



Fearless Unscripted | Grant McCasland

[Taylor Peters] Hey guys, it's Taylor and today's episode of Fearless Unscripted is one that I'm particularly excited about. Coach, you are someone who electrifies this community. You bring a lot of spirit not only to Texas Tech, but just to Lubbock in general. And so I'm really pleased to welcome coach McCaslin to the podcast. Welcome, fearless Unscripted.

[Grant McCasland] Taylor. Here we go. We're close enough to the gym. We could really get excited actually. Yeah. Down in there.

[Taylor] We're just going to we're just going to jump over and we'll just be right there on the court for, for for practice here in a little bit. No, I just, I, I've been thinking a lot about, you know, what? I wanted this conversation to reflect, and I, I'd like for people to maybe get a glimpse of who you are as a, as a person who you are as a dad, who you are as a man in addition to who you are as a head coach.

But I think it's important to to maybe start there. And I feel like right now, this is the time where we're at the time of the year where it's like there's 30 minutes left on the pre-game clock and you're kind of just like sitting, sitting there waiting for it to go down. So I know that you guys are getting a little bit and see and getting really excited for the start of the season.

[Grant] Yeah. This part specifically gives you an opportunity. Two things. One, it's like recruiting. I mean, we do get to finish up with the high school recruiting and the guys that we're looking at for next year's team. And so we're traveling quite a bit doing that, wrapping that up. And then the other part is how do you invest in this group and our team, but also not just our team, but you set it like, how do we involve our families in this.

And so, like how do we have dinners with them. How do we have them at practice? How do we our wives had a retreat, and our, our significant others had a retreat while we took the team to see the canyon and did a retreat. And then, like, how do we we have a staff meal that we're going to all go and do tonight.

So honestly, it's like, how do we connect people in a time that, you know, difficulties coming and some success and usually and if you talk to really good coaches, they'll tell you success is actually harder to deal with. And the than the failure depends at what rate. But it's like really how do you make this about how do you stay the course and love the people that you're with every day?

And it sounds as corny as it is, it it really is the it is the I think it's what elevate you the most is, is connecting people. Outside of just basketball wins and losses and success on the court. Because the more you can invest in people as people that you love and actually care about, the more I think that you find that you're willing to do to help each other win a game, which it is a game.

[Taylor] That's so right. And relationships are such an important component, especially considering that, I mean, the coaching world is so small in a lot of ways. And so I think about just as you sort of reflect on, on your career, the fact that, you know, you've been able to kind of bring your family back to a place that's really important to you, that's really important to your wife, and be able to kind of help them understand.

It's like you're reliving sort of a season of life, maybe that's nostalgic for you, and you're getting to see your kids maybe identify with a place that's important to you. Is that kind of how you feel about being able to lead this program?

[Grant] Yeah, you could have said it any better. I should you should be the title. Sure. Fine. Congrats. No. I honestly think the our whole basketball journey carries together is is Texas Tech. It is West Texas. It is here. That's what's awesome. And I'm looking at my wife's picture of her when she played here. And her jersey.

That's Adidas by actually it's really cool. It's like a double X. It's weird that my wife is like this little and she wore a double x jersey, but, I remember watching her play here and when I first got the job and Coach Dickey hired me here, and coach for sure gave me the opportunity. I drove to West Texas to work, camp and interview.

And the real reason why I wanted to come here, come here was to find her.

[Taylor] That's true. She did good.

[Grant] Yeah. She was, but like, we had known each other. Went to the same prom in the same limo twice. Not together. And so we were friends. And when I got done, I literally drove to West Texas to work basketball camp to be around her. So this revolves around her visit. What's really the cool part about how God brought us together?

But but like our journey in all four of our kids were, conceived in West Texas, in Midland, I became a head coach in Midland, but we started our career here. And because she played here, it's it's just wild, honestly. And I want to say this, too, that I never wanted to

be the head coach at Texas Tech because the people that were head coaches here were actually friends of mine, and I respected them.

So to be the head coach here would require something. Sure. Negative. Sure. You know what I mean? And honestly, we're in the living room, and I was in Minnesota when we played in the Final 4 in 2019, and that team was remarkable. I just think of the guys on that team that I've gotten to know, the Jarrett Culver, you know, that are Matt Muniz.

And yeah, I love Matt and and Norris ODAC just and the Mark Adams and Chris Beard and like just the love that the people had. And we modeled our program at North Texas after that team that played in that game. But I just remember my wife and I being in there like and I say we because it was we at the time because having been around here like we're going to win a national championship.

Like we were like going crazy. And so honestly, there's there's real deep conviction that we're not here accidentally, you know what I mean? Like, we're here for a purpose and there's such, there's such a real ness to the people of West Texas that we love. And I will tell you, my biggest concern in moving here wasn't that we were going to win.

It wasn't that my wife and I weren't going to love it. It was just like, how are our kids going to, like, adapt to change?

[Taylor] It's hard, hard doing that when they're the age that your kids are. Yeah. That's.

[Grant] Yeah. And like, well specifically one's already in college. But like my son was going to be a junior and he played basketball and played with the whole team kind of all the way through and finally got to a real significant role in his high school team. But really, my youngest son and my oldest son, I wasn't concerned about them because they have sports and they just but my daughter was a ninth grade, it was going to be a ninth grader, and she was smaller in regards to other size of ninth grade.

So when you're transitioning into high school, you already got enough going on. But that being it, and she actually is an elite level rock climber, which there's not rock climbing out here. And she loves all sports. She's good at all things, but like rock climbers or deal. And so she just set my arms and cried for a couple hours.

And when it became real and I was like, how's this going to work out? Well, when we got here, she actually ended up becoming best friends with Coach Adams granddaughter, which they ended up being friends. And I think it was like a real beautiful picture. Now she's the one that loves it the most, I guess remarkable, and she's the most connected here.

And she's like, we don't ever want to move here. In a big part of us moving here was she wanted to have animals and she wanted to live someplace where we could have that. And so it's really been great how many people have embraced us? But just the things that you're concerned about when you think that's West Texas, it's like people love you and care about you, and there's a depth to it.

There's a sincerity to it. And I do believe it's allowing us also to win. It's kind of cool that it's all connected to people on a separate and go like your family's this and that. And like for us.

[Taylor] It's that doesn't exist.

[Grant] It's not how we work, you know. And I think the more our families around, the more our guys get to see a picture of how to really do life in the big picture. And one example of that, when I think maybe this is going to be terrible for my daughter, it's it's works out where they love this and are more connected to this.

And I can't imagine the growth being any better than what it is, not just for our family, but for our program. And we've got such great people. But honestly, there's just been a lot of blessings of things that you have concerns about that have been. I could not imagine it being better.

[Taylor] I love the redemptive nature and that than that story is awesome. And I want to maybe talk just a bit. You had mentioned your wife. I think that coaches wives are superheroes, and I say that I know a lot of coaches wives, and I was a coach's wife for ten years, and my husband coached high school football.

[Taylor] And, and, and I think that that community is so deeply important. And I want to allow a chance for you to maybe kind of, talk about your wife and the way that over the years, she's maybe kind of partnered with you and allowed you to be able to really chase your dream and to, to be sort of a cornerstone when you talk about family, she really embodies that.

[Grant] Yeah. You know, there's a personality test I took when I first became a head coach, and it's like five things that are your most known for. My number one is competitive, which and then if you met my wife and we play pickleball together, she's more competitive than I am. So like, there's a dangerous element to this whole deal.

I mean, I came and watched her play soccer here at tech, and I remember looking on the field and this is true. She was MVP of her district in high school, came to tech because she wanted to go to School of Tech and felt like this is where she was supposed to be, but not to play soccer. Wow.

She actually came here to be a student, but, but. And didn't think she wanted to play soccer in college, but got here and she was playing with people that played soccer and they're like, you need to go try out for the team. Ended up ended up being a walk on that earned a scholarship and was a full scholarship player when she got to the end.

But I watched her play her last year and I watched her play a little bit before that, but I watched her last year here and she got in fights, but she got in fights, but she didn't know she was in a fight. She was such a pass. She was a defender. So she was more offensive player when she was in high school.

And she got here and she was a a right back, I think. And she would be such a pass to the other team's best player that they would get mad and try to fight her, but she didn't know that they were trying to fight her. She was just trying to play a little.

[Taylor] Find the film. I'm going to go try to find the film.

[Grant] We should, we should. I've actually looked, but like, that's what is awesome about her. Like, she is all in to do whatever she can for us. Like that's what makes her such an amazing wife. What makes her such an amazing mom, which makes her such an amazing part of this, is she literally loves this now. She also cheers and doesn't completely know basketball, so a lot of the cheering is connected in a way that like it's got a lot of passion, but that's really, you know, may.

[Taylor] Not be.

[Grant] Completely but no, I mean this like there's no one that loves this and is convicted about it. She is and that honestly is beautiful. But also tell you, I think the greatest thing for us is that we do have a greater purpose and just to love these, love the people that were around every day, I think is a bigger part of this than the wins.

And that's the part that I love her the most in, because she holds me accountable in a way that when I walk away from here, we can walk away from this and we can be husband and wife and then father, mother before we are basketball.

[Taylor] A basketball.

[Grant] Coaches at tech, you know what I mean? And that to me, I think gives me the best balance for being the best coach. And honestly, our identity isn't just solely tied into this because you know, this people are awesome until you lose and then it's not awesome. And and there's the we signed up for it. So we actually love it.

I embrace it. I don't read any of the message boards, but I embrace it. And honestly, what I do know is that like that love that they have is the same love that I want us to have for this. Right. You know what I mean? Like you pour everything you have into it and you should be passionate about it.

Yeah, but honestly, I do think there has to be a deeper conviction that you don't get swayed by the way that things look on the outside, that there has to be a core conviction. And that's what I'll tell you. She provides for me, honestly, is she loves what we're doing. But I do think that there's a deeper love that honestly, I know she has.

For me, that's not tied to basketball. That allows me to be the best basketball coach. And that's the part I love about our relationship and what what we're able to go through together and that, honestly, I think gives us the best foundation for being the best we can be up here. And I know it seems backwards sometimes, like, why don't you just work all the time?

And I tell you what, I can tell people this convicted and I do. We work crazy hours, but when you put it in the proper order, honestly, I think it gives you the best perspective to win in the end. Yeah, I really do. Our teams have had the best record in schools history, the best finish in school history.

I do think there's a collective building that she allows us to be able to have, and all the people that our spouses are the people that are in our programs and the families, the more we involve them, honestly, I think the better the better.

[Taylor] We do well in that that job that you're talking about, the work schedule and what you're trying to do, and the greater purpose behind it is not sustainable unless you have that partnership. Right. And I think that that is something that has to be reinforced, because what what you guys do as coaches and what the what the players are going through, it's so exposed to people and people like watch from the outside looking in and it's almost like there's like this expectation, right, that like you do the media requests like you're doing and we're doing all these things and you know, you have to be vulnerable and people feel like, you know, they know you, which I think is is such a beautiful thing. And it's an important thing, but it's also a really challenging thing, and that's what makes it really hard. You know, it feels like your successes are really exposed and your greatest challenges are really exposed. And that's hard.

The the beauty. And what you're saying, though, is that she's as convicted about it as I am. That's what's amazing about this, because like, unless you've unless you're a Red Raider, unless you live in Lubbock, unless this is what you do, it's hard to explain it. And I just tell people nationally for whatever reason, that people don't know about maybe what it is to live in Lubbock, Texas, and what it is to be a Red Raider.

And the what it really means. Like there's no one that loves this more than she does. That's what makes like I think that's what you said about Full Circle, but that that also is what makes this open better than I ever could have imagined, literally. And, I, I can't explain it to people in a way, because we get in the car sometimes and she's like, can you believe we're at Texas Tech?

Like, this is what we get to do. And that joy that I get to hear from her because it is so difficult and the hours are so long and the demands of what we do are significant, but we are taking care of better than I ever dreamed, and we get to be around the people that I would actually choose to be around, you know, because in this profession, you always get to choose that.

And honestly, if I could choose where I wanted to be, this is where I would want to be with the.

[Taylor] People that you'd want to be with. Not even.

[Grant] It's just like, that's the beauty, honestly, of the conviction of all of it being put together. And then you add the part that our kids love it like they do. And you don't know how that always works out, I think is just a do think. Honestly, we're going to win the whole thing. I honestly do and I don't I can't tell people because it's going to be because we have the most now or we have the, the, the, the NBA player.

I just look at our team and I think they embody what Texas Tech is all about. And they do love each other and they do love this place. And when you get here, it is unexplainable how awesome it is.

[Taylor] I love that. Speaking of school spirit for a second, I want to take you back for convocation for the going back in 2023. You stood up at the podium and somebody from the going band kind of called you out, put you on the spot, and they were like, hey, coach, we want to challenge you and the whole basketball team to come, come to a halftime performance with the do you remember this? I mean, you're probably gonna be able to tell a story better than I did, but that's to paraphrase. That's what happened. And you were like, yeah, sure, we'll do it. And you made good on that promise last week. And I, have you seen have you what are the stories that the players have told you about what that experience is like for them? Because the look on their face was priceless.

[Grant] Yeah. Well, I mean, we all know this in life. It's like you can think something's easy to do until you have to go do it right. Like.

[Taylor] Not a truer statement has ever been...

[Grant] Go go go. Make a free throw, even though it's free in front of 15,000 people. When you know everybody screaming or go in, I'm guessing it's vinyl. I don't know what it looks like. It black, full fledged, amazing outfits for the band.

[Taylor] And the turf. It's 100.

[Grant] And no, I mean, honestly, all of it. Every time I see them on game days, I'm like, y'all are the toughest people here. Not even close. And they're caring an instrument, and they're standing in the baking sun without moving. And then they go perform after being already just the whole lead up to it. And honestly, I do love them.

I literally love the going band. I love our director. I love being a part of because when you hear the fight song or it's just, I don't know, it's like what connects people like with the passion that they have. So I went spoke to the convocation. I just like hearing from them. So we were just having a banter conversation.

I was like, what do y'all do that I can that we can do for you? Like what? Because you're always are doing stuff. What can we do for you is like, well, why don't you come to. And they said the name of it. And I was like, okay, what is it? And they were trying to explain it, and then they were like, well, let's put it up on the screen.

And they were acting like they were trying to find it. They couldn't find a video of it. And so I'm like, okay, we'll try to do it. And then that was at the beginning of the game and we had like possibly had picked a day, but then we ended up actually going and doing our retreat that weekend. So we weren't around.

So it kind of got pushed back. And then I saw them this year and we made a connection there, like, let's do it. Well, our guys went and all of them said to a person like is way harder than I thought it was going to like. And then two of them were like, there's no way I could be in the band.

Like, not that they didn't know that it was difficult, but like, I think just the unity and the precision and the, the, the talent level of.

[Taylor] Changes your perspective about what other....

[Grant] They just honestly have. They we respect people. But until you put yourself in their shoes, all of our guys are like, I there's no way I could do that in a complimentary way I didn't like. I wouldn't do that. But like, I don't think I could do it.

[Taylor] Oh my Gosh.

[Grant] Just I mean, we got guys that could be NBA players but you know, like to to march in connected people and to play instruments that they, they were like, mind blown. I can't do it.

[Taylor] It was cool. It was hilarious. We have yeah. I mean, I was out there and so I was able to kind of like watch it in person. And I was, you know, shooting footage and stuff of it, and I can't remember who it was. But one of the players I said, you know, do you know what instrument it is that you're holding? He was like, I mean, it was a trumpet. He like, couldn't even. But then one of the players said that he played trumpet in middle school. So he was like, I'm actually, I think I could do this. Yeah. And it was, it was really funny. But, yeah, it was such an unusual thing to see who, you know, are such like, high level athletes feeling like lost, you know, and I just.

Yeah, I just thought that it was really neat that your program could go and, like, kind of display the level of respect, to the the oldest and the largest student organization on campus. That is. Yeah. I thought that was cool.

[Grant] Worldwide known. It's awesome.

[Taylor] Yeah, I love it. I want to ask you to, you know, we've talked a lot about, you know, how intense the schedule is and how many hats you, you kind of wear, whenever you are not in this building and you're able to kind of like to be with your family. I know that you you had mentioned earlier, you like to spend time kind of hunting and fishing and doing some things outside with your sons.

What are what are some of the things that you feel like you're able to do in your free time that are really important to you, that have nothing to do with this program?

[Grant] Yeah. I think first and foremost, I'm thankful for my dad because my dad and, just everything that I was involved in, whether he knew about it or not, he just supported it all out. And then, like, he would be the guy that, like, just project from me. He was in charge of it. And he had he was did a ton of different things.

He had a job and had responsibilities, and he was just so busy. And the one thing that I wanted to do for our family is be there for him. So honestly, I do everything I can like if we can fit it in the schedule, I get a text message every day, but like it's everything that I have going on for the day and like if I can fit in, going to one of their games and I do it like we and I tell our whole staff that.

And I got a couple examples of times in my life where, one was I was an assistant at Baylor, and it was the first game of the season. We were playing Stephen F Austin, and they just came off of a win against VCU in the NCAA tournament, and it was our first game of the year, and my younger sister got married.

My dad had had a stroke. He couldn't talk at her wedding. For the rehearsal dinner, she asked me to speak at it and I was like, whatever you do, cool. Just don't do it during basketball season, you know what I mean? Well, sure enough, the only time they could get the church was the first game of the season.

So I'm dreading going and talking to Coach Scott Jr's amazing, but it's like I didn't want to go do it. Long story short, I ended up telling coach, I'm like, coach, it's the night before I got to do this. And he's like, sure. And I love my sister. And he was unbelievable. Grace. She was like, go do it.

We're going to be fine. We'll be prepared. You'll help us be prepared. Even though he did try to help me get a helicopter to figure out how to be connected. So we tried everything and it just the timing of it wasn't going to work. And I remember looking at my phone and looking at the score, and then we ended up winning the game by 30.

Okay, so I'm not saying that I want to try to skip out on responsibilities. Just like if you leave space for those things that you know you should honor in regards to, those things are important in your life and you trust the people that you do life with, and you pour everything you have into it, and you make decisions in a convicted way.

I just feel like it's going to work out and we end up winning the game. And it was just such a great remembrance of me. And I just tell people all the time on our staff, like, if there's something that's really important, I want you to go to your kid's games. I want you to go to a funeral.

I want you to because there's things I'll look back in life, and I think it gives us opportunity to trust other people, to be prepared to put ourselves in the best position and make sure we're making decisions that, I think, reflect what we want our priorities to be in life, and that being one of them. And and honestly, just trying to be with our family when I'm home is is another part.

Like, and I'm not always like, I trust me, I'm on this phone like call in and it's midnight and I'm watching film til four in the morning and I'm waking up early. There's moments where the rhythm of it gets a little out of whack. This spring was probably the worst of my career, honestly. Just changes in the structure of an ideal and would transfer portal and everybody else.

I told my wife it was the most difficult spring and summer ever. And then USA basketball is an awesome responsibility and then add some other things to it. But I will tell you this like that's why I staff so important. But I do think that just when I'm present, I want to be present. And even if it's for like 30 minutes or an hour, like be there for my wife will remind me, say, put your phone down like you have to be helped in that way.

But honestly, I do. I am convicted because of the the, the example of my father and mother. I mean, I think I'm thankful for them because if it weren't for them and the people that have kind of given me better perspective on what's important, I wouldn't be able to, I think, make the decisions and know actually that by doing that, you actually give other people the opportunity to step in what they're greatest at, and it puts them in a position where they can learn and grow too, and see what priorities.

And I think, honestly, we win in the end because of it.

[Taylor] Yeah, coach, I appreciate your honesty and your wisdom, and this has been really enjoyable for me. And if you want to, take a look at the schedule, you can see a link to it in our show notes. Come out and watch coach this season. It's going to be a good year.

[Grant] You're going to love this team. It's an awesome group. They love each other. And, we've got a chance to really do special things.

[Taylor] Thanks for having thanks for your time, coach.