



THIS WEEK'S SPEAKER

February 2, 2021

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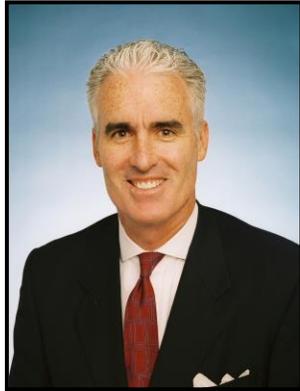
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Rebound with Matt Doherty

By Rick Handford

Jeff Atkinson began his introduction of Matt Doherty by reflecting that everyone experiences highs and lows as we go through life, but most of us deal with them privately, or at least only shared with a limited number of people that we know. Matt was not afforded that kindness, as his highs and lows were known to everyone that knows anything about college basketball, which is a pretty substantial group.

Jeff then played a video promo for Matt's book, *Rebound*, in which the Coach described his being let go from UNC as one of the most emotionally scarring experiences in his life. Seventeen years after the event, he has written the book not only as a cathartic exercise, but to share with others the things he has learned about himself and leadership, so that they might learn from his mistakes. The title of *Rebound* is not only a basketball term, but describes bouncing back from adversity.

Coach Matt Doherty then came on live and thanked those of us in Rotary for standing by our religious and patriotic principles. He then gave us a brief bio, starting with his 1989 arrival in Charlotte, after three years working on Wall Street, which he hated. His intention in coming to Charlotte was to get into real estate. He got involved with radio in Davidson, and shortly thereafter they hired Bob McKillop, who was Matt's high school basketball coach. Matt regards Coach McKillop as one of the finest coaches in basketball. About this time he met Kelly Propst at an "Alive after Five" event on the roof of the old convention center, and somehow convinced her to marry him.

Matt got involved in coaching with the Charlotte Sonics, and was asked to join Coach McKillop as an assistant, where he spent three seasons, followed by seven years as an assistant at the University of Kansas under Roy Williams.

He took the job as head coach of the Notre Dame team in 1999, with the expectation that he would spend his career there, but was recruited away in 2000 to become head coach of the UNC Tar Heels. In 2001, he was voted the AP Coach of the Year. In 2003 he was forced to resign, after which he accepted head coaching jobs at Florida Atlantic University and SMU.

Matt was emotionally devastated by being let go at UNC but hid his feelings and carried on. Kevin White, Athletic Director at Notre Dame and later at Duke, called Matt after he left UNC and recommended that he take the high road because there is less traffic up there, and that is what he has done, choosing to get better instead of bitter. He gave us an analogy of driving a car on the bridge across the 'bitter river', where one must pay a high toll, even though it is a slippery and treacherous bridge with no guardrails. While he has taken dips in the bitter river, he has always managed to get the car out of the water and back on the bridge, sometimes with help from others.

He has gotten into coaching with depression (a different type of 'head coaching'). His primary purpose in writing the book is to help others learn to cope with failure, because we all fail, and we can all use some help in getting over it and moving on. One of his coaches told him that "Leadership is a learned skill," which was one of the most hopeful things he had ever heard. You can learn how to be a leader, and thereby learn and grow. He challenged us to join him in being a life-long learner, and to understand that we are all leaders in our own spheres of influence. Are we modeling the behaviors that God wants us to teach by our example?

Matt has given up his drug of choice, coaching basketball, and has taken up executive coaching instead, which along with his time co-hosting on WFNZ and WBT give him fulfillment. He can be reached at coachmattdoherty.com if you have an interest in his coaching skills.

Matt then told us the story about losing [Pat Millan's](#) cockatoo, Omar, which was quite a trauma for all involved, not least Omar. It is a lengthy story, one which you should see for yourself. The entire Zoom meeting has been recorded, and Christine will include a link in this week's Rotary Reporter if you want to see it first-hand.

[Rex Reynolds](#) asked Matt if he could tell us what he might have done differently while he was at UNC. He told us about the "Six knows of leadership": Self, Team, Environment, Vision, Industry, and Truth. In looking back, he sees that he didn't have a clear knowledge of himself or the environment that existed in the UNC basketball program at the time.

[Jeff Atkinson](#) asked about the first time Matt met Dean Smith, another long story best heard from the horse's mouth.

When asked what was the most needed skill of the leaders he has coached, Matt noted two blind spots: (1) Your greatest skill is your greatest weakness, so you need to know yourself better than most to maximize the former and minimize the latter; and (2) Most leaders do not "mine for the truth", which is to say they don't make it safe for those around them to tell them the uncomfortable truth.

We are all invited to Matt's Virtual Book Launch to be held March 2 at 6:30pm. Park Road Books is hosting a live virtual launch for his book "Rebound: From Pain to Passion". All are welcome to hear him discuss "REBOUND".

<https://www.parkroadbooks.com/event/matt-doherty-presents-rebound-pain-passion-leadership-lessons-learned>

#MattDohertyReboundBook

#AuthorMattDoherty

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/507653772>

*This link will only be available for one month from the recording date.