

PROFESSIONAL  
**TROUBLEMAKER**



with **LUVVIE AJAYI JONES**

## Professional Troublemaker with Luvvie Ajayi Jones

Use Your Platform (with Sue Bird) - Episode 11

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Welcome to the Professional Troublemaker Podcast! This is the place where we help you cultivate the courage, authenticity and audacity you need to use your voice, take up space and live a life that is so bold, even your wildest dreams say #goals. I'm your host, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, New York Times bestselling author, sought after speaker and side-eye sorceress bringing you thought-provoking conversations with amazing people taken action, done scary things and rocked the boat to an audacious life. Like the late, great John Lewis said, these are the kind of people who are "Never, ever afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

Before we jump into today's interview, know that this podcast is named after my second New York Times bestselling book, [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#), which is available now wherever you get your books!

Think of it! A million people who are out there, standing on the edge of something great and need that little push of encouragement. That push to be the domino. To say the hard thing. To have the hard conversation. A million people kicking their fear to the curb and step into the life they've been dreaming of. A million people asking for a raise. A million people starting a fierce job they're not sure they're ready for. A million people doing something so big that their wildest dreams say goals. My goodness.

And that is what writing this book has done for me, what it's already done for those who are reading it and gifting it to others. This book has empowered people to say yes to things they were previously saying no to. It's empowered people to have tough conversations they weren't going to have before. People have asked for raises and promotions and gotten them after reading this book and finding the courage to speak up. The domino effect of what has been happening when a few people have decided not to live in the realm of fear has been amazing - think of what could happen if a million people stopped letting fear be the first factor in their decision making?

An audacious mission like that can't happen without you, so let's get this book in the hands of people who need it. Buy a copy of Professional Troublemaker for yourself, or as a gift for your friend who needs a push. I know it will change your life like it's changed mine and I know it will change the lives of all these people who touch it, because domino effects are real. Order Professional Troublemaker (hardcover or audiobook) now at [PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com](http://PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com) or wherever you buy books.

Today, I'm talking to basketball legend Sue Bird.

Regarded as the world's premier point guard, Sue Bird is a universally celebrated star and the WNBA's All-Time Leader in Assists. Seemingly ageless and playing some of the best basketball of her career at 40, she is one of only seven women to win an Olympic Gold Medal (she's won four), a World Championship Gold Medal (she's won four) an NCAA Championship (she's won two), and a WNBA Championship (she's won four). Sue is also a five-time Euroleague Champion, an eleven-time WNBA All-Star, was voted by the fans as one of the WNBA's Top 15 Players of All Time.

Off the court, Sue spends time as a basketball analyst for ESPN, as a front office executive with the Denver Nuggets and advocating for equality, LGBTQ+ rights, Black Lives, universal health and wellness and expanding opportunities for girls.

During our conversation, we cover some of the hardest parts of being a female athlete, how she learned to start showing up as her full self instead of trying to fit into a preconceived mold for what a female athlete should look, act and sound like, and of course, we had to talk about Sue and the rest of the WBNA players use their voices for social justice. This is a great conversation. Let's get into it. Let's get into it!

## Conversation with Sue Bird

The first thing I always ask them guests because I'm always curious how we were as kids, is what did you want to be when you were growing up? When you were like five.

SUE I mean, I think I was an athlete the moment I came out of the womb. I don't know about five but I can tell you what's in my fifth grade yearbook. It was like the picture and then it was like what do you want to be when you grow up? It was a soccer player, a basketball player, a lawyer or an accountant. You know how when you're a kid it's like doctor, lawyer, accountant, teacher, those are the jobs that you only know of but number one was soccer player actually.

LUVVIE Wow. Wait, what was the first sport that your parents put you in?

SUE It was soccer and basketball at the same time. I jumped into both right away.

LUVVIE How old were you?

SUE I was young. I was probably like first, second grade. Six, seven years old.

LUVVIE Wow.

SUE Yeah. I have an older sister, she's five years older, which she was already in organized sports so I was the four and five year old little sister who was dragged to all the games, dragged to all the practices. Even though, I wasn't on a team, when I would go to her practices, I was all up in there. They couldn't get me off the court for real. [crosstalk 00:01:55].

LUVVIE "Fine. We'll put her in the sport." Were you the kid who was just naturally good at it or were you just loving it?

SUE Both. I think, like I said, I just was born playing sports, came out the womb kicking, came out the womb shooting hoops. Yeah. It came naturally to me. I was a tomboy, like classic tomboy, was just into everything. Not just sports. Even like climbing trees, riding bikes, all that stuff. I was all about it. I was very active.

LUVVIE See, I was a tomboy who was not into climbing trees. I was very much like I just want to watch Disney. I was a Disney kid. I had no sports when I was little. In terms of personality, how were you? Were you shy? Were you really boisterous?

SUE Oh, no. Shy. Very shy. I still have to fight that a little bit, like in my adulthood. Obviously, you get older, you get more comfortable in your skin, that helps, but I was 100% shy. I think it was always like shy until I got comfortable and then I could let loose.

LUVVIE Slowly

SUE Yeah. That's why I think being in team sports helped me so much because when you're with your team it's such a comfortable place, it allows you to come out of your shell.

LUVVIE It's actually really wild that you knew at nine that you were going to be an athlete. Most people when I ask that question, they either do know exactly what they're going to do or they're doing opposite of what they were going to do. You happened to know exactly from jump. You've been a superstar athlete for a long time.

I actually used to watch then you were playing college. That was back in the day when college sports, I'd pay more attention. For a hot second there I wanted to also play basketball but I was never dedicated. I played two years in high school and ended up quitting at the end of sophomore year because I was not giving the energy that I was supposed to give.

SUE Got you.

LUVVIE That's when my basketball dreams were ruined.

SUE That's what happened?

LUVVIE But I would watch you and your team and that was when Tennessee, Connecticut, Louisville, all three of y'all ... I'd actually just plug in and be like, all right, I'm watching them. It's kind of crazy to see how your career has gone.

When you were in high school, tell me about that journey because that's really where you were able to super nova.

SUE Yeah. Basically, like I said, I played soccer and basketball growing up and both very competitively, I started getting recruiting letters in middle school for both sports. That's when it's kind of becoming a thing. Then what happened was I'm from Long Island but I played on an

AAU team, which ... That's the team you're going to go and college coaches are going to watch you on this team, you're going to play other states, that kind of thing.

That team was in Queens and they're based out of Christ The King, which is a basketball powerhouse in New York. All of a sudden, my sophomore year rolls around, like the end of my sophomore year and two things happen. I started to realize basketball was my sport, I was essentially choosing in that moment, and my parents were splitting up. Yeah, in New York, if you transfer high schools in order to play right away, part of it is you've had to have relocated. If you relocate, you can play right away.

The way it worked out is my dad relocated, got an apartment in Queens, and then that was kind of simultaneously I was going to go to Christ The King now. That moment really was me deciding that basketball was going to be my sport, my path, let's see what happens.

LUVVIE As a teenager, having your parents split up, how did you handle that and also having to be focused as an athlete?

SUE Yeah. I mean, looking back, it's like somehow as a 14, 15 year old, I compartmentalized it. For a long time, my teammates, my friends they didn't even know for like a year or two years. I didn't tell anybody. I was just operating as if nothing happened, which probably isn't the healthiest. I think looking back, I might have known it was probably for the best. You know what I mean?

I think there might have been a part of me that was like, "All right. They're not really made for each other" and as the kid, you kind of take some of that brunt and you don't want to be in a divorced family when you're a little kid but I think somewhere deep inside, I think I knew. It helped come to terms with it quicker. Like I said, I had my teams, I had my friends. I always had these safe places for me to go.

LUVVIE You chose basketball and then senior year happens.

SUE Yeah. [crosstalk 00:06:37]. Which way are we going?

LUVVIE Usually when people pick their colleges, which changes the whole thing, and your whole journey because where you picked ended up becoming a legendary program.

SUE The spot.

LUVVIE The spot. Right? First of all, you chose basketball so soccer was no longer there.

SUE Right.

LUVVIE Focus all on basketball. How was senior year?

SUE Usually, there's like these signing periods, right? There's one in the fall, one in the spring, and my high school coaches, which had been through this so many times ... There's legends that came out of Christ The King, Chamique Holdsclaw is probably the biggest name.

LUVVIE Legend.

SUE Yeah. Legend. I was really lucky. They had already been through all this. They were like highly recommending that I get all of the decision making done in the fall signing period so I could just be like, boom, done, it's October or November or whatever it is, and I can just focus on my senior year, college decision is over with.

Luckily, it happened that way for me. I chose Connecticut. I chose Connecticut over ... I looked at Vanderbilt, Stanford, Duke, Notre Dame. My final three were Stanford, Vanderbilt and U Conn. Yeah. I chose Connecticut and it was tough there for a minute in that process but, obviously, looking back it was probably the best thing I ever did.

LUVVIE That program was nuts. I was like, this is insane. This is insane. Y'all were ... I mean, the skill of the Connecticut team is just always like what in the world? How did they manage to get these magical people together on one court? For you, as a student athlete, and also as a woman in basketball, how was that process? I know a lot of women athletes don't feel fully respected in that way.

SUE Yeah. It's very true. It's interesting because I've played long enough where now I can say ... When I was in high school and going into college, it was almost like a different ... I mean, it was. It was a different time. I feel like I'm part of a different generation. I feel like I fell into this generation of we were just happy with what we got. "I can get a scholarship? Great. Can't ask for more than that" which is like what I love about younger players now is they're like, "Nah, bro. I want chartered flights." You know what I mean? They think big.

You have to think big and you have to go into things with expectations, especially as a woman I feel like. You have to be able to ask for things and to push the envelope in that way. When I was in college, I was just super excited to have a scholarship. The one thing I will say is the WNBA did start my junior year of high school. There was a little bit in the back of my head like, "Oh ..."

For me, it was always the Olympic team. The Olympic team was it. That was like, "I'm aiming for that." The only thing about that, in reality, that's only 12 people. Only 12 people get to be on those teams. What a lofty goal, right? Luckily, there was now a WNBA so it's like, "Oh, I could play professionally in the US. That's opening my eyes to something else." It was an interesting time.

LUVVIE People underestimate the amount of pure grit that it takes to be an athlete. Pure grit. Like I cannot imagine ... Break down how long were you playing basketball ... Let's say it's sophomore year of college.

SUE Okay.

LUVVIE How many hours a week are you dedicating to being on the court?

SUE I mean, all of the hours. All of the hours. When you're in college, it's as close to a job as you're going to get because it's all consuming. Maybe you're only practicing two and a half, three hours

a day but you're also having to lift, you're also having to take care of your body. Obviously, you're going to class.

Even at night, I always try to say this about when you're an athlete, the consuming part is that your mind is always on it. Even if you're not on the court practicing, it's always in the back of your head, whether it's, "Oh, I got a game tomorrow. I got to make sure I sleep" or, "You know what? My coach called. He wants to meet. We're going to watch film for an hour." There's just always something in the back of your head happening as it pertains to your sport. It does feel like just this consuming job. But you're a kid so you can play for days. You don't get tired. I'm like I wish I was 21 again. It'd be amazing.

LUVVIE      Running up and down the court. What parts of being an athlete do you think help you now? What parts of that?

SUE          Everything. Everything. The things you learn, I think especially in team sports, I give credit to individual sports, that's a different breed when it's just you, all the eyes are on you. If you're playing tennis, with every point you hit, it's your point but with every point you lose, you're the one who ...

Team sports is different. I think everything that I've learned and that I embody today, I've learned through sport. Like how to get along with others, how to respect one another, even if you don't agree. "Hey, we may not agree but here we are trying to put that to the side to achieve this bigger goal." You learn that right out of the gate and that's so valuable.

I could literally rattle them off, how to be disciplined, what it means to set goals, achieve goals, what it means to set a really lofty goal but understand you have to come back to where you are today and understand it's going to take one day at a time to get to that. You can't think too big. You have to dream big but then you got to reel it back in. Just like all these different things that you learn as you go through it.

LUVVIE      What do you think the hardest thing about being an athlete is or was?

SUE          I think one of the hardest parts about being a professional female athlete is very rarely are we talked about because of our game. It's always something else. I don't just mean negative. I think in a negative sense, people always want to talk about other things, what we're not doing, what we don't look like, what we're not wearing. Whatever it is.

I think even the positive stuff will only get that credit if it was like ... I don't know. At times, I'll just be blunt, if it's like given to us by a man. Like, "Oh, this guy said she's good. She must be good."

LUVVIE      Yeah. She must be good.

SUE          I think there's these elements as you go through as a professional athlete, as a female professional athlete where your value, it's like you think you know your value and then maybe you get an endorsement that proves your value but then you're talked about in this other way and ... You're constantly gauging what your value is in the world and you can't just be elite at

what you're doing and be respected for that. The jockeying between those two things is where it can be difficult.

LUVVIE I mean, I find that in watching some of the athletes on TV and just how women just move in the world, we are, typically, to your point, not spoken first about our accomplishments. We're spoken for by our bodies, what we're looking like, and for you, how did you navigate that? Especially as you started getting higher and higher in the world stage. You made the Olympics team. All of that.

SUE Yeah. I think this is actually going to touch on what I was saying earlier, when I first came out of college and entered the pro world, it was 2002. I was 100% like, "Oh, got to be feminine. This is what's going to sell." I knew I was gay at the time. Wasn't going to say it. It's interesting because I always say this, nobody told me, "Hey, you should hide this part of yourself because it won't be good for you" but I just knew. There was something happening around us in our society where I just knew that it might not be a good thing or I might lose an endorsement or this might not happen or that might not happen.

Back in 2002, like I said, I was very much in a place of feminine and trying to fit into this, what was at the time, mold of what a female professional athlete should be. Where I've gotten to in that is like, man, you've got to be yourself. It's so cliché but, A, you're just going to be happier. That's as simple as that. You're just going to be happier so it's worth it. B, I think people are drawn to authenticity and are drawn to those that are being genuine.

I feel like a lot of times you can smell it when someone is not being real. Who wants to be around that? Also, I think about some of the outfits I used to wear. Clothes are funny because they're just clothes, right? They speak to something too.

LUVVIE Yes.

SUE Like how you feel, what you want to portray, and I look back on pictures of my earlier years and I'm like, "Oh my God." I was clearly trying to fit in a mold and I can look at myself and be like, "You're so uncomfortable." Now I enjoy just being comfortable and being who I want to be.

LUVVIE Honestly, I feel like the last, you said that was 2002 so 18 years, we've lived six generations. We've lived six generations because things have shifted so quickly. The fact that in 2002, you could not be like, "I'm gay" and not be afraid of losing money and losing whatever type of currency is attached to your name. At what point were you like, "It's actually safe for me to say that out loud"?

SUE Yeah. I said it out loud in 2017. I would say it was like right before the 2016 Olympics so the year leading up to that Olympics, it was on the tip of my tongue. I thought, at that point ... Probably could have been even sooner but that's when I was like, "I could tell the world right now and it wouldn't impact me at all and I feel comfortable and confident in that."

It took, obviously, a little bit of time. Obviously, I started dating Megan during that time, which helped push me along, gave me a little nudge. Yeah. That's I think around that time is when I fully felt like, "I'd be cool. I'm good. I'll talk about it." You know?

LUVVIE How do you think that for you ... If you're looking back at current athletes and you from 2002, you from 2000, what is the piece of advice that you let them know? What is this main piece of difference between your generation and theirs?

SUE The advice I usually give is in that world of being yourself. How I like to frame it ... This is actually stolen. I forget what I was watching. I was probably scrolling on something. I came across this clip and somebody said this and I was like, "Oh, that is perfect." It's basically like the reasons you should be yourself are because ... I can speak to this. I was basically from probably like 19, 20 to 32, let's say, in those years, I was almost like because I was hiding my real self, I was basically just developing this character, almost like a movie character.

You know what? We all do it. Right? We all hide a little bit and show this and maybe hide that but show this. We all do it to some degree. It's like very difficult to play a character for your whole life.

LUVVIE That's got to be exhausting.

SUE Right. It's exhausting. One year of it is exhausting. 10 years of it. Are you going to do that for 40, 50, 60 years? No. Rather than developing a character and playing one in life, you're better off just being yourself. It's just so much easier. Obviously, there are going to be bumps in the road but it's just so much easier. That's usually what I say when I'm talking to younger kids.

LUVVIE I've had a few professional athletes on this podcast. I've had Abby Wambach, of course, I've had Ibitaj Mohammed. [crosstalk 00:18:47].

SUE Love them both. Love them both.

LUVVIE Those two, I was like those are homies. I think it's really interesting that all three of you, especially as you are getting older and more set in who you're going to be beyond the sports of it all, have now really stepped up to be like, "My platform is going to be used to speak up."

You have been at the forefront of some speaking truth to power, especially in this last year and a half with the WNBA, with your platforms, even as you're walking through the world, the shirts you're wearing. What made you finally say you know what? I'm about to be a giver of no fucks.

SUE The no fucks giver.

LUVVIE No fucks giver.

SUE You know, it's definitely a process. I'm glad I arrived. I think the term More Than An Athlete, which was obviously coined by Uninterrupted and LeBron, that's been kind of part of our vernacular in sports. Like I want to be more than an athlete but what does that mean?

Someone actually asked me, "What does that mean to you?" It was in that moment where I realized something and I was like I've been giving all the fucks for a really long time. I missed a lot of opportunity to speak up, to use my platform, all the things you just said. I don't want to waste another day.



I didn't want to waste any more ... I've already wasted a lot of time. I'm actually really thankful that I'm still playing because I do think the platform as a current player is different [crosstalk 00:20:22]. It's like now I'm here, I'm still playing, I've realized all this time I've wasted, I'm not trying to waste any more time.

LUVVIE I mean, better late than never. Honestly, it's not even late because you had to get to a point where you didn't feel like you had to sacrifice everything. That's the other thing is I think often times, people are expecting women to constantly sacrifice ourselves in such large ways like laying prostrate at the altar.

Honestly, as a female athlete, you didn't have as much power as you did now. I think it's something people don't understand. For you, as you navigated the industry and sports, in general, the WNBA and you're seeing how NBA players ... Me and Abby talked about when she was retiring, and how when she retired, her retirement looked different from when Kobe retired. You know? When any of the big names retired.

As a female athlete, who is still playing, how do you see that difference, that dichotomy, playing out for you right now? You're not retired yet, of course, so yeah.

SUE Yeah. Not yet. Close. Very close.

LUVVIE You're put in work. Yo.

SUE Yeah. I think the conversations about women in sports, they're definitely changing. You can feel them changing. I think one example I could use ... Again, it's going to touch on something I said earlier. Russell Wilson wore my jersey to one of his games and then after the game he spoke about, "Oh, yeah." He threw some really clutch touchdown. He was like, "Oh, yeah. I felt like Sue Bird in the clutch."

LUVVIE Wow.

SUE There's one aspect of it, what I was talking about earlier, which is like you don't always have to have the male athlete anoint us or validate us but, simultaneously, when you have certain people who have a certain platform in the world help change the conversation, that I think is ... That's how I like to look at it. That's where the meaning and the power comes.

I do think Abby retired in ... I can't remember now. [crosstalk 00:22:27].

LUVVIE Probably like five years ago. [crosstalk 00:22:30].

SUE Even to your point, we've probably had eight generations in those four years. Like so much has happened and the conversation is changing and changing. Now I do think it'll be different when somebody in the next year or two, three years, in women's sports retires. It'll be talked about different. Their impact will be felt differently. They've had the opportunity to have a certain kind of impact. I think it will be different.

Imagine being in an online space where people's foolishness doesn't make you want to fight the air. That might sound impossible with your current choices for social media, but I was sick of wading through nonsense to find like-minded people, so I created my own online community. And if you are the kind of person who is striving to be a professional troublemaker and fight fear, we need you to join us in that community, because you need people to cheer you on.

[LuvvNation](#) is my online community and app that is a safe space in a dumpster fire world. It's the place for the most thoughtful, funny, most chill deficient people on these interwebs. We're a community that comes together to make each other better with curated conversations, opportunities to connect, and challenges to help us transform and do better in every area of our lives. So, I want you to come in there, join us. Become a citizen of [LuvvNation](#). So go to [luvvnation.com](#), that's [luvvnation.com](#) L-U-V-V-N-A-T-I-O-N. Download the app in the App Store or on Android, it's on iOS and Android and come on through! All right. Back to the podcast.

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LUVVIE Yeah. To your point, the work that WNBA has actually done this last seven months, the fact that you are a player who are seeing on the court wearing a Warnock t-shirt and showing up getting off the bus wearing a certain sign on your shirt. There's such power to that. This year, a lot of eyes turned to the WNBA, in a way, we hadn't before in a long time. Especially as leading voices in social justice. What part did you play in that? What made you think, "Okay, this is the time to do this particular thing"? Y'all were big with the Warnock and Georgia rollout.

SUE Yeah. You know, I think the best way to look at it is we're a league of 144, so it's a large number in some sense, it's a small number in other sense. It's like it kind of works. We can organize fast, we're strategic about what we're doing. I think the best part is we're all on the same page. We all want the same things, we're fighting for the same things.

The term intersectionality, welcome. We live that. We understand that me, as a gay athlete, I understand that if I want things to be a certain way and if my Black teammate wants things to be a certain way, they're all connected and we can all work together in that way.

Simultaneously, I think we all have different strengths at different times and the best way to put it is like there's been players through the years, dating back to the Minnesota Lynx when they first wore their t-shirts, gosh, 2016, which was actually right before Colin Kaepernick kneeled. They were already protesting police brutality,

The Minnesota Lynx had the "idea" to do this. Right away, the whole league behind them. I think through time there's been different people who have had different ideas and then the whole league just rallies. You can't do it without all of us. We know that our strength is in a unified voice.

As it pertains to Warnock, I happened to be one of the people behind the scenes with the idea and pulling the strings to organize and get it done but it took 144 players. It was way more powerful with all of us onboard than it ever would have been than just one person. That's kind of the beauty of our league is just how organized we are.

LUVVIE Not just ... Again, I think it is completely weird and odd and perfect that you can get 144 people on one accord. That's some unicorn stuff. You see 12 people, you can't get them to agree. The whole league moved as this unit. It was so dope to see because nobody else ... You can't even get NBA teams to agree to one thing, let alone a whole league. It was significant and I hope people really understand that this really shows the power of women and beyond the gifts that you all have on the court, using your voice in this way was major. It was huge.

Shout out to y'all for doing that. I loved seeing it. Every time, Nneka, I saw a picture of her, I was like, "Yeah."

SUE Yeah. Nneka is the best. Nneka is our president.

LUVVIE Funny enough, I actually met her in 2012 randomly on a TV set. Before she was this WNBA superstar.

SUE She was a baby. Yeah, 2012.

LUVVIE She was a baby. I was like that's crazy. That deep respect for the work that women do, I really hope it starts showing up in how y'all get paid on this court. You were saying that you're going to retire soon. For you, what would the ideal retirement look like?

SUE Oh, man.

LUVVIE As the legendary Sue Bird.

SUE That's a good question. It's funny because I'm friends with Ray Allen, and if you remember when Ray Allen retired, he's a U Conn guy, so he just faded out. He didn't have ... He just one year wasn't playing. He didn't announce a retirement. Then I'm also friendly with CC Sabathia and CC, who just retired last year, he announced before the season, he did a tour. One other example I'll give, which is similar to CC, is Tina Thompson. She was on my team in Seattle.

LUVVIE I remember her.

SUE Yeah. When she retired, that was her last year and she announced it before the season. Watching them go through that, which is if you announce your retirement before a season, every game has this, "It's my last time." "Oh, it's my last time in New York. It's my last time over here. It's my last time doing this."

I, personally, this is where I feel like I'm more like Ray, like Ray Allen, I'm kind of like I don't know if I can do a tour like that. I was talking about it with CC and he's like, "Man, you owe it to your fans." I was like, "But it's going to mess with me." I get emotional in that way. Every now and then a song will come on and I'm like, "Oh my God. If this plays at my retirement ceremony, I'm done."

I don't know what retirement is going to look like for me just yet. I'm playing with it a little bit.

LUVVIE The grand tour. No, the compromise could be maybe in the middle of the season.

SUE Middle of the season.

LUVVIE "By the way, guys, my last season." People will turn it into ... It'll be really nostalgic every game.

SUE Every game. I don't think I can handle it.

LUVVIE There'll be tears. [crosstalk 00:28:16].

SUE I don't think I can handle it for every game.

LUVVIE It'll be like, "I can't believe this is the last I'm playing with you" or against you. Yeah. Yeah. I feel that. I feel that.

You are now partnered with another world-class athlete. Jesus. That household has gold in competitive spirit, in legendary status. Does the competition show up? Do y'all compete against each other in any ways even though you're in different sports?

SUE Not really. No. It actually doesn't. It actually doesn't. Every now and then if we mess around and play, whatever, I don't know ... We got into backgammon, random, during quarantine. I feel like we're all searching for things.

LUVVIE We are.

SUE Backgammon. It got competitive for a hot second but then it comes back down right away. No grudges are held. It's pretty chill in this household.

LUVVIE Ah, okay. It's not chill at mine. We're playing Monopoly.

SUE Oh, Monopoly.

LUVVIE See, I discovered the Monopoly app. It's not the actual game. It makes it so much easier. It makes the game go by so much faster. We get very competitive in that way.

How do you maintain your grounding as you are a part of ... Now you are part of you're Sue Bird and you're part of this coupling that includes Megan?

SUE I mean, to be honest, I don't think it's really a question of how do you maintain it? I think that's just who we are as people. Like individually, I think we are very much like that. I think probably you could talk about how we were raised and where we're from and our upbringing as to why. Even together, we're pretty chill. People every now and then will ask, "What's it like?" I'm like, "We're pretty boring. We did the laundry today." Megan is currently over there with a timer ready to get the clothes out of the dryer. This is us. This is us happening.

LUVVIE Listen, the boring is where it's at. We can't be exciting all the time. Who has time for that?

SUE Exactly.

LUVVIE Who has time for that? Especially in quarantine. I was like anybody who has an exciting life in quarantine is clearly not doing what the rest of us are doing, which is staying in the house.

SUE Right. Good point. Good point.

LUVVIE Clearly not. Who is your girl squad? Who are the people who you rely on and ask for insight in this crazy world that doesn't have blueprints?

SUE Yeah. I'm really lucky, obviously, to have Megan. That's number one. I have a very accomplished sister. She was a lawyer but now she left that world to be a head hunter. She's a legal recruiter. What's fascinating in my conversations with her is there's so many parallels. Even though I'm not a legal recruiter, she's not an athlete, there's a lot that's similar. It's always nice to have sounding boards.

Then a lot of my teammates, like Diana Taurasi is a sister. She's literally like part of the family.

LUVVIE Another person I used to watch.

SUE Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. She's dope, obviously. Then I just have a core group of friends that I've known since childhood. There's something really comforting about that. They all have gone off in their own way and are successful in their own right and when we get together, it's like always just fun conversation, always insightful conversation, and I feel like those people I just named, that's the crew. That's who I'm bouncing things off of. Maybe playing Devil's Advocate with because sometimes that can be both educational and entertaining. Yeah. That's my squad.

LUVVIE What is something that people would be surprised to learn about you?

SUE Surprised to learn about me? I don't know. A surprise? I do like an argument.

LUVVIE Really?

SUE Yeah. I like an argument. Here's the difference, I won't take the other side just to argue but if I dig my heels in on something, I'll get in there with you, I'll argue, it's fun.

LUVVIE You treat debate as a sport?

SUE A little bit. I enjoy it. I think you learn from it. I'm not scared by it. When it gets too personal, that's when it gets weird.

LUVVIE Introvert or extrovert?

SUE Oh, introvert. I actually just read an amazing article ... It was only amazing by title. It was like, "Just because you're an introvert doesn't make you an asshole." I was like, "Yes." I think sometimes when you're a little on the shyer side, you're a little closed off, people are like, "What's up with her?" I do have these extrovert moments. Like quarantine, I think has shown all of us a little bit more about ourselves. I 100% ... I think I already knew. This just put the stamp of approval, I like getting out, I like having a fun night with friends at dinner, going out to a bar or

whatever, that part of me, that does get my juices going but it also exhausts me a little bit and that's where the introvert kicks back in and I just want to chill on the couch for a couple days.

- LUVVIE Introvert squad. People always get surprised I'm an introvert because they think because I'm really social, I'm like, "When I people for a bit, you will find me facing the corner." [crosstalk 00:33:23].
- SUE I'm with you.
- LUVVIE Lake or ocean?
- SUE Lake. It's controlled. Sharks freak me out. Seaweed actually freaks me out. That's in lakes too but whatever. Fish like nipping at your feet, freak me out. I do like waves but I'm lake all day.
- LUVVIE Okay. Winter or summer?
- SUE Summer. Clothes for winter, life for summer. I like [inaudible 00:33:45]. You got to layer.
- LUVVIE What's your horoscope?
- SUE Libra.
- LUVVIE You're a Libra? Oh. Scales of justice. That's my mom. Y'all are definitely very much necessary. Capricorn over here so we're straight. We're goats. All day goats. Reading or listening?
- SUE I want to say reading but it's probably listening.
- LUVVIE Favorite artist?
- SUE Like music?
- LUVVIE Yeah.
- SUE I mean, I could go in so many directions. I think all-time it's like Biggie and Jay Z. Now when I go workout ... I feel like this is what our parents were doing when they were playing ... My dad would play Frank Sinatra all the time. I'm like, don't you know anything newer than that? But I totally get it. I go workout, I'm like Jay Z Radio. Those are just all-time faves.
- LUVVIE What is your routine when you need to get hyped up? If it's for a game, if it's for a big day, what is the thing you go and do?
- SUE You asked me this probably five years ago, to be honest, it would have been like put X, Y, Z music on, get in ... Now it's like I meditate for 10, 15 minutes, I try to get very peaceful. I found that when I was too amped up, it messed with me. I just like to be in a really peaceful state. I used to be like, hardcore, I have to listen to music all the time, in my ears on the bus, and then ... Sorry. Niece is FaceTiming. Of course.

SUE In my ears on the bus and then at the arena, what do they got on? Now, I can go no music, I can just be chill, in a good space. That my "hype up".

LUVVIE We are washed. This is fine.

SUE Is that what it is? Ah, shit.

LUVVIE It's exactly what it is. We are washed. I was like, yes, that is relating to me on a spiritual level. I love silence. Yes. That's change, man. Just crazy. When we start seeing ourselves and being like, "Yo. Now I understand our parents."

SUE Yeah. That's when it ...

LUVVIE That's when ... Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yup. I definitely realized that this last couple years that something happens in your thirties, in your later thirties, that just all of a sudden you calm down and you like peace and quiet. How are you taking care of yourself? What is your self-care routine in general? What are the things that you are doing to make sure that you're finding peace?

SUE Yeah. Part of it is meditating. I can't really go super long. I use the Headspace app. They have even these quick hitters, like three minutes. Any time I feel ... I've actually noticed people can get tension headaches. I don't get the headache but I'll feel a little tightness in the back of my neck. The second I feel it ... I've actually just started this in the last couple of weeks. I'll just go do a three minute, just go sit down, three minutes and it really helps me out. When I do get the time, I'm in more of the 10, 15 minute range. Still not that long.

For me, I feel like a lot of my self-care comes in the shape of taking care of my body, like when that's feeling good and I feel like I'm doing the things I need to do, everything else just falls into place but if I'm slacking in my workouts or if I didn't get good ones in or if I didn't find the time for it because other things are taking my time, that's when I feel like I get a little cranky about it.

When I'm on point, taking care of my body, things otherwise generally fall into place and that's where I fall.

LUVVIE How often are you working out?

SUE Oh, every day.

LUVVIE Oh my God. Okay. This is your whole life of working out, right?

SUE Yeah.

LUVVIE What do you tell somebody like me who hates to workout? I hate it so much.

SUE Marginal gains. Marginal gains. That's what I tell people. This is what I tell people for real. It is marginal gains but it's basically I feel like a lot of times we think if we don't get an hour and a half or two hours or if it's not hard or it's not this, and the truth is some days if you just,

whatever it is that you do, whatever, if it's weight training, spinning, whatever it is, if you do it for even just 15 minutes, that's a marginal gain. It's a small little gain that will eventually add up.

Sometimes if you can only get that in, it's still worth it and then the second part, it's like a two-parter, be kind to yourself. Man, be kind. Some days, like the other day, I was just so tired. I have a performance coach who helps me with my workouts, tells me what to do, and I just texted her and I was like, "I don't think I can do it today." She was like, "It's okay." I was like, "Oh, thank you. That really made me feel better." That day I just couldn't do it but instead of beating myself up, I was like, "I just can't today and I'll be better tomorrow." You just have to be kind to yourself.

LUVVIE I got to try it. You want to talk about fell off the wagon?

SUE It's hard.

LUVVIE I got married ... Y'all getting married was 2019. I was in the gym with my trainer like twice a week because I wanted a track booty so I can look good in a dress.

SUE [crosstalk 00:39:02].

LUVVIE I was there this whole time, my back was getting cut, I was like, "Okay." Yo, I got married. My freaking trainer was like, "All right. See you next week?" I'm like, "Yeah, I'll see you the next session. I'm going to skip it today." Well, I happened to have skipped all the sessions since then. I have not gotten back on the wagon but I got a Peloton.

SUE Oh, okay. See, that's good.

LUVVIE I got a Peloton now.

SUE It sounds like you need a goal. You had the track booty goal. You just have to make another goal.

LUVVIE I do need another goal.

SUE Some kind of competition with a friend. Those things sound silly but they work.

LUVVIE That's true. I had a goal and I was focused. It was like an end goal, there was like a purpose. Without a purpose, I'm kind of like, "Meh."

SUE Same. Same. I mean, I'm lucky in terms of the working out part because, obviously, I have a purpose, I'm training for Olympics. That's the purpose. Yeah, without purpose, it can be like you're just floating around.

LUVVIE I got to find a purpose.

SUE We need a new goal. We need a new goal.



LUVVIE I need a new goal. This summer, you were part of our Share the Mic Now campaign, which thank you for being a part of. We paired you with Seun Adigun. She is the bomb. What was that experience like for you? What made you say yes to us when we asked?

SUE I don't even think it was a thought process. It was like, "Yeah. This sounds amazing." Just the whole meaning of it, what everyone was trying to do in terms of sharing your mic to give someone else this opportunity to have their voice heard. It just spoke to me. It was literally not a thought. It was a no brainer.

Yeah. Well, first of all, it was just great to get to know Seun. I had so much fun because if you remember, the day before or two days before or something like that, you guys had told us, "Hey, make sure you guys reach out. Like, get to know." Yeah. We were on the phone for like, I don't even know, close to two hours.

LUVVIE Wow.

SUE Just talking. Of course, it's the getting to know you parts but it was also she's in the world of sports, she has an amazing story. She's actually the first ... I think it's the first woman ever to be in the summer and winter Olympics. She's bobsledding for Nigeria, which is obviously incredible.

Just hearing her stories but now she's also a chiropractor so she's still in professional sports. Ironically, one of the names that came up was Nneka's because Seun is in Houston and I was like Nneka is in Houston. I was like, "Y'all need to either hang out", maybe you can work together or whatever. That was fun to have that connection or to try and make a connection.

Just learning about her and ... I mean, listen, with everything that is happening in our country, in our society, in our world, one thing you quickly learn I think when you just listen is there's no one story for one group of people. Not all Black people have one story.

LUVVIE Exactly.

SUE Not all white people have one story. There's different stories. You have to take the time to listen, to get to know someone, and you're going to learn something because all these stories are so unique so you're going to learn and that's going ... I mean, selfishly, it's going to make me a more well rounded person and just open your eyes to things but in that moment with Share The Mic, it was a way for my I guess followers to learn from a different voice, from another voice, with a different story. It was just powerful all around.

LUVVIE Y'all showed us a lot of trust. I got to say. I think me, Glennon, and Boz and me were all like, I can't believe y'all actually said a full yes.

SUE Yeah.

LUVVIE Hearing how the different partners have also connected after the fact has actually brought us so much joy. Seeing people be like, "Yo, yeah, I still talk to my partner."

SUE Same. We talk.

LUVVIE Some people are like besties with their partners now. I'm like, "Oh ..."

SUE Yeah. No, this summer we're in the WNBA, we're in this bubble, and I had a little injury and Seun hit me up and was like, "Hey, I think you have this. This might help." I was like, "Thank you. That's amazing."

LUVVIE Wow.

SUE Yeah.

LUVVIE That's so dope. That's so dope. Yeah. No. We were so thankful and appreciative of, again, sisterhood.

SUE Women, yeah.

LUVVIE For us, sisterhood is dope. Women get shit done.

SUE 100%. Get shit done.

LUVVIE Get shit done.

SUE The end.

LUVVIE The end. That's just all we do. We just don't know how to do anything less than to get shit done so that's why I always surround myself with amazing women. I'm always in conversation with amazing women because the constant inspiration pushes me to be better. What do you want people to say when you're not in the room?

SUE Man, good question. It's funny. I'm usually asked this from a basketball standpoint, not like a human being standpoint.

LUVVIE Yeah. No. Human standpoint.

SUE Yeah. I mean, when I'm not in the room? I mean, honestly, I hope that I'm engaging. I hope that ... Like when I'm not in the room I hope people say like, "Oh, I had fun, it was engaging, interesting." I like having a balance in my life between serious things and topics and what needs to be said and done and having fun. I think that's important. Hopefully, if I walk out of a room, that's something that could happen. Like, "Oh, I learned X, Y, and Z" or, "We talked about X, Y, and Z" but we also joked around because Sue is a huge Dave Chappelle fan. I don't know. Whatever it is. You know? Like something, a connecting point in those two different ways.

LUVVIE Got you. That's valid. That is valid. Yeah. No. Sue, the person. I think for people a lot of that question is also ... It's almost like when you're not here anymore, what do you want people to say about you?

SUE Yeah. Again, I'm usually asked basketball-wise. I have this answer that I've just always said, which is like, "Oh, I'm a good teammate." I've never had to answer for a person. I do know that

when the basketball and the person collide, I do know that ... For a long time, I think I talked about and I thought about legacy in terms of how many championships did I win? Now I've totally embraced and enjoyed the idea of it's actually about the lasting impact that I can leave on this game, on this world, whatever we're talking about.

In terms of legacy, I want to do as much as I can so the next generation can have it easier, can make more money, can have more opportunity, and that's why I'm just not shutting up right now. You know? Just going to keep talking.

LUVVIE        Okay, let them have it. I am here for loud Sue, which actually brings me to this question, this final question. What does it mean to you to be a professional troublemaker? What does it mean to make good trouble?

SUE            Yeah. I mean, exactly what I just said, I think the more that I speak up, the more I make that good trouble, the more I stir the pot, not to do it just to do it, like with purpose, the more I'm doing that with purpose, I really feel so passionately about female sports, female athletes, obviously, specifically, basketball and I want younger generations to have more opportunity than I did. I really believe that.

I really want that. I always joke that ... I think nowadays in the NBA you might hear an older, retired player talking about, "Oh man. I never made that money that Kyrie is making. I didn't make that money that LeBron is making." I joke, I'm like, I hope I'm saying that. If I'm old, retired and I'm like, "Dang, man. I didn't get to make millions when I played", it means I helped. It means I did something right.

LUVVIE        Yes.

SUE            I hope I'm that disgruntled older player talking about, "I didn't get to fly charter and make all that money" because that means my fingerprints are somewhere on that and I had that impact. I'm just going to continue to make that good trouble and, hopefully, that's what happens.

LUVVIE        Look, that is going to happen because Hall of Famer over here. I'm excited for you whenever you own a team or start coaching, either way. We are rooting for you for whatever your next steps are after you decide you're out, off the court game. I'm excited to just watch you show up in this world and use your power and your privilege and your access in such dope ways. Yeah. I'm such a huge fan.

SUE            Thank you. I appreciate that. I appreciate that.

LUVVIE        Thank you so much for joining me.

SUE            Yeah. Thanks for having me. This was fun.

I love hearing that Sue is so committed to making sure the female athletes that follow behind her, have permission to have more. To speak boldly with purpose today, so that future WNBA players know that disrupting for the greater good is what WNBA stars do. And its what people with power and privilege do. And I love that Sue is doing as much as she can, being as visible as she can be so that the next generation can have more money, have more opportunity, and have someone ahead of them who called them into these bigger rooms and onto these bigger stages. It's all about permission and access. When it's been given to us, we need to give it to others. And Sue is showing up and doing that in big ways.

Be sure to follow Sue on social media. She's [@sbird10 on Instagram](#) and [@s10bird on Twitter](#), and be sure to tag her when you share this episode and let her know you loved it.

Much love to Chicago Recording Company, who I've been partnering with from the start of this podcast and they've been such a huge help putting my recordings from home together and making the sound on point.

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Until next time, have the courage to speak your truth and show up as yourself. Create good trouble.