

## Sawbones 262: Tom Brady's Snake Oil

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**Intro (Clint McElroy):** Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Hello, everybody, and welcome to Sawbones: a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy!

**Sydnee:** And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** Well, Syd, another Superbowl is in the books.

**Sydnee:** That's right, Justin, it was a, um... I would say not an exciting...

**Justin:** It was a bad football game!

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly]

**Justin:** Unenjoyable at times.

**Sydnee:** Do you feel like you're enough of an expert on football to declare it a "bad football game?"

**Justin:** I'll say this: I've watched every single Superbowl, and it was the worst of those that I've seen in my grand 38 years.

**Sydnee:** I would not say bad or good. I would just say it was not exciting.

**Justin:** I mean—

**Sydnee:** I did not—I did not have—

**Justin:** —that's bad! It's a sporting event! Like, what other metric could there be?

**Sydnee:** Well, who's it for? I mean, I'd say that the Patriots and their fans are very pleased with it.

**Justin:** For the—well—n—probably not the game itself. The game itself was boring. It had five minutes at the end where everybody decided to play football and do points.

**Sydnee:** I think that if you're the team that wins the Superbowl, you don't really care about that part. That would be my guess. I don't know, though. I am not a Patriot, nor am I a fan of the Patriots, so I... I don't even watch football that much. Neither of us are big football fans. Like, we're pretending like we are. We're not really—

**Justin:** I'm not pretending anything! I have watched every Superbowl.

**Sydnee:** —it's just, the Superbowl—

**Justin:** I'm a huge fan.

**Sydnee:** —the Superbowl is a shared cultural event, and we like to participate in those, you and I. I think that's a fair thing to say.

**Justin:** The point is, the New England Patriots have won every Superbowl for the past 17 years.

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] That's not true. [laughs]

**Justin:** And they must be stopped. It's getting boring, not just for us, but for all of the NFL family of owners.

**Sydnee:** Hm... except the Patriots, who are fine with it.

**Justin:** Except for the Patriots, who are fine with it.

**Sydnee:** Again, I'm certain they're fine with it.

**Justin:** Probably. But we're not—

**Sydnee:** We're not.

**Justin:** —so we're putting a stop to it this week.

**Sydnee:** That's right. A lot of our listeners had tweeted and emailed and messaged and said, "You should—you missed an opportunity. You should've done an episode before the Superbowl on the TB12 training method."

And I thought, "This isn't a missed opportunity," because the thing is, Tom Brady uses this me—the TB12, the Tom Brady 12. That's his number. TB12. There you go.

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh. Training method. Tom Brady uses this method to be so good at football, and maybe if we uncover it, break it down, and share it with the world, [through laughter] maybe he can be stopped!

**Justin:** Maybe if everyone has just—

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] Maybe!

**Justin:** —you're saying if everyone has his football secrets...

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] Maybe next year he won't win again! [laughs]

**Justin:** He'll stop drinking his touchdown potion.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I mean, I'm fine with—I am not suggesting in any way that he be worse at football, or stop anything. I'm saying that everybody else has to raise their game, so that we can defeat him at football.

**Justin:** Get on his level, with the TB12.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Uh, I'm actually not gonna suggest that anybody do this, but... at least now we'll understand it.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So, do you know anything—do you know any—did you know he had a secret training method? Because before our wonderful listeners were so kind as to inform me, I had no idea.

**Justin:** I... sweetheart, no. I didn't. I don't go to training regimens for individual players. My fandom, if you will, of the, uh, NFL, begins and ends with the Superbowl, and honestly kind of... hovers out of existence during the parts that are not commercials.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Uh, so Tom Brady is... I think we can all agree that—let's just start. He is good at football. Whatever we think of him personally, he is good at the sport that he plays.

**Justin:** Yeah?

**Sydnee:** And he's using a training method that seems to be working for him.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** Before I get a bunch of emails that are like, "Well, but this seems to work for him!" Yes, I acknowledge he is—he has played for a very long time.

**Justin:** Seems very happy.

**Sydnee:** He is, for the NFL standards, he's an older player. Not for, like, humanity, but for professional football he's considered an older player, and he has played, like, every—he hasn't missed a game since, like, 2009 or something? I mean, he—you know. He's fit.

**Justin:** He's fit. Well, he's a football... captain.

**Sydnee:** And—[laughs]

**Justin:** He's a captain of football. I would hope he would be in good physical condition.

**Sydnee:** And he had—a book came out a couple years ago to kind of detail how he's achieved this, and I think—there have been some stories leading up to that about what he had done, but I think this really kind of opened the door so that

people could see what he was doing, and it was called The TB12 Method: How to Achieve a Lifetime of Sustained Peak Performance.

And he put together this book—well, one—

**Justin:** He put toge—

**Sydnee:** He had a ghostwriter.

**Justin:** —Mr. Brady—

**Sydnee:** I'm starting with that, he had a—[laughs]

**Justin:** —Mr. Brady sat down at a typewriter—

**Sydnee:** No.

**Justin:** —and was like, "Hmm, Chapter One: Water. Boy howdy, you gotta pump... a lot of it in your body."

**Sydnee:** "I like water." No, actually that's a big part of it. Water is a huge part of it.

**Justin:** O—okay! Well, look! Me and Tom!

**Sydnee:** Drink a lot of water. No, he did have a ghostwriter, Peter Smith, who he put together his book with. But the method, the plan, is actually developed by Tom Brady, and then probably more so by his "[skeptically] body coach," Alex Guerrero.

And that's who we need to talk about a little bit first, because Alex Guerrero, who—like I said, he's listed as his body coach—is a lot more than his body coach.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** He is—this was—

**Justin:** Is romance on the horizon, Sydnee?

**Sydnee:** No, no, no.

**Justin:** Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:** No. This is from—

**Justin:** You understand why the way you said that... made me think that maybe romance was on the horizon.

**Sydnee:** No. This is from one interview. "While Guerrero is known as Brady's '[dubiously] body coach—'"

**Justin:** [snorts] You keep saying it—

**Sydnee:** "—he is so much more than that. He is his spiritual guide, his counselor, his pal, his nutrition adviser, his trainer, his massage therapist, and family member. He is the godfather of Brady's younger son Ben. He comes to—"

**Justin:** Ben Brady.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] "He comes to every game, pretty much. He stands on the sidelines—"

**Justin:** Huh! The "pretty much" was a way I didn't think you were gonna end that sentence.

**Sydnee:** Well, I don't—it says—

**Justin:** "I can't make it, homie!"

**Sydnee:** I—it specifically says, "almost every game."

**Justin:** Okay. What if he's gonna... what if he needs a massage?

**Sydnee:** I mean, he has a life. Like, he has a life, too, I guess.

**Justin:** Sounds like his life is taking care of Mr. Brady's every want and need.

**Sydnee:** He works with his personal chef, so every single bite of food that Tom Brady eats is approved by Mr. Guerrero. His training schedule is set out not just—

I found, like days in advance, weeks in advance, months in advance. He has a plan for his life.

**Justin:** Wow.

**Sydnee:** Like, he has a training plan—[laughs] a health plan for Tom Brady's entire life. Uh, and of course in regards to football specifically, he works with him at least twice a day every day on his football... skills. [laughs quietly]

**Justin:** So, here—here, you can see around 20:40, we've opened up Brady's Burgers, so your schedule's gonna have to change drastically—

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** —to get in there and start making the burgers at 6:00 AM, so you're gonna have to do your curls at 5:30.

**Sydnee:** Listen. As we're gonna get into, his dietary plan for Tom Brady and the other athletes he works with—he would not recommend burgers. No, sir.

**Justin:** Then keep crankin' there, Squid!

**Sydnee:** Okay. So, Mr. Guerrero. First of all, let's find out a little bit about his background. He received a Master's degree in traditional Chinese medicine from a university that no longer exists.

**Justin:** [wheeze-laughs]

**Sydnee:** It was—

**Justin:** [high pitched, through laughter] That's not a good start!

**Sydnee:** Samra University in LA. It was closed in 2010, because the, uh... [laughs] the board that provided its accreditation was closed in 2007.

**Justin:** And it—

**Sydnee:** And so then it closed.

**Justin:** —and it turned out a lot of the walls were made of Styrofoam, and the doors were just painted on, a lot of them, and...

**Sydnee:** Now, here's what's wild. You—after you get that background, and then you get into, like, his early career, this is gonna sound very familiar to you, Justin. If we reach back into the annals of medical history, this is not going to sound strange. He took the title of Doctor after he finished school—

**Justin:** Just took it!

**Sydnee:** —just started calling himself "Doctor." And he wrote a book, *In Balance For Life: Understanding and Maximizing Your Body's PH Factor*.

So, we did a whole episode on alkaline water.

**Justin:** [whispering] Like, just a little bit ago.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And, like, this was the same idea. So, his revolutionary diet idea's not necessarily revolutionary. A lot of people were already saying this, that you should eat alkaline foods and not acidic foods, and he had a whole list of them, and... anyway. So, it was not—it was not the newest idea in the world, but he sold this book, and he got a little bit of notoriety among some athletes. Specifically, that was kind of who he was targeting.

Like, there were some people who were interested in improving their athletic performance and they got kind of interested in it. He started from this diet. He developed a supplement called Supreme Greens.

**Justin:** Supreme Greens.

**Sydnee:** Supreme Greens. It was a nutritional supplement, and essentially he said, you know, "Based on my diet that I have written about in my book, you need to eat a lot of alkaline things, and the alkaline things are largely vegetables, and so I have taken the equivalent of two pounds of fresh vegetables, and then put all those nutrients in these pills."

**Justin:** Vegetable pills!

**Sydnee:** They're vegetable pills.



**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** And his argument is that food today is deficient of nutrients, because, um... plants get 67 vitamins and minerals from soil, but we only put 3 into soil now. So I guess, from that sentence—

**Justin:** What?!

**Sydnee:** —we can assume that all of our plants only have 3 nutrients now?

**Justin:** What are you talking about, Sydnee?!

**Sydnee:** None of this—none of these—these words don't make sense like this.

**Justin:** I'm angry at you!

**Sydnee:** But—[laughs]

**Justin:** By extension! What are you talking about?!

**Sydnee:** He made these vegetable pills to put the nutrients back in them, and—

**Justin:** So—so touchdown Tom hears this, and he's like, "Yeah! Gimme some of what this cat's sellin'! How many vegetables—how many vitamins are in the soil? Good!"

**Sydnee:** There's supposed to be 67, but we only put 3 in. But he put 'em all in—

**Justin:** "Hey, I know from a lifetime of football: 67 is more than 3. That's several touchdowns versus one field goal. Come on! Even touchdown Tom can figure that one out! You're on my team, now! You're my new—[wheezes] you're my body dad!"

**Sydnee:** [laughs] I don't think he calls him his body dad. So, it's got—the pills have, like, vegetables and grasses and herbs. They've got, um... I mean, it's largely just herbal stuff. It's not necessarily dangerous in and of itself, the pills. And it says that it will balance your body's PH level.

Now, if that is all he had said, "Here's a supplement with a lot of veggies. It's good for your PH," he probably could've gotten away with selling—I mean, he did sell it. He made, like, millions of dollars.

**Justin:** Did get away with it. Uh, you can get away with anything, by the way.

**Sydnee:** He actually didn't make millions of dollars. He did infomercials, and the companies that did the infomercials made millions of dollars. He did not make as much off of that as you would have thought!

**Justin:** You want me to feel bad for this gentleman.

**Sydnee:** No, I just am clarifying.

**Justin:** You're trying to elicit pity from me.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] I'm j—I'm just clarifying.

**Justin:** It will be fruitless.

**Sydnee:** Uh, so he had to go past that. That was not enough. He wanted to sell a lot of this supplement, so he did infomercials on both Spike and Women's Entertainment TV, and he claimed to be a doctor in them—

**Justin:** That's everybody! I guess you got 'em all!

**Sydnee:** [laughs] He said, "I need—I need the men and the women. That's all there are—"

**Justin:** That's all there are!

**Sydnee:** "—and this is all they watch!"

**Justin:** And this is all they watch!

**Sydnee:** This is it!

**Justin:** Why would you not watch a channel just for you?

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh. And he claimed to be a doctor, and he went on to cite studies that he had done on the supplement in 200 terminally ill patients, and he claimed that of these 200 terminally ill patients with various problems, various medical issues, that only in the—after eight years of taking his supplement, only 8 of them had actually passed away, and the rest of them were still alive, despite the fact that they were terminal eight years ago, because of his pills. And he claimed that his leaf pill could cure: cancer, AIDS, MS, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, aaand Parkinson's Disease.

Oh! And if that wasn't enough, it could also help you lose up to 80 pounds in eight months.

**Justin:** Wow, what a steal! What a bargain!

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And it's just, like, a veggie pill.

Now, you can't say that on TV!

**Justin:** Come on!

**Sydnee:** You can't get away with that, Alex!

**Justin:** You can't say that on television.

**Sydnee:** No... somebody eventually will call you out on it, if you peddle fake cancer cures. Eventually.

**Justin:** Eventually. Not as quickly as you would hope!

**Sydnee:** No, but eventually somebody will call you out on it, and that someone, in this case, was the FTC, who said, "You can't... call yourself a doctor if you're not a doctor, sir."

**Justin:** Fair enough.

**Sydnee:** "And you can't tell people that your veggie pills cure cancer, or AIDS, or MS, or anything else, if they don't. And they don't... do that."

**Justin:** "So you can't—"[wheezes]

**Sydnee:** And that study that he cited, the 200 patients? Totally fabricated. This wasn't even—this was—this was a whole new level. A lot of the stuff we talk about, it's like—

**Justin:** Contorting.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Like, they did have patients who did take it and like, somebody got better and somebody didn't, and they're just—it's bad science. A lot of this stuff was just... made up. So he got in trouble, because of this.

And again, I don't think the Supreme Greens—

**Justin:** Just for that? Sheesh.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Yeah. The Supreme Greens pill probably is not dangerous in any way. It's just a bunch of herbal stuff I don't—yeah, I looked at the ingredients. There was nothing that struck me as dangerous, but it is dangerous to tell people, "I can cure your cancer," and scare them away from actual medicine that could help them in, you know, in favor of your veggie pills.

So he had to pay, like, a 65,000 fine, or they gave him the option—he could hand over the title to his 2004 Cadillac Escalade.

**Justin:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** And he was not allowed, after that, to present himself as a doctor, market Supreme Greens or anything like it for the treatment of disease from then on, for life.

**Justin:** And—the end! Well, folks, thanks so much for—

**Sydnee:** [sighs] No, that wasn't enough.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** 'Cause, as I said, Mr. Guerrero had not made his fortune, and he still... I would say—and I'm gonna probably insist on this through our episode—I think he's a true believer. He believes in the stuff he says. He's convinced himself, and he wants to convince you, too.

And he convinced himself that he was on to something with his various nutritional ideas, and so he came up with a new company called Six Degree Nutrition, which marketed a bunch of different supplements, but the big one was something called Neurosafe. And Neurosafe was specifically targeted at athletes, because you've probably heard a lot about the traumatic brain injury that can occur, the multiple concussions that people get while they're playing sports, specifically contact sports like football.

**Justin:** Yeah. You're holding the ball for the guy and he's about to kick it and he misses, and he drills you in the head.

**Sydnee:** I don't think that's—

**Justin:** Then you've got a football injury.

**Sydnee:** —I don't think that's the most common way.

**Justin:** There's many common football injuries that I've seen in my time... on the gridiron.

**Sydnee:** But basically, he said that if you take this, it will protect your brain. He described it as like a seat belt for your brain.

**Justin:** A s—a s—

**Sydnee:** A seat belt for your brain.

**Justin:** A seat belt for your brain!

**Sydnee:** Yes. And if you do this ahead of time, you can prevent all of the damage that can occur from multiple concussions, and he got a lot of people on board with this, including—

**Justin:** Me. [wheezes]

**Sydnee:** No.

**Justin:** Hi, everybody! I'm Justin McElroy, for Brain Belt.

**Sydnee:** No. Including, like, Wes Welker went on record saying, like, "Yes, I know that this will protect me when my helmet can't," and, like, Tom Brady said Neurosafe makes him feel good, and basically he got big name athletes coming out and saying, like, "Yes, this will prevent this horrible injury," that, you know, at this time was being more well understood and was making a lot of headlines on its own.

And so he came out with this product, and he got in trouble... again... in 2012.

**Justin:** [sighs] And that's... the end of his story. Man—

**Sydnee:** Nope!

**Justin:** —what a good ri—

**Sydnee:** It continues, but before I tell you what happened next... let's go to the billing department.

**Justin:** Let's go!

[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Folks, our first sponsor this week is Squarespace. You got a big idea? You want to turn it into something cool? Something out there on the web that anybody with a W key and a period key—and I guess usually all the other keys—anybody with a keyboard can access?

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] I don't know who just has the W key.

**Justin:** Who just—[wheezes] well, I was thinking "W-W-W" is what you would hit first, but—

**Sydnee:** You just have a W and a period.

**Justin:** Folks, don't waste time typing in H-T-T-P-colon-forward slash-forward slash! Just head on over to Squarespace, where you can turn your cool idea into a website.

You wanna sell stuff? You wanna put your content up there? You wanna do it all with beautiful, customizable templates, created by world class designers?

Squarespace can handle it! They got a new way to buy domains, and you can choose from over 200 extensions, which'll help you get a great website URL, which is so important. They got analytics to help you grow in real time, and 24/7, award winning customer support.

You know, it doesn't have to be some big challenge making a website, when you got a partner like Squarespace that's gonna help you make it stand out with a beautiful website from Squarespace.

So, go to [Squarespace.com/sawbones](https://squarespace.com/sawbones) for a free trial, and when you're ready to launch, use the offer code "sawbones" to save 10% off your first purchase of a website or domain. Again, that's [Squarespace.com/sawbones](https://squarespace.com/sawbones) for the free trial. When you're ready to launch, use the offer code "sawbones" and save 10%!

Syd, I am also excited to tell you, once again, about MeUndies. You know, Valentine's Day is just around the corner, and you could go out and buy a bunch of chocolates, but they are... I mean, that's not actually—

**Sydnee:** They're—they're just gonna be too acidic for you, is the problem.

**Justin:** They're gonna be too acidic—

**Sydnee:** They're not alkaline enough.

**Justin:** —for your alkaline body, yes!

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And instead, just have matching underwear! Like Justin and I.

**Justin:** Non-acidic matching underwear.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Matching Valentine's underwear.

**Justin:** It's made from micromodal fabric, which is three times softer than cotton. I actually have some MeUndies Valentine's day socks that they sent over that are extremely comfortable.

They got all kinds of different prints, four different cuts, and all kinds of different colors. They're releasing a new print every Tuesday this—it says "V-day season." I refuse—[wheezes] to do this with them, but it is around the time of February 14<sup>th</sup>,

the one day that it's Valentine's Day. [through laughter] They will be releasing a new pattern every Tuesday.

I'm sorry, MeUndies. Please don't cancel your sponsorship. They got a great offer for our listeners. Get your 15% off your first pair, free shipping, and a 100% satisfaction guarantee. Just head on over to [Meundies.com/sawbones](https://meundies.com/sawbones). That's [Meundies.com/sawbones](https://meundies.com/sawbones).

[music plays]

**Speaker One:** Not all heroes wear capes. Some heroes watch war movies and then review them.

**Speaker Two:** [wheezes]

**Speaker One:** [laughs quietly]

**Speaker Two:** Friendly Fire is a war movie podcast for people who don't *necessarily* like war movies, although it does not exclude people who love war movies.

**Speaker Three:** I'll have you know that I *am* wearing a cape, my cape is just made of sound-deadening material from an audio recording studio.

**Speaker One:** [laughs] It's a really great show. John's daughter doesn't like it because we sometimes say swear words on it, but almost everybody else that has ever listened to it has enjoyed the program.

**Speaker Three:** Download and subscribe to Friendly Fire, wherever you get your podcasts.

**Speaker One:** To the victor... go the spoiler alerts.

[music plays]

**Justin:** Uh, so, Sydnee...

**Sydnee:** So it continues.

**Justin:** Yes.



**Sydnee:** So, as I said, the FTC stepped in again, because they were concerned that some of the claims he was making about Neurosafe kind of violated that lifetime ban they had put on him about making false claims. [laughs]

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** About—

**Justin:** A lifetime ban on lying.

**Sydnee:** —ying. Uh, he wasn't claiming to be a doctor this time, but they basically said, "You have no evidence for any of these claims. There's no science behind it, and you're going to tell people they can—" I think it was like, a drink that you could drink—"and you can drink this thing and it will protect your brain, and maybe then people are going to... go get hurt and think they're okay and not seek proper treatment," and that kind of thing.

But despite all this, they actually didn't really... they told him he couldn't market it this way, but they didn't sanction him, really? Like, they didn't do much to him. They didn't punish him, so to speak, because he had sold so little of it. And as soon as they started writing him letters, he just stopped marketing it, and he actually even agreed to—

**Justin:** "Alright, you got me!"

**Sydnee:** —refund all of the money.

**Justin:** "You got me, alright! Fair—fair—fair game! You got me!"

**Sydnee:** So, there was a violation, but if you look at, like, what did the FTC do to him, it doesn't look—I mean, they didn't do much, 'cause he kind of went, "Okay, you caught me. I'll stop, I'll stop."

**Justin:** "Sorry, sorry, sorry."

**Sydnee:** "Sorry, sorry, sorry about that. Yeah. I got carried away."

So—[laughs] the question, though, at this point is, we have this—we have this person who kind of fits into, like, our typical Sawbones model of... a little bit of a snake oil salesman... like, I think—

**Justin:** I'd say a lot a bit, but okay.

**Sydnee:** A lot. Like, he made false claims, he sold a fake cancer cure, he got in trouble for it... how did he end up as Tom Brady's... guy?

**Justin:** Best friend?

**Sydnee:** As his—as his buddy? How did they meet? That's—because by the time we get to this Neurosafe product that he's marketing, Tom Brady's endorsing it!

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And that's a big deal! So, how did this happen? Well, as I mentioned, his book about alkalinity and eating had made some waves among some athletes. So there was a certain level of, like, specifically I think track athletes were reading and kind of passing the book around and talking about, like, "I think this might be helpful. I buy into this. This is a good idea." And from there, he got the attention of Willie McGinest, who also plays for... he is a football player.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** For the Patriots. I'm telling you, 'cause I didn't—you looked like you didn't know.

**Justin:** [loudly] Uhhh... alright Syd. [through laughter] I guess I didn't know who... Will—was it Willie...

**Sydnee:** McGinest?

**Justin:** McGinest, yes. Okay, got it.

**Sydnee:** Anyway, so he started working with him first, because he, like—I don't know. They made contact somehow and he was like, "Hey, I like this plan! What other ideas you got?"

So they started working together on, like, some training regimens. And he wasn't, like, officially part of the Patriot's training team or anything. He was just helping out players. He was freelancing for players from other teams, too. There were other, um... like, I think LaDainian Tomlinson worked with him for a while.

So there were players from other teams that were also working with Guerrero on his training regimen, but it was from this that Brady started to get wind of him, and other members of the Patriots as well, that this program is really successful and the players who are using it are really liking it, and they're thinking this guy might really be on to something secret, something special that all of our sports trainers aren't doing.

'Cause this was—his methods were not... the same as any of the, you know, sports medicine trained, or physical therapy trained, or, you know, physiology trained—any of these specialists. They were totally different.

So at this point, Bill Belichick gets wind of this.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** And he says, "Well—"

**Justin:** Patriots coach Bill Belichick.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Very good!

**Justin:** No big deal.

**Sydnee:** "If this is an advantage, I want it." [laughs]

**Justin:** "Whether it's... part of the rules, or in absolute violation of the rules! I want this advantage I can claim!"

**Sydnee:** So, he makes an exclusive deal with him, essentially, that "No, you're ours. Whatever your training secrets are that my boy TB12 likes so much—"

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "—um, we're keeping 'em for the Patriots only."

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** And so he became exclusively linked with the Patriots around, like, 2008, and especially—that was when, if you're a big sports fan you may remember, Tom Brady had an ACL injury that took him out. It was, like, the first game of the season—

**Justin:** Ohhh, yeah.

**Sydnee:** —that took him out for, like, the whole season. And that's a huge deal. An ACL injury is a huge deal for a football player, and he nursed him through that injury, and of course Tom Brady came back and was still great, and all that, and that really solidified that relationship. So, that's how he got in there, and that was why, by 2012, Brady would be endorsing his product, Neurosafe.

What goes beyond that—'cause if we get into the TB12 method, the book and the website and the training center and everything that has come from that, is not just supplements. It's a whole... I mean, really, like, if you get down to it, "lifestyle" would be the right word to use. It's not just a diet. It's not just exercises. It's.. everything. First and foremost is the alkaline diet.

**Justin:** Sure. So important.

**Sydnee:** You have to eat 80/20 alkaline/acidic. 80% alkaline, 20% acidic at all times.

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** And just to kind of review, an alkaline diet... like, it's largely a vegan diet. It's largely a plant-based, vegan diet, so I'm not gonna critique the diet too much in terms of, like, what you actually eat. Obviously we've done a whole show—

**Justin:** I mean, it's working for him, obviously!

**Sydnee:** Well, we've done a whole show on this whole idea of alkalinity and acidity is probably all... well, no. It's fake science. Like, that doesn't—

**Justin:** It's fake! It's not—

**Sydnee:** —it's fake science. Not "probably," it is. That doesn't matter, but I'm not gonna quibble with eating a plant-based, vegan diet. That's fine. He avoids meat and dairy, there are certain foods like peppers and tomatoes, mushrooms, eggplants, which are specifically really bad... which I would say are probably fine, but whatever. That's—I'm not gonna quibble with the diet.

The physical regimen, like, the actual training regimen is kind of... strange. As I tried to find, like, descriptions of what they do, it sounds like really intense massage therapy, but they talk about how they're going to work with the muscles to prehab them. This isn't rehab.

**Justin:** Prehab.

**Sydnee:** Prehab the muscles. And the argument that Guerrero makes is that a lot of what athletes do, or just people who work out in general do, is strength training, lifting weights and such, that will make your muscles too firm, like, too hard.

**Justin:** ... Uh-huh?

**Sydnee:** And so when you, like, do sports, then they don't stretch well. They're not... you know.

**Justin:** Hey, the good news here is—

**Sydnee:** Bendy enough?

**Justin:** The good news... I'm ahead of the curve, it sounds like! It sounds like maybe I'm in... top football shape.

**Sydnee:** You don't want your muscles too tough and sinewy, because then when you do stuff with 'em, they tear—

**Justin:** That's what I been sayin'!

**Sydnee:** —or strain—

**Justin:** [high pitched] That's what I been sayin' this whole time! [laughs] What a—what a vindication!

**Sydnee:** He says that his program will keep you strong while keeping your muscles soft and pliable.

**Justin:** Excellent.

**Sydnee:** That's the big thing. Pliability is the big word that's different from a lot of what you would see in other sports medicine training programs, where they talk about strength and they talk about flexibility, but this is different from flexibility.

Flexibility is a real thing that's important. You know, range of motion and all that, if you're gonna, like, throw footballs and everything.

Pliability is a whole other thing, where you have to keep your muscles... soft. And as far as I can tell, there are no studies on this. I couldn't find any other, like, exercise physiology people or sports medicine people or physical therapists who were advocating this, and it's not those things. 'Cause, like, he even got in trouble once for doing something that was sort of like physical therapy, 'cause he's not a physical therapist, so he can't do that.

It's some sort of massage, and then also a lot with resistance bands, and there was some sort of, like, anti-gravity treadmill that somebody was on—

**Justin:** [wheeze-laughs]

**Sydnee:** —in one of—

**Justin:** [continues laughing]

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] —one of the things I read. And they mention, like—

**Justin:** I don't know. That's probably a real thing, but man, a lot of this sounds funny.

**Sydnee:** —they mention, like—it was in this, like, men's magazine. He was talking about doing, like, an anti-gravity treadmill there working with him, and he was like, "And then I pass Giselle doing, like, sit ups until she passed out." So, sit ups apparently are part of it.

But when I tried to look into, like, does anybody buy into this? Are there studies on it? I couldn't find anything. Tom Brady describes it as—when he sees, like, a lineman charging him, "My brain is thinking only lengthen and soften and disperse," so that's how his muscles handle all those hard hits. They lengthen, they soften, and disperse. This is not a thing—

**Justin:** I mean, his brain is probably—I hope his brain is also thinking, like, "I should try to do a touchdown, here."

**Sydnee:** [laughs] I don't—

**Justin:** Don't you think his brain also thinks that?

**Sydnee:** I don't—like—

**Justin:** Like, it seems wild—

**Sydnee:** Well, yeah, I mean, I think—

**Justin:** —if his brain is, like, just thinking about like, "I'm about to get hit by that guy. [through laughter] I shouldn't think about anything else!" He's probably also thinking about touchdowns. Touchdown glory.

**Sydnee:** It's very much—and I didn't get into all of this part of the regimen—it very much is, though, like, a spiritual, mental thing.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like, it's more than—like, there's the training center where he does physical activity, that is the exercises and massage and all that stuff he does. There's the diet. But there's more.

**Justin:** What of the soul, you know?

**Sydnee:** Right. There's a whole—no, but I mean, that's part of the whole training program.

**Justin:** What of his touchdown soul?

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly] Uh, I found in a New York Times article, they interviewed a professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, who's an expert in muscle physiology, a guy named Stuart Phillips. And this was my favorite. They asked him about, like, muscles, pliability, softness, all this stuff, "What do you think of this?"

And his response was just, "It's balderdash." Which... man. I guess you have to be a muscle physiologist to pull off being able just to look at somebody and say, "It's balderdash. It's balderdash."

Um, but whatever he's doing, a lot of members of the team bought into it. So for a while, he was a fixture in the locker room, on the team plane, on the sidelines. He was there working with a lot of members of the team.

It was voluntary, it wasn't like—Belichick wasn't forcing them to work with him, but also Tom Brady's doing it, so there probably was some pressure, like, "Well..."

**Justin:** "You know, Touchdown Tom's doin' it. You sure you don't wanna..."

**Sydnee:** Yeah. TB12.

**Justin:** "Hey, are you sure you need that huge pile of mushrooms? Because..."

**Sydnee:** "Tom says mushrooms are bad." [laughs quietly]

**Justin:** "Tom says mushrooms are bad, and also tomatoes. A very boring pizza, Tom enjoys. No cheese, no tomatoes, no mushrooms, no sauce..."

**Sydnee:** I don't even know how much bread he'd eat.

**Justin:** [quietly] Okay. So, TB12... not a big pizza boy.

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] No, I don't think Tom Brady eats a lot of pizza, would be my guess!

**Justin:** "You just won the Superbowl. What are you gonna do now?"

"Well, not eat a pizza. I can't eat pizza anymore."

**Sydnee:** He went to Disneyworld. I saw a picture.



[pauses]

**Justin:** He went to Disneyworld, it looked like, with another player? [wheeze-laugh]

**Sydnee:** Well, yeah.

**Justin:** Like, I'm not sure that's they mean, right? [through laughter] Aren't you supposed to take your family?

**Sydnee:** Maybe it's, like, a team trip. Sort of like when I went to show choir. Like, with show choir to Disneyworld.

**Justin:** He was there quick, too!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I would want a day to just kick it! I don't feel like walking around Disneyworld! I just did a Superbowl!

**Sydnee:** Have you been paying attention? He doesn't need to just kick it.

**Justin:** It's true! His pliability's off the charts!

**Sydnee:** Yeah! [laughs] Anyway, so... he was really intrinsically linked with the Patriots for a while, but there were conflicts with the actual training staff, with probably all the, like... physical therapists and sports medicine people and trainers and people who, like, went to school and did training in this, and studied, and know how to do this, and were all there saying, like, "This is—this stuff, we—some of it isn't harmful, some of it's fine, but some of it doesn't make sense to us, and it's not what we're doing."

And so there was some conflict. So he was actually, like, removed from his access for a while. There was, like, a big story a year or so ago where he was removed from the team plane, and it was a big deal. But it sounds like now he has access back—

**Justin:** That's why he's only at some of the games. [wheeze-laugh] 'Cause he wasn't allowed!

**Sydnee:** That might be why. But it sounds like he has reclaimed that access, probably largely due to the fact that him and Brady are still totally tight.

**Justin:** Homies for life.

**Justin:** Yeah, still complete buds. And I would say that if Tom Brady wants it, he probably gets it. If you ask Tom Brady in an interview about it, though, he ends the interview pretty quick. I found some, like, transcripts of interviews where people will ask, like, "So, what's the deal with Guerrero?" And he pretty much says, "I'm not gonna talk about that, and, uh, gotta go now! Bye."

Like, "I'm not answering questions, and I'm done with you." [laughs]

**Justin:** Dang.

**Sydnee:** So he's back in good graces, for the most part. There were some rumors right before this Superbowl that there were people on the team, maybe some staff members like the trainers, who were blaming Guerrero's training program for some of the injuries that Gronkowski had during the season. Another player on the team.

**Justin:** Another player... of football.

**Sydnee:** Who had multiple injuries, that they were—

**Justin:** A Patriot, I believe.

**Sydnee:** Yes. That they were blaming Guerrero for how many injuries he had, and saying that if he had just stuck with the regular training program that the rest of the players were doing that he would've been okay, but these are just rumors. I don't know. It at least speaks to the fact that there's still discord, there. There's still issues.

Like I said, there's a website. You can buy supplements through their website. They're largely just, like, protein shakes and, you know, electrolyte replacement stuff. Like, nothing that we've talked about. None of these other things that I've talked about.

You can buy workout gear. You can buy their book. It's all very expensive, I would say, but then, I don't know. If you're buying, like, elite athletic training equipment or supplements, I think they're all very expensive, so it's probably as expensive as all that other stuff.

It's very expensive... it doesn't work, you know. Then I would say that's very expensive.

**Justin:** That's extremely expensive!

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly] But I don't know! It works for Tom Brady.

**Justin:** It doesn't. [pauses] It doesn't work for Tom Brady!

**Sydnee:** Well, something works for Tom—Tom Brady is very good at football.

**Justin:** Tom Brady is paid to keep himself in great physical shape and to only eat f—football food.

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly]

**Justin:** Like, yeah! It's not working if you're not—like—[sighs]

**Sydnee:** Okay, okay.

**Justin:** It's so irritating. It doesn't work for—this dumb alkaline diet and the dumb stuff doesn't work for Tom Brady. It's like—we call it anecdotal evidence, right? Like, Tom Brady has—

**Sydnee:** That's fair. It's all anecdotal.

**Justin:** —this is completely anecdotal. So it's not proof that it's working for Tom Brady. You could argue that, like, Tom Brady's football family that birthed him to do touchdowns is probably working for Tom, very—absolutely.

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, there's the argument to be made that Tom Brady was good at football before he met Alex Guerrero.

**Justin:** I'll make that argument!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I'll actually—I'm over here, saying "Yeah! Yeah, that seems right." He didn't, like, rescue him from, like, a downed spaceship and wrap in a blanket and say, "I'm gonna make you good at football by not letting you have tomatoes!"

**Sydnee:** And I think—I think the big problem with this is that, like, once you've been linked with somebody like Tom Brady, who is not just—we keep saying "good at football," but, like, his ability to keep coming back and playing and not miss games and not get injured and recover from injuries is... it's pretty remarkable, and I don't think it speaks to necessarily anything other than, he works really hard and he trains a lot and he eats really healthy and he takes very good care of himself, and all those things, and probably also some genetic... factors.

And he's incentivized with lots of money—

**Justin:** Mm-hmm!

**Sydnee:** —to do so. But I think that once you're linked to somebody like that, it's gonna give you a lot of legitimacy, and it's important to remember that this guy came from selling fake... cancer cures.

**Justin:** [simultaneously] Cancer pills! Yeah, like, fake cancer pills.

**Sydnee:** Which is really bad, and usually you don't get to continue to ascend... to fame after that! After that, that's usually the end. That's usually the last thing on the Wikipedia article. Not the first! Which is—that's where this guy comes from.

So, as far as the TB12 training method, there's no science behind it. There's no evidence for it.

**Justin:** Is that, like, Tom Brady is endorsing this training method? Eating method?

**Sydnee:** Oh, go to the TB12 website.

**Justin:** Oh, I... would rather not. So, Tom Brady is a—

**Sydnee:** Or the book! Like, the book that he wrote—well, he didn't write—you know, that he helped with. [laughs] It's like—it's just—it's his face. Like, yes, he endorses this completely.

Now, there's a lot of the, like, language you have to use to get around the FTC. Like, "For me, this works," or "I have found, in my opinion, in my experience..." there's a lot of that stuff that, like, blunts it so that you don't get in trouble, and what they're claiming now are not cancer cures or anything like that. It's just, like, "Do this stuff and you'll be better at sports," which is regulated a little differently, you know.

But there's no evidence, really, for it. There's just anecdotal. There's—I'm not gonna say that the diet's unhealthy. The alkaline acid thing is nothing, but if you want to eat a plant-based, vegan diet and you don't like mushrooms, I'm not gonna tell you that's bad.

And I'd say that the training is probably... I mean, there's no evidence so far that it's dangerous, other than these rumors about Gronkowski, but they're just rumors. I don't know. So I'm not gonna say it's dangerous, but is it the best training?

Well, no one else would agree that it is who knows these things. I am not a sports medicine specialist, but it sounds like all the sports medicine specialists would say, "No."

**Justin:** This is a—this has been a truly shocking morning, Sydnee. I can't believe that I have reason to dislike Tom Brady. Um...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Thank you so much for listening to our program. We hope you—

**Sydnee:** Now you know Tom Brady's secrets.

**Justin:** [loudly] That's T—Tom Brady's football secrets! Now go! Throw your tomatoes in the trash, and be good at football!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Um, thanks for listening to our show. We hope you enjoyed it. We sure enjoyed... having you at the show. Um, this virtual... show that we have. Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of our song Medicines as the intro and outro of our program. We really appreciate it. And, uh, that is gonna do it for us!

So, until next week, my name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** And, as always, don't drill a hole in your head!

[theme music plays]

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