**Motivational Mondays interview:**

**Molly Fletcher – *Airing* 05.24.2021**

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:02] Molly Fletcher is all about high-performance.

After spendingnearly two decades as one of the *only* female sports agents in the business, she represented some of the greatest athletes on the planet.

Now, an author of 5 books, and a keynote speaker to Fortune 500s — she’s sharing the secrets that helped her thrive in a male-dominated world to rise to the top and then leave it all behind to become a successful entrepreneur.

*This* is Motivational Mondays. I’m your host Max Irzhak, and joining us is Molly Fletcher.

Molly, welcome to the show!

**Molly Fletcher** [00:00:33] Thanks Max, it’s great to be with you.

**Max Irzhak** [00:00:38] As a sports agent, you were constantly surrounded by some of the greatest coaches and athletes in the world. These are people at the very top of their game.

What differentiates the best from the rest?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:00:51] You know, so many things, right. And that was really what brought me into the space that I'm in now. I saw this common thread between Doc Rivers and Tom Izzo and John Smoltz and Matt Kuchar and Erin Andrews. And I thought the way they’re wired, the way they behave, the way they execute, the way they recover, the way they deal with challenges and change — it’s so similar. And so i wrote a book about it. I thought, you know I'm going to put this together and push it out because I think it could help people. I think it’s not only applicable in the sports space, but certainly in the business space. But you know, at their core, they believe in their ability to evolve and change — they embrace change. You know we live in a world that’s constantly changing and I think it’s more important than ever to lean into the change because it’s here to stay at some level. And it’s going to be a constant as we continue sort of in the world that we’re in in regards to technology and all the other things. Change is constant so we have to get comfortable inside of it, we have to recognize that when we get uncomfortable, that’s actually when we grow.

So I saw great athletes lean into change when they didn’t really have to because when you’re a big league baseball player for example, or you’re a PGA TOUR player, you’re only as good as your last game. You’re only as good as your last put. You're only as good as your last tournament. Your last at bat. So they wake up everyday at some level fearful that it could all go away in a moment if they don't continue to produce. So they are always eager to find ways to unlock opportunities to get better — just little tweaks, little pivots.

I mean Smoltzie would be on his way to the park and he’d call me and you know talk about different things he was trying with his slider or his fastball or the way he was navigating a hangnail in his thumb and how he was going to get a hold of the ball the way he needed to — i mean all those things. So you know, they’re not afraid to discover the gaps inside of themselves. They’re not afraid to discover the opportunity to show up and lead even better, the best ones. They manage their energy at some level more than their time. They recover really fast. And you know, at the end of the day, they’re brave, they’re courageous, and they’re not afraid to be on that world stage and have the ball in their hand — they want the ball, they want the ball when it’s tight, they want the ball with two seconds left on the freethrow line, they want it on the bottom of the seventh inning, they want it. Or the bottom of the ninth, they want it.

**Max Irzhak** [00:03:08] I’m always interested in the *why* behind the challenges people take on.

What drew you to the world of sports agency in the first place?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:03:17] You know, i was a student athlete in college — i played tennis at Michigan State, and i always wanted to stay in the sports space in some way. I truthfully didn’t know what that meant, what that might even look like. But I tell the story that’s sort of fun. I moved to Atlanta with about two-thousand bucks, and lived on a couch of a friend of mine’s apartment, and then negotiated a deal to teach tennis for free rent at an apartment complex — which gave me a little bit more time. And so I did different internships, different opportunities inside and around the sports space and then I got an opportunity with a small agency — really just doing marketing and endorsement deals. But then saw an opportunity. And for me it was what fascinates me about the agent business is that it’s an opportunity to serve an athlete or a coach or broadcaster inside what is a really short window of time. That is incredibly unique. I mean these guys and gals make in 4 years, 5 years, what most of us make in a lifetime. And you can’t get it back, right? The clock is constantly ticking, and it’s a very relational business. It’s about connecting, serving, supporting, and maximizing that window of time and so i found myself sort of in a spot where i saw an opportunity and as i teach and believe and speak about so much i think when we see those opportunities in our lives, we’ve got to have the courage to get a little bit uncomfortable and step into them — and so i did. And it’s been a fun journey.

**Max Irzhak** [00:04:45] I’ve heard you say that too many people think that greatness is reserved for somebody *else*; that it’s not for them.

How do people push past the self-limitations that they place on themselves?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:04:58] Super common, right? I think first of all, be gentle on yourself. I mean lots of people have limiting beliefs. We all do in different moments and different opportunities and times in our lives. How do we push past it? I think we have to identify what are those limiting beliefs? What are the things and the stories that we’re telling ourselves that are holding us back that aren’t serving us, that aren't allowing us to show up as our best? And how do we then shift the story that we tell ourselves to be one that *does* allow us to serve others, that does allow us to support; that does allow us to be our best selves. And you know, storytelling if you will, is a big deal. We can jam a story up in our head and we’ll believe it, right? And we have to take the time to get clear on what are the stories that i'm telling myself around why i am or why i am not taking time to exercise? You know, what are the stories that I'm telling myself that are causing me to not feel comfortable to speak up in a meeting? You know, what is the story that i'm telling myself that’s causing me to not go after this promotion or opportunity that i actually think would be a good one for me? But I have these limiting beliefs. We have to get clear on what are those areas of our lives; get clear on that story that’s holding us back and then reframe it to be one that takes us where we want to go.

**Max Irzhak** [00:06:20] Many of our listeners will soon be graduating from college and applying to their first jobs.

There’s really 2 parts that are critical to landing the job. The interview itself, and the salary negotiation. And when that topic of compensation comes up, a lot of people get *really* uncomfortable — and unfortunately leave a lot of money on the table.

What’s your advice for negotiating with confidence?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:06:46] Preparation is key to that, right? The more prepared we are, the more comfortable we are asking for what we want and doing it with confidence. And the truth is that the person on the other side of the table, they can tell. They can tell if you mean it or not, they can tell if you believe it or not, they can tell if you’re going to walk or not, they can tell. So when we’re really prepared, when we’ve done the kind of research — both on the person that we’re negotiating with — when we know what they’re worried about, what they’re excited about, what does success look like for them? How do I at the end of the day show up to potentially make my boss’ life easier and better, take things off their plate, be at some level sort of a hero for them? Getting clear on all of those things so that you know who you're even having these conversations with, how are they’re wired, what matters most to them, is so important. So preparation, comps, facts — we want to lean into all of that. It helps us with our level of confidence inside of those moments.

And then I think the tone, the timing, the way in which we ask for what we want is key. One of the things that I believe deeply is that when we add value to the people that we negotiate with, we send a really powerful message, we frame-up the conversation in a way where they’ve already got a little bit of a feel for the way we do what we do. I’ll tell you a quick story. I had a guy that I was interviewing, who was just a really smart kid. And he was young, he was coming right out of college. He had done an internship for the 49ers. And he comes in and sits down in the office to interview for a marketing role, to help me, and us, navigate marketing opportunities for Doc Rivers and Mark DeRosa and John Smoltz and all these guys. And we had a great conversation, and he seemed like a really sharp guy, and he had come through a reference. And he leaves. 2 hours later, i got a full — literally it was a four or five page with no typos perfectly prepared marketing plan for Doc Rivers. Wow! I mean in a matter of 2 hours i went “oh my God”. I mean A, he did it without being asked. B, he had probably gotten his head inside of that before he walked in. C, he had them in my inbox in 2 hours. The message that he sent inside of that, like I really want this job. “I want this job, and by the way i can do this job… check this out, here's my plan”. That takes a little bit of courage though, right? Because he could’ve put some stuff on paper that you know he had a fair amount of knowledge around, and a fair amount of competence around, but it wasn’t all perfect as far as the ideas — but it was pretty darn good, right? Enough that I went “wow” and we pulled the trigger on him. And he’s now a thriving agent in the broadcast space which is just wonderful to see. So that takes courage, it takes preparation. It takes going and doing a little bit more.

We have 3 daughters. I always talk about “you’ve got to do a little bit more than everybody else; you’ve got to put in a little more effort, make that extra phone call.” When you’re sitting in that office for that initial conversation, or even a followup conversation with the person you want to hire you, I always had 2 goals: to get them to like and respect me enough to either hire me or help me. And if they weren't going to hire me, that’s okay, but hopefully they will respect and like me enough by dropping three names in my lap that I can go potentially ask those other people for advice as well. But, we’ve got to know something that they don’t think we should know. We’ve got to know something that surprises them, that shows them we’ve put in the work. That we respect and appreciate their time, and we’ve got in our head and heart into the role in advance of this time together.

**Max Irzhak** [00:10:16] I absolutely love what you shared in that story, where that guy went out of his way to actually show the work that he would be doing before he bagan. So many people don't do that. They think that I arrive at the interview, we chat for a little bit, and then I wait for the offer to come in.

But that little bit of showing what will you do on day 1, in your first 90 days — that makes all the difference.

**Molly Fletcher** [00:10:40] Absolutely, I mean I tell business leaders and particular people from a business development perspective “act like you have the business before you have the business”. Behave in a way that sends a message to the person that you want to work for, work with. When I was recruiting players, it was always my mindset: behave in a way that sends that message. And part of that is putting in the work; taking the time to demonstrate that this relationship matters.

**Max Irzhak** [00:11:08] One of my favorite concepts that you teach is for people to lean into failure; for them to view failure as a hidden gift. Why are rejection and failure so important to progress?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:11:19] Well to me it means you’re leaning into opportunities, to challenges — it means you’re being a little bit fearless. It means you're going for things, right? I saw it all the time with great athletes. If a golfer rebuilt their swing a little bit and had to tweak it, that caused some challenges potentially when they got back on the golf course — but if they were playing the long game, if they were going for a shift they knew they needed to make to improve their game long term, you know you stay the course. But it didn't mean it always worked perfectly right when they leaned into that change. And i saw it all the time with baseball players having to sort of tweak their arm slot potentially if they were a pitcher — and yeah you might throw the first 20 in the dirt, but then maybe you’ve grabbed a little bit of velocity on the ball after that.

So we have to when we’re failing we know that we’re pushing ourselves, we know that we’re getting a little bit uncomfortable. Think about when you go to work out, right – when you max out for example, you’re potentially going to at some level need a spot — and that’s okay! That’s a good thing. And so i think about it at that level, it means that we’re being a little bit fearless. I also think when we have failed, there is so many opportunities inside of those moments to recognize the gifts in it, to learn from it. I think about tennis matches when i was in college that i lost but i completely should’ve won. Where every other girl on the team won, and I was the only one that lost. And those were moments that were awful in the moment. But then I went out and won 8 in a row. I was out on the ball machine the next morning getting after it trying to fix the problem that I thought I had. I had a tough Fall term freshman year. When I went to college I was playing tennis, I was in a sorority — I was going to class *periodically*. And i didnt do real well. But then I 4.8 eight terms in a row after that. And so if we learn from those moments, if we recover fast from those moments, then i think at the end of the day we’ll win the long game.

**Max Irzhak** [00:13:29] Let’s talk about managing our energy.

College students are trying to balance a lot all at once. Between school, work, family, friends, internships … a lot of us feel exhausted and drained at the end of the day.

How do you avoid burning out?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:13:47] Well I think with intention, with preparation, with planning, I believe it’s incredibly important to almost manage our energy at some level more than our time. And what i mean by that is i think we’ve got to pull back and gain clarity. What are the things that give us energy — what are those things? Is it working out, is it going for a walk, is it we’ve got to get great sleep, we’ve got to eat right — what are the things though that give you energy that give you joy, right? What are those things? For me it’s playing golf with my husband, it’s hanging out with our 3 daughters, it’s going for a walk with our dogs. What are those things? And then protect that time in your schedule. I think we live in this overly-scheduled, overly-busy world, and if we don’t — with intention — protect the things that bring us energy, then the world and everybody else will decide where our energy goes. And the truth is for a day or two, for a week maybe, all of that is fine – but at scale, over a long period of time, if we don’t take care of ourselves, if we don’t pour in at some level to the things that give us energy, then we can’t give anything away to anybody else that’s close to us and that matters to us in our lives. So I think it starts with clarity — what gives you energy, what drains your energy. Sometimes we don't even realize the things that are so draining in our lives. And if we can pull back and get really clear on what those are, and then say “how can i maybe delegate, minimize, navigate these a little bit differently, manage my energy and emotion around them a little bit better”... that can be really powerful. So, you know I wrote a book called ‘The Energy Clock’ that did pretty well — and so now we teach a multi day program around managing our energy. I think that in so many moments in our lives, things sort of come back to that because it changes the way we show up, it changes the way we perform.

**Max Irzhak** [00:15:40] You mentioned intention a couple times. How do you use intention to reach your goals?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:15:47] Well I mean we all need a North Star, right? We all need to know what is that big hairy audacious goal, right? What is that BHAG, I call it? What’s that North Star? If we just react in life to things that come at us, i think what’s risky about that is we get to the end of our lives, we get to our ninetieth birthday party — and some of your listeners they’re young and may not think about those kind of things — but i’ve seen it a lot. And their ladder has for years and years has been leaning up against the wrong wall. They’re chasing the wrong stuff.

I was on a boat with a really good friend of mine — a big time executive for a huge Fortune top 50 company, and she was just exhausted. She said I'm completely fried. She said “Mol, I just got this promotion. You know they’re giving me a raise they say in 8 months, but they haven’t done it yet. I mean I'm gaining weight, I'm not taking time to work out. I'm totally miserable, i'm waking up too early, i'm going to bed too late” and she said “my relationship with my daughters is tough, my husband”... and i said, literally i looked at her and said “what are you chasing?”. And she goes “what do you mean?” I go “that’s what i mean, what are you chasing?” And she goes “what are you talking about?!” I said “what’s it all for? I mean are you trying to get a new house, is it the money, do you want a new car, i mean what is it *for*?” And she said “well, what kind of a question is that; i don't know!!” And I said “im being serious; i want you to think about that. I want you to think about that, i love you, and i want you to think about that and i want us to dig into that because i think *that* could be a gap and i want to talk about it.”

So i think we always have to have that question in our minds, right? What are we chasing? Because we can find ourselves in life in classes, on calls, taking jobs, going to meetings, going to different events and everything — *why*, right? And is our ladder up against the right wall? What are we really chasing? Because if we're not intentional, right, to go back to that word about it, we can find ourselves very misaligned. I mean you take off a plane from New York and you’re headed to LA — two degrees of difference you end up in Seattle. So if we're not intentional with just little pivots, little tweaks, we can end up in the wrong spot.

**Max Irzhak** [00:18:15] And finally, what’s some *actionable* advice that our listeners can apply to their lives starting today?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:18:23] Have the courage to continue to be curious because to me that’s the linchpin for all of our growth. Be curious about the opportunities for internships, for jobs. Be curious about the opportunities for promotions. Be curious about how you can potentially serve people that you work with now. Be insatiably curious, and then have the courage when you have that pit in your stomach to step into it anyway — because that’s when we grow.

**Max Irzhak** [00:18:50] And if people wanted to learn more about you, and learn to embrace confidence… where should they go?

**Molly Fletcher** [00:18:56] You know Max, it’s been fun, about a year ago we created a community — Game Changer Leadership Huddles. So for people that want to gain more confidence, right, that want to have the tools to help navigate opportunities in their careers, we actually created a special discount code for you and for your members to get $10 off the monthly membership. But they can go and join the huddles, they go to training.mollyfletcher.com and then use the code NSLS for $10 off every month. They'll be part of an incredible community, they'll be pushed and challenged — and then the byproduct of that is an opportunity to gain confidence as they continue to navigate life’s demands, and certainly their careers.

**Max Irzhak** [00:19:37] To close this out, Molly, it’s been a privilege and a huge thank you for teaching us that greatness is within all of us, and that the right mindset, energy, and confidence are the true keys to success.

**Molly Fletcher** [00:19:48] Thanks so much Max, it was a treat to be with you!

**Max Irzhak** [00:19:52] We’ll see you all back here again next week for Motivational Mondays.