

**Bob Wallace's After the Buzzer Podcast**  
**Recorded on April 26, 2023**

Bob Wallace: Welcome to After the Buzzer. I am Bob Wallace chair of the Sports Law Practice at Thompson Coburn in St. Louis. We specialize in representing entities and people with sports interests; whether it's acquisitions, facility representations, real estate deals and contract negotiations. Our lawyers are in offices in St. Louis, Chicago, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Dallas and New York; and they all have experience in these areas. They are often put into what we call the "Sports Law Space." We have taken some time off from these podcasts but our topic today Negotiations is very timely; both in the political world with the debt ceiling talks and the sports world with the very interesting negotiation between Lamar Jackson, who is representing himself, and the Baltimore Ravens. My guest today is Mori Taheripour who in your very informative book on negotiations "Bring Yourself: How to Harness the Power of Connection to Negotiate Fearlessly" says she is not an expert in negotiations, just a negotiator, but she gives us some real expert advice on how negotiations affect all aspects of one's life and how you can be more effective negotiator for yourself or your clients. I have known Mori for a long time; in fact, close to two decades and every time we interact, I learn something. Mori is a globally recognized negotiations scholar, an award-winning faculty member at the Wharton School and as mentioned above the author of Bring Yourself: How to Harness the Power of Connection to Negotiate Fearlessly. Mori has over 20 years of experience in negotiations, DEI and sports business and maintains an impressive roster of clients that includes Fortune 100 companies, major sports league, leading charitable institutions and government agents. Mori has been featured on ESPN, in Forbes Magazine, Marketplace Money, NPR and the Next Chapter by American Express and regularly contributes to the discussions on Wharton Business Daily, which can be heard on Sirius XM. She's a member of the Board of Directors for USA Track and Field and the advisory board of the sports leadership and administration undergraduate program at UMass Boston. Mori is a graduate of Barnard College of Columbia University and received her MBA from Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania. It is my pleasure to welcome Mori to After the Buzzer. Mori, before we start, and I read, as I said I've known you for a long time and I read in your book that you say you're an introvert, really?

Mori Taheripour: I really am. First of all, hi, Bob. It's so good to connect with you. It's been far too long, we only get to talk to each other like once a year, so this is a treat. But I am. Nobody really thinks that but particularly because I teach for a living so I'm in front of people all the time, but I am an introvert. I enjoy sort of more intimate gatherings. I enjoy being with close friends, but outside of that I'm not a big throw me in a party, big conference person which is why I'm usually just hanging out with you guys,

the Sports Lawyers Association. It's a – I shy away from those things, but I'm definitely, I lean towards introvert for sure.

Bob Wallace: Okay, you know yourself better than I know you, but you've always been what I would consider more an "A" personality. Always sort of taking charge. Mori's always the one organizing the black affinity group we have at the Sports Lawyers Association. She's sort of the rallying force so an introvert, you know yourself better than I do. Tell me a little bit about your career and yourself, a lot of it is in your book, which I found very interesting. I found out more, I learned more about you by reading your book, then, just by sitting at these dinners that we've over the years. But tell me a little bit about your career.

Mori Taheripour: Right, so hence why I'm an introvert because I don't really talk about myself much, but the book was sort of very self-revealing. So, born in Iran, we emigrated to the United States at the brink of the revolution in 1978-1979, so I've grown up in the US basically. First on the east coast in the Boston area, Massachusetts and then New Jersey and New York and while I was in college my entire family moved to the Bay area. So, I moved out there for a while and for about 14 years and I now live in DC, Washington, DC, which is by the way the only place I don't work that's why I commute to wherever I'm teaching or my speaking engagements, so um, people always say so why live there, it's very easy to get out of Washington, D.C. Not only is it a beautiful city but we have three airports and a train station, so it works.

I started my career in public health and had always been really interested in being in sports; not because of sort of the fandom of it all, but really about sort of what I consider the social impact of sports and its ability to impact communities, to educate communities, to bring people together and be a big influencer. I started my company first of all in 1997, which is really around creating big social marketing campaigns and working with high-risk populations, diverse populations and that sort of where a lot of my work around diversity, now DEI really started and we used professional athletes, sort of really well-known individuals in the entertainment industry to run a lot of these big marketing campaigns so that they could again influence and educate communities. We did that nationally and then globally. When I went to get my MBA at Wharton, Ken Shropshire, who is a dear friend of both of ours, he was my negotiations professor my very last semester at Wharton and somehow thought that I would, that I should think about teaching as a career or at least just think about doing it for a while until I really figured out kind of my next chapter. I have no idea to this day; we still struggle to find out why he thought that but here I am 18 years later and teaching at the Wharton School. I got my uh, I started teaching there shortly after I graduated actually and have been there since teaching undergrads, MBAs. Executive MBAs, you name it in the Legal Studies and Business Ethics

department there and outside of that you know over the years I've done a lot of work in sports, not necessarily negotiations which people immediately say, did you negotiate those persons contract and I'm like no, absolutely not. I do more education than anything else, so with agents and athletes I've done a lot of diversity, equity and inclusion work in sports and a lot of actually international development work too, so using sports as a platform for social and economic developments. So, it's sort of my first love but I've done so much of this sort of negotiations, teaching and speaking engagements since the book came out at poorly timed by the way, March 24th 2020 but it's taken up so much of my time, but it's been quite the journey.

Bob Wallace: So and I'm going to get back to, you said something that interests me and I promised you when I asked you to do this that we would probably go off of the topics that I said but you did talk about making a social impact in the sports world and I just read that Phil Jackson who was a Laker coach and a New York Knicks coach, just said that he's turned off from the NBA because of their two politically aware or as they're saying I hate the word but the woke thing. What do you think the sports and I always say political correctness or wokeness is really just being considerate of other people's feelings but talk about what kind of impact you think that sports make on the general discussion about social change.

Mori Taheripour: Yeah, I'm definitely not a big fan of the word woke. I think at this point in 2023, especially in the US where we're truly, truly a melting pot, to not be socially aware and respectful and understanding of all the cultures, the magnificent diversity that this country has is, is insane and you know I teach a subject that you know the beauty of it is the back and forth, is the conversation, is finding a middle ground; is better understanding so you know sports and how it leads into this you as again I started very young age you know had left Iran during a really bad sort of political climate during a coup d'état basically and coming to the United States and sort of falling in love with the world of sports was really from perspective of how it brought people together, right and coming from a place that was so divided; I came to a place where you could go to any arena, you could go to any stadium and watch people for two hours, three hours convening around a certain team or prayers and it was to me really magical and so that's where it kind of all started and then when I tried to sort of find my path and find what I really wanted to do in sports; it really sort of pursuing still that passion because I think that athletes particularly have an incredible ability, you know this is back in the day when we didn't know who influencers are and like the way we talk about them know but they're the true influencers and they have the ability to go back and reinvest in their communities. They have the ability to do lot of social good and we've seen it actually over the past few years just round the social justice issues. So, I think sports influences. I think music influences. I think entertainment influences and to be in a world that we have so many issues

that we have to deal with and not to think that sports should play a role in again bringing people together or raising really important subjects that a lot of people are too afraid to even talk about. I'm a huge fan of that and I've done work internationally around economic and social impact of sports; so, you know using basketball as a platform for leadership development for kids, the same with baseball and you know I could go on forever about that but it's universal, it's impactful and it allows people to listen to the messages you may not otherwise be able to have them listen to you. It's again, it's influential now there is this division of church and state kind of thing that people want. You know I want to watch my football game and not be worried about politics. The truth is I can understand that but our whole world is so politicized so it's like how to do you even get away from it. I think athletes should speak their voices, they're human beings and they stand for things, and they should follow their convictions, but you know to think that you go to a game, and you leave everything behind is nice for some people but for others it's a little bit naïve because we are in this world. We may find escapism in sports, but we're also highly influenced by it in our daily lives for good, bad or otherwise, so I'm a big proponent of sports playing an active role in these issues because again athletes are humans, communities need sometimes that extra push and so again yeah, I don't agree but this completely personal to me, it's my journey, my lived experience that makes me feel this way.

Bob Wallace: Right, it's really unfair to the athletes to think that they're just there for our entertainment and they're not dealing with life issues as well and why shouldn't they be able to speak out on things that may affect themselves or their families or their environment.

Mori Taheripour: Absolutely.

Bob Wallace: It really just isn't fair. So, every man in the world knows not to ask a woman how old she was so I wasn't going to ask but how old were you came to the United States from Iran?

Mori Taheripour: I was seven, eight years old. I don't mind speaking about my age.

Bob Wallace: And were you aware of what you were leaving and what you were coming to? I mean, how was that adjustment for you as a seven-year-old?

Mori Taheripour: Yeah, I was actually really aware and it's interesting because when I sort of recall things they're quite vivid and I think after sort of talking to therapists and dealing with sort of life issues, what I've realized was that there was so much sort of in some ways childhood trauma in that way and kind of the uplifting and sort of re-rooting yourselves in a new place; and even though we had visited the states many times, my brother and my sister went to school here, but you know you leave a lot behind. So, I do

remember, I remember Iran as a secular country and those are so the really vivid memories and then I also remember sort of the shakeup and leaving, and I think I also remember it most because of the impact that it had on my parents and how difficult it was then and then has been in leaving a country that they loved behind and forever basically. That goodbye ended being a forever goodbye. They've gone back and visited but you know, you are, you start a new life not necessarily by choice but because your youngest daughter is so young, she can't go away by herself, so I think that's a pretty big sort of a burden on my back but a responsibility for them.

Bob Wallace: And have you been back since?

Mori Taheripour: I have not.

Bob Wallace: You have not?

Mori Taheripour: I'm the only member of my family who has not been back. My sister and my brother, they've been back a lot actually. My parents have gone back. I would love, love, love to go back, I've just never been afforded the opportunity to go for sort of a long period of time. I can't remember ever taking a vacation for a long period of time so; but one of these days I'm going to carve out, even if it's a short amount of time to visit Iran for sure. Not right now, the political climate is not really right for that but I'm very proud of the culture and I would love to go back and visit.

Bob Wallace: Right, I think you have to make time to do that for yourself. I mean that's part of closure...

Mori Taheripour: Absolutely

Bob Wallace: ...or understanding. So, I hope you do that. Your book was – there are a lot of stories in it about your father and how he wanted you to be a doctor and all of that stuff. What made you decide to write a book and then reveal so much about yourself and why did you pick the topic of negotiations?

Mori Taheripour: I'll start with the last one. You know I had already been teaching for probably about six or seven years when the process started. I was encouraged to do it by a sort of a mentor and very big supporter of mine at Goldman Sachs Foundation where I teach, and he had sort of talked about the magic that I created in the classroom, and he said I think this is something you should consider. Your approach is very different. At first, I thought, I got an agent very quickly, so I sort of wanted to maybe explore this and at first, I thought there was no need for another negotiations book there's so many out there and I thought until I found an angle that was different, I didn't want to be just another author writing another negotiations book. So, it took me about four years to be honest

with you to do sort of that soul searching and finding what I thought the gaps were, right the open spaces and one of them really is the one I sort of jumped into, which was a lot of myths around negotiations and many of which actually preclude people from even going to the table. They cause a lot of anxiety in people. People have very bad memories of a negotiations that they have done, deals that they've done or they just attribute it to being this kind of win/lose like battle royale, you know things that they see in the movies and you know contentious and aggressive and you know I had been really successful teaching the subject from a very different place which was, it's not about that but first of all, we do this every single day, so it's silly to say you don't negotiate or you don't like to negotiate because it's the language of our life. It's everything that we do all day long with everybody around us from business to personal stuff to negotiating with yourself. So, I wanted to dispel kind of that myth because I think the people are actually better than negotiators than they think they are because we have so much practice of it every single day. The other myth is that you know a lot of people, a lot of books that have been written and there are quite a few that are incredibly good and we all come from different places, right and so my perspective is that negotiations is not a prescriptive topic and so I didn't want to be another book that said if you say this and then you say this and then you do that then you will get the right outcome, because I think that that's really sort of false notion. I think that you can never guarantee something like that. You're not following instructions. So, I wanted to write a book that told people and gave people permission to be exactly who they are and be their authentic self and make this the conversation that was a process; a really elegant process in some ways that included the back and forth so that people wouldn't be so afraid and again giving them permission not to emulate some character they've seen in a movie or how they've been told in a class that they should sort of, you know arrive at a negotiations but to really find their confidence in themselves and I truly believe that when we're more confident that we're better negotiators. A lot of other myths but that was my, that's what I really wanted to do with this book. Now how it ended up being you know almost an autobiography, I used stories to teach in class. I like to make negotiations really accessible, and I've had at this point you know thousands and thousands of students both at Wharton and through all my other work and I thought you know the best lessons can come from these stories because it's a very human subject and my publisher once said, well once the book was purchased and we started talking they said but we want more of Mori. There's something very authentic about this but without more of a voice from you it's sort of feels like that's the missing link here and so it wasn't as much of my life story as it ended up being which again ended up being very self-revealing. I gotta be honest a lot of things in that book nobody knew about me and not even sort of close friends and family members. It was sort of like, hey I've arrived kind of a thing. But I wanted to do something that would help

people and I thought that my truth, particularly my struggles and mistakes that I have made would be really instrumental in people both being more comfortable about the subject but also learning that you can see so much of one another, it's so much of yourself in other people and know that that's a really sort of great way of learning and approaching the subject. Let me see, what else you asked. Oh, my dad, yes, my dad. When we left Iran and even when I was really, really young, my dad had always wanted one of his kids to be a doctor and my brother who is 14 years older than me, said no and he became an engineer. My sister said no and she's ten years older than me, so I was like the last great hope, and you know they left really for my education. They left Iran for my education so when we came to the States it was sort of in pursuit of and I did it. I followed sort of that road for a very long time, and it took me to go through college to realize that it just wasn't the place for me. It wasn't what I wanted to do. I didn't want to do medicine at a very micro level. I wanted to do something that did people and communities in a much bigger way and that sounds, you know sort of fairytale-ish but at that point I thought I could. I thought that whatever I pursued it wasn't, it had to be sort of bigger in a way and I wasn't, you the subject wasn't, the biology classes and the chemistry classes; it was like swimming upstream for me at all times and I thought you know this isn't the path for me. So, I went into public health first thinking that that may be it and then ended up sort of where I am, but I had to sort of find my way and I had to find my purpose and medicine just wasn't it, much to his chagrin actually.

Bob Wallace: He forgave you before he passed away?

Mori Taheripour: Uh well.

Bob Wallace: He was proud of you for what you've accomplished and what you've done?

Mori Taheripour: I would hope. I don't always know. I don't always know with that. You know somebody we'd be in a, I don't know, in a grocery store and something if somebody fell or did something they'd be like, and if only you were a doctor, you could help people. You know I hope so. I've struggled with that a lot, but I would hope so.

Bob Wallace: I'm sure he was. I'm sure he was. So you talk about being yourself in a negotiation, but I had a, I've had several people who I've worked with, who I've observed their negotiation style and I have one boss who was an older lawyer and very smart and he was, we're in a meeting and he was negotiating and he smashed his hand down on the table and he screamed and I mean he basically he got everybody in the room kind of petrified and then he turned to me and he winked and like he's, well I got them. So, do you ever as a negotiator, do you ever role play, fake anger, fake something

that you can get a point across, or you know emote something that may not be typical of you?

Mori Taheripour: No. No. I don't, again I don't prescribe to that and it's not to say that people aren't successful doing these things, but the way I see it, I think that first of a negotiation is, again it's about human beings and so the way we show up and the pretention in that, the having to sort of sit there and think well what I am supposed to do now to get their attention; or how am I going to show them that I'm angry even though I'm actually okay with what they just offered me? Like there's so much energy that's going into figuring out what you're supposed to be as opposed to more of your energy going towards you know being your best self and showing up exactly in the way that you want to achieve the interest that you want to you know, to accomplish the goals that you want to accomplish. So, I'm not a big fan of that, again I'm not going to put anybody down because it's, it would be silly to again there's many people I'm sure who are very successful doing that. I've seen it. It's just not the road I like to travel, and I don't want to teach it in that way. You know I do more teaching than anything else. I love teaching and part of it is that I feel like to be able to make people proud of who they are, to make people, allow people to find their voice, to have people to feel like it's okay to show up exactly as they are, because again if you're forming relationships with people, it's based on your authenticity. So, I just, I can't do it, Bob. I think that that's you know, what are you going to do the next time? Right, the next time you have conversations with these people; you have to go back into that role again? It seems silly. It seems a wasted effort to be honest with you.

Bob Wallace: What about the other way? I've said to myself and to other people that I've been talking to, my biggest regret is when I've lost my temper...

Mori Taheripour: Right

Bob Wallace: ...in some situation. If you're being yourself all the time and you lose your temper, is anger ever a good way to conduct a negotiation?

Mori Taheripour: No. I think there was a place for emotion in negotiations because if I'm saying you should just be authentic, then showing happiness, you know, even if you're upset about something, to be able to exercise that emotional intelligence and to know how far you take that, I think is really important but again it's human, right and human beings have feelings and emotions. I think that's what creates connectivity. But emotions should never get ahead of you and for many reasons, one of which is you can't do sort of critical thinking when you're all fired up and anger doesn't allow you to be, to exercise better judgment or to have clarity of thought. So, it's not that showing sort of who Bob is at that moment is bad thing, it's just the, when you hit that other level where you can't express yourself the way you want to express yourself and maybe even regret it later, but also to not



be able to see clearly. I think that's when things go wrong, so you know, it's not magical. I swear it's like, well people say well what should I do; walk away; take a break, breathe. I mean these are the most simple of things but what those things allow you to do is just regain your control and to settle back into, so, this ability to be more clear and have better judgment. But also, to hear one another better because if you're yelling and they're yelling, I mean it's a mess. I mean, look at our politics these days. Right, there's no, there's you can't see, you can't even understand people when you're sort of going down that rabbit hole. So, I think that that, that limits you whereas just having emotions and allowing them to inform you is not a bad thing.

Bob Wallace: Right. I always said that the best football coach is Bill Belichick and I think one of the reasons he's the best is he's taken the emotion out of his decision making...

Mori Taheripour: Yeah.

Bob Wallace: ...as he can, so and you know I've worked for people who they don't like that person so that clouds their judgment...

Mori Taheripour: Yeah, yup.

Bob Wallace: ...that clouds their decision making and I think that's a mistake. So, part of, a lot of your book you talk about empathy, and you sort of touched about, a little bit on that just now. Tell me about empathy in a negotiations context.

Mori Taheripour: I think about, I think people, I've realized that people sort of define empathy in very different ways and what I try to do in the book and really when I talk about empathy is to say in my description of empathy what I mean by it, is just to be very curious. It's like extreme curiosity and it's this, you know, notion or being able to walk in someone's shoes. It's not to take on somebody's problems, it's not to weigh yourself down in that way, but it's really to be able to better understand who they are and their life experiences, what makes them unique, what, what is of interest to them and what their goals are and those things as you know don't come at that moment that you're having a negotiation, they come way before that, right. They're sort of your life experience and so if you can understand people in that way, that deeply then you can (a) better influence them and better persuade them because you can come at this issue from their perspective in a way that they can understand it, but you also may find that there's a better way to think about this whole thing. Right, that there were things that in gaps in our knowledge that you didn't have that will maybe even shift the way you think and have a better outcome, right? So, I think to use empathy I think that's our superpower, honestly and I think it connects us, it humanizes us. People think that it weakens us, but I think

it's absolutely not that, it's actually the other side of it. I think, I think empathy, if you can actually make yourself more empathetic and more curious as you approach specifically a negotiation, it allows you to have better judgment and it allows you to think in a much bigger sort of space, rather than leading with certainty and leading with bias and I know you and I have these conversations, but the stereotypical way that we approach people and the biases that we all have, those always end up getting us in trouble because we're not being empathetic, we're being, we're being, we're leading with what we're certain of, which isn't always, actually most of the times, it's actually wrong.

Bob Wallace: So, you talk about, we negotiate with everybody, our family members, our children, our friends, our colleagues and you know those people and you kind of know them from where they are. But, when you're negotiating with someone, a third party, but I think it applies when you're negotiating with someone you know. How do you prepare your negotiation with someone? What do you do? I mean I think empathy comes in part of it, you try to put yourself in that person's place or...

Mori Taheripour: Right.

Bob Wallace: ...try to understand where they're coming from. What do you do when you say, you know I'm gonna negotiate you know Bob about x...

Mori Taheripour: Right.

Bob Wallace: ...what's your process getting ready for that?

Mori Taheripour: I start with myself first, not the other side and I think it's really important to know yourself first; to sort of do that introspection, to know exactly what it is that you're looking for, not, not like in terms of specific things but really as a whole, right. What's driving you? What's motivating you to even have this conversation and to do that it means that you have to better understand yourself. You have to dig deep sometimes, we have to you know, I always say know yourself first and that includes knowing your values and how you want to conduct yourself; how you want to be remembered and once you do that and you do your goal setting by the way and you are you know always I hope aspirational because the more we see our own values, the more we want to ask for. So, once you do that work which is actually really very hard because it requires some transparency and vulnerability with yourself then I talk about, sort of, the other side and that's where the empathy comes in. That's where you want to consider even sort of their backgrounds, how they hear things, you know, how you can communicate something to someone, you know there are people that are very analytical, so you want to approach them with the numbers, with analytics and there are other people that are more values based and do you want to approach them in that way and so that again goes back to how do

you influence people, how do you talk to people in a way that they can hear you and it will matter as opposed to them shutting you down because they can't even hear what you're saying because (a) it doesn't even interest them, but doesn't apply to them in any way and you're not even speaking really the same language. So, I think preparation starts with you, and then you look outward and I never think you can be over prepared by the way in negotiations I think that's always another angle that you can look at things, another way to frame things. But, yeah, I think preparation is deep and it's long. I mean you should spend quite a bit of time doing this. And even if it's friends and family by the way, just another note, it's not different the way you prepare for negotiations with people that you know and people you don't know. In fact, I think with people you do know you have to do even more of your homework and open your heart more because we're not very curious about people that we know, which always seems to get us in trouble, but yeah curiosity in perpetration both about yourself and about the person you're negotiating with is really important.

Bob Wallace: So, you also talk a lot about the difference between men and women and how they approach things, and your examples are the men were maybe over confident and the women were under confident in a lot of your negotiation class. Talk about gender and negotiations are their difference in styles? Should there be differences in terms of being yourself, should a man try to be more empathetic, more sensitive, less confident? Should a woman be the opposite – you know less empathetic, more confident, you know, what do you think the stereotypes of gender to do to our negotiation?

Mori Taheripour: Yeah I think everybody should be confident, so I think women always have really good role models if we actually look at men, especially if you think about the pay equity gap in salaries and what have you, there's something to be learned and I don't like thinking about, I don't even like sort of going to conferences where there's all women speaking to all women because I think that there's lessons to be learned across genders; so that's sort of my feeling around that. I think that of course women and men negotiate differently because we communicate differently. But, generalizations are sort of hard even though that's how sort of a lot of the research has been done, but I think anybody that considers themselves an other so this could be race, it could gender, it could be age, I think that when you feel like you're necessarily invited to that table, that people don't think you actually should have a seat at that table, then it precludes you from wanting to be at that table; why it creates great anxiety and so I think women in that sense because of, and it's not our imagination. I mean studies prove that there's a lot of the social price of negotiations is very real. I think that when people already have these biases and stereotypes that they, you're basically walking into that, right? And you know studies show that, that women are not likely to ask for a higher sort

of starting salary when they go to seek a job, whereas men, more what men do than women, and that's probably a pretty big gap, actually like. There's this very famous Carnegie Mellon study that was done, Linda Babcock, who's big in sort of the gender and negotiations area of study showed that like women were just under 13% of those women in that graduating class of the public health school had negotiated their starting salaries, whereas men it was upwards of 50% and that gap still persists. Studies show that and so if you think about that it's not that women aren't necessarily good negotiators, we really are, because when we do negotiate, especially on other people's behalf, we are shown to actually do even better than men. It's that we are so concerned with these stereotypes, and we bought so much into where we should be and how people see us that it, it, doesn't (a) allow us to even pursue those things, right? We won't even approach the negotiations, but it's also what's in our heads when we are negotiating or how we're planning because you're so worried about what people think, what they're going to hold against you, how you should act, should you smile or you know, should you be more tough and then the stereotypes that come with all those things. It's a lot to consider so it's not necessarily a comfortable place when you don't allow yourself to just be and I don't know, and I don't think actually that men often times have those same struggles, but races do. You know again it's not a gender issue, it's that any time you feel like you are somebody who's different then I think you sort of fall into those same challenges as far as negotiations go.

Bob Wallace: So how do you deal with it from the other side? You're confident, you don't care about how you act, but the concern is the person you're directing, who you're negotiating with may take it either if you're an African-American is that you're angry or a women you're too aggressive, you know the body language that comes with those things for men and women are different.

Mori Taheripour: I care in the sense, or I tell people to care in the sense of actually coming from a place of emotional intelligence and being really aware of how you're affecting somebody else, right so, if my actions are making you uncomfortable it's going to keep you from being able to hear me. So, in that sense I think you have to have social awareness, especially if you want to engage them in a way that's beneficial to you. People's body language, you know most people don't even have to say a word and you know exactly what they're thinking, right, that's arms-crossed, that stern look on their face, it's not welcoming and so you know chances are that the conversation doesn't start in a way that's welcoming and open, it's going to end that way and so, and I think that, that goes well beyond just gender. It's sort of maybe cultural, the way we've been raised, the way we've been told to act and so I think you have to have that level of self-awareness so that you can again be able to influence the other party. But the place where I say okay, you draw that line is that if you feel

disrespected, if you feel like you are not being welcomed into a place that you should absolutely be welcomed into then you get up and you leave or you use that opportunity to educate, not you know yelling at somebody and getting angry at them but finding out maybe how you could better communicate with them. But again, if they draw, if you have a line and you say this person crosses this line, I can't do business with them, I can't communicate with them then you save that for yourself, you create that space and you walk out. But I think that we're quick to judge, I think that we're quick to get angry when somebody says something that we don't like and we see a lot of that these days, you know we talk about the whole woke concept. I'd rather educate somebody than to get angry with them, because I feel like if I have a conversation with you, regardless of how hard it is, what I just heard from you or the way you acted. I'd rather have that conversation because then I feel like that may affect you and the way you behave going forward as opposed to yelling at somebody and screaming bloody murder because then what are you doing? You're probably even feeding more into whatever stereotype they had of you and that doesn't open hearts and minds. So, I think it's very individual, I think that people react to things and should react to things the way you know obviously they do, everybody's boundaries are different, but mine is a discussion of, there's a lot of ignorance and you know use this opportunity to educate.

Bob Wallace: So, you talk about walking away, you know can't negotiate with them. If you're a lawyer for instance or an agent and you're negotiating on behalf of somebody and one of the things that someone, that people talk about in negotiations and it's true in life, is leverage. Who has the leverage and what happens if you don't have the leverage? What happens and when I advise family members or friends of mine about a negotiation then, I say, I might do this but you have to make a decision you can afford to walk away from this opportunity, how do you deal with those, you know the conflict of you know, I don't really have, I really can't afford to walk away but I don't think you know this is not what I want out of this transaction.

Mori Taheripour: Yeah, so leverage is really interesting because studies show us that it's perception based. So, if the other party or counter party thinks that you have leverage, then you have leverage whether that's true or not. It's really sort of how they perceive you that's important and I think that's really, I think that's actually a great news for most people because it's not really how much money you have, or how big the company is or any of that, it's really about what they perceive you to have and I don't mean you're making it up, it's about the competence that you show and standing sort of in a place that shows sort of your power and again not power in a bad way, but power in the confidence you have in yourself and what you're bringing to the table. So, being that it's perception based, I think again you have to be super aware of how you show up, how you behave,

what kind of words you use, all these things really matter but you know and I know any time you don't, the less you need a deal, the more leverage you have, right because it's that power of being able to say, this does not work for me, so thanks but no thanks. And that's very powerful because either you have a BATNA or you have another alternative that you can pursue or you have time or simply this was my bottom line and you're, going past this will simply be a bad deal. So, if you can walk amazing. That is, that is, that is sort of the height of all leverage. But then the opposite of that is that the more you need a deal, the more you're sort of pushed into that you know back up against the wall because you can't walk away from it and you know I worked with a lot of small business owners and entrepreneurs pandemic was really hard in that way, right, things are unsure, this are chaotic, you don't know when that next contract is coming, so leverage was decreased as a result of that and definitely at least in their minds, right there was fear there was anxiety because you're likely to take deals that maybe you wouldn't otherwise, just to be able to keep the lights on and to keep sort of your employees and not have to make cuts, you make decisions that were different. It's largely because you don't feel that you have leverage because you can't make a decision to not take some of those deals. So, I think anytime you can say I can work this deal until you know it actually is good for me and good for you, but at some point, I don't need it. The point is where I'm either worse off or it's not likely to benefit me. I can walk away, that confidence you show, and you carry.

Bob Wallace: Right, I always tell people it's easier to get a job when you have a job because you have the leverage of being also, I'm doing this because it's going to improve my situation not because I have to have a paycheck coming in...

Mori Taheripour: Always.

Bob Wallace: ...and that's a great freedom to have. So, what about you know in the football world, which is where I've had most of my negotiations, is this, give them, tell them this is the best we're going to do. This was our final offer, what do you think of that strategy? I never liked it myself, I always wanted to have myself the ability to adjust...

Mori Taheripour: Right.

Bob Wallace: ...and for me to say, that you're basically saying take it or leave it and in the football world in the past you could get away with that because there was not a lot of free agency....

Mori Taheripour: Right, right.

Bob Wallace: ...not a lot of movement, but in the business what do you think of that, that strategy?

Mori Taheripour: I don't like it either, Bob. I think to your point it's you're backing yourself up to, in a corner right and you're not allowing some flexibility. I think it's a power move, but I think it can actually backfire on you. You better be certain that is your last and final offer because what you're essentially saying is this is my bottom line. Bottom lines are not flexible, they are what they are, so you can't change your mind, the minute you shift them, they're like oh so you did have more money, that wasn't really your bottom line and that then allows people to sort of take advantage of that. So, I think that I, it, you know again I love negotiations because I like the back and forth. I love negotiations because I like that dynamic and when you come in and say this is the last offer, it's often because people don't want to make space for those conversations. I just don't, I don't, I don't think it is what people think it is. I actually think it sort of weakens you in a lot of ways because it's not allowing you to, you used a great word the adjustment. It doesn't allow you to make adjustments. It's not flexible.

Bob Wallace: So, in the sports world, you know I always say there's a difference between a sports negotiation and a car accident negotiation. You know the chances that me and you are going to run into each other more than once are not great, but the chances are once we sign a sports contract, whether it's a sponsorship contract, whether it's a playing contract, it's really whether it's a merits contract, it's really the beginning of our relationship. So, you know, you don't really want to back people into a corner and you want to have the ability to adjust. Do you, you know, and you said in your book you didn't like the win/win situation or the loss/loss situation where everybody doesn't get what they want but one group you know, or one side of the negotiations doesn't win and the other side loses...

Mori Taheripour: Yeah, your rel..., I mean, the business of sports is a business of relationships, absolutely. Fundamentally it's about reputations and connections and what have you and you're likely to not only see each other again but do deals over and over and over again and so it does dive that business. I think that this concept of win/win or, some people say it's lose/lose because you're, neither one of you is totally happy, but win/win just means that you're happy enough, you're both happy enough and it allows you to create a deal without there being acrimony and anger and sort of a very disruptive process and that alone, just enjoying that process together allows you to come back again. We choose the people we want to do business with, and I think that negotiations set sort of that standard. It sets the groundwork and so yes, you know going to negotiations always, thinking I'm going to lower my goal just to make you happy, absolutely not. You should always take care of yourself first or whoever you're

working on behalf of and have those sort of aspirational goals and want the best for yourself, for your client, but, you can't forget that there's another side to this and maybe, just maybe the deal that allows you both to get something that makes you happy enough and leaves something on the table so that the other person doesn't think that they gave up everything is what's going to lead to not just a better deal today but to deals and even increasingly better in perpetuity because they're going to say, you know what I really like working with Bob and if I have to negotiate with him again that's what I want to choose because I like Bob. I think we underestimate likeability. I think it's really important and that comes with this whole notion of win/win, right? It's finding a place where both of you can be happy enough.

Bob Wallace: Right. I think and you, we talked a little bit about it before is relationships, likeability, integrity, you know your word meaning something. I used to, Some people want to enter a negotiation and give a low-ball offer so then they can move quite a bit. I always want to give a negotiation an offer, my first offer and I never had a problem giving my first offer because you know we had established the value of what we thought a player was, should be paid and that doesn't mean that you know so, you only moved a little bit, but I was close to where we should be anyway, so I was always thought that was more important. Do you, do you like starting low or if you have established yourself as a, with a reputation of he's fair and he's going to be right up around where we should....

Mori Taheripour: Right.

Bob Wallace: ...where we're each going to end up. What do you think of that strategy?

Mori Taheripour: I think that's why you were so successful and been so successful because I think that it's important to respect your counterpart and I think that inherently when you come to the table and you have the facts and you have the figures and you have the data and you have the experience then to come through with an opening offer that doesn't turn the other person off is actually brilliant because again one, you won't have this prolonged battle, you'll start somewhere that is generally in that place where you're probably going to end and you can take away the pain of you know, the head butting and instead spend more of your time being strategic together and finding a place that's going to make again both sides happy but then lead that good taste in your mouth and I think that people and again Bob, this is cultural for some people, it's personalities so I can't say it's the wrong thing to do, I just don't, you know people in some places even if they're like tourists in certain countries, they're like you know, they are going to start their negotiation you know four times what this price should be. They're not trying to be disrespectful, that's sort of part of that culture, but we choose what we want to do but in my world and your



world, again when relationships are so important, why not come in from a place that's educated that is, that's sort of looking at market values, that's looking at data and you lead with that because I think it's, it actually even looks better for you. You appear as somebody who's been experienced and is reputable in that way. So, I'm all for that Bob, I think it's, I think again that's probably why it's led to much of your success and also the relationships that you have, right and you keep people around for a really long time when you approach them with humanity and sort of fairness and equality as opposed to coming down with that really hard hand and try to crush them, that does you no good.

Bob Wallace: Pete Rozelle was well known for leaving, always leaving something on the table his network partners and you know I think the NFLs changed a little bit on that where they are not necessarily looking to leave anything on the table. They're getting everything they can from the beginning. What about you know the thing I hate more than anything and again one of the things I used to try to do when I'd negotiate a lot, is be first. I always think that the guy who goes first, if he knows what he's doing is going to get the best deal and instead, you know, the old adage that deadlines spur action, well they may but they don't necessarily spur good action. What do you think about the deadline negotiations where waiting to the last minute to get a, to really deal in earnest?

Mori Taheripour: I don't like that either. That's sort of like that um final offer folks right? It's sort of backing yourself up into a corner and I don't think deadlines necessarily are real. I mean maybe that's actually the first negotiation, is negotiating the deadline because they're sort of made up, unless it's a line of credit or a loan where you know it's based sort of on APRs and market values and interest rates, you know the deadlines are sort of, they come usually from the parties wanting to enforce that boundary, right? There are rules, right? There are you know in all the leagues we see this, but and those deadlines are respected, but outside of that, this whole notion of we need an answer by Monday, generally action puts as much pressure on you as the other party. So, I don't believe in that. I also don't believe that it's any one parties' role to have to put up the opening offer. I think the, it's you know some people say it's wise to make the opening offer and other people say never make the opening offer. I think the person who has the most information should make the opening offer and you're going to find that out through your preparation and in talking to them before that opening offer is made. You know it anchors the rest of the conversation, so it's actually quite powerful that opening offer, but the rules aren't you know buyer the seller or you know I never will, or I always will. The rules should be how informed am I and should I make this opening offer and they accept it will I be happy with it because they can.

Bob Wallace: Right, it goes back to what you said the final offer or deadlines that means if you're saying there's no room to make an adjustment then there's no

room to make an adjustment so and if there is it's not the final offer and if there is there's no deadline. Now there may be a deadline in a league or team sport, well if you're not here by the first game of the season you're not going to get paid your 17 weeks. That is a real deadline but that doesn't mean they aren't ways to get around it...

Mori Taheripour: Right.

Bob Wallace: ...if you really want to. So, we come to close to the end I wanted to get your thoughts on Lamar Jackson and him negotiating his own contract. What do you think of that? Is that a good way to go? Is it a hard way to go? If you were his sister what would you be advising him?

Mori Taheripour: Or his mother who he's working with, right?

Bob Wallace: Right, his mother, right, right that's why I didn't mention his mother.

Mori Taheripour: Yeah, I can't wait to see sort of the business school case on this one because I do actually think that it will set a precedent one way or another. Look one of the most talented quarterbacks, he's electrifying, I mean there's no doubt in any of that. Do I think that his choices of agent or not use an agent which does not use an agent, he sort of does his work and you know, you said his mother and I'm sure that he has other advisors. I think that you know the athletes of today are smart. They're well versed because I would say that the internet made all the difference in the world, right, it's sort of democratized information and you know, is it beneficial, well surely, it's if you're a more frugal person, which at that point when you're talking those numbers, I mean it's 1½, 3½%, a lot of money. So, if that's what is leading your decision making, then yeah, you're going to be saving that money and the other part of it is that you're exercising more control, which I think is what he wants to do. The opposite side of that is that agents are who they are because they're experienced, right? They're well versed. They have, you know they know things like the CBA and all the, you know, sort of the intricacies of you know fighting term sheets and contracts and what have you. So, that experience is you know, could be worth that 1½ or 3½% or whatever it is. So, I think there's the good and the bad, would I say that maybe the fact that he hasn't had, he doesn't have this deal in hand yet, could be a result of him not having an agent, yeah I would probably attribute it to that, though an agent can't make a decision without you being okay with it.

Bob Wallace: Right

Mori Taheripour: I do think that the reason why this is sort of taking so long could be attributed to that. I think that he has every right to do it. I hope that he makes a deal sooner than later. I think what's on the table is pretty rich. But, you know you have examples of somebody like DeShawn Watson out

there, you're thinking, if he can, I can and I don't carry that baggage and so if that's what's driving your thinking, then yeah you're going to hang out and wait until that deal comes. But, I think not having sort of an experienced agent at your side could be the reason why maybe this thing is taking as long as it does. But, you know, another thing and you know this, the NFL PA serves, they serve as advisors, you can pick up the phone and call anybody and say I want to see the top five contracts, or can you help me with this information? So, it's not like an athlete is hanging out there alone. They have these football players with plenty of, you know, advisors that they can call on and services that they can get from the Players Association. It's just that how fast this moves along maybe really understanding the advantages and the disadvantages are places where I think somebody who is more experienced maybe and well-versed and to your point earlier, has the relationships could actually be quite beneficial.

Bob Wallace: I've suggested that this is, because he's representing himself that this is a perfect example to bring in a mediator...

Mori Taheripour: Yup.

Bob Wallace: ...and you know take some of the emotion out so, you know, and I do some mediations and you're shuttling back and forth, you know you're getting permission to disclose things or not disclose things and I think that might help the process quite a bit, so I've tried to suggest to them, why don't we, why don't you set up a mediation...

Mori Taheripour: Right. Yeah, you're right, you're right because you know unlike an arbitrator who's making the last and final decision, a mediator is that neutral third party...

Bob Wallace: Right

Mori Taheripour: ...you know they can sort of shuttle back and forth between the two parties and sort of create an understanding because we stop hearing each other...

Bob Wallace: Right, right.

Mori Taheripour: ...and you know, again to your point, it brings down the temperature, it maybe allows for some clarity, and I think you know, I actually think mediation should be used more in sports...

Bob Wallace: I do too.

Mori Taheripour: ...because it does provide that. You know we call it in negotiations, we call it going to the balcony when you yourself actually are aware enough that you can pull yourself out of that space and go to a more neutral place. Well, it's hard for human beings to do, especially if they're really sort of

tied to something and are really emotional about something. But a mediator can do that for you and you both, both parties agree on a mediator. I mean I think it's a great thing.

Bob Wallace: Yeah, I, when I was negotiating for the team, I always felt sort of like a mediator because you know I was hearing what the player was saying and what he wanted and what he needed and so I would kind of take that back to the owner to get him to move to where we could make a deal and vice versa, so I was kind of negotiating with both sides....

Mori Taheripour: Right.

Bob Wallace: ...to get to where I, what we all wanted which was to get the player in the fold.

Mori Taheripour: Exactly.

Bob Wallace: Well, Mori I've taken a ton of your time. I really appreciate it and if I was telling a purchaser why should or your telling a purchaser, why should you buy my book, give me three things that are takeaways from your book that you think are really important.

Mori Taheripour: After reading it you will feel much more empowered and more confident in your own existing skills because it's a negotiations again is something you do all the time and you've plenty of experiences. I think the other important note to that is not only become more confident because you know that you've had experience but also becoming more competent because you know your value. You understand your worth and my book does a lot to talk about sort of how we see ourselves, right that sort of imposter syndrome that many of us struggle with across gender and I think that that's really important because it's not often tied to negotiations but it, I think it plays such an indelible role in it so being able to so sort of clear up that emotional baggage is really important and I think lastly, their stories, right this isn't a textbook, it's a story about my life, other people's life and I think once people read and learn through stories not only does it make it more accessible, but you don't feel like you're alone. You don't feel like you're the only person that made a mistake, but you actually understand that you know there's great resilience and that we can learn from the good and the bad and that mistakes are made, you're better for it and I think this book is as instrumental as showing sort of successes as it in showing you mistakes and challenges and how people sort of rose above that. So, it's very human.

Bob Wallace: Yeah, I thought it was great. I read it in the last three days and enjoyed so. It's an easy read. You're right it has some great stories in it. For those of us who know Mori, you learn more about her than you might have known

before, so it's a great story and I think this is a great conversation Mori, I really appreciate it. I really enjoyed it...

Mori Taheripour: Thank you.

Bob Wallace: ...I learned some things in it, so, and I hope our audience enjoyed or will enjoy listening to Mori.

Mori Taheripour: Thank you.

[End of Podcast]