

# LA Times NFL Speaker Series

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## Nate Boyer

**Q. I want to welcome Nate Boyer, one of my favorite people to haul of farmer. A guy who's lived multiple lives really if you think about it, whether it's NFL, MVP, he's now got a movie out, one of the hottest events at the Super Bowl, the screening of your movie. We're going to talk about that and how the overflow, it was a tough ticket to get. First I just want to start off talking about your life and sort of the intersection with Colin Kaepernick and how that happened. Tell me about being a Green Beret and how that sort of unfolded.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area, so I grew up a 49ers fan, which is important to the story. We almost got here this week, but you know what, I'm excited for a Rams-Bengals match-up. It's going to be really cool. Yeah, grew up in the bay, was Joe Montana for Halloween two years in a row, my heroes were Jerry Rice and Roger Craig and Ronnie Lott and all these guys.

Growing up through high school, my younger years, I always wanted to be a football player, a professional athlete. That's what I wanted to do. I never played football. It was something that I would regret for a very long time because it was my favorite sport, but it just didn't work out. When I was real young my mom didn't want me to play, and by the time I was old enough to make that decision for myself, I just didn't have the confidence and belief that I could do it. I was afraid of getting cut or riding the bunch or whatever, so I never played.

Fast forward to graduating high school, didn't really know what I wanted to do, what I wanted to study. Had a lot of passion but not a lot of work ethic. Moved down to San Diego, worked on a fishing boat for a bit and then actually came up to Los Angeles at 19, interested in film and TV, not really knowing where to start and all that.

After living here for about a year, 9/11 happened, and that really --

**Q. Let me stop you for a second. Wasn't there a time when you lived in your car?**

NATE BOYER: Yeah.

**Q. Was that around that time?**

NATE BOYER: Right around that time. When I first came up here I didn't have any money and I didn't know anybody in LA. The weather is nice. Look, we're in February and it's in the 80s.

For me, I was excited to kind of be just on my own. It didn't really bother me. I mean, I was sleeping in my car or I'd sleep in -- I think it's Will Rogers Park down by the Beverly Hills Hotel. I'd take my sleeping bag out there. It was not a big deal. Just because I was like, I feel like I'm following some sort of passion, and I was excited about that.

I think just being at that age, it just didn't bother me, you know.

But after a while, it gets tough. You're showering at the YMCA and you're like, all right, if I'm really going to be here and try to pursue something, I need to get my stuff together and kind of get things figured out.

Working odd jobs, eventually saved enough up to put a deposit down, had a little studio apartment over on Franklin and Gower in Hollywood, in kind of old Hollywood, had a Murphy bed pull out of the wall, and that's the bed I was laying in when my mom called me on 9/11/2001 at gosh, it was probably about 6:00 in the morning out here, and she just said, turn the TV on. I had this little 13-inch box TV, and I was like, What channel, what are you talking about. She's like, Just turn it on. I turned it on and of course saw what the rest of the world saw through a television screen. I can't imagine being there boots on the ground.

But yeah, it just kind of shook me, as I'm sure it shook a lot of people. It was like hard to even believe that this was real.

It really got me thinking kind of immediately. I remember 9/12 and seeing how we really came together as a country and the sort of patriotism, even on that street that I lived, over on Franklin Street in Hollywood, there was a little parade the next day. People were out there dressed like Uncle Sam and carrying flags, and it was like this pride of -- we're still together, we're going to be okay, we'll figure this out kind of rallying around one another.



I didn't join the military right away, but it got me thinking about it and thinking a little more globally, and eventually a couple of years later I found myself in the Darfur region of Sudan, the Sudan and Chad border.

**Q. Wait, you found yourself in the Darfur region --**

NATE BOYER: I kind of did. That's sort of a literal and figurative statement, because I didn't feel like anything I was doing here in the States, at least at that time in my life, made a difference. I wasn't affecting anything in my community. I wasn't doing anything that made me feel like I belonged and had a purpose and I really mattered. Like if I was gone, I felt like nobody's life would be negatively affected. Yeah, my family would be sad, but it's like, I'm not doing anything great that's changing.

**Q. How old are you?**

NATE BOYER: About 23.

I read this time magazine article, the cover of the magazine said "The Tragedy in Sudan," and it was this woman holding her child, and it's in the midst of this genocide I was reading about, 300,000 people had already been killed, and it's already a very distraught part of the world as far as economics and being a developing place.

Then we've got that going on, and I couldn't even compute. I'm reading about these refugee camps that are not being stood up fast enough. There's just too many people coming in across the border into Chad.

I called all these NGOs, I wanted to help out, and all of them told me -- I didn't have a college degree, didn't have any special skills. They were like, it's not that simple; what would you do? I'm like, you guys are undermanned. I'll do whatever. I'll dig ditches and build campsites and assist in medical centers, whatever you need. I just want to help.

They were like, we understand that and we appreciate that, but it's just not that simple. I said, man, I'm going to figure it out anyway, I'm going to find a way.

So I went to the AAA in Burbank, and I bought a ticket to the capital of Chad, N'Djamena is what the capital is called, and I flew out there and just figured it out and made my way out to the --

**Q. What was that flight like when you were thinking, wait, what am I doing? Or you obviously were a sensitive -- a hardy kid, an adventure some kid but a sensitive person to be affected by this, and 9/11 affected you.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah. I was fortunate to have parents that were really hardworking but also they're both -- they made their own way. They're blue collar, they've worked their butts off. They instilled that in us as kids, like you've got to work for things, and at the same time when people need help, it doesn't matter if you don't understand or can relate to what's going on with them, you should help them, you should be there for them, do what you can, because they were always there for not only us -- I remember my dad, he's a racehorse veterinarian, and at the racetrack he worked at, he would help everybody. If somebody needed a few bucks or a connection or whatever. Sometimes he stretched himself a little thin with helping people, but that stuff just kind of sits with you.

So I'm lucky to have that kind of guidance growing up from my folks.

Yeah, so I get over there, and I'm hundreds of miles from where these camps are just in the capital and I had to talk my way on to this UN flight, this little propeller plane, and they had an extra seat. I BS'd my way on to it and we're flying over the desert there and that's when it kind of hit me, I'm looking down over the Sahara, just bizarre, very surreal, like where am I, what am I doing, am I -- am I out of my mind?

Quickly, soon after that, I should say, all my insecurities and worries sort of went away when I was around the people. Talk about people that have absolutely nothing, and whatever they did have, what little they had was taken from them. The men had all been killed and a lot of the women had been raped and the children were left abandoned and villages burned down. They're at these refugee camps and the kids are smiling and playing because there's one soccer ball, and they're just so grateful for that.

The women and some of the elderly there are grateful to just have food, something to eat that day. It's just a perspective that we all -- I'm as guilty of it as anybody. You come back here, this is a great place. We have a lot of opportunity here. It's not a perfect place, but where we live, we don't have to worry about those things as much. There's still issues, but it's just different in a place like that.

I was like, man, I want to fight for these people. I want to do more of this. I want to find a way to still give to them once I go back home, and with us being at war, I never really thought the military would be right for me, but I got malaria my last week there, and I was put up by this family, and they had this little mud hut they put me in and fed me and nursed me back to health and they put a little radio by my bed, and the only station that came through was the BBC, and I'm listening to the second battle of Fallujah, like

the play-by-play, and hearing about these Marines who were going over there and fighting for these people and doing what they could to provide some sense of stability.

I was like, man, maybe it's that. Maybe I'll be a marine. Came back home and learned -- started studying up and learned about the Army special forces, the Green Berets, and their motto was "De Oppresso Liber," which means free the oppressed, which spoke to me in a big way, and then I read about how part of what they do is there's a humanitarian side to the work and foreign internal defense. You're like training locals and living with them and fighting alongside them, and that even more so felt like it was right for me.

I signed up for the Army and shipped off to basic training and eventually went through the special forces training and --

**Q. That doesn't just happen; you obviously were very athletic, you were in good shape, you had the right mindset --**

NATE BOYER: Not when I got there. Eventually, but I think I did have the right mindset.

**Q. Tell me just briefly, what do they put you through? How do you become a Green Beret?**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, it's two years of training, and it's very challenging. It's some of the toughest training in the military. A lot of it's on your own, and some of it's with a team. It's spending weeks on end in the field, in the woods with just the pack on your back, and you do -- from land navigation to small unit tactics to honestly learning how to best communicate with people that have completely different backgrounds than you and completely different values and cultures and customs and all these things that you kind of have to set aside. You don't ignore them, but you have to like set aside your pride in that way and understand that, like -- I believe what I believe because of what I've experienced, and I have to respect what this person believes because that's their experience.

I can't be stuck in this, well, I'm right and you're wrong because I feel strong about it. I think that's the biggest part of the training that's challenging is like you're exhausted mentally, physically, emotionally, but at the same time you have to keep your wits about you and keep a level head and kind of take the high road at all costs.

That's the best way I can describe it without getting into too much crazy detail. But it's tough.

**Q. At this time was the interest in football -- and again,**

**you had not played organized football, still percolating in the back of your mind, or just fandom, or did you still have a dream of maybe playing football, which is outlandish to think he could?**

NATE BOYER: Not right -- it was there, it was always there because I loved the game and I loved to watch it, and being on a deployment in Iraq, I remember we'd be on mission until 5:00 a.m. and we'd come off and go back to the team house, and it's like, we might have experienced some tough stuff out there, right.

But I can't wait to like finish filling out whatever reports I've got to write so I can go watch Monday night football, which at 5:00 a.m. that's when it starts out there, because it's like that escape, and it's something that reminded me of home and something I could just kind of turn off whatever else was going on and just watch the game.

By the end of that deployment, knowing that my time was ending soon in the military, at least on active duty, I was like, man, you know what, I'm going to go to college and I'm going to -- I'm just going to try and play.

**Q. Crazy. Now you're in your late 20s, right?**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, 29.

**Q. Just like all the other freshmen on the team. So what happens then, you start watching YouTube?**

NATE BOYER: Exactly. I was on that deployment the last few months, and I started training for this opportunity. I knew I still had a year in the military, but I was like, you know what, I'm going to Google how to run routes and I'm going to watch YouTube videos on playing defensive back and different training that I could do, from weights to speed work to whatever it was.

I came back to the States and finished up my time on active duty, and then went -- moved to Austin, got enlisted -- applied to University of Texas. I got in. It was the only place I applied. I really liked Austin. It's a great school, and just the legacy of football in Texas was something that was really appealing. I wanted to try something different, go to a new place.

I tried out for the team and made it. I was a safety that was never going to see the field because of -- there's some good football players in that locker room, regardless of me being 10 years older than the other freshmen. So I started -- my sophomore year I started long snapping just to kind a way on to the field. It's one of those thankless jobs people don't really know about. I barely knew what a long snapper was when I got there, but I started practicing it. I reenlisted

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in the National Guard.

**Q. For the uninitiated, you're snapping the ball back on punts and kicks?**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, exactly, field goals, extra points and punts. You only play 12, 15 plays a game, but the accuracy and consistency is the most important thing. You've got to do the same thing every time. You've got to do it absolutely perfect, set that kicker up for success, and then you've got to block and then you've got to go downfield and try to make a tackle if it's on punt.

You never get any glory, but if you screw up, everybody knows who you are.

So that's a tough one for I think a lot of people. For me it was like, this is my opportunity. It's a thankless job, I'm going to find a way on the field, I'm long snapping. That's what I'm doing.

So I had reenlisted in the national guard in Texas, and with that had agreed to go on deployments in the summertime, so I went over to Afghanistan between my sophomore and junior and senior years and practiced -- brought a football with me and worked on the long snapping, and my head Coach Mack Brown at the time said hey, be safe out there. When you come back you'll get a shot to try out for the position. I don't think he really believed I'd be able to figure it out, but I snapped 100 balls a day and just focused on that and came back to Texas and won the starting job and got to long snap for three years at UT.

**Q. That is unreal. Then Pete Carroll.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah. Yeah. So it ended. I played through my senior year and got to play in the Senior All-Star Game out in Charleston. It was called the Medal of Honor Bowl. They don't have it anymore, but it was really amazing, a bunch of medal of honor recipients came out there for the week, and then there was like NFL scouts at this All-Star Game. I didn't know that was a thing. They were watching us practice and a few teams interviewed me, and they were like, hey, we know you just turned 34 and you're a little small for the NFL, but you should put some weight on and give it a shot. I was like, all right, I'm in, let's do it.

So I moved out to Los Angeles, I met Jay Glazer at Unbreakable Performance Center. Everyone was telling me you've got to meet this guy, you've got to come to this gym, a lot of NFL players train there.

He just opened the doors to me and said, hey, I want to help you. I'm going to find -- we're going to find a way to

get you a shot.

So I started training there at the gym with his staff, and he was working with us, too. It's like, there's Odell Beckham and these other -- Jadeveon Clowney and these guys that are just insane athletes, and I'm there trying to keep up with them, but I'm doing what I can and I'm eating like crazy and putting the weight on, and the draft rolls around, and I got -- I had calls from two teams, the St. Louis Rams and the Seattle Seahawks, who had been to back-to-back Super Bowls. No offense to the Rams, I'm really proud of where they're at now, they've really come around, but I just couldn't not take that opportunity in Seattle, even though it was going to be tougher to make the team for sure, but it's like, I loved the way that Coach Carroll ran that team, that organization. It felt like a college locker room in a lot of ways, and they were the best, from Richard Sherman to Marshawn Lynch to Russell Wilson, all these guys, the team --

**Q. I've got to stop you here. This is insane. For a guy who didn't play high school football, for a guy who learned off YouTube, had this incredible life experience in your 20s of being a Green Beret, and now you're in the NFL, which makes zero sense. This is a one-in-a-billion story.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, you're right. There's just no way I could have done it without the people around me, without that family, without people like Jay pushing me, without my immediate family, my parents believing in me. They tell me I'm crazy, but then they would believe in me; know what I mean? So many others, the people from the veteran community, not just guys and girls that I served with, like other people that just were like, go for it, man, you're doing it this for us, and we're proud of you.

Also just having to accept the fact that I'm going to fail at some point, and like knowing that and getting past the fear of looking stupid and embarrassment. I think that's what limits a lot of us.

When I look at it, I don't think it's that crazy because I wasn't worried about the outcome. It was just like, I'm going to put the work in, and if it works out, it works out, but I'm going to work harder than everybody else, and the results will speak for themselves.

I don't have control over that. That's okay. That's good. Just control what you can control, keep yourself around the right people, those that believe in you, and shut out the haters, because there's always plenty of haters.

**Q. Let's fast forward to your Seahawks experience, you're then out of the league, and the quarterback from**



**your favorite childhood team Colin Kaepernick has decided to sit out on the bench during the National Anthem in a preseason game.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah. So I go through OTAs, training camp, I get to play in one preseason game in 2015 before I did get cut. It did end. I ultimately failed, right.

I'm warming up pregame, and I'm at midfield and I'm snapping footballs. I'm nervous as all get-out. It's in Seattle, which is like crazy -- the fans, they're all in.

It's like a sell-out crowd for a preseason game, and I'm snapping balls, I look to my right, and Peyton Manning is there in his final season warming up, and that was that moment where I'm like, wow, what am I doing here.

I go in the locker room, and the equipment manager says, hey, do you want to lead the team out of the tunnel with the American flag, we know you got to do it in college and we were wondering if you want to do it for this game, and I was like, I would love that honor.

So took the flag, lead the team out of the tunnel, place is going crazy, and right before the game starts, of course the announcer says, Would everyone please rise for the National Anthem.

In college, you're actually not on the field when the anthem plays. Teams are in the locker rooms. They just kind of do it a little bit different.

I hadn't really been out there for the anthem. Maybe once in a bowl game or something, but this was just a -- I had sort of forgot. I wasn't even thinking about it. I'm like, oh, dang, I find the tallest flag in the building and I face it and I put my hand on my heart and the song starts playing and all these emotions and kind of recalling my experience, and the guys that I know that didn't make it back and the ones that are struggling back home and veteran suicide is a big issue, people that are coming back and not feeling like they fit in, all these things are like running through my head, and I just started bawling. I was like, overcome, overwhelmed.

The song ends, all the players on the team, a bunch of them came up to me and gave me a hug and just were like, We're proud of you. It was the most special moment of that game. I got to play the whole second half. That was great. I did as well as I could do. But that moment stuck with me.

One year later almost to the day is when Colin started sitting on the bench, Colin Kaepernick, during the National Anthem, and when interviewed about it, he said, I'm doing this because of social injustice in this country and I'm not

going to stand for the flag of a country that oppresses Black people and people of color.

From my experience, I didn't feel that that was what the flag stood for, and for me, those symbols mean something very different, but like I talked about earlier, that's because of my relationship with them and my experiences. I don't have a similar experience to Colin Kaepernick or any person of color for that matter. But we're all different. We have those different emotions to certain symbols.

For him, this was something he felt so strongly about that he wasn't going to even stand with his teammates when the song was played before the game, and of course that created quite a controversy and something that we're still talking about today, six, seven years later.

It was hard for me to write that letter, but I thought it was important --

**Q. You wrote a letter.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah.

**Q. To explain a little bit --**

NATE BOYER: Yeah.

**Q. Wrote a letter that went in Stars and Stripes?**

NATE BOYER: The Army Times.

**Q. Because you had played in the NFL, you had been a Green Beret, you were a Green Beret.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah.

**Q. So you came with that respect.**

NATE BOYER: Yeah.

**Q. And what did you say in the letter, the gist of what you said?**

NATE BOYER: Well, when I first saw everything, I made a snap judgment. I see somebody sitting on the bench during the anthem, it hurts. I feel like it's not odd for me to feel maybe anger, know what I mean, or like, you don't -- this initial thought of like, you don't know what you're -- you don't understand what that really means. You've never been to war and all these things that really also don't have a lot to do with the flag itself. It was just that reaction. That wasn't fair of me to feel that.

I'm getting hit up from FOX News and also CNN and

MSNBC and they're like, come on our show and they're like, let's debate this topic. I'm like, man, that's not going to help; I don't want to debate. I just want us to work together as a nation, and it felt like we were very divided at that time. It's the middle of Hillary Clinton versus Donald Trump, that election. We're just getting pulled apart, pulled apart, and I didn't want to be a part of that.

So I wrote this letter, open letter to Colin through the Army Times, which I didn't think a ton of people would read to be completely honest. It's a smaller publication, just about my experiences, how I felt, but also saying, look, this is how I feel, but that doesn't mean this is the only way. This is just because of my experiences, my connection to things.

I told a little bit about my story in that letter but also I said, Colin, I'm not going to pretend to know what it's like to be you or what you're feeling, and I've got to say that what you're doing, it is brave. Whether I agree with it or not, it's very courageous. I look forward to the day that you're willing to stand during the anthem because I'll be standing right there next to you. I signed it De Oppresso Liber, and he and a lot of other people read it. It went kind of viral, and he ended up reaching out and said that he wanted to meet, and they were playing the San Diego Chargers at the time in that final preseason game that week, and it's Military Appreciation Night, 9/11 is approaching, and they're going to do a flyover with Navy Seals jumping in the stadium and full honors on the field and Colin is saying, I'm not going to stand, I'm going to sit during the anthem, I'm going to sit on the bench.

So I go down there and meet him, and man, I will say he had nothing but respect for me, and we were both nervous. You could see it. I'm sure he could see it in me and I could see it in him of just like, I was nervous because now I'm in the middle of this conversation, and I don't really know what I am talking about at some level. I am not fully read on to everything that -- the reasons, all of the reasons why he was doing what he was doing beyond just police officers not being held accountable when we have situations where unarmed people of color are being killed. It's so much more than that, so much deeper than that.

I'm just trying to educate myself as much as I can and just listen to him, and he was very respectful, and he wanted to listen to me and hear about why I felt that strongly about -- why it was important for me anyway to stand during the anthem.

You know, we joked about stuff, and it was like two guys in a locker room just having a conversation. Honestly, like you and I are having right now. It was very organic.

At the end of it, he just asked me, hey, do you think there's

a way that I can still protest that's not going to offend people in the military, and I was like, man, I mean, I don't speak for the military or the veteran community, so in my opinion, I think being alongside your teammates is really important. I think that's a good message. He said, I understand that, but I've committed to not standing during the anthem, so I don't know if I can do that. I said, well, what if you took a knee. I just kind of threw it out there.

I thought in my experience, in my recollection anyway, I couldn't think of a time where kneeling was seen as disrespect. People take a knee to pray and propose to their future spouse, and when a player on the field is hurt in a football game, a lot of the other players will take a knee out of respect until they're shouldered off.

When I go to Arlington and visit someone like Brad Keys, one of my best friends that has now passed and I go to visit his grave, I take a knee and spend a few moments with him.

I thought, maybe that's a good -- I don't want to say compromise because it's not what it was, but just a middle ground. He actually agreed. He said, he thought that was more powerful. He said, I think that's a good idea.

He asked if I'd kneel with him, and I said, I can't do that because I just -- I don't feel that way, and to be completely honest, for me, I feel a sense of pride when I hear that song, and I understand not everybody feels that and I understand there is a different history around the Star Spangled Banner specifically but just from my experiences and the way it was always honored, and like a folded flag is handed to a family member when somebody passes, I've carried a casket draped in an American flag with my best friend in that box. It just is different for me.

He understood that and respected that immediately, and I said, but Colin, I'll stand next to you if you're willing to do this. So that night can he game, I stood next to Colin and he took a knee, and the anthem started to play, a Black Navy sailor sang the anthem, and people in the audience booed. Not everybody, of course, but that's what I remember, that uncomfortability of hearing that.

I'm standing there with my hand on my heart, half the time I've got my hand in my pocket, which is kind of a no-no for veterans, but I was so nervous around this whole thing.

But I was proud of him in that moment for doing that. There's plenty of things that him and I will probably never agree on, and that's totally okay, but we can have a conversation and respect each other and move forward kind of together and figure out, like I said, that middle ground.

**Q. I mentioned at the top, you've had many lives. You've lived many lives. Tell me about MVP, Merging Vets and Players, the movie and the impetus behind that.**

NATE BOYER: So after I got cut, literally like the next day, I get a call from Chris Long first. Playing for the St. Louis Rams --

**Q. Son of Howie Long?**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, and he was telling me about Water Boys, this clean water project he had going on in Tanzania, and he was like, I'm trying to raise money for 32 water Wells to represent the 32 teams in the NFL, do you want to help, and I was like, I'd love to. I don't know what that looks like but let's do it.

So we came up with this idea of let's bring veterans and NFL players, we'll go climb Mount Kilimanjaro together, raise money for the water wells. So that starts -- those wheels are in motion, so I'm like, cool, I've got some kind of a purpose, something going on. But at the same time I was considering my next move. I don't know what I'm going to do, maybe I'll go back in the military.

I come back to LA and I'm staying in Jay's guest house for a bit and kind of getting back on my feet, and Jay is like, don't do that. Like there's a lot we can do with veterans. That's cool what you're doing with Water Boys, that's great, but let's do something here, too, like in the States.

He said, I have this idea for this charity called MVP, stands for Merging Vets and Players. He's like, I don't know what we're going to do with it yet but I just want to bring these groups together because I know how you feel right now not having that team, and I was like, yeah, and I'll tell you what, guys that leave the military, they feel like they don't have a team anymore or a purpose or a mission, and that uniform is -- it's not who we are but it becomes a part of our identity, whether it's camouflage or a jersey, and people recognize us as that, and we start to feel like this is who I am.

The reality is that's not who you are, it's something that you do or something that you did, but it's hard to kind of move on sometimes and take that as -- this is a part of me, it always will be, I'm proud of that, but now I've got a clean slate, I've got a new path, a new journey, and a lot of these people, they don't realize that. It's hard for them to see that. They kind of get stuck in the past.

I could have done different or better and who I didn't save and the negativity of it instead of look at all the amazing

stuff did.

Even though I played in one preseason game, I got that shot. Like that's incredible. Like you were saying, it's insane. I got that shot. I should be proud of that.

Everybody who had that opportunity should be proud of that, and everybody that enlisted to protect our country and try to help people in places less fortunate, they should be proud of that and proud of those scars that we're here and we survived it.

So we started to build Merging Vets and Players, MVP. I went down to a homeless shelter in East Hollywood, and this place is on Sunset Boulevard, all Iraq and Afghanistan vets living in this one building, and I met some of these guys, one who you've met before, Denver Morris. I met Denver, and we didn't have a great conversation the first time. He was like, what are you doing here, I'm not a charity case kind of thing.

Then we reconnected, we went and had lunch, and I asked Jay, hey, can I bring some of these guys to the gym. Jay has this incredible gym, Unbreakable. There's people like Wiz Khalifa, not to mention all the athletes and stuff that train there. It's a very elite spot.

He was like, yes, of course. We'll shut it down for a couple hours every week and bring these guys up.

The first time I went up there, I brought six of them, and we trained together, and I told Jay, man, this was amazing, you've got to come. He was like, all right, let's do it. Jay brought people like Randy Couture and Tony Gonzales and we went and worked out together and then we hung out on the wrestling mat afterwards and just talked through our struggles, talked through our experiences, really lifted each other up, and everybody kind of walked out of there like man, I needed that. I didn't know that I would connect with somebody who has this different life, a football player and a veteran.

But I'm going through the same stuff. That's where MVP started, and over the last six years we've sort of built from there, and now we're in seven different cities, and when COVID hit, we couldn't be in the gym, we had to do stuff over Zoom, these virtual sessions, right, and that also like -- I've been working on this story and this idea of man, we need to tell this story about how MVP started, the genesis of that like I was just explaining.

When things just looked like they were never going to open again, I'm like, I'm not going to wait any longer, we're going to make this movie. People like Jay, Tony, Randy, Sylvester Stallone, so many others, were like, we love

MVP, put my name on it, whatever you need, I'll help.

Then -- about 50 percent of the cast and crew is just veterans from the MVP community, people that I just reached out and said, do you want to help, we're going to do this thing, we're going to shoot it in LA. We've got a lot of people that have restaurants close and things like that and they said we're welcome to use it to make this thing.

So we just did it. We had very little money. We boot strapped and we did it together and it was vets and athletes telling our own story. We had the opportunity to screen it this week, the Super Bowl -- down at LA Live Super Bowl week just a couple of nights ago, and the it was amazing. We had 500 RSVPs and we filled two theaters. We were just sending the flier out on Instagram. We didn't really market this thing, and everybody came out for this.

**Q. What were the moments that really resonated with the audience?**

NATE BOYER: I think when they see this person like this athlete, this NFL player who's played by Mo McRae, who's an incredibly underrated actor, like this guy should be a star and I think he will be now, but this guy who -- you'd think has it all, played 10 years in the league, first-round draft pick, he's got a wife and a kid and a nice house and the car and it's like -- he's got it all. He feels like he has nothing because he'll never be great again.

Tony Gonzales, for instance, came in in one of the scenes, we're sitting on the wrestling mat talking about stuff, and he's sharing his real story about losing that uniform, and that guy is a Hall of Famer, probably the best tight end to ever play the game, and feeling like he's peaked, and really -- that's really him just really telling his own story. Randy Couture, same thing.

Those moments I think resonated more than anything, and of course hearing these veterans tell their stories, every veteran on the screen is played by an actual veteran, by the way, which is really cool, including Dan Lauria from "The Wonder Years." He was a Vietnam vet. These guys, they're sort of playing themselves in some way, and of course it's scripted and there's a little bit of Hollywood that we had to make everything work and move forward, but like it's really authentic and real.

I think that's what resonated with people was just that it was real, and it's like, that's really that person feeling those things and going through those real things.

I can relate to that because most of the audience there was athletes and vets, and they're like, this is right. This is our

story, and this feels genuine.

**Q. Pretty cool that in an age when we could not -- seemingly could not be more polarized, you're bringing people together with this, in two diverse groups with disparate experiences, you're pulling them together.**

NATE BOYER: I think that was Jay and my's dream or hope with this. We see where the country is going, where the world is maybe going, and we want to be a part of bringing everybody together. What better way than these two groups that most people kind of look up to. We look up to athletes, they're like these icons, and they have this platform, and a lot of them do a lot of good, and these veterans that are willing to sacrifice so much for us to have the freedoms that we enjoy, to have a Super Bowl every year on that Sunday. We come together in living rooms and in stadiums and wherever it is, and we put all that stuff aside. We put all our differences aside, and we just enjoy the game and we enjoy one another.

Those moments are really special, and we just want to duplicate those, replicate those more, and really help people that are struggling, that feel alone and feel lost and feel like they'll never be great again and they've peaked, and it's just not true. We've got a lot of life left to live, and there's no reason those two groups of people specifically can't help kind of lead this country forward and bring us all back together. So that's all we're trying to do, and we're doing the best that we can.

**Q. Where can people see this movie?**

NATE BOYER: Right now we're working on figuring that out. We're working on finding the right partner, MVP, finding the right partner to distribute. We've got some offers in and we're just evaluating all that, but I hope this thing -- this thing will be out, the movie will be out sometime this year, and we'll make sure it's everywhere it can be. The screening last night or two nights ago I should say was -- if anything what I learned from that was like people connect to this thing despite the budget, despite all these other challenges we faced. It didn't matter, it was like the story resonated with people.

So we're going to find a way to get it out there to everyone and make it available, but most importantly, I want it to be available to the veteran community and the athlete community. I want all of them to be able to experience this and understand like why MVP exists, what we're all about, and just join our tribe and let's keep moving forward together.

**Q. Sounds like an impossible dream, but I think you've**





**encountered those before. I'm not betting against you.**

NATE BOYER: I appreciate that.

**Q. Thanks so much, Nate, for coming.**

NATE BOYER: Thanks for having me, man. It was a honor.

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