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## KANE WILLIAMSON

### FOREVER LEARNING

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*To go to India for my... for my debut and test cricket was a... was a bit of a freaky experience really because...*

**Host:** Thank you for joining us today... Thank you for joining us today, Kane. It is a pleasure to have you. I'd like to begin by talking a bit about your early journey in cricket. You've played cricket all your life, you scored 40 centuries by the time you'd left school. Was representing New Zealand internationally always on the cards or did it become a goal later on?

**Kane Williamson:** Firstly, I just want to say it's a real honor to get the invitation to come here to Oxford and speak. I must admit when I got the invitation I questioned whether they had the right person because some of the names on the invitation that have come and spoken here before are incredibly influential people and I certainly wouldn't throw myself anywhere near that category but it is very humbling to have this opportunity.

In terms of my cricketing journey, I'll try and keep it brief because I'm assuming people just want to hear about the World Cup. I guess a twin brother, three older sisters, and a large family that were all very enthusiastic about sport and my dad was right into cricket so the interest in cricket grew fairly naturally, and fortunate to live near a school field where there was some fundraising done to put up some cricket nets which suited me just fine.

A lot of my days after school were spent practicing and then I guess if you fast forward over the years into age group cricket, into my school years as well and just

sort of love the sport, and the progression part kind of came off the back of enjoying what I was doing.

Then getting the experience to play some professional cricket towards the end of my college years was a new experience and those number of hundreds that you mention I think every year that you leave school they grow which is impressive.

I always want more but I don't recall scoring 40 of them at school. I don't know if it's anything special in terms of the journey but one thing that I've always tried to maintain is the enjoyment of what I do and that can be challenged at times.

When you get into the professional area of the sport and there are so many other challenges but also very fortunate as well and you certainly see that every day that you're fortunate to do what you love and as a job.

**Host:** So you made your test debut in 2010 against India and you scored a century there as well. How is it that this phenomenal beginning then affected the rest of your career and how is it that at such a young age you adjusted to the international spotlight?

**Kane Williamson:** I guess if you rewind and that was an interesting experience for me making my debut. You never could foresee the opportunity to play for your country. It was probably less of a goal and more of an idea or a dream that was only real when it was actually happening.

I do recall making an A side prior to the Blackcaps and when the Blackcaps were never on your real radar or the opportunity to play international cricket was never on the radar, the scoring runs and giving it that purity was a little bit more authentic all of a sudden when it started looking a little bit further ahead.

Playing for the Blackcaps felt so much further away so there was a few lessons and having those experiences been able to peel it back before the time came where I was selected in a squad.

To go to India for my debut and test cricket was a bit of a freaky experience really because growing up and playing backyard cricket I had half of the Indian team in my backyard cricket side and now I was playing them and having to remove that thought and trying to compete against them.

In terms of adjusting to that, I think being naive and new to those challenges perhaps was a positive thing the challenges are always there and they can be... they're always different but having that little bit of freedom and sort of no expectation. The opportunity to just play one game for your country was such an exciting thing in your own mind and you never saw anything else and then so to go there and do that was pretty special let alone to get off the mark and then stay out there a little bit longer and score a few more runs.

**Host:** So you talked about these new challenges that you face. Are there any that you can pinpoint specifically any moment in your career that you remember really freaking out or really thinking, “oh wow.” Am I really here to do this kind of thing?

**Kane Williamson:** Yeah, the challenges are always there. I think whether that's the want for more or whether you have some success and there's some fear of failure and there's all these different things. I guess when you enter the professional environment and there's a few more... I would say distractions and sometimes... people would call very positive things and the idea of it being your job and these sorts of things but they're also they can be added pressures and when things aren't going particularly well you can start looking ahead of yourself again and sort of focusing on the things that you can't control.

So that's always been important to me but I do remember early on playing a series in Sri Lanka and I was maybe 20 or 21 and it was really tough and I'd sort of gone through the grades and had some success and then you're sort of quite new into the professional game and all of a sudden your talent wasn't sort of wasn't enough. Everybody was talented and the challenge became so much more about the confidence in your own game.

I do remember being 2021 sitting in my room thinking I need to enjoy this more than I am and it sounds sad because it's often a dream and there's probably a number of people in this room that have that same dream and that's a great thing and it needs to be there.

But whilst you're in it there are those challenges and so from that point and having a number of other experiences I guess there was a conscious decision around making sure I tried to treat the game in a way that was true to me. So I was able to try and enjoy it because in cricket and anything really there's just so much failure and there's so many things you can't control that learning to accept those and try

and take it in your stride and move on with the approach that everything's a learning experience is something that's been really important to me rather than sort of riding the highs and trying to avoid the lows because they're all going to be a part of the big picture.

**Host:** So when you had this change in mindset did you feel like your game got any better or did you just feel like you were enjoying it more?

**Kane Williamson:** Yeah, I mean it wasn't a moment in time it's sort of a forever learning and by no means do you have a thought make an adjustment, and never think of it again. All of a sudden when that catches on it comes and sort of bites you in the bum a little bit and you need to remind yourself of I believe anyway and I do have to remind myself of these things.

So when you're going out and you're playing in a world cup final versus maybe being two years out and it's just a regular game in a series. What is the difference? Except for some of the baggage around it. Is it the desire for everything to go your way versus accepting that on any given day it may not happen perfectly but it doesn't need to be perfect?

So for me in my game, the mindset is very important. I think it's important for everybody's game but not just an cricket probably and anything and it's trying to stay true to that and then I guess dealing with the distractions and the challenges that are all around it so it's not something that I don't believe anyway and I certainly haven't but I don't think it's something mastered it's just something that's ever-present to deal with.

**Host:** So in 2016, you became the captain of the New Zealand cricket team...

**Kane Williamson:** Is that long?

**Host:** What were your early experiences of the captaincy and was it another change in mindset that you had to go through from becoming just a cricket player on an international level to the leader of this very important international team?

**Kane Williamson:** Yeah, I mean it was definitely a transition period before being captain we obviously had a previous captain and that of Brendon McCullum and he did such a fantastic job with the side and took it to a new place in terms of adjusting how we approached our cricket.

And then after that, you're losing your leader and you're also losing him as a player and that's the nature of sport or anything is that people I guess have a use-by date and they move on and do different things and that was one of those times.

So then to get the opportunity to come in and captain and before that there was a sort of a sense of... well there were opportunities where I came in and captain before so there was sort of a worry for me about it just being given to me without truly being considered what's important in the leadership of the team and so when it did happen and I was sort of selected or before it was announced publicly I did ask the question that if it's not me it's okay as well.

You know, it can be anybody here but what is the job and give it to the person that you think might offer in those areas. And anyway I was then asked if I would do it and I did and it's been another one of those learning experiences where you're learning so much about the group around you and you're trying to continue to I guess make the people around you feel valued and it's not just from my direction but it's much of a collective approach with other leaders in the side of the players.

And support staff as well, and that's once again not a task that you tick and move on it's something that bubbles away and you're forever addressing it and I think that would be one of the more challenging parts of the captaincy versus the on-field. And certainly where you learn most about yourself and the people around you as well.

**Host:** So how do you think your leadership style has kind of been different to Brendon McCullum's and do you think it's been better or worse in certain ways?

**Kane Williamson:** I wouldn't even claim it to be better. I feel very fortunate to have been captained by Brendon and lead by Brendon and in a time where leadership was so important for us as a team to try and get us moving in a direction that we wanted to be going and playing a style of cricket that was authentic to us.

I would say we're different people so naturally, we're going to have slightly different ideas or behaviors but then at the same time being lead by Brendon for so many years and other people as well I suppose naturally learn by just being in that environment.

I certainly hope that I have picked up a number of traits from Brendon in some parts but then trying to stay authentic to myself as a person. So perhaps what you say is believable versus maybe reciting something you may have just heard.

**Host:** Thank you so much for joining us, everyone.

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