



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

February 24, 2026

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## **MAX SIEGEL** *CEO, USA Track & Field*

### *A Man with A Mission*

by **Marilynn Bowler**

**Joel Ford** said it perfectly when he introduced his very good friend. "Max Siegel is not only a builder of organizations, but a builder of people." That was confirmed by our speaker as he took us through his journey from childhood to ~ again, in Joel's words ~ "CEO of USA Track & Field, the governing body for one of America's most successful Olympic sports."

Imagine the trauma young Max and his little sister experienced when they were kidnapped by their father and were told their mother was dead. (She was not.) They were kept away from their mother for the next seven years until their father died of cancer when Max was twelve years old. Imagine then receiving an unexpected phone call from their mother, who took Max and his sister to a home filled with chaos, drugs, and alcohol. Somehow, Max dug down deep into his own soul and committed to make a better life for himself and his sister.

Max had a dream and he worked hard to make it come true. Sports, part-time jobs throughout high school, and a firm determination to live a life far different than the one he had grown up in, brought Max the chance he worked so hard for and deserved. He went to Notre Dame University on scholarship, but even then, lingering challenges found Max almost flunking out. He buckled down, and his grades slowly improved. To pay for his student loans he signed on to work for General Motors in its College Graduate Training Program, and it was during this time that a friend's wise counsel bore fruit. She had convinced him to find his passion. "Go back to school and make a difference in the community," she told him, and he listened.

Max became, in his own words, "fascinated" with problem-solving during his General Motors job so he applied to law schools. He chose a return to Notre Dame, feeling it was familiar and safe. From the mouth of Dean David Link, he heard these challenging but welcome words, "We build a special kind of lawyer ... we are a community working together for the good of others." Those words sank in, and Max made up his mind to not only become a lawyer but to become "the best lawyer I could possibly be." He became the first African American to graduate from Notre Dame Law School with honors. That changed his life, and it set a pattern for his future life.

Joining a sports law practice, his new boss saw tremendous potential in Max and told him so. Representing a pro sports team as well as governing bodies for the Olympics would be any lawyer's dream job. Max, however, wasn't a fan of the sports and entertainment world.

He got together with his younger sister, who, by then, was running gospel radio stations out of Charlotte, NC. As luck would have it, a Pastor friend of hers, with a promising career as a gospel music star, needed a good lawyer. Max met with him, they discussed houses the Pastor wanted to build for the elderly and the program he wanted to create for young people. It was, as the saying goes, "music to his ears," but Max couldn't act on it just yet. Finally, after a year, Max was hired to rework the Pastor's recording contract, work with the record company's owners, and talk about using music as a platform to change lives.

The next steps Max took *did* change lives ... mainly those of the Pastor, the owners of the record company, the world of Christian music, and even Tony Gwynn of the San Diego Padres. The result was the establishment of a church music camp combined with a sports camp. (Brilliant!)

Tony Gwynn saw tremendous talent in Max and made him an offer he couldn't refuse ... a million dollars if Max would quit his job with the big firm and start his own business. Max jumped at the offer and opened his own firm.

The next giant step was the start-up of a Christian music label in Nashville, thanks to meetings with Reggie White, Wayman Tisdale, and Terry Cummings. Eventually, Max became Reggie's agent and between Tony and Reggie, Max learned even more about leadership, integrity and respect for people.

Shortly thereafter, Max met Jennifer ~ his (now) wife ~ and the story of their wedding is one for the books.

During his work in sports and entertainment, Warner Brothers' Tommy Boy Records and Tom Silverman, himself, set out to partner with Max simply due to his reputation within the Christian music world. He began representing established artists and worked among ministry leaders which led to Max being named as President of a label, President of a division, and then a key player in the global management team of Sony BMG in New York City.

Throughout this period Max and Reggie had maintained their close friendship and Reggie introduced Max to Coach Joe Gibbs and the world of NASCAR. Reggie was set on working with Max and Joe

Gibbs to develop opportunities for women and people of color in NASCAR. The partnership of Mr. DeBartolo, Reggie White, Ronnie Lott and Max formed the first majority-minority-owned NASCAR Cup team. Following the unexpected death of Dale Earnhardt, the NASCAR plans were put on HOLD.

Fast forward to the next year after Max had stayed in New York but had met many key NASCAR owners, including Teresa Earnhardt. Teresa was looking for a new President of Global Operations. She had a vision to create a film project, and Max was her choice to spearhead it. That brought Max back to Charlotte. His friend, Tony Dungy, advised Max, "It's rare that God gives you a chance to impact an organization - and industry - and a culture. My advice is to take it and make the most of it."

Wow! Did Max ever do that ... and so much MORE!

Max Siegel, you're a superb businessman, a powerful advocate for how gospel music combined with sports can impact lives, and a man whose work ethic and heartfelt care for others are beyond superb.

*Max Siegel, you're a hero.*

The recording can be found here:

With slides: <https://vimeo.com/1167885190?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Without slides: <https://vimeo.com/1167886550?fl=pl&fe=sh>

The speaker's introduction begins at about 28 minutes and 15 seconds.