

Transcript

The Bill Walton Show

Jimmy Kemp-Lamaar Thomas

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Bill Walton: Today I'm here to talk with two friends of mine, Jimmy Kemp and Lamaar Thomas. Our topics are football and family. Both Lamaar and Jimmy are products of terrific families and both play professional football. Before we turn to football, lets talk about families. Jimmy, tell me about your family, where you grew up-

Jimmy Kemp: Sure.

Bill Walton: What life was like in the Kemp family.

Jimmy Kemp: Well, Bill, thank for having me. Glad to be back and glad you keep on doing this. I grew up in Bethesda, Maryland. My father was a congressman from 1971 to 1989. Back then, congressman lived where their jobs were. My dad was a congressman from Buffalo, New York where he played for the Buffalo Bills. He got elected to congress in 1970 and took office in '71, I was born in June of '71 so I grew up in Bethesda, Maryland. My mom's in the same house where I grew up, she's been there for 42 years I guess and we're just moving her out next year. My parents, Jack and Joanne got married when they were just out of college and I'm the youngest of fou children. I only knew my dad as a congressman and a politician but I was mostly proud that he was a pro football player before I knew him.

Bill Walton: He won the AFC championship twice.

Jimmy Kemp: The AFL championship.

Bill Walton: AFL, yeah right.

Jimmy Kemp: Before it became the AFC it was the American Football League, separately before a merger. My world revolves around sports. I'm 12 years younger than my brother, my brother Jeff played in the NFL for 11 years so by the time I was nine years old, not only had my dad been an NFL quarterback, which that was kind of out of my

memory, I loved Roger Staubach of the Dallas Cowboys despite the fact that I lived in the DC area, Redskins fans forgive me, but my brother became an NFL quarterback and I thought that was awesome. Our family kind of revolved around football, yes, politics was important, but Sundays in the Kemp family, as my dad would say were a religious holiday. Yeah, we went to church but it was because of football.

Bill Walton: Lazaar?

Lazaar Thomas: Well, my backgrounds a little different, very similar though to Jimmy's but my parents didn't play in the NFL, or my mom or my dad didn't but we all were involved around football. My parents played flag football, they grew up playing flag football as a [crosstalk 00:06:35].

Bill Walton: You grew up in Maryland?

Lazaar Thomas: I grew up in Maryland. I'm sorry, I'm from Fort Washington, Maryland.

Bill Walton: What town? Fort Washington.

Lazaar Thomas: I'm from Fort Washington, Maryland. I have one younger brother. Both of my parents are together, they live together. My dad's name's Shawn Thomas, my mom's names is Elwanda Thomas, okay my brother's name is Desmond Thomas. My parents, they grew up around flag football so my dad was really big on flag football, my mom also plays flag football.

Jimmy Kemp: Lot fewer concussions I bet.

Lazaar Thomas: Lot fewer concussions. My mom has a, they have an interesting story about her playing when she should not have been playing.

Jimmy Kemp: Pregnant?

Lazaar Thomas: Pregnant. They didn't have enough people, they told her to stand out on the field on the sideline for the extra body and she goes and starts trying to make plays, and being competitive, the competitive person she is. Fort Washington, Maryland, football family, wasn't on Sundays for us, it was on Saturday mornings.

Bill Walton: You still have a team, you still have a family team.

Lazaar Thomas: I still have a family football team that my dad and my mom both still currently play on. Actually, this past Tuesday night we won our league championship for third time in a row, which my mom and my dad play on a team, which I think is the coolest thing about my life right now is that I can play football with my dad, my mom, and my brother.

Jimmy Kemp: That's pretty neat. You need a quarterback?

Lamaar Thomas: We do need a quarterback, actually. We do need a quarterback.

Bill Walton: You play quarterback.

Jimmy Kemp: Yeah.

Bill Walton: You play like every position there was.

Lamaar Thomas: Kind of, except for quarterback.

Bill Walton: Except, I think you threw a few-

Lamaar Thomas: I did play a little bit of quarterback. You're right, I played a little bit of wildcat quarterback.

Bill Walton: Now, you grew up in Maryland, Prince George's County. Your football team went 50 and 6 or something like that.

Lamaar Thomas: Yeah, so in my four years of high school I lost a total of five games. There was a time where my high school team was ranked in the top 20 in the country. We had a pretty good high school team, it was a public school so we didn't get as much of the hype as the private schools got but we were a pretty good public school at the time.

Bill Walton: Jimmy, you played quarterback in high school.

Jimmy Kemp: Yes. I played the wishbone. We didn't throw the ball, we didn't ... It always drove my dad crazy.

Bill Walton: What's a wishbone?

Jimmy Kemp: Come on, Bill.

Bill Walton: I'm from Indiana, I play basketball.

Jimmy Kemp: The wishbone is-

Bill Walton: I got a pretty good jump shot.

Jimmy Kemp: Instead of having three receivers to throw the football to, you have three running backs to hand the ball to.

Bill Walton: Oh, my.

Lamaar Thomas: Yeah.

Jimmy Kemp: I was handing the ball off all the time in high school. I'd run it every once in a while. Then my junior year I completed ... We threw the ball seven times in one game and I completed all seven passes. Our coach, who had been an institution at our school, after the game he said, "Dammit, Kemp, now we've got to throw more." Yeah, I played quarterback, Churchill high school in Potomac, Maryland and then at Wake Forest, and then in Canada for eight years.

Bill Walton: Lamaar, you were recruited by an extraordinary number of colleges. Like 31 I understand.

Lamaar Thomas: I had 31 Division I scholarships coming out of high school.

Jimmy Kemp: You were an All-Met?

Lamaar Thomas: I was All-Met, yeah. No more playing in the state of Maryland coming out my senior year. I played in the US Army All American game my senior year. Yeah, but 31 Division I scholarships, a lot different schools. It was an exciting time for me.

Bill Walton: I've learned from you though that you're not the best football player in your family, best athlete in your family.

Lamaar Thomas: I wish that I could take the claim of being the best athlete in my family.

Bill Walton: It's your mother.

Lamaar Thomas: I'm sure my dad wishes he could take the claim also. I'm sure my brother even wishes that he could take that claim. Yeah, my mom is the most competitive person in the family and she's probably the best athlete in the family.

Bill Walton: I'm sorry, I stepped on your punchline. You set that up pretty well. Jimmy, were you the best athlete in your family?

Jimmy Kemp: Yes.

Bill Walton: Okay.

Jimmy Kemp: Nobody else is here to disagree.

Bill Walton: We're not going to talk to with your brothers who actually can't defend themselves. You both played high school football, you were starters in high school, then you went to college. You went to first Ohio State and then to New Mexico. You went to Wake Forest.

Jimmy Kemp: Right.

Bill Walton: What's it like going from being like the best player around in high school to going into college and having a lot more athletes that you've got to compete with?

Jimmy Kemp: I wasn't as highly recruited as Lamaar was. I was All-Met but even though I, I punted also, and apparently the Washington Post thought there was a better quarterback in the county at Springbrook than me, so they made me All-Met, first team punter and I was not the player of the year, I didn't have a ton of scholarship offers, so I was under no illusion that I was going to be a big fish in a small pond. I had to scrap, and fight for anything that I could get at Wake Forest. I had a bunch of one AA offers, William and Mary, James Madison, those may have been smaller ponds had I gone there but I wanted to play one A football and Wake Forest gave me that opportunity. It took me, it wasn't until my red shirt senior year, my fifth year that I became the starting quarterback so it took me awhile but I had my sights set on what I wanted to do. I wasn't surprised that it was going to take me a little while.

Bill Walton: I've been an intramural athlete my whole life, I was too little as a kid to actually get into competitive sports, I grew a lot when I finally got to college so I don't know what it's like to be part of a team where you're in a high school or college environment. How different a world is that to be part of a football team on a campus? Ohio State, Wake Forest?

Lamaar Thomas: It's a big difference for me, like coming out being a highly recruited athlete and being able, having the opportunity to kind of go to whatever school I wanted to. I went to a school with a big football program and it was difficult to me, to adjust because like you said, I'm kind of used to, "Hey, you're the best player on the team." "Hey, we're going to kind of center everything around you." To like now, you're just kind of like-

Jimmy Kemp: One of the guys.

Lamaar Thomas: One of the guys. If you can compete with these guys, then you'll play but if you can't, then you won't play. It was a big adjustment for me. Not only did I have to do that in high school, I played a lot of running back so I was a running back, they handed me a lot in high school. The times I did catch passes they would just, "Hey, run as fast as you can down the field, we'll throw the ball, you catch it." Where now, in college these guys are just as fast, they've been playing receiver, or whatever position they're playing so now I've got to make this adjustment to not only learn how to play receiver but also learn how to not be the most athletic, or

the fastest, or the best guy on the team. It was quite an adjustment for me, it was a fun adjustment for me but it was quite the adjustment for me.

Bill Walton: Jimmy, when Lamaar talks about running down the field fast, I think he ran a 4.3 second 40 yard dash.

Jimmy Kemp: That's not bad.

Bill Walton: How was yours?

Jimmy Kemp: We don't need to bring it up.

Bill Walton: I bet it didn't start with a four.

Jimmy Kemp: Actually, I ran a 4.85.

Lamaar Thomas: Nice.

Bill Walton: Okay.

Lamaar Thomas: There you go. That's good.

Jimmy Kemp: I was under five. I wasn't going to say that, but once you challenged my ... I was a little bit quicker than I was fast.

Bill Walton: Well, your dad said you were the best passer in the family.

Jimmy Kemp: I told you, I was the best athlete.

Bill Walton: Okay, well.

Jimmy Kemp: You don't have to ask anymore questions about that.

Bill Walton: Okay, I thought that was just humorous. You're a football player, you're on the team, you come into Wake Forest, you come into Ohio State. It's not just pure athleticism that gets you the job as a starting this, that, or the other thing. Is there a lot of politics that go into deciding who gets to start and who gets to sit on the bench?

Lamaar Thomas: I've gone through situations where I do agree that there are politics that play into who plays and who doesn't play. I always use this for example, like I got recruited to go to Ohio State from a high school in Maryland. To think that if the coaches at Ohio State, that how many times they're going to come to my high school or to come to my area to recruit a player where the players that they recruit in Ohio, they have to continue to go back year after year. I can go back to my high school and say, "Hey, I don't like this school because of this, this, and that." The guy that's from Ohio, they want to make sure that he makes that good impression on his

fellow teammates or the people that he played with before. They'll kind of play them a little bit more, or they'll kind of get advantage to where, "Hey, we got to go back to that school and recruit, we don't want any bad feedback coming from a kid that went to that school." I feel like I went through that a little bit at Ohio State where I kind of had to fight that uphill battle of Ohio kids that might have been the exact same talent as me but got the upper hand because they were Ohio kids and Ohio State has to recruit that area a lot more.

Jimmy Kemp: Yeah. Politics in football?

Bill Walton: You must've been pretty good at it.

Jimmy Kemp: One would think. Well, part of what I think I did understand is that all that stuff doesn't matter. I bet if you ask Lamaar today, is it there? Yes. Are there some preferences that exist? Yes. I'll tell you what, if a coach, for the most part, there are coaches who make mistakes, but for the most part if you keep your head down, you work your tail off, you're a good teammate, and you do what's asked of you and you show up, and you're persevering and you're not going to get discouraged by things, you don't have to worry about politics. I think there are a lot of comparisons there to politics, but I don't think we want to go there yet.

Lamaar Thomas: Honestly, I agree. We talked about it a little bit beforehand where the decision I did make to leave, that like I do-

Jimmy Kemp: You left where?

Lamaar Thomas: Ohio State. I left Ohio State to transfer to the University of New Mexico.

Bill Walton: You were there for two years, freshman, sophomore.

Lamaar Thomas: There for two years.

Jimmy Kemp: How much did you play?

Lamaar Thomas: I was their returning, I was a kick returner. I started kick returning my freshman year, my sophomore year. I didn't red shirt at all so that kind of played into me also transferring out. I played two years

Jimmy Kemp: Oh, I think the coaches made a mistake there, in my ... Without knowing you real well, I think they made a mistake.

Lamaar Thomas: I played two years there just primarily returning kicks.

Jimmy Kemp: Gosh.

Lamaar Thomas: I just looked into my next season-

Jimmy Kemp: Frustrating.

Lamaar Thomas: Kind of being the same way and I didn't want to only have two years left to play. I still had a red shirt year where I could transfer and still sit out, and be able to play somewhere in two years. I think that kind of impacted my decision on transferring. Like you said, now looking back after transferring, looking back, I wish I would've stuck it out and realized that the politics really aren't in it as much as I thought it was at the time and just kind of gave that chance to see if I would be able to get on the field. After I left, things happened on the roster. Guys transferred, guys didn't do this, and it would've been an opportunity for me to play had I stuck around.

Jimmy Kemp: Right, yeah.

Bill Walton: Well, what mistake did the coaches make on this? What should they have picked up on?

Jimmy Kemp: Just in college football, the red shirt year is typically used for freshman. You come in as a freshman and I think it's wise for coaches to recognize that a 17 or 18 year old kid coming to a college campus, having to deal with classes that are probably a lot different than they had in high school, and dealing with the freedom of being at home-

Bill Walton: They should've red shirted him the first year?

Jimmy Kemp: Red shirt him the first year.

Bill Walton: Yeah, okay.

Jimmy Kemp: I was red shirted not because I ... I mean, it's a tough decision when you've got as much talent as Lamaar had, the coach wants to get him on the field because he can help that year. Right? It was a temptation that they gave into, I'm guessing he would've been better served, and the team would've been, had he been red shirted. I'm just speaking off the top of my head.

Lamaar Thomas: I agree, I agree 100%.

Bill Walton: Jimmy, you went on from Wake Forest to play in the Canadian Football League.

Jimmy Kemp: Right.

Bill Walton: Difference between Canadian football and American football?

Jimmy Kemp: There are a few differences. Instead of four downs to get a first down, there are only three down.

Lamaar Thomas: Wow.

Jimmy Kemp: You punt on third down instead of fourth down. You always go for it on third and one because the defense is required to stay one yard off the line of scrimmage so on third and one, if you can't get a quarterback sneak for one yard, you are pitiful. You always go for it on third and one, it's the equivalent of fourth and one in the NFL, or college football. There are 12 players instead of 11, and that extra player is a receiver on offense and a defensive back on defense.

Bill Walton: You got what, five receivers there?

Jimmy Kemp: You can have six receivers.

Bill Walton: Six receivers okay.

Jimmy Kemp: If you want, you can have one back and five receivers, or two backs and four, or no backs and six. Those four of those receivers, lets say you go with six receivers, all right, you can take four of those receivers, put them in the backfield behind the quarterback, and then they can motion anywhere they want and they can be running at the line of scrimmage just as long as they're not across the line when the ball is snapped. They can be going full speed at the line of scrimmage and a defensive back's eyes, "Oh, my goodness." It's a passing league, and you may have heard of a quarterback named, Doug Flutie.

Bill Walton: Oh, sure. Yeah.

Jimmy Kemp: Doug's one of the, I would say he's the best Canadian Football League quarterback of all time. I got to play against him, and played with his brother Darrin, who is a receiver. It was a fun league, and most of us, the last thing I'll say about it Bill, most of us had been cut at some point. We'd been told that we weren't good enough. That made you angry and you played with an edge, but you also knew that football should be fun. I don't want to just be ... I've been cut before, the worst has happened to me. I'm past that, I'm going to have fun, and we did.

Bill Walton: You played what, 10 years, 12 years?

Jimmy Kemp: Just eight years.

Bill Walton: Eight years. How many times were you cut in that eight years?

Jimmy Kemp: Well, I was cut by the NFL Europe league. One year I tried out for NFL Europe and I got cut, so did Jay Gruden, the current head coach of the Redskins, we were teammates during training camp. That's once. I got traded two times, that's a little bit like being cut. Then I didn't get resigned my final, I was still under contract, I had wife and two kids and I wanted to be making more money, and I wanted the team to treat me better. I didn't think it was politics, I just thought it was common sense that they'd pay a veteran quarterback who'd performed pretty well, and they didn't, and so they didn't bring me back and that felt like getting cut because it wasn't ending my career on my terms.

Bill Walton: What was the pay scale in the CFL versus the NFL?

Jimmy Kemp: Yeah, probably about a sixth of what the NFL makes. The average salary was \$400 thousand. It was about \$80 thousand in Canada.

Bill Walton: You went from not throwing the ball at all to throwing the ball all the time.

Jimmy Kemp: Yeah, that was fun.

Lamaar Thomas: I was just going to ask you. How was the adjustment from Wake Forest, 11 players, traditional four downs, to Canadian Football League? Is the field also bigger?

Jimmy Kemp: Oh, yeah. That's right, the field's wider and longer, and the end zone's are 20 yards deep instead of 10, and the goalposts are on the line of scrimmage. You can throw a pass into the end zone and it could either get knocked down by the goalpost or the receiver could be looking for the ball, catch it, and hit the goalpost.

Lamaar Thomas: Oh, wow.

Jimmy Kemp: You could use the goalpost as a pick, right? Take your defender right to the post, and he's backpedaling-

Bill Walton: That's quite a pick.

Jimmy Kemp: Doesn't see the goalpost. The adjustment was great because really, I was red shirted my first year of pro football. I was on the practice squad. They paid me 400 bucks a week and I didn't travel with the team. Then halfway through the year, the starting quarterback got injured, I got bumped up to second string, the guy who was starting, he got hurt the first game that I was on the active roster and all of a sudden I found myself in the game and I was scared.

Lamaar Thomas: Sounds like me.

Jimmy Kemp: Oh my gosh, I was scared. It was brutal. I did okay, actually. I did okay but I'll never forget the first time I really took a professional hit. The guy became a good friend of mine. He's about 5'11", 6 feet, 320 pounds. I was kind of rolling out, scrambling a little bit, I threw a pass around this guy to a running back and he put his face mask right in my chest, I was totally exposed, and his 325 pounds drove me right into the ground, wind knocked out me and I thought, welcome to professional football. After that year, it got a lot easier. My practice squad year really helped and I got a little bit of experience.

Bill Walton: Well, you know it's in the family. I remember seeing here that your father played 11 seasons.

Jimmy Kemp: 13.

Bill Walton: 13?

Jimmy Kemp: Jack was 13, Jeff was 11.

Bill Walton: Okay.

Jimmy Kemp: Jimmy, eight.

Bill Walton: Well, he suffered a dozen concussions.

Jimmy Kemp: Maybe.

Bill Walton: Two broken ankles, crushed hand. What did he tell the doctor when the hand was crushed?

Jimmy Kemp: Well, yeah. It was his middle finger. His middle finger got crushed, he wanted to come back and play that season, and the doctor said, "Look, Jack, I can either fix your finger but it's going to take you a full year to get better or I can fuse your finger into the shape of a football and you can come back and play in a month." Dad said, "Fuse the finger." Any time you shook his hand, he'd have his middle finger sticking into you, he couldn't straighten that finger.

Bill Walton: The hand was permanently cupped to grasp a football.

Jimmy Kemp: His finger was permanently cupped to grasp a football. He was a determined guy.

Bill Walton: You remember Larry Bird, of course.

Jimmy Kemp: Sure.

Bill Walton: You remember Larry Bird's broken finger? It was pointed the wrong direction and it didn't seem to hurt him.

Jimmy Kemp: Dude could shoot.

Bill Walton: He was Larry Bird.

Lamaar Thomas: Dude could shoot.

Bill Walton: You went from Ohio State, you were drafted by Denver Broncos?

Lamaar Thomas: Undrafted free agent from the Denver Broncos.

Bill Walton: Undrafted free agent.

Lamaar Thomas: Undrafted free agent.

Bill Walton: What was that like?

Lamaar Thomas: Signed by the Denver Broncos.

Jimmy Kemp: Did you go through the combine?

Lamaar Thomas: I did not get invited to the combine. What happened, I transferred to the University of New Mexico, I played one year, I broke my foot, sat out the rest of that season so all I had was my senior year to play. They brought in the coach, Bob Davie, he brought in a brand new offensive coordinator and quite like the wishbone we ran the single wing where we had just option offense. It was ideal for receivers so I didn't get any ... I had 18 total catches my senior year in college, 18 total catches.

Jimmy Kemp: You led the team I bet.

Lamaar Thomas: I led the team with 18 catches. I didn't get any bowl invites, no combine invites, all I had was my pro day, I ran in my pro day, did pretty well.

Jimmy Kemp: Pro day is when the pro scouts come to your campus. That's what I did too, I didn't get to go to the combine.

Lamaar Thomas: Yeah, pro scouts come to campus. You run, you do all the testing at your school that they do at the combine. You do your 40, you do your vertical jump, you do your bench press.

Bill Walton: Didn't you tell me you did pretty well with the bench press on pro day?

Lamaar Thomas: I did do pretty in my testing.

Jimmy Kemp: I think you still could do pretty well.

Lamaar Thomas: My testing was really well on my pro day. My bench, 225 bench. I did that 17 times and the craziest part about that is never before that, I had never done it 10 times.

Jimmy Kemp: Really?

Lamaar Thomas: 10 times, never had done it 10 times. The days before.

Bill Walton: It was all adrenaline.

Lamaar Thomas: All adrenaline and I mean, I think could have gotten more but I was so shocked when I got to 15 because I had never gotten more than 10 that I think that I just kind of psyched myself out a little bit.

Jimmy Kemp: That's wild.

Lamaar Thomas: Yeah, but I had quite the day. That was the same day I ran 4.3 in the 40 and my vertical was 38. I just say, it was quite the adrenaline day.

Bill Walton: It was a good day to be on fire.

Lamaar Thomas: It was a good day.

Bill Walton: Yeah full disclosure, Lamaar's my personal trainer. I was in the gym with him this morning.

Lamaar Thomas: Yes, we were.

Bill Walton: We were boxing and I'm really glad we have rules and Lamaar doesn't get to hit back.

Jimmy Kemp: Well, it's working Bill, he's doing a good job.

Bill Walton: CFL, do you miss it?

Jimmy Kemp: Oh, yeah. There's nothing like being on a team and having your performance judged, you know you won or lost. It's either a great feeling or it's a really painful feeling. Then the next day, you know what your routine is, bam, I'm going to go in there, we're going to look at the film, look at the video and figure it out. I'm going to try to get better at the things that I screwed up and I know the guy to right is going to try to improve those things. Having that common cause in such a defined way on a weekly basis was an awful lot of fun. Life is different now, and it's fine, it's a stage of life but yes, I do miss it.

Bill Walton: Now, were the players in the CFL mostly recruited from the United States?

Jimmy Kemp: There's a quota. You have to have half of the players can't be Americans.

Bill Walton: How many of the players are African American?

Jimmy Kemp: Probably I'd say, when I was playing at least it was about 60% African American.

Bill Walton: Now, are there issues of race in Canada, American football? I mean, what is the-

Jimmy Kemp: There's definitely, it's definitely, I think it's a better place for black players to play in Canada than in the United States but I didn't play ... Well, actually the Canadian Football League had teams in the Sacramento and the San Antonio, Baltimore ... There was an experiment. My first two years I played in the United States in the Canadian Football League in Sacramento and San Antonio. The all those, that experiment folded and I went up and played in Canada for my last six years so I know a little bit of the difference. Michael Pinball Clemens, one of the best running backs I've ever seen, he was a pinball. He just bounced off people. He grew up in Florida and he experienced racism in Florida, and in Virginia. When he got to Toronto after being cut by the Kansas City Chiefs, he loved Toronto. He's never moved back to the United States, has an American wife who's African American and they've built their life and their family up there. I think it's one of the pocks on our country that we have not been able to do a better job on race relations.

Bill Walton: Lazaar, you haven't experienced both countries, but do you have a point of view? Have you heard things, talked with guys about how they feel?

Lazaar Thomas: I know a few guys that feel as if it's not equal. I don't know in what sense because I don't really get into too much in the topic of that. I've never experienced personally, I never had any personal experience on whether African Americans get treated differently in the NFL or not. I do know of some guys, some friends that still currently play in the NFL that feel as though sometimes that it's not equal, or they don't get treated equally.

Jimmy Kemp: Have you ever been stopped for very little or no reason by any police officers?

Lazaar Thomas: I've actually, yes. I've had that happen to me before when I was at Ohio State. That was probably the first time that I've ever really witnessed that happen. It was one late night, I was driving on campus and I got pulled over. It was for no reason really, and kind of was just threatened by the cop to tell my head coach that I was out late, and doing nothing. He just, "Yeah, you're out late, I can report this to Coach Tressel if I need to." I didn't get stopped for speeding or failure to signal.

Jimmy Kemp: Did you feel like it was more because you were African American or more because you were a football player?

Lamaar Thomas: I feel like it was more because I was an African American because I don't think they knew that I was a football player-

Jimmy Kemp: They didn't know you were a football player until they saw you.

Lamaar Thomas: Until yeah, until they saw me. Yeah, exactly.

Bill Walton: Well, I don't think we're going to solve it on this show. I went to a high school that was about 80% African American. I got very friendly with guys, I try to put myself in their shoes, I couldn't do it. I mean, it's just ... We'll figure it out, next show we'll figure that out. How about that?

Jimmy Kemp: Right now, Bill. Come on.

Bill Walton: Right now.

Jimmy Kemp: Let's go.

Bill Walton: Injuries, football. You got hurt a lot, Lamaar.

Lamaar Thomas: I did, I am sad to say.

Bill Walton: Is that because you committed your body in ways you shouldn't have?

Lamaar Thomas: It's probably a little mixture of that. I also ran track, I also played basketball. I've done a lot of this stuff since I ... I ran track when I was six for the first time, played football when I was seven for the first time. I think that the wear and tear on my body just started to add up and then the next thing you know you have a broken bone here, and you have a pulled muscle here, and you have a concussion here.

Bill Walton: The injuries is because you didn't learn to recover?

Lamaar Thomas: I think so.

Bill Walton: Yeah, you just went flat out, okay.

Lamaar Thomas: A lot of times, like I broke a bone in my back. I don't think that came from wear and tear on my body. I broke my foot, I broke my finger. Some of those injuries, I don't think came from wear and tear on my body, just kind of my bad luck at the time. Yeah, I did suffer a lot of injuries.

Bill Walton: Jimmy, what about you?

Jimmy Kemp: I'm very healthy and grateful for that. It's great to be a backup quarterback most of your career. You don't get hit in practice, you don't get hit in games until you get sent in or they're booing the starting quarterback. I had one knee injury that wasn't really bad, just a sprained MCL. I had one bad concussion, stayed in the game but not really. I tore my ACL skiing, I separated my right shoulder, my throwing shoulder mountain biking.

Bill Walton: Okay so these are not football related.

Jimmy Kemp: Football's been pretty good to me. Being a backup quarterback's a good gig.

Lamaar Thomas: Jimmy's, I'm sorry, Jimmy's still healthy and you said you missed the game a little bit. Now, we don't watch film but my flag football team, we play every week. If you-

Jimmy Kemp: Hey, that's why I asked you if you need a quarterback.

Lamaar Thomas: We do need a quarterback. Now, if you're itching. I'll give you a call.

Bill Walton: This would be, we could create a winning team right here on this show.

Jimmy Kemp: I think I can still do it.

Bill Walton: When do you play? What days?

Lamaar Thomas: I play Tuesday nights, I play Sundays, I play Sunday nights, Sunday mornings, sometimes Saturday mornings. I play in a bunch of different leagues, co-ed, all men's.

Jimmy Kemp: Awesome.

Lamaar Thomas: Five on five. Just a bunch of different stuff. I try to stay in a lot of-

Bill Walton: You won your championship last night.

Lamaar Thomas: Won my co-ed championship Tuesday night.

Bill Walton: Right, okay.

Lamaar Thomas: Co-ed championship Tuesday night.

Jimmy Kemp: Sweet. That'd be fun.

Bill Walton: Injuries, concussions. What's going on in today's football? The rules they've got with regard to hits and things like that? What do you think of that?

Lamaar Thomas: One of my last plays was actually a concussion. I got a concussion the preseason game, we were playing against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, I caught a slant route, don't really remember the play too much but I've seen it. I caught a slant route, took a hit, and immediately from there I was knocked out, unconscious. The process to even get back on the field or to be cleared by NFL protocol now is intense now. I mean, to the point where once I was aware of what was going on, I kind of became a little nervous just because of how I was being treated. They were very cautious with me making sure I'm okay like, "Hey, make sure you're not looking at your phone, make sure the lights aren't too bright in the room." It kind of made me a little nervous at the time because I'm like, "Wait, what's going on?" I saw a bunch of people here and everybody's asking me questions and asking me if I'm all right like, "What's going on?" Now, looking back on it you can see how the ... How it has evolved, like how much safer they're trying to make the game with paying attention to concussions a lot more.

Bill Walton: Do you like the rule though? If somebody gives an inappropriate hit, they're out.

Lamaar Thomas: I like that rule. I like the rule. I think that the rule should be a little more consistent.

Bill Walton: Well, it's hard to-

Lamaar Thomas: Yeah, exactly. It's hard to say. You have times like I saw a clip a few weeks ago of Russell Wilson who took a hit and they, one of the referees sent him over to kind of get looked at.

Jimmy Kemp: Oh yeah.

Lamaar Thomas: He was saying that he was fine and he kind of waved it off and went back in the game.

Jimmy Kemp: Right.

Lamaar Thomas: Now he, I think he's got a fine for that. I want to say it was like a \$100 thousand fine for not going through concussion protocol. The NFL is taking it seriously and I think they're going about it the right way but like you said, it's kind of hard to say, "Well, it looks like he got a concussion but he doesn't look like it so we're going to pull him out but we're going to leave him in." It's that fine line of, how do you really determine when do you pull someone out and when do you not pull someone out.

Bill Walton: Jimmy?

Jimmy Kemp: Well, I coach my, I've got four boys. All of them have played youth football. I coach my 11 year old and we've changed the way we teach tackling, we've changed the way we teach blocking. We hit less in practice.

Bill Walton: You don't use the head, you use the shoulder

Jimmy Kemp: No. Yes. You see how Seahawks have demonstrated to really develop a strong tackling team without risking head injuries. Obviously, it still happens, it's a violent sport. Somehow, I convinced my wife to not only let our 13 year old play football but he also plays rugby.

Lamaar Thomas: Oh, wow.

Jimmy Kemp: I don't believe that we should put kids in bubble wrap and say, "Okay, we never want you ... " Life is, you can't just protect kids and you can't protect adults who are choosing what to do but we have to be smart. The really concerning thing to me is we don't know why some people are susceptible to these brain injuries and others aren't. Some people have had tons of these sub-concussive hits and concussive hits and they're fine.

Bill Walton: Well, your father had a dozen and ended up running for president.

Jimmy Kemp: He seemed to be fine, didn't he, Bill?

Bill Walton: Well, I don't know he ran for president. Maybe that explains it.

Jimmy Kemp: Maybe it's concussions that ... Yeah, maybe that's right. That was his line actually. He said, "What else was there to do after 12 concussions in football other than run for congress?" No, it is a serious issue. My wife has helped me take it much more seriously than I probably did initially. The research needs to be studied and I think the NFL is being responsible but it's clear that they have interests that are very tied up in it so you need objective research and analysis as well.

Bill Walton: Well, the thing that's happened though in the last 25 years is the size and fitness of the athletes is just dramatically different. You're getting hit a lot harder by a lot more muscle. I'm not a subject matter expert but I think Teddy Roosevelt confronted a lot.

Jimmy Kemp: Yeah, he did.

Bill Walton: Football, American football players were dying by the dozens in 1912, or whatever it was he was president, 1908. He took charge of the football rules and recreated the rules and I think did a lot of good because of that. It seems to me that if we want to keep-

Jimmy Kemp: Are you saying that the president could fix this? Sorry.

Bill Walton: As we speak, there's a long pause. Could and should.

Jimmy Kemp: Could and should.

Bill Walton: He should. He actually could show some leadership here.

Jimmy Kemp: Sure.

Bill Walton: I think he should too. I don't want to go all the way to flag football, as much as I know you're enjoying it. We've got to keep the equipment on. We've got to wrap up. Jimmy, I did want to give you a chance to talk about what you're doing now with the Jack Kemp Foundation.

Jimmy Kemp: Oh, thanks Bill. I run the Jack Kemp Foundation. I set up the foundation after my dad passed away in 2009. The reason is because my dad's political philosophy, he described, as being about the American idea. Our mission is to advance the American idea, the belief and the truth that the condition of your birth should not determine the outcome of your life. That in this country, our government was established for liberty, for people to be able to self-determine what they want to spend their life doing, what flourishing means to the. We believe in that American idea and we believe that it unites much of the country and that if in our divided times, that if we have a path forward, that it's going to be around something ... I think the American idea's a great thing to come around, which allows people to compete their ideas but with civility, with respect for one another.

You can be a democrat, you can be a republican, you can be a different skin color, you can be a different gender, you can have a different sexual preference, whatever, but we can be civil and compete our ideas and try to build a more perfect union. We do that through the Kemp forum, and we have a Kemp forum on expanding opportunity with both Republican and Democratic political leaders, we will be in Chicago in March of 2018. We're going to be talking about how to expand opportunity, how to fight poverty-

Bill Walton: Where in Chicago?

Jimmy Kemp: To be determined.

Bill Walton: Okay.

Jimmy Kemp: Date is to be determined so stay tuned, I'll get you that information as soon as we get it. Speaker Paul Ryan, this was his idea originally and we did one Kemp forum on expanding opportunity in January of 2016 where we got presidential candidates to talk about their proposals to fight poverty and help people become upwardly mobile, give equality of opportunity. That's how the Kemp Foundation is trying to do our part. We just had a big event last night where we honored Senator Tim Scott who will also be at the event in Chicago. We're trying to stay active and be a part of the solution.

Bill Walton: Website?

Jimmy Kemp: Jackkempfoundation.org.

Bill Walton: Jackkempfoundation.org.

Lamaar Thomas: Sounds like something I want to look into. I can tell you talking about it, you seem really passionate about it.

Jimmy Kemp: I love what, it's a great privilege to do it, I'm grateful for the goodwill that my dad generated in his political career and it's football that helped him understand how to treat people from different backgrounds. He's given me a wonderful legacy that I can build from. There are a lot of people who loved him and Bill has been a good friend to us as well, so we appreciate your friendship and look forward to staying in touch with you, Lamaar.

Lamaar Thomas: Sounds good.

Bill Walton: Lamaar, thanks for coming on.

Lamaar Thomas: Of course.

Bill Walton: Jimmy, thanks.

Jimmy Kemp: You're welcome. Thanks for having us.

Bill Walton: We'll pick another interesting topic. Although, it's hard to go wrong with football. We'll get you back.

Jimmy Kemp: Somehow, people have managed to this year.

Bill Walton: We've got another show on that. Okay guys, thanks a lot

Jimmy Kemp: You're welcome.

Bill Walton: Okay.

Lamaar Thomas: You're welcome.