

2-12-2006 Mondays with Myles-Brooklyn

1 (File: 20060212\_Myles\_Brand\_brooklyn22m16.)

2 JOSH: I'm here with Dr. Myles Brand,  
3 president of the NCAA.

4 And Dr. Brand, besides our mutual love for  
5 intercollegiate athletics, you and I have something else  
6 in common -- both born and raised in New York City. Tell  
7 me a little bit about your days in New York.

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, thanks, Josh. It's  
9 a good question. Yeah. Actually, I grew up in Brooklyn  
10 in a lower middle class environment.

11 I sometimes joke I didn't see grass until I  
12 was 14. That's not true. I just played a game of  
13 baseball on a piece of grass, a little piece of grass.  
14 But I grew up playing in the parks -- basketball, of  
15 course; one wall handball; stickball on the streets. I  
16 loved every minute of it. I couldn't wait until school  
17 was over to start playing in the streets, and I enjoyed  
18 it.

19 And there was some great ballplayers, some  
20 basketball players, for example, that I enjoyed playing  
21 with. And I took some of that basketball to play in high  
22 school then and a little bit in college. But I was never  
23 very good, but I enjoyed it a great deal.

24 You know, growing up in Brooklyn, I also  
25 went to Ebbets Field, which is where the Brooklyn Dodgers

1 played at the time. And I remember every weekend I would  
2 go, including watching doubleheaders. Amongst my heros  
3 was Jackie Robinson, who was still playing there. It was  
4 a great treat for me to watch him play and hustle around  
5 the bases. And so that was great fun for me.

6 JOSH: Does that mean you don't like the  
7 Yankees?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: Oh, I don't like the  
9 Yankees at all.

10 JOSH: Not at all?

11 DR. MYLES BRAND: And I've never forgiven  
12 the Dodgers for moving out of Brooklyn.

13 JOSH: So no longer a Dodgers' fan now that  
14 they're out in LA?

15 DR. MYLES BRAND: No longer a Dodgers' fan.  
16 I did live in Chicago for some time, and I transferred my  
17 angst to the Cubs.

18 JOSH: Gotcha. Wrigley is a great park.

19 DR. MYLES BRAND: Wrigley is a great park.  
20 I love to watch baseball in Wrigley. To sit out in the  
21 bleachers in Wrigley is quite a treat. You know, I don't  
22 particularly like the fact they put up lights, but I do  
23 like Wrigley. It's a wonderful ballpark.

24 You know, some of the new ballparks are  
25 like the old ballparks, in that they're not big dishes in

1 which you can enjoy watching the game. And so Jacobs  
2 Field, for example, in Cleveland is a great place to watch  
3 baseball. And that's a new field, but it's kind of retro.

4 JOSH: It's got some of that old time feel.

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yeah.

6 JOSH: So is it fair to say you can trace  
7 your love of sports back to the city?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: Oh, yeah. Back to the  
9 city, to the youth. You know, I enjoy playing the pickup  
10 games and throwing the bats and finding out which team is  
11 going to pick you and all that stuff. I thought it was  
12 great. I mean, I thought playing with the kids on the  
13 street -- sports, was terrific. You know, playing  
14 football on concrete, of course, is a hard lesson.

15 JOSH: Especially when you get tackled.

16 DR. MYLES BRAND: Oh, yeah. It hurts like  
17 hell.

18 JOSH: Do you miss the city?

19 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, I do. I go  
20 back once in a while on business. New York is a very  
21 special place. I've got to tell you, a few years ago, I  
22 went back to Brooklyn, in a neighborhood where I lived.  
23 And I was shocked, absolutely shocked. It looked like it  
24 didn't change at all.

25 And I went to Kelly Park where we played

1 basketball, and it looked like the same kids were still  
2 playing. So, yes, Brooklyn and New York is a great place  
3 to be from.

4 You know, it doesn't matter whether you're  
5 from the city or from the country. The fact that, early  
6 on, sports became part of one's life is what's important.

7 JOSH: You know, I'm a former baseball  
8 player, and my father grew up in the Bronx. So he told me  
9 all about stickball in the streets.

10 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yeah.

11 JOSH: Can you describe a little bit about  
12 how the scoring system worked? A little bit like that?

13 DR. MYLES BRAND: Oh, sure. Well, first of  
14 all, you had to get someone's broom handle that you could  
15 untwist and then put some tape around it so it wouldn't  
16 slip from your hand. And we played with what's called a  
17 Spalding.

18 JOSH: Yep.

19 DR. MYLES BRAND: Which was the pink  
20 Spalding. And it was either fast pitch or one bounce, and  
21 we kind of played fast pitch. The width of the court was  
22 the street, and plus you had to stop if cars were coming.  
23 But, you know, two Johnny Pumps was a good hit, and that  
24 was a home run. But, you know, one Johnny Pump gave you a  
25 double, if no one caught it. And, of course, you had to

1 run around the bases, which means you had to touch the  
2 cars, provided they weren't moving. But playing stickball  
3 would sharpen your eye. It's a pretty skinny bat.

4 JOSH: I'd like to see an NCAA championship  
5 stickball.

6 DR. MYLES BRAND: So would I. That would  
7 be fun.

8 JOSH: I don't know how baseball people  
9 would feel about that.

10 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, you know, Willie  
11 Mays said that that's how he learned to hit, playing  
12 stickball. I mean, when it's fast pitch, you got to be  
13 pretty sharp to hit that ball. And it -- of course,  
14 it's -- you know, you've got to be pretty quick to chase  
15 it down if you get a good shot on it, because it does go a  
16 long way.

17 JOSH: So do you think that your  
18 experiences growing up in Brooklyn helped translate to  
19 being a professor and then being university president and  
20 then president of the NCAA?

21 DR. MYLES BRAND: No. I don't see any  
22 relation to it. But I still enjoyed growing up in  
23 Brooklyn. I think that kind of experience of  
24 participating in sports, being competitive, working hard,  
25 knowing how to interact with people, win or lose; I think

1 that may have played a role. But it didn't have much to  
2 do with Brooklyn. I mean, you could do that in country  
3 fields. You could do that in any city in the country.  
4 But I do think participation in sports had a role in my  
5 attitude towards life.

6 JOSH: All right. Well, thank you so  
7 much.

8 Although we're in Indianapolis right now,  
9 from one New Yorker to another, thank you so much for  
10 taking the time with me today.

11 DR. MYLES BRAND: Great pleasure.

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25