

THE WARM UP

With Hillary Thornton

The Pilot Episode of *The Warm Up* Podcast: Analysis of Focus Group Findings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background. The following report provides a brief history of podcasting, emphasizing how the medium has recently exploded with assistance from celebrity talent, a proliferation of new shows and topics, investment from advertisers and large companies, and a perfectly executed launch of *Serial*. The report analyzes how the success of podcasting is supported by the Long Tail theory due to the niche, inexpensive, and easy manner of distributing the medium. Podcasts are also arguably the most efficient medium, as users can consume content while doing other tasks.

A new podcast that is prepared to capitalize on the success of the podcasting industry while promoting a fresh idea with the potential to gain a large following is *The Warm Up*. *The Warm Up* is a sports education podcast that is created and hosted by Hillary Thornton. In 10-20 minutes, each episode provides listeners with knowledge as to how an individual sport is played, including the object of the game, rules, positions, elements of strategy, scoring, etc. After listening to an episode, listeners will be ready to attend a game, bond with co-workers about the local team, and understand sports analogies spouted by their father-in-law. Sports often invade the everyday cultural Zeitgeist, and *The Warm Up* gives the audience a toolkit to help them navigate sport references.

The Warm Up has a crucial place in the podcasting realm because it is the first sports education podcast. Sports podcasts and educational podcasts are very popular genres, but *The Warm Up* is the first to combine the two. It is also written, produced, edited, and hosted by a woman. Podcasting is a medium that is still male-dominated, and promoting a woman who is informed and presented in a position of authority while discussing the masculine topic of sports is important to help the medium continue to grow and feature diverse perspectives.

Method. A 10-minute pilot episode of *The Warm Up* was created and uploaded to SoundCloud. That episode was then distributed to a focus group consisting of eight participants of various demographics, dispersed throughout the country. The participants listened to the episode and took part in a virtual 60-minute focus group discussion on Zoom, where they provided feedback and recommendations regarding the pilot episode and overall concept. The goal of the focus group was to receive feedback about the successful elements of the show and, ideally, suggestions for improvement. A moderator was present to ask guiding questions, but the participants were encouraged to speak freely and let the conversation flow, within relevant reason.

Results. Qualitative data analysis produced five themes that continually came up throughout the discussion. The themes praise the show while also providing suggestions to improve subsequent episodes.

Theme #1: Praise for the concept of *The Warm Up*: The participants agreed that the unique concept behind *The Warm Up* was refreshing to hear within the context of a podcasting market that is currently oversaturated.

Theme #2: Less focus on technical details of sports: The pilot episode focused primarily on the technical aspects needed to follow along with a game of basketball. Though the participants learned a lot, they were longing for more narrative and culturally relevant details.

Theme #3: Building on characters and narrative elements: The focus group admitted that they would be more drawn to watch a sporting event if they understood the narrative and character-driven moments that lie beneath the dry aspects. The participants who do not typically follow sports felt strongly about this. They are more likely to be invested in a sport if they are exposed to the underlying story within.

Theme #4: Adding an additional voice: Though there was praise for the host's vocal quality, the participants agreed that the overall quality of the show would be heightened if the host were allowed to play off another person, at least for one segment. This would help make the tone of the show become more jovial, and it would also help listeners retain the knowledge being given.

Theme #5: Appreciation of female voice: The participants reinforced the belief that *The Warm Up* is particularly effective because it is hosted and created by a woman, who is discussing a male-dominated topic in a male-dominated medium. The tone of the show is welcoming, and the listeners do not feel judged for lacking sports knowledge.

Discussion and Implications. The feedback and suggestions provided by the focus group discussion were thoughtful and astute. All of them will be carefully considered when creating future episodes of *The Warm Up*. Moving forward, episodes will work to find the balance between the serious, educational elements of the show with the fun, personality-driven elements. Sports are intended to be fun, so listeners of *The Warm Up* want to have a good time while listening.

Future episodes will also focus less on the dry, technical details of the game and instead bring attention to iconic moments and unavoidable cultural references of the sport in question. There will also be segments that focus on prominent figures in the given sport and the storylines that make them special. Lastly, the focus group revealed the importance of having an additional voice and perspective present. Including a segment that features a guest will likely make the tone of the show less serious while allowing the guest and the host to play a game that tests knowledge retention.

Conclusion. The first episode of *The Warm Up* will build on the successful aspects of the pilot while implementing the introspective recommendations provided by the focus group discussion. By becoming more collaborative, narrative-driven, and jovial, the first episode will ultimately prove to be audience-focused.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, the subject of podcasting is nearly unavoidable in everyday conversation. Podcasts are now a go-to source for many Americans to hear breaking news, conversations with celebrities, or educational lessons about specific topics, but it was not always this mainstream.

Exactly 20 years ago, podcasts were born as a collaborative effort between Adam Curry and Dave Winer and were known as radioblogs (Walch & Lafferty, 2006). Curry and Winer wanted to create a better way to deliver audio to the Internet and keyed in on a state-of-the-art XML format called Really Simple Syndication (RSS) to achieve this (Walch & Lafferty, 2006). Later, in 2004, Apple's iPod was popular, journalist Ben Hammersley invented the name "podcast" as a portmanteau, combining "iPod" and "broadcast" ("The man who accidentally invented the word 'podcast,'" 2020). Despite the medium being connected by name to Apple and gaining a cult following in the mid-2000s, Apple did not create their much-used podcast app until June 2012 (Weissman, 2019).

Even though podcasts have now been around for two decades, the popularity has increased exponentially in the last five years. This can be credited to celebrities getting involved, an abundance of new shows and niche topics, and investment from advertisers and other large companies (Reyes, 2021). Business Insider forecasted that 77.9 million people will listen to a podcast at least once a week this year. If true, that would result in more than twice as many weekly podcast listeners than in 2016 (Reyes, 2021). Furthermore, a separate study found that

the majority of Americans aged 12 or older have now listened to a podcast at least once (“The Infinite Dial 2019,” 2019).

Beyond an explosion of listenership, podcasting is now an incredibly profitable medium. According to the U.S. Podcast Advertising Revenue Study (2020), podcast revenue increased 48% to \$708 million in 2019 and is expected to become a billion-dollar industry in 2021.

It is impossible to discuss the meteoric rise of podcasting without mentioning *Serial*, a stylized, suspensive audio-documentary. Premiering in October 2014, *Serial*’s first season spent 12 episodes investigating the evidence and details behind a real-life murder case that took place in 1999. Hancock & McMurry (2018) detail just how successful *Serial* was: “*Serial* undeniably broke records: the fastest-ever podcast to reach 5 million downloads (within its first month); 40 million downloads in its first two months; holding the #1 rating on iTunes’ download chart for three months; the first podcast to win a Peabody Award.”

Podcasting is a medium that was once very niche and techno-driven until *Serial* catapulted the medium to the mainstream discourse. Podcast expert Richard Berry (2015, p. 170) argues that *Serial* caused the world to “suddenly talk about podcasting again,” a decade after the medium debuted.

The rise of podcasting can also partially be explained by Chris Anderson’s Long Tail theory. The Long Tail theory suggests that, with improved distribution and recommendation algorithms, consumer demand will move from the popular and mainstream (the “head” of a demand curve) towards the more niche, lesser known long “tail” of the supply (Anderson, 2004). Anderson wrote on this theory in 2004 when podcasts had just been given a name and were barely on the radar of most people, and yet, his theory applies to podcasts greatly. The theory

details three rules that highlight the power of the Long Tail and also explain why the theory is so effective for podcasters:

- 1.) Embrace Niches: There are podcasts about nearly every topic imaginable, including very specific, niche subject matter that would never find a place on public radio or television. Podcasts give a distinct platform to anyone who wants it.
- 2.) Cut the Price in Half. Now Lower It: Because podcasters make money beyond the distribution aspect, most podcasts are free for listeners to consume. It is game-changing for consumers to have access to news, education, and celebrities without spending a dime.
- 3.) Help Me Find It: Media must make it easy for users to find exactly what they're looking for, and podcasts have achieved that. Listeners can easily find anything they want with the assistance of personalized algorithms and “Browse” sections in podcasting apps. Lastly, podcast listeners appreciate the medium because it allows them to multi-task while consuming episodes, so the content insinuates itself into listeners’ lives in a manner that other media cannot (Gitner, 2016, p. 288). It is possible to drive, cook, or clean while listening to podcasts, whereas it is much harder to consume television, movies, and other visual media while doing these same tasks. This allows podcast listeners to be efficient while consuming content, as opposed to a “couch potato” lifestyle associated with people who consume a lot of TV.

Introducing *The Warm Up*

The Warm Up is a sports education podcast written, edited, and hosted by Hillary Thornton. Each episode of *The Warm Up* is an easily digestible introduction into a facet of the world of sports, allowing sports novices and experts alike to learn something about the given sports topic. The first season will introduce listeners to individual sports by detailing the rules,

object, positions, and commonly referenced moments and catchphrases. For season one, the goal is to educate a sports novice to feel more integrated in the sports culture that often fuses with everyday culture. For example, if a listener had never watched a basketball game before, she could listen to the “Basketball” episode of *The Warm Up* and understand what it means when her nephew says “I go hard in the paint” and can follow along with the action at her coworker’s March Madness party.

Subsequent seasons of *The Warm Up* will feature more in-depth lessons about specific details and stories of sports, such as “Russian Steroid Use in the Olympics” and “Penalties in American Football (featuring an interview with a referee),” etc. As the episodes of *The Warm Up* increase, the number of listeners that can be educated by the show will increase, as well. The first season is primarily for those who do not watch sports at all, whereas later seasons will cater to sports novices and die-hard fans alike. *The Warm Up* attracts a wide variety of people, meeting them where they are in their sports knowledge.

In a podcasting market that has become oversaturated in recent years, a podcast like *The Warm Up* still does not exist. Sports and Self-Help/Education are two of the top eight most popular podcast genres (“Leading podcast genres U.S. 2020,” 2021), and *The Warm Up* provides listeners with a podcast that combines sports and education.

The Warm Up is being created at a crucial time in culture because, though there are more podcasts and listeners than ever before, it is still a male dominated medium. According to Lin Taylor (2018), less than one-third of Apple’s top 100 podcasts were hosted or co-hosted by women in 2017. This extends to sports podcasts, as well. ESPN only has ten podcasts that regularly feature female contributors, and they are the leader (Kidd, 2019). With podcasts attracting massive audiences now, diversity has never been more important. The D-I-Y nature of

creating podcasts allows creators the freedom to create content that represents his or her perspective. Diverse representation among podcast creators is crucial – otherwise listeners miss out on various viewpoints and stories (Werner et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, the pitch of feminine voices could also be limiting women's opportunities to level the playing field in podcasting. According to a study by Tigue et al., (2012), a majority of both men and women prefer listening to masculine voice pitches. Furthermore, the study also found that it is assumed that people with lower voices are more informed, confident, and possess more leadership qualities (Tigue et al., 2012). This is an obvious issue in a medium like podcasting, which is entirely aural. Not only are female hosts less popular than their male counterparts, but they are also perceived to have less authority, as well. This bias is even more heightened in the field of sports, an industry that is traditionally male dominated. Instead of suggesting that women talk lower to imitate men, it would be more beneficial to increase female representation. Hearing more female voices in podcasts (and elsewhere) in positions of authority could go a long way towards changing the perception of what a leader sounds like (Werner et al., 2020).

It is certainly worth noting that *Serial*, far and away the most popular podcast of all time, was written, produced, and hosted by women (Hamedy, 2017), proving that the supply and demand of female leadership in podcasting is present.

The Warm Up is ultimately aimed at an audience of people who are not typically fans of sports. Stereotypically, this would mean that the podcast's audience is predominately women. Therefore, it is crucial that the podcast be hosted by an informed woman in a position of authority, as the audience is more likely to be influenced by a host that shares their sensibilities and sounds like them.

Because the popularity of podcasts has reached unprecedented heights, the market for podcast topics is over-saturated. If you want to create a podcast, it is important that you have a solid, unique concept for the podcast. *The Warm Up* is a distinctive idea that stands out in a dense, popular market and further establishes women as knowledgeable, authoritative figures in the podcasting world.

METHOD

A ten-minute long pilot episode of *The Warm Up* was created, written, hosted, recorded, and edited by Hillary Thornton. The episode is titled “Basketball,” and details the rules and object of the game of basketball, complete with segments that are intended to be routine in future episodes: (1) a brief (30-60 seconds) history of the origin of the sport, (2) Game Time, a segment that explains how the sport in question is timed, and (3) BUT WHY???, which acknowledges a common complaint of the sport. The pilot episode was uploaded to SoundCloud.

In an effort to gain feedback and better understanding of which elements of *The Warm Up* are effective to new listeners, a focus group was conducted. There was one moderator and eight participants. The participants were of varying ethnicities, and their ages ranged from 27 to 31, with a mean age of 29 years old. The participants were all located in the United States, but were spread out among Austin, Chicago, Miami, Minneapolis, and New York City. Perhaps most importantly for this specific focus group, the participants also arrived with varying levels of basketball knowledge prior to listening to *The Warm Up*, ranging from “I’ve never watched a game” to “die-hard fan.”

The focus group was one hour in length and conducted virtually through Zoom on Thursday, April 1st, 2021. The meeting was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, allowing for small edits for clarity (millennials, your author included, say the word “like” ad nauseum). The SoundCloud link containing the pilot episode of *The Warm Up*, “Basketball,” was sent to all

of the participants beforehand, so they could all listen as many times as needed prior to the meeting and discussion.

The meeting began with an introduction from each participant, including his or her name and favorite podcast. Eight questions were written to be used as a guide to facilitate discussion. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and not to avoid going on tangents, as long as they were relevant. Because of the free, lively discussion among participants, many of the topics highlighted by the nine guide questions were covered naturally, and only five of the questions were asked.

Table 1: Focus group questions

1. After listening to the episode (“Basketball”), what questions do you still have about basketball?
 - a. Consider whether it was explained poorly or not covered at all
2. What is an ideal length for this sports education podcast?
3. What turned you off about the podcast?
 - a. Did you zone out? What did you dislike?
4. How much time per week do you listen to podcasts?
 - a. Why? What do you get from podcasts?
5. Did you like the format?
 - a. Would you prefer multiple hosts and/or guests?

Table 2: Additional questions written to facilitate discussion but were not necessary

1. What did you like about the podcast?

2. What did you think about the specific segments (such as Game Time and BUT WHY???)?
3. Do you listen to podcasts? Which ones?

The discussion concluded after each participant was given an opportunity to give a closing, summarizing statement of their overall thoughts. This also gave them time to voice any feedback that they had not yet shared. All eight participants took advantage.

RESULTS

Qualitative data analysis revealed five themes that all participants agreed on, which are listed in the table below.

Table 3: Themes found in focus group discussion

1. Praise for the concept of *The Warm Up*
2. Less focus on technical details of sports
3. Building on characters and narrative elements
4. Adding an additional voice
5. Appreciation of female voice

Praise for the concept of *The Warm Up*

As previously noted, when starting out with a new podcast idea, it is critical that the idea is unique. Listeners will only feel hooked if they can't hear the content anywhere else. This particular form of education, lacking condescension, is what appealed to one participant:

“I think this is actually distinct from what is out there, and I feel like the podcasting landscape is so dense right now. Everybody’s got a podcast, right? But I’ve never heard

anything like this, and I think part of it is the concept, and it's also the delivery of that – how easy it is and welcoming and it doesn't feel judgmental. That feels like the win. That's the biggest part. The concept in and of itself just feels very different to me."

Another participant described how she can see *The Warm Up* easily fitting into the podcasting culture:

"I think about if someone asked you what podcasts you listen to and explaining this like "it's like your cool older sister explaining sports to you." I keep imagining people saying, "Oh my God, it's this awesome woman and she's not condescending and she's funny, and you learn something and it's short." And it can become very Zeitgeist-y, like "everything I know about sports, I know from The Warm Up." I can feel it being a thing."

Less focus on technical details of sports

Though many participants were proud to boast that they learned a thing or two about how the sport of basketball is played, they agreed that they want *The Warm Up* to go beyond the technicalities. As stated by one participant:

"If I am going somewhere and I need to know how to play basketball, I'll probably just like Google it and go on YouTube and watch a real quick three minute video. It'll have all the visuals and stuff.... I just think your podcast has so much more to offer than just being, like, 'here's how to play!'"

There's a lot of truth to this. If someone is unaware of the object of basketball, there is probably a reason why. All previous attempts to explain the game were likely too boring and technical. *The Warm Up* has a unique opportunity to present the sport in a more vibrant manner, infusing iconic moments, situations in which odd strategies have paid off, and connecting listeners to colloquial terms heard in everyday life.

Ultimately, sports are games. They are intended to be fun. Though this is an educational podcast, it shouldn't be serious, and listeners want to have a good time learning about how a game is played. Many participants wanted more of the host's personality and "quick wit" to shine through to keep the audience engaged.

Some participants, particularly those who admitted to knowing next to nothing about sports, recognize that a 10-minute podcast is unlikely to turn them into rabid fans. Therefore, the goal of *The Warm Up* should not be to convert them into sports almanacs, who can rattle off all of the rules of sports. Instead, these participants simply want to understand sports analogies that people use when speaking to them, and they want to fit in around co-workers and acquaintances who frequently discuss sports.

A "Party Tricks" segment was suggested, in which the host would explain frequently mentioned moments in the sport and sports analogies, in hopes that listeners could take that information and impress people at a party. One participant wants *The Warm Up* to equip her with party tricks:

"...or just like shining basketball moments, moments that are most commonly referenced from basketball history so that you sound like you watch basketball when you're at a party."

The audience does not want to become sports experts; they just want to fit in.

Building on characters and narrative elements

Participants agree that *The Warm Up*'s potential to go beyond sport's technicalities can be built by emphasizing moments of story and building characters. The reason so many people enjoy sports is not just because of the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat (though that is nice). Enjoyment is due in large part to sports telling a story. There are characters, there's a

narrative that spans a game or an entire season, there's conflict and resolution. *The Warm Up* can convince people of this drama, instead of just being a very technical, education-centric podcast.

This was detailed by one participant:

"I feel like that's also why the "BUT WHY???" segment worked because inserting strategy into the rules like that is narrative, right? That's what felt interesting to me and also, like, a next level of learning, which caused me to feel somewhat more accomplished. Like at the end of that 10 minutes, I was like, 'Oh, I not only understand new terms, but this is how it all fits into gameplay,' which is very interesting to everybody, even people who are not traditionally sports people."

For example, everyone knows who LeBron James is, but non-sports fans may not know exactly why he is important. *The Warm Up* can explain the moments that made him so special and frequently regarded in everyday culture.

Furthermore, listeners want to be able to understand how these knew terms are applied. Introducing narrative and strategic elements can help listeners retain the knowledge and be more engaged with it, as well.

Adding an additional voice

While the participants agreed that the vocal tone of the host was pleasant to listen to, they felt the show could be benefited by allowing the host to play off an additional person, even if just for a segment. They believe that adding an extra voice could help the show be more conversational and personality-driven, allowing the host to implement more jokes and lively banter. An extra perspective could also help the audience retain information.

A "Walk On" segment was suggested, in which the host would interview a guest who knows nothing about the sport being discussed. This could allow ignorant listeners to hear their

perspective within the show and help the host make sure everything was clearly communicated.

Participants also suggested the host depict life-like scenarios, such as “You’re in a business meeting and John from Accounting makes this sports analogy. Here’s what it means.” They also recommended implementing a “Pop Quiz” segment to test listeners’ knowledge. One participant elaborated:

“If you have a guest, you can prompt them with a question at the beginning of the episode like, ‘what would you say (in this situation)?’ And then at the end of the episode, you could prompt them like, ‘now what have you learned?’ And that ties it in thematically to the show where it’s like, this is an educational podcast. You will learn, but really, it’s fun, and it’s a way for you to explore whatever stories you’re interested in.”

Appreciation of female voice

The Background section above documented just how important it is, particularly for female podcast listeners, to hear women as informed authority figures. This is especially important to consider for this sports education podcast, as sports media is traditionally dominated by the male voice and perspective. One female participant explained:

“Not to bring gender into it, but if it were a man doing it (this podcast), I would hate it. I just think I would. Just no matter how they did it, it would feel condescending. Maybe not every man... but there is something about it. It didn’t feel man-splainy. It felt like my equal was talking to me and wasn’t looking down on me. I don’t know if that’s 100% gender, but there is something really cool about this podcast being hosted and written by a woman.”

Another participant elaborated:

“I think gender has a lot to do with it, actually. Not that I would hate the podcast if it were by a man, but it’s kinda like your cool older sister explaining sports to you. I thought it was awesome.”

It is important to meet the audience wherever they are in their sports knowledge. Hosts cannot make assumptions that the audience is at a particular level of knowledge. They also can't make snide, presumptive remarks that can be perceived as condescending by the audience. As stated by one participant:

“I think I liked it (the host’s voice) so much because it was so kind and non-judgmental. I feel like when you’re going to a party or game and know nothing about the sport, you can feel really dumb and stupid for that. So to have someone so unjudgmental just be like “oh, here’s how it works!” is really great.”

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The five overarching themes compiled above are all excellent bits of feedback that will undoubtedly help make *The Warm Up* better moving forward. The positive response from all of the focus group participants reinforces the quality of the concept behind *The Warm Up*, and implementing the changes suggested by the participants will make a more successful podcast, capable of achieving a following and gaining sponsorships.

It is important to find a balance of creating a serious and informative podcast while allowing the content to also be fun and personality-driven. Being a sports fan is intended to be fun, and that should be evident in every episode of *The Warm Up*. The host’s vocal tone in the pilot episode was too oriented towards speaking clearly and confidently that the personality and warmth was somewhat disregarded. Future episodes of *The Warm Up* will definitely include more humorous elements.

Subsequent episodes will also be influenced by the new-found understanding of the podcast's audience. Many of them aren't motivated by learning about the technical rules of sports. Instead, they are interested in learning about understanding commonly referenced sports moments and terms that they encounter regularly. They are also interested in characters and storylines that are easy to root for. Yes, they want to understand what's happening during a game, but they will not be fully invested without being introduced to character and narratives.

Moving forward, *The Warm Up* will work to find a balance that includes an explanation of technical rules, while also including micro-specific elements and strategies that add personal elements to the listeners. This might be achieved by making each 10-15 minute episode more specific. Instead of an episode being about basketball as a whole, it might be beneficial to have a 10-15 minute episode devoted to just the positions of basketball. That way, listeners can understand the technical differences between each position while also learning about specific characters and strategies. This will require a greater quantity of episodes, but listeners will still be able to dissect the information in bite-size chunks.

While it is helpful for listeners to hear why a player would intentionally foul an opponent in the final minute of the game, it would be more beneficial for them to hear of a specific instance in which a team was successful with this strategy. It would help the entire sport come alive for listeners if they could learn something technical and then hear it applied in a real-life setting.

The Warm Up will also seriously consider including at least one segment that includes another person. All of the suggestions provided by the focus group discussion were great, including "Walk On," where a sports novice would be interviewed. This will help make the

material more conversational and light-hearted, while also providing a quiz to users to help retain information.

If these recommendations are implemented successfully, there is little doubt that *The Warm Up* could gain listeners, complete with sponsorships. Podcasts with a following can be extremely profitable, and businesses understand that. Along with sponsorships, *The Warm Up* could also create a subscription-only Patreon profile, where listeners could find longform, un-cut interviews with guests and other bonus materials.

CONCLUSION

The data provided by the focus groups was thoughtful and intelligent. The participants perfectly understood the podcasting landscape and how *The Warm Up* can fit into it seamlessly. The backbone of *The Warm Up* is that the concept is one-of-a-kind. The suggestions provided by the focus group will help build on that backbone to turn the show into a long-term success.

The first episode will maintain the focus on education while implementing a segment that features a guest, cheerful banter, and a quiz element. The first episode will also center on the compelling stories and figures that drive the world of sports, rather than the dry rules and objects of sports. Moving forward, *The Warm Up* will take listeners' desires into account, and the focus group revealed that listeners aspire to assimilate to their everyday cultures and conversations more than they want to attend a sporting event and be an expert.

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APPENDIX

List of questions asked by the moderator during the focus group discussion:

1. After listening to the episode ("Basketball"), what questions do you still have about basketball?
 - a. Consider whether it was explained poorly or not covered at all
2. What is an ideal length for this sports education podcast?
3. What turned you off about the podcast?
 - a. Did you zone out? What did you dislike?
4. How much time per week do you listen to podcasts?

- a. Why? What do you get from podcasts?
5. Did you like the format?
 - a. Would you prefer multiple hosts and/or guests?

Additional questions written to facilitate discussion but were not necessary:

1. What did you like about the podcast?
2. What did you think about the specific segments (such as Game Time and BUT WHY????)?
3. Do you listen to podcasts? Which ones?

Transcribed focus group session:

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: I'm going to have everyone go around and just say their name and their favorite podcast. I'll start. My name is Hillary and my favorite podcast right now is *Legends Only*, a pop music and pop culture podcast. I'll call on people in order that I see you guys. Evelyn.

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: Trust the process. That's the only thing about basketball. Am I wrong? My name is Evelyn Jacoby, and my favorite podcast is... I like two people talking to each other with like, no script. Yeah I like those sorts of things. There's a podcast I listen to called *Touche*. It's like two actors shooting the shit for literally two hours.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: I love that. Amazing. Thanks. Caroline...

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: I'm Caroline. My favorite podcasts... I haven't listened to a podcast in a while, obviously. But it used to be *My Favorite Murder*. I really like that. And then I also really like *The Dollop*, which is just like two comedians talking about weird American history. And it's really funny. Really funny.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Amazing. Nick.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: Hi, I'm Nick. Um, my favorite podcast... well, today I started listening. I started listening again to the White Sox talk podcast, which is really nice. Man, I don't listen to many podcasts anymore. I've been doing like music without words, so I can just relax. But I listen to this podcast called *Pivot*. It's just like two people talking about tech and business stuff. I like that one. And then *Reply All*. Oh, and *This American Life*! Oh my god. I love podcasts. (group laughs) Yeah, that's it.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Thank you for interrupting opening day to talk hoops over here.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: No, the White Sox play at 9:05, so I've got time.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Okay, great. Sam.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I'm Samantha Gardner. I have to say my favorite podcast is the podcast that originally got me into podcasts, which is called *Totally Lame*. I don't know if she's called a comedian, but a comedic person named Elizabeth Lane who interviewed a lot of her friends in Los Angeles in the late teens. They're like 2006 to 2015, and that kind of got me into podcasts and got me into other people's podcasts from there. Right now, the three that I listened to regularly are *WTF* (with Mark Maron). We're a big *WTF* house. It's always on. *Armchair Expert* and *Couldn't Help But Wonder*, which is a *Sex and the City* re-watch podcast, but *Totally Lame* was what started it all.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Thank you, Sam. Gaby.

PARTICIPANT #5 – GABY FEBLAND: Yeah, my OG, like, gateway podcast was *The Memory Palace*, and I still keep up with it. But I recently really loved *Dolly Parton's America*. Highly recommend.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: So good.

PARTICIPANT #5 – GABY FEBLAND: So, so good.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Ooh, I haven't listened. I'll check it out. Ilana.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: I'm Ilana Pena. I'm not a huge podcast listener, but all of these sound great. Over the pandemic, a couple that I would listen to is Nicole Byer's podcast *Why Won't You Date Me?* She's great. And *Las Culturistas*, Bowen Yang and Matt Rogers' podcast. You know, just L.A. alt-comics!

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I didn't list all the podcasts I listen to. I listen to a lot more than the three I said. Should I have listed all of my podcasts? I keep hearing about, you know, people are like, "oh, and that one!" I'm like, "Oh, I listen to that one, too, but I didn't say it." Like, I listen to *Reply All* and *Dolly Parton's America*. I just want to be clear: I listen to a lot of podcasts.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: (laughing) We understand. Thank you, Sam

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I need the credit!

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Okay, Schuyler.

PARTICIPANT #7 – SCHUYLER WEINBERG: Hi, I'm Schuyler Weinberg, born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky. My favorite podcast... I don't really love podcasts that much. Like I listen to them, but I guess Mark Maron's podcast would be my favorite. I also like Pete Holmes' podcast, which is really good.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: *You Made It Weird?*

PARTICIPANT #7 – SCHUYLER WEINBERG: Yeah!

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Alright. Madi.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: Um, there was a period of time where I was listening to Schuyler's podcast to help me fall asleep.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Schuyler has a podcast?!

PARTICIPANT #7 – SCHUYLER WEINBERG: Yeah, listen to my voice. You'll go right to sleep.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: It's true. It's actually really, really good for that. And I say... this is really boring, but *Up First*, if I listen to it in the morning, it makes me feel like I've got my shit together, so that is a really important one to me. But also, for fun, *Every Little Thing* is a really good one, too. It's really hilarious. As an example, they just did an episode about how old Winnie the Pooh is. So, it's just literally every little thing.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: How old is Winnie the Pooh?

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: Um, well, based on a lot of context clues, they think that he is... old. (group laughs)

PARTICIPANT #7 – SCHUYLER WEINBERG: So they haven't gotten to the exact answer? Got it.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Season two, baby. They'll get there. Okay, great. That's us! So I'm just gonna dive right in. Just some background of what this is and what the idea is. Obviously, if this were to be sustained, in the first season, each episode would be about a specific sport, describing it as if someone's coming in... an alien has been dropped into the planet, and they don't know anything about basketball or whatever sport. The first season would explain that. Season two would be a bit more specific, like how the WNBA grew, or the history of March Madness and how to make a bracket, and then like beyond that, it would be like the life

of Tiger Woods, like it would be more and more specific as it went on. So more people could get something from it is the idea.

For this specific class, I had record this pilot that you all listened to. And then I'm doing this focus group and will write a paper about it, and then take the findings about it, and record a first episode that will be like my final project. So I'll probably do a different sport just so it's not totally similar. I'm open for ideas. And, yeah, that's basically how the rest of the class is gonna go. And if you have negative feedback, this is very much a rough draft for me. I'm not taking anything personally, please don't feel like you're gonna hurt my feelings. I'm here to learn from you guys. From how you felt about this and your own personal experiences and relationships to podcasts and basketball and whatever. So this is a very safe space, you are not going to hurt my feelings. And I have questions to ask, but if everyone is chatting and chatting and we go off on tangents, that is great. I'll only ask questions if there's a wall that we hit and need to come back. So if people are talking and you feel like you have a thought that you want to get out, you can use the chat. You guys know how Zoom works. I don't know, just do whatever you need to do to get your voice heard.

Okay. So first question (question 1). After listening to the episode, what questions do you still have about basketball? Whether I explained something poorly, or I didn't cover it at all?

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: One thing for me, being kind of not good about knowing about sports was when you started explaining the positions. That was actually very helpful for me, because I never really knew what they did. I just have heard the words. So then as you were talking about it, I was like, I wonder what position, you know, LeBron James is, etc. So connecting the dots there would have been helpful.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: You said something that I didn't know if it was a joke or serious. You called something a field goal. And I'm not sure if like... Oh, that's like the field goal of football or like maybe actually in basketball, they do call it field goal! I honestly don't know.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: It's called the field goal in both sports.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Okay, so that I didn't know.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: I think saying that would help 'cause I was like... my very cursory knowledge. And then to Madi's point, too, I was like, I hadn't even really heard I knew like center and like point guard. But I got a little lost. And I it might have been helpful to give them names. That might have been a way to be like, "Okay, this center... we'll call him LeBron!" It's not LeBron, but you know what I mean? And so then you can come back and like, you know what an animation would do, I guess in like a visual thing you could do with like naming it.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I was validated by you saying you could play all centers because I apparently once believed you could play all quarterbacks in a football game. But I will say that that line resonated with me, and I'm certain it wasn't supposed to. I guess I would say, maybe my feedback is don't say anything that you wouldn't want that to be the only thing they take away about the sport.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: No, I'm glad that resonated with you. That was the point.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: (laughs) I guess... yes, but I don't remember other things that are actually true.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: It is true!

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: The outlandish things resonate with me and the sort of regular basketball stuff I didn't remember as well.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: I also had no idea what a low post move was. One of the positions does that a lot, I think you said?

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I listened to it while making Winston's lunch in the kitchen. And you were talking about the Canadian YMCA guy, which I guess did resonate with me. And Evan calls out and he's like, isn't it also based on the Aztec game? This is not really feedback. But that's what happened when I was listening to it, he thinks but maybe it was based on an Aztec game.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: I had that thought too! I was like, 'weren't they playing like with baskets and fruits from the beginning of time?' but that I had the thought of like, 'I don't need to know that.' Like, I actually had the thought of like... you could start later. Because I was thinking of it as like, I'm invited to a basketball party and I want to sound good. And me being like, 'it was invented in 1891 or whatever!'. But if I could be like, 'Oh, he's the best center since dadada!'. Or if you had an example of, 'for example, there was one game where so-and-so got hurt and they had to play all centers'. Like... anecdotes or party tricks, basically.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: That could be a good segment. Party tricks. (the group agrees)

PARTICIPANT #5 – GABY FEBLAND: Yeah. Or just like shining basketball moments, like moments that are most commonly referenced moments from basketball history so that you sound like you watch basketball when you're at a party.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Jordan. Game Six. All of my basketball references are from rap songs, actually.

PARTICIPANT #7 – SCHUYLER WEINBERG: Yeah, I really like the idea of the podcast being something that gives people pointers at a party. So like, yeah... whatever you want to call that segment, just things that like fun facts about basketball.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: That's like an interesting way of maybe framing this too, because like, you could drop your basketball episode right when, like, March Madness is picking up, and a Super Bowl episode right around that time. And kind of like a utility kit. Like, here's what you need to know for your co-worker's basketball party. And that can even dictate this, how in depth you go. Because it's like, 'okay, it's just coworkers thing. All you got to do is be able to say your favorite team and a couple things'. And then be like, 'OH, you're going to your father in law's to talk about football. Here's the harder things.' I don't know.

PARTICIPANT #5 – GABY FEBLAND: (laughing) or you are marrying someone who is a football player. Here's what you need to know!

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: Yeah! As you progress through. because the one thing that I was thinking as Ilana and Madi were talking is... Well, maybe I don't want to tie Ilana and Madi to this because it might be a totally different idea. But I think I want more. Like you went to bonus and field goals and positions all so fast. I almost think like the fouling, you know, I think that could be like a whole episode even too. So, I don't know, I guess I'm asking like, how far does the telescope or the microscope go into it?

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Is it 10 minutes? Is it always going to be 10 minutes?

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: This assignment had to be 10 minutes, yes. Another question I have (question 2), which I'm open to your feedback, because I really don't know is... how long is too long to listen to a sports education podcast? Like what is an ideal length? Do you want to be around 30 (minutes) or what?

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I would not have done 30.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: Yeah. But I would say I left the podcast wanting more. I wasn't ready for it to end. I don't know if it's because it was you and I was so excited, but I did want to know more. I was like, 'Wait, do I know everything about basketball now?' Like, I'm ready, you know?

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I mean, I don't know if this would scale, but what is the length of a basketball half or football quarter? Could that be used?

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: I mean, they're all different. Innings don't have time in baseball.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Yeah, I didn't think so. That's why it wouldn't scale.

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: And sometimes, the last minute goes on forever!

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: I loved that because my family has a joke because, like, I was invested once in the last minute of a basketball game, and whenever it's the last minute of a basketball game, my mom goes, 'Ilana, it's your favorite part!' And it actually didn't start as a joke. So I was like, it really is! I mean, I don't really care. But it is the most interesting part. I wonder if, and I feel like somebody said this, but just like really, really having micro-specific themes for each episode. Because I think short is good and short is nice. And it's hard to just be like... basketball. But if you do, it's like March. And I know, you're thinking season two. But I wonder if you do shorter episodes, if it's like, I'm gonna just talk about the positions on a basketball team for one episode , you know what I mean? And you do that in a funny way, and you get to have examples, and you get to hear footage from games. And you really just delve into this one thing. And then the next one is like, I want to talk about tennis scoring, you know, and I wonder if micro-specific could be helpful.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Maybe the first five or seven minutes is a primer on the thing you're about to get micro specific about. Like, if you're going to do tennis scoring, the first five minutes is 'here's what you probably should know about tennis, in general, as a sport, whatever,' and then go into your micro-specific thing.

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: It was so factually dense that I was like, I need blank space, or the equivalent of that or breathing time or like narratives shoved in between the facts that I could be like, 'Oh, this is what that practically means.' Just because, again, I'm coming from literally zero knowledge that I was like, 'this is Greek.' I need to have a notebook and me taking notes. And I was driving home from work.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: So that one part where you were like (imitates announcer) 'he did it at the buzzer!' it would have been nice if you were like, 'Okay, so what you just heard applies to what I just said in this way.'

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: Yeah. I mean, I don't know anything about basketball either. Like, I don't even think I've ever seen a game. So, I think what I was looking forward to about this podcast was learning the basics about how a basketball game is played. Like, what I would want to know if I was going to a game. And I think I did get a lot of that. I think during the explanation of the positions, I like, got a little lost. And I think some things that people have said before would be really helpful and maybe just laying it down in like the simplest terms for people like me who don't really know how, like, many sports work. But yeah, I mean, I loved "But Why????" I thought it was awesome. And I didn't know that about basketball games, the last minute seems to go on forever. So I was like, 'Oh, that's actually really good to know when going into seeing a basketball game to expect that last minute to go on for a long time.'

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I have literally texted Hillary and Nick about things that I think are dumb about sports in a “But Why???” fashion.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: Evelyn was talking about listening to it in the car, and as she was saying that, I was thinking, you know, I was literally sitting there with my notebook writing notes about this podcast. And I would never consume a podcast that way. Normally, I'm like multitasking while I'm doing it. So I think to her point on, like, having kind of drawing some things out and having some of those interjections can help. It was a lot of information really fast because it was packed into 10 minutes. So, if I was multitasking, I don't think I would have been tracking through a lot of that.

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: I feel like that's also why the “But Why???” segment worked because inserting strategy into the rules like that, though, is narrative, right? That's what felt interesting to me and also, like, a next level of learning, which caused me to feel somewhat more accomplished. Like at the end of that 10 minutes, I was like, ‘Oh, I not only understand new terms, but this is how it all fits into gameplay,’ which is very interesting to everybody, even people who are not traditionally sports people, in different ways. I feel like that's another way to do it. Talking strategy is.... I don't know (trails off)

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Yeah, I mean, whenever I care about sports it's usually because of like a story or some emotional connection and I wonder... I mean, I'm just pitching something that I don't even know if it exists, but I wonder if there's a way to take it... like, ‘In 1985, a crazy thing happened...’ and I'm using this, but it's bad, but ‘...where they played all centers! and here's why it happened!’ That could work because you invest... there's characters! Do you know what I mean? That's something and then, like, you don't have to do that the whole

time. You can like have something like what Evelyn was saying... a couple sentences about that and then go strategy and then like, 'so back to Pittsburgh!' But you know what I mean?

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: Do you ever listen to *Reply All*, Hillary?

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: I listened to one episode where the guy had the song stuck in his head, but he had no idea where it was from. An incredible episode.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I haven't heard that one. I want to figure out which one that is.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Oh, I'll send it to you. I sent it to like five people because the best walk I took in quarantine was listening to this episode.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: I sent the Santa Fe restaurant reviewer one to a bunch of people, so I get it.

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: They have this... well, they also sort of were cancelled (laughs) because they did this really weird, not-finished miniseries on the Bon Appetit scandal, and it turns out Gimlet, the company that produces *Reply All* and many other podcasts, like, also has all the same problems and got called out. Anyway, they also have older episodes called "Yes, Yes, No," and they're segments with the two co-hosts who are, like, Internet... and very well versed in that world and how all of that stuff works. And the founder of Gimlet is an absolute novice, like, he just doesn't understand anything. And the dynamic between them is like, it's all educational. They're just trying to explain to him what this really compounded tweet means because it's all about, like, current international controversies, or jokes. But because they have him there is this sort of character in the learning and that weirdly provides something that is otherwise basically educational, a story arc, which is kind of cool. You get to see Alex the founder, learn and change over the course of the 10 minutes of the segment, which is kind of fun.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Yeah, have you ever thought, and I don't even know if I even want this, I'm just saying it... have you ever thought about having a person as dumb as me on there? And, like, that's how you do it? You know what I mean? And each episode is a different dumb person, or it's the same dumb person? Because then you could get like, 'wait, hold on, I'm confused. Can you go back? Because I thought field goal was football.'

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Yeah, like a walk on. Or a novice.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: A walk on! That's a great name.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Even if it's just for one segment of it! Where maybe if because it's pre-taped, if like... it could be like this! Where you do 10 minutes, then you send it to me, and then I listen. And then I ask you three follow up questions or something. And that's how you end it. You know what I mean? Yeah, just like, that could be a way to, you know... If you are multitasking, it's like the TL;DR

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Yeah, yeah. I like that.

Okay, I'm going to ask you a question **now** unless you guys have more thoughts (pauses) Okay. (question 3) What turned you off about the podcast? Did you zone out? What did you not like?

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: The buzzer scared me several times.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: The music for me. I was like, 'I've heard that before. Where have I heard it?' And then I was taken out and I was zoned out and then I was like, 'Wait, pause. Listen to Hillary's podcast. It does not matter. This is probably royalty free music from some website. And you've heard it before. Who cares why?'

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Oh, I had that thought too. The intro and outro?

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: The doo doo doo doo doo doo doo...

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: That was the Chicago Bulls intro song from when they were really good.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Ohhh, I wish I had known because I literally was like, ‘when have I heard this?’ And then I just thought, yeah, it took me out and it shouldn't have because it was so good. That's so cool. Did you say that?

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: I didn't say that. I wanted to put a couple of Easter eggs in there for people who do know it, you know what I mean? Like they would be like, ‘oh it's the basketball episode.’

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: That particular easter egg now that you just told me it now... it would have been enlightening because I had a moment with the music that was unfinished. So that would have been cool. I don't know.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: Well, your podcast should probably have a theme song. That's fun. But like, I don't know, maybe get a more obscure one, I guess? I don't know, I kind of liked it. Um, the thing, though, is I kind of wanted more of that stuff throughout. But I think I liked the direction that it was going, when we were talking about maybe getting someone for you to like play off of. I thought that would be cool because honestly, like if I am going somewhere and I need to know how to play basketball, I'll probably just like Google it and go on YouTube and watch a real quick three minute video. It'll have all the visuals and stuff. And so, if I want to, like learn how to play basketball, I don't know. I just think your podcast has so much more to offer than just being, like, ‘here's how to play!’

I mean, there's got to be a reason why there are people out there who don't know how to play basketball. They just haven't been interested in going out and Googling it or whatever. So if your podcast can find a way to, like, make people come and listen to it... And I think that's in the

relational stuff. Like, talking to you about sports is such an awesome thing that I have, like the privilege to do as your friend. It's so cool. You can share that with other people. And that would be a thing that would keep people coming back and allow you to do a whole episode on, you know, LeBron James or whatever. But more fun, too. Like, it's a relational thing, and sound effects, and music. I love that shit.

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: I will add on to that, too, Nick. Hillary, you have such a quick wit and personality that you react to others very well in conversation that... I don't know, I can't decide, because I absolutely adored your voice on this podcast. Like... it was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Yes, so much. So much.

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: Um, I literally wanted to keep listening forever. I was like, 'I could go to sleep to this. This is amazing.' But I also do agree that there could be moments where you put more of your personality into it and, like, because you are so funny. And there were little moments of that. I think you started with the quote from that one song. That was so good, and I'm blanking on it now. But I was immediately like 'Ah, that's funny.'

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: And you played it at the end!

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: I know! The perfect little Easter egg.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Hey, you caught it, Sam!

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: My first Easter egg. I'm Jewish. That's the problem.

PARTICIPANT #1 – EVELYN JACOBY: That also felt like a similar moment for me of... when I was saying you talked about strategy, and I was like, 'Oh, I'm moving up! I'm next level,' and had some sense of satisfaction. It was also that, like, tie back. I was like, 'Oh, I

remember when she made that joke 10 minutes ago!' like it made me feel good about myself.

And I think that's nice!

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: I wonder if... whether or not you have, maybe it's like an actual real-life dummy. But I wonder if like a little like 'pop quiz time!', would be helpful because I would have wanted to test my own knowledge. Because you're always competitive with yourself, you know what I mean? Like, am I retaining this?

And there might be a cute way to do it, and that could be something to break it up. You play some fun music and you're just like, 'okay, here's a situation...' And then you give us a second and then you're like, 'it's this! And this is why!' and that could bring the audience into it a little more.

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: You could also do little... this might be so dumb. But you could do like little scenarios where you're like, 'you're at your co-worker's basketball party, and John walks up to you from Accounting,' and it's like, 'oh, what do you think of blah, blah, blah?' and what would you answer? Stuff like that.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Right! Or like... you're on a date and it's going bad. And he says, 'we'll leave at the... half!'

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: Yeah, see? I don't know sports. I can't even give an example.

PARTICIPANT #8 – MADI DOWELL: Or things that people say in work settings that are sports puns.

PARTICIPANT #3 – SAM GARDNER: Those happen all the time for me: sports analogies at work. Constantly.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: Hillary, if you have a guest, you can prompt them with that question at the beginning of the episode like, ‘what would you say?’ And then at the end of the episode, you could prompt them like, ‘now what have you learned?’

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Oh, that’s cool!

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: And that ties it in thematically to the show where it’s like, this is an educational podcast. You will learn, but really, it’s fun, and it’s a way for you to explore whatever stories you’re interested in.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: It’s like that Adam Conover show. What’s that show?

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: *Adam Ruins Everything.*

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Yeah. I haven’t seen a lot of that show. But he does a really good job of, like, by the end, you’re like, ‘I’m smarter!’ And I think that’s, you know, summing it up. Having a little thing at the end, whether it’s interactive or not, I think could… you just want people to turn off that podcast and be like, ‘I’m smarter!’

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: I mean, it’s almost like there’s a spectrum between that *Adam Ruins Everything* show, or an episode of like *Planet Money* or *The Daily*, and then you go all the way to that wacky side. It’s like *Drunk History*, or something where you all kind of feel like you’re learning something. But it’s just like, I feel like with sports… I feel like almost right now (with this pilot podcast) we’re in *The Daily* territory, where I feel like sports is just naturally more towards the, like, casual. And I think that’s where you can have more fun, top, you know?

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: (mutters) There are sports things that are… like you said something… There are certain phrases I’ve heard, and I don’t know what they mean. Because

they're like names of restaurants or, you know, like, they're just in the Zeitgeist and that could be a nice thing to tie in. I feel like you said one and I should have written it down.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: In the paint? Hard in the paint? I don't know what the paint is.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Yeah, I've heard that! And like, I don't know. I'm trying to I can't think of anything else right now.

PARTICIPANT #3 – NICK GERTONSON: How can you find the vibe that you do best at? That would be such a good fit for this podcast.

PARTICIPANT #6 – ILANA PENA: Yeah! Like, grab your nachos, grab a beer. We're gonna sit and talk sports. And you're hanging out with your friend Hill. I think I wanted a little bit more of my friend Hill. Even though I am obsessed with, like, sexy podcast Hill.

PARTICIPANT #2 – CAROLINE REEDY: Yeah, that being said, start a sleep podcast or something. That would be amazing. I will listen.

MODERATOR – HILLARY THORNTON: Yeah, that's really good. I'm working on that exact balance of wanting people to come away learning something, but also wanting them to have like a good time. Yeah.