*Daniela Cambone:* Our next one is truly, truly an all-star, so we’re shifting your thinking and developing strategies and achieving sustainable success is our next presentation. Our guest today is Marques Colston. He is the Founder of Marques Colston Enterprises, a professional development services company, which empower organizations and growth minded individuals to unlock creativity and possibility and experience sustainable business success. Creating separation is a mindset inspired by his incredible NFL career, spanning over a decade, and as an owner, partner, investor, and advisor to dozens of businesses and organizations. Marques’ game changing methodology of creating separation is the paradigm shift that has propelled him to overcome adversity and experience seemingly unattainable accomplishments, both personally and professionally over his lifetime. Currently Marques serves on the Advisory Committee for NFL Players, the licensing arm of the NFL Players Association. He launched Venture Investing and entrepreneurship for professional athletes, an executive education program for current and former professional athletes at the prestigious Columbia Business School. He has partnered with his alma mater, Hofstra University, to create the Marques Colston Fellowship, which provides learning opportunities for student athletes in health majors. He is also currently teaching entrepreneurship and life skills to undergraduate students at the University of New Orleans. My husband is very jealous that I get to introduce Marques Colston now to the stage.

Marques, take it away.

*Marques Colston:* Thank you. So, first and foremost, it’s a pleasure to be here with you all today. Hopefully, this serves as a little bit of a change of pace. You know, one of the things that I’d like to talk with you all today about is really the legacy that you all are creating and the success that you all are here getting the insights and the resources to create success, but how can we create that success that’s really aligned with a vision that you can clearly articulate.

So, as we get started today, I just want to start with a simple question for you. What will your legacy be? You know, for a lot of us that question seems very abstract. It can be hard to think about at times. You know, when you’re kind of caught in the minutia of the day, your caught in the minutia of your careers, you’re building your investment portfolios, you’re doing your research, and I understand a lot of you are self-directed investors, but I think it’s really critical to be able to understand and articulate what that vision looks like, because ultimately if you can’t see the vision with clarity, how do you know you reached it? How do you know you’re progressing towards it? How do you know how close you are to that vision for success that you have, right?

You know, we’re all here today. Stansbury is a great partner for a lot of us and we’re all here, you know, building tools and getting additional resources to build our plans and build our game plans for success. Fortunately, with my background I’ve been able to be a part of a lot of interesting game plans, a lot of really good game plans, some not so good, so I’ve seen a lot in my day. I think we can all know and understand how vital to success that building the right game plan is.

You know, over the years, I’ve come to learn that a great game plan really has three core components to it. It’s really made up of three groups of factors. The first is your goals, right? For this room, those goals span anywhere from when you want to retire, how you want to retire, where you want to retire. What kind of assets do you want to have when you retire? Some of the goals might be some lifestyle or life milestone driven goals. It might be around your kids or your grandkids going to school and you being able to provide resources for their education. It might be you want to retire in Florida. You want to retire in some specific place. Some of your goals might be around estate planning. What do you want to leave to your family, to your loved ones?

The second bucket that really influences how you game plan for success is your experiences, right? Your lived experience is really where it all starts. You know, what are the tools and the resources that you have access to? You know, how do you view money? How do you view investment opportunities? What is your exposure and how does that shape your beliefs and your mindsets around some of these assets and some of these opportunities? You know, your skills and your talent, your technical skills, your technical abilities, you know, skills that you’ve learned along the way, along your professional careers. They kind of become really integral in how you execute and how you implement specific strategies and how you can do it in a way that’s unique to you. First-hand knowledge, right? We’re all talking about different investment opportunities and different business opportunities. If you have access to first-hand knowledge, again, it shapes your perspective and it shapes the way that you view and the way that you can implement some of these strategies.

The third area that really influences your game plan is your resources, right? For a lot of people in this room and really for the topic of the day the number one resource we’re talking about at times is capital and its financial capital. You know, but there’s also emotional capital. There’s spiritual capital. You know, the capital that you have access to dictates, again, it dictates how you implement, how you execute your game plan, right? Your education, whether it be traditional, whether it be firsthand, whether it be on the job, again, education really shifts the way that you implement these strategies. Your network and your access to people, to opportunities, to deal flow, again, it really influences the way that your game plan comes together the way that you implement it.

All right, so your goals, your experience, and your resources, those three factors really influence how and how you can build a game plan, how you can execute it, and implement it in a way that’s going to lead to success.

But again, back to my original question, and you guys can see the slides, correct? Back to my original question, right, you have your goals laid out, your experiences, and your resources laid out, but if you can’t articulate and you don’t have that vision for what success looks like for you, what that means to you, what that feels like, how do you know that your game plan is optimized for you?

So, as we all are building our individual plans to go and achieve the success that we have, that we visualize and that we have in our head, we’re all leveraging different tools to get there, right? This may seem like an interesting reference, but when I think about some of the best tools that I’ve had access to to build game plans, you know, I’ve had the good fortune of playing in the NFL for ten years and we’ve had access to all kinds of databases, you know, looking at players, and looking at pass games, and resources. But those don’t really stand the test of time. They don’t really top the list of game plan or resources that I’ve had access to.

When I think about some of the best game planning tools that I’ve ever seen and ever used, this is what I’ve come up with. Right? When you think about these tools they don’t feel like they should fit in this conversation, but when you look at the old paper map, when you look at MapQuest, the old website, and when you look at Ways, the navigation app, you start to figure out that these are precisely the tools that can help you execute the game plan. They’re built to have you execute a game plan for getting from point A to point B, right? They all do it in unique ways. They all leverage innovation and technology in different ways to do it, but the one caveat with these tools is their effectiveness is solely dependent upon you as the user to input data with clarity. If you’re able to input your starting point with clarity, and your destination with clarity, these tools help you navigate that pathway flawlessly. But if your start point is fuzzy and your end point is fuzzy, if you tell these tools that I want to go from the Staples Center or I want to go from Los Angeles to Las Vegas it will get you to the city limits, but it might not be exactly where you want to end up, right? But if you tell these tools that I want to start at the Staples Center and I want to ultimately end up at the Winn, it’s going to take you from door-to-door, right? So, these tools, these navigation tools, these game planning tools are solely dependent upon you as a user to input your point A and your point B with clarity, right?

So, looking at these tools, the reason they make really good game planning tools is, to me, a great game plan has two distinct qualities. The first quality is it’s aligned with a specific vision for success, not just a vision, a very specific vision for success. Again, when we think about those tools, point A and point B is clear the tools work flawlessly. Just like any game plan, when you can really understand the starting point and the trajectory that you need to get to your end point you have a great game plan.

The other factor, the other distinct quality of a great game plan is that it allows for multiple pathways for you to get there, right? So, using our navigation tools again as a reference, it allows for different ways to get there. Some of the ways might be by your choosing. You might want to take the scenic route. There’s a route for that. You might want to avoid tolls. There’s a route for that. You might want to avoid traffic. There’s another route for that, right? But there’s also factors that you can’t control that these tools allow you to navigate around, right? So, there might be an accident. There might be detours. These tools allow you; they allow for dynamic pathways to get you from point A to point B.

So, when we think about how we’re building game plans, how we’re building our game plan for wealth, for our lifestyle, for our careers, when we think about building a great game plan for success and these tools are the comp, what happens when you swap these tools for these tools? It becomes a similar story, right? Whether you’re dealing with cryptocurrency, which is the new flavor of the day, you’re dealing with ETFs, you’re dealing with any type of investment vehicle, as they hit your portfolio they’re ultimately tools that help you get to your end goal, right? Similar to the tools before it, these tools work flawlessly when you’re able to articulate the starting point and the end point with clarity.

So, what I’d like to do today is share a little bit of my insight and my experiences with you all on, you know, how I’ve been able to develop game plans, how I’ve been able to go from point A to point B within my career and just to get started, I want to share just a little bit about myself and my background to give you a little context. So, as it stands now, I operate as a financial advisor, a licensed financial advisor, a Series 7, Series 66, and I also work with professionals, entrepreneurs, professional athletes as an executive performance coach. A lot of the work that I do, it overlaps in this ability to build intentional game plans to get from point A to point B.

Just to give you guys a little bit of my background, as Daniela said, I was fortunate enough to play ten years in the NFL, fortunate enough to win a Super Bowl, but the journey there is what allowed me to really see this path and see these insights with a lot of clarity. I started. I went to school at a small, liberal arts college in New York called Hofstra University, not really a football powerhouse, but had an opportunity to get drafted really, really late in the draft my year and, you know, with a one or two percent chance of making a roster I was able to stick around for ten years and leave the franchise leader in really every statistical category at my position.

From there I wane on to roles in venture capital. I started as an investor at the intersection of sports and technology, really leveraging a lot of my firsthand experience and knowledge in the industry to try and pick and choose companies that I thought would be – that I thought had an opportunity, you know, as the scope of sports tech continued to evolve.

Starting as an investor, I quickly shifted to an advisor and a consultant to a lot of these companies and, you know, had a lot of fun and made a lot of really good relationships, you know, within the VC world. But eventually, I made the shift to start my own independent consulting, so I worked as a strategist and a management consultant for companies in the cannabis space, again, companies at the intersection of sports and technology and also found a way to get involved in healthcare as an innovation consultant, again, leveraging a lot of the insights and the experiences that I learned as a professional athlete, not just playing on the field on Sundays, but really, the journey from getting to – from that small liberal arts college to the field on Sundays.

Now, as an advisor and a performance coach, I leverage a lot of those same insights, a lot of those experiences to help clients kind of map their vision for success and build the right game plans that fit them. The strategy and the framework that I came up with, you know, through that journey and it strengthened and I was able to add more resources and more elements within every transition in my journey is a framework I call progressive awareness. It’s really a framework that allows you to build intentional strategies for differentiated success. What do I mean by that? Differentiated success allows you to take what’s unique to you, your resources, your abilities, your lived experiences and leverage it in a way that creates the type of success that you can sustain that ultimately leads to legacy.

Progressive awareness is really built on three pillars. The first pillar is self-awareness. That’s really the ability to understand and really take what you know through your unique lens and really own it, whether it be your skills, your lived experiences, whether it be your core values, those things in your life that are non-negotiables that you just will not – you will not come off of those things for any reason. All of those things become who you are, what drives, you, what makes you. When you’re able to articulate those things and really understand them as a foundation it allows you to really understand that point A and point B with a lot more clarity.

The second pillar of progressive awareness is peripheral awareness, right? That’s the ability to take what you know to be true about yourself and start to understand the landscape around you and all of the factors that may impact your journey based on what you know to be true about you. It could be things that are in your control. It could be things that are not in your control, but the general understanding of the landscape really allows you to see the different pathways that will allow you to get from point A to point B in your journey.

The third pillar of progressive awareness is what I call situational awareness. Situational awareness allows you to take self-awareness and peripheral awareness, that understanding of self and that understanding of the landscape around you, and it allows you to use those things and those insights to make dynamic decisions and midstream adjust based on the clearest pathway to your goal, right?

What I’d like to do with the remaining time is really walk you through these three pillars of progressive awareness and really try to give you some insight into how it can potentially shift the paradigm with how you build your wealth strategies, your game plans for the success that you want, and really leverage a lot of the tools and resources that you’re learning and you’re getting from Stansbury and implement them in a way that allows you to achieve differentiated success that ultimately becomes the legacy that you leave with intention.

So, as we start with self-awareness, again, it’s the ability to assess what you know through the unique lens of your experience, right? It’s something I call the known knowns, right? So I mentioned to you guys that coming out of college my North Star, the thing that I wanted to do, the thing that I was intentional about doing and everything in my life revolved around it was to play in the NFL and play for ten years and in understanding that that was the end goal for me, that was the point, that was the destination that I wanted to end up at. I also had to swallow some hard truths, right? I had to understand that my starting point at Hofstra, again, wasn’t a football powerhouse. There wasn’t a ton of scouts coming to see me. I also had to understand not just what I believed to be true about myself, I had to understand what others believed and what others saw when they looked at me, right? What they saw was an athlete that had raw ability, but was unpolished, right? That’s kind of how you end up as a really late round draft pick, right? So really, being able to digest these things and digest these hard truths and understand my starting point led me down a path where I knew that I had work to do and I knew that in order to have an opportunity to get to my end goal I knew I had to fill some gaps, right?

You know, as it relates to you all, right, when you think about self-awareness and you think about starting with the known knowns, right? I mentioned having a very clear understanding of what that end point is, what that destination is, and on the other side of the spectrum, having a very clear understanding of that starting point, right? So, when you think about what I call your ideal state, it’s the place that you ultimately want to be. It’s the place that if you had to draw up a win this is what a win looks like, right?

The first thing you have to do is you have to identify what does success look like for you, right? Again, for me, it was to play ten years at a very high level, right? That kind of created a standard that everything else in my life revolved around.

You also have to understand what is enough for you? What is the number that you can achieve? What is the number that you can reach to know that you’ve achieved this vision for success, right? As we’re talking about and a lot of these conversations revolve around investment opportunities and business opportunities, you have to ask yourself what is the number. What is enough? What is the number that I’m working towards? When you understand that you’ll start to understand what it looks like and how you know you’ve achieved that vision, right? So, when you can start to answer these questions and get more clarity around what these answers mean to you and make them tangible, it gives you that tangible destination, that tangible end point to where you can know and understand what you’re chasing and know when you’ve achieved it.

On the other side of the spectrum, your current state, what are your current strengths and weaknesses, right? I told you guys that I knew that I had limited visibility. I knew I didn’t have a ton of exposure, but I also knew – I also knew that I had physical ability that was untapped. I knew that I was able to learn and digest things that I just hadn’t gotten exposure to, so from your lens, what are your strengths and your weaknesses? Is it time horizon? Is it access to capital? What are the things that drive you towards your goals and what are the things that become risk factors that mitigate you from getting to your goals? What are the mindsets, the values, and everything that you believe in, right? Because again, if the goal is to achieve intentional success, right, a vision for success that becomes your legacy, it has to be a function of your mindset, your values, and your beliefs.

Ultimately, what is your tolerance for risk and discomfort? You know, for me, I knew coming from Hofstra University there were going to be some ugly conversations. There were going to be some ugly evaluations and there was going to be a ton of work. There was a ton of work in front of me that was not going to be comfortable. But if you’re willing to take on that discomfort and that risk you can now build a strategy and a game plan that allows your trajectory to get you where you need to go, right?

When you’re able to start with the known knowns and your self-awareness, and you have that clear vision for your point A and your point B, it allows you to activate this peripheral awareness, which is the second pillar of progressive awareness, right? So, what are the parallels? What are the competing factors? What are the complementary forces that allow you to create the different pathways to your goal, right?

So, in my case, I knew who I was. I knew how people saw me and when I got an opportunity to get drafted my first day, my first weeks with the team I spent a lot of my days just studying the landscape, right? I wanted to be successful, so I had to find what success looked like, right? So, I studied all of the veterans around me. I studied what made them successful. What are the things that they did on the field? What are the things they did off the field? What did they eat? What was their routine? What was their regimen? You know, all of those things that lay out success in a way that you can duplicate. You know, I studied – in college I played one position. I played on the left side of the field for four years. I never moved to different positions, right? But I understood very quickly that in the world that I was going into that there was value in being able to do more, right? So, in studying the landscape I saw that there were opportunities to learn different wide receiver positions and play different positions and that created opportunities for me to be able to do more and create more value, right?

I also studied other players that had success, not just my teammates. I studied other players that had similar physical qualities, similar physical abilities that were able to have success. What made them successful? I studied players that looked nothing like me, the small, fast, shifty guys. You know, I studied the things that they used to become successful, right? I’m not going to be able to do it the way that they do it, but what insights can I gather to make that strategy unique to me, right? Over time what I was able to do was put together a composite of these different insights to build a strategy that allowed me to see three or four different ways that I could start as this raw talent from Hofstra University and become this person that could go on to achieve this vision that I had to play ten years at the highest level.

So, as I’m talking to you all today, how does that apply to you, right? Again, when you can start with a crystal-clear vision of who you are and what you know to be true you can use that to identify what are the known unknowns, right? You can use that to study the landscape and see what is required of you to reach this vision for success that you have, right? Is there going to be more research, more education? Is there going to be more white papers on crypto? Is there more white papers on whatever the new investment vehicle is, automated vehicles? Whatever it is that you think gives you an opportunity to get your end goal, what’s required of you to achieve it?

What do you know – taking what you know to be true about yourself, how can you best position yourself for the success that you want, right? Again, I knew who I was as a big, physical receiver, but I knew that in order to create the value that was going to allow me to achieve my goal I had to learn some other nuances, some other qualities, right? So again, how can you take some of the areas that are not strengths, how can you take those and make those become areas of improvement that allow you to position yourself for the success that you want?

What are the factors that are in your control, right? This is a big one. It’s taking what you know to be true and really being candid and clear about what you can control and taking that and being very intentional with using it to position yourself, right?

Some of the factors outside of your control, you know, in this world it could be something like just the cycles of the market, right? That’s not something that’s within your control, but it exists within the landscape, right? So if you know it’s coming it’s a known that it’s coming, but it’s an unknown exactly how it affects you, so how can you study that landscape enough to know what are the different opportunities to take advantage of these cycles or what are the different advantages to mitigate the risk that these cycles can bring, right?

When you can study the landscape enough to know and create these different opportunities and these different pathways, right, that can potentially lead you to your goal and your vision for success this third pillar, situational awareness, gives you the tools and the insights to know when, how, and where to apply them, right? So, again, back to my example, so I came out of Hofstra with a North Star of playing ten years. I knew I how I was viewed, as a raw, physical ability, a physical talent. The peripheral awareness allowed me to study the landscape enough to see how I could create these different opportunities, these different pathways to get to the vision for success that I had, and now, becoming more situationally aware, being able to understand the global landscape is what allowed me to know when and where to use all of these different tools and when to activate these different pathways, right? It allowed me to make decisions and midstream adjust in a way that as some of these unknown situations popped on the radar, when you’re in any high-performance business your ability to solve the problem, your ability to overcome adversity quickly and efficiently becomes a competitive advantage, right? This situational awareness really came from understanding the global landscape and really studying the global landscape now, right?

So, the peripheral awareness, it allowed me to study my position. In order to become situationally aware, I had to study the entire landscape, right? So, it wasn’t just about receivers anymore. It was what is the quarterback thinking? It was what is the defense trying to stop? It was what’s the score and how does that affect the way that we game plan? Are we losing the game and do we have to score points fast or are we winning the game and we have to just hold the ball so the other team can’t get it? All of those different external and global factors impact when, how, where you execute strategies that lead to the vision for success that you have, right?

So, in being able to study that global landscape and understand everyone’s goals and objectives around me not only did it allow me to maximize my ability, but it allowed me to perform at a really high level, even when my physical abilities started to wane, right? Because I think we’ve all heard the phrase Father Time is undefeated and as a high performing athlete, when your physical ability starts to leave you you’ve got two options. You can evolve and figure out how to become more cerebral and get to the same spots at the same time using anticipation, or you can continue to lean on your physical abilities and eventually somebody comes and takes your job, right?

So, as it relates to you all, using situational awareness to navigate the unknown unknowns how can you start to master each individual component of your game plan, right? It could be investment game plan. It could be the construction of your portfolio. It could be each individual holding in your portfolio. It could be how your career path, how your lifestyle goals, how your family goals, how does that all impact each one of those individual components, how does that impact the game plan, the overall game plan, right? Because it’s all wholistic. The way that you live, the lifestyle that you want to lead, the way that you invest, the businesses that you run, it all ties together, right? It’s all a component of this game plan to get you to your end goal, right? So, how can you master each individual component of your game plan? How does each individual component contribute? How does it stand alone versus how does it factor into the collective performance of your game plan, right? Again, it could be each individual holding. It could be each individual asset class. Your ability to understand how each one of these impacts your overall game plan allows you to be dynamic in how you make decisions that when faced with adversity or faced with, I don’t know, the situation we’ve been dealing with for the last two years, when unknown adversity hits how can you adjust, midstream adjust, so that you have levers and components that you can turn on and off and make decisions about that still align with your overall game plan and your overall vision for success?

How does the performance of each one of these components, how do they perform based on specific conditions, right, a similar situation? Ultimately, when you understand the game plan as a whole from a holistic standpoint what can you adjust individually, not just to mitigate risk, but at times, these adjustments, these midstream adjustments and your ability to act fast and stay aligned with your vision for success, it can become more than just a risk mitigation strategy. It can become a competitive advantage, right?

So, to kind of wrap up this progressive awareness and these pillars of progressive awareness, again, if you start with the known knowns and become really, really self-aware and really master yourself and master everything that you know to be true about you, your vision, your strengths, your weaknesses, your goals and ambitions, you use that to identify the known unknowns around you and become more aware of the landscape. You can now navigate the unknown unknowns effectively, more effectively and more efficiently and choose those dynamic paths that allow you to midstream adjust when necessary, but always stay aligned with this North Star, this vision that you have for success. Thank you.

*[End of Audio]*