

# LA Times NFL Speaker Series

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Los Angeles, California

## Jane Skinner Goodell

**Q. Jane Skinner Goodell, thank you so much for joining us.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Hi, Sam, I'm so happy to be here. I have the bottled water that I made sure was Farmer's water, Fresh from the Farmer in my cup.

**Q. Farm-to-cup water. Thanks so much for coming.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: I hope your sales are huge.

**Q. Right. What do you think of LA, Super Bowl in LA? What are your first impressions?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: You know, it's funny, my first thoughts are actually of my husband Roger, because when we started dating, he was really obsessed with getting a team back to LA. Never even dreaming there would be two teams in LA, and the thought of having a brand new stadium and a Super Bowl and then a home team playing has kind of blown his mind, I think.

I just think back to when we were dating and he would talk about it all the time, he's like, I have this thing, I really would like to see it back in LA, it's such a great market, and the fact it doesn't have football doesn't make sense to me. I mean, you've lived it, right; it's such a long time coming.

I'm always excited to go to a Super Bowl, and I actually love smaller cities, medium sized cities as much as big cities for them because I think each city just imprints its personality on the game, which is really fun. But here there is, I have to admit, like a little extra level of excitement. I had never been to SoFi until yesterday, and I had been hearing about it for a period of a couple years now, and it was kind of everything that you say and more.

**Q. It is remarkable, it's a Hollywood scripted story that you've got the Rams playing both in the championship game here, which has never happened, Super Bowl stadium hosting a championship game, and then the Rams in the Super Bowl, and it's got to be like jet fuel to building a fan base in Los Angeles.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Absolutely, plus for people like you who you've been kind of working this story for so many years, I can imagine that you almost don't sleep. Have you been sleeping?

**Q. A little bit, but I'm sure I was an annoyance to Roger asking him every year.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: He never mentioned it, I swear. No, I think you probably shared the same passion that he did, right? It was the ups and downs, which you covered, and I would think for you, I know you're supposed to be an unbiased journalist, but you have watched this process and it's your hometown, to watch something so spectacular happen, I can imagine that you don't sleep a lot. There's probably a lot to cover, also.

**Q. Yeah, it's pretty remarkable he wrote a 2012 memo which is basically the blueprint for what he wanted to see, what the league wanted to see for a stadium in LA, and I talked to him about it, and he said it's one of his favorite memos ever. I said, Oh, good, do you have a laminated copy you can give me? He said, No, it's just on some stack of papers on my desk.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Probably so. We were also reliving the other night, he said one of the funniest memories was there were all those competing plans and bids for stadiums, and at one point -- and I don't think it was at a time when they thought things were going well, and one of the models which was probably a couple hundred pounds of a potential future site for a stadium dropped on the back of his foot and he ended up having to go to the hospital, but he had to pretend it didn't hurt because they were in a meeting, and he had these loafers on, and he said he could feel the blood filling up in his shoe as he was sitting there, and then he got up and said, I think someone needs to take a look at my ankle. It's gone from that, from the lows to the highs.

**Q. That's right, so he's shed blood for LA.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: I guess so.

**Q. In fact, I think he had to throw out loafers, didn't he.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Let's hope so, I don't know.



**Q. I would have kept them. I'm a keeper on that --**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Maybe he's got those laminated. He'll gift that to you after the game.

**Q. The bloody loafers. I want to talk first about a project you did in recent years, "Lifetime of Sundays," and if you can sort of explain what that was, what the motivation was, and some of the joy that you got out of it.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yeah, so this is a documentary that I was watching the NFL Network one day, and they do a series called "A Football Life," and it just popped into my head, I had spent some time -- I always say the most fortunate person, I have been able to spend a fair amount of time with Virginia Halas McCaskey, who for anybody who's watching doesn't know, her dad started the NFL in 1920. She still owns the Chicago Bears. She's 99 years old, still goes to all the games, which is mindboggling, and I thought, I wonder if they've ever done "A Football Life" 30-minute documentary on a woman.

So I asked Roger and he said, I have no idea, call someone at NFL Films and ask, and they said, No, we haven't, and I said, well, how about -- you should do one on Virginia Halas McCaskey. I could ask her. And they said, Well, sure, I mean, if you can get her to say yes. I'm like, Why wouldn't she say yes; she's got 100 years of history in her head and wouldn't she want to share that with the world. So thus began this process.

She of course immediately said, No, I don't do that.

I always describe it as she and the other women we profile, there are four of them, come from the generation of "we," where it was never about your contributions, it was all about team and country and community, and we're living in the generation of me, where it's like, what have you done lately, and especially for women I think you're kind of encouraged, and young women are encouraged to kind of like own your strength and maybe take a selfie and tell your story online and all that kind of stuff. So it was really a clash.

I then moved on to the next person I thought would be great for "A Football Life," which is Martha Ford at 88 years old was running the Detroit Lions, and her -- actually she was in her 90s but at 88 inherited the team, and the media all said an older woman can't run a time, and she called a press conference and fired the coach and the GM, and I want a Lombardi Trophy, too, by the way; I've been here for many decades.

So I tried her, and she said, Oh, Jane, no, no, no; that just

would not be something that I would want to do, that would be too much attention. Oh, my goodness.

So I moved on and I finally asked Pat Rooney of the Pittsburgh Steelers and Norma Hunt of the Chiefs, who also both of them had seen so much history, and they kind of hemmed and hawed, and Pat finally said to me, and Pat was very much -- she was such a sage, this lovely Irish lady who just would like lay it on the table always for me, and she would say, why don't we just -- I feel bad for you, first of all, you keep calling, like stop calling, and why don't we do something together.

So we ended up making a film, and it coincided with the 100th anniversary of the league with four women in their 80s and 90s telling their stories from their perspectives from an ownership perspective as a female owner, which is different, and they had really never told those stories before.

So when you start with Virginia McCaskey, and I sat down with her at Halas Hall and said, What's your first memory, and she said, it's 1927, I was with my mom, the Bears were playing this game and they used to play in Wrigley Field, she could name the seat number, the box that they would sit in, and said, I learned the game of football from my mom, and I'm like, Oh, my God, this is something. This is going to be kind of something for history.

**Q. That was the first indication to you, this could be huge.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: And she also, by the way, at the time I guess she was 96 maybe during that interview, and she sat there for almost three hours. Her son, who's in his 60s, George McCaskey, would come and say, mom, let's take a bathroom break; mom, don't you need some water. I'm fine.

We talked and talked, and I said to her, Mrs. McCaskey, this has never happened to me; I was a reporter for 20 years; I have no more questions. It was such a long conversation. She answered everything.

Her mind was as if you were talking to a 30-year-old. She would remember what she had texted at the -- there had been a game the week before. She remembered what she had texted to her son about a certain play and a certain player the week before but yet she also remembered everything from the 20s, the 30s, the 40s. It was just remarkable.

So we put it all together kind of telling the story of the league. You can tell I'm very passionate about it because I won't stop talking about it, but it turned out to be a "Lifetime

of Sundays," and pitching that and saying, hi, would you like to -- to the platform saying, Would you like a film that we're making about women in their 80s and 90s and NFL football. The reaction was kind of like, I don't think so.

I asked a lot of people, Will you just give me an hour and 10 minutes and watch it and then let me know what you think, and I think it surprised people because it obviously had a ton of football in it and we had a ton of players, coaches, men in it, too, talking about the women and talking about the history.

We screened it for -- the initial screening was at the NFL annual meeting, about 800 people, and there were like audible tears and I could hear people sniffing, and I stood up and it was like the Andy Reids, Ron Rivera, Roger Goodell crying and saying, that brought me back to my childhood in so many ways. There were stories about Walter Payton, and just like you understood why the game of football kind of connects people because it was so much about families and --

**Q. Brian Piccolo.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Brian Piccolo. That was the very difficult segment for everybody. If you can get through the Brian Piccolo segment with Mrs. McCaskey, you are very hard hearted. I don't think anybody did. Anyway, that is my very long answer to where that came from.

**Q. Was it particularly meaningful in light of your Chicago roots for you?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yeah.

**Q. Tell us a little bit about your background.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Right so I grew up in Chicago literally like in the shadow of Halas Hall, which used to be at Lake Forest College, which now they've got a big fancy modern facility, but in the days when you used to be able to walk over and watch practice and it was open. I'm the youngest and have all brothers and I'm the only girl, and so my dad would take us, and he got season tickets to the Bears in '72. Those are a lot of lean years in the '70s and early '80s for sure, and cold years. He was a bit of a tough task master. I got a ticket, he had four seats, and I have two older brothers, so I got the fourth seat, and it was like, there's no whining when it's 10 below wind chill and they're losing and a losing season. We spent a lot of time at Soldier Field. There were not a lot of little girls at Soldier Field, but it was very much a part of my family and our world.

I think I met Mrs. McCaskey just once before I did this film

-- I'm sorry, not before the film, before I got married to Roger and I would see her at events.

I had met her once when I was a little kid like 10 years old. She was with her dad or something like that and that was it, but she really was somebody who I always wanted to spend a lot of time with because I thought she was so interesting and it was such a thrill for me to be able to have -- I get to see her at various events, but to have three hours to sit down with her was like -- I'll never forget it.

**Q. What about your background in journalism and interest in journalism from a young age?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yeah, so I grew up -- so my dad was in politics or our family was all about politics and sports, and I come from a family of kind of all lawyers. I went to Northwestern, and when I was there, they have a great journalism school and I really thought I was going to be a lawyer and then I saw all the lawyers in my family and they were like not that happy being lawyers. So I thought, how could I marry something I really love, which I thought maybe I would do something visual. I loved politics, and so I went to journalism school there and stayed for a graduate program, and then I did like a very typical reporter's path, I started in Duluth, Minnesota; went to Portland, Maine; St. Louis, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and then I actually really wanted to go back to Chicago and be a political reporter in Chicago and then I went on a date and met this guy at a wedding and I moved to New York.

**Q. Tell us about that.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yeah, so we met at a -- Roger and I met at a wedding. I don't know, I guess -- I'm probably going to get in trouble. I guess his friends would say he was kind of like a confirmed bachelor. He's a little bit older than I am, like eight years older than I am, and I was very much in my like, I'm two years away from my dream job in Chicago. We met at a wedding of mutual friends got married, and I thought he was super nice. But he lived in New York and I lived in Milwaukee.

That's for a martini story, the rest of it. It took a while. He always says he was very patient. My mom adored him from the second she saw him. She walked up to the table and said, who's the hunk in the tan jacket?

So I said, oh, some nice guy from the NFL. Mom, I'm on a career path, I'm not really that interested.

**Q. He keeps talking about LA.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: That's true.



**Q. Very boring.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: No, you know what our first conversation was at the wedding, he finally said, What did I do to deserve this, because he said, I'm Roger, I work at the NFL, and I said oh -- and the Bears were trying to renovate their stadium or potentially build a new stadium at the time, so we were kind of arguing about that, and he's like, Who are you and stop bothering me with the work questions.

Anyhow, so it took a little while. He was super patient, and then I ended up in New York.

**Q. Tell me about your latest project "Earning It" and what the inspiration was.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: So when we made a "Lifetime of Sundays" with these four women, the older women in their 80s and 90 talking about the history of football, my concept was, why don't we have comps to them, so if you have Martha Ford running the team in her 80s, what about Kim Pegula running the team at the time she would have been in her late 40s, and wouldn't that be neat to have them kind of interact and talk about what it's like to be a female owner in this day and age, at her age, a younger age.

But we had so much richness with the four women, and it was the 100th anniversary, so we just decided to make "Lifetime of Sundays" as a project.

But lingering out there has been this, like -- the pace of change, which still boggles my mind that if we were talking five or six years ago and I were to say to you, Do you know in five years there are going to be six full-time female coaches and there's going to be a Sarah Thomas and a Maia Chaka in black-and-white stripes and all progress we're seeing. It's just happened so fast that we decided to like kind of wait and make this a living, breathing series, so it's a five-part docuseries, I guess you could call it. NFL Films is shooting it, which is the best news, and they're so good at what they do, and it'll be on -- it's streaming on Peacock and it's been on NBC network, too.

It's really chronicling change ultimately. How does this happen? Arguably the most male-dominated industry in the country, right, and then suddenly you're seeing women come into the game in positions that you maybe never thought that would ever happen or would be possible or why would that happen.

It really all started because somebody created a pipeline, a woman came to Roger and said, I have this idea, I was a former professional female tackle football player,

quarterback, which I didn't even know how many women played tackle football, and there are a lot, and she said, I have a lot of really smart friends who know the game very well, and there is no way they can get an interview. If you're a Bill Belichick you know the path; it's pretty straightforward how you become an assistant to the assistant and end up on that route, and there's no way for women to even try and get in front of anybody.

He's kind of famously said, call me Monday; I have never really thought about it and let's talk about it. So they created this pipeline, or Sam Rappaport really did, and she brings together each year 40 very qualified young women, sometimes older women, depending on their paths in life, and she right away, the Ron Riveras and Sean McDermotts of the world raised their hands and said, I'd like to be there, I'd like to meet these women. It all kind of coalesced and it has happened pretty quickly. She's created over -- now I think she says more than 175 opportunities for women just in the past couple years.

That was kind of the -- that's the genesis of the change, and then now we're profiling 20 women anywhere from on the field, front office, the episode that's actually coming up on Super Bowl Sunday that we're filming part of in LA is there's a woman who produces the halftime show, and she's like a fantastic story in herself.

It kind of -- Condi Rice is in it. We have some great female fans who are trailblazers, as well, Lindsey Vonn, and it isn't -- my big intention was not to make female content for women, it was to make content -- football content really for everybody, so we have a ton of very powerful male voices, really interesting male voices, players and head coaches, George Bush and Dr. Dre and it's a wide variety, and they all were really interested in being part of it, which I also thought was pretty satisfying and makes it pretty deep and interesting.

**Q. Any surprises for you in putting it together?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: No, I would say not so much surprises. We got a lot of yeses, which is great. I was hoping that's what it was, and I really was hoping that when you ask the former president, would you be willing to take part and this is the concept of this show and would you talk about Condi Rice, and he said -- he doesn't do a lot of interviews, right, so I think that's a shot in the dark, but I would love to have that kind of a voice. We didn't have a political voice like that, and he said, 100 percent I'll do it and I'd like to talk about Charlotte Jones of the Cowboys, too. He wanted to spend extra time on it and say that's something that has impressed me.

I guess maybe that's a surprise or it's just like super



satisfying to hear that there is interest in the project and also just interest in that kind of change in society.

**Q. We've talked about change in the NFL, and effecting change in the NFL and diversifying the coaching ranks. What are some of the big challenges ahead for the league?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Well, Roger talked a lot yesterday -- I mean, I think everybody kind of knows what the big challenges are, and I think it's what so many corporations and institutions, whether it's colleges, universities, Fortune 500 companies, everybody is facing, right, is all of society facing, is how do we create a system which is kind of like this pipeline we're talking about, where you get qualified people who might not normally be in the room, make sure they're in the room, and once they're in the room make sure that they're considered as everyone else is considered.

I was interested to hear him talk about it yesterday to say, because I've been married to him for 25 years, so I know -- I don't work there so I can't give you that perspective, but I can give you the perspective of I know what he thinks about when he goes to bed and what he thinks about when he gets up in the morning, and I've known him for a long time, and somebody years ago a reporter asked me, is he supportive of women, and I'm like, well, I wouldn't have married him if he wasn't. That was right at the top of my list.

**Q. Two daughters --**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Right. But at the top of his list, to me, in addition to LA, has always been really diverse voices. He's not a guy who wants to walk into a conference room and everybody tells him he's right. He actually is like a redhead in the middle of five boys in seven years. He wants people to argue and mix it up and give me the facts and then we decide, I want to listen, tell me, tell me.

The diversity of thought has always been huge for him, and he has worked on this issue of bringing Black coaches in for as long as I can remember knowing him. I think he is very frustrated, like he said, the fact that they have tried all these different things. He listens. He is on phone calls all the time. He is not somebody who's going to go out to the media and say, guess who I've been talking to. He does a ton of work talking to hopefully the right people on how to make this better.

As he said, they haven't gotten there yet. Hopefully -- and by the way, if somebody called from a Fortune 500 company and said we have the secret sauce on how to

make this better, he would in one second be on a call with them to find out.

**Q. You had a very different up-close view of his phone calls and everything when COVID hit and he was at home. What did you tell your daughters who were also at home from college?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yeah, so that was so interesting for everybody, right, to have -- to watch kind of how -- wherever you were, kind of how your institution managed it.

I thought it was fascinating that he woke up the day after the world officially was shutting down kind of and said, we've got to adapt. It wasn't like -- I had friends who were working in different companies and were like, oh, it's the death of our company, it's going to be so bad. Roger is a very optimistic guy but he woke up immediately and said, we have to figure this out.

He was like this one-man team on the phone like telling everybody, no, no, no, we're going to figure it out. It's going to be really hard, we're going to figure it out. It was 7:00 in the morning talking to East Coast governors and mayors and then it's midnight talking to West Coast, can we get people in the stadium, can we get stadiums open, can we get people in the stadium, getting the virtual draft done. Nobody really thought that was going to happen. Did you think that was going to happen? I don't know.

**Q. Well, I thought it was going to happen, I just didn't know how you'd pull it off.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yeah.

**Q. I thought about the virtual draft, it was fascinating that he was getting up in the middle of it to go fix a screen door or put the screens in or something. Tell me about that.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: You know, he was like, well, I had downtime, because they needed him out of our basement while they were setting up different cameras and he said, you'll be so proud of me because I took the time to take out the -- it was April so we took out the storm doors and put the screen doors in and that kind of stuff. It was very funny. People always --

**Q. During the draft, while teams were drafting, while he was on camera?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Well, maybe it was -- it feels like so long ago. It was either like right before or maybe at the end of the night or whatever it was. People ask me all

the time, though, because you know how you slowly -- was like sliding down, he's like taking off the jacket, wearing the T-shirt and whatever. They're like, he was drunk, right? I'm like, no, he wasn't drunk. I think he actually in some funny way like so enjoyed it.

The draft is his favorite event by far because he always says, that's the time when you see people's -- these young men's dreams come true and their lives really change, right, for their families. So he loves, loves that, and he loves like the hugs and the whole thing. But I think he just loved the fact that they were able to do something and bring some distraction and joy but also make the business carry on in the middle of all that.

So I think he was just feeling, like, chill.

**Q. What did you tell your daughters?**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Oh, sorry, yeah. So I did say they were home from college, and I did say to them, you guys, we have him. You never have your dad for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I mean, who does, right? In the midst of a crisis, ask questions. This is going to be like a business class, better than any business class you might be able to take because you're going to see what the challenges are and the obstacles and how you try to work around them and make something happen. So when he comes to the table at lunch for his 20 minutes of soup or whatever, say, What happened this morning, because things were changing so quickly.

So it was really, really, I thought, really fascinating. I don't know if my teenage daughters feel that way, as fascinating as I thought it was, but I'm sure they'll look back on it and say it was pretty cool to see -- he was this one-man positivity machine where he was like, let's do it.

**Q. I know he's a creature of habit on a lot of things --**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Really?

**Q. On the Zoom calls I know with the league he would have oatmeal and people at the league wondered if it was a bottomless thing of oatmeal because they're like, how much oatmeal is in that bowl.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: A lot, a lot. In fact, yesterday at the hotel he said he couldn't find a spoon so he ate his microwave oatmeal with the plastic top of a coffee cup or something. So the oatmeal, that is a creature-of-habit characteristic.

**Q. What's next for you? Obviously you're very engaged with the --**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Yes, and we produced a companion podcast, also, this year with the TV series, so it's been really fun, and that is just this week the last episode dropped, which if anybody likes Halftime at the Super Bowl, which I think a few people million do, we did this awesome behind-the-scenes with Dionne, who's the woman who produces Halftime, and then we brought along Questlove to act as like a Halftime historian to take you through, what do you take into consideration, particularly when you're in LA and you have Dr. Dre and Kendrick Lamar, Snoop, et cetera, how much history comes into play when you're designing the show, what are the iconic moments, what do artists tell you.

One of the spoilers is she said after Diana Ross got lifted out on a chopper, that's all anybody says anymore: Can't I have a chopper? No, not at SoFi you can't have a chopper lifting you out of the stadium. We're kind of wrapping up that. We're going to shoot one last episode on Super Bowl Sunday, and we're going to -- Matthew Stafford's wife Kelly is going to -- we're going to do some stuff with her and her four girls, and we have a couple other cool surprises for that episode, too, so that'll come out at the end of February. Then I'll take a day off and figure out the next one.

**Q. Jane, thank you so much. You're the first last guest on Hall of Farmer, and I really appreciate you. That is quite a feather in your cap.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: I know, and you need to have the coffee mugs, though, with your --

**Q. That's tomorrow.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: -- logo on.

**Q. Noted.**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: I want you to make money off of this.

**Q. You want me to make money off it...**

JANE SKINNER GOODELL: Thank you so much.

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