

Special Edition: Innovating the Game with Armando Bacot and Roberto Castro



Episode 35

Vinnie:

Welcome back to CapTech Trends. This is Vinnie Schoenfelder and I'm really excited about this episode. I think you're going to like it. It's about sports technology specifically, and we have two great guests. The first is Roberto Castro. He's a former professional athlete at the PGA Tour for nine years, was it?

Roberto:

Athlete is generous, but yes.

Vinnie:

Okay. Nine years. Coming out of Georgia Tech, we had an industrial engineering degree and played golf at the collegiate level as well, and joined us how long ago?

Roberto:

Two years.

Vinnie:

Two years ago and is a leader in our sports technology practice. And very special guest today, Armando Bacot from UNC, entering your fifth year of playing basketball. And you partnered with us, how long ago was it, Armando?

Armando:

Last year around this time.

Vinnie:

Yeah. Yeah, through the NIL. The NIL rule changes allowed us to partner and have you be an ambassador for CapTech, so thank you for that. And both of you, welcome.

Roberto:

Thanks, Vinnie. So Richmond native, but how did you end up at Carolina and then how does that

all tie into CapTech?

Armando:

Yeah, I mean, growing up in Richmond we get a lot of athletes I would say that went to Carolina, like Ed Davis for example, Kenny Williams, just to name a few. And UNC influence has always been some enrichment, and I love the school. Coach Williams was great. He came down here a bunch of times, so it all just ended up working out and I mean, I just thought UNC was the best. And then obviously with Sandy being a UNC guy.

Vinnie:

Sandy Williams, one of our co-founders.

Armando:

Yeah, one of the co-founders of CapTech. I met him through my high school coach, Steve Reese, who is actually a Duke guy, but him and Sandy are buddies, so that's how we all ended up meeting. And then also one of the head entrepreneurship professors at UNC had Sandy come and speak.

Vinnie:

Oh, nice.

Armando:

And someone actually in the class told me about CapTech because I'm all into business and some of the cool things, and they were just saying all the stuff about CapTech and how they were a company out of Richmond, Virginia. So it was just all actually ended up coming just full circle and it was just great.

Roberto:

That's how things happened. Curious on your NIL partnerships beyond CapTech, you have a few of them. Which businesses have you found to be the most interesting? Leadership styles, what have you learned? Because you know CapTech pretty well now, right?

Armando:

Yes.

Roberto:

You're close with Sandy, who's our co-founder. You met a lot of people. What have been your lessons a year or two in NIL on business?

Armando:

Yeah, I would say all of my favorite partnerships are the ones where I actually get to meet the founders and CEOs and some of those people and just kind of pick their brains and get some experience and learn how they run the business and how they prepare and just seeing their work ethic and some of the things they do. I think that's one of the really cool parts about NIL, because me being a business guy and that's being my focus in school, just kind of learning from them and seeing firsthand how they run these successful companies. I think that's been the best part for me.

Roberto:

That's great. That's amazing exposure.

Vinnie:

Before we get started, so not everyone's going to know what the NIL ruling is and what it provided for. So Roberto, why don't you give us an overview of it and then Armando, if you can tell us how that affected your world in basketball.

Roberto:

Yeah, so I think NIL came out of... For a number of years, college sports is a big business and was generating a lot of revenue for a lot of parties, and the players benefited through scholarships but no monetary contributions at all to the players. And NIL is Name, Image, Likeness. The argument was that players should be able to benefit from their name and their image and their likeness and earn money that way.

Well past my time, and not that I was even marketable in college, but people like Armando who play at blue chip organizations or teams in the big sports, basketball and football, now have the opportunity to earn money and be ambassadors and brand representatives. And it's been a wild ride the last couple years since that started. I've followed it as a fan of college sports, but looking forward to hearing Armando's experience.

Vinnie:

If you follow college sports, that was debated for many, many, many years.

Roberto:

Years, yeah.

Vinnie:

So Armando, growing up playing probably several different sports I imagine, were you aware of those conversations? It seems like a really good time to have been coming into basketball and have that ruling. Was that in the back of your mind? How has that affected you as a player?

Armando:

Yeah, well I mean it's actually crazy you say that because I was a part of some of the first college athletes who kind of knew that it was getting to that point because it was the PDC, called Players Development Coalition that was led by Craig Robinson. That's Michelle Obama's brother. And we just hinted at it and talked about it somewhat and he would take some ideas on what we thought to the NCAA and to college basketball. So I kind of already knew that it was coming, so it allowed me and some of the other guys to get a head start on just thinking about ideas and just how it would look, really.

Roberto:

So you were essentially involved in the lobbying?

Armando:

Somewhat, to a degree because we, like I said, provided ideas and we had an idea that it was

already coming. It was kind of just, I guess, secret to somewhat. But I mean, I think it was long overdue and I think for the majority of people knew eventually it was coming. It was just more when it would come.

Roberto:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

You were talking earlier, Roberto, about how some universities have sponsorships that affect the whole team-

Roberto:

Right.

Vinnie:

... Versus individual players. Do you guys have something like that at UNC or do you see that at other schools where the entire team is effective versus individuals?

Armando:

Yeah, definitely. I mean, at UNC we got a few team sponsorships where we all get money from it, and I think stuff like that is really cool. But now I think see a lot of colleges doing a lot of different things where they're catching up the speed now on just how important it is. I mean, you look at recruiting and college basketball, college football, a lot of the stuff now has just swayed upon the NIL and I think that's just been a huge challenge for a lot of schools is just figuring out the right ways to go about it and just making sure they up to pace with everyone.

Vinnie:

It would seem to me too that it takes a very big thing off your plate. You don't have to worry about having a job and going to school and being an athlete. It's a way to have some revenue coming in because of who you are and what you're able to do as opposed to doing something completely different on there. Going into your fifth year-

Roberto:

I have a question.

Vinnie:

Yes, go please.

Roberto:

Can I interrupt? So I was curious whether there would be friction on a team based on NIL, because like you said, there's team-wide deals.

Vinnie:

Are they making you pick up dinner? Well,

Roberto:

No, there's team wide deals where everyone gets something and that's great. But obviously, you could have a guy who is one of the higher NIL paid, he's got a bunch of deals, but he's not playing well. Right? He's not even playing. Has it created another dynamic where it's like, "Hey, I know he is not playing well, but he is got 10 sponsors. Coach, we got to get him in."

Armando:

Yeah.

Roberto:

How has the internal side of it gone as a member of a team?

Armando:

Yeah. Well, I mean, I would say for UNC it's not really that big of a problem just because I think just the school in general just does a good job of everyone. It's such a big brand. It's UNC, so everybody will have that opportunity. I think it's just one of those things where you see it even in professional sports. I mean, it's a lot of guys that get paid a lot more money and they might not be as deserving as the other one, but it's just one of those things where it is what it is.

Roberto:

Yeah, okay. So not much friction.

Vinnie:

Yeah. Did you see that?

Roberto:

I thought there could be more. I thought there'd be potential for more.

Vinnie:

So basketball players are nicer than golfers?

Roberto:

That's probably true.

Vinnie:

Okay, good.

Armando:

And I mean, I'm not saying that's not a thing. I would just say just from my experience, it hasn't been a thing.

Vinnie:

It's manageable.

Armando:

Mm-hmm.

Vinnie:

Yeah. Okay. So going through your fifth year, and is this because of COVID you're eligible for one more year?

Armando:

Yes.

Vinnie:

Okay. Gosh, it's got to be tough being a high school kid coming out and playing against people like yourself who've been playing for four years, right? So you graduated this week?

Armando:

Mm-hmm.

Vinnie:

Congratulations.

Armando:

Thank you.

Vinnie:

What was your degree in?

Armando:

Sports administration and business.

Vinnie:

That makes sense.

Roberto:

Congrats. That's awesome.

Vinnie:

Congratulations.

Armando:

Thank you.

Vinnie:

So when you go back next year, is it just basketball or is there additional course load?

Armando:

Yeah, I'm going to go after my MBA. It's a two-year program. So this year, just knocking off some of the things, getting a certificate and once I'm done playing basketball or while I'm playing basketball, still just coming back in the summer trying to just finish it out. But getting my MBA has always been a dream of mine just to be a master at what I want to do.

Vinnie:

Yeah.

Roberto:

That's awesome.

Vinnie:

And congrats on that too.

Roberto:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

That's great.

Armando:

Thank you.

Vinnie:

So getting into more technology related questions, I like to bucket things up and talk about

groups of things. So when I think of technology in sports, I'm thinking, how does it affect you personally and training and becoming a better athlete? Coaching, what data and analysis can be done to provide insights that other teams don't have? Fan engagement of course, and equipment. So do any of those strike a bell with you that you'd want to hit on?

Armando:

Definitely. I mean, it's this software called Synergy that we use a lot in basketball and it tells you your percentages at certain areas, how you defend the screen. So let's say in pick and roll defense, you 11 out of 19, meaning that you got 11 stops out of 19 times and that might be average. And it provides the film so you can see what you've done. It might show your shooting percentages from the right corner, shooting percentages doing a one dribble pull up a certain way. So just things like that definitely help you with basketball and allowing to see yourself do it and see the numbers part of it. I think that's a huge thing in basketball that we use, obviously.

Vinnie:

How do they record that? Is it computer vision and it's interpreting it?

Armando:

I want to say computer vision and interpreting. I think they got a bunch of employees, because I mean it's a real expensive software that a lot of college teams pay a lot of money for. And then-

Vinnie:

Probably have human beings tagging timestamps and stuff.

Armando:

Exactly. And I mean, like I said, it's very expensive, so they're allowed to have people do that. And a lot of AAU programs and I think a lot of NBA teams and professional teams, they use those different data stats to judge a player, but also from a player standpoint of view to things you could look at to see tendencies of people you're playing against. You may notice based upon that data that a big man that I'm guarding likes to shoot over his left shoulder using his right hand on the right block 80% of the time, so I know I need to take that away. And it allows you also too, to

see what you need to work on.

Roberto:

And does it-

Vinnie:

Go ahead, please.

Roberto:

Does it track off the ball movement?

Armando:

I want to say it does, yeah. It tracks everything down to the T.

Roberto:

Because I remember hearing Curry had the most efficient or most off the ball movement. I just think it's great that a coach can call a player lazy and say-

Armando:

Oh, well, we actually-

Roberto:

... And say that he's like, you're not hustling and being like, "Here are the numbers."

Armando:

Yeah, we use the KINEXON. It's like a chip that you put in your shorts and the tracks how much you run, the distance and all that. So it's a lot of cool things, different technology we use in basketball.

Roberto:

That's good if you're a hustler. Not so good if you're the lazy guy on the team.

Armando:

Exactly. Yes.

Vinnie:

Well maybe it inspires you. Yeah.

Roberto:

It keeps coming back to golfers being lazy. I'm just thinking a whole bunch of running doesn't sound like fun, but he's a basketball player.

Vinnie:

Of course.

Armando:

Standing I feel like is worse, though.

Roberto:

Standing is worse.

Armando:

Standing and walking and doing all that.

Roberto:

Walking is not a problem. When I watch golf, if my brother or someone... Standing is brutal.

Standing for five hours... I can walk all day or run.

Armando:

Yeah, but standing, I mean it's...

Roberto:

I'm with you.

Vinnie:

So when you are watching yourself back, you're saying, "I'm looking at this other guy and how he responds to being defended," but he knows that you're looking at that, right? So when you're going up against somebody and you're looking at your tendencies, do you start to game that and be like, "Well, I'm not going to do what I'm showing on this video because they're going to be expecting that"?

Armando:

Yeah, but I mean a lot of the times, like you say, it's your tendencies, so it's something that you just do.

Vinnie:

It's happened on its own, yeah.

Armando:

You don't think about it. It's just natural. So it's really one of those things where it's hard to get out of it. But I think for me, I do a good job of being able to switch it up and I mean a lot of the points I score is off of just getting off as rebound and put back. So it's kind of hard, I would say for the most part, to scout me. I think a lot of teams, they do a good job of doubling me and knowing somewhat of my tendencies, but yeah.

Roberto:

Is there a game you can think of where you and the coach and the team had a set game plan and you got out there and you were like, "They are not doing what we thought they would." Is that common? Not common?

Armando:

Sometimes it happened. I would think our coaches do a good job of game playing, but it's definitely been times where you scout a player and you like, "Okay, we going to give him some space, let them shoot," and then they just knock down three or four threes. Usually that's how lucky UNC guys and teams, they get up to play us and they want to just kill us just because of the

name. So a lot of the times we get everybody's best game and best shot.

Roberto:

That's interesting.

Vinnie:

So it's a wearable piece of technology that goes in your shorts.

Armando:

Yes.

Vinnie:

Any other physical technology that you have to play with? Would you put anything in your shoe?

Armando:

Yeah. Well actually, my shoes are a lot different. Jordan, they make me these special shoes because one of my legs is longer than the other, so it kind of balances me out. So that's something that's pretty cool. A lot of my shoes are one on ones and I'm the only one that have them.

Vinnie:

That's nice.

Armando:

Mm-hmm.

Roberto:

When did you get fit for those? Or did you go out to Nike campus?

Armando:

No, they brought their people out to UNC and they just look at my foot and do a bunch of

different measurements and use some of their technology to see what works best for me.

Vinnie:

And one of the things that Roberto and I were talking about a couple weeks ago was the change in athletes being okay with technology integrating with the equipment. A few years ago, making a smart golf ball, golfers didn't want to hit it because how is that affecting my swing? Or maybe there's technology in the golf club, how is that affecting the golf club? Or you put something in a basketball or you put something in a football, how does that affect the flight? But I think that's changing.

Roberto:

It is changing. But even some of the technology, Vinnie, I don't think I've told you this, but we had a guest from a television network join us at a client event a couple of weeks ago and I asked him about, and they do a lot with the NFL, "Why is there not a chip in the ball for first down?" Right? It's like we're still looking at this video to see whether the ball-

Armando:

I never thought about that. That's a good point.

Roberto:

And he said that the technology is most of the way there, but once the ball gets under a pile of players, you lose the signal or you lose the vision on it. So they're like, "Unless it's 100% of the way, we're not going to put it into the gameplay," but did it break the plane?

Armando:

I never thought about that.

Roberto:

We've been checking that for a million years. How can we not just tag the foot and when it breaks some sort of...

Vinnie:

Well, you'd have to tag the skin because if you put a chip in one end of the football, where does the chip go in the football?

Roberto:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

Right? You'd have to-

Roberto:

That not that easy of a problem.

Vinnie:

I think you'd go more with computer vision, even something outside of the visual range where the ball has some kind of surface that a LiDAR or other type of camera can... But again, that's a line of sight technology.

Roberto:

It's a line of sight technology and what you're talking about actually exists in golf already. Titleist made a golf ball that has a skin on the inside that is much easier to pick up by launch monitors.

Vinnie:

Okay.

Roberto:

So if you're hitting on a simulator or with a launch monitor if you use-

Vinnie:

So I can't patent that idea? It's already happened?

Roberto:

It's happened. You use this golf ball, it picks up a lot quicker.

Vinnie:

I'm not sure they do it in tennis, but they obviously can see where the ball hits the lines.

Armando:

And how hard it hits too.

Vinnie:

Yeah.

Roberto:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

That ball's coming in quick. So anything else on the equipment side? What about some of the stuff that we've done for the tour and TGL on the-

Roberto:

Well, I mean data captures kind of what Armando was talking about. So I mean, part of it was said computer vision, the chip in the shorts. If you think about some of our clients that are capturing data in golf, a basketball court is a set size. Armando plays half his games at the Dean Dome, right? Golf is playing a different golf course every week, and the field of play is two to 300 acres.

Vinnie:

And changes.

Roberto:

And changes and it's-

Armando:

What goes into that though? The preparation of that going places, do you got to scout out the course before you play or how does that all work?

Roberto:

As a player, we have it easy. We just go play the golf course and we actually get a yardage book that has a super detailed map of every single hole. So you're going out there, you're looking at the book, you're taking it all in, but if you went and played it for the first time with this book, you'd have all the information you need. But from a broadcast side, they have to go lay power. They have to go lay fiber on two to 300 acres. I mean, there are multiple 18 wheelers with just spools of wire that get laid out and picked up every week. So the tour invested in the system called ShotLink 23 years ago where they capture the location of every golf ball similar to how they capture-

Vinnie:

And that's using a lot of computer vision.

Roberto:

The new version is it uses more like laser tracking, like surveying equipment currently. But anyway, all that data being created is extremely difficult in golf. I mean, honestly more difficult than all the other sports. But where CapTech came in is helping package and move that data and helping the tour monetize it. So they actually invested in the system years before they were driving direct revenue with it, but it's just a fascinating story to follow. Investing in tech before the market's kind of ready for it, and then finding a way to monetize that data is a pretty cool story that I think a lot of the sports are tracking now.

Vinnie:

I'm going to switch a little bit to fan engagement, but I want to talk about virtual reality as it relates to that, but also as it relates to you. I bought a house, we moved about a year and a half ago, and when I was looking at homes, we would drive by and say, "Hey, that's a nice house," or

whatever else. I'd go home and I would put my VR goggles on and go into Google Earth and actually walk around the backyard and view the house from different angles and how big's the property. And there was this brown spot on the satellite image. What is that? Oh, okay. That's worth the guy's dumping his grass, right?

You can go see that stuff. If it was available when you were playing and you were going to... Great question, Armando, how he prepares for different courses, would you put a VR headset on that accurately represented these courses and walk the course ahead of time, go to the green, go to the sand traps?

Armando:

Wow.

Vinnie:

Would you do that as a prep?

Roberto:

Sure. Why wouldn't you do that on your flight down to...

Armando:

Is that a thing?

Vinnie:

It can be a thing.

Roberto:

I mean, I'm still stuck on you walking around my backyard in VR, but go ahead.

Vinnie:

Yeah, so... Right.

Roberto:

Can you walk around anyone's backyard in VR?

Vinnie:

Yes.

Roberto:

Holy cow.

Vinnie:

Now that's kind of a stretch because it's constructing those images based on satellite imagery and also...

Roberto:

Street view.

Vinnie:

Street view and all this other stuff. So it's okay, but it kind of looks like Dr. Seuss and everything's kind of melty.

Roberto:

Okay.

Vinnie:

But to do it the way we're talking about for the TOUR or basketball or anything else, they actually have these rigs, they look like giant spheres with cameras all over them and you push them through and it's taking all these pictures and then it recreates it. So if we did it for golf, it would actually be legit and clean.

Roberto:

Pretty doable.

Vinnie:

Yeah, pretty doable.

Roberto:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

We've done it for retail stores. We didn't do it, I'm sorry. I've seen it done at retail stores where imagine you've got thousands and thousands of retail stores and some stores are doing well and some aren't. They push these carts through and they let all the store managers around the country put the headsets on and see what's different about those two stores.

Roberto:

They don't push them anymore. I was at Home Depot last weekend and they had a robot-

Vinnie:

Oh dear. Yeah.

Roberto:

... That was walking around with multiple cameras and I was there early in the morning and it was going down the aisles, just scanning the entire store. And I don't know, I was so interested. Is it doing that or is it just scanning inventory? Is it assessing damage?

Vinnie:

Right.

Roberto:

Is it checking for safety?

Vinnie:

It could be doing all of those things.

Roberto:

It could be doing all of those things. yeah. But it was really cool. I was in the plumbing section and all of a sudden this robot went by.

Vinnie:

So Armando, I'm curious from a fan engagement perspective, you can also do this in a live setup, like if a band you is playing, you could put one of these 360 cameras in there and put the headset on and watch them play. If you could sit courtside watching an NBA game or NFL being in the stands, or being on top of the quarterback's head or the running back's head as they're playing, is that something that would interest you as a fan?

Armando:

Definitely. I mean, I think that would be cool. And I saw something maybe a year ago, and they were talking about in the NBA possibly doing that, like some type of virtual reality. And I mean, I think that's definitely the future of all sports.

Vinnie:

But you told me before we started that you gave your headset away.

Armando:

I did give my Oculus headset away, so I'll get another one.

Vinnie:

No, I'm curious, did it disappoint you in some way? The experience?

Armando:

Honestly, I just never tried it. I was moving out last weekend.

Vinnie:

Gotcha.

Armando:

It just was in the drawer. I was like, "You know what? I'm going to just give it away."

Vinnie:

Nice. Well, next time you're here, I'll have set up for you.

Armando:

Yes.

Vinnie:

You can give it a try.

Armando:

I got to try it out and see.

Vinnie:

And Roberto, you've played golf in virtual reality.

Roberto:

I have. So there's a company out of Austin, Texas called Golf+ VR that is really getting some traction and it actually connects to our previous conversation. So during the Waste Management Phoenix Open, if you were on Golf+ VR you could put your headset on and you could play a hole alongside the tour players in the tournament. And the way that the tour player data is fed in is captured by the ShotLink system. So again, when they started capturing data, the tour and investing in that, I don't think they anticipated that they would need it to power a VR experience, but they do and now they're able to do that. So it's really cool.

Vinnie:

Yeah, they get the data, right? If you can capture every bit of information about the shot-

Roberto:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

... And I don't mean every bit of information. Weather, wind, temperature, crowd size, crowd noise, whatever the thing is, the same thing in basketball, free throw at the end of a game and actually replicate that thing and then put someone in that environment and see how they perform.

Armando:

I never thought about that. That is cool, being able to play against those guys. That's crazy.

Vinnie:

Yeah. You're involved in TMRW Golf League through CapTech. Can you let us know what that is and what we can expect? Because that was announced publicly two weeks ago?

Roberto:

It was. So it's exactly what we've been talking about. TMRW Sports is a company founded by Mike McCarley, who was the president of the Golf Channel, along with Tiger Woods and Roy McElroy. And they're really trying to build out these next generation sports experiences. And the first thing they're doing is called TGL, which is a new golf league where three players will be on each team, a three on three match, and it'll be broadcast prime time, Monday nights starting next January. But it's mixed media, mixed reality. So they'll be hitting the full shots into a giant simulator screen, and then they'll hit the shorter shots in a green that's movable. And they'll be playing this all in a small arena in Palm Beach.

Vinnie:

It will adjust its contours.

Roberto:

It'll adjust.

Vinnie:

Yeah.

Roberto:

So you can play a hole into the screen that is an island green, like an actual island, and you don't have to worry about a bridge to get there because it's not real. So there's a lot of really interesting things that they can do with this concept. It's going to be fast-paced, it's going to be really, really fun. And I think it's the idea of tomorrow sports is to then take that concept out to other sports, whether that's auto racing or basketball, and it's just kind of this holding company where they have this big vision of what technology-enabled sports can be.

Armando:

And what, are they going to get just a bunch of public figures to...

Vinnie:

Actually, four players.

Roberto:

Yeah. They already have commitments from a number of the top 10 players in the world. So they're going to have Tiger, Rory, they already have Jon Rahm, they have Rickie Fowler.

Armando:

Okay.

Roberto:

They have Morikawa, Max Homa, and another tenant of their value prop is celebrity or culture. So I think when you watch, there'll be a bunch. And their investor list, like, Shaquille O'Neal's on it, Louis Hamilton, Serena Williams, I mean, you name it. Every famous athlete has invested in this concept. So you'll see a lot of those people at the matches, and I think as a kind of auxiliary league, Monday nights will probably be the top players in the world playing TGL, but Tuesday night could be a celebrity night, or maybe that's on streaming.

Vinnie:

You could have more than one arena with people playing.

Armando:

Where is it based out of?

Roberto:

The arena's going to be in Palm Beach in South Florida.

Armando:

Oh, wow. Okay.

Roberto:

Yeah, because so many of the players live down there.

Armando:

Gotcha.

Roberto:

So it's on the campus of Palm Beach State University.

Vinnie:

I'm wondering how this translate to other sports. Basketball seems so, I mean, offense and defense. Golf doesn't have a defense, per se. Except stress. Right? I wonder what kind of things you could do in other sports that are more defense-oriented or have a defense.

Roberto:

Yeah, I think you have to start thinking creatively on what basketball is. A lot of the growth in golf was driven by COVID and flexible schedules, but a lot of it has also been driven by people thinking outside the box on what golf can be. And it doesn't need to be Dad leaves the house at 8:00 Saturday morning and comes back seven hours later. It can be really kid-friendly, it can be really family-friendly. It can be Topgolf, it can be a putting course, it can be a par three course. So if you take that over to basketball, it doesn't need to be five-on-five playing. And you've seen some of the three-on-three leagues or the half-court leagues. But it can be a skills challenge. It can be a

number of things.

Armando:

Trick shots.

Vinnie:

Yeah.

Roberto:

Trick shots, yeah. It can be shooting challenges. I mean, you see that in the NBA and the All Star game and the skills night, but I think that's the answer to how these kind of technologies -

Vinnie:

Rethinking it. Reimagining it.

Roberto:

Just rethinking it, yeah. There will always be a place for the pure game. What he plays is real basketball. What the tourist plays is the purest form of golf, but doesn't mean TGL's not golf. It's just a different style of it.

Vinnie:

I got a couple questions to finish us off. When we talk about the wearable technology or the technology that affects the equipment. There's a thing in interactive design where, let's say it's a mobile app or a watch or something like that, if we're collecting data from people's behaviors and we're using it to enrich the company that owns that app or something, people will put up a wall and say, "Privacy, privacy, privacy. I don't like to share my information." But the second you make it good for them, discounts or just in time coupons or head of the line, or whatever it is, then they give everything up freely and they're totally in. So it really is a perspective of being authentic with how you are using the data you're collecting to benefit the person as well as yourself. So I guess that question to you, Armando, would be, if someone's asking you to wear something in the lining of your shorts or in your shoes or play with a ball that's different, do you think about that

differently If you don't get any advantage from that? If you're not getting paid for that, or if you're not getting any information to change your training or input? If it's just helping somebody else, does it change your mind on that or do you not really care?

Armando:

No, for me, I don't care because I think information is probably the most important thing there is in sports. Just knowing what you're outputting and what to work on and just kind of figuring out those things. So I mean, I think it's good.

Vinnie:

Any thoughts, Roberto?

Roberto:

I think it ties back to what I was saying earlier about ShotLink, because sometimes you collect data that may not have value in the moment, but it will eventually. And I think that's kind of what Armando's saying. It's like, let's get the information and then figure out where the value is. So the tour just actually last week rolled out something that I think is really cool. They have added, in addition to where the golf ball is, they started adding launch monitors, radar tech on most of the tee boxes. And for years they've been set up on the tees and they captured data and you could check your year-long stats. It was kind of useful, but not really. They just rolled out last week where, and I don't exactly know how the mechanics work, but a player during practice rounds on Tuesday and Wednesday can now pull data in real time off those launch monitors. So you're on the driving range, you're practicing with your launch monitor. You play differently on the course, right? It's more game time. Now, you can get on the fifth tee box of a practice round at the memorial and you can say, "Hey, I want to see what my numbers are on this shot," and you can somehow log into the launch monitor that the tour is set up behind you. So like you said, those things, they're not really in the way, but you could easily as a player say, "Why is that there?" Now it's creating value for the players.

Vinnie:

Gotcha. This next question probably should have come sooner, or it's a whole nother episode for

us to dive into, but obviously everyone's talking about artificial intelligence. We have all this data coming off. Have we seen anything in sports yet that says, "Given this information, we're going to inform the coach how to change strategy. We're going to inform the player." I liked your story before that you were watching the video and you're making these observations. Is there a component that's predicting, "Hey, if you change your game this way..." Are we getting into that area yet or not?

Armando:

I never thought about that, but I think that's definitely something that's to come. Just asking the computer, "What's his tendencies? What do he like to do?"

Vinnie:

What's my best? It knows you and it knows your competitor.

Armando:

Yeah.

Vinnie:

What's the best thing you can do?

Armando:

What's the best defense to play against this team? What are some plays they struggle defending? I think those are definitely questions that you probably could ask right now. Probably get an answer for you.

Roberto:

Yeah, that's what I was going to ask. The Synergy or, what was the name?

Armando:

Synergy, yeah.

Roberto:

The software that you use. Is it all interpreted by the coaches or does it provide you a profile at the end of a game? Or does the software feed anything to you? Or just kind of raw-

Armando:

Yeah, it gives you everything.

Roberto:

But raw data, no analysis. The software's not doing-

Armando:

Raw data, yeah, it is some analysis.

Roberto:

Okay.

Armando:

It'll tell you if you do something good. But I think that's all just probably based upon the numbers and the averages and how they have it set up.

Roberto:

So yeah, nothing beyond just old school statistics.

Armando:

Yes.

Vinnie:

Right. So from a data perspective, I call that declarative where the data's there and you can view it in many different forms. AI is more predictive where it's like, given this information, what behavior can I predict? I think that's the next step.

Roberto:

Intuitive.

Vinnie:

Yeah. Next step.

Roberto:

Insightful.

Vinnie:

Okay, so wrapping up, thank you both for coming. Very interesting conversation. Armando, what can we look forward to the next year in your world?

Armando:

Just winning, man. Just winning. That's the main thing.

Roberto:

There we go.

Armando:

Stacking some Ws.

Vinnie:

Nice.

Roberto:

Love that.

Armando:

But yeah, I mean we got a lot of great guys coming in. Like I said, with college basketball, it's just crazy now. So we ended up eight players transferred out, something like that, which is unheard out.

Roberto:

Transferred out?

Armando:

Yes. I want to say eight. So now we got a bunch of new guys coming in, but we all excited. Just a new look team. Got a lot of experience, got some good younger guys coming in too, so I think it'll be a good year.

Vinnie:

Very cool. Awesome.

Roberto:

Nice.

Vinnie:

Great. Well, thank you both for sitting with me today and having this really interesting conversation. Appreciate it.

Armando:

Thank you.

Roberto:

Thank you.