

AT Banter Podcast Episode 235 - Tanner Gers

Mon, 4/12 3:54PM 1:01:56

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

blind, ryan, sports, people, played, soccer, brain surgeries, life, comedy, year, super, steve, united states, gers, rob, paralympics, tanner, week, audience, gave

SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Rob Mineault, Tanner Gers, Ryan Fleury

S Steve Barclay 00:00

R Rob Mineault 00:00
Hey and welcome (coughs)

S Steve Barclay 01:12
Oh, a little rusty.

R Rob Mineault 01:37
Try that again.

R Ryan Fleury 01:38
What are you wearing?

R Rob Mineault 01:41

None of your business. Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter

S Steve Barclay 01:50
banter, banter.

R Rob Mineault 01:53
My name is Ned No, my name is Rob Mineault. Joining me today in the anti gloom Zoom Room. Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R Ryan Fleury 02:03
I don't know why I'm here. I'm supposed to be on vacation.

R Rob Mineault 02:05
And Mr. Steve Barclay.

T Tanner Gers 02:08
Those are some fine biscuits. Having having a little bit of a slingblade throwback there.

R Rob Mineault 02:20
I love that movie. Ah. Hey, Ryan. you're on vacation?

R Ryan Fleury 02:25
I am. Absolutely

R Rob Mineault 02:27
Well, look at you, Mr. Dedicated. Doing a show while you're on vacation.

R Ryan Fleury 02:31
While Yeah, what else am I gonna do on vacation? I can't go anywhere.

- R** Rob Mineault 02:35
I didn't know that they had Wi Fi out there on the beach drinking your pina colada.
- R** Ryan Fleury 02:40
Well, I have told somebody I was in Hawaii. I'm not.
- R** Rob Mineault 02:48
Well, we could have had the audience going. We could have played some steel drums in the background.
- R** Ryan Fleury 02:53
That's true. Okay, well, let's rewind
- S** Steve Barclay 02:55
A little bit of hula dancing.
- R** Rob Mineault 03:00
Well, you know, speaking of them, we got some blue skies. I feel like I feel finally feel like it's spring today.
- S** Steve Barclay 03:07
Yeah, there's been a couple of nice days in the in the weather here this last week.
- R** Ryan Fleury 03:13
Yay, sunshine.
- R** Rob Mineault 03:15
This winter seemed to take forever to get through. I don't know if that's how you guys felt about that. But I just felt like I didn't - I think it's just we had screwy weather this this winter. We had some cold snaps fairly late in the winter. That's unusual for us. So it just I think it's made it feel like the winter just dragged on and on.

S Steve Barclay 03:36
Yep. It did.

R Ryan Fleury 03:39
We keep hearing that, you know, to hear the cherry blossoms row now plants are starting to come up. You know, we have greenery on our on our raspberry bushes again. So yeah, the signs are here.

R Rob Mineault 03:50
I you know, I read something about cherry blossoms specifically how I think because of global warming. They're all blossoming a lot sooner in the year now.

T Tanner Gers 04:00
Yeah, there was actually a I saw a news article about that there was some Japanese place where they they monitor and they've been monitoring the cherry blossoms for like 200 years or something. And this is the earliest that they've been out in time.

R Rob Mineault 04:18
So I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

T Tanner Gers 04:21
Well, it just means that the climates changing.

R Rob Mineault 04:24
Which is bad

R Ryan Fleury 04:26
I wonder though, we've had less of an impact on Mother Earth in the last year that we would have had if this pandemic hadn't hit. We have less air travel. We have less people in the roads. We have less people in the parks. Animals are coming out. I wonder if that has something to do with it. And maybe with the cars on the road.

- R** Rob Mineault 04:48
I see there's a new documentary on Netflix called Seaspiracy.
- S** Steve Barclay 04:53
Oh, oh, yeah, I watched it.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:54
Oh, did you?
- S** Steve Barclay 04:55
Oh, it'll infuriate you.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:58
yeah, we're screwed, right? Because we've we've pretty much wrecked the ocean is that is that pretty much the long and the short of it?
- S** Steve Barclay 04:59
The worst takeaway for me of the entire documentary was seeing the charities that you think are doing something about it, and finding out that not only are they not doing something about it, but they hardly even know what the issues are. There, they've just become self sustaining charities that are that are basically just bringing money in to keep the charity going. And they aren't really effecting change in any way. Like what one of the ones I used to support was, was an outfit called Earth Island Institute. They were the the group that put it together that documentary on the dolphins and being slaughtered on the cove.
- R** Rob Mineault 05:11
The Cove
- S** Steve Barclay 05:45
That's right, okay. And the guy who, who, you know, he used to be a dolphin trainer. And he was part of that organization, he has quit and he's no longer lending his name to the

the organization anymore because they're not doing anything.

R Rob Mineault 06:05
That sucks. That sucks. Yeah.

S Steve Barclay 06:08
Yeah, that's -

R Ryan Fleury 06:08
What I find really sad is that, you know, once we get all our ships and boats and stuff back in the water, we're going to be just killing marine life left, right and center again, because they've all started coming back. We're just killing everything.

R Rob Mineault 06:22
Welcome to the show, everybody.

T Tanner Gers 06:27
Can you can you tell this isn't the good news episode?

R Ryan Fleury 06:29
We are sad race.

R Rob Mineault 06:33
That's right. Humans bad. Yeah.

R Ryan Fleury 06:36
Coyotes good.

R Rob Mineault 06:39
Hey, speaking of the good news show, did we get our email flooded with responses about

Pepe LePew?

- R** Ryan Fleury 06:45
We absolutely did. We haven't got that much email I think for any other show we've ever done.
- R** Rob Mineault 06:53
Are you -- are you serious?
- R** Ryan Fleury 06:55
No, there was no email.
- R** Rob Mineault 06:56
Okay., I thought I touched upon a nerve or something.
- R** Ryan Fleury 07:10
No, no, sorry.
- T** Tanner Gers 07:12
I'm becoming more and more convinced that our only listeners are the ones who show up for the Tuesday gloom room and the Thursday pub nights
- R** Ryan Fleury 07:19
And guests we get on the show.
- R** Rob Mineault 07:23
Hey, Ryan.
- R** Ryan Fleury 07:25
Yeah.

R Rob Mineault 07:25
Hey, what are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 07:27
Today we are speaking with Tanner Gers. Who is a blind individual hoping or working towards bringing blind soccer to the 2028 Paralympics.

R Rob Mineault 07:39
Yeah, this is really cool. He's a really cool guy. Well, before we go too far down any rabbit holes or skunk holes? Let's, let's go ahead and bring Tanner on.

R Ryan Fleury 07:51
Alright, so Tanner, thank you so much for taking some time to join us this evening. I am Ryan. And joining us in the room is Steve Barclay.

S Steve Barclay 07:59
Hello there.

R Ryan Fleury 08:00
And Rob Mineault.

R Rob Mineault 08:01
Hello, and greetings.

T Tanner Gers 08:03
Thanks so much for having me. I'm super, I'm really excited to be here.

R Ryan Fleury 08:07
We're excited to have you here. You were a guest that Rob had actually sent me information on to get booked onto the show. So it's it's interesting watching a couple of videos on you. And your story is I think a little similar to mine on how you lost your sight.

And the main reason we wanted to get you on was what you're planning to do for the 2028 Paralympics. But we'll get to that.



Rob Mineault 08:37

Oh, you know what, that's a good segueway. Ryan. Let's start, let's start there. Tanner so can you, what can you tell us about about how you lost your sight?



Tanner Gers 08:44

Today I'm 38 years old. When I was 21, though, 21 years old, I was in a terrible auto accident. A tree came to the windshield and hit me in the face. I was in the middle of enlisting into the military I'd already taken my AAS Bab and knew that I was gonna be an air traffic controller and just have a, you know, super motivated, influenced by 9/11 then I had that I had already moved back in with my parents because my lease was over at my apartment like it was just ready to go. And then that I had that accident and I woke up in the hospital totally blind since then just you know, figuring things out trying to live life independently and put the life back together and you know, leave a positive positive mark.



Ryan Fleury 09:37

Yeah, it's interesting you know, this is Ryan, I was in a car accident, severed my optic nerves shattered my face woke up three days later, totally blind. And so, you know, hearing your story just kind of almost gave me not a flashback but took me back to that time I was I think 23/24 at the time. It had to have been tough because, I know for myself, there was a lot of anger and a lot of depression. And so what you've been able to accomplish is and I'm not going to use the word inspiring, because I hate that word. But it is motivating and encouraging to people to, to show that life doesn't end, because you have this disability or this difference.



Tanner Gers 10:22

Yeah. I mean, I always try to look at the upside, like, what's the positive thing? And when I think about you and your story, I mean, you're, you know, Rob tells me that you're remarkably more handsome now.



Ryan Fleury 10:36

That's what I've been told.

R Rob Mineault 10:38
You weren't supposed to share that.

R Ryan Fleury 10:43
Thanks, Rob. You're a sweetheart.

R Rob Mineault 10:45
I'm a sucker for that mustache.

R Ryan Fleury 10:49
That's right.

T Tanner Gers 10:53
I saw I saw a YouTube video that the guy sent me where you were being interviewed, and you talked about your your father at your bedside giving you a attitude adjustment. And I, as a father myself, I, when you when you said that I just went, Oh, good dad. Yeah, you know, it's so funny, because like, I had this a really, we'll call it rocky relationship with my dad. And, you know, it was really, one, there was a lot of absence there. And, you know, I desperately, desperately, you know, wish there was something more and, and, like, seek approval, and, you know, I have certainly some daddy issues. And it was just, you know, so, you know, the universe aligns itself and in moments that, you know, cannot really be described in why or how this happened. But, you know, for those words that come out of his mouth, at the time of this came, just the complexity onion of, of what I just described before us, you know, saying in describing what he said to me, it just meant so much it moved me so much, it was just the perfect thing that I needed to put me into motion. And I'm forever grateful for it.

R Rob Mineault 12:20
Can you talk to us a little bit about what that experience was, like, in terms of how strong of a support system did you have? And, and what were those, you know, first, first few steps for you like?

T Tanner Gers 12:32

Yeah, great question. So, just to set the context a little bit. So, you know, my, my losing my sight was just, you know, that was that wasn't even really in focus. It was at the time, it was just survival. So I had, I had a brain infection that was killing me, I had multiple brain surgeries. After, you know, like, I was alive, I guess. I was, I, my accident was in March, and I got out Memorial Day weekend. And so I was I was in the hospital for a little bit. And, you know, still just survival. My last brain surgery that actually happened was in October and November of that year, and then I had another one on the books for the next year around my birthday in February. But my support system was, it was like my Mom, like, just side by side, I needed so much medical attention and care. I was on at home IVs like four times a day, just two boxes of medications. doctor's appointment after a doctor's appointment from, you know, the, you know, the neurologist and ophthalmologist to the facial reconstruction surgery team to the you know, the occupational therapy to, you know, the psychiatry to, you know, to the actual neurosurgeon, you know, all these, you know, just so many different appointments and you know, It was my mom that really pushed me, she's - we're from the south- I was born in southern Louisiana, and she self identifies as a mean snapping bitch.

R Ryan Fleury 14:19
And we need to get her on the show.

T Tanner Gers 14:22
Yes, she's this like, you know, a Cajun woman she's 4'11" and just all-powerful and, I mean, I'm I can barely move like, I'm still recovering, like going through brain surgeries and all that garbage. And she's got me like, tried to get fitted on a tandem bicycle. You know, just push but you know, so she's definitely just magic on-demand. Yeah, my mom.

S Steve Barclay 14:50
Okay, good mom.

R Rob Mineault 14:52
But so it sounds like really, in terms of like dealing with the sight issue was kind of like sort of at the bottom of the list. Because of all these other things that you sort of had to get through first.



Tanner Gers 15:04

Yeah, cuz I didn't even, I literally did not know that I was going to live until January. So I my accident was March 28 2004 out of the hospital, Memorial Day weekend '04 you know, and then I didn't know that the brain infection was gone until like, late January or early February of '05. So it wasn't even until then that I really started to address the blindness. I mean, I was struggling with it along the way. You know, it's like learning how to piss, learning how to brush your teeth without getting toothpaste everywhere, like, all the little things. So, but I didn't get a formal training, I guess until 2005.



Rob Mineault 15:50

So, so once you work through all that stuff, though, did you find that that gave you a little bit of perspective, when it did come down to "Okay, like I'm alive. And I'm, I can figure the rest of my life out now. And I just have to build it in a different way than than it was before." Did you find that that was maybe an easier process because you had to go through all that other stuff first?



Tanner Gers 16:16

I mean, I think the people that know me best know that I just am willing, you know, I might be impatient or short tempered with you know, the close relationships that I have in my life only because I demand so much of them, but I'm incredibly patient. It just willing to withstand so much weight, you know, across the shoulders, just relentless blizzard-like, oppression. And people say like, what prepare you for that? And it's like, yes, the I think that definitely the medical struggle played a part but also to just like growing up. So these are all the places that I live before I started high school. So I was born in Lafayette, Louisiana. I lived in Orlando, Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, Mobile, Alabama, Houston, Texas, Anaheim, California. Several different places in and around Lafayette, you know, like, Karen Crow, and, you know, with other family members around that area, then we moved to Tucson, Arizona, and I was still in eighth grade. And, you know, so we moved around a lot and always being the new kid really kind of, you know, that constant adaptation to change, I think is really what helped prepare me to deal with this blindness.



Rob Mineault 17:39

So then, so once you once you did sort of land on your feet, and and had to figure out okay, well, what's next? What was next what what happened?

T

Tanner Gers 17:55

I was, you know, so again, Amen. Praise so much love for you, mom. I hope that, you know, maybe one day you hear this. They kept just pushing me, helping me believe in myself. You know, combined with - well, you know what my, my dad told me, but I had already enrolled in - I enrolled in school that fall semester before. So I had two brain surgeries, the fall semester before. I just knew, I just knew that if I'm going to do something, if I'm going to be something if I'm going to make something of my life, then it's going to be up to me. And I don't even know what hurdles are in front of me. I know there's a ton. Like, in the back of my head. I knew technology was was was behind me, you know, advancements there. I knew that I was going to get it. But I didn't know JAWS, I didn't know. I didn't know how I was going to read a book. I didn't know anything. And so I went after it. But I started working and I started going to school. And then I started working. So in '06, I got my job. rolled the dice. So lucky, so blessed. The first job I applied to I got a job. So working full time, going to school full time. Well, boy bought a house in peak time of the market in '06, and Dad - and so I come from a line of entrepreneurs. So my dad, my dad's dad, etc. And so I was just you know, you know, in my head, just, you know, trying to figure out this I was in this new world of blindness and so there was so many different problems to be solved and things to be done. Everybody, I think everybody handles it differently. And then how do we manage the change and find our feet again, when you realize that you know you're you're you finally are going to do something with your life. For me. Was it was going into the military and you know, putting the flag on your chest and, and giving you know, some service and then being taken away and then trying to re emerge as something new, something better. Something that you can be proud of. For me, that was just, that was a really complicated struggle that even today, I still feel like is, is changing?

R

Ryan Fleury 20:25

Well, and for me, losing my sight actually gave me a direction to go in my life. Because at that point, I'd been wandering around, I was estranged from my mom and dad, my support, it was my uncle. And so you know, I didn't know what I was doing with my life. And then when I lost my sight is like you, okay, I'm gonna have to learn technology, learn JAWS, learn, you know how to maybe use a computer because a call center looked like it was going to be the job I was going to be doing. Right. But it's interesting how, you know, you get thrown a curveball, and it kind of sheds a light on things you never thought would be become a part of your life.

T

Tanner Gers 21:04

Well, this just got really philosophical. Yeah, yeah. You know, I don't know, if it, you know, You know, the thing that really got me to change my perspective about my life, was,

you know, beep baseball, and just learning about sports for the blind. You know, I've always been a good worker and physical expression has been something that I found release and passion and, and, and so that, you know, I felt like that was taken away from me, and then having the, you know, a chance to, to reemerge as you know? I I can still be an athlete, like, I can still physically express myself. And, and then what's possible within this realm? And, and how far can I push it? That just, that was the the fuel on on my pilot light of motivation.

R

Ryan Fleury 22:03

And sports were a big part of your family's life. You know, I recall, I think you guys were skiing, and, you know, just outdoor activities galore. So I'm sure that was, you know, therapeutic for you. And also giving you strength to think about looking into sports for the blind and what might be available.

T

Tanner Gers 22:21

It also gave you a way to put on a uniform with the flag on your chest represent your country. in, in 2011, it was Guadalajara, Mexico, they just built this stadium, it was so nice. And these people were just amazing. And I had my first track meet was earlier that year, I ended up making the National team. And then I somehow got a slot here for the Pan American team. So South and North America competing in track and field and swimming and all these other events. And so anyway, I ended up doing well on the long job. And, you know, I had this like huge, heavy golden metal put around my neck. And they played the national anthem, and everybody's quiet, you know, for the United States of America. And I mean, that moment just shook me to my core. And, and it was nothing short of amazing.

R

Rob Mineault 23:22

So I'm curious, though, like, so at one point where At what point after you you lose your vision do you consider sports as sort of an outlet?

T

Tanner Gers 23:33

I never considered sports. It was coincidence. Like, again, it's like the universe just lines up things. So appropriately, you know, so I'm working full time with one school full time, right? And so I go to school during the day, I work at night, and I get off at 1030. And, you know, so the thing that I like to do at the end of the day is watch the tonight show. So if para transit picks me up like right at 1030 and we scoot across town or not across town but

down the way to get to my house like as soon as I get there The Tonight Show starting and so this is Monday night. And you know we pull up to the house I get in I've got my dog AJ with me. And I turn on the TV and there's a commercial. Yeah, the commercial meant you know cuz it goes from the news right into the Tonight Show. There's no commercial break, like sports then Tonight Show. And so the commercial meant that I missed it. The monologue, and comedies is a stand up comedy and comedy is just been a huge positive influence on my life. So that's what I like to do. And so I'm just like, I'm sulking a little bit. So you know, just looking for the positive. And then, you know, the news jangle comes on, and I'm like, Oh my god, the News is still on. Well, it's if anybody listens to the news, the local news, it's, it's at the end of the shows sports, they did national sports, they break for commercial than they do local sports. And so they're recapping all the local sports for the weekend. Well, this weekend, just so happened, that they ran a story about beep baseball. And so it was like the universe just created this one moment, where I catch the news, the one time that they happen to show a blind sport and baseball nonetheless. And so that moment, that was four years after I lost my sight. And not one person had ever mentioned blind sports to me ever. Wow. It was, it was incredible.

R

Rob Mineault 25:48

That's really interesting. Because, you know, I think we always feel like we have we have an organization up here called BC Blind Sports. And they, you know, they certainly are fairly well known, but I just, it makes me wonder how many people are, are in that boat where they they do lose their sight, and they just they never find out about a lot of these organizations, or a lot of these opportunities that that are out there.

R

Ryan Fleury 26:17

Yeah, I mean, seriously.

T

Tanner Gers 26:21

That's why I'm so passionate about, you know, you know, talking about sports, right? So, you know, having the soccer, you know, having, you know, having all those sports things mentioned, in my bio, whenever I'm being, you know, introduced or doing webinars or whatever, that's really important to me, and that's a strategically put there, just to create awareness. You know, I could put something else about my professional career, but I choose to do that, because that, to me, couldn't really make a difference.

R

Rob Mineault 26:52

Yeah, I mean, there are a lot of blind sports, both adapted or just, they're just plain have been created for blind or partially sighted participants, they have track and track and field snowboarding, downhill skiing, cross country skiing,

R

Ryan Fleury 27:09
tandem cycling, you name it

R

Rob Mineault 27:11
yeah.

T

Tanner Gers 27:12
Racecar driving.

R

Ryan Fleury 27:16
Tell us about that experience.

R

Rob Mineault 27:22
You know, you laugh, but even like, you know, stuff, like stuff that you would never think that could be adapted, is adapted. I mean, certainly they have they have Alpine, you know, downhill alpine skiing for for blind and partially sighted people. So I mean, you know, there, there's, there's tons out there, it's just it. And usually it's just a matter of, you know, adaptations here and there that that make it a viable sport. So let's segue in from that, though, into into the soccer conversation, because I'm fascinated about that. Tell us what, what you're planning and and how all of that came about?

T

Tanner Gers 27:59
Well, I gotta say, right up from the right up top is that I take absolutely no credit for this. I just happen to be, again, at the right place at the right time with the right path. So Mark Lucas, who's been, you know, like a three decade, you know, steward, the United States Association of Blind Athletes just retired late last year as their Executive Director. And prior to doing so, you know, I have a long standing relationship with USABA. Going back since, you know, I believe 2011. And I'm a lifetime member of theirs. And they supported me, you know, doing track cycling. They supported me in terms of facilitating goalball tournaments. And they also wanted to figure out some relational opportunities with the

National Baseball Association, which I serve on the Board of. And so Mark came to work while serving on the board at the in National Baseball Association, and BBA. He was telling us about, you know, his roadmap for 2028 started in 2018 and 10 year strategic plan to bring a team of soccer players to the Paralympics. And he explained how, you know, this is the only sport that the United States has not competed in the Paralympics or the Olympics is five sides soccer, blind soccer. And I love soccer. I played indoor soccer, outdoors, soccer, both me and my brother. And you know, so that really attracted me and I just started doing more and more and more working with Mark and then Kevin Broussard. You know, with USABA, and they, you know, started telling me more and we just started just became a great collaboration. And so, you know, one of the one of the things that they really needed help with is athlete development, trying to create talent pipeline. And so part of that, you know, gets back to the awareness, right. So one of the things that I'm I'm really good at, is create awesome relationships, get people excited, and, and, and lead them into the direction that is collectively positive. So, you know, they're, they're struggling to get these athletes like together, they're all separated. It's one athlete here, one athlete, they're one athlete here, one athlete there, they tell me about this, and I'm here in Phoenix, and then, you know, before you know it, like, we've got four athletes together, you know, for totally blind athletes ready to play soccer and Phoenix, and it's five besides soccer. So that's four in the field, one goalie, you know, so that kind of caught their attention, right? And so, and now, you know, they're they're saying, you know, are you Do you want to play? Do you want to coach, do you want to, you know, how do you want your what, what can we do? You know, how do you want to be involved, it's like, man, I just feel so pumped to be a part of it. Like, if, if I were to play, you know, and that was the right thing for the team. Great. I, I am not like, you know, charting a plan architecting a plan for me, you know, 92 years old to run into the 2028 games, and I think I'm going to play, right, but, but just to be a part of establishing something and getting off the ground and getting it to come to fruition as legendary as the first blind soccer team in the United States. To me, man, that fires me up. Yeah, that is pretty cool.

R

Rob Mineault 31:53

So can you can you step us through how this sport is adapted?

T

Tanner Gers 31:57

Yeah, so great question. So if you think of it more like indoor soccer, if you know about indoor soccer, then that's going to help, you know, put some context around this. But so, you know, we're gonna think smaller, less players, right? It's not that big soccer field, we've got less players smaller field, it's 20 meters wide, 40 meters long. So we've got 220 meter squares making up each half the field. Along along the sides of the field are walls. Okay.

Every player in the field except for the goalies is a B1 athlete, they're totally blind or close to totally blind, they have no functional use of their vision. Okay. And then, on either side of the field, one coach, there's a coach. That's kind of guiding and coaching and calling from the sideline, there's one coach that's on the goal that you're trying to score. So like the goalie, I'm trying to score against the goalie, well, I've got a spotter behind that goal, helping me orient myself to the goal. And, and vice versa for the other team. So that's the kind of like landscape if you will 20 by 40, multiple spotters, and coaches guiding the eight totally blind athletes for on each team around that field. As they try to pass the ball, dribble the ball, shoot the ball and score the ball.



Rob Mineault 33:29

Now is the Is there anything special about the ball? Is the ball adapted at all? Or is it just a standard regulation soccer ball?



Tanner Gers 33:37

Oh, great question that that would have probably been appropriate for me to describe that ball. Yeah, so the ball is, you know, I was surprised when I got mine in the mail. It's smaller. It's not like a maybe I've just grown since I'm playing soccer, but to me, it seems like a little bit smaller of a ball. And it's got ball bearings in five different pockets on the outside of it. So as long as it's moving, you can hear it pretty clearly.



Rob Mineault 34:04

Yeah, that's much like blind hockey. It's it's been adapted in a similar way. The the quote puck is in Steve or Ryan, do you guys recall how big that the puck is?



Tanner Gers 34:18

It's bigger than a standard pack. I don't know how big, Ryan played at once.



Rob Mineault 34:22

Yeah, I think it's it's two or three times the size of it of a standard puck. But it's the same thing. It's got some sort of, it's not ball bearings, but it there's some sort of metal things in there that make it rattle and, and it very much the same way.



Tanner Gers 34:37

So it's super exciting. So one update, I will drop here. I probably shouldn't. But I will say you know, so COVID locked us down, right. Last year, you know, we've got some USABA had secured some funding. And, you know, to really kind of develop this team this plan is that we were bringing in coaches from all over the world, and, and athletes from all over the country to come in, where, you know, our US coaches are getting coached up with some of the best strategies and techniques from a coaching perspective. And then the athletes are receiving that data, that feedback in real time. And just really trying to advance the foundational starting point for this program really kind of kick things off. So that happened, and then COVID happened. So that all got canceled. But this year, in 2021, we have a tentative event planned in early August at the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center. Right. And so things are back in full swing,



Rob Mineault 35:56

What's the process been like to to actually start this up and to, to build this team? When did this all start?



Tanner Gers 36:07

So the the initial conceptualization was in 2018, that's when everything you know, Mark, and Kevin and Kat were really putting this together over at USABA. And then when they outlined this plan, they secured some funding. And now we're going through that process of, you know, actually becoming that governing body, I'm going to mess up the acronyms. It's not NGB, it's not the national governing body, but it's it's like an equivalent or even higher than certification or qualification process. So that USABA will now be basically the equivalent to the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee, as as it is related to goalball. And five side soccer specifically, right. So even though like, you know, Judo is a blind sport, that's still under the usopc, whereas goalball and five besides soccer, so even so for contextual background to for goalball, if for those that don't know is that USABA now has their own training center in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where, you know, that's where the high performance stuff is going down for goalball. And so the plan will be the same thing for soccer, five side soccer is that we'll have the United States Association of Blind Athletes will have a National Training Center. They're looking at different locations across the United States. One has not been decided, as of yet, but yeah, it'll be just like that, where we're with Team USA, but from a paperwork perspective, a funding perspective, organizational logistics planning perspective, USABA is going to own goalball and five a side soccer.



Rob Mineault 38:06

So does it ever really blow your mind when you think about the fact that you know, here you are involved in World Class athletics, and you hadn't even really considered sports before you lost your sight? Like, do you ever like just to sort of go, I can't believe that this is where I'm at.



Tanner Gers 38:28

Oh, man, I you know, thank you so much for bringing my attention and gratitude to that. That feeling right there. That is just so beautiful. I mean, seriously, seriously, like, you couldn't have said it better, literally, from nothing, from losing everything with regards to sport to being able to influence the creation and manifestation of the first blind five side soccer team The United States has ever seen. To me. Wow.



Rob Mineault 38:57

Yeah, yeah, exactly. Or even, you know, competing, even competing in a Paralympic sport. I mean, that's your, that's world class athletics and, and you've won, you know, on top of that.



Tanner Gers 39:13

I'm so blessed. Thank you so much.



Rob Mineault 39:16

So you just got to come on the show, and we'll remind you.



Tanner Gers 39:21

I, I, I you know, I really tried to be just humble. I'm not a I'm not a super big bragger or anything, but man, I am so appreciative. You say that, I think we forget, like on the day to day just individuals, people, we forget all these little things that we do. I don't think we celebrate ourselves enough. You know, we do like, I think about the single moms, the single dads, like the Pete you know, you know, Ryan, you know, a stranger and your parents dealing with the heart, you know, whatever your, your issue is, like, I don't think that we celebrate ourselves on the day to day enough to just, you know what we're accomplishing here. Thank you for helping me take time to reflect on that. Because if we're not supposed to be celebrating ourselves, I'm doing something wrong, man. I don't

have time for humility.

R Ryan Fleury 40:22
Yeah.

T Tanner Gers 40:24
The other thing I wanted to ask you about is you, you said that you were very into comedy and I'm, I'm curious. I'm also very into comedy. And I'm curious if there's any particular comedians that are standouts for you right now. Yeah, you should check this dude out. super fresh face is crushing the circuit right now. Can't believe it. I don't know if y'all heard of him Tanner Gers.

S Steve Barclay 40:50
You're doing comedy now?

T Tanner Gers 40:53
I just said I don't like like to brag on myself. I'm I'm excited about this. Yes, I'm doing I actually have a show tomorrow night. Downtown Phoenix at 8pm at Stand Up Live, the the the place in Phoenix for stand-up.

S Steve Barclay 41:11
That's awesome,

R Ryan Fleury 41:13
If we weren't in Canada, I'd say road trip.

T Tanner Gers 41:19
Get back across the border afterwards and God Damn it, now. we've got to be inside for two weeks.

R Ryan Fleury 41:23

That's right.

T Tanner Gers 41:26
Totally worth it. Tanner's killing it.

R Rob Mineault 41:31
Well, that's, that's really interesting. That's a whole another side, which that wasn't even in the notes here. So this is a whole fresh, new new path. But talk to us about that, like, what prompted you to do that? And and what's that been like?

T Tanner Gers 41:45
Yeah, I mean, anybody who's seen me, like, you know, do my talks. I you know, I often talk about that Tonight Show monologue. And, you know, so comedy has been a part of my life for a really long time. And I started writing, I started writing jokes a while ago. And, you know, last year, my wife and I separated. And so at the end of the year, I was like, oh, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do it. Like, I'm gonna stop writing jokes, and start telling jokes.

R Rob Mineault 42:17
So talk to me a little bit about the about the writing process because I'm kind of curious. So how, how much does do you incorporate the blindness into the act? Is that sort of always at the top of your mind where it's just like, well, I want to write jokes that are just just funny, but I don't necessarily want to have to tie my blindness into the act ... but at the same time, it's something that you kind of can use, or you might want to address like, what's what's that kind of been like for you?

T Tanner Gers 42:48
Yeah, so super awesome question. So here's, here's, I don't think my position or stance is the right one. It's just the one that feels right to me. So I want to just tell jokes that are funny right now. I want to establish myself as being funny. When when I'm when I didn't know. I mean, it makes sense. Like, I'm just new to the comedy game, but when you're starting out, you're doing all these short sets. Right? So I'm doing like five minutes, seven minutes, 10 minutes tops. Right. And, and that's being really generous. It's, it's probably closer to five. And, you know, it's really tough to, you know, tell if you look at it, they're like the great comedians that influenced me in the, in the stories that I want to tell stories like legendary storytellers like Louis CK or Dave Chappelle, like they're telling these

overarching stories that cascade across a period of time, but then they're intertwining smaller stories in between them, and these little side jokes that keep the last coming while they tell the larger funny story. And you have to you have to do that, because you got to keep that audience's attention. They don't want to sit through the five minute story for the one or two laughs along the way. You give them laughs along the way, and they and you build them up to that, you know, to that big story. We create that experience for them. I think it's really, really tough to do in such a short amount of time. And so, yeah, I want to introduce my blindness, because there's so many blind related funny stories to tell, like so many stories, right. And so I'm excited for that moment. But right now, I'm just focusing on just trying to be funny,

- R** Ryan Fleury 44:36
So I have to ask you a question Tanner. Have any of your friends ever said "why are you wearing pink socks"?
- R** Rob Mineault 44:43
No, no, don't.
- R** Ryan Fleury 44:45
Don't trust these guys.
- T** Tanner Gers 44:50
I get all the time. Why are you wearing one white one when black was?
- R** Rob Mineault 44:55
You know, it was Steve. Wasn't that Steve? I think that was Steve.
- R** Ryan Fleury 45:01
Yeah, you guys played along though.
- T** Tanner Gers 45:05
Which made it better he actually went home and gave his wife heck for letting him leave

the house in pink socks. That's right. Right, right, right by. I used to. I used to be super into like be matching and the way that I looked and super fresh, super clean. And my like, you know, I went to the store this one time, and I had these like red and white Nike Air Maxes on one foot. And I had Adidas Shelters on the other. And I'm like, how, how do you not feel that just one huge shoe and there's other really like...

R Ryan Fleury 45:50
Too funny.

T Tanner Gers 45:52
Keep walking along going, I gotta fix this floor. Well, I went to the store, right? And I'm getting all this help. No one said nothing to me. Like, I can imagine the conversations like "did you see the blind guy in aisle 4? Holy shit, that guy, say a prayer?" "Go look, he ain't gonna see you."

R Rob Mineault 46:18
See, there's a lot of gold to be mined for a comedy career. For sure.

T Tanner Gers 46:24
Yeah. Dude, go, I went to an open mic. And I saw some guys bomb their butts off. And then I was like, some guys did good. And I was like, I can do this. And that gave me the confidence. And let me tell you something, though. Like, just like right here, right now, when you tell a joke, and no one laughs You know, you just like you got to like swallow and just keep going. Yeah, you know, is is exhilarating when everybody laughs and it is a kick in the nuts when no one does.

R Rob Mineault 46:57
But I mean, but and I don't know, this might be a stupid question. But like, do you think that being blind and not being able to see the room and read the room in say a conventional way is kind of an advantage? I don't know. I mean, I know that you're picking up on on laughs and what the audience is doing ... but I don't know. I just feel like you don't see people like crossing their arms and just looking unamused if you're bombing. Like, I don't know, like, that could really be an advantage.

T Tanner Gers 47:32
Yeah, I mean, I love your perspective. I think that definitely it can mute the the negative components of like a bomb, right? Yeah, texting, getting up and leaving, you know, crossing their arms or just talking to other people. Yeah, you know, a part of me wishes that I could engage more with the audience. Like, I'll ask questions, like, round of applause for this or something, something about that. And, but sometimes, you know, sometimes I want to pick on the audience. So, you know, I yeah. And my, my pupils, I have one eye and that pupils really dilated because of the optic nerve issue similar to Ryan, but um, you know, so if I just look in a general direction, and like eight people think I'm looking at them. Well, you can totally make that part of your act, though. You could just have somebody feed you a bunch of details about the audience in advance, and you can really freak them out. Oh, See, this is why you surround yourself with smart people. And me like you know, a clock is right twice a day.

R Ryan Fleury 48:58
Well, we've covered a fair bit, but Tanner, what do you do for your day job?

T Tanner Gers 49:03
Yeah, so day job, I am head of partnerships at UsableNet. UsableNet is a technology company that it's been around for 21 years, and is exclusively focused on digital accessibility. So if anybody knows, like the those tools like Wave or Ax, those automated scanning tools, UsableNet built one of those first ones back in the early 2000s. And yeah, so I served as head of partnerships. So I'm on the sales team. And yeah, that's what I that's what I do.

R Rob Mineault 49:39
Man, so we could probably talk to you for an entire podcast just about that as well. Geez. You know, when you Tanner you really need to do more with your life.

T Tanner Gers 49:54
I was starting to feel a real slacker vibe on this guy, right?

R Ryan Fleury 49:59
You really making me look bad

R Rob Mineault 50:05
Where's your Paralympic sport Ryan?

T Tanner Gers 50:07
Where's your Comedy Ryan?

R Ryan Fleury 50:09
Yeah, cuz I'm not funny.

T Tanner Gers 50:13
I'm gonna steal that.

R Rob Mineault 50:19
Come on, Ryan. I want some blind adapted badminton.

R Ryan Fleury 50:23
It's out there.

R Rob Mineault 50:24
Is it? Could be. Yeah, does it beep, does the birdie beep?

R Ryan Fleury 50:29
I don't know how they do it

R Rob Mineault 50:32
Man I suck at Badminton sighted, I can't imagine.

S Steve Barclay 50:36
Yeah.

T Tanner Gers 50:38
I heard they're trying to put American football together for blind people. And that makes me scared.

R Rob Mineault 50:43
That would be scary.

R Ryan Fleury 50:45
Well, that would be just as bad as doing like blind rugby. Can you imagine?

R Rob Mineault 50:48
Oh my god.

T Tanner Gers 50:50
Well, I suppose blind people have every right to injure themselves, same as everyone else.

R Rob Mineault 50:54
Yeah.

S Steve Barclay 50:54
Wow.

T Tanner Gers 50:56
Yeah, I super enjoyed chatting with you guys. I would I would love to come back and hang out and just chat about anything that you guys want to talk about.

R Rob Mineault 51:04
Yeah, we'd love to have you Tanner. Yeah, we would love to have you back on we could certainly certain talk about digital accessibility for an hour or two, I'm sure.

- R** Ryan Fleury 51:12
And before we let you go, is there are you on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube. Can people follow you get in touch with you if they want?
- T** Tanner Gers 51:19
Yeah, I'm everywhere at Tanner Gers. We made it hard so you spell the last name just for letters G-e-r-s. And TannerGers.com or TannerGers anywhere. You can find me but I'm I'm terrible at social media. I'm probably most active on LinkedIn and Facebook.
- R** Rob Mineault 51:49
And are you available for birthday parties or bachelor parties?
- S** Steve Barclay 51:54
Bar mitzvahs?
- T** Tanner Gers 51:56
Right now. I'm only doing Bachelorette stripper parties. Okay,
- R** Rob Mineault 52:01
Yes
- T** Tanner Gers 52:04
Police man or firefighter.
- R** Rob Mineault 52:08
No soccer player
- T** Tanner Gers 52:12
I wouldn't disgrace the game. In in seriousness, though, too, I didn't know. Clearly it was still kind of going you guys edit this far. And I wanted to say as soon as you guys, have you guys ever heard of foresight augmented reality?

S Steve Barclay 52:34
No

T Tanner Gers 52:34
Okay. So I don't know if, if this would be of value to your audience something and it would be considering the the podcast title. But of course it forced out augmented reality is a company that I'm involved with. I am helping them with business development. We just got approved for the Department of Transportation's inclusive design challenge for autonomous vehicles. So 47 companies and universities, we were one of 10 that were selected to go to the to the next round, we got some funding for that. And what we're doing is we're developing, we're using our existing technology and IP but we're developing solutions to make autonomous vehicles rideshare autonomous vehicles accessible for people who are blind, or visually impaired and for the aging population.

S Steve Barclay 53:32
Awesome.

T Tanner Gers 53:33
So yeah, so that's that what that what else that other companies doing, if that's a value to your audience, I would love to talk about that as well.

R Rob Mineault 53:44
Geez. Yeah. So while we can definitely have to talk more about that, for sure.

T Tanner Gers 53:50
Yeah, that's right. And you realize this guy just came on and pitched us on three episodes. He wants to be in showbiz. He's good.

R Ryan Fleury 53:58
All I need to know as an agent. He can be his own age. That's true, too.

R Rob Mineault 54:03

Yeah, that's right. Get into the agent field.

R Ryan Fleury 54:05
There you go.

T Tanner Gers 54:06
Yeah. What's an agent gonna do? He's already got three episodes.

R Rob Mineault 54:14
Oh, yeah.

T Tanner Gers 54:15
So yeah, that's cool. Yeah, if that's Yeah, I mean, that would be really, that'd be really helpful. I love talking about that stuff. I don't know what your guys's perspectives are on accessibility as it relates digital accessibility as it relates to the physical environment.

R Rob Mineault 54:35
That's right in our purview as well. I mean, that's definitely in our wheelhouse, too. So we love it. We love talking about all manner of accessibility, we're big accessibility geeks.

T Tanner Gers 54:49
and I own Canadian assistive technology, one of the distributors up here of assistive technology. Are you really okay? Yeah. Wow. Yeah, that's cool. So are you doing so? You're basically you do the training too, right. So you're doing like, purchasing distribution and then training. Yeah, I make Ryan do the training. Yeah, that makes sense. Now. What's that?

R Ryan Fleury 55:18
I said only on the blindness products. You know, Steve's

S Steve Barclay 55:22

Yeah, yeah. Any any the low vision stuff? That's me.

T Tanner Gers 55:25
Okay. Okay, cool. Wow. That's, that's awesome. How long have you guys been doing that?

R Rob Mineault 55:33
Oh god.

T Tanner Gers 55:35
I'm up to 31 years. I think. Ryan, you're

R Ryan Fleury 55:45
No, no, I started in 2000 in a row. Go so yeah. 21 years. 21. There you go.

R Rob Mineault 55:50
Yeah. And I'm the young puppy. I think it's been 20 maybe 19 or 20.

T Tanner Gers 55:57
Man.

R Rob Mineault 55:58
Yeah, I know. We're old. Okay, well, thank you so much, sir. And best of luck with everything and we'll talk again.

T Tanner Gers 56:08
Thanks, gentlemen. We'll talk soon.

R Rob Mineault 56:10
Okay. Take care. Thanks. Take care. Wow. Well, once again, guys. We have had a guest on that makes us feel terrible about ourselves.

R Ryan Fleury 56:23
Yes, we have a lot of those.

R Rob Mineault 56:24
Yeah, we need to stop doing that. We need to be interviewing underachievers.

R Ryan Fleury 56:29
Although Steve is is running again. So maybe it just makes you an I look bad, Rob.

R Rob Mineault 56:35
Do we know for a fact that he's still running again? Like we heard, we haven't had the update yet. Steve, are you still running?

T Tanner Gers 56:42
Well, I injured my foot last week.

R Rob Mineault 56:44
Ah, here we go.

S Steve Barclay 56:45
I've been out of commission for a week ago. I could barely put weight on my foot for about a couple days. And I'm just kind of waiting for it to get healed. But I am going out for a run tomorrow.

R Rob Mineault 56:57
So it's interesting how foot injuries happen right around Easter and Easter chocolate and turkey dinners.

R Ryan Fleury 57:08
And wine.

- R** Rob Mineault 57:10
Yeah. "I sprained I sprained my ankle getting the turkey out of the oven."
- R** Ryan Fleury 57:13
Yeah, that's right.
- S** Steve Barclay 57:17
No, that was the week the week before I injured myself. I ran three 5k runs.
- R** Rob Mineault 57:22
Wow. Holy cow. Really?
- S** Steve Barclay 57:24
Yeah, that's my goal is to run 15k per week.
- R** Rob Mineault 57:28
Wow, we'll see. And after talking to Tanner, like honestly, we should all be inspired to do something. I will tell you guys what I will walk to the store later and buy a frozen pizza.
- R** Ryan Fleury 57:42
Whoa,
- S** Steve Barclay 57:43
That's a great idea.
- R** Ryan Fleury 57:44
Okay. There you go. Yeah, I was talking to my doctor today about some other health health issues I'm having. And he is pretty much told me now I need to be doing at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week. So

R Rob Mineault 58:01
Whoa

R Ryan Fleury 58:02
That's that's, you know, 115 minutes Isn't that long. That's two and a half hours and a week. So that's my goal. Starting tomorrow.

R Rob Mineault 58:10
Whoa, whoa, hold on. Now, this is big news. I don't know why we didn't lead with this in the show. But okay, let's talk about. Okay, well, so what are you going to do?

R Ryan Fleury 58:18
I've got a, I don't know what it's called. It's an exercise bike here. But it's it's horizontal. So you kind of sit on the floor, and your pedals were in front of you. Okay, oh, it's got a seat and stuff. So it's an exercise bike, with kind of rowing arms attached to it as well. So I'll be pedaling in rowing for the next little while bopping to music down here, in the guitar dungeon. And till I build that up a little bit, and then my wife and I are going to start doing some power walking and just gotta get exercised.

R Rob Mineault 58:49
And here's what here's what you do. You connect that thing to your TV. So that powers to TV and then you then at night when your wife wants to watch all her reality shows like that's the only way that you can watch them is if you're pedaling. She'll keep you going.

R Ryan Fleury 59:09
I'm glad she doesn't listen to the show.

R Rob Mineault 59:13
That's a win win for her.

R Ryan Fleury 59:15
It is

- R** Rob Mineault 59:17
"Hurry up the bachelors on!"
- R** Ryan Fleury 59:20
"It's a commercial, speed up!"
- R** Rob Mineault 59:23
Whoo. All right. Yeah. Hey, Ryan.
- R** Ryan Fleury 59:28
Yeah, Rob.
- R** Rob Mineault 59:30
Hey, where can people find us?
- R** Ryan Fleury 59:32
They can find me on my exercise bike. And I can find Steve probably out pounding the pavement. You are probably playing with your kitty cat.
- R** Rob Mineault 59:42
No, I'll be I'll be in the freezer section at my local save on getting a frozen pizza.
- R** Ryan Fleury 59:47
All right. Well, they can also find us online www.atbanter.com
- R** Rob Mineault 59:51
They can also drop us an email if they so desire. Hashtag rehabilitate Pepe. At cowbell@atbanter.com
- S** Steve Barclay 1:00:03

And they can get us on social media.

- R** Rob Mineault 1:00:12
That's right. That's right, Ned. Oh wait sorry it's not Ned, I don't know what was that dude's name?
- S** Steve Barclay 1:00:20
I don't remember what his name was now it's been years since I've watched it. I mean, all I know is that after after Jackie and I watched it, I walked around the house saying "Them's some fine biscuits". After after about a week, she just smacking cheated, told me that I could never do it again.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:00:35
What was that guy in SlingBlade's name?
- S** Steve Barclay 1:00:40
It's with Billy Billy Bob Thornton, he plays a ex con, who's gotten out of prison and goes to stay with a family.
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:00:50
Now I'll have to see if I can find it
- R** Rob Mineault 1:00:51
it's a classic.
- S** Steve Barclay 1:00:53
He's a little strange.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:00:54
Yeah, it's it's good. It's actually a good Yeah, it's a very good movie. All right. Well, I think that's gonna do it for us this week, guys. Thanks, everybody for listening in. Big thanks to

Tanner Gers and we will see everybody next week.