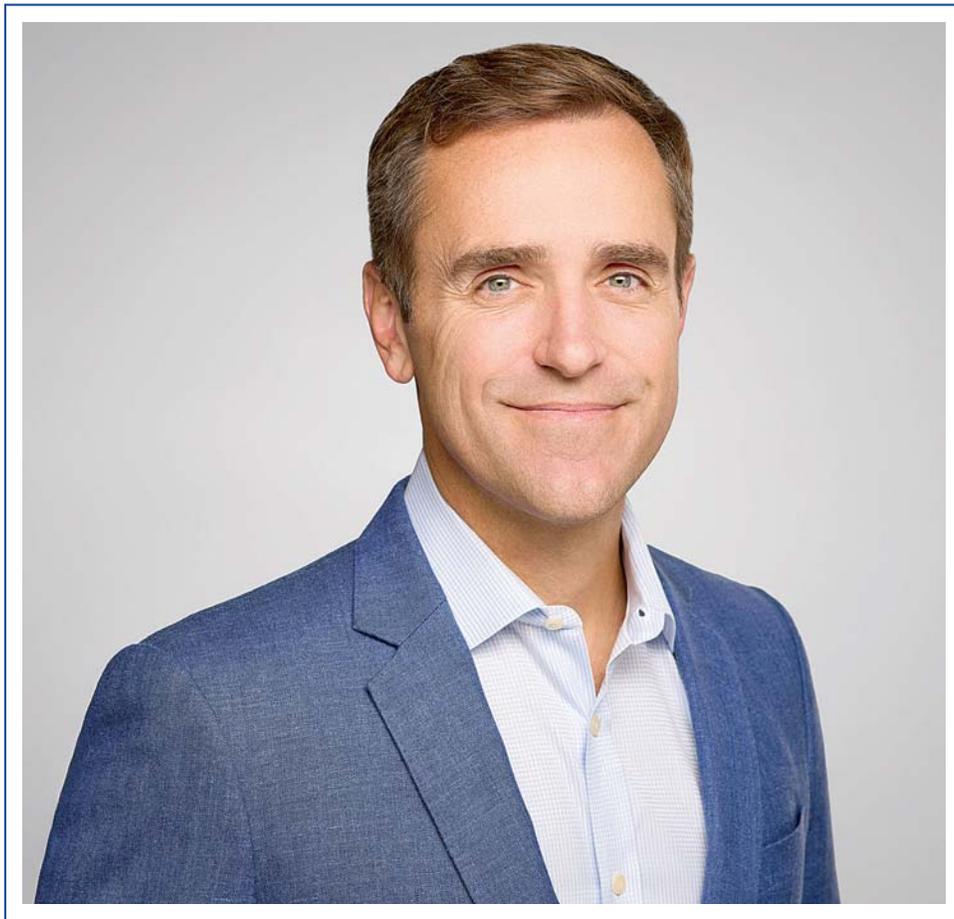


Norm Cates'

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Brian Vahaly and YouFit Gyms *Where YOU Fit In*



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CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF TRUST

Brian Vahaly and YouFit Gyms *Where YOU Fit In*

By: Justin Cates

A person is the culmination of a lifetime of experience, knowledge and beliefs, whatever they may be. No one thing can define any one person. Instead, the multitude knits the fabric that is one's being. That is YOU. That is me. That is all of us. And, we are all in this together.

At *YouFit Gyms*, their slogan, and the subheadline of this cover story is "*Where YOU Fit In.*" Within that statement, so much is said in very few words. Come one, come all, we love you, and you are welcome here. That is beautiful.

Led by **Brian Vahaly**, CEO, YouFit is in good hands, having emerged from COVID-induced bankruptcy to once again being poised for growth. The experience,

knowledge and beliefs that define Brian are now present at YouFit, and it is making all the difference in the world for the company.

I welcome you to read on, as we present a conversation with **Brian Vahaly**, CEO of *YouFit Gyms*.

A Conversation With Brian Vahaly, CEO of YouFit Gyms

Club Insider (C.I.) - Where were you born, and where did you grow up?

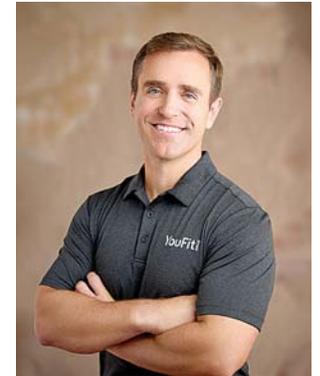
Brian Vahaly (BV) - I was born in Camden, New Jersey, but I grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and lived there from the time I was five years old until my early thirties.

C.I. - Wow, like our cover story interview with **Jeff Quinn** last month, it's a small world! I

was born and grew up in Atlanta. Over the years, I have learned it's applicable to ask: Where in Atlanta have you lived?

BV - Where didn't I live in Atlanta? I started up north in Roswell and progressively moved closer to the city, growing up in Smyrna and Vinings/Buckhead, eventually finding myself in the Virginia Highlands and Inman Park area.

C.I. - That is wild. You and I have very similar journeys. I was born in Atlanta and grew up in Marietta. Over the years, I lived in Midtown, Lawrenceville, Dunwoody and Smyrna/Vinings before buying a house in Alpharetta. So, I moved outwards from the city (laughing). And, of course, I spent four years in Athens at the *University of Georgia* (See **Brian Vahaly** Page 12)



Brian Vahaly

Bill Austin Passes Away at Age 80

POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y. - William H. Austin Jr. ("Bill"), 80, of Poughkeepsie, New York passed away due to heart complications on Friday April 14, 2023.

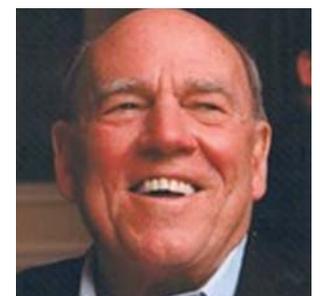
Bill, who also answered to "Pop-pop", "Mr. Bill" and "Coach," was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. on March 8, 1943 to **Una and William H. Austin**. While growing up in Atlantic City, N.J., he achieved the rank of *Eagle Scout* and spent over a decade of summers as an *Atlantic City Beach Lifeguard*. He graduated from *Atlantic City High School* in 1961, then went on to *Trenton State University* to earn a degree in Physical Education. While there, he met

the love of his life, **Jane**. Upon graduation, the newlyweds proceeded to the *University of Indiana* where Bill earned his Master's Degree in Education.

In 1966, they moved to Poughkeepsie, and Bill began his career in education with the Poughkeepsie City Schools. He coached crew and swimming as well as taught for two years until being hired as the *Head Crew Coach at Marist College*. Throughout his time at Marist, Bill brought together countless talented oarsmen, founded the women's crew program and won the Dad Vail in 1972. He also taught Physical Education and

Health, worked in the Alumni Relations and Development office, served on the *U.S. Olympic Rowing Committee* and earned a Degree in Administration and Supervision at *Southern Connecticut University*.

In 1978, Bill left the coaching world to pursue his passion in fitness and was one of the *Founders of Allsport Racquet and Fitness*. With the help of others, he subsequently purchased a number of health clubs in N.Y. and CT, which he later converted to *Gold's Gyms*. He was a *Founding Member of IHRSA* (the global health and fitness association) (See **Bill Austin** Page 6)



Bill Austin

Inside the Insider: Edition #353

- Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert
- Knowledge Level Up - **By:** Chris Stevenson
- The Magic of Teaching the Concept of Different Paradigms - **By:** Herb Lipsman
- Are Instructors Your Influencers? They Should Be. - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- Augie's Quest Selects Lynne Nieto as Chair of Board of Directors
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **353rd monthly edition! WOW!** As I begin to write these **Norm's Notes**, it's hard to believe that we've been at this for **30 and 1/2 years now!** And, I'm thrilled that my goal from **Day One** is still being achieved every month herein. That goal was, and continues to be, to: **"Tell-It-Like-It-Is!" YAHOO!**

■ **Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT? Hmm... hmm... hmm! GOD BLESS AMERICA! GOD BLESS YOU ALL! And... GOD BLESS CLUB INSIDER!**

■ **SAD NEWS** arrived with the announcement that industry veteran **BILL AUSTIN**, passed away on Friday, April 14th at **age 80** due to heart complications. We've placed **Bill's Obituary** on **Page #3**. **May BILL AUSTIN Rest In Peace.**

■ **Augie's Quest** has selected **LYNNE NIETO**, widow of the late **AUGIE'S NIETO**, to be the **Chair of The Board of Directors**. This is great news, and you can read the **Press Release** on **Page #6**. Please also see the **Full-Page Ad for Augie's Quest** on **Page #11**.

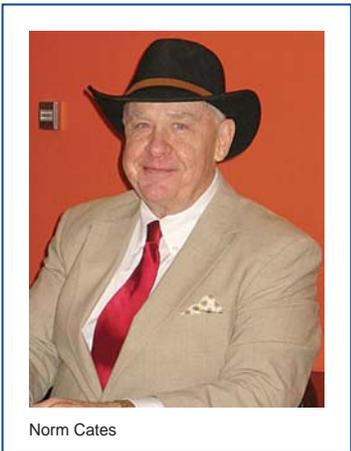
■ **Many CONGRATULATIONS** are in order at **CRUNCH Headquarters** as they have made several key leadership announcements. Those announcements include: **MOLLY LONG** has been named **Chief Experience Officer**. **CHAD WAETZIG** has been promoted to **Chief Marketing Officer**, and **TIM WELSH** has been promoted to **Chief Development Officer**. Also, **PAM BROWN** has been appointed to **Vice President, Head of People and Culture**.

CRUNCH, our esteemed **Inside Front Page Advertiser**, is a leading high-value, low-price gym. Crunch has announced these key leadership changes in order to help position the company for continued growth and success, and we wish them all the best results from these important choices. Crunch has been a leader in making serious exercise **FUN** by fusing **fitness and entertainment** and pioneering a **philosophy of 'NO Judgments.'** Crunch serves a fitness community for all kinds of people with all types of goals, exercising all different ways, working it out at the same place together. Today, Crunch is known for creating **one-of-a-kind group fitness classes** and unique programming for their wildly diverse members. Headquartered in

New York City, Crunch serves two million members with **over 400 gyms** worldwide in **36 states**, the District of Columbia and Australia, Canada. Here's a little bit more about each appointment:

■ **Molly Long's** job as **Chief Experience Officer** is to advance the overall membership experience and satisfaction at Crunch, from sign-up to daily visits to their gyms, all while driving brand growth and success. Long's passion for the member experience and her previous employment track record of delivering exceptional results at **7-Eleven** make her the ideal candidate for this position. There, she founded the **Store Evolution Group**, which will be beneficial in reshaping the member experience, launching new innovations and overhauling the company's store design standards.

■ **Chad Waetzig's** promotion to **Chief Marketing Officer** will allow him to lead worldwide marketing strategy and execution to drive growth, revenue and member retention. Waetzig was formerly **Executive Vice President of Marketing and Branding**, where he led Crunch's marketing and communications efforts for all locations globally, focusing on strategically growing



Norm Cates

the company's brand presence and member base while driving marketing innovation and brand loyalty.

■ **Tim Welsh** has been promoted from **Senior Vice President of Development** to **Chief Development Officer**, where he will oversee real estate, design and construction for Crunch. With more than 20 years of experience helping grow brands at scale, *(See Norm's Notes Page 7)*

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PUBLISHER (p): (863) 999 - 2677
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FOUNDER & TRIBAL LEADER SINCE 1993 (p): (770) 635 - 7578
 Norm Cates, Jr. (e): Norm@clubinsideronline.com

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PRINTING and MAILING SERVICES - Walton Press

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Exercise IS Medicine

By: Mike Alpert

There is undeniable evidence that regular exercise helps prevent and treat Breast Cancer. Women who do regular exercise have lower rates of recurrence and much improved survival. Yet, most women who have Breast Cancer are not told about the benefits of exercise or have it prescribed for them. How has it happened that such a proven and established treatment for such a devastating disease has been kept from the people who need it? And, given the fact that this therapy is readily available and can be provided at a very reasonable price, I believe that something needs to change!

I believe that the future of healthcare has got to focus on making people healthier. As I have written in several articles, the United States spends considerably more than any other industrialized country in the world, yet our current system of sick care produces some of the worst outcomes. Changing this paradigm to put more focus on physical activity can dramatically improve the life and survival of women with Breast Cancer and many other types of cancer and chronic illnesses.

I recently read a very interesting article about how exercise helps sabotage Prostate Cancer. **William Aronson, M.D., UCLA Urologist**, was recently asked, "What do your patients with prostate cancer ask

you about exercise?" His response was, "None of my patients ask about exercise." Sadly, exercise is not on the radar for many men with Prostate Cancer, and it should be because it extends life, improves quality of life and slows the progression.

Results of several large studies suggest that exercise reduces the risk of dying from prostate cancer by 30% and the risk of dying from any cause by 40%, according to **June Chan, ScD, UCSF Epidemiologist**. Chan is a pioneer in studying the benefits of exercise in prostate cancer. Back in 2011, Chan and her colleagues found a lower risk of progression of cancer in men who engaged in vigorous exercise. But, in later studies, they saw benefits with just brisk walking.

According to **Edward Giovannucci, M. D., ScD., Harvard Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition**, "Exercise lowers insulin and insulin-like growth. Physical activity improves insulin sensitivity, which is important for diabetes." Insulin, a hormone that regulates the metabolism of carbohydrates and fat, can play a role in cancer, too. So can a closely related hormone called insulin-like growth factor 1. Both of these hormones also affect cell growth and division, he added. "If you have higher levels because you are physically inactive or maybe a bit overweight, or maybe you don't have the best diet, those high levels will sometimes lead to

diabetes, sometimes to heart disease, and sometimes they lead to cancers. Prostate cancer is one of those cancers that is probably sensitive to these key hormones."

June Chan speaks about another interesting study, the ERASE trial, which was published in *JAMA Oncology* in 2021. Canadian investigators looked at the effects of 12 weeks of high-intensity interval training on patients at the early end of the prostate cancer spectrum. The participants had localized prostate cancer and enrolled in an aerobic exercise program of supervised sessions on a treadmill. They achieved 85 - 95% of peak oxygen consumption compared to a control group of men who continued their normal exercise routines. In just three months, exercise was shown to decrease the men's PSA levels and slow their PSA velocity.

What was even more exciting was that the participants in the ERASE trial showed improvement in cardiorespiratory fitness. For men with prostate cancer, cardiovascular health should be a concern, and improving it should be a goal. "Cardiovascular disease is a major cause of illness and death for patients with prostate cancer," according to **Lorelei Mucci, ScD., Harvard Epidemiologist**.

In addition to whatever exercise she does specifically to discourage prostate cancer from growing exercise accomplishes what many forms of therapy



Mike Alpert

do not: *It prolongs life. It lowers your risk of dying from prostate cancer and from heart disease. Exercise IS Medicine!*

With such a powerful medicine, what is it going to take to make it mandatory that health insurance providers begin to reimburse people who have chronic health issues and will benefit from it? I believe that it will need to be demanded for by the people who pay for it, and that is the employers.

(Mike Alpert is the COO of Smart Health Clubs. He can be contacted at mike@smarthealthclubs.com or 951 - 205 - 1136.)

...Bill Austin

continued from page 3

and was inducted into the *Gold's Gym Hall of Fame* in 2016. Known throughout the country for his success in the industry, he was affectionately called "*The Godfather of Fitness*."

Bill cared deeply about the Hudson Valley community, and over the

course of his life, belonged to many local organizations such as the *Lions Club of Pleasant Valley* and *Hudson Valley Boy Scouts* and served on numerous boards and committees. Bill was also bestowed the *Marist Presidents Award* and named *Family of the Year* by Family Services in 2016.

Bill loved to travel, was a passionate skier, an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman, and an absolute master of

the charcuterie platter. He enjoyed making wine every year with the "Ten-to-Go" gang, meeting his friends for "lite bites" and was known to hold court at any party. Above all, he loved spending time with his friends and family.

Bill is survived by his wife of 57 years, **Jane**; his daughter, **Kim** (husband, **Dave**); his son, **Billy** (wife, **Becky**) and three grandchildren, **Kyra**, **Austin**

and **Beatrix**.

The family would like to thank the Heart Center and ICU at Vassar Hospital for their kindness and care.

If you wish to send an online condolence, please visit www.wmgmillerfuneralhome.com. In lieu of flowers, the family asks for donations to *Family Services of Poughkeepsie* at www.familyservicesny.org.

Augie's Quest Selects Lynne Nieto as Chair of Board of Directors

DENVER, CO - **Lynne Nieto** was unanimously voted by the *Augie's Quest to Cure ALS Board of Directors* to lead the non-profit to raise the funds and awareness needed to advance cutting-edge research to find a cure for ALS. Lynne served as *Secretary/Treasurer of Augie's Quest to Cure ALS* and is currently a *Board Member of the ALS Therapy Development Institute*. She was previously the *President of Classic Management*, a division of her family real estate development and management firm. Her accounting background, vision and leadership has played a key role in the success of Augie's Quest since

its inception.

Augie Nieto, the *Co-Founder, Chief Inspiration Officer and Board Chair of Augie's Quest*, loved speaking to hundreds of corporate leaders and being interviewed to share the importance of his Quest to find a cure. Lynne was happier behind the scenes. Then, when Augie could no longer speak because of his ALS diagnosis, she became his voice, the voice of Augie's Quest to Cure ALS, and to many, the voice of the ALS community. Her husband lost his almost 18-year battle with ALS on February 22, 2023, and Lynne is dedicated to continuing their Quest to find a Cure.

"It's critical we continue the important work we started 18 years ago," said **Lynne Nieto**. "We've shown results, and we've shown that our vision can change the face of ALS. I promised Augie on the day he left his body behind that I will never give up his quest and that we all will collectively carry on his mission," she added.

The *Directors for Augie's Quest to Cure ALS* are: **Eric Affeldt**, **Jon Canarick**, **Sherri Medina**, **Paul Sallaberry**, **Bert Selva** and **Jim Worthington**.



Lynne Nieto

...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

Welsh is a real estate and development leader with a passion for finding creative solutions to complex problems that expertly balance member needs with business results.

JIM ROWLEY, Crunch Worldwide CEO, told *Athletech News*: "Our total growth since January 2020 is 60%, and we have seen compound annual growth of 17% in membership since the start of the pandemic. We continue to be very aggressive in terms of new member growth and adding to our club count yearly. As Crunch Fitness looks to the near future, part of its expansion plan is to focus on hybrid fitness to complement the in-gym experience. We have seen members post-pandemic miss the sense of community and motivation that comes with working out in a gym setting, which we feel has contributed to our continued success."

Congrats to our Friends at Crunch! Be sure to check out their Ad on Page #2. And, Stay Tuned Folks!

■ **Important News** here as the *Federal Trade Commission* recently proposed new rules making it easier for consumers to "Click to Cancel" recurring subscription and memberships. Within, they specially mention gym memberships. This development and its ramifications for our industry are obvious. Here's the **Press Release** from the *FTC*, and following that is the response from **LIZ CLARK, President and CEO of IHRSA.**

"The Federal Trade Commission today proposed a 'click to cancel' provision requiring sellers to make it as easy for consumers to cancel their enrollment as it was to sign up. That is just one of several significant updates the Commission is proposing to its rules regarding subscriptions and recurring payments. The new click to cancel provision, along with other proposals, would go a long way to rescuing consumers from seemingly never-ending struggles to cancel unwanted subscription payment plans for everything from cosmetics to newspapers to gym memberships.

'Some businesses too often trick consumers into paying for subscriptions they no longer want or didn't sign up for in the first place,' said *FTC Chair, Lina M. Khan.* 'The proposed rule would require that companies make it as easy to cancel a subscription as it is to sign up for one. The proposal would save consumers time and money, and businesses that continued to use subscription tricks and traps would be subject to stiff penalties.'

The notice of proposed rulemaking announced today is part of the FTC's ongoing review of its 1973 *Negative Option Rule*, which the agency uses to combat unfair or deceptive practices related to subscriptions, memberships and other recurring-payment programs.

These programs are widespread in the marketplace and can provide substantial benefits to both consumers and businesses. But, they can become problematic when marketers fail to make adequate disclosures, bill consumers without their consent, or make cancellation either difficult or impossible, such as by requiring customers to cancel in person or keeping them stuck on hold waiting to talk to customer service. Each year, the FTC receives thousands of consumer complaints about such practices.

The current patchwork of laws and regulations available to the FTC do not provide consumers and industry with a consistent legal framework. Accordingly, the proposal would make several specific changes, including implementing:

A simple cancellation mechanism: If consumers are unable to easily leave any program when they want to, the negative option feature becomes nothing more than a way to continue charging them for products they no longer want. To address this issue, the proposed rule would require businesses to make it at least as easy to cancel a subscription as it was to start it. For example, if you can sign up online, you must be able to cancel on the same website, in the same number of steps.

New requirements before making additional offers: The proposed rule would allow sellers to pitch additional offers or modifications when a consumer tries to cancel their enrollment. But, before making such pitches, sellers must first ask consumers whether they want to hear them. In other words, a seller must take 'no' for an answer and upon hearing 'no' must immediately implement the cancellation process.

New requirements regarding reminders and confirmations: The proposed rule would require sellers to provide an annual reminder to consumers enrolled in negative option programs involving anything other than physical goods, before they are automatically renewed.

The Commission vote approving publication of the notice of proposed rulemaking was 3-1, with **Commissioner Christine S. Wilson** voting no. **Chair Khan** issued a separate statement, in which she was joined by **Commissioners Rebecca Kelly Slaughter** and **Alvaro Bedoya.** Commissioner Wilson issued a dissenting statement. Once the notice has been published in the Federal Register, consumers can submit comments electronically. The public also may submit comments in writing by following the instructions in the 'Supplementary Information' section of the Federal Register notice.

The FTC has developed a fact sheet summarizing the proposed changes to the Negative Option Rule. The primary

staffer on this matter is Hampton Newsome in the FTC's Enforcement Division."

Following this announcement from the FTC, here was the statement from **Liz Clark, President and CEO of IHRSA:**

"This proposed rule demonstrates that FTC and Biden Administration officials who support it, fundamentally misunderstand the nature and reality of the brick and mortar gym and studio business model.

Gyms, studios and related providers play a vital role in helping improve the physical and mental health of more than 60 million consumers. The majority of

these benefits are accrued from exercise, classes and services delivered at a brick and mortar location, or in many cases, multiple locations of the same brand or family or locations. Many also offer bundle or short-term packages.

This rule appears more oriented to deal with online games, services, programs and products and not physical gym and studio locations where consumers regularly visit. IHRSA looks forward to having a dialogue with the FTC and Biden Administration officials on the positive mental and physical health benefits of
(See *Norm's Notes* Page 8)

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...Norm's Notes

continued from page 7

our industry's services as well as the pro-consumer platforms, agreements, and interaction arrangements already in place to ensure fair and transparent membership contracts with our millions of customers.

Online abuses and junk fee situations are rife in some app and online service areas of the digital universe but not the brick and mortar space of gyms and studios that are Main Street businesses with a physical presence in every corner of the country." **STAY TUNED FOLKS!**

■ *The Talks & Takes Show* is a terrific club business online learning experience sponsored by *ABC Fitness Solutions*. It's offered quarterly with the most recent having taken place on April 12 and the next one being scheduled for **Wednesday, July 26, at 2PM EDT!** Essentially, Talks and Takes is an online roundtable featuring the expertise of four of our industry's top experts: **BRENT DARDEN, REX Roundtable Chairman; SARA KOOPERMAN, CEO of SCW Fitness Education and WaterinMotion; BILL McBRIDE, Co-Founder, President and CEO of Active Wellness and Owner of BMC3; and BLAIR McHANEY, CEO**

of *MXM and Owner of Worx Health Clubs*. Check out previous episodes and sign up for those upcoming by going to hub.ihrsa.org/talks-takes.

■ At the *IHRSA 2023*, I had the pleasure of meeting **DR. PAUL BEDFORD**. **DR. PAUL** lives in England and has successfully created a brand identity so that he's now known worldwide as "*The Retention Guru*." I recently received an email across the pond with his seven-minute video entitled: "*Helping Those Who Are New to Exercise Create an Exercise Identity*." To see that video and to learn more from **DR. PAUL BEDFORD**, a/k/a "*The Retention Guru*," email paul@retentionguru.co.uk and tell **Dr. Paul** that "**Norm sent you!**"

■ Speaking of *IHRSA 2023*, I have to once again thank our friends at *Integrity Square*, **PETER MOORE** and **DAVID GANULIN**. Last month, it was fun to report that my son, **JUSTIN**, and I received their *HALO Award for Best Father and Son Team*. We shared pictures of that moment. Now, there is video! Not just of us, but highlights from the entire event! Check it out today at bit.ly/halo-ihrsa2023. And, while I am at it, here is the full list of *HALO Award* Winners:

- *Best HALO Ambassador*: **Liz Clark, IHRSA;**
- *Most Likely To Create a HALO Initiating Coverage Report*: **Kaumil Gajrawala;**
- *Best Chief Marketing Officer*: **David Ganulin;**
- *Most Likely To Have The Most Wins in 2023*: **Brian Mitchell, Promotion Vault;**
- *Best Mastermind Facilitator*: **Eddie Tock, REX Roundtables;**
- *Protector of the Sport of Tennis*: **Rodney Steven II;**
- *Best Father-Son Team In the HALO Sector*: **Norm and Justin Cates, Club Insider;**
- *Most Popular Father-Daughter HALO Academy Alums*: **Sal Pellegrino and Sarah Pellegrino;**
- *Best NEW Licensor*: **George Jackson, TG - The Gym;**
- *Honorary HALO Academy Investment Banking Degree*: **Terry Blachek;**
- *Caricaturist Award*: **Mark Siermaczeski.**

■ **ELAINE "LaLa" LALANNE**, widow of the legendary, late **JACK LALANNE**, was recently in touch with me with an amazing postcard that she produced. One side of it has over 30 photos of Jack LaLanne, with a photo of the "*Pride and Discipline*" book cover in the center of those photos. The other side was filled with **Elaine's written message**. I was happy to hear from LaLa! On her card, she explained that, due to catching COVID prior to last Thanksgiving, it wasn't possible for her to send out her normal Holiday Card to us. So, she wished us a Happy Valentine's Day and gave us an amazing summary of all of her activities during 2022. As you read the following, keep in mind that Elaine "Lala" LaLanne is now **97 Years Young**, having celebrated her 97th birthday on March 19 (**A belated Happy Birthday LaLa!**). Here are some

of the notes that LaLa put on her amazing greeting card, and I quote her:

"January to March 2022 - Finished edits with **GREG JUSTICE**, and his assistant, **CRYSTAL BABB**, on their book '*Pride and Discipline*.' Then, I celebrated my birthday with friends at the *China Dragon Restaurant!* In July, I took a trip to Las Vegas to celebrate *IDEA's 40th Anniversary* with the winner for 2022 being **BILLY BLANKS, Creator of Tae-Bo**. On August 26, we celebrated Jack's birthday with a successful campaign headed by friend, **DRISHA LEGGEST**, for the new '*Pride and Discipline*' book launch (*Amazon Books* launched the book, and it made the *Amazon Best Seller List*). September and October, 2022 - I then flew to Orlando where Jack, posthumously, and I received the *American College of Lifestyle Medicine, Lifetime Achievement Award* along with **DR. KEN COOPER** who was the 2022 Recipient! During our stay in Orlando, we were able to visit *The Universal Cabana Beach Resort Hotel* where pictures were taken in the 5,000 square-foot *Jack LaLanne Fitness Studio*, which is not only a gym but a *museum* of Jack's memorabilia. Because of COVID, I didn't see anyone for Thanksgiving."

Lala ended her card comments with thanks to her son, **DANNY**, and to **JOHN OH** for assisting her in putting her greeting card together. **Thank you for thinking of me Lala, and Stay Well!**

■ **VICTOR and LYNNE BRICK**, long-time-industry veterans, and *Founders of The John W. Brick Mental Health Foundation*, recently presented a 48-hour replay of the entire *Mental Health & Well-Being Global Summit*. The Summit contained **61 sessions for free!** But, access was limited to just 48 hours. The 61 sessions were done by more than 60 prominent presenters, including: **Deepak Chopra MD, Gabor Maté MD, Andrew Weil MD, Michael Singer, Tara Brach PhD, Jewel, don Miguel Ruiz, Wim Hof, Thema S. Bryant PhD, Sharon Salzberg, Mariel Hemingway, Patrick Kennedy, Jeezy, Peter Coyote, Dan Siegel MD, Kristin Neff PhD, Ray Lewis, Roland Griffiths PhD, Rick Hanson PhD and over 40 more...** The Summit covered the following topics and more, including:

- Psychedelics and ketamine-assisted therapy;
- Energy psychology;
- Hot & cold therapy;
- Transcranial magnetic stimulation;
- Exercise & movement;
- Nutrition & supplements;
- "Geek therapies" for adolescents;
- Post-traumatic growth;
- Social justice and mental health;
- Indigenous psychology;
- Music & sound therapy;
- Positive stress & resilience;
- And much, much more!

(See *Norm's Notes* Page 10)

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...Norm's Notes

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The Summit also featured an **exclusive free screening of the stunning and widely acclaimed film: THE WISDOM OF TRAUMA**. To contact Bricks to perhaps arrange your own viewing, email: info@johnwbrickfoundation.org.

■ Thank you to **PAMELA KUF AHL**, our good friend and Content Director at Club Industry, for this news: **F45 Training's New CEO to Make \$1 Million; Mark Wahlberg to Make \$1!**

"**TOM DOWD**, the newly appointed President and CEO of F45 Training, Austin, Texas, will receive a base salary of **\$1 million per year** while actor, producer and entrepreneur, **MARK WAHLBERG**, who was recently named F45 Training Chief Brand Officer, will make **\$1 per year** and will report to Dowd, according to filings the public company submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Dowd and Wahlberg were named to their roles on March 30. Dowd was an early investor in F45 Training. And, Wahlberg has been an F45 investor, brand ambassador and board member since March 2019. In addition to his salary, Dowd will be eligible for an annual bonus of \$750,000 and an annual equity-based incentive award with an aggregate grand date fair value of \$750,000. Wahlberg's agreement does not state any bonus opportunities, but it does state that he is still bound to the promotional agreement that he entered into

with the company in March 2019 to be a *Brand Ambassador*.

Wahlberg has multiple other businesses, including his restaurant chain *Wahlbergers*, *Municipal Apparel*, *Unrealistic Ideas LLC* and car dealerships. Wahlberg's production company, *Unrealistic Ideas LLC*, is reportedly working on a documentary film and a scripted movie about fitness legend, **JACK LALANNE**, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*.

Dowd and Wahlberg have been business partners for 12 years. They co-founded investment group *MWTD Inspired* and active lifestyle nutrition company, *Performance Inspired Nutrition*. The company promoted Wahlberg's affiliation with the brand by hosting *Wahlberg Week April 17 - 23* at participating F45 Studios. During that week, members participated in seven new classes designed by Wahlberg and celebrity trainer, **GUNNAR PETERSON**, who is the company's *Chief of Athletics*. Members and new participants will be able to track their stats and points by downloading the F45 Challenge app."

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to say Thanks for reading Club Insider!

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Thanks and Appreciation

At Club Insider, we are excited to be in our **30th Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still intriguing and amazing to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30-year run possible.

Very sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* go to **Rick Caro**, the **late Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. *Thanks and Appreciation* to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our monthly editions! And, of course, *Thanks and Appreciation* to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers! *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **READERS**. Sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. *Thanks and Appreciation* to **IHRSA** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to my son, **Justin**, who has become our Publisher and is a truly great partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

Last, but surely not least, this writer who refused to fear failure when many told him he didn't have a chance of surviving the publishing business for even a year did survive. And, he would like to give his sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to the power that made that survival happen: **God**.

Very sincerely, with love in my heart for you all,

Norm Cates, Jr.

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■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 49-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 30th year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its **DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award**, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's **Lifetime Achievement Award**. You can reach Norm by phone at **770-635-7578** or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

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...Brian Vahaly

continued from page 3

(UGA). Speaking of college, where did you go to school, and what did you study?

BV - Well, maybe you ran into my sister at UGA. I still love it there as my parents have a lake house about 30 minutes outside of Athens. I went to the *University of Virginia (UVA)* and had a double major in finance and business management.

C.I. - Oh, nice, you ended up using that later on for sure.

BV - I put my finance and business management degree to work every day. But, I must admit that playing tennis in college also proved to be extremely beneficial both on and off the court. Tennis was an opportunity to get a great education, then it turned into a career unto itself. But, I had a great time at UVA.

The Top Levels of Tennis

C.I. - Well, let's definitely talk about your tennis career. When and how did you begin playing the sport? And, of course, you reached the top levels of the game, so please take us through some of those career highlights.

BV - I started playing when I was two years old. I really don't know life without tennis.

C.I. - Wow, so the Tiger Woods story...

BV - It's a little crazy. Now that I have kids, I understand that you should let kids dictate what will make them happy and keep them busy (constructively). Well, tennis was that for me. I started getting involved in competitive junior play starting around six years old. I began to play in national and international events. Eventually, I got up to #17 in the *World Junior Rankings* before heading to college tennis.

I enjoyed a great career in college as a *three-time All-American* but losing in the *NCAA Finals*. I eventually went on the

ATP Tour and reached a high of #64 in the world with wins over the former world #1 player, **Juan Carlos Ferrero**, and several former Top 10 Players. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to play and beat my childhood idol, **Michael Chang**, which always stands out as one of my favorite moments. Playing on the center court of all the *Grand Slam* tournaments is something that's hard to explain to people and is extremely difficult to walk away from. Unfortunately, multiple shoulder surgeries ended my career when I was 27 years old.

From Tennis to Turnarounds

C.I. - Oh no, that is brutal. How did you proceed from there?

BV - It was tough. When I was interviewing for future jobs, my potential employers wanted to interview me to hear what it was like to play **Andre Agassi**, but they didn't necessarily want to hire me at the time, given my lack of business experience.

I eventually convinced some high net-worth individuals in private equity to give me an opportunity, even if it meant not paying me. I wanted the experience, and I was ready to compete. That experience really honed a lot of my skills in running a successful business, specifically in operational turnarounds where you go in and try to fix struggling businesses. I finally found that sense of adrenaline and pressure again when it came to working inside these companies, with the P&L functioning as my new scoreboard. I eventually moved into venture capital.

C.I. - Just as an outsider looking in, with no real experience in playing tennis, I imagine there's strategy involved that folks who don't play the game would not recognize. From tennis to turnarounds, I imagine the feeling is similar and seeing strategy visibly play out is very gratifying.

BV - I love strategy work, and I love it even more when the people around you don't



see your strategy coming. Both tennis and business are a constantly evolving chess match, and you tend to learn the most from your defeats and the great people you meet along the way. I've always felt that, if we have the right strategy with the right team at the right time, we are on a path to being winners.

C.I. - That makes a lot of sense. You also spent some time on the *Board of USTA*, among other positions. Please take us through that experience.

BV - I joined the *USTA Board* in 2012 and progressed to *Treasurer*, and now, the *First Vice President* position. I certainly recognize what tennis has done for me, both as a human being and a professional, so I care pretty deeply about the mission to grow the sport of tennis. I have learned many business lessons watching the *USTA staff* execute the *U.S. Open*, and I'm very passionate about getting kids active in sport.

C.I. - Well said. Speaking of loving the game and always wanting to bring it to everyone possible, I welcome any thoughts you'd like to share about the *late, great Alan Schwartz*.

BV - Alan Schwartz had the reputation of being one of the best *Chairs of the USTA*. Even in his last year, he was a great leader and would come to the U.S. Open offering advice. As I was moving up in my leadership positions at the USTA, he was very gracious with his time and his ideas. He was one of the *Titans of Tennis* and certainly of the USTA.

C.I. - *May Alan Schwartz Rest In Peace.*

YouFit Gyms

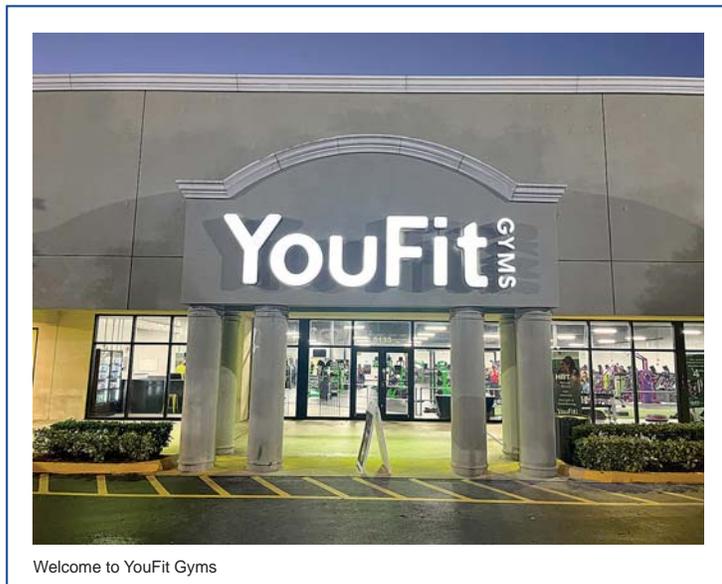
C.I. - When and how did you become involved in the health and fitness club industry? And, how did this lead you to YouFit Gyms?

BV - I was in the venture capital space, and our company had been acquired. I knew the *Founder of [solidcore]*, and she asked that I come on as the *CFO* in 2017. Since then, I have really grown to love the health and fitness space. In this industry, there's just something about helping people transform their bodies and their lives and the self-empowerment that comes with that. I began working with *YouFit* during COVID supporting their bankruptcy process before being asked to serve as *CEO*.

C.I. - Well, speaking of the bankruptcy, it was a tumultuous time for everyone, with the industry and world still reeling during the pandemic. Please take us through that experience, as well as your process for prioritizing things that needed to be done to bring the company back on solid ground.

BV - We were very focused on how the industry would change as a result of COVID and really thought about whether our offerings made sense or how we would need to pivot as a business. A lot of our gyms were old, and there wasn't really a strong plan in place to consistently maintain our footprint.

We looked at our square footage and looked for ways to optimize that
(See *Brian Vahaly Page 13*)



YouFit GYMS



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...Brian Vahaly

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footprint. We asked ourselves, do we have the appropriate strength equipment? And, how do we continue to bring *fun* and community back into the gym? Our core focus remains making health and wellness affordable to everyone, so we ensured our personal training pricing was affordable, and we began offering 'boutique fitness' small group training offerings to expand accessibility.

C.I. - How did you ascertain the answers to those questions?

BV - We hit the road to visit all our gyms, as a key data point is always direct client feedback. We began to see we had too much cardio equipment that wasn't being utilized, and our clients were asking us for more strength equipment. No matter which of our gyms we went to, almost 90% of the members were in 25% of the square footage of our gyms. So, we surveyed our clients and really nailed our value proposition. With that said, we certainly always have an eye on our competition in the HV/LP gym space. We wanted to understand what amenities they were offering and what the customers were looking for coming out of COVID.

C.I. - Now, from the hindsight is 20/20 point

of view, that is definitely in line with industry-wide observations, but you figured it out then. So, now, a few years later, where is YouFit today? What are the key initiatives?

BV - We introduced indoor pickleball, which has been a really great success. Through tennis, I've learned: You'll love to exercise and even look forward to going, if it's *FUN!* So, we've tried to not only provide the right equipment inside of the gyms but also create a great experience where people want to come back. We've had great success offering indoor pickleball at times when we're not having our Les Mills group fitness classes.

We partnered with *EatLove* to provide a nutrition component to our offerings as well. If you are joining the gym because you want to see your body change, it's impossible not to talk about your nutrition, and we wanted an affordable option for our clients.

We've also strategically priced our personal training and small group training classes to make it way more affordable than people are used to. That has been a nice driver of demand.

Lastly, we're really leaning into strength training equipment, adding new Olympic and power lifting platforms and a variety of weight machines to meet the demand of the market right now. We feel that, if we can hit these

benchmarks, especially with a potential recession coming, we're going to be very well positioned.

C.I. - That's excellent. I just want to bring up one thing you've mentioned twice now: **FUN.** At *Club Insider*, we just love hearing that. For 30 years, we have placed little ads in our editions that say: **Make It Fun!** This industry is in the business of helping people live better lives through improving their bodies and brains. That's tough, difficult work, but *fun* is what conditions their mind and brings their physical body back, time and time again.

BV - It's an important little piece of the psyche. Willpower will only take you so far, and that's why a lot of people fail. I feel like our business will be successful if we're providing an environment for our clients to be successful. It all comes down to loving where you go and wanting to spend time there.

C.I. - Absolutely! Great stuff; I love it. Obviously through the bankruptcy, I'm sure some spaces closed. How many YouFit locations are now in operation today and across how many states? How does that compare to pre-COVID and bankruptcy?

BV - We have 70 gyms across nine states. Compared to where we were, it's actually hard to say because the *Founder* before

us went on a massive growth spree. I think they opened anywhere from 160 to 180 locations during a time when the HV/LP model was quite new, and a lot of those closed fairly quickly. I imagine that was a wild time of growth, but I cannot speak to that experience personally. As CEO, I'm focused on where we are today and driving responsible growth going forward.

C.I. - I'll put an asterisk on that. I remember covering *A LOT* of Opening Announcements in our *Club Insider Weekly eBlast*. Almost every week it seemed; it was gangbusters. **BV** - Indeed. I have no insight into what the growth strategy was before I joined YouFit, but we learned a lot from the outcome. As we enter our growth phase, we will certainly do so strategically and thoughtfully in our core markets.

C.I. - Well, the lessons of the past certainly help create the maps of the future. You've mentioned where you're headed with the YouFit model as it now stands. Please describe a typical facility today (size, amenities, services, programming, etc.). **BV** - We're about 20,000 to 25,000 square feet per location, offering strength training, cardio machines, free weights, locker rooms, affordable personal training, small group training, group exercise,

(See *Brian Vahaly* Page 14)

...Brian Vahaly

continued from page 13

indoor pickleball, *YouFit On Demand*, and Nutritional support through EatLove.

C.I. - You mentioned affordability, what are those price points and what do they include?

BV - Our membership still starts at **\$10 a month**. Then, as one begins to layer on services, like small group training, group fitness, pickleball or nutrition, etc., it ranges anywhere from **\$10 to \$39 a month**.

Key Market Differentiators and Expansion

C.I. - Wow, we've discussed a lot already. Boiling it down, what do you consider your *Key Market Differentiators*?

BV - Affordable personal training (PT), affordable small group training (SGT), indoor pickleball and affordable nutrition combined with a great group exercise experience. You combine all that with the strength training equipment people are asking for, and we believe we're giving people exactly what they need. I feel many of the other amenities in the HV/LP space are *nice* to have but not *need* to have.

C.I. - Like 'fun' earlier, you've mentioned affordable several times now. Obviously, in the HV/LP sector, affordability is paramount to the model. But, you're mentioning it with things many (members and providers alike) consider expensive by comparison: PT, SGT and nutrition. So, how have you created economies of scale to bring everything to that impressive price point and being able to call it affordable?

BV - We focus on partnering with the right companies, and we are willing to cut back slightly on margin in order to drive volume. The margins are quite high in boutique fitness, and we can provide that same level of workout for a fraction of the price.

For us, we're talking about unlimited, SGT with certified personal trainers *included in the membership fee*, as well as PT for as low as \$35 a session. Our members are incredibly excited about the variety of workouts we are able to provide wherever they are in their fitness journey. The human brain gets bored very easily doing the same workout over and over, so if we can provide PT, SGT and nutritional support combined with different strength options in the gym, there's a better chance for them to be successful if they're working out with us.

C.I. - Moving forward, what does expansion look like? Percentage of new-builds vs. acquisition?

BV - From 2024 on, we plan to expand primarily through new builds. We would consider opportunistic acquisitions if they fall within our strategic footprint, perhaps more so in Florida and markets in which we currently have a presence. But, primarily, it will be through new builds starting next year.

C.I. - You live in Washington D.C., and YouFit HQ is in Florida. How does that work out for you and the company?

BV - We have embraced the remote culture and have gotten rid of our headquarters coming out of COVID. I am certainly on the road often, and our *Executive Team* meets in person quite frequently. It's just so important to be inside the gyms themselves, seeing the customer experience, which helps inform our strategy. So, I would rather our Executive Team be in the field than us all being in the ivory tower.

C.I. - I love it. Well said, and I know the troops appreciate that, too. All right, let's say this interview is happening a year from now: What do you think we would be talking about?

BV - I'm hopeful construction costs come down because that would allow us to accelerate our growth. Construction is



Training Floor at YouFit Gyms

tough for anyone opening a new gym. I expect to see continued expansion from the major players in the HV/LP and ultra-premium space, as many more local mom and pop gyms could not survive COVID.

C.I. - Let's talk a little bit more about HV/LP. Like *Planet Fitness* years ago, obviously what you are doing now is no secret; many will be trying to match it. So, looking at the industry as a whole, where is the HV/LP sector headed?

BV - Most in this sector will be competing to make larger, more expensive boxes and trying to offer everything under the sun to create as much value as possible, whereas we'll aim to be in a smaller footprint. We want to give people everything they need and are looking for but without providing amenities no one's really using. This allows us to hit profitability faster with lower construction costs, ensuring we can open more units.

A lot of large boxes are incredibly impressive, but they need a lot of clients to make that business model work. They can also become dirty very quickly. Our goal is to really maximize our square footage with the correct offerings for our clients. We are completely corporate-owned, which continues to give us great flexibility and agility to evolve our core offerings.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

C.I. - As a precursor to my next question, I welcome the sharing of your journey of coming out as a professional athlete; meeting your husband, **Bill**; and raising

your twin boys.

BV - I chose to come out on the *Sports Illustrated Podcast* with *60 Minutes Contributor, Jon Wertheim*. Context was really important to me, and I feel like hearing a person's voice, understanding their story, who they are, how they got there and really humanizing an experience, is the best way to change hearts and minds. I have found discrimination is most prevalent when people do not have firsthand experience with diverse communities. With that said, selfishly, I was hesitant to do it for fear of being typecast as the only gay professional *ATP tennis player* to exist. I know that's not true, but I'm the only one to have the courage to come out. I put in a lot of hard work to be a professional athlete, and it felt as though that could be overshadowed by simply talking about the person I loved.

Once I had kids, I knew I had to take an active stance. I had to be my authentic self in order to be the right role model for them. So, that was the precursor to being more public. I was certainly out in my private life; I just never felt the need to share it with the world. But, kids have a way of changing priorities a little bit.

I met Bill through mutual friends here in the D.C. area, and certainly, having children as a gay couple is not easy. It was expensive; it was time-consuming. But, we went through the surrogacy process and had twin boys back in 2016. It has been awesome, and I can't imagine my life without them.

C.I. - That's beautiful. Thank you for sharing
(See *Brian Vahaly* Page 15)



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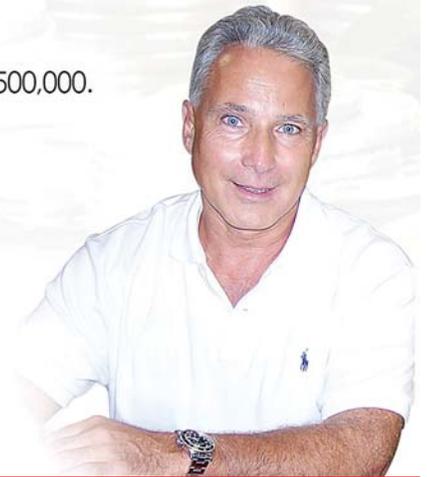
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...Brian Vahaly

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your journey. Sadly, there is a visibly scary rise in anti-LGBTQ+, and really, anti-minority rhetoric and actions across many States in this country. Please share your views on the importance of *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)* in our industry heading forward. **BV** - I care about this for a variety of reasons. My family has certainly been subjected to some hateful rhetoric over the years, so it's something I feel strongly about, personally. But, professionally, I have found tremendous success with diverse teams. It's not hard for me to care about this initiative because I feel more successful when I'm implementing it. For me, it's as simple as that. It makes business sense to do it. So, it's an easy win-win for me to be supportive. And, I care about that in the tennis community just as much as I do at YouFit and in our industry.

C.I. - That's perfectly said. For whatever reason, some people see this as a complicated issue, but you boiled it down to something very simple. *It just makes sense.* **BV** - There's no reason not to do it. Oftentimes, we've seen businesses prefer to surround themselves with people similar to themselves, but most businesses are finding more success when there are

diverse points of view and perspectives in the room. Once that becomes clear, they are nuts not to get on board.

C.I. - Once again, perfectly said. Getting to the end here, what key lessons, advice --and let's add inspiration-- do you have for readers?

BV - **People make your business. If you put the right people in the right spots trying to solve the right problems, that is one of the most critical things you can do as a leader.** Oftentimes, I think mistakes are made when you trust them personally but maybe not professionally. I'm constantly thinking about whether I have the right strategy and the right people in the right seats. That's always where my head goes, and that takes me back to sports: Did I have the right tennis coach? Did I have the right physical training coach? Did I have the right sports psychologist? Did I have the right physical therapists? If I had all of those things right, it was hard not to be successful. From there, I just need to empower and support that team and get out of the way.

C.I. - To close this candid, in-depth interview, what does the future hold? For YouFit, the industry and you personally...

BV - I'm incredibly enthusiastic about our industry. We've proven we can be recession-resilient, and with an uncertain economy ahead, I'm certainly happy to be in the HV/LP model. Anytime you're offering tremendous value and great service, you're going to be in a great position. We're pretty excited to continue to strategically refine our footprint and start growing again.

C.I. - Aren't we all? I'm going to be so bold to say that, when the next recession occurs, it will be the first after the pandemic and the world learning that our industry is actually the answer to a lot of the problems. Like you said, that's a great spot! At least, I hope it is...

BV - If you look at Millennials and Gen Z, which is a large percentage of our client base, they prioritize health and wellness, and they're not willing to give it up. I feel strongly about exercise because of the impact of my own mental health. I'd rather give up other lifestyle amenities before I

give up my mental and physical health. For the saturated boutique fitness market, I think the jury is still out as to whether people will continue to spend \$30 to \$40 for an hour class. As these younger generations experience their first recession, I do believe they will think about how to spend that dollar more effectively.



Thank you to **Brian Vahaly** for his time during this candid, in-depth interview, as well as providing photos and graphics for this story.

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 38 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 15 years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider in April of 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)

Make It Fun Every Day!!!

Knowledge Level Up

By: **Chris Stevenson**

Publisher's Note: If you have not checked out the blog of our friend, **Chris Stevenson**, *Founder of The Empower Group* and *IHRSA Board Member*, I highly recommend it. Like *Club Insider*, he *Tells-It-Like-It-Is* on a myriad of topics while sharing his experiences across the industry. Specifically related to this article, Chris is also quite the reader. By my count, several books per month, and he shares his thoughts about each one in regular blog posts. This month, Chris shares four of those with you.

Is Your Business Good At Seeing Around Corners?

I just finished the book *Seeing Around Corners* by **Rita McGrath**. I really enjoyed it. *Seeing Around Corners* is about creating and sustaining organizational success in an unknown and ever-changing world. The book provides readers with strategies to successfully navigate the future, recognize potential opportunities and adapt quickly to changing circumstances.

In the book, McGrath outlines seven principles that business leaders need to consider and apply to succeed in the future. These include seeing the future as an ambiguous landscape, understanding that the future is unknowable, embracing uncertainty and seizing opportunities it presents. McGrath also emphasizes the importance of deeply understanding the current context, developing an agile mindset, and embracing experimentation and iteration. Here are five key takeaways that resonated with me:

1. Staying ahead of the curve and understanding industry trends are crucial to remaining competitive.
2. Organizations must learn to anticipate and react to changes in their environment quickly.
3. Having a clear long-term vision and strategizing accordingly is essential.
4. Organizations must have agile processes to adapt to changing market conditions.
5. Organizations should strive to create a culture of experimentation and innovation to remain competitive in today's rapidly changing business environment.

Seeing Around Corners is an excellent guide for any business leader and organization looking to stay ahead of the competition in a rapidly changing world. It offers valuable insights with tangible and practical examples to back them up. This is a book that I would highly recommend!

Is Your Customer Experience Unreasonable?

A few weeks ago, I wrote about a *Ted Talk* by **Will Guidara** that I found

moving. I found it so moving that I decided to read his book, *Unreasonable Hospitality*. Let me tell you: it's quite a delicious read (pun intended). Guidara, the former co-owner of the celebrated *Eleven Madison Park* restaurant in New York City, takes us on a gastronomical journey through his experience in the hospitality industry.

From managing high-end restaurants to creating unforgettable dining experiences, he shares his insights on creating a hospitable environment that goes beyond the norm. He goes above and beyond, pulling out all the stops to ensure his customers are treated like royalty. One thing I appreciated about this book was Guidara's honesty. He admits to his mistakes and shares the lessons he's learned along the way. Here are five key takeaways:

1. Hospitality is not just about good service; it's about creating a memorable experience for your customers that they will cherish forever.
2. Empathy is the key to exceptional hospitality, as it allows you to understand your customers' needs and exceed their expectations.
3. Consistency is crucial in the hospitality industry, as it helps to build trust and establish a reliable reputation.
4. Encouraging and empowering your team to take ownership of their work can lead to a more engaged and passionate staff, which translates to better customer service.
5. It's essential to continuously learn and evolve in the hospitality industry, as trends and expectations constantly change. Staying ahead of the curve can set you apart from the competition.

Overall, *Unreasonable Hospitality* is an informative and entertaining read. And, let's face it, we are all in the hospitality business. If we put time and energy into consistently surprising and delighting our customers, we can distance ourselves from the competition.

My Honest Review of The Subtle Art of Not Giving a #@%!

March was a whirlwind of a month! I've been on the road for most of it. It started with the *URPA Conference* in Utah, then *IHRSA* in San Diego, *SCW Mania* in San Francisco, culminating with a much-needed break with the family in Cabo for spring break. On my flight home from Mexico, I was scrolling through the inflight entertainment and came across the movie adaptation of the book, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a #@%!* by **Mark Manson**. The book has been on my reading list for quite some time, so this was a pleasant surprise. I had no idea they had made a movie about it. Here is a review of what I found to be an entertaining and insightful film:

The Subtle Art of Not Giving a #@%! by **Mark Manson** is a refreshing self-help movie that challenges traditional positive thinking and offers practical advice on living a more fulfilling life. Here are five key takeaways that I got from watching the film:

1. Don't try to be happy all the time: Instead of trying to avoid negative emotions, learn to accept them and use them to motivate yourself towards positive change.
2. Prioritize what matters most: Identify your core values and focus your energy on things that align with them. Learn to say "No" to things that don't matter.
3. Take responsibility for your life: Stop blaming external factors for your problems and take ownership of your actions and decisions. Instead, accept the reality of the situation and focus on what you can control.
4. Embrace uncertainty: Life is unpredictable, and trying to control everything is a recipe for anxiety and frustration. Instead, learn to embrace uncertainty and use it as an opportunity to grow and learn.
5. Action trumps everything: Don't just think about making changes, take action towards your goals. Small, consistent steps can lead to significant changes over time.

Overall, I really enjoyed *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a #@%!*. It is a home run when a book or movie can be humorous yet thought-provoking at the same time. I had moments where I would nod my head in agreement and times where it made me reflect on specific behaviors and attitudes and how I could improve them. It challenges views to reassess their priorities and act towards a more fulfilling life.

Do You Ever Feel Like You Are Surrounded By Idiots?

One of the benefits of traveling to different events is it is a great opportunity to get some reading in. On my flight to and from Phoenix last week, I read the book, *Surrounded by Idiots*, by **Thomas Erikson**. To be fair, I stumbled across the book, and the title really piqued my interest! The book offers an interesting perspective on human behavior and communication styles. Erikson focuses on the **DISC Model**, which categorizes people into four different behavioral types: Dominant, Influencer, Steady, Conscientious.

Erikson explains how understanding these behavioral types can help individuals communicate more effectively and build better relationships. Here are some key takeaways from *Surrounded by Idiots*:

1. People have different communication styles, and understanding them can improve relationships. The DISC Model helps identify these styles and provides



Chris Stevenson

insight into communicating effectively with each type.

2. Adapting to different communication styles is a valuable skill. Erikson emphasizes the importance of being flexible and adjusting your communication style based on the person you interact with.
3. The Dominant type is results-oriented and decisive, while the Influencer is outgoing and focused on relationships. The Steady type is reliable and supportive, while the Conscientious type is detail-oriented and analytical.
4. Conflict often arises when people with different communication styles clash. Learning how to recognize and manage these conflicts is an important part of effective communication.
5. The book provides practical advice for applying the DISC Model in different contexts, such as work and personal relationships. Individuals can improve their interactions and achieve better outcomes by understanding and leveraging different communication styles.

I really enjoyed the book. Overall, *Surrounded by Idiots* is a thought-provoking book that offers a fresh perspective on human behavior and communication. If you are looking to improve your communication skills or better understand the people around you (which we all should be!), this book is definitely worth reading.



Be sure to check out *Chris Stevenson's Blog* at: stevensonempowers.com/resources.

(Chris Stevenson, former *Power Ranger stuntman*, is the *Founder of The Empower Group*, a full-service consulting firm with services ranging from staff training, workshops, full facility management and more. From health and wellness to business strategies. Chris can be reached by phone at 818-519-6038 or email at chris@stevensonempowers.com.)

The Magic of Teaching the Concept of Different Paradigms

By: **Herb Lipsman**

My approach to leadership and management in the club business has always been to focus on a few "high leverage" concepts that will influence the conduct and behavior of the vast majority of staff members to do the right thing during the thousands of "Moments of Truth" (See *Herb's February 2023 Article*) they face during each shift on the job. As I have stated before, we will never be able to write SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for so many of these encounters with members and co-workers each day. Therefore, we need to instill values and principles that all of our member service professionals can lean on during these interactions.

A paradigm is simply the way that each of us sees the world at any given moment in time (our perception), shaped by all of our prior life experiences. A paradigm is the lens by which we view every situation we encounter, based on what we learned from our parents, siblings, friends, teachers, coaches, bosses, religious leaders, where we grew up, our travels, our successes and failures, any crises we have faced, etc.

Why is it so important to teach all of our employees about this concept of each person's "paradigm?" If we can influence every staff member to stop and consider the other person's paradigm during every interaction, especially during heated moments, our people are far more likely to make the right call and turn that particular "moment of truth" into a "moment

of magic."

Years ago, while in my early 20s (okay, decades ago), I was managing an indoor tennis club. One day, a member came to check-in for his court reservation while I was covering the front desk. I scanned the court sheet and could not find his name, and all courts were full. He went from 0 to 100 in an instant and lit me up by calling me incompetent, an idiot, worthless, etc. At this early point in my career, I had a lot more passion than sense and was about to follow this member into the locker room and set him straight when another older member gently grabbed me by the arm. "Son, you did not deserve that, but please understand that 'Doc' is a heart surgeon. He just came from the hospital where he lost a patient today... let it go." Needless to say, this "paradigm shift" has stayed with me throughout my career and taught me an invaluable lesson about all people. We never know where they are coming from... until we calmly and compassionately try to listen and understand.

Years later, at another club, this time in suburb of Las Vegas, a member came into the club around 9AM on a weekday with his elementary school-aged son. They walked right past me to the front desk and then proceeded down the stairs to our beautiful basketball gymnasium to shoot some hoops. I found it a little odd that this little boy was at the club on a school day but figured it must be a special circumstance.

Minutes later, the Dad came

storming up to my office to demand to speak to the Manager (me). He was incensed that he had been kicked off the court by one of our younger staff members because our policy was that kids could only play on the court during after-school hours. This member was breathing fire because not only did he pay for his own membership and hardly ever used the club, but he also paid the family dues for his ex-wife and kids. For once, he had a day off and took his son out of school for a day out together at their club where they just wanted to shoot some hoops together on our beautiful "empty" basketball court. Needless to say, common sense would warrant an exception in this case, but we had obviously emphasized enforcing policy more than serving the member, and "every organization is perfectly aligned to get the results it gets." In this case, the result was an angry member.

We will never be able to train every staff member how to handle every challenging moment of truth, but we can teach them about striving to understand the other person's paradigm every time and to use common sense to do the right thing. I promise you that your staff's overall batting average for successfully handling all of these moments of truth will go up exponentially as you empower your people to do the right thing!

(Herb Lipsman is a veteran of the club industry, having managed some of the most prestigious athletic clubs and golf/



Herb Lipsman

country clubs in the Houston, Texas market over the past 30 years, most notably *The Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa*. Lipsman has served on the Board of Directors for IHRSA. He was appointed by Mayor Bill White to serve as Chairman of the Mayor's Wellness Council for the City of Houston. Lipsman has also been invited to speak at numerous industry conferences and conventions around the world, including the U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Russia and Mexico. Most recently, Lipsman authored and published his book *Caring (The Sequel): Valuable Insights into Effective Club and Hospitality Management*. Learn more about Herb and order his book at www.herblipsman.com.)

Are Instructors Your Influencers? They Should Be.

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

Are you liking your likes? You may have noticed over the past few years that your *Facebook Business* posts are getting drastically fewer likes and comments than in the past. Here's why: In 2018, Facebook announced that it would reprioritize its newsfeed to make sure that friends and family remain at the "core of the experience." And while that sounds nice for your personal use, Facebook's algorithm has reduced the visibility of posts from the businesses, brands and media that were, in Mark Zuckerberg's words (or the words of his copywriter), "crowding out the personal moments." Reading between the lines, for a business to show up in people's newsfeeds, the business needs to pay for advertising. But, I have a better solution.

Organic Growth Isn't Growing: Following the changes to Facebook's algorithm,



Jeffrey Pinkerton

business posts immediately became devalued. A report from *Hootsuite* in 2021 estimated that the average reach for an (See *Jeffrey Pinkerton Page 18*)



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organic Facebook post for a business is only 5.2%. This means that only a fraction of your followers actually ever sees your business posts. And, if none of your followers laugh, love, comment or share that post in the first hours of its life, it's likely to die a death of single digit likes. And, when you add buzzy sales words like "free," "discount," "no joining fee," or "limited time offer" to your caption (or worse, add those words in big block letters to the image itself), Facebook is likely to devalue that post even further.

Check My Meta Math: To confirm my misgivings of *Meta's* manipulative math, go to your business' Facebook page and look at your last few posts. Find a few that are specifically trying to sell something. Depending on the content (plain text, photo, marketing image, video) and the caption (sales words), you're likely to see posts with one, two and even zero likes. If you'd like to learn more about Facebook's algorithm for businesses, Google "Facebook algorithm for business pages 2023" and settle in for some serious down-the-rabbit-hole reading.

How to Win Members and Influence

People: The battle for business page visibility will continue to be an ever-changing, somewhat mysterious search for the perfect post. But, here is what we know to be true: *Facebook values content that is engaging, original and authentic*, so you should post content that is engaging, original and authentic. All of your other posts (selling, big bold text, special offers, stock photos, etc.), need to be shifted to paid ads or boosted posts. So, where is that original, authentic content going to come from? Who on your team can you ask to create engaging content? Content that will present the value that your facility offers and highlight what sets you apart? Something fun or funny and meaningful and memorable? With a personal invitation to come and try something at your facility... say, a group fitness workout? *Your instructors.*

Meet Your Influencers: Your Instructors:

Instructors are the most member-facing, engaging, face-of-your-facility people. They have 30 or 60 minutes of face time with dozens of people, several times a week, plus they're likely connected to all types of people in your community. And, now, they can be your influencers... to create content for your team and to deliver content to

their followers directly to help promote and inspire more people to come try what you have to offer.

Tips for Turning Instructors Into

Influencers: Make instructors your ambassadors, so they'll post meaningful and memorable content, and make your business more visible in more feeds. You probably already know instructors who are present and savvy on social, but here are ideas to get all of your instructors involved:

Good: Ask instructors to love, laugh, comment and share your posts.

Better: Ask instructors to take pictures and video to send to you to post.

Best: Ask instructors to post to their own feeds and stories and tag you.

In return, here are a few ideas for incentivizing these new ambassadors:

Good: Capture and share with them high-quality pictures and videos of their workouts (or before/after) so they have content to share.

Better: Provide them with apparel, accessories, etc. from your facility as compensation. What better way to get your brand seen by all of their followers!

Best: Offer an increased class rate to those

who regularly post about you on social. I would recommend you set a rate based on their number of followers and quality of content.

Essential: Make sure they have a simple and supported call to action, like "join me for a workout" or "DM me for a free pass" or "be my guest this weekend."

Social Media is Changing...Are You?

Digital marketing may be ever-shifting, but don't assume you have to move all of your social media efforts to paid advertising. Get your team involved. Ask for their help. Inspire (or make it part of their job description and require) your instructors to help in the creation of your company's organic, authentic, and more effective social media content. Better content not only makes a better impression but will help sell the experience at your facility, a message that will literally help you reach more people.



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