



JIM HARSHAW, JR.

Clarity of Action. Peace of Mind.

Success for the Athletic-Minded Man Podcast

Action Plan Episode #509

Ross Bernstein

You've heard of speaking on stages... but what about a keynote on a research vessel off the coast of Antarctica?

That's just one of the wild stories Ross Bernstein brings to this episode— but the real gold lies in his hard-earned insights on championship team culture, elite leadership, and the line between gamesmanship and integrity.

Ross has interviewed over 1,000 pro athletes, written 50+ books, and keynoted on seven continents. But what matters most? What he's learned about the DNA of winning teams, and how that applies to your boardroom, locker room, or even your very own living room.

In this episode of "Success for the Athletic-Minded Man" podcast, we talk about what great leaders actually do, why culture isn't fluff, and how to build your own Environment of Excellence.

After listening to this, you'll walk away challenged, maybe a little uncomfortable—and that's a good thing.

If you're a leader at work, at home, or in your community, this conversation will challenge the way you think about winning. Because it's not about being the best guy in the room, it's about being the one they'll follow when everything's on the line.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"Success leaves a lot of clues. You just got to look for them."

"Money doesn't buy you happiness. It buys you freedom to say 'no' to crap you don't want to do."

"My biggest failure turned out to be my biggest success."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **[Share this episode!](#) (1:51):** Share the podcast on social media by tagging me and using the hashtag #SAMpod:
 - **YouTube:** [@jimharshaw1](#)
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 - **LinkedIn:** [Jim Harshaw, Jr.](#)
- **Unlikely Gigs and Penguin Poop (2:25):** Ross shares how he landed a keynote speaking gig in Antarctica on a research vessel.
- **Behind-the-Scenes Sports Stories (3:28):** From handing Brett Favre a book in the locker room to covering epic rivalry games, Ross recounts surreal experiences from his career in sports media and the impact of personal moments behind the curtain.
- **What Championship Teams Get Right (5:30):** From "addition through subtraction" to shared meals and knowing families' names, Ross unpacks how elite teams build culture, and how most companies fail to do the same.
- **Zoom Killed the Culture Star (9:23):** Post-COVID workplaces struggle to rebuild camaraderie. Ross shares how some companies are winning the "culture war" by going against the grain by offering connection and mission-driven environments.
- **[The Environment of Excellence](#) (13:55):** Ross talks about masterminds, retreats, and coaching groups like EO and Reveal Your Path. Success leaves clues— and one of them is who you're surrounding yourself with.
- **The Intangibles of Elite Performers (17:01):** What separates the great from the greatest? Ross explores the rare "it" factor— grit, focus under pressure,

and the will to win. From Tom Brady to Tiger Woods, elite performers study others and thrive when it's all on the line.

- **Failure as a Launchpad (25:22):** Ross shares how getting cut from his dream team led him to become the University of Minnesota's mascot— a decision that launched his writing and speaking career. Your biggest failure could be your greatest turning point.
- **Gamesmanship vs. Cheating (28:12):** In sports and business, there's a fine line between pushing limits and breaking rules. Ross explains "the code" that governs locker rooms, and how integrity plays out in business when the pressure's on.

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

Books by Ross Bernstein:

["I Love Brett Favre/I Hate Brett Favre"](#)

["Raising Stanley: What It Takes to Claim Hockey's Ultimate Prize"](#)

["Raising Lombardi: What It Takes to Claim Football's Ultimate Prize"](#)

["The Code" series](#)

["Wearing the "C": Leadership Secrets from Hockey's Greatest Captains"](#)

Other Episodes Referenced

[#445 \(Pt 4 of 5\) Excellence by Design: Crafting Your Environment of Excellence Using "MAPS"](#)

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