

PROTECTING YOUR POSSIBILITIES PODCAST WITH LUKE FEDLAM

Episode 18: Protecting Athlete Identity: A Discussion with Celia Anderson | Nov. 18, 2020

The following is a transcription of the audio podcast recording. It is largely accurate but in some cases it is incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages or transcription errors.

Luke: I'm sports attorney Luke Fedlam, and welcome to the Protecting Your Possibilities podcast. Each conversation we focus on sharing information and having conversations around how athletes can best educate and protect themselves or their life outside of their sport. Welcome to the Protecting Your Possibilities podcast. My name is Luke Fedlam, your host. I'm excited to be with you again today and to welcome my friend, Celia Anderson to the show. Celia yo, what's going on? Man?

Celia: I'm doing well.

Luke: I'm doing well, excited to have you on today. So for those of you who don't know, Celia is a former basketball player for the Arkansas Razorbacks. She played in the women's final four '98. She played overseas in Greece, before starting in her working career, where she has done a lot. And when I say a lot, I mean a lot - like I can't take time, you know, going through her whole bio, because that would take up our whole time here today. So let me give you some of the highlights. She is an author and writer. And she continues to be involved in the sports world sports, tourism world, as she works for Experience Columbus here in Columbus, Ohio. But she's also a mom and a mom of a basketball player. And her daughter also is a published author. So if one author in the household isn't enough, let's have another one. So with that being said, Celia, welcome. Thanks for being on today.

Celia: Thanks for having me. I'm very excited to be here. You know, I love women's basketball. So I welcome any opportunity to talk about it.

Luke: Yes, and I do as well. So let's just get right into it. I would love to have you share with our listeners kind of what your experience was like playing basketball, playing at the highest level, being able to play in a women's final four, transitioning to overseas playing in Greece, and then coming back to the States. What was that like for you both in terms of the experience, but also in terms of kind of your identity and preparing for kind of a career after basketball?

Celia: Yeah, so I played basketball all my life, pretty much. And it was just a natural part of who I was, from the time I was 13 years old, until, you know, my mid-20s, I had a great experience playing women's basketball. That's why I love it so much. And I give so much back to the game, because I feel like the game gave so much to me. You know, it really is the foundation on which I was able to build a life. You know, early on, my mother pretty much said, Hey, listen, if you want to go to college that's on you, but I can't afford it. So you're six feet tall honey, so you better go throw, hit, or do something if you want to go. And so basketball just kind of became my outlet. And it's what I worked at. And I was fortunate enough to play the Power Five to play for the University of Arkansas. And I

cannot say enough about my experience there. You know, just like anything, every experience is not 100% good. But as I look back on it, I don't know if there was anything that I'd change about that experience. And then transitioning to overseas to play in Greece, I'm just gonna be honest, I'm having a good time. But I don't know if it was the basketball or the guy I was dating. I had a lot of fun in Greece, but you know, basketball was, you know, it taught me discipline. So a lot of things that I learned from the game I've taken into my work career, you know, I learned how to work hard when no one's looking, you know, all of those cliché things you hear that athletes say all the time they really hard true. You know, you learn how to take direction from people, you learn how to lose on Thursday, play again on Saturday, those kind of things.

Luke: Now, that's great. That's fantastic. So when you say, you know, good experience, and we've talked about, you know, Greece and playing over there and playing in college, for those of you who don't know, Celia has also traveled to Rwanda to read and teach English in Rwanda. I mean, talk about like, global perspective, what was that experience like for you? And what caused you to say, I want to do this, I want to go travel to Africa and teach young people English.

Celia: So Africa, for me was life changing. And I actually ended up going to Africa because I'm originally from Arkansas. And Bill Clinton was actually the president during the Rwandan genocide. And so if you read any of his memoirs, he would list that as you know, one of his biggest regrets of his presidency. So Little Rock has in the Clinton Foundation have strong ties to a wonder, you know, they fund the world Rwandan genocide Memorial and all of that stuff. So I always knew I wanted to visit Rwanda, just from the education and the things I learned with people I've met just by living in Arkansas. And so there was a particular organization in Arkansas called Africa Reads Now, and I had the opportunity to go and to teach, and I took it, and it was life changing for me. You know, it's nothing like being in another country and embracing yourself in other people's cultures. I thought I was going there to teach them. But to be honest, they taught me a whole lot about myself.

Luke: Yes, no, that's good. That's good. Right there. I think that's a, that's so real. Right? But just the foresight, and the desire to do that, I love that. Because, you know, a lot of times, and we've had conversations, you know, around athletes, and the idea of athletes identity. And I think a lot of times, you know, there have been so many headlines or people in in, you know, various media outlets and others, you know, saying that athletes should only focus on sports, and you know, the shut up and dribble kind of concept. But there's, there's so much to be said, right about the idea that you're more than an athlete. And we've talked a lot about athletes' identity, kind of, you know, just thinking about, you know, your experience, and I know, we're about to get into something real good. I want to get your thoughts on. But before we do, just as you think about how your identity evolved, while you were playing, post playing and starting in your career, and the different things you've done, kind of what, what was that like for you? How do you think, you know, how did your identity kind of evolve to, you know, be more than just athlete, right? More than just a basketball player? You know, at Arkansas, right? Or was this something that you already had, that you already always had a vision of your identity being more than that?

Celia: And no, to be honest, I didn't have that vision from the beginning. I mean, I was a five foot 10, 180 pounds, seventh grader. So in those years, you know, you are a bit awkward, you know, I was taller than all of my teachers taller than everybody in the school really, to be honest. And then basketball came along and gave me an identity. And so it kind of

became my identity. And it was like, oh, all of a sudden, you know, people wanted to talk to you, and you score points that you've been the newspaper, and the kind of becomes a little bit of who you are. But as you grow and mature, or at least as I grew and matured, as a woman, it slowly started to separate. Basketball became something that I did, and not necessarily who I was. And I was very, very diligent about recognizing that separation, when it started to happen. And I really think, honing in, when that starts to happen. And learning to not just continually to live in that basketball space really contributed to my success.

Luke: Yes, yes. So you kind of hit it, you talked about when you started to kind of grow and mature as a woman and your identity. So you and I've had conversation around something that you talk about, which is protecting your feminine energy and protecting your feminine energy as an athlete, as a basketball player, share with our listeners, what does that mean, from your perspective? And what was that like for you?

Celia: It's really, really a simple, a simple statement, you know, to protect your feminine energy. But sometimes as a women's basketball player, it's a complex thing to do. Because if you think about the sport of basketball, there's really not a whole lot that's feminine about it. You know, you don't get to wear skirt, like you do in tennis, you know, track girls, you know, they can wear jewelry, they can do a full face of makeup if they like lacrosse was wear the skirts, volleyball has the short shorts. So there's when you think about basketball, there's really not a whole lot that's feminine about it. And so once I started growing into a woman, and I wanted to, you know, just to be to experiment with makeup and to be more feminine. I had to be purposeful about protecting that energy. Yeah, as I was a basketball player, because if you're not careful, as a basketball player, you'll end up throwing your hair in a ponytail every day throwing out some sweats and throwing on some tennis shoes, because that's comfortable for you. But, you know, I started doing things like getting my nails done, even though you know, you can't really keep them that long in basketball, right? No matter how long your nails are, but in basketball, you can't keep it long. So I would get them short, but I would try to keep them painted. You know, I would also you know, just do little things like if I was going out with my teammates or with anyone, I always tried to dress up, you know, put on a dress, put on some heels if I was going out, you know, and just trying to really protect the feminine side of me because I felt like, that's who I was, you know, I, that's who I was. And I also felt like I was going to need that energy when I was done. You know, when I was done, I wasn't going to be able to walk into a job interview and sweats and tennis shoes, you know. And I knew that. And so I was purposeful about protecting that energy. And this is also something I talk to my daughter about all the time, you know, as she continues to be a player is protecting her feminine energy, and just being careful to not let it kind of be drowned in the women's basketball world. I'm not talking anything about sexuality here. These are two totally different things. I'm talking about your feminine energy.

Luke: Yeah, though? Well, that's the question right out of my mouth. Right, which is, how do you kind of separate that? Or what in your mind would be the distinction between kind of the two, right? Because I think that makes sense. What you're saying in terms of protecting your feminine energy, and that that's not sexuality. So somebody's listening and kind of conflating the two in their mind. What are you saying? From my perspective, I think what it says is, maintain your identity, and be who you are beyond just sports. But in your words, kind of what is that differentiation, I think, you know, that you're making between sexuality and protecting your feminine energy.

Celia: So I think sexuality is, to be honest, I think people are born with their sexuality. And I know a lot of people don't agree with that. But I know for me how I was born in what I naturally feel and who I naturally was. And I always had a great deal of feminine energy. I will never forget the first time, I was maybe 14 years old. And my best friend's cousin snuck us into a college party, and she dressed us up, but she put us on a skirt that I went to that party, never forget that. And I have always...just that's always been who I am. And so as I moved more and deeper into the women's basketball space, I wanted to protect that, you know, I wanted to continue to be true, you know, to who I am. So I think the distinction between, you know, what I'm talking about and protecting my feminine energy is probably more geared towards, you know, people who have that feminine energy, you know, some people may not have it, you know, and that's who they are. And they should live in that. But when I talk about living in who I was born to be, and that was very important to me that I was still able to, you know, be feminine.

Luke: Yeah, yeah, I hear that. So you mentioned your daughter, right? So your daughter plays basketball. And so as a parent, as a mom, who's been there before, right, who's played at the highest levels? How do you both help your daughter with being comfortable with her identity and developing her identity? And also as a follow up, what kind of sports mob? Right like, let's just be let's be real audience wants to know, right? Like, are you like the one that's in the stands? Like, ah, you know, going nuts. Are you kind of laid back like, what's, what's your flow like when it comes to parenting? Got a daughter that's doing something that you've already done?

Celia: Yeah. So I always have this thing that I tell her all the time. I heard it in a sermon one time that my ceiling was her floor. No.

Luke: Say it again for the people in the back.

Celia: My ceiling is your floor. Yes. So I played in Power Five, you know, I went to a women's Final Four, that was my ceiling. So in my opinion, those are experiences that, you know, it would be great if she had them. But, you know, I'm not really caught up in, oh my god, I wanted to play at, you know, at some major school. For me, what I am most interested in as a parent, is that my daughter has a great experience that she's surrounded by great people that when she leaves college, she has a great foundation on which to build her life. You know, so now I'm not a crazy sports parent. Because for me, there's not this unknown, the shiny ball that's dangling before your head, you know, when I talk to parents who have never played in Power Five, you know, they are mesmerized. Oh, God, did you see that room? It was so great. It was this, whatever, but you know me I'm not Like, oh, Been there, done that. So that's not necessarily the most important piece. You know, it's those unseen things that I look for, you know, that I tell my daughter to look for, you know, it's like, Are people being honest? Are they being, you know, the character? Do they have character, you know, all of those kinds of things. And one of my favorite quotes that I have my daughter put on her mirror, it says, I've spent a lifetime making of my life to be more than the measure than others can see. Hmm. And I give her that quote, because I really want her when she gets ready to make her decision to judge people on the unseen things. You know, because everything, always though,

Luke: Hey, listen, I'm gonna need you to text me that after this. So go ahead and shoot me that text so I can have that I know, I might need to put that up in my, in my office as well. I like that a lot. So, so listen, you know, kind of final thoughts. Right, I want to ask you a final question as we wrap up. And as you can tell by this conversation, don't you worry,

listeners, we will most definitely be having Celia back for additional conversation. There's a topic I want to talk about. Because you and I've had some conversations on I don't want to get too deep into any specifics, because we're not trying to, you know, talk too deep on things. But could you just share a high level perspective on the importance of parents in sports, and parents to being educated on the various changes in news items that their student athletes might be facing? So, you know, when you think about, let's just say college sports, and you think about, you know, all the changes that we know are coming to college sports, and they're coming so fast - name image and likeness changes coming transfer portal, you know, becoming in 2021, thinking about the potential impact of gambling and gaming and sports. In college sports, there's a lot that's coming. How important is it as a parent to be educated on these things that you're, you know, that your son or daughter may go through as a student athlete? And what do you kind of do to educate yourself?

Celia: Listen, the role of the parent of today's athlete is changing faster than it is ever changed before. My mother never played any sport before in her life. So she pretty much entrusted anything that had to do with me and basketball to my coach. And thank God, I had a great AAU coach, who was really invested in you know, in my future, she's actually Gabby's godmother, my daughter's godmother. And so she's kind of involved in our life. So luckily, for me, I was able to have someone who was educated that my mother could kind of pass it on to. In today's world, as a parent, it is important that you know, firsthand what's going on with your kid. Because as your child moves through this basketball world, you become less of a parent, and more of a business manager. And even though you're not getting paid, it is a job. And if you want to talk about protecting their identity, you know, you've got to be tuned in, you've got to understand the implications of things that they put on social media. And what that means, you know, you got to understand how your behavior in the stands could potentially affect what's happening with them on the court, you have to understand this whole name, image and likeness thing. And what is this, what is this going to mean? When someone reaches out to you for your daughter and says, Hey, listen, I just need her to tweet this, you know? And before you say, Oh, yeah, go ahead, tweet it and get that check. You have to know, you know, what's behind that. What does that mean? How is that going to continue to brand your daughter, so there's so many things to learn. And that's just the stuff that's off the court. You also have to have a bit of an understanding of what's happening on the court. You know, I always say, I, I've been fortunate enough for Gabrielle to always have excellent coaches. And I've only gotten this wrong, like twice, but all the other teams and programs that I have picked her to be a part of. She's always had excellent coaching. But I'll never forget when she was younger, she was the tallest girl. But for some strange reason, I knew she would probably never make six feet, but because she was taller than everyone else, this particular culture limited her plate to the block. And if I was a parent who didn't know basketball, I feel like oh, well, great. She's following everybody. But just having the foresight to say, No, no, she needs to learn to handle the ball because what if she doesn't get any taller, you know, and then all of a sudden, she's a 5'11", post player, you know. So as a parent, educating yourself just on what's happening on the court, what's happening off the court, and then understanding your role as a business manager is more important than it's ever been before.

Luke: Man, there was so much there that we could unpack and we're gonna do that another episode. So we'll definitely have to have Celia Anderson back. Celia, thank you so much for taking some time to be on the protecting your possibilities podcast.

Celia: You're welcome.

Luke: Yeah. So listen, if you've enjoyed the conversation today, guess what, there's gonna be more of it to come. We'll definitely be having Celia back. And please do make sure that you subscribe to the podcast, share it with your colleagues and friends. Go ahead and give it five stars wherever you listen to podcasts. And feel free to continue to reach out and let me know topics that you want to hear because that's what we want to be able to provide back as we think about the protecting athletes and other possibilities that they have. Celia Anderson was with us today. Thank you so much Celia, and thanks for listening. We'll talk to you all soon.

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