



THIS WEEK'S SPEAKER

June 29, 2021

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Muhsin Muhammad II, Former Carolina Panther, Wild Wing Café Investor, Philanthropist

by Jim Kelley

Cheryl Banks introduced our speaker, Muhsin Muhammad II. Muhsin enjoyed a 14-year career with the Carolina Panthers (1996-2004; 2008-9) and the Chicago Bears (2005-08), and is currently retired from the NFL.

During his professional career, Mr. Muhammad was an All-Star two times and a team captain for a total of nine years. He has played in two Superbowls (XXXVIII & XLI) and currently holds the record for the longest touchdown reception in Superbowl history. Mr. Muhammad represented both football clubs as a union representative for a total of four years and was a member of the Executive Business Committee. The committee was formed to create opportunities for current and former players in the business community.

After obtaining his Bachelor's degree in Telecommunications from Michigan State, Muhsin continued to pursue his love for broadcasting by hosting radio and television shows. During his playing career, Muhammad worked as a color analyst for Fox NFL Europe for two years. He was a post-season correspondent

for NFL Network and won an Emmy award for a segment called "Hangin with the Moose", which was part of a show called "Countdown to Kickoff". Post-NFL career, Muhsin's business interests include real estate and he's the co-founder of a Private Equity Firm called Axum Capital Partners which currently owns two Portfolio Companies (Wild Wing Café and Backyard Burgers) with over \$200 million in combined revenue.

Mr. Muhammad has always been active in the community. He was involved with Men for Change, which was an organization that supported The Battered Women's Foundation, early on in his career. He also was actively involved with The Muscular Dystrophy Association and hosted the Jerry Lewis telethon with his childhood hero, Rick Flair. After establishing his own 501C-3 organization called "M2 Foundation for Kids", Muhsin sat on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Charlotte, NC and served as the spokesperson, for The Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte, NC. He is currently on the board of Gift of Adoption of the Carolinas.

Muhammad started off his comments with a mention of his childhood hero, Rick Flair, since he was referenced in his introduction. He got in trouble so much from his parents and got hurt multiple times as he jumped off his couch imitating Ric Flair.

Muhammad took a unique approach to his presentation. Instead of discussing his professional football career or his business career, he reflected on his history and his grandparents and parents who made him who he is. He described himself as a servant, a servant of God, a Christian and said it was no accident that he now is in the food business where you serve people on a daily basis.

Muhammad talked with both his mom and dad in preparation for his comments today. His mom's dad was a veteran of the Korean War and World War II. He and his family moved from Mississippi to Michigan. He was a skills man, working with steel and other metals. His mom's mom cleaned homes and worked at the YMCA. His maternal grandfather became the grandfather to all the kids of the entire neighborhood. So, both those grandparents were service focused.

Muhammad's dad's dad was one of 12 children born in Mississippi. His grandfather's 's parents both died when the kids were young and they were all sadly displaced. His grandfather was rescued by a white family at gunpoint from a bad situation. He moved to Tennessee. At age 26, his grandfather was a cook on a train going back and forth between Chicago and Los Angeles for a couple years. Then he moved to Detroit where he worked for Chrysler. His dad, at age 7, sold 712 boxes of cookies from the YMCA and so impressed the adults that they sent him to summer camp at the YMCA for free every summer until he was in high school. While in elementary school, his dad challenged his dad to get involved in Scouts with him so his Muhammad's grandfather spent ten years as a Scout leader helping to change the lives of many young Scouts.

He had a great football career and has a good business career but he received his foundation as a servant from his grandparents and his parents.

In 1996, Muhammad was drafted in the second round and he was focused on making an impact in the community and getting a championship for Charlotte. He changed his approach from football

camps to have his foundation “adopt” 12 young middle school men who were provided a number of special experiences by the foundation and who are now all college graduates with careers started. Today, in his presentation, he wanted to focus on making an impact and on being a servant which he thinks is more important than a football or business career.

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/569063666>

Mr. Muhammad’s introduction begins at approximately 9:30 minutes.