. And that's hard to do sometimes.

Tim Lightfoot. Well here's a tough question. So as adults, who may have children, how do we help other parents understand that? Whether we're coaches of the team or whether we're just another parent that has children on the same team and we've got another adult that's going nuts. I mean how do we help them understand what you've just said?

Welty Peachy. Well I think there's a number of ways. We can't be afraid to confront. I think sometimes we don't take action when we see behavior...if we are parents sitting in the stands and we see another parent acting inappropriately, that it's easy for us not to do anything. Be passive.

Tim Lightfoot. Right. Don't want to get involved.

Welty Peachy. Don't want to get involved, but maybe we should. And maybe we should get involved and say something, in a respectful way, of course. We're not being antagonistic. We don't want to fight in the stands or anything. But in some ways call attention to that. There are some leagues around the country that are starting to put together codes of ethics of conduct for not just...at a variety of levels.

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For officials, for players and for fans and for parents. And some leagues that will have parents sign these codes of conduct, codes of ethics, prior to seasons so that they know what is expected of them in terms of behavior when they're sitting in the stands or when they're interacting during little Joey's, little Suzie's event, right? So that's a more formalized way. But I think it's not the...the main thing is not being passive and that's a hard thing. You know to be able to confront somebody but to do it in a respectful way because we all see it and...you know when you're sitting in the stands and you're at the game or the event and you...I'm guilty of this as well. You know we don't, we don't do anything. You know we let it go on.

Tim Lightfoot. And it's easy to do.

Welty Peachy. Easy to do.

Tim Lightfoot. It's hard to stand up and do the right thing sometimes. Well speaking of doing the right thing, let's...you mentioned very briefly at the beginning about the use of sport in world peace. Do some examples of that. That may sound to some people listening like this big airy fairy kind of wow.

Welty Peachy. Sure. Let me give some context and I'll give a specific example. It's actually how the Olympic Games were formed. When you think back to not Pierre de [Cupiton 0:21:28] who brought back the Olympic games as we know them now, but when you think back to the ancient Greek model of the Olympics back in ancient times, sport was supposed to be...not just sport but the original Olympic games were competitions in sport and the cultural arts, in oratory and poetry and music and dance, as well as running and athletics. But it was supposed to be a celebration of humanity and a way for us to work at getting along. And if you look at the Olympic model today, the Olympic creed that Pierre de [Cupiton 0:22:04] brought back, it's still there. It's still there. But beyond that, now there are organizations that are developing a specific mandate to use sport for working at peace. And let me give you one specific example because it's actually an organization that I worked for for a number of years. Which you mentioned at the beginning of the Podcast, which is, the World Scholar Athlete Games, which is an Olympic style event which is held every four years that brings together roughly about 2,000 young people from 180 countries around the world to take part in sport activities and cultural arts activities. So we have contests in your typical Olympic sports. You know, track and field and basketball and

volleyball and all that. But as well as in symphony, dance, choir, theatre, those types of things, so going back to the original Olympic model. But the mission of this organization is to use sport and the fine arts cultural arts to help bridge and work at peace between the youth of the world and to foster that understanding. Reduce stereotypes and prejudice and etcetera. But they do a very unique approach to this. And this gets back to the how we organize sport. So unlike the Olympic Games where we have country versus country competition, so U.S. against China, you know, and U.S. versus Canada and we love to root for our country, this organization takes all these 2,000 athletes and mixes them up on teams.

Tim Lightfoot. Oh, really? Huh, interesting.

Welty Peachy. And so a soccer team might have players on it from 10 different countries. You know a basketball team might have players on it from the U.S., China, Russia, South Africa, you know, Indonesia and the organization pays special attention to putting on the same team young people from parts of the world that are in conflict like South Korea and North Korea. Or Palestinians and Jews. And so then using that team based model of having to work together in a competition format, with trained coaches who are facilitators to work at those goals of conflict resolution, you know, stereotype reduction, working at forming bonds of friendship with people that we've not necessarily interacted with before, that we have stereotypes about, or perceived that there are certain ways, you know, these are our enemies per se but now we're playing on the same team with a common goal. And that's fascinating. You know, I think the outcomes of that are really fascinating. And it gets back to how do we organize sport to achieve those goals? So...and that's just one example of an organization that is changing how we think about sport and how we can use it. So using that then to help to work at peace issues around the world and I think that's pretty fascinating.

Tim Lightfoot. Yeah. We think so often of sport in the term of just athletic competition. My team won, your team lost, whatever.

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So it's really cool to find out about ways that we can use sport to actually develop peace and collaboration amongst a bunch of people as well as social causes as well.

Welty Peachy. Sure. And I think that's really important. I mean there's a place for all parts of sport. You know professional sport and a collegiate sport are important and important in this country and they give us hope and they give us many things. You know within that then we can look at ways that sport can be used for other things and I think that's really important to consider and for us all to think about that this thing that we love can really be a positive influence in society. And we see so much negativity these days I think with regards to ethical conduct in sport at all levels. That we read the media loves to grab onto those issues and sometimes we see less about the positive things that are going on. There are thousands of non-profits around the world that are using sport in very positive ways. We just don't know about them and we don't hear

about them but they're there and we need to call those to light. And I think they're doing really powerful things.

Tim Lightfoot. Is there a centralized website we can go to pull it out?

Welty Peachy. There is actually. Sportfordevelopment.org is a website that has pulled together a lot of the research and a lot of the organizations that work what we call in sport for development or how we use sport for social change. And it's an easy, lay language type of website where you can go and see what's going on and what the organizations are that are working around the country and around the world. Not just around the world but in the United States there are many organizations that are working in the inner cities or working in rural parts of the country, in Appalachia and others, that are using sport with some type of development mandate. And so this is a website that kind of showcases some of those things that are going on as well as some of the research that's been done that's showing how these organizations are actually impacting society.

Tim Lightfoot. Super.

Welty Peachy. And I think that's important.

Tim Lightfoot. Well we'll certainly put that up on our web notes and we encourage everybody to visit, look around. Become something part of bigger than yourself, right?

Welty Peachy. That's right.

Tim Lightfoot. Yeah. John thank you so much for being here today.

Welty Peachy. My pleasure.

Tim Lightfoot. We've kind of run short on time here and as we do every week we ask our guests to give us a take home message. What's the one thing that you would like people to remember?

Welty Peachy. I think to think broader about what sport can be.

Tim Lightfoot. Interesting. Great. Great take home message. Thank you so much for being here.

Welty Peachy. You're very welcome.

Tim Lightfoot. And as always also with our take home message it's always followed by our Podcast question of the week and so with our Podcast question this week is our producer, Cheryl.

Cheryl. What sport organization does Dr. Welty Peachy work closely with to help the homeless?

Tim Lightfoot. Super question. Be the first one to e-mail us the correct answer to that, to Huffinespodcast@HLKN.tamu.edu and you'll win one of those nifty Podcast tee shirts that we have. And I keep saying and it's getting true now is that hurry up because those second edition tee shirts are about to run out. We're going to have the third edition out the next couple of months.

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