

## Transcription details:

Date: 08-Feb-2016  
Input sound file: 186\_Huffines\_Sports\_Med\_Burge

## Transcription results:

- S1 00:00 Hi. This is Tim Lightfoot, the director of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance. I am so excited to let you know that the Huffines Institute now has apps for your smart phones and your tablets. We have apps for the Apple products and for Android products. You can go to iTunes or go to Google Play - either one - download those Huffines apps and you can pull in our content every week. Now, on to the podcast.
- S2 00:26 [music] Welcome to the Sports Medicine podcast brought to you by the Sydney and JL Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Texas A&M University. At the Huffines Institute, we're always working to facilitate, apply, and bring you the most up-to-date coverage of the wide world that is sports medicine and human performance all in a language you can understand and share with your friends. Now, here's our host, the director of the Huffines Institute, Dr. Tim Lightfoot.
- S1 00:57 Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance weekly podcast. I'm your host, Tim Lightfoot. I want to thank you all for taking the time to join us as we interview another interesting person in the world of sports medicine and human performance. We have with us today Miss Tanna Burge who's the director of sports performance here at Texas A&M University. Welcome to the podcast Tanna.
- S3 01:17 Thank you.
- S1 01:17 We're so glad to have you here.
- S3 01:19 It's good to be here.
- S1 01:20 We're going to take a few minutes and tell everybody a little bit about you first and then we're going to jump into the conversation. As we said, Tanna is the director of Sports Performance here at Texas A&M and she's going to tell us a little bit more about that. She's the direct Sports Performance coach for the Texas A&M men's and women's swimming and diving programs-- athletic teams, excuse me. She has a bachelor's degree in Health and Fitness studies from Baylor. She previously was an assistant director of Sports Performance [of?] women's basketball and tennis at Northwestern University. She worked with the softball and equestrian athletic performance programs at Baylor University. She was the assistant Strength and Conditioning coach for Olympic Sports Programs at Clemson University. She also made a previous stop at West Point. Thank you again for being with us.
- S3 02:02 Thanks for having me.
- S1 02:03 You're welcome. Tanna is a relatively new addition to Texas A&M . She's been here around two and a half months. As director of Sports Performance, you oversee all the sports performance components.
- S3 02:15 I do.
- S1 02:15 Tell us a little bit about what that job entails.
- S3 02:19 Well, we have a staff of seven Sports Performance coaches including myself that are on the Olympic sport side. We meet weekly and discuss everything that we want to do as a program, as a staff. The things that we want to do to help our student athletes really perform the best that they absolutely can in their sport. If that means looking at different technology things, if that means looking at the different types of coaching cues, if that means looking at different mobility patterns, movement patterns. How we are training our athletes so that they maximize their performance, so that they maximize what they're capable of doing and reach their full potential as student athletes.
- S1 03:01 Recently, relatively recently, the way it is in many places, this would be considered strength and conditioning. Now, y'all have changed that term and we'll talk about that in a minute, but so for the audience to get the context in their head what we're talking about really used to be called strength and conditioning, it's really no longer called that and why is that?
- S3 03:19 There's different ways of thinking about that. Our two national governing bodies are still considered National Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association and Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association. It's still titled in with the strength and conditioning. There's been a move recently more towards athletic performance and sports performance because it entails a little bit more of what we actually do when we're looking at working on a holistic approach to the student athlete in their training, in their performance. It's not just lifting weights and running anymore, there's so many more components that go into that, so labelling that and branding that as more of a holistic and well rounded approach. That's the direction that many universities in our field have gone.
- S1 04:06 Many times the sports performance staff, strength and conditioning staff, they're not the ones in the limelight. You see on the sidelines or on the side of the court, the coaches and the assistant coaches. But in many ways, the strength and conditioning

staff may be more important, other than game situations, than some of the other coaching staffs. Help our audience understand where you fit in the athletic realm.

- S3 04:33 A lot of times, we're more of the behind-the-scenes staff. We take the athletes when we're in the off-season programming. We have eight hours, per NCAA rules, to work with our student athletes. So we--
- S1 04:47 And that's eight hours per week.
- S3 04:48 Yes, per week. We'll see them potentially more than their sport coaches actually get to see them during that time. We're looking at how well are we moving, how are we recovering, what are we needing to do to help these student athletes get the best foundation of strength, the best foundation of power, explosiveness, flexibility. That's when we work on their nutrition. We work on educating them so that they're making good choices while they're with us and then when they're studying. When they're going to classes, when they're off on the weekends, they're making good choices that will help them athletically and just in overall health.
- S3 05:31 We do a lot of the behind-the-scene stuff where we'll get in early in the morning, if that's necessary, and we'll make sure that all of the little things that our student athletes are needing, we're individualizing as much as possible. We're making sure that their needs are met. We'll, a lot of times, go out to practices. We'll see them at practice. We'll see how they're performing in their sport. Then if we need to make adjustments to what we're doing based on how they're performing in practices or how they're performing in games. We do all those things behind-the-scenes.
- S3 06:07 A lot of our field is moving towards a little bit more of the technology front. A lot of times with that, we're looking at the results of the numbers from some of that technology and seeing whether it's confirming that what we're doing is correct and that their bodies are responding the way that we want them to respond or we're seeing trends that could maybe track towards making some additional modifications on down the road. So we can make sure that we're peaking at the right time, we're able to perform in those game-time settings, or we're recovering well enough so that we can continue to push forward and push them a little bit harder.
- S1 06:45 Given the current rules - NCAA rules - strength and conditioning coaches almost see them more on a year round basis than their sports coaches do. I mean, you have more interaction with the athletes.
- S3 06:55 We do. We do. A lot of that, working within that, we build, we work to really, really build strong relationships with our athletes because we want them to trust us. We want them to trust us with their overall performance, but also with their overall health because we could grind them down into the ground all the time but if they don't know that we're there for them and we're supportive of them, they don't really necessarily have a trusting relationship with what we're doing with them.
- S3 07:22 We want to make sure that in that time that we spend with them, we build that trust, we build that bond, we build that relationship so that when it comes down to, we're having a really, really tough workout, they know that we're doing this for their best interest and we're doing this for the best of the team, for the best of their performance. But also, we are looking out for them and their best interest overall. Within that, we build those really, really-- some of the strongest relationships. You see student athletes who will come back 5, 10, 15 years later and they're coming back to see their strength coach, sports performance coach, because you've built that really, really strong bond, because we see them so much and we have so much interaction with them.
- S1 08:08 You work really closely with the nutrition side of things, you've mentioned that already. We do have some registered dietitians here in the athletic department that work with athletes. Talk to us a little bit about how that relationship between you and your staff and the sports nutrition folks works.
- S3 08:25 John and Blair are absolutely fantastic. We've already started building that really, really strong bond, because if you look at overall performance of any athlete, that base and that foundation is going to come with proper fueling. So we want to really, really educate our student athlete on, how do you fuel your body correctly? I tell this to every recruit that we have-- I talk to about this, all the time with people. It's like you have a high-performance sports car. You have a Ferrari or a Lamborghini, one of those cars, you're going to put the best fuel in those cars so that they run optimally. They run at the highest level. They're going faster than every other car. You've got your formula one cars. They're going go faster. They're going to have to move. You have to put the higher octane fuel in there.
- S3 09:16 It's the same thing with our athletes. We have the elite, high-performance athletes, so you need to put better fuel in them. We need to educate them on, what are they actually putting in their bodies? Are they hydrating well? Are they putting the right types of fluids in their bodies? Are they recovering well? Are they putting the right types of food - carbohydrate, protein, fats? Are they putting the right things in their bodies? Are they getting antioxidants?
- S3 09:40 Within in that, we're working with our sports dietitians to make sure that we're setting up the foundation of their proper fueling, which also helps with their proper recovery because we're going to work them hard. If we do our jobs really, really well, which our staff does, we're going to work them really, really hard. So we need to pre-fuel correctly to set their bodies up to take on the stress that we're putting on them through our training, but we also need to set them up for refueling properly and recovering properly so that, again, we can continue to push forward and make gains athletically and overall physically.
- S1 10:19 I think in my observation this is one of, probably, the biggest changes in college athletics over the last 20 years, is that there's been this holistic approach. [It?] really has become a holistic approach to-- you have to think about the nutrition. You have to think about the strength and condition. You have to think about sport-specific stuff. You have to think about the psychology of

this. And so your athletes are not just coming in and you're just throwing them the ball and saying, "Now, go do your thing." It really is a holistic approach to athletics.

- S3 10:45 It is. Because there's so much involved and when you look at-- it's not just about, you go out there and you play a game and then you're done and then you leave and go home. There's so many different components of this elite athlete performance. We're in the SEC, we're in the top percentile of competition in the country. When you look at that, you want to perform as best as you possibly can. There's a lot of different components that play into that, and a lot of little things that can make that 1% difference which makes a huge differences in the long run.
- S3 11:22 If we get that 1% here and there, then we have a little bit higher percentage chance to win in the SEC, to win national championships. Because we have a lot of teams who are fully capable of winning national championships and already have. We want to make sure that we set them up for a success with everything that we do.
- S1 11:42 Sometimes it's just that one little bit of difference, isn't it?
- S3 11:44 It can be a tenth of a second. It can be a hundredth of a second. That tiniest little percent makes the whole difference.
- S1 11:52 You mention some of the few moments ago that-- it relates to something that you and I have already talk about before and that's when they finish playing their sport, you're not done with them. It's not like, "Just go back to your dorm room or whatever." One of the things that I've heard as we have interviewed numerous coaches over the years and we talk about, "What is the biggest challenges you have with college athletes?" And they say, "Recovery and sleep." Would you agree with that?
- S3 12:17 I absolutely, 100% agree with that.
- S1 12:20 It's not getting them in the weight room and lifting is not having them perform, it's actually getting them to recover appropriately and sleep?
- S3 12:27 And that's where if we're looking at-- we just spoke about the nutrition side of things but also one of the biggest foundations of overall health and performance is that sleep and that time to recover because that's when your body recovers. So all the stuff that we're doing in the weight room, at practice, and competition, if we don't get the appropriate amount of sleep, our bodies are not going to recover. That's when it rebuilds itself. That's when it fully restores everything that we've worked so hard to break down.
- S3 12:58 So if we're not getting that sleep, if those athletes who-- they're not professional athletes. They're not just here to play their sport, eat, sleep, and drink their sport. They have classes, they have to study, they have meetings to go to, they have tutor sessions to go to, they have a social life to keep, which is just as important as everything else because they have to feel like they're real people and we want them to enjoy and live their college experience. But within that it's, how do they balance all of those things and prioritize the sleep portion because that's so important and a lot of times, that's the last thing that gets looked at.
- S3 13:40 There's a lot of research that's gone into sleep science. There's a couple of new companies out there who are working with sleep science with college athletes, with professional athletes. And there's some really, really cool stuff that's coming out where we can monitor and gauge and coach our athletes through their sleeping patterns and their sleeping habits. As much as we can educate them on proper sleep hygiene, how much sleep they need to get, the quality of sleep they need to get, as much as we can educate them on that right now. And then as we move forward more and more into the research, we start to see some benefits, we start to see injury rates go down, we start to see reaction rates go up, we start to see a lot of that recovery start to work a little bit more in our favor so their bodies are actually recovering well, and then they're able to do more because their bodies are restored completely.
- S1 14:40 So how do you sell that to an 18-year-old or 19-year-old who's at college. I can remember me at college first time and it's like, "Wow, I can stay up all night if I want." And you get with some friends and there you go and then it's the next morning.
- S3 14:54 And a lot of times it's difficult with that. A lot of times it is really difficult because we do want them to have that experience. But it's also, if we can educate them on the importance of sleep and educate them on time management, if we can teach them how to be more efficient when they're studying or more efficient with how they get the little tasks done that they need to get done, and then we give them 30 minutes extra by being efficient, well, then they can take that 30 minutes to go to sleep. And we teach them the importance of that extra 30 minutes, or we teach them the importance of getting a nap in if they've had an early morning [lecture?].
- S1 15:32 And not during class.
- S3 15:33 And not during class. No [chuckles]. Definitely not during class, but around their schedule. If we teach them how to organize and manage their time well, then we can teach them and educate them on how to get that proper amount of sleep, because the sleep adds up. We don't want them to be in a sleep debt, because a lot of times that sets them up for a higher risk of injury, a higher risk of low performance.
- S3 15:57 And a lot of times, if you put that out to even an 18-year-old, then they understand, "Well, if my performance is going to go down, if my academics is going to go down because I'm not getting the sleep that I need, maybe I do need to make this a priority." And then you get the coaches on board as well, who are going to echo that message. Then everybody's speaking the same language, everybody's giving the same message to these student athletes, and then it becomes more of an important

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aspect to adhere to. And then they start making changes, and once they start making changes-- from my experience we try to keep it simple. It's like, "Go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Just try it."

- S3 16:36 And a lot of times, it's almost like a dare to them. It's like, "I'm going to prove you wrong." And then they actually end up proving you right, because they're like, "Oh man, I feel better." And then that becomes an hour, and that becomes an hour and a half. And then, before you know it, they're getting eight hours of sleep and they're performing at their best, they feel really good, they're academics is going up and then all of a sudden it's like, "Oh man, that was the missing component the whole time."
- S1 17:01 So we're going back to the old days of curfews?
- S3 17:02 Yes. I would love that but [laughter]...
- S1 17:05 Make it easy.
- S3 17:07 Not really realistic in these days but--
- S1 17:09 Especially without athletic dorms. So let's change gears a little bit. So let's talk about how you got into strength and conditioning. What happened? Were you five-years-old and you said, "You know what? I like lifting weights and that's what I'm going to do the rest of my life."
- S3 17:22 Oh my gosh.
- S1 17:23 What's your story on that?
- S3 17:25 Kind of. So I've been that athletic kid. Growing up I used to race all the little boys in my class when I was younger because none of the girls were fast enough to race me.
- S1 17:37 You're picking on boys again [crosstalk].
- S3 17:38 I did. I picked on the boys. But it was one of those things. I loved being competitive and I was athletic enough to hang with all the guys, and so then I played every sport. I started playing sports from pretty much the time that I could walk and built up into that through high school. I played, or I attempted to play. I played a lot of sports, I played six sports. I attempted a seventh and I was not successful. Golf--
- S1 18:05 Not enough recovery time.
- S3 18:07 Golf is not my game [laughter].
- S1 18:09 So it just wasn't-- not enough of recovery time. It was--
- S3 18:11 That was actually not enough skill.
- S1 18:13 The skill thing, okay.
- S3 18:14 That was full on skill. But I was mildly successful for a high school athlete playing six different sports. And that was what I did. That was who I was. I was an athlete. So coming into college, I had burned myself out a little bit with going from 2:00 to 9:00 every day with practices. And I wasn't quite good enough at any one sport to play in college. My freshman year of college I took a class that was called Fitness Theory and Practice. The instructor of it was a graduate assistant football coach. One day about halfway through the semester I'm dominating everything that we do and that was-- that's my strength. I lift and I run and I'm good at all those things.
- S3 19:07 And he asked me one day, he said, "Have you ever thought about being a strength coach?" And it was like, "Aha." I was like, "I didn't even know there was such a thing. That's so great." I knew that I wanted to be in a profession where I could work with athletes and I could be athletic and I wanted a profession that dealt with sports. I just didn't even know the perfect thing for me existed [chuckles].
- S1 19:30 Was there already.
- S3 19:30 I lived in the weight room, basically, my entire high school career. Every summer, every time that I could get. I'd go in between practices and I'd get a 20-minute lift in. And so then I found out that it existed. And I went in and I rolled up into the weight room one day. I went up to the strength coach and I said, "Hi. My name is Tanna. I want to be a strength coach." And it took a little bit of convincing and it took a little bit of, "Let's see if this will work." Actually, the first day that I walked into the weight room at Baylor, my sophomore year of college, Michael Johnson was in the weight room lifting and I was like, "This is what I'm going to do."
- S1 20:16 You're talking about the world track champion.
- S3 20:17 Yes. The champion. The gold medalist, Michael Johnson, was in the weight room the first day. I knew that this was something that I really, really-- I wanted to work for. I wanted this to be my career. Because it was already my passion. Then over the past-- that was 1998-- over the past 17 years it's continued to grow as my passion. Now, I think I enjoy what I do even more now than I did in the first couple of years. I was just learning about, "What is this? What is this profession?"

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- S1 20:57 This past summer the Arizona Cardinal's made news by a hiring female strength coach for a football team. Has being a female impeded your progress, or sped it up, or been a difference or-- I mean, that's not something I know you talk about. But let's chat about that for a minute because we may have people-- young women listening that want to know that.
- S3 21:18 Yeah, absolutely. When I started as a student assistant, there were three females working as student assistants at Baylor, and so it didn't seem like it was--
- S1 21:30 Big deal.
- S3 21:30 --a big deal. We all worked hard. We did as much as we possibly could. All three of us had really, really good work ethic already. And then I think the passion for learning and seeing more about this field. As far as I know, I'm the only one of us three that is still in this field. But everywhere else that I've been from when I was an intern to a graduate assistant to full-time and, now, to director, I have personally never felt like being a female has been an issue.
- S3 22:07 Sometimes, it may have been one of those, "Oh, we need to diversify the staff a little bit and maybe get a female in." But every position that I've gone for it's, I'm going up against male counterparts. And whether it's one thing or another, I'm always going to be the one that-- I'm going to try to put in as much work as possible and I'm going to do the best job as possible so that it's not a question of male or female, it's the best candidate gets this role and gets this position.
- S1 22:38 You haven't had any push-back from athletes, though, that you've work with, because you do have male athletes under your purview and you never say, "You're female. You don't know what you're talking about."
- S3 22:48 Early on, I think, when I was really young, I think before the strength and conditioning field really became a regular and understood field, there was a little bit of push-back from some of the players who maybe were older than me. As a student assistant they were like, "What do you know?" And I would tell them what I knew, and I think a lot of that just comes with the confidence of just--
- S1 23:15 Having been there and done that.
- S3 23:15 --speaking and understanding what you're talking about and then speaking it with confidence, and speaking it with the authority that you do have. And that's one of the things that I always-- I talk to young female strength coaches a lot, and I always say, "If you speak with confidence and if you stand with confidence and authority in what you're doing, anybody's going to listen to you."
- S3 23:36 And it's having that confidence in yourself and your confidence in what you know, and your confidence in your ability to coach these athletes. Because it doesn't matter if you're a male or a female, young or old, it's having that confidence to tell them what they need to do and hold them to it - hold them accountable - structure it to where they understand what you're talking about, keep it simple enough to where they can get it, they're going to do whatever you ask. I have a lot of fun working with male teams because a lot of times they actually work - I wouldn't say harder for me - than female teams, but it's a different type of relationship.
- S1 24:14 Different dynamic.
- S3 24:15 It's a different dynamic. And in some of them it's, you can have fun with them because they'll try to talk back and then you're just like, "Nope. Not going to happen. Not going to work." Or not even talk back, but joke back and forth. And I think it just makes it that much more fun because you have that banter back and forth with them. But at the end of the day or at the end of that conversation, they know that what you say goes, and not because you're an authority but because you know what you're talking about. Because you're doing what's best for them and they see that and they understand that, and so they're going to work hard for you.
- S1 24:48 Do you think athletes have progressed as well - the generation of college students now? When you started, they were three and four-years-old.
- S3 24:57 Yes. Yes.
- S1 24:57 Do you think that-- that's okay, Tanna, I have the same thought.
- S3 25:01 I was going to say, "Man, that's harsh."
- S1 25:02 The freshman that I have now, I had already been a faculty member for eight years before they were born, so I understand. They've been raised during this time period where woman are more and more obvious in sporting situations. Whether it been in sports themselves, or whether it be in athletic training, or sports and conditioning, or these things. Do you think they're more accepting now, and it's just because it's part of the scenery?
- S3 25:25 I think it's--
- S1 25:26 Or they're used to it.
- S3 25:27 It's what they're used to. If that's all they've ever known, then that's all they've ever known. I've seen a lot of athletes, it's just they come in and it's like, "Oh, there you go." It's not even a factor. It's not anything that they think twice about. When I'm looking at who's going to respond in a different way, I think this generation just naturally responds differently to a lot of things. I've had a lot of just different conversations about females working with football, or baseball, or anything like that. And when you



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look at it, a lot of these young men have been raised by their mothers, or grandmothers, or any other women in their lives, in their families, and that's what they know to respond to, and they hear that voice, and they hear--

- S1 26:16 [That's?] an authority figure for them, right?
- S3 26:18 Yeah. And so they have that response, and so I think a lot of times we, females, have a little bit of an advantage, because they understand that authority in that caring nature, but also the authority of, "This is what you're going to do."
- S1 26:37 So there's certainly-- if you had a young woman approach you and said, "I want to be a strength and conditioning coach-- a head strength and conditioning coach." You'd go, "Absolutely. Rock and roll."
- S3 26:45 Absolutely.
- S1 26:45 Fabulous.
- S3 26:46 If she's willing to put in the work and do what she need to do.
- S1 26:49 Right. Don't get anywhere just because of your gender but--
- S3 26:52 Exactly, exactly. And that's what it comes down to, it's, "Are you willing to really put in that extra little bit and really put in the work and education, and the time, and just really putting in a lot of work with that-- just that relationship building?" Because, I think, so much of it is-- it's all about people. What we do is a people business.
- S1 27:14 Sure. It's a hard business regardless whether you're male or female. You get a lot of long hours.
- S3 27:19 A lot.
- S1 27:19 A lot of low paying jobs. Absolutely.
- S3 27:22 But there's so much reward in it too because when you get to see-- all the hard work that we do that most other people don't see, when you see that victory or when see an athlete reach either a max on their lift or when you see them break through something that was difficult for them. When you see that and you look at their faces and you know that they've done something that they didn't that they could do, but they did it. That's all the reward I ever need because it's, you know that you've helped them see their full potential. I don't even like potential because I think that's limiting. They've done something they didn't think they could do and so then that sets the standard even higher and you just keep building up on that standard.
- S1 28:07 Well, thank you for being here with us today.
- S3 28:09 Thank you for having me.
- S1 28:09 We've had a great conversation. Regular listeners know that this is the time we tell our guests they can do the take-home message. What do you want people to remember after they listen to this podcast?
- S3 28:19 I think a couple of things. Number one, having confidence in what you do and what you know, and just really sharing that confidence and the education that you've worked so hard to learn and to grow in. I think sharing that with-- as a coach I see sharing my education with my student athletes as one of the most important things that I do. Helping mentor them, helping grow them as people, not just as athletes.
- S3 28:48 But also for any of the young female coaches out there, or any young female, I think don't ever use that or don't ever allow that to be a limitation. Don't ever allow that to be something that makes you question what you are capable of doing or that you can do because there's-- I don't think there's any limits. I don't think there's any ceiling for anybody, whether it's just a young coach, a young female coach, anything. I think there's definitely no limitations and with hard work and with persistence and diligence in what you do, and then, again, the confidence to continue to go, I think anything is possible. It just takes being passionate about what you do and really, really loving it every single day and loving what you do and just, I don't know, I think, waking up every single morning and getting excited about your day and excited about the opportunities that you get to have every day.
- S1 29:47 Great take-home messages. Thank you for being here with us. Regular listeners will know that this is the time of the podcast when we have the podcast question of the week and here with our podcast question of the week is our producer, Kenneth.
- S4 30:00 What are the two biggest difficulties that college coaches say they have with their athletes?
- S1 30:05 Be the first one to send us the correct answer to that question, you'll win one of our podcast t-shirts. Send that response to huffinespodcast - make sure you put the S in the podcast - @hlkn.tamu.edu. Be the first one and you'll get one of those nifty podcast t-shirts and, hey, we have been known to give out bonus ones, so don't ever think you're too late. Send us that answer anyway, besides we like to talk to you.
- S1 30:30 Again, we want to thank you all for taking the time to download and listen to us this week with Tanna. [music] Thank you again for taking time this afternoon to be with us. And we hope that you all join us next week when we have another interesting person in the world of sports medicine and human performance and until then, we hope that you're active and healthy.
- S2 30:49 The sports medicine podcast is produced by Ayland Letsinger and licensed by the Huffines Institute at Texas A&M under a Creative Commons 3.0 license. You can share it as much as you want and you can talk or blog about it all you want, just don't change it or charge money for it. This podcast is made possible by support from the Omar Smith family and the Sydney and

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S2 31:29 If you have questions or comments please send them to [huffinespodcast@hkn.tamu.edu](mailto:huffinespodcast@hkn.tamu.edu). From all of us at the Huffines Institute we hope you have an active and healthy week.