

Announcer ([00:00:04](#)):

Welcome to The Bill Walton Show featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.

Bill Walton ([00:00:24](#)):

Welcome to Backstage with Bill Walton. I'm Bill Walton. We've added a new segment to The Bill Walton Show, which we're calling Backstage is where we can explore the more personal side of life, the life that I think sometimes is the only one we ought to be concerned about when we're dealing with all the political madness in the world, which you know I cover often too much and too exhaustively.

([00:00:48](#)):

Anyway, today we're taking a break from that. We're visiting with one of my great friends, Haven Pell, who is one of the world's leading figures, if not the leading figure in a sport that people don't know much about. I didn't until I got into it. Now, I'm very interested. It's called ... has different terms. It's called court tennis or jeu de paume, or it's also in Wikipedia as real tennis, and it's the predecessor to what we now play tennis, which started as lawn tennis in the late 1870s.

([00:01:21](#)):

Anyway, Haven spent a lifetime working at this. He learned the ... not working at it, but enjoying the sport of it. He learned from his father Clarence Pell, really at his knee as a kid and has been playing at his whole life.

([00:01:35](#)):

Haven spent over six decades in finance successfully. He was a naval officer, and now his life is culminating as a storyteller and he's written a terrific book that is highly recommended, Around the World in 50 Courts. And in it he talks about his personal journey to play all of the 50, actually, it's not exactly 50, but it's close to it, courts around the world and tells the history of the game and really another world, a world away from one many of us live. So I wanted to get him and talk about it, and we decided at the outset this conversation's going to go we know not where. So Haven.

Haven Pell ([00:02:21](#)):

Thank you very much for inviting me to join Backstage. I'm very glad to be here, brought some toys with me and hope to be able to tell your audience a little bit about something that they may not know very much about because most people don't.

Bill Walton ([00:02:39](#)):

Well, let's start with what it is, court tennis. How is it different from regular tennis, which I play a lot of?

Haven Pell ([00:02:51](#)):

I would love to just read just that question and say, how is regular tennis different from court tennis since court tennis got there first?

Bill Walton ([00:02:58](#)):

Have at it.

Haven Pell ([00:03:00](#)):

Court tennis, to give you a little history, I think many of us have played children's games. And this is a children's game, there's no question about it. It was the kind of thing that people would've invented before they had any real idea of what life was about. They just looked at what was interesting.

Bill Walton ([00:03:19](#)):

A children's game in the Middle Ages.

Haven Pell ([00:03:21](#)):

Children's game in the Middle Ages. It had about probably 300 years in which it was played in various cities, principally in Western Europe. And it was simply played in the environment that there was. There were no dimensions. There were no specific rules. And along the way came an Italian writer called Scaino. And Scaino decided he was going to try to homogenize this game because people were thinking that it was good enough that they would go ahead and actually have a purpose-built court.

([00:03:59](#)):

He toured around in various parts of Europe and he said, "Well, okay, this is pretty much the way it's done in most places." And he wrote a treatise. And then from there, most of the courts ended up being built in somewhat the same way.

([00:04:14](#)):

That went on until and evolved and had successes and failures. Prosperity was good. People had spare time. Revolutions were generally bad and the game would get banned.

Bill Walton ([00:04:32](#)):

Revolutions were bad for sport.

Haven Pell ([00:04:35](#)):

Were bad for sport, that's for sure.

Bill Walton ([00:04:36](#)):

[inaudible 00:04:37].

Haven Pell ([00:04:37](#)):

But it was adopted by monarchy, clergy, so forth, sort of the upper end of society. Although I would say that actually most of the courts that existed throughout history were related to bars and betting. Though it has a sort of an aristocratic demeanor mean to it, much of it was really related to selling drinks and getting people to bet on two different players. So that's how it went until 1873.

Bill Walton ([00:05:20](#)):

We've got a picture of that, and the French version was called jeu de paume.

Haven Pell ([00:05:25](#)):

Yeah. It was-

Bill Walton ([00:05:28](#)):

And we can maybe, we'll get this up on the screen and you can see the early version of the court, and we'll show you a later version of the court in a minute.

[\(00:05:37\)](#):

So it was in a courtyard, a medieval courtyard and primitive net strung across it, and you could play all the walls, off all the walls. Okay.

Haven Pell [\(00:05:48\)](#):

That's true. And if you imagine it is a children's game, the high likelihood is that they would've had some sort of a sphere and because those were, and that is everywhere throughout the earth. The Aztecs played ball games. But your weaponry would've been in your hand. So it began that way and then began to evolve until it got to the racket that I assume you can see on the table. No.

Bill Walton [\(00:06:19\)](#):

Let's hold it up.

Haven Pell [\(00:06:20\)](#):

All right.

Bill Walton [\(00:06:20\)](#):

Let's hold it up. Yeah.

Haven Pell [\(00:06:21\)](#):

So it evolved from the hand to a racket, and they kept very much the same size as the palm of your hand. It's obviously much smaller than a regular tennis racket. And so the weaponry ... Go ahead.

Bill Walton [\(00:06:43\)](#):

Let me reach. Okay. Sorry.

Haven Pell [\(00:06:48\)](#):

The weaponry evolved and somebody would say, "Hey, look, I can use this and I'm going to be a little bit better." And one of the things that I always wonder about is what happened, Bill, if you and I were used to playing together all the time, and what would happen when I showed up with my first pair of glasses that you didn't have, and suddenly I could see the ball better than you. Would that have been viewed as cheating? Much as we have all kinds of discussions today in tennis and golf and anything else that includes equipment about what equipment is fair, and we spend a great deal of time even today in discussion of what equipment is fair to use. We don't want to have-

Bill Walton [\(00:07:34\)](#):

You've been president of the Court Tennis Association-

Haven Pell [\(00:07:37\)](#):

I was president of the foundation that supports the game. I'm a member of the board of the governing association for years. And so these kinds of things come up and are discussed all the time.

Bill Walton ([00:07:51](#)):

One of the things that struck me about your book is it's about the game. It's fascinating about the courts you've traveled, but it's also about camaraderie, sportsmanship, what I'd call a sporting life.

([00:08:03](#)):

And we have a mutual acquaintance, a very, very good friend of yours, Temple Grassi, who I guess you two traveled most to all the courts together visiting in England and in France primarily.

Haven Pell ([00:08:19](#)):

Yes. Temple and I got involved with this. I always think that you decide where you live sometime in your 40s. And you have children, and you begin to say, "Well, I think here I am in Washington DC. I guess this is where I live." And there were a group of people who were at more or less the same stage in their life in the mid '80s. And we said, "Okay, well we're all ... We have kids in school and we have houses and mortgages and so forth. If this is where we live, what do we do to make it better?" And for good or ill, a small group of us said, "Washington would be better if it had court tennis." And this we thought would be just fine. And no difficulty there at all.

([00:09:06](#)):

It actually took about 10 or 12 years to find a place and to pull it all together. But from the middle '80s to the late '90s, we spent building a court. And Temple and I were very much involved with that. There were others, Fred Prince as well. There were many other people who were involved.

([00:09:31](#)):

So he and I became friends doing that. And then we got to open this first court that we built at a sports club in McLean, Virginia. And we were pretty enthusiastic about what we'd done. There hadn't been a court built in the United States since 1918. So it was pretty remarkable. We then said, "Well, there are other people who do this, and they do it in interesting places and we should go off and learn about their places and meet them and so forth." So we set out to do that beginning in 1999, and we were progressing nicely.

Bill Walton ([00:10:11](#)):

And that's the saga that you recount in the book. Yeah.

Haven Pell ([00:10:17](#)):

Temple was a wonderful friend. I mean he was known as the ambassador because he was such a zealot about promoting the sport and had such personality. He was also a fifth grade teacher at Landon School, and he got a lot of people to at least know about it. So off we went and we started touring around.

Bill Walton ([00:10:47](#)):

And the benefit of traveling the world, or at least Europe, I guess with France and England where most of the courts were.

Haven Pell ([00:10:53](#)):

Right.

Bill Walton ([00:10:53](#)):

Traveling with a fifth grade teacher, you were in a group, small group. He would always remind you to go to the bathroom before he got in the car.

Haven Pell ([00:11:00](#)):

Yeah. And he was always interested in what the full day was going to be like. So he didn't probably have to treat me as much like a fifth grader as he had in his day job. But yes, we thought about that sort of thing a lot. And one of the things that happened was there was a great rule of life with Temple Grassi and that he did not drive on the left. So I was always the driver. He was always the navigator.

Bill Walton ([00:11:34](#)):

In England, that would be tough.

Haven Pell ([00:11:36](#)):

That would be tough.

([00:11:37](#)):

So at the time that we were first doing this, this would be 2001, 1999, 2002, trips in that period, GPSs weren't what they are. And we had to use something called MapQuest. And MapQuest meant that you got turn by turn directions, but they were printed. And so you really-

Bill Walton ([00:12:00](#)):

Designed to make you mad.

Haven Pell ([00:12:02](#)):

You really had to know exactly what you were going to do on a given day.

Bill Walton ([00:12:07](#)):

Perfect.

Haven Pell ([00:12:07](#)):

That was a pretty good plan. And I was pretty organized guy. And I could put these notebooks together and they would be day by day and where we're going and court by court. And all the MapQuest pages look exactly the same. It's turn left, turn right, do this and that.

([00:12:23](#)):

There was a flaw. Temple got carsick. And if you ever tried to read MapQuest while not feeling so good, every roundabout, which is one of England's great contributions to humanity, is turn left, pass some number of turnings, turn left again and go on. But if you have to close the book after each of the directions, then you end up whirling around the roundabout until you can get the book back open again to the right page. And that was a challenge.

([00:13:05](#)):

There was one moment in Redding, I don't think ... I think Redding is essentially a black hole that everyone who's ever been there is still there, and that it's entirely possible that everything from 1999 onwards is just an out of body experience. I mean, Temple and I might still actually be in Redding. It was very interesting.

[\(00:13:31\)](#):

In any event, we ultimately had to replace the first court that we built and we were in the process of building a second one. And this is where it gets to be a little bit sad, but on the same sense, a little bit like Moses. Temple never made it to the promised land. He died two years before we got our court built. Actually one year before we got our court built. So the book is dedicated to him because he was a fellow traveler and somebody that I had a great deal of fun with and a person who had suffered the sin of enthusiasm, which in my view is no sin-

Bill Walton [\(00:14:17\)](#):

The sin of enthusiasm, well, that's one of ... That just shines through. I mean, there are about 6,000 people worldwide that play the game and there's a comradery and sense of fellowship. And it's not just men. There are women now playing the game.

Haven Pell [\(00:14:31\)](#):

Women, children.

Bill Walton [\(00:14:33\)](#):

But when he died, there was a massively well attended funeral. And you introduced this poem in the book, in the introduction, and I looked at this and I thought, "Why?" This is absolutely one of my favorites. But I understand, and I've taken a crack at poetry, but I think you're probably better at this than I am. Do you want to tell us what this ...

Haven Pell [\(00:14:56\)](#):

Sure. Well, first of all, I think you have to imagine that Sir Henry Newbolt-

Bill Walton [\(00:15:02\)](#):

Wait. Before we go. This is The Bill Walton Show. I'm here with my great friend Haven Pell, who is really the [inaudible 00:15:09] of all things racket tennis, court tennis, and has written a wonderful book about the life and the sport. And we're about to learn a little bit more about the culture of the game.

Haven Pell [\(00:15:23\)](#):

So I think ... I'm not sure that very many reading lists for children include Kipling. That's probably not politically very correct. And I would suggest that Kipling was probably a better known poet than Sir Henry Newbolt. But Sir Henry Newbolt did write a number of poems that would have been important on the question of how to behave.

[\(00:15:57\)](#):

We have things that we do. We have laws that we have to deal with. And in between those two is things that are and are not done. And Sir Henry Newbolt seemed to write about that place in our lives, things that you, what a well brought up person should do.

[\(00:16:20\)](#):

So this was a poem that he wrote that was very important to Temple. As I say, he was a fifth grade teacher because sports was very important to him, and what did we learn from being in sports. So Temple would recite this quite often, anytime he was asked, and he would sometimes adjust it. And I read it at his funeral at the National Cathedral.

[\(00:16:48\)](#):

There's a breathless hush in the close to-night, ten to make and the match to win, a bumping pitch and a blinding light, an hour to play and the last man in. And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat, or the selfish hope of a season's fame. But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote.

[\(00:17:19\)](#):

And here what I did at the cathedral was I got everybody, all 1400 people to do this with me.

Bill Walton [\(00:17:25\)](#):

I'll do it with you.

Both [\(00:17:26\)](#):

Play up! Play up! And play the game.

Haven Pell [\(00:17:31\)](#):

The sand of the desert is sodden red, red with the wreck of a square that broke. The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead, and the regiment blind with dust and smoke. The river of death has brimmed his banks, and England's far, and honor a name, but the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks.

Both [\(00:18:02\)](#):

Play up! Play up! Play the game!

Haven Pell [\(00:18:06\)](#):

So what we know from that, from those two is that what the person learned on the cricket field, he then takes into the army, which would've been a very logical progression for a young, clearly a boy in that period of time. And so then, he has to return to the school.

[\(00:18:30\)](#):

This is the word that year by year, while in her place the school is set. Every one of her sons must hear, and none that hears it dare forget. This they with a joyful mind bear through life like a torch in flame, and falling fling to the host behind.

Both [\(00:18:56\)](#):

Play up! Play up! And play the game!

Haven Pell [\(00:19:00\)](#):

So in a sense, it's an education of how to be.

Bill Walton [\(00:19:05\)](#):

Sure. That's what literature is for.

Haven Pell [\(00:19:07\)](#):

And what you learn about-

Bill Walton [\(00:19:10\)](#):

It was more about how to be than winning the game.

Haven Pell ([00:19:11](#)):

Yeah. What you learn on a playing field is about fairness, is about not taking advantage. And it's interesting that he goes from the boy on the field to the battle and then back to the school.

Bill Walton ([00:19:26](#)):

Well, he wrote this in 1898, and I thought it was Kipling for a long time until I realized that it was not. But this poem was used and there's an irony here. Paul Fussell wrote a book, *The Birth of Irony* about World War I and about how the young men, there was a young lieutenant who led his soldiers into battle over the trench, or the edge of the trench in World War I and they were reciting this poem. And the sad thing about that, of course, was that the modern warfare was just about butchering people. It wasn't so much about honor. It was this mechanized slaughter.

Haven Pell ([00:20:06](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:20:08](#)):

Anyway, I digress. Let's stay with the sporting life.

Haven Pell ([00:20:10](#)):

Well, I think that the interesting thing is-

Bill Walton ([00:20:14](#)):

I promised you we'd have one long digression here.

Haven Pell ([00:20:16](#)):

I think the interesting thing is this game, the people ask ... Every now and again, somebody says, "Well, does anybody cheat in this game?" And there is actually a chapter in the book about somebody who did. But it deserved a chapter simply because it doesn't happen very often. And it's a little bit like golf. If you have cheating in golf, you have no game at all because there's no way to police it. And if people are cheating, then there's no activity at all. So you really have to learn what kind of a reputation you want to have.

([00:21:03](#)):

And we have the same kind of problem. The reason that we don't have cheating in court tennis is because it's too easy. It'd be too easy to cheat. You could cheat all the time. And we just can't do that.

([00:21:15](#)):

And one of the things that I think that I find is when we have a child who's beginning and they begin to get the idea that they are being dependent upon by their opponent to call the ball fairly then, and they are depending on their opponent, that is something that we preserve because in a small world, in a small universe, your reputation is forever. You're going to grow up. If you play in an under 12 tournament, you're going to grow up and you're going to play with that guy for the rest of your life. So cheating is not something that you can do. And hopefully that transitions into the rest of the person's life and they say, "This is how I'm going to behave and this is ... "

Bill Walton ([00:22:05](#)):

That's why I love this book so much because it's about honor and sportsmanship and what that means and playing the game and playing the game fairly. And that's something I don't think is taught nearly enough now.

([00:22:17](#)):

Let's visualize a bit what this is about. We've got a picture here of the Jesmond Dene?

Haven Pell ([00:22:24](#)):

Jesmond Dene.

Bill Walton ([00:22:25](#)):

Jesmond Dene in Newcastle, England. And it's interesting, I've showed you this. You've played all 50, what, three courts in the world?

Haven Pell ([00:22:33](#)):

Well, there's something in the high-

Bill Walton ([00:22:33](#)):

And I showed you the photo and you recognized him it instantly.

Haven Pell ([00:22:39](#)):

Okay. There's something in the high 40s of courts. But look, if you're going to steal Jules Verne's title, you're not going to call it Around the World in 47 Courts. I mean, Around the World in 80 Days-

Bill Walton ([00:22:49](#)):

A tour the world's guy, you fudged [inaudible 00:22:51].

Haven Pell ([00:22:52](#)):

Around the World in 80 Days has done really well. It's had a movie, it's had all sorts of things. And why would you change something that worked? We actually, in setting the title for this, we tried to decide whether it should be 50 spelled out or 50 numbers. And we decided that it should be 50 spelled out because that's what Fifty Shades of Grey is. Got to be a reason for everything. And so ...

Bill Walton ([00:23:21](#)):

Good artist steal, great artist ... Good artists borrow. Great artists steal.

Haven Pell ([00:23:26](#)):

Oh, absolute theft. Absolute theft. Pinched it right away. Actually, while there are 46 or 7 courts in the world, I've played in 54 of them because some of them have gone-

Bill Walton ([00:23:39](#)):

Because who's counting? They've gone the way of the ...

Haven Pell ([00:23:41](#)):

Yeah. And one of them was on a movie set in Noank, Connecticut.

Bill Walton ([00:23:46](#)):

Well, these courts have got an amazing history. I hope we stay with this picture a bit because one of the courts in Paris was the place where they ... What did they call it? The court oath where they-

Haven Pell ([00:23:58](#)):

Oh, the-

Bill Walton ([00:24:00](#)):

The 1789. Tell that story.

Haven Pell ([00:24:01](#)):

Okay. Minor correction. It was in Versailles, but that's-

Bill Walton ([00:24:06](#)):

Suburb, suburb-

Haven Pell ([00:24:07](#)):

... not going to kill anyone. So it was in Versailles, and we're at June 20, 1789. Today is June 22nd. So we're just past the anniversary. June 20, 1789, the estates general have been meeting in various places in the palace in Versailles to create a new constitution for France. The palace was of course owned by the king, and the king didn't think things were going well for him, so he locked up the palace. He was right.

Bill Walton ([00:24:40](#)):

He was right. He was astute.

Haven Pell ([00:24:43](#)):

So he locks up the palace and the people, there's 570 some delegates have no place to meet. So they scurry around in Versailles and they find a tennis court and they all go into the tennis court and they vow to stick together until they have come up with a constitution. And they do this. The picture, the drawing, painting by Jacques-Louis David of the Le Serment du Jeu de paume, The tennis court oath, there's no question it's in a tennis court. I mean, he wouldn't call it that for no reason.

Bill Walton ([00:25:25](#)):

Well, one of the stories, I'm going to let you amplify it, but there's only one door to a tennis court. And so once you're in, you're in. But as people went in, they headed different directions.

Haven Pell ([00:25:39](#)):

Yeah. So think about just a little bit of human nature. Let's imagine that you and I, for whatever reason, are in the same group in France in 1789. Maybe we're merchants, maybe we're clergymen, maybe we're farmers, maybe we're whatever. But we know that we have the same interests. And so the absolutely

normal human response to that is, shouldn't we go stand together? We'll go stand together and then we'll look across the way and be sure that nobody's trying to euchre us in some way and so that we're getting our share.

[\(00:26:19\)](#):

So what happened was that some people go through this door, which is at the side of the court, and there's a net right in front of it. And some people go to the left and some people go to the right. And that is the origin of the concepts of left and right in politics everywhere in the world today. And it all happened in a tennis court. And it's interesting because the generally more progressive or radical party is always called the left. And the generally more conservative or, yeah, more conservative party is always called the right.

[\(00:26:57\)](#):

That's not true of the colors. In the United States red is for Republicans and blue is for Democrats. Whereas it's exactly the opposite in England. The more liberal party is red and the more conservative party is blue. But the concepts of left and are everywhere.

Bill Walton [\(00:27:16\)](#):

For that we have to thank the single door on the tennis court.

Haven Pell [\(00:27:22\)](#):

Yeah, you do.

Bill Walton [\(00:27:23\)](#):

Okay. We've done enough politics.

Haven Pell [\(00:27:24\)](#):

Okay. Yes, absolutely we have.

Bill Walton [\(00:27:27\)](#):

Unless, we could certainly get into it. So how's the game played? This is The Bill Walton Show and I'm here with Haven Pell and we're talking about court tennis. Some Wikipedia calls it real tennis. I think I'm beginning to see why they call it real tennis. It's a difficult game. We have a graphic here, a court schematic, which explains what's happening in the room that we just looked at. Explain what this is.

Haven Pell [\(00:27:57\)](#):

Well, the first thing to notice about the court, and nobody does, I ask it as a rhetorical question. You can imagine that I do a lot of explaining what this is to a lot of different people. And so I will have them looking at a court and beginning to explain the history in much the same way as this conversation. And I will say, what's the first thing that you notice? Well, it's, oh, for all of them. Nobody's ever gotten it right. And the answer is the two ends of the court are different. And if the two ends of the court are not symmetrical, one looks one way and one looks a different way, then there's a high likelihood that one end is better than the other. And it's true. There is one end that is better than the other, and all the serving takes place from there.

[\(00:28:46\)](#):

And so everything about the game, and it is undeniably complicated. The one thing that people, if they have heard the smallest thing about court tennis, they will say it has a very complicated scoring system. Yes, it does. And everything about the scoring system is designed to help you to have some method of sharing the better end where the serving takes place. The advantage is probably, if you and I are both equally skilled, the person at the better end is probably going to win about 55% of the points, which given the way tennis is scored, and by the way, real tennis was an interim name for us. We were tennis for 800 years. Then along comes this other game that was invented in 1873.

Bill Walton ([00:29:37](#)):

Well, and it was invented by a guy, and I've read this maybe in your book or maybe separately, who was upwardly mobile desiring ... He was a ne'er-do-well, right?

Haven Pell ([00:29:51](#)):

Well, no. Walter Clopton Wingfield, I am probably not predisposed to be a huge fan of Walter Clopton-

Bill Walton ([00:30:01](#)):

But he wanted a game where he could meet women because he wanted to marry a rich woman.

Haven Pell ([00:30:06](#)):

I have to confess, there's a little bit of fiction in the book.

Bill Walton ([00:30:09](#)):

It's such a ... Okay. Well.

Haven Pell ([00:30:11](#)):

That came a little bit from ... His motivation came from my head. The reality of Walter Clopton Wingfield is absolutely true. He invented a game. In December 1873 he patented it. It looked like a backyard croquet set. That's what you would get. And it had four rackets and a bunch of balls and so forth. And it all was absolutely derivative of court tennis. And he called it Sphairistikè, which is the Greek word for ballgame.

([00:30:42](#)):

It was very interesting. It couldn't have been invented any sooner than that because it required two very important things. One was vulcanized rubber so that you could have a tennis ball. And that didn't exist until the 1800s. And the second thing was steam power, because you couldn't have a roller pulled by an animal-

Bill Walton ([00:31:04](#)):

These were played on grass.

Haven Pell ([00:31:05](#)):

Yeah, because it was-

Bill Walton ([00:31:05](#)):

Just like Wimbledon is now.

Haven Pell ([00:31:08](#)):

Yeah, was played on grass. And so you had to have a level surface that wasn't pulled by oxen who would make hoof marks in it.

Bill Walton ([00:31:14](#)):

Oxen would certainly change the bounds.

Haven Pell ([00:31:17](#)):

It would definitely change the bounds. So those two things were prerequisites, but changing the game from an indoor game of three dimensions to an outdoor game of two dimensions was very, very smart. I mean, you have to give him a great deal of credit.

([00:31:33](#)):

From 1874 when he patented his Sphairistikè, it evolved very quickly into pretty much what you see as tennis today. And there existed by 1880 national championships in both England and the United States.

Bill Walton ([00:31:48](#)):

And women took up this game.

Haven Pell ([00:31:49](#)):

Women took up the game-

Bill Walton ([00:31:51](#)):

Right away. And in large numbers.

Haven Pell ([00:31:52](#)):

And in large numbers. I think that in part, I always think that he was pretty clever in moving it outdoors because people liked to play games outdoors. And that attracted much more audience. Good for him.

([00:32:05](#)):

But yes, I invented the part in which he ... He was a colonel. We know that. And we have pictures of him and he's in a beautiful red jacket and so forth and has a-

Bill Walton ([00:32:18](#)):

Looking splendid.

Haven Pell ([00:32:20](#)):

Yeah. So I figured if he was a military person, he was a second son. And if he was a second son, he wasn't going to inherit anything. And if he wasn't going to inherit anything, he was looking for a rich woman. So I felt that that was his motivation.

Bill Walton ([00:32:36](#)):

I like ...

Haven Pell ([00:32:37](#)):

There is no support for that one.

Bill Walton ([00:32:39](#)):

This is the Haven Pell definitive history.

Haven Pell ([00:32:41](#)):

Yes, that is ...

Bill Walton ([00:32:43](#)):

Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:32:44](#)):

One of the things, if you are going to read this book and thinking that you're getting the work of a scholar, let me disabuse you of that notion right away because it's a story.

Bill Walton ([00:32:53](#)):

No, but even, we don't. Scholars, we're interested in raconteurs. We're interested in people who've lived the life and that certainly would be you.

([00:33:05](#)):

But the point I think you made about two-dimensional, if it's not obvious, this game, real tennis is played using all the walls.

Haven Pell ([00:33:13](#)):

The walls are in play. And it's actually great fun because the walls that are in play are 18 feet high on the side and 24 feet high-

Bill Walton ([00:33:22](#)):

And it's a massive court. It's bigger than a regular tennis court. It's about fence to fence size. It's huge.

Haven Pell ([00:33:29](#)):

It is much bigger than a regular tennis court. The way to envision it is to think about it as a tennis court from fence to fence instead of line to line. And it's wonderful fun. You bring a small child in there and they maybe have played a little tennis and they've experienced the frustration of hitting a ball. It's just out. And you say. You ask them about that. "How do you feel when you hit the ball? It's one inch out." And the child, his head goes down and he looks sad and so forth.

([00:33:58](#)):

I said, "Would you like to try to hit a ball out in this game?" And he says, "Okay." And I say, "See that way up there? See if you can hit it." Nobody can. And the kid just lights up. And he said, "I can hit it as hard as I want. I can hit it anywhere I want." And there are windows and there are sloping roofs and there's abutments and things that are ... There's one part of the court at one end in which if you hit it, it sends the ball off at a 90 degree angle. And ...

Bill Walton ([00:34:33](#)):

What's that called?

Haven Pell ([00:34:34](#)):

It's called the tambor.

Bill Walton ([00:34:35](#)):

The tambor. Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:34:36](#)):

Now let me tell you, one of the great moments to have with your grandson. He's on the court for the first time, likes to play tennis, loves all this stuff, and you hit some balls to him and he's hitting a few of them back and you say, "Let me show you this." And you have him to return this ball, and you hit it up the side of the wall and suddenly it goes off at a 90 degree angle. Then, I mean, that's when you really need a good photographer. You want the expression on this. It is that's when they're hooked.

Bill Walton ([00:35:10](#)):

Well, the thing about, I love the colorful part of this sport. I'm looking around for a piece of paper. I found out that there were 14 serves, but you corrected me. There are actually how many serves?

Haven Pell ([00:35:25](#)):

I think there are 54. I can't name a ball.

Bill Walton ([00:35:27](#)):

So when you put the ball up, that's the serve.

Haven Pell ([00:35:29](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:35:29](#)):

And tennis, the name in French means take heed.

Haven Pell ([00:35:34](#)):

Yes, tenez, take heed. It was shameful in the early years to serve. So one of the reasons that you might be curious why is it called a serve? Because the kings thought it was so shameful to put the ball in play that they had a servante or a servant to do so for them. And so there would be an extra person on the court who would hit the ball in the way that you have to hit it so that it is a proper serve. And then he would dash off the court and everybody else would continue playing. But he was the servante, and what he did was the serve or the serve.

Bill Walton ([00:36:16](#)):

And so the servant would say take heed?

Haven Pell ([00:36:18](#)):

And he would say tenez before you begin. So tenez became tennis. I think we're fairly clear on that. The rest of the scoring system, nobody is clear on-

Bill Walton (00:36:31):

Well, in the usurer sport that I play, the one that we see on TV, the serve is probably the weakest part of my game. So I have now got a new idea. I'm going to get a servant to help me to hit the serve.

Haven Pell (00:36:44):

I think you should.

Bill Walton (00:36:45):

Get out of the way.

Haven Pell (00:36:46):

I think you should. I think adapting games is very important. And-

Bill Walton (00:36:50):

Well, you've played over 50. I mean, you're a sportsman. I mean you've not only played this game, but you ski, cross country skiing. You're a golfer, you're a tennis. What we've joked about is real tennis, but you've played regular tennis, you've played over 50 sports.

Haven Pell (00:37:06):

Actually for a time I had a website with another friend and we were writing about sports and values, and ...

Bill Walton (00:37:13):

Sports and?

Haven Pell (00:37:14):

Values.

Bill Walton (00:37:14):

Values, yeah, great topic.

Haven Pell (00:37:17):

Essentially the first two chapters, stanzas of the Newbolt poem. We were writing about what do you learn from sports? Most of us don't become pro athletes. Most of us learn character from sports. And so as part of the exercise, and it took us a couple of months to do it, we each asked each other, how many sports have you played in your life? And I came to over a hundred. Now that counts hall hockey at boarding school.

Bill Walton (00:37:47):

Well, that counts. That's one. That's in the [inaudible 00:37:49].

Haven Pell (00:37:47):

Yeah. It was a game.

Bill Walton ([00:37:47](#)):

Yeah, sure.

Haven Pell ([00:37:50](#)):

The whole question of what is a game is a very interesting one. Yeah, you count water-skiing and you count ... We had to decide a little bit what was a sport? Is poker a sport? I didn't think so.

Bill Walton ([00:38:06](#)):

No. Poker's not a sport.

Haven Pell ([00:38:08](#)):

Poker is not a sport. Is chess a sport? I think we sort of evolved towards the idea that it had to be an active physical game. But you could have defined it any other way. It's just as good.

Bill Walton ([00:38:19](#)):

Well, I guess if you want to say a sport is where you play rules and your job is that you call yourself out if you break a rule.

Haven Pell ([00:38:27](#)):

Yep.

Bill Walton ([00:38:27](#)):

And that's one of the issues. I don't watch professional sports. I guess I watch golf occasionally. Tennis and occasionally golf. The modern professional game and the college game in most sports has become so win at all costs, so Vince Lombardi, that who was the guy in the Oakland Raiders Win Baby Win or Just Win or something?

Haven Pell ([00:38:49](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:38:50](#)):

I think that's wrong. And I think it teaches all the wrong lessons. And we've got this culture now where you do anything to win. And I think you forget, and I'm pontificating here what really matters.

Haven Pell ([00:39:03](#)):

What really matters to most people. And I think that there are some people who are going to be extraordinarily highly valued for their skill. And they can make ... It used to be that it was pretty good if they could make hundreds of thousands of dollars. Now they make millions of dollars or they become team owners and they make billions of dollars. And you look at the merger of the PGA and LIV Golf and you see that it's undeniably very big business. Television has helped to do that.

([00:39:43](#)):

Now we see it happening in college. And I think as I move into the Substack world where you are, one of the things that I am going to continue writing about is what are we doing wrong with sports? And there's a lot. And one of the conversations that I have very frequently is with parents who have kids who

were involved in travel sports, and that's an area that needs some looking after. But when you dangle the carrot of what is now probably a \$300,000 college tuition over four years, and somebody's going to give that to you, people are going to chase it and they're going to do a lot to chase it. And it's done a great deal to improve the skill levels of people, but at quite a considerable cost.

Bill Walton ([00:40:35](#)):

Well, I'd like to contribute to that when you get that going, because I'm thinking this through. I gave my very idealistic speech just now about how it's all about character. And I was doing some research on the beginning of the modern Olympics. There was a Frenchman that started it?

Haven Pell ([00:40:51](#)):

Yeah, Pierre de Coubertin.

Bill Walton ([00:40:52](#)):

And hearkening back to the Ancient Greeks and did a little work on the Greeks and their sports. Turns out in the Greek games there was no second place. It was first place, and they would do anything to win. And it was really winner take all. So the notion of the sporting life and the value system really came in Victoria and England and France during that area. And it was a very different code than even the original Greeks in sport.

Haven Pell ([00:41:24](#)):

Oh, absolutely. And I think it's very interesting about Pierre de Coubertin. He, in the 1890s, there must have been some sort of desire to be involved in sports because court tennis was sort of having a renaissance at that period of time and the Olympics were getting created. So people must have been thinking a lot about it. And Pierre de Coubertin didn't care a wit about amateurism, but he knew that he had to care about it if he was going to get England to be involved. And so if England was very important to the Olympics and they cared a great deal about amateurism, and so he was going to have to make the Olympics be amateur.

([00:42:08](#)):

We've seen all kinds of movies on both sides of that. Chariots of Fire is one of them. But there was a wonderful series about the creation of the British Football Association or their soccer association and how it was being held by the sort of upper classes in England. And they didn't want the working class to play. It was not that they didn't want professionals in their sport. They didn't want people who worked at all to be playing in it. And there was a lovely Netflix series that talked about this one person who democratized it and to the benefit of everyone but it continues to evolve. That's why it's going to be an interesting topic to write about.

Bill Walton ([00:43:03](#)):

Well, and you democratized modern court tennis. I mean, you've really opened it up. There a lot of people who wouldn't or wouldn't used to have played.

Haven Pell ([00:43:13](#)):

There are many. If you go back to what it looked like when I started playing in the 1950s, which is what now, 60 plus years ago, to what it looks like today, we found, and particularly here, which we did, Temple and I did quite consciously, we felt that it was going to be something that was going to do best if

it was the most wide open to anybody who was curious enough to want to play and that it shouldn't be dependent on the color of your old school tie. So we didn't do that. And it shows.

[\(00:43:49\)](#):

Washington, the players that we have here in Washington have come from everywhere. And it's not just a few people who had access to a few fancy clubs and so forth. So it's, yes.

Bill Walton [\(00:44:06\)](#):

Well, we talked about the number of serves. I love the names of the serves in this game. There's the railroad, the bobble, the demi-piqué, the underarm twist, the giraffe.

Haven Pell [\(00:44:20\)](#):

The giraffe. That's the very high serve, not surprisingly.

Bill Walton [\(00:44:23\)](#):

And then there's the boomerang.

Haven Pell [\(00:44:25\)](#):

The boomerang is another very high serve. By the way, I can't do either of those.

Bill Walton [\(00:44:28\)](#):

Well, I understand-

Haven Pell [\(00:44:28\)](#):

I wish I could-

Bill Walton [\(00:44:29\)](#):

... the boomerang, it says when served well, it's impossible to return. And this gets to our earlier point. So there's a gentleman's agreement that the serve is not used at high level play.

Haven Pell [\(00:44:40\)](#):

Yes. There are some things that basically that wreck the game. And that particular serve, the end result of it is that you make it scoot along the back wall about one inch away from the back wall.

Bill Walton [\(00:44:54\)](#):

Having played squash you can't dig that out.

Haven Pell [\(00:44:56\)](#):

And the problem with that is it's boring. If you and I are playing and I am able to do that, and you are scampering around, whacking the back wall with your racket and never hitting it over the net, it's not a great hour, it's not a great hour for us. It's certainly not a great spectacle. And so there are some things, some places where the weaponry is simply so advantageous that you have to say, "Well look, we're ruining the game. We got to stop. We can't do this."

[\(00:45:32\)](#):

There's another game. What was the other one that you like? The African hunting dog-

Bill Walton ([00:45:36](#)):

I love. My favorite is the African hunting dog.

Haven Pell ([00:45:39](#)):

The African hunting dog is a dreadful serve, and it is a serve that for most people is an American twist. It's a serve that people use as a second serve. They kind of hit it like this.

Bill Walton ([00:45:53](#)):

Second serve in tennis. Yeah.

Haven Pell ([00:45:54](#)):

And given the nature of what happens in court tennis, it hits the back wall and it scoots way off to one side. And basically if you're a righthander, it kind of hits you in the stomach. So it's a crummy serve because any reasonable player will just stand much further back and walk right into it and smack it. It happens to be on the court that we just built in Washington still a very good serve because the court in Washington that we finished in-

Bill Walton ([00:46:27](#)):

That's at the Westwood Country Club?

Haven Pell ([00:46:28](#)):

Yep.

Bill Walton ([00:46:29](#)):

And is that open to the public?

Haven Pell ([00:46:30](#)):

It is. We can make it available.

Bill Walton ([00:46:33](#)):

We're going to make it. Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:46:36](#)):

That court is, the surface of the walls is still a little bit rougher than it will be when it so-called plays in. A court seasons over some period of time and it achieves what its ultimate character will be, but not for the first couple of years. You have to play on it a bunch.

([00:46:57](#)):

So for the moment, you still got a great benefit from the African hunting dog. And we have a lot of people unfortunately, who are learning this serve. And one of the things that I do to try to help them is to say, "Okay, this serve is really working for you. I understand that. That's great. Keep doing it. It'll beat people at a fairly unsophisticated level. When do you stop doing the serve?" Well, of course they've never thought of that. And I teach them that when you see your opponent back up before you serve it,

so that every time it's going to happen, they always know where it's going to be, then it's time to try something different because he's onto you. But yes.

Bill Walton ([00:47:45](#)):

Well, that's rough, an [inaudible 00:47:47] return a serve.

Haven Pell ([00:47:48](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:47:49](#)):

We've been staring at these five lovely balls for the whole time. Tell me about what those are. Those don't look like the tennis balls I'm used to.

Haven Pell ([00:48:01](#)):

No, they don't. And people often ask, "What is the process of building, of making a tennis ball?" Now it's a mass production. In regular tennis you have some rubber and they put some felt on it and they can make thousands of those and they have machines that do it. Well, that's not what we do. What we do is we begin inside of this is probably a little bit of Saran wrap, and the Saran wrap is holding together a little bit of beat up wine cork. And so you take ... All of us contribute our wine corks to the clubs. You then put those in a Cuisinart and you turn them into cork chunks and then you wrap them in Saran wrap.

Bill Walton ([00:48:50](#)):

Now you're kidding me.

Haven Pell ([00:48:51](#)):

I am not kidding you. I am not kidding you. That is what happens.

Bill Walton ([00:48:56](#)):

These are literally wine corks in a Cuisinart?

Haven Pell ([00:48:58](#)):

Yeah. And at Wellington College, one of the pictures in the book is a basket that they have that says that in which the pros say thank you for your wine corks. And it's to remind people, they put it right in the lobby so that people will bring their wine corks to the club and they can be chopped up in a Cuisinart, wrapped in Saran wrap. And then they are wrapped in this sort of cotton tape and it makes a ball that is really, is quite round.

([00:49:29](#)):

This then gets put into a sort of a cup like this with the top sticking out and they get whacked with a hammer. You move it around to try to make it round. Okay? Because it isn't perfectly round. So that's step one. Step one and two are the wine corks, the Saran wrap and the cotton tape.

([00:49:50](#)):

Then you need to really make it tight. So you get a batch of thread and you wind it around the ball and tighten it up. And you basically, you hold the ball in your hand, you wind this string around a stick and

you pull it and it is very tight. And you see the professionals at every court spend a great deal of time making balls.

Bill Walton ([00:50:21](#)):

So part of the job of the professional at the courts is to make balls.

Haven Pell ([00:50:26](#)):

Is to make balls. So that's about step three.

Bill Walton ([00:50:29](#)):

Step three. Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:50:30](#)):

Here's step four in which you take felt, what we call ball cloth, and presently in short supply so it's a problem that we have to deal with, and you create something that looks like this and then you trim it with some scissors and you sew it and you end up with this. And basically-

Bill Walton ([00:50:53](#)):

And you sew it by hand?

Haven Pell ([00:50:54](#)):

You saw it by hand. And there's a specific number of stitches that goes. I think it's 108 stitches. I can't remember what it is, but there's a specific number of stitches that makes a perfect ball. Now we're about to host the world championship at Westwood in September.

Bill Walton ([00:51:08](#)):

It's hard to see this going mass market.

Haven Pell ([00:51:11](#)):

No. No. We're about to host-

Bill Walton ([00:51:14](#)):

Could I see the completed ball there?

Haven Pell ([00:51:16](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:51:21](#)):

So it's a little heavier than a regular tennis ball.

Haven Pell ([00:51:25](#)):

Yeah, and smaller.

Bill Walton ([00:51:26](#)):

And has no give because of the cork.

Haven Pell ([00:51:28](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:51:30](#)):

What kind of noise does it make when it comes off the racket? Is it just a regular-

Haven Pell ([00:51:34](#)):

If you do it really well, it makes a kind of a swish noise because you've put a lot of spin on it, and that's what you're trying to do.

Bill Walton ([00:51:41](#)):

And the racket is strung with nylon now? It used to be gut.

Haven Pell ([00:51:46](#)):

It was at one time gut. Now it's all kinds of miracle things.

Bill Walton ([00:51:49](#)):

Miracle things. But seems to me that you should talk to the people who invented pickleball because their ball is horrendous.

Haven Pell ([00:52:00](#)):

Yes.

Bill Walton ([00:52:01](#)):

I digress. We'll come back to pickleball in a minute, but we're going to continue with our sport here that we love.

Haven Pell ([00:52:06](#)):

Anyway. So needless to say, if you have this sort of real craft of being able to do this to make balls, there are some people who do it better than others. So when we get to the world championship, all the balls will be supplied by one person who has made them. And he is the person who is viewed to make the best ones in the whole world.

Bill Walton ([00:52:32](#)):

Go ahead.

Haven Pell ([00:52:35](#)):

The set of balls will be made, it will be shipped, it will be delivered. And then after the world championship, the balls will be returned where they will be recovered and maybe remade, but they will have been in use for three days.

Bill Walton ([00:52:53](#)):

And the way you start a game is you start with a basket of balls and there's typically 60 balls in the basket roughly.

Haven Pell ([00:52:59](#)):

72. Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:53:01](#)):

72. So you ...

Haven Pell ([00:53:03](#)):

No real reason it has to be that. I mean, it could be anywhere from-

Bill Walton ([00:53:06](#)):

And then you've got to-

Haven Pell ([00:53:07](#)):

60 to 100.

Bill Walton ([00:53:09](#)):

The basket is recessed in the floor and you kick the balls towards the basket or use your racket. So the balls re-accumulate in that basket so you don't have to go all over the court chasing them.

Haven Pell ([00:53:20](#)):

Right. And then you bring them back to where the server is going to want them.

Bill Walton ([00:53:24](#)):

I've got to play this game.

Haven Pell ([00:53:26](#)):

And you put them in a trough and the server picks them up and serves them.

Bill Walton ([00:53:32](#)):

Well in tennis you see, high level tennis you see that sometimes they'll be handed a couple of balls and they'll look at it very carefully to see which one they want to use. Usually there's not much difference. In this case though, it seems like balls could be very different one from another.

Haven Pell ([00:53:48](#)):

They absolutely can.

Bill Walton ([00:53:48](#)):

So you're in the championship mode, you're going to be staring at the seams and what's loose and what is it.

Haven Pell ([00:53:55](#)):

Yeah. And some people for a particular serve might want to have what they view to be the smallest, tightest one or the loosest fattest one, depends on the serves that they want to get.

Bill Walton ([00:54:08](#)):

Depends on whether they want to, what are the names of our serves, a caterpillar serve or a ...

Haven Pell ([00:54:13](#)):

A caterpillar, yeah. Or what they think that their opponent is going to do back to them. He's going to return the ball. And so, you can choose a ball that you think is going to give you some advantage.

Bill Walton ([00:54:27](#)):

Now you and I are going to play.

Haven Pell ([00:54:30](#)):

Yes, we are.

Bill Walton ([00:54:31](#)):

How good are you?

Haven Pell ([00:54:33](#)):

Well, I think of Ted Williams. Somebody asked Ted Williams, "What would you hit if you played today?" And he said, "I think I might hit 248."

Bill Walton ([00:54:45](#)):

At what age was he answering the question?

Haven Pell ([00:54:47](#)):

And he said, "But I'm 72 years old."

Bill Walton ([00:54:48](#)):

There you go. Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:54:51](#)):

So-

Bill Walton ([00:54:51](#)):

When you were in your prime, I bet you-

Haven Pell ([00:54:51](#)):

At 77, I'm a pretty average player.

Bill Walton ([00:54:51](#)):

Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:54:53](#)):

I'm a pretty average player.

Bill Walton ([00:54:56](#)):

But at one point you were one of the top players.

Haven Pell ([00:54:58](#)):

No, I wasn't, I wasn't. Enthusiasm was more my strength than skill. There are lots and lots of people better than me and always have been. And alas, the process of aging is to get worse slower, and that's ...

Bill Walton ([00:55:16](#)):

Oh, I'm there with that.

Haven Pell ([00:55:17](#)):

What I'm trying to do is get worse slower, and ...

Bill Walton ([00:55:21](#)):

Okay, admirable goal. Now, one last point on the equipment, maybe not my last point, because I'm eager to play. This is not your typical oval tennis racket. This is tilted one way. And you explained, I assume this is so you can dig balls out of the corner?

Haven Pell ([00:55:39](#)):

Yeah, and it also matches your hand. It matches-

Bill Walton ([00:55:44](#)):

Well, it matches the palm part.

Haven Pell ([00:55:45](#)):

Yeah. If you hold it up and hold your palm next to it, basically very few people are going to hit a ball like this. They're going to cock their wrist up like this because it gives you more strength.

Bill Walton ([00:55:58](#)):

Is it all forehand or is there a backhand?

Haven Pell ([00:55:59](#)):

Oh, there's a backhand.

Bill Walton ([00:56:00](#)):

Okay.

Haven Pell ([00:56:01](#)):

Yeah. Backhands, volleys, forehand, serves, all of it.

Bill Walton ([00:56:05](#)):

Let's go play.

Haven Pell ([00:56:06](#)):

Let's go play.

Bill Walton ([00:56:10](#)):

I've tipped just the very top of the iceberg on this one in terms of all the things that we can get into. The book by the way, just remind us, Around the World in 50 Courts, more or less, by Haven Pell. What else-

Haven Pell ([00:56:28](#)):

If I can just share a word. If somebody is interested in buying one, that is not the easiest process in the world. The publisher is Ronaldson Publications and they have a website, and you can buy it on that website. But I get lots of emails from people who say, "I can't find this on Amazon."

Bill Walton ([00:56:48](#)):

True. I looked for it.

Haven Pell ([00:56:49](#)):

Yeah, you can't find it. It's not on Amazon. It's not in bookstores. It was published by a proper publisher in England and they sell it off of their website, or you can probably get in touch with me and I'll figure out how to get you a copy.

Bill Walton ([00:57:07](#)):

Let's close. We got to end up politically a little bit. Let's talk about the decline of civilization.

Haven Pell ([00:57:13](#)):

Oh.

Bill Walton ([00:57:14](#)):

We have court tennis, which arguably must be one of the hardest racket sports on the planet. You're nodding in agreement for anybody listening and not watching.

Haven Pell ([00:57:24](#)):

Everybody's going to pick their sport as the hardest.

Bill Walton ([00:57:26](#)):

You're still making your rackets out of wood, whereas almost all the modern tennis rackets and squash rackets are composite graphite, that sort of thing that's heavier.

Haven Pell ([00:57:38](#)):

Do you want to know the reason for that?

Bill Walton ([00:57:39](#)):

Sure, sure.

Haven Pell ([00:57:40](#)):

Well. You're in a room. There are four walls. The ball, when you hit it, will go 120 or 130 miles an hour.

Bill Walton ([00:57:50](#)):

Wow.

Haven Pell ([00:57:51](#)):

If we end up with nuclear technology for rackets as they have in golf, as they have in regular tennis, we could be in a situation where we're just going to start hurting people. And there is a limit to what human beings can do. And if you're in an enclosed surface, an enclosed space, and somebody's hitting a ball that is going 135 miles an hour, you might not get out of the way of it. And so we try to limit the efficacy of the weaponry by keeping the size small, keeping the materials so that it doesn't get drivers in golf where they're hitting the ball 400 yards.

Bill Walton ([00:58:38](#)):

Yeah, which ruin the game in my humble opinion. But in terms of decline, lawn tennis was easier than court tennis. And now we've come upon that, I think worst of all, racket sports pickleball. Do you share my view?

Haven Pell ([00:58:56](#)):

Well, I think here's ... Unsurprisingly, I've spent rather a lot of time thinking about what makes a sport successful because it would be lovely to make this sport even more successful than it is.

Bill Walton ([00:59:09](#)):

It's going to be too hard.

Haven Pell ([00:59:11](#)):

Well, that is a problem.

Bill Walton ([00:59:12](#)):

Anyway. What makes a sport successful is that it's easy to start and interesting to continue. And obviously that implies that people can do it.

([00:59:26](#)):

Hence pickleball.

Haven Pell ([00:59:27](#)):

And the thing that I am, I will watch with great interest is pickleball is easy to start. Will it prove to be interesting to continue? Or are we in sort of a peak pickleball bubble. And will people sort of say, "Well, okay, I've played this for a while," and so forth and it doesn't change much and so I'm not going to bother with it anymore. I don't know. I haven't the slightest idea what's going to happen.

Bill Walton ([00:59:55](#)):

My theory is that it probably will fade because of just that. It's too simple in a way and it's less interesting. One of the things that makes this, your sport we've been talking about is it's so endlessly interesting.

Haven Pell ([01:00:07](#)):

Well, our problem-

Bill Walton ([01:00:08](#)):

I mean, I'm going to have to stay up all night just memorizing the names of the serves.

Haven Pell ([01:00:11](#)):

It's hellishly difficult to start. So you lose people right away. But if they stay, they stay forever. If they stay, they become ... The marketing program for court tennis is pretty simple. It's like selling drugs. You give people a few free hits and you get them addicted and you watch the idea get injected into their veins and then they're hooked. And it's probably just like selling drugs.

Bill Walton ([01:00:42](#)):

Let's end on that. Haven Pell, this is extraordinary. This is so interesting and I do recommend everybody take a look at this book. Even though just like the game, it's just as difficult to find as it is to play, but it's well worth the search.

([01:01:02](#)):

And as always, thanks for joining on The Bill Walton Show and hope you found this adventure into Backstage with Bill Walton equally interesting as some of our more political shows. I think it's more interesting in a way because the political world is wearing us out. And I think in this world of sports, there's a chance to really live a human life and a very exciting civilized life.

([01:01:27](#)):

So Haven, thank you.

Haven Pell ([01:01:28](#)):

Thank you for having me here, Bill. I very much enjoyed it and thank you to your team as well who have filmed this and will presumably edit out all the stupid things that I said.

Bill Walton ([01:01:40](#)):

They're not going to have to do that. Anyway, thanks for joining. As always, you can find us on all the major podcast platforms and Spotify, YouTube, Rumble, Substack. We're on CPAC now on Monday nights, maybe adding another night in not too distant future. Send us your comments on Substack about shows you'd like. And also send us your thoughts about the Substack segments, because I personally would like to do a lot more and I'd hopefully like to see those and hear those as well. So anyway, thanks for joining.

([01:02:11](#)):

I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the Subscribe button or head over to thebillwaltonshow.com to choose from over 100 episodes. You can also learn more about our guest on our Interesting People page. And send us your comments. We read every one and your thoughts help us

guide the show. If it's easier for you to listen, check out our podcast page and subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right, and what's next. Thanks for joining.