Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Powered by Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle

**Recording Date:** May 3, 2018
**Last Edited:** October 27, 2026

# Sue Bird

## SUMMARY

One of the greatest basketball players of all time, Sue Bird has won two NCAA championships at the University of Connecticut; four Olympic Gold Medals with Team USA; and three WNBA titles with the Seattle Storm. At age 37, she's still at it: the oldest player in the WNBA and the league's all-time assists leader, she led the Storm to victory in the 2018 WNBA Finals despite breaking her nose for the fifth time earlier in the playoffs. Born in Syosset, New York, Sue actually has dual American and Israeli citizenship, thanks to her father, Herschel, an Italian-born Russian Jew. Sue was a dynamic athlete from an early age, and after leading UConn to a 39-0 record her senior season, winning both the Wade Trophy and the Naismith Award as the College Player of the Year, she was chosen as the first overall pick in the 2002 WNBA draft by the Storm. The rest has been history, including her decision in 2017 to come out as gay, and her joint appearance with her girlfriend, soccer star Megan Rapinoe, on the cover of ESPN Magazine's 2018 Body Issue.

Jeff Schwager: Two.

Sue Bird: Hi, I'm Sue Bird, Point Guard for the Seattle Storm and Team USA, and I am an agent of change. Okay. [laughs]

Jeff Schwager: When you were young, there weren't many opportunities for women in professional basketball. What did you plan to do when you grew up?

Sue Bird: I think if you look at my fifth-grade yearbook, it says lawyer, like, you know, profession: lawyer, doctor, professional soccer player. So, you know, I had really high goals at that point. You know, it's funny you say that because there weren't a lot of women on TV when I was growing up, but I did actually come around, like, come about in my basketball life at an interesting time because the WNBA started in 1997 and women's basketball was kind of getting hype in '95, the UConn Huskies went undefeated. It was like really publicized, 1996 was the I'm sorry, the Atlanta Olympics. And obviously, that was-there's a ton of hype behind that. And then the birth of the WNBA. And those three years, I'm like 14, 15, 16. You know, I'm in high school. I'm getting recruited a little bit. So even though I didn't, in my early years, grow up wanting to be a professional basketball player, around the time when you were kind of like, you know, choosing a college, thinking about these things, thinking about your major or whatever the case. There was professional basketball in the US, so while I didn't dream about it as a young, young kid, I definitely had that goal when I was a teenager.

Jeff Schwager: Mhm. Okay.

Jeff Schwager: So I think that answers our second question about when you realize that. So what was your backup plan if-

Sue Bird: [laughs] My backup plan.

Jeff Schwager: Basketball hadn't. If you weren't playing basketball today, would you be a lawyer or a doctor?

Sue Bird: Right. Yeah. Maybe. Um, um. You know, I think for me, for my family, academics were always number one. So it was in terms of like backup plan. Um, I didn't really have one in place or anything like that, but from day one of like birth, it was always

really, you know, stressed in our household, you know, finish your homework before you go play, you know, do well in school. I have an older sister. She's five years older. And you know, she went to Brown, she went to Yale Law School. I'm bragging a little bit, but that was kind of the standard set in the house. You know both my parents, my dad's a doctor, my mom's a nurse. Like that was the bar that was set that we were always trying to hit. So academics were always big. So, yeah, if I didn't become an athlete, you know, I took school seriously enough that I would have figured something out, I think, but no, I didn't have that one backup plan.

Jeff Schwager: Well, it was pretty clear, probably from the beginning, that you were going to be a superstar. So you didn't ever need to think too seriously.

Sue Bird: Yeah. I got really lucky. Like I said, I think the WNBA came about at a time when I was choosing a college, so I'm really one of the first, my generation, I should say, is one of the first, that when we were getting recruited to go to different colleges, there was a thought of, okay, yeah, I want to go somewhere where I'm going to get a great education, where I'm going to, you know, have a great basketball experience, a great life experience. But also, is this going to help me prepare for the next level? You know, there was talk of that next level. Um, so yeah, so I kind of, you know, once I got to college and I kind of realized, like, okay, you're pretty good at this. It was-that was the track I was on pretty good.

Jeff Schwager: You lost a couple of games?

Sue Bird: Yeah, a couple I know. Terrible. [laughs]

Jeff Schwager: Who were your role models growing up? Both as basketball players, and also if there were any non-basketball players.

Sue Bird: Yeah. I mean, again, I'm going to talk about my family. I think I was really lucky to have my older sister because she really did, like I spoke about already, set that bar. Um, you know, both academically, it was always, I mean, every teacher I ever had, because we went to the same schools, you know, I was, "Oh, you're Jen Bird's little sister?" Like she left her mark on all of these teachers' minds. You know, I have vivid memories of it. Um, you know, oddly or funnily, funnily. Funny enough, I'll edit that one. Okay. Um, ironically enough, you know, you fast forward to us now. And just because I'm the athlete and, you know, I'm in the paper on TV every now and then, you know, she'll get asked like, "Oh, you're Sue Bird's older sister?" So it's come full circle a little bit. Um, but yeah. So like I said, my sister was who I looked up to, you know, both my parents as well, but my sister was, like, within reach, you know, she's only five years older. And every step of the way throughout her journey, I was, you know, front row seat watching. And so I got to see her excel in the classroom. I got to see her excel in athletics. She was also a really good athlete, you know, played varsity, um, on two different sports, and then obviously we both found our paths. You know, she kind of went in one direction. I went to the other. But, you know, I was lucky to have somebody to always look up to and kind of strive to be like.

Jeff Schwager: And what about basketball players? Were there any who meant a lot to you as a kid?

Sue Bird: Um, yeah. I don't really have that one player that, you know, I modeled my game after. It was more, um, I just watched a lot of basketball. I was always watching, and I think because there weren't a lot of females on TV at that time, you know? Um, yeah. Every now and then, I would catch the NCAA tournament. They might put the Final Four on TV. I remember my dad telling me to watch at different points. Um, it's mostly guys' basketball players. Um, but if I had to pick two, I would say I was really a big Mike Bibby fan. So when he was at Arizona, I was in high school, and I loved watching his game. And then, you know, as it turns out, it's like we both were number ten. We both are like these point guards that can also score, which was, at the time, kind of like a position that was evolving into that. Now you see it all the time, as all point guards can score, but it used to just be where they would pass. And so you saw Mike kind of become-and then we're both bow-legged. So it's a natural fit. Um, and then the second player is Jen Azzi, and that one was-I first noticed her in that 1996 Olympics, you know, and they kind of saw her, and it was like, oh, you know, we look alike. She looks like me, you know? And I think when you see someone who looks like you, it makes you feel like, oh, I could do that too. You know, there's like a connection there.

Jeff Schwager: Cool.

Jeff Schwager: Who are the mentors? Uh, who had the greatest influence on you as a player? Any particular coaches?

Sue Bird: Yeah, pretty much. I was very lucky. Throughout my whole life, I've had great coaching. I think my AAU coach and my high school coach, she kind of one and the same. Um, right. So right out the gate, I go, you know, a lot of a ton of influence from her and just how to play the game the right way. You know how to be a leader. And, you know, I remember she was one of the first people to say, you know, "Do you want to be a player who had great potential, or do you want to be that player that reached it?" You know, and at a young age, those are really important, powerful words for me. And then you move on to college. And I think when

it's all said and done, it'll be my college coaches who had the most influence on my game. Um, not just my game, but me as a person. You know, my college coach, he, uh, he was really challenging. He was demanding. And, you know, [laughs] he was blunt. I mean, he would give it to you straight, and he really pulled out a lot in me, both from a personality standpoint, because I think I had two personalities at that point. I had, you know, my off-court personality, which is a little more reserved, shy, laid back. And he was telling me, you can't be that on the court. So he kind of got me to be this whole other person on the court. And, I think it was at a time when I was, you know, I entered college at 17, 18 years old. And, you know, you're at a point you're you're just kind of like building this, this groundwork of who you're going to be as a person. And so he was able to get me at that point and kind of mold it, and really, a lot of what you see now is because of that. And then my coaches in the professional ranks. I mean, I've been really lucky. Not many people can say that. I've been really lucky to have good coaching throughout my life, so it's been good.

Jeff Schwager: I imagine, especially with the storm, that you attracted good coaches as well. You being here has probably.

Sue Bird: Yeah, maybe, I don't know.

Jeff Schwager: I think so.

Jeff Schwager: So this exhibit is called Agents of Change. And we recognized you because of the positive influence you've had as an athlete, and the example you've set for girls and young women. I'd love to hear what changes you have seen in the world of women's athletics and the world in general over the course of your career. And what changes do you see coming in the future, and how can you help your peers? How can you and your peers help make them happen?

Sue Bird: Well, there's been a ton of change, you know? First and foremost, I think from a WNBA perspective, our game has just gotten better and better. I mean, the literal game on the floor, you know, the product itself with each draft class, you know, we only have 12 teams, and there's only-you can have 11 or 12 players on each team. So we're not talking a lot of numbers. So with each draft class, it's like survival of the fittest. And what that produces is just really competitive basketball. And it pushes you to get better. And so when it all comes together in the season, you know, is on its way and it's going, and by the time we get to the finals, you're seeing some great basketball. So I think from that perspective, when you have a good product, it can only grow. You know, we're still trying to get our footing and figure things out from a business standpoint, but we have the product and that's that's like the good sign and the changes that you see, um, or that we have seen is, you know, different kinds of investment, not just from a money standpoint, but time and energy and things of that nature, different companies investing. You know, we just, um, now are working with Nike, which is a great thing. Um, but while I can talk about, like, you know, all the strides we've, we've made, and we've taken, you know, I still think there is a long way to go. And I bring up that word investment again, you know, because I think the investment that you see from, you know, a male sport perspective, I mean, it would be great just to be equal to that. You know, people, I think at times wonder why women's sports don't do as well or aren't as successful. And then you hear a stat that says, oh, you know, the highlights they show, whether it's ESPN or other channels, the highlights they show, you know, let's say it's a one-hour segment. It's like 2% of the time is dedicated to women's sports. And then you wonder why people don't like it or see it or know it, you know. So I think as much as, again, I don't want to like put down the progress we have made because we have I mean, I've been in the league now for like 17 years and it's yeah, it's it's it's amazing, you know, where we are now and what we've done. But it would be nice to have people put not the literal money, but it's just the saying their money where their mouth is, you know, it's everyone's talking about women. And right now, obviously for many reasons, women are being in a good way, pushed to the to the forefront and acknowledged and supported. Um, but we need the actual investment to be there. That's what I would like to see change.

Jeff Schwager: Great answer.

Sue Bird: Thanks.

Jeff Schwager: I'm a big tennis fan. Okay, so tennis is one of the few sports where-

Sue Bird: -Yeah, where it's equal. Yeah. Or semi-equal.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah, yeah. So great to see that in other sports. And it really has that investment is what allows it to be.

Sue Bird: Yeah absolutely.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah, so as you know, this is for the Washington State Jewish Historical Society. And I know that you weren't raised in the Jewish religion, but I'm curious about, you know, being raised as a Christian. How much about your Jewish background did you know growing up?

Sue Bird: Yeah. So, I mean, funny enough, I wasn't really raised anything. Um, my dad is Jewish, so my whole, you know, the whole my whole father's side of the family is Jewish, and my mom is Protestant Christian. But I, you know, I did Christmas stuff just as much as I did Hanukkah stuff. I didn't go to church. I didn't go to temple, I wasn't baptized, I didn't have a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah or anything like that. But I definitely got doses of both. And so growing up, um, it was kind of cool. I got the best of both worlds. You know, I got to celebrate Easter with one side of the family, and then we would have Passover dinner on the other side. So, um, it's interesting because it's. While I'm not necessarily I don't necessarily identify one way or the other, I have both inside of me, you know? So it's kind of cool, I feel, I don't know, from an early age, there's just like this well-roundedness that I got to experience. Mhm. That's good. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Where did your father's family come from? Do you know?

Sue Bird: Yeah, I do. So my dad is like 100% Russian. And so as we know it now, it would technically be the Ukraine, but like, you know, obviously back in, like, the early 1900s, it was just Russia, um, eventually the Soviet Union, and then eventually Ukraine. So he's 100% Russian. And, you know, the way the story goes, I actually have some really cool documents. My aunt, my dad's sister, did a great job of saving, like, everything. I have things like the Ellis Island or the boat ticket. Sorry, I have the boat ticket. Then I have the documents from Ellis Island. You know where my dad's, I believe it's my father's grandfather, my great-grandfather came over on a boat, and our name is actually originally, like, Borda or something like that. And they just, you know, they came through Ellis Island, like, what's your name? You know, Borda, Bird, boom. Go through. And that's how Bird came about. So that's why my name is what it is, which is kind of funny. Um, but yeah, we have a ton of cool documents. Um, because, as I'm sure you know, I played in Russia in my off-season for a very long time. So it was a really good opportunity to like, you know, I'm there. Why not? Like, I had all these documents written in Russian, so I had them translated, then my aunt had some other stuff. They think it might have been Yiddish. Nobody could really figure it out. It was really hard to read, even like I couldn't even. You couldn't even pick out letters. Um, so. So, yeah. So that's kind of where my, my father's side came from, and that's, but yeah, it's interesting even on like the, the naturalization papers that we have, you know, it's like my dad's mom, her name was Edna. So it's like Edna, you know, religion, Jewish, you know, where are you from? Russia. It's got like, the whole thing. So it's pretty cool.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. That's great. I have the same sorts of things.

Sue Bird: You do? Yeah. Oh, nice. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: The part of my family that was from Russia. Romania. Moldova.

Sue Bird: Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Same kind.

Sue Bird: Of. Yeah. It's like. Yeah. Who knows? To be honest. It's like when you get over there, Russia is like, so massive, they probably just, you know, it's like, oh, Ukraine. It's like, you have no idea. Is it Kiev? Is it here? Is it there? Who knows? Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: So, did you get to see where your family was from?

Sue Bird: No, I never got to go to Ukraine. That was one of the few places I didn't get to go. Um, just because, you know, even though you are over there living, you're still in season. So a lot of the travel, you didn't necessarily get free time to travel. I could bounce around Russia a little bit. Obviously my the city where I was living is maybe a short trip, but yeah, I never got to go to Ukraine. Bummer. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Um, so you became an Israeli citizen?

Sue Bird: Yes.

Jeff Schwager: How did that come about? What was that process like?

Sue Bird: Yeah, so it's very much basketball motivated. There's, um, not to bore you, but there's there's different rules where, if you as an American, each team in Europe can only have two Americans. So as an American, if you have any kind of, um, um, what's the word I'm looking for, like descendants. Is that the word?

Jeff Schwager: Ancestors.

Sue Bird: Ancestors. Thank you. I'll start that over. Okay. So, as an American, if you have ancestors, if you have any connection to another country, another culture, if you can get a passport, it can be really advantageous for your career. So obviously for myself,

you know, my father being Jewish and still having relatives who live in Israel currently, that it was an easy connection, you know. And I have teammates, Diana Taurasi's father was born in Italy, and she has an Italian passport. Um, so I know it's, it's interesting when I tell this to people, kind of like outside of basketball circles, it seems a little odd. But in our world, it's like very normal. There's-I can name, like off the top of my head, like 10 to 20 players that have passports who have a second passport. Um, so yeah. So that's kind of how it all came about. And it was cool because what I found was in this effort to create an opportunity, my basketball career, I was able to learn a lot about a culture that I probably wouldn't have, you know, tapped into prior. like I said, I grew up going to, you know, different Passover dinners and things of that nature. but it was just the surface there. So now I really got to, I mean, so part of it was I made Aliya. So part of it was being just immersed and living, basically living there for a little bit. And it was one of the best experiences. Um, just to kind of, I don't know, people have like this whole different image of what Israel is and how it is and what it's about. And yes, there are, you know, military people all over, and they have guns, and yes, you have to walk through a metal detector pretty much everywhere you go, whether it's the bank or the mall or a restaurant. And I think people see that and it scares them. But there's so much more. I mean, going to Jerusalem was an amazing experience. I've been now like 2 or 3 times, um, because every time I went, I was with a different teammate or a different friend. So I was like, we got to take the tour, let's go. Um, so I did that tour a couple of times, went to the Dead Sea. I never got to go to Eilat, which is kind of like, I'm bummed about that because I heard it's beautiful down there. Um, but yeah, I spent most of my time in Tel Aviv. Gorgeous. You know. And just, I don't know, there's so much culture, and I've made some friends there that are lifelong friends. And so it was really cool. So like I said, what's it to basketball? 100% a basketball thing, you know, I really got to that's where I really started getting a lot of the paperwork because obviously, you know, as you know, I'm not saying you don't know. A lot of it is people believe, you know, the Jewish religion kind of what passes through your mom's side, your mom's side. It was my dad's side. So-but because I had his mother's papers, we were kind of able to use it in that regard. Um, so I got to get in touch with my whole dad's side of the family, the family tree. I learned all about it. Um, so, yeah, it was cool. It was just a really it was an awesome experience. And now, um, I haven't been able to go back just because of life. So the last time I was there, it was probably maybe like seven years ago, but in like a 2 to 3-year span, I was there like twice a year, 2 or 3 times a year. Yeah, because it's not, it's really not far. Moscow to Tel Aviv is a direct flight. It's like four hours. It's not far at all. Yeah. So it was it was it was cool.

Jeff Schwager: 2024 Olympics, you could be on the Israeli team.

Sue Bird: [laughs] I don't think it works that way.

Jeff Schwager: I'm sure they would take you.

Sue Bird: No, but I mean, you say it's like Alysha Clark on our team; she also has Israeli citizenship. Um, she plays on their national team, actually. Yeah. Um, Shay Doron, I mean, there's, it's just these, it's like lifelong friends now, so it's cool.

Jeff Schwager: That's great. Um, so, speaking of the Olympics.

Sue Bird: Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Um, you are about to go for your fifth gold medal.

Sue Bird: Maybe. Yeah, maybe, yeah, I think, you know, I'm just in a position where obviously I'm an older player. I'm closer to the end than I am. The beginning. Let's put it that way. And, um, you know, the Olympics are still two years away, and there's a lot that has to happen. You know, first, we actually have our own little World Cup, you know, and that's this fall. So the way I see it is, you just never know. And I just want to kind of stay in the moment, just focus on what I'm doing right now. And I joke that I'm on like the one-year plan. It's like, ask me in a year. I'll tell you how I feel, you know? So right now I feel good. You know, I'm excited for the storm season, excited for potentially being on that World Cup team. And then we'll see.

Jeff Schwager: Well, we're all hoping we, the whole city of Seattle, and the whole country.

Jeff Schwager: It wouldn't be too-

Sue Bird: -Fingers crossed.

Jeff Schwager: -As the point guard.

Sue Bird: Thank you. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: So that leads to my next question, which, you just said you don't know the answer to, but you're the all-time leader in assists in the WNBA. You have been on, I think, the most all-star teams.

Sue Bird: Something like that, yeah. I think tied maybe.

Jeff Schwager: The longest tenured player-

Sue Bird: Oh, yeah. Right now. Yeah, yeah. I was actually last year was actually my first year of being like the oldest. That was like in my bio. So I'm still the oldest. And unless somebody came out of retirement, I haven't heard about. So it's my second year in a row being the oldest.

Jeff Schwager: And yet you still are so youthful.

Sue Bird: I try, yeah.

Jeff Schwager: If all things are equal. I mean, do you have any idea how long you'd like to play?

Sue Bird: It's tough to say, I think, I don't know. It's tough to say. I think, you know, I've now seen all of my friends essentially go through this, this process, which is like knowing when it's time, deciding maybe your body is telling you. So right now, I just feel like I'm in a place where, okay, I'm going to do whatever it is I can do and control all the controllables. So can what can I control? I can control what I eat, and I can control my workout regimen. I can control my attitude about things. I can control, you know, how my body feels, and basically, well, I can control how it feels, but I can control basically all the things that will allow it to feel as good as it can. And that's kind of where my head is. I'm just going to control what I can. And if I feel good and I'm still enjoying the game and I'm still excited to go to practice and excited to be around my team and go through a season, why not keep going? That's kind of where I'm at, and if one of those things changes or shifts, then that's okay too. You know, I've had a good run.

Jeff Schwager: You still love it, though.

Sue Bird: I mean, I get to play basketball for a living. I think I'm, I think I win just by doing that.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah, absolutely. What are your favorite things about Seattle? And do you think you'll stick around when you are done?

Sue Bird: Yeah, I love Seattle. Um, you know, for a while there, I was only living here in the summer. So I would joke that I love the weather, but it's true. It's like, because I saw it at its best. I didn't really have to experience the winters, which I have since, but I still do. I still appreciate a beautiful Seattle day. I don't think there's anywhere in the country, in the world, really, that can compete with Seattle when it's like 75, 80 [degrees] and clear, it's unbeatable, but what I really love about Seattle is the restaurant scene. I love good restaurants. I love going out to eat and experiencing that. Um, and Seattle always has, whether it's new restaurants opening or just like your old fave in the neighborhood, it's like you're always going to have an amazing time. And just like the vibe of the city, you know, I'm not necessarily like an outdoorsy person just because I know I talked about taking care of my body. It's not like I can go for a hike, you know? That would be really hard on the knees. I do every summer, and the team will try to. We've gone paddleboarding, and we'll try to get on the lake and do some fun stuff. And that's just what's soL great about the city. It's like, you know, whether you drive five minutes to South Lake Washington and you rent paddle boards, or maybe you drive an hour, you go for a hike, or, I don't know, you go down to the locks and just watch the boats go through. It's like there's all this stuff around you. I'm not a skier, but I know you have that option also. Um, for the first time last winter, um, I went up to Winthrop, and it was like, what? What blew my mind? It was January. What blew my mind? Because you never see snow here. It was like within 45 minutes, I was in, like, a winter wonderland of snow. It was crazy. So it's just-I mean, Seattle's got everything. And then the last thing is that I'm from New York, and so a city to me was always New York City, right? That was like, we're going into the city, you know, like that was like a city. And New York is extremely intimidating. It's big. It's fast-paced. And that was like my definition. And I think what's cool about Seattle is it's got big city stuff. You know, whether it's like music scene, the shows, the shopping, the restaurants it's got, but it's small and it's convenient and you can kind of get where you need to get and go where you need to go and it's not going to take you I mean, now traffic's really bad, but it's not going to take you like, you know, two hours when it could just be a 20 minute. It's still pretty convenient, and that's probably my favorite thing. It's like a big city vibe, but, like, small town feel.

Sue Bird: Cool.

Jeff Schwager: You've worked with kids a lot in the community. Um, you were recognized by the Moyer Foundation, which is amazing. And you were recognized by the WNBA Community Assist Program. Have you thought about how you're going to continue that after your playing days?

Sue Bird: A little bit. You know, I think the one thing is when you are playing, and as I said earlier, it's like my off-season used to

be spent in Europe, so I was never around, you know. And so when you are playing, that's like your main focus. And some players do an excellent job of like balancing all of that, like having a foundation or setting things up. I haven't done that, but definitely, as a player still playing, I want to have my hands in something in the community, you know, um, whatever it is. And the Seattle Storm actually does a tremendous job in the community, and they really tee things up for us. They make it easy. But if you do see something that you feel strongly about or are passionate about, you can kind of contact them, and they can help make it happen. And I've thought like, oh, when I'm done, I don't really have like, don't get me wrong, I'm sure I'll still work with the storm and stuff, but when it's like I have more time and you can kind of really invest in that way because as we're talking investments, it goes, you know, it's not just a money thing. I think time is probably like the best thing you can give. Um, I do want to get more involved. I think something as simple as a camp, you know that that really interests me. And it's something that I've never been able to do because I've been playing. And when do kids usually go to camp? In the summer, which is when we're I'm doing my own camp. You know, I'm in training camp right now. Um, so we'll see. I think, luckily, you know, there's already been like that, that kind of framework, and the groundwork has been laid. Um, the relationships have been made. So I think when I do have more time, it'll be easy to just jump right in. And until then, you know, I think through the storm and whatever other ways you can, um, you know, whatever channels you can use, just get out there and get your hands in there, you know, because I think one of the best things about having a professional team in a city is that connection with the community, um, being role models, having them see females be, you know, be strong and kind of, um, I don't know if you have a dream and you want to be something we're kind of, you know, living examples of that. And it doesn't have to be an athlete, you know? But obviously that's what we do, and we have this platform, so we just try to use it.

Jeff Schwager: You are an amazing role model.

Sue Bird: Thank you.

Jeff Schwager: And you made some news with your personal life this year.

Sue Bird: Oh, yeah.

Jeff Schwager: I'm curious if that has given you an extra incentive to work with gay kids? Is that something you've thought about and how that would impact that community?

Sue Bird: Right. Yeah. So it's interesting because before coming out, um, you know, my girlfriend and I, Megan, would talk about this, that, talk about that topic of coming out all the time, and something I never really realized because in my mind, there was no need to come out. You know, I kind of fell in. I felt like, oh, my hope. My family knows. All my friends know. Anyone who knows me knows. So what's the difference? Like I'm not doing anything to hide it. So why do you have to come out? You know, and she kind of showed me the other side of that, which was because it's not because it's just not like the norm. And in casual conversation, the same way. I mean, I hate to use the example, but the same way, maybe like a straight couple, they don't have to, like, announce that they're together, you know? So because gay couples aren't there yet, it actually does matter. And you do have to say it. And you do have to show yourself in that way. Um, for the younger generation, not just younger generations, actually, but that's, that's definitely, you know, where the focus can, can go. Um, you know, to show people and to be a role model in that way as well, and that it is important. And that kind of was like, okay, that, you know, that kind of got me thinking in that way. So while I don't necessarily, um, target dfferent groups in terms of my ability to be a role model, I do I definitely a i cknowledge that coming out has, has, has, uh, given a lot of people like a different look and given a lot of people, um, maybe a little girl, a little boy, confidence to be who they are, you know, to see that, um, you know, somebody in my position, you know, has the guts, if you will, to say it. So there is something, there was like a nice little byproduct of sharing my story that I didn't necessarily or I hadn't necessarily thought about. Um, so, yeah, I think it's just about people living their truth. That's pretty much it.

Jeff Schwager: Great. And I think we're down to our final question, which is what your plans are when you retire, if you're going to think about coaching? Yeah, we all assume make an amazing coach. Uh, and then, uh, in conjunction with that, I'm curious what you think about, um, Becky Hammond's, uh, coaching with the Spurs. And if you've given any thought to if you want to coach in the NBA or if you'd rather coach in the WNBA or-

Sue Bird: Yeah, yeah.

Jeff Schwager: What are all your thoughts?

Sue Bird: All my thoughts? [laughs]

Jeff Schwager: So I guess if you're not planning to coach, what are you planning?

Sue Bird: Right, right.

Jeff Schwager: If you're planning to coach.

Sue Bird: Gotcha. Um. Man, part of me is, like, maybe I should just keep playing so I never have to actually grow up and get a real job. Um, but, no, I think, coaching does interest me. You know, if you had asked me this, and I'm pretty sure I'm, like, on record somewhere saying this, if you'd have asked me this, like, even five years ago, I was like, No, I'm good was always, but I don't know. The older I get, the more I start to see the game as a coach. You know, I'm obviously a player out there, but I'm starting to see it in practice. I'm starting to see it the way a coach might see it. And it does interest me. You know, I think what always was kind of not as attractive was the life of a coach. I think if you were to look at a college basketball coach, they have to recruit. I mean, their summers are full of recruiting. You're dealing with kids, you know, from a recruitment standpoint, you're talking to like 15, 16-year-olds trying to convince them to come to your school. Then you get them, you know, they're 17, 18 to 21. And there's something you know nice about that, in the same way as my college coach, you're able to mold, you know, young women. Um, but that's a tough life. You know, the schedule for it. You're traveling a lot. Life is what I think kind of turned me off because I already did a lot of traveling. You know, I kind of want to be in one place, and the thing about the WNBA is, from a, like, level of play standpoint, that's probably where I'd want to coach if I did. But that life's not great either, and there's not a ton of job security. You can get fired like that, and there's not a ton of money, to be honest. There's way more money in college. And not that these are all like, I don't know, these are just like the pros and the cons. It's not, it wouldn't, it's just kind of a balance thing. Right? I'm just kind of throwing the information out there. So that's kind of how I see it. Um, and then you bring up Becky Hammon, and I mean, what she's doing is amazing because she's breaking down barriers. Um, and there's something really important about that that goes beyond basketball. The same for Jenny Boucek, our old coach. She's now doing the same thing Becky is doing with the Sacramento Kings. And these are two women who are literally, like, blazing the trail, but I think obviously if an opportunity presented itself, of course, I would look at it, but right now, it's like my heart is still in women's basketball and still in wanting to, like, advance that game and get this league going. It is in the right direction, but like push it forward even more, you know. So that's kind of where my whole coaching mentality is at, and if I didn't do that, who knows? I've done some broadcasting, which I really enjoyed. Again, a lot of travel in that life, but maybe I'm just meant to travel for the rest of my life, I don't know. Yeah, GMs don't have to travel. That's true. Bualuating talent, I mean, you look at it all the time. You see drafts, and you know those are. That's a tough job. Yeah, GM, that's a tough job because even now people either look like geniuses or look like, you know, the biggest dummies in the world. So that's like, that's a big extreme there as a GM that you got to deal with. So we'll see.

Jeff Schwager: Well, you've had some tough jobs before being the best point guard in the history of women's basketball. It's got to be a tough job.

Sue Bird: It can be. Yeah. Being a point guard, um, it can be tough because you have to be the brains out there and think. And it's a balancing act.

Jeff Schwager: No matter how tough those you're trying to, like, help people out, but also, you know, do your own jobs are, at least you won't get your nose broken. Probably.

Sue Bird: I mean, knock on wood.

Jeff Schwager: Jerry West has not had.

Sue Bird: His nose is broken. That's true. That's true.

Jeff Schwager: Very famous for always getting his nose broken when he plays.

Sue Bird: Yeah. The logo. Of course. I know Jerry West.

Jeff Schwager: Well, you are a fantastic interviewee.

Sue Bird: Yeah. Thank you, I had fun. This is good. Yeah, this is great. Thank you for having me. Yeah. You too. Thanks, guys.