

Episode 2: What's Next Podcast

Sydney Wiese

[Snip-it's from Podcast] SYDNEY: My first few weeks, I was like, man, I have so much time for naps, like, this is. This is like a dream. This is the dream. And so then I was like, okay, I can't just nap my days away. [Light laugh] Like I have to? I want to be productive with them. And I think as I've gone longer within the league, like, I've learned how to be a professional in every aspect. So, like, my body's getting older, so I can't just show up.

[Bouncy theme music plays.]

[Introduction] Welcome to the What's Next? podcast. Let me just start off by saying. Not everyone has the same background. There is no roadmap for success. Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone. Leaning into your curiosities. It does suck when you grow up. We're all still figuring out who we are. You can't just sit back and be silent. Black Lives Matter. It's the little stuff that makes the biggest difference. Do you have another hour? [Laughs]

CODY: Hello, Beaver Nation, welcome to the What's Next? podcast.

I'm your host, Cody Stover. It's not every day that we get to welcome a guest to the show with this kind of track record. Joining us today is a former four-year starter with the OSU Women's Basketball team. She's a two-time all-American, 2017 PAC 12 scholar athlete of the year and also led the Beavs to a Final Four appearance in 2016. I could go on and on with the numbers, but I think for anybody who watched an OSU Women's Basketball game between 2013 and 17, you know, the passion and determination that's behind those achievements that I listed off before. Our guest today is a 2017 grad with a degree in communications and now a member of the WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks. Sidney Wiese, welcome to the show.

SYDNEY: Thank you so much for having me, Cody. I'm happy to be with you today.

CODY: How's everything going for in your world? I know it's COVID times. What's going on? And where are you joining us from?

SYDNEY: Yeah, I mean, it's been a wild couple of months for all of us. I was in Spain as everything was taking place. That's where I was for the off season. And so I was in Spain from October until about March and then spent most of my time, basically all of my time in Phoenix the last few months. And then I actually just helped my grandparents drive up to Minnesota. They have a cabin up here. And so my parents and I drove them up and so now I'm in Minnesota. So not a lot of movement, but I currently am in Minnesota.

CODY: And so you came back from Spain in March. That was kind of right when everything was kind of blowing up a bit or starting to get real serious around the world. Is that was that kind of the timing when you came back to the States then?

SYDNEY: Yeah, that was that was why I came back. I actually I had been back to the States February 22nd specifically. That was when my brother got married. And so I had just been back home and then went back to finish off the season in Spain. And like you said, everything around the world, it seemed to be escalating in regards to the virus. And so every day that specific week, I think it was like the week of March eighth to the 13th, like every day it was something new that you were hearing about the virus, whether as in the states, Spain, throughout Europe. And so I went to sleep I think it was like Wednesday night I went to sleep and during that. So the time difference, obviously, during that while I was sleeping, that's when there was the first case in the NBA and then President Trump [**CODY:** Mhm] was going to initiate the travel ban. And so my agent was texting me. People from the L.A. Sparks were text me like it was like, you got to get home. I was like, oh, all right. Let me just wake up to this at 5:00 in the morning to try and figure out, like, OK, because we still have like a month or so of season left. And so everything was happening super-fast. And so thankfully, the club that I was with, they were very they were quick to find the flight and they worked with my agent. And it was awesome that they were super helpful. And so I was out the next day. I traveled back on Friday the 13th, ironically, made it home safe.

CODY: Yeah, I remember that Friday the 13th, because actually that was the Thursday before I was at a conference at work and we were we had like this roundtable thing going on and we thought we were coming back into the office the next day. And then suddenly that morning, Friday the 13th, it was like, no, nobody come in and actually

went like two months later, I went back to the office just to grab something. And all of our, like LaCroix cups were still sitting there in the exact same place they had been like on the [SYDNEY: Oh my gosh] 28th. And it was like this. Yeah. Something out of a movie or...

Sydney: Apocalyptic, [CODY: Yeah] yeah [CODY: Exactly] that's crazy

CODY: Yeah, actually OK. So we want to get into a couple of more things. But just to wrap kind of our COVID talk. You actually contracted COVID also. Right. And went through that experience of working your way through that virus.

SYDNEY: I did, yes.

CODY: Yeah. What was that like? And I guess what would you say to people who are still going through that that process currently?

SYDNEY: Yeah. I mean, fortunately, my case was mild. I was more concerned because I was at home with my parents and so I didn't want to expose them. I wanted to do what I could to make sure I didn't spread it. And so while, like I touched on the week where everything was happening quickly, I was starting to show symptoms without me even realizing it. And so I was having night sweats while I was that last few days in Spain. I lost my taste and smell the day before I left. And it was weird, like I've lost my taste and smell before. Like when you have a cold, your nose gets sort of stuffed up and you can't breathe. So then you can't taste, this like it just evaporated. Like I was cooking dinner and I'd stop smelling and I stopped tasting and I could breathe through my nose, but there was nothing. And I was like, OK, [CODY: Yeah] that's never happened before. So then I'm trying to get home, got home safely. That was like I wanted to get home before the travel ban was initiated. I didn't know what that looked like. I didn't know. You know, because I didn't feel right. And so I had a feeling that, like if I did get stopped at Customs, that I might not make it home. And I would understand why cause you don't want someone who has it to be traveling and exposing other people go. But thankfully, I made it home and tried to get tested multiple times. The two times that I tried to get tested was just with our primary care doctor. And they, they didn't have enough tests yet. They weren't accessible to anyone unless they were showing major symptoms. And so I wasn't showing major symptoms and the smell and taste became a symptom later

on. And so then once that was established as a symptom, then tried again for the third time, finally got tested. And then obviously, I think at that point, I had been home for about a week and a half. And so I tested positive and had to be in quarantine another two weeks. And throughout that time, I was starting to feel much better getting my smell and taste back. Throughout the time that I had it, though, I was still working out. I was I could breathe, OK. I had no coughs and that's what I was focused on, was just making sure that my lungs were feeling OK. And so, thankfully, my parents never showed any symptoms. I'm pretty sure that they if they did have it, it was they were asymptomatic. [CODY: Mhm] And so, yeah, it was it was crazy to I was thankful that I that my parents felt good and I hadn't seen anybody else. Like, I disciplined myself even when I got home, I was gonna quarantine for two weeks [CODY: Right] just to be safe. And so, yeah, at the time, too, there's there were a lot of unknowns surrounding the virus. And so now we know a little bit more. But I think there's so much going on within our country with, you know, racism. People are protesting. And so there's a lot of people out and about and understandably so. But I think, you know, that's the virus is still present. And so it's I feel for the people who are in the hospitals, the frontline workers that are caring for people, making sure that we're taken care of. And, you know, we're all trying to we're fighting a similar battle. It's like this invisible presence that we're all trying to work through. And, you know, live continue to live through as best as we can, but while still being safe and protecting one another. So it's definitely a it's an interesting thing, I guess, if you want to call it interesting. [CODY: Mhm] But, you know, my heart goes out to I have friends who are in the health care industry and they're facing this every day. And so it's definitely something that we can't just forget about and toss to the side because it's still present.

Cody: Right. And a good way to put it is it's yeah, it's a common battle that we have. And I think it's something that none of us experience in our lifetime to have this common thing. With work I talked to some people around the world during different conversations. And it's interesting that logging into those calls, pretty much everyone has a similar thing to say and is doing a similar thing. And I don't know, another time in history where that's been exactly the case. But, yeah, [SYDNEY: Mhm] we're glad to have you healthy and having a little time on the show today. So I want to transition here over to your time at OSU, and the first thing I have to ask is you're coming from Phoenix, Arizona. Why did you choose to come to rainy, dark Corvallis?

SYDNEY: [Laughing] Oh, I loved the weather. I loved the weather in the Pacific Northwest. And I think because I was surrounded by sunshine and heat my whole life, that it was always like a treat whenever there is rain or whenever there was a storm. And in Phoenix, we have it's called monsoon season and it happens during the summer where we have crazy thunderstorms. And I always loved it. And so the rain, obviously, in the Pacific Northwest is a little bit different cause it's just gray. It's gray and misty or rainy and cold and. But I loved it. I mean, first and foremost, what drew me to the place was the people. And so I knew that I was going to be in the gym. I was going to be in classes. And so the only time that I would really be outside was getting to the gym and going to class. So I didn't really worry about the weather as much as being involved with the people I got to be with. So that was definitely what sold me. I didn't mind the cold in the rain either.

CODY: Yeah. OK, so as a myself as a long-term Beaver fan, it has to have to ask, what was the experience like playing in Gill Coliseum? It seemed like a cool place to be a fan in. Was it also that cool to play on the floor?

SYDNEY: Oh, man. You know, it's ironic, actually. I had a dream the other night that I was I was suiting up to go back out there and play. And I'm not kidding. Like, I was like it was I was putting on my uniform and we were meeting in the locker room downstairs, getting ready to go off to Gill. And the feeling, the support, there really is no place like it. And you hear it all the time. And it's cliché, but it's the truth. I mean, I think what was the coolest part was seeing the amount of fans that continue to take notice as we went through our years there, because I think when the first game that my freshman year that we played, maybe a couple hundred were there. And then, you know, to go out with a sold out crowd for the PAC 12, the final PAC 12 weekend, our senior season. It was so cool to be a part of that growth and to get to know. One of my favorite things was that the eight minute mingle after games where you can have time with fans, you can take pictures, you can talk to them. And it was a family atmosphere. And I hold true to the fact that they helped us with momentum and a lot of close games. The I I've talked to former opponents now in the professional world and everyone has said, like, there's nothing like playing in Gill. I mean, it's intense. It's loud. You can feel it while you're out there. And there were times where we had to have hand signals for plays because we couldn't hear each other. So like we had to communicate through, like signaling with our

hands because it was so loud so that that it's one of the coolest environments and I'm privileged to have been a part of it like that.

CODY: Yeah, I I've been to a few different arenas, college arenas, and a lot of ones, I should say, that are newer, are more modern, have been built recently. And I always tell people, I'm like, you need to come to a game at Gill Coliseum because, you know, it's older, and it's an older place. But like, it's just an amazing vibe. And yeah. When it fills up [**SYDNEY:** Yeah] and that was another thing I was going to add is I was at Oregon State from 2011, 2015, and you kind of already touched on this. But I thought it was really cool to see how the crowds just continue to get bigger and bigger as you and people like Jamie Weisner and Ruth Hamblin and those folks like continue to really bring women, Oregon State Women's Basketball up and up and up. So that was amazing to see from my perspective.

SYDNEY: Yeah. I know I'll never forget too like before games, before a couple of our games that it seemed like almost every game at home. Jamie would always say, I smell the popcorn because [**CODY:** Laughing] you can you can smell the popcorn from the floor. So, like, we'd be stretching and she's like, oh, there's the popcorn, its game day.

CODY: That that's actually an amazing call out, because that's something for me that also pings in my mind of like, oh, I'm in I'm in Gill because you walk in and you do. [**SYDNEY:** Popcorn] It has kind of that old stadium, you know, smell and vibe. But then there's also mixed with the popcorn. It's like, OK, I know where I'm at here.

SYDNEY: Yeah, exactly. [Laughing]

CODY: So that's cool. So I want to just ask a couple more things before we jump into more of life after OSU. But what would you say? I know you guys got to go to the final four and you've got to go toe to toe with Yukon. What did that kind of experience mean to you that year?

SYDNEY: That was a culmination of everything that we had been through since we got to campus. And even as we got recruited, our vision was that. Our vision was to win a national championship. And we didn't quite make it there, but we made it as close as we could. And so I think it showed all the experiences, all the lessons. I mean, I think back

to my freshman year, we played Notre Dame at home and we were so close. We went toe to toe with them then and we weren't supposed to like they were just things that we did where we weren't supposed to be in these games. And we had this collective belief, this buy-in that, you know, that was a reason why we came to Oregon State. We want to do something that had never been done before. And so when we made it to the final four, I mean, I get chills even talking about that moment when the buzzer went off against Baylor and it solidified that we are going to be going.

CODY: You know, you're going. Yeah.

SYDNEY: Yeah. That that elation, that joy of like, holy crap. Like we just did. What did we just do? And you just remember all the work and all the effort and all the intentional preparation that went into everything. And there was no mistake. There was no mistake that we had made it there. We earned it. We deserved it. We were we were damn good. And, you know, to go down against Yukon, who is arguably one of, if not the best, women's basketball college basketball teams ever. I mean, what they did, that legacy of four national titles in a row. And we got to face that there's nothing better than that opportunity. And so I think, like I said, it just shows the journey. And it's summed up in that one moment, that destination that we were able to reach as a group.

CODY: So another thing I wanted to touch on now, as we kind of transition over to your path to the WNBA and after college. So you graduate and then doesn't the WNBA starts in like May, right?

SYDNEY: Yeah. So I actually graduated a week before our season got done in late March. I was done a term early. And so we started training camp like April 20th that year. So it was even while school was still happening at OSU.

CODY: Yeah, and I don't know if everyone knows that, but it's an amazingly quick turnaround to go from the college season, right. And then straight into [SYDNEY: Oh my gosh] graduating. What does that whirlwind like to go from all those steps?

SYDNEY: Yeah, it's a lot. I mean, I thankfully and unfortunately, I mean, our season ended and the Sweet 16, and so it was during spring break at the time. And so people went home and I went back up to Corvallis because I was anticipating that transition.

And so I just took time by myself to clean my room, clean my locker room areas and having those quiet moments and saying goodbye to some people up there. And then I went home. It was it was a really crazy time, too, because I went back to Phoenix for I had something during the Final Four weekend, the men's final four was in Phoenix. And so I was doing like a three point competition there. So I went back to Phoenix for a couple of days, went back up to Washington because Jamie got married in the middle of it. I think the beginning.

CODY: Wow, just throw that into the mix of things.

SYDNEY: Yes. Jamie got married and then the day after her wedding was our banquet. And then the day after that, I went to New York for the draft. So, I mean, it was it was like you thought college move fast. This was like welcome to reality.

CODY: Yeah.

SYDNEY: So, I mean, there was really I had that time right after season to really decompress, to have that time to myself, to get organized, to get prepared for what was coming. So that really helped me to have those quiet moments before I got busy again. But then the draft happened. And then about a week later, so the draft was in New York, went back to Phoenix, and then I was in Phoenix for probably six days and then went to L.A. for training camp. So it was like, here we go, folks.

CODY: Yeah, and so you get picked the 11th pick. Is that correct?

SYDNEY: Yes.

CODY: Yeah. The Los Angeles Sparks. And so you find out you're moving to L.A. How was that? Had you spent much time in L.A. previous or [**SYDNEY:** No] How did that all resonate?

Sydney: Yeah. I mean, look where I went to college. I went to a college town. I, I mean, Phoenix is a city, but L.A. is a different beast. I mean, I the only time I been in L.A. was for our games. Every other time, like growing up, our family would go to San Diego for vacation. But San Diego is even nothing in comparison to Los Angeles. And so it was

really cool because Jamie was also at the training camp with me. And so we are doing my first training camp was with a familiar face and I knew a couple of more people from the PAC 12. And so it was nice to have those type of people around that could help me through that transition. And I remember, like, we both got to the airport at the same time and we were getting our rental car and we were sharing it because we were staying at a hotel during training camp and we got in the car and all that. Jamie, you drive. You drive all the time. I am not going to space these freeways. I can't handle it. I'm too stressed. And so she was the one that was driving constantly and like, right when we landed, it was rush hour was like four thirty. So we were like, try and we didn't know the back roads yet. And so, like,

CODY: You got your first true taste of L.A. right off the bat.

SYDNEY: Oh my gosh, the out right there. It was like this is where you get to live. Welcome. And so it was definitely like, OK, this is this is not Phoenix. This is not Corvallis. This is Los Angeles. So let's just take it in every moment and survive, [Light laugh] basically just survive.

CODY: One thing that I am curious about is I think especially with professional athletes, is you see players get drafted or you see players get traded or there they sign with this team or that team or attend this training camp for that training camp. What's kind of going on under the hood, though, like when you move from city to city or you are like you moving to L.A., like you've got to do all the steps of finding a place to live. Right? And figuring out how far that is from the practice facility. Is that stuff kind of like do they give you a template for how to do that? Or you kind of just like. All right. Here we go. Jamie and I are here we're gonna figure this out.

SYDNEY: Yeah. Thankfully for the WNBA, they have team housing. And so they set us up in apartments and they, they do a lot of work for us. And so during training camp, my rookie year, I was in a hotel. And so I was in a hotel for like the first two, three weeks. It was like right down the street from where we actually practice at USC. So it wasn't like you didn't have to navigate and figure out too much. It was like, okay, we're going back to the hotel, go into the gym, go to the hotel, go to the gym. And it was on the same road. So it's easy. And then once I moved into the team housing that was already set up. Then I had to figure out, like because where we lived was in Marina del Rey. And so

it was like a solid 20 miles, 15, 20 miles, I'd say, from downtown L.A. And so navigating traffic and navigating are there has to be back roads because I'm not going on the freeway.

CODY: Is that like two hours on the freeway? [Light laugh]

SYDNEY: It's no joke. It's probably like two hours. Like, if you hit it at the wrong time, you could be on there like hour, hour and a half. And so found the back roads. But like I said, they the, the teams do a lot of work for us because it is it's not as lucrative as the NBA, where a lot of NBA players, they're in charge of their own housing. They've got to figure that out. They've got to figure out cars. And but for us, they do a really good job of housing us. And it's a shorter season, too. So you're in an apartment for the season. So like five, six months, and then you move all your stuff out and then the next season comes around, you could be in the same complex but move into a completely different place. And so there's definitely I'm thankful. I have like Gabby lives down there. Gabby Hansen and her family live there. So I saw some of my stuff at her place. I have family that lives in L.A., too, so I just have a bunch of my stuff sprawled throughout Los Angeles.

CODY [Laughing] That's great. You're packing light. You know, you can move around freely.

SYDNEY: Yes. I'm learning how that like after so my first season in L.A. and then I went to Australia from overseas. I came back home and I had like two months off and I was like, I need to purge my stuff because I like all this stuff from Oregon State that I brought home was just still in bins and suitcases. I didn't have time to go through it. And so it was nice to, like, go through my stuff and really figure out because I'm not home much like, what do I need? What can I bring with me and transport easily. And so it was a process. It made me realize how much stuff I have.

CODY: I want to ask more about your playing experience overseas. You said you were in Australia. But before we get to that, I wanted to timeline here, focus in on so you could you and WNBA now. And so you hit the regular season. What would you say is kind of like your welcome to the WNBA moment or what was that thing that was like, OK. This is in college ball anymore.

SYDNEY: Our first game of the season in Staples Center, first of all, walking in the Staples Center and coming to terms with this is where I get to work. That took a moment for sure.

CODY: That's pretty cool.

SYDNEY: Our first game on the baseline closest to our bench, you have right next to our bench Magic Johnson and his wife. And then on the other side of the baseline, you have Kobe Bryant and his family. So that was definitely my moment of like, welcome to the league.

CODY: Yeah, and the coach of the Sparks is Derek Fisher. Correct?

SYDNEY: Yep.

CODY: Yeah. Another Laker Great. [**SYDNEY:** Yeo] So I think I was reading your second game in the WNBA. You went off for twenty two points with six threes. That had to be an amazing experience of like, OK, here we are, we're diving in.

SYDNEY: Yeah that was. That was really cool. I don't I don't know how to really put it into words because it's you dream of that's when you're a kid. And I know I dreamt of getting drafted. And then you get drafted. You're like, okay, what are you gonna do with it? And so then being on the court, you sort of in that transition, you're trying to think. Am I cut out for this? Am I good enough for this? Am I supposed to be here? That's what was going through my mind. And then when that game happened, it sort of proved to me, like, you can do this, like you are meant to be at this level. And I didn't I mean, I knew that that wasn't just going to you know, that I was just the beginning. I was I had so much to learn. But to have that moment and to know, like, I can I can be a part I'm supposed to be a part of this league. It was really cool to experience it and then to, you know, go from there and grow and learn exponentially more than just what that game presented to me.

CODY: What would you say to a player who's in college currently and who wants to make it to the next level? What would you say is the biggest thing to prepare for?

SYDNEY: I think what I had to learn what's different at this level is there is no roadmap for success. In college your schedule is so structured and it has to be in many ways because you have classes, you have study hall, you have weights, you have practice, you have games like you have a rhythm and it's templated for you. Here you have practice. Figure it out. Figure out what you're going to do with the rest of your day. Figure out how to recover. Figure out if you need to do extra shooting. If you need to do extra recovery. If you need to do extra weights like it's your schedule. Plus, like, I know some people go to they play professionally and they're still in school. So that can give us a structure to the days, too, because you have something outside of the game that you can focus on and pay attention to and that can structure your days.

But for me, like my first few weeks, I was like, man, I have so much time for naps. Like this is like. This is like a dream. This is the dream. And so then I was like, okay, I can't just nap my days away. Like I have to I want to be productive with them. And I think as I've gone longer within the league, like, I've learned how to be a professional in every aspect. So, like, my body's getting older, so I can't just show up to the gym five minutes before practice and, like, not stretch. And we're out there like I've had to learn what do I need to be successful as a professional? What do I need to show up earlier to list and then be warm for practice and get extra shots up? And then how do I recover and what should I eat? And so it's like a full, It's really is a job because your body is your product. And so I think figuring out how you can start figuring that out within your college routine, you know, what you need within that and outside of it. And so that's, that's what I had to learn. My first couple of seasons was how to spend my free time productively.

CODY: Yeah, that's a great insight. The other thing I was going to ask is, your playing year round? Is that correct with the overseas ball? Like, is that kind of filled the off season or what does that schedule look like?

SYDMEY: Yeah. So my my first season in Australia was actually a shorter season, so I had like two days in between the L.A. season because we went to the finals that year. So we ended late. So I had about two days to get everything organized and then go to Australia until like February. And so I got I was in Australia from October to February and then I had until like middle of April off. And so I was able to spend time with family and take a step back and get ready for the next season. And then sort of the same

thing. I had the summer season and then I had about two weeks, I think, before I had to go to Israel. And then I was in Israel until the middle of March. And then I had five weeks in between my next season for the summer. And then same thing with this season. It was about a week. Then I went to Spain and then I was and then this happened. So this is definitely been the most amount of time that I've had. I haven't been in the gym since March.

CODY: Wow. Yeah. [SYDNEY: Yeah] I I think that's something that people sometimes overlook when they're looking at NBA and WNBA players as those NBA guys get to have their summer off to kind of let their body reset work through injuries. And what percentage of the WNBA would you say plays overseas during that off-season period?

SYDNEY: I would say 75 to 80 percent.

CODY: Yeah, amazing to, like, go through that physically, too, and into. I can see how that those recovery periods are really important to work into the routine with how much work you guys are doing.

SYDNEY: Yeah. It's different. And I've I really have as crazy as it's been these last few months. It has given me time to take a step back from basketball. So I'm not pounding the same muscles all the time. I can I've incorporated yoga into my workouts and biking. So I'm not just running for conditioning or doing basketball work. I've tried to do I've tried to learn ways and incorporate ways to be fit for as a human being. And while also like preparing for basketball and keeping in mind, like, you know, I have to be in shape for a season. But it's been nice to not have as much urgency on the basketball side so I can get my body re centered and stronger and healthier for when basketball does start up again.

CODY: I think I saw earlier this year that the Sparks traded for one of your former teammates, Marie Coolidge.

SYDNEY: Marie!!!

CODY: Yeah, How excited were you about that? That seems like the coolest thing.

SYDNEY: Oh, my gosh. Honestly, at first I we both were very hesitant to celebrate it because it's a business. And so we were both thinking, like, I could I could get traded still or Marie, it could have been like a pit stop for Marie. And she's actually gonna go somewhere else. And so, like, she called me in the middle of the night, it was like said, "I just got traded to L.A". and I was like, I really want to be so excited right now, but I can't be. And she was like we were both, like, very reluctant to like over celebrate it just to be safe. But then as time went on and she had conversations with our coach and our GM, we both figured out, like, this is real, like this is gonna be happening. And then it's funny too not funny, but like with everything going on with the virus and the world stopping, we were both like, well, I guess we weren't supposed to have a season together, but maybe it's just delayed.

And so but we have had, like Zoom calls as a team and to see her on my screen and we're texting all the time about different things and to go through all of this uncertainty together has been such a blessing. And she really, like we say this about each other, like she is an extension of me and I'm an extension of her. So it's like it's like we're sisters and it's so rare to have like we had no control over this happening. And so to see how it ended up like this, it it's like it's the coolest thing. So hopefully I'm sure we will be able to play with each other at some point. But it's been cool. Like I said, seeing her on these meetings and walking through this directly with one another.

CODY: As a fan, when I saw that news, I was like, oh, this is the coolest thing ever but uh I totally...

SYDNEY: Go Beavs!

CODY: Yeah go Beavs that's what we like to see. [**SYDNEY:** Yeah]. Represent down there in L.A., too.

SYDNEY: Absolutely.

CODY: So this is a question I feel sort of silly asking because I personally don't know what I'm gonna be doing tomorrow, much less five, 10 years. But after your basketball playing career is over. What do you have ideas of what things like come next or what

things you'd like to pursue. I know you graduated in communications. This is far down the line. But what is that question? What kind of ideas do you have around that?

Sydney: Yeah, it's. And things come up all the time too. It's sort of like when you're in college majoring in something and then you don't even get a job. And what you major in because things, new opportunities present themselves. You meet, you meet people who can lock you in to different career paths that pique your interest and set your soul on fire. And so it's tough to say for sure. But I will I will say what my vision is and hopefully my goals for basketball. I still have a couple goals. And, you know, I want to win a WNBA championship. I would love to be a WNBA, WNBA all-star at some point. And I would love to make the Olympic team one of these years. So those are like my final goals as a player. So stay tuned. Hopefully we can hopefully God will, you know, whatever he has in store for me, I'm excited for what's left in regards to playing.

After basketball, communications is a very broad major. And I, I love I'm still learning. So you would think I would have it, you know, nailed. I would know how to communicate. But I am still learning so much about communicating, you know, in groups and interpersonally to different, you know, on different levels. It's been. And I love that you can apply that in everyday life. And so that was one of the reasons why I majored in it. And so I do have a vision of potentially coaching, maybe doing something with commentating or being an analyst. And I also have thought about. You know, helping out. I don't know if this would be a career necessarily, but my mom works at our church and I would love to be involved in our church or in some capacity or, you know, if I called to send on mission trips of some sort, you just never know. But I do see myself. I would love to be a coach and give back with what I've learned from all my coaches, all my experiences, and give that back to this next generation that's coming.

CODY: That's a wonderful answer and wonderful things on the horizon. I mean, I'm sitting here smiling because I'm thinking of like classes at the end of my senior year of professors being. OK. Get ready for this interview Question of what are you gonna be doing in five years? What do you want to achieve in 30 years? And I'm seeing there is this college senior like, OK, let me try to figure out what these answers are. [SYDNEY: laughing] Let me figure out my bullet points.

SYDNEY: Map out the next five years, I don't even know. Like you said, I don't even know what's going to happen tomorrow.

CODY: Yeah. Well, I appreciate you amusing me by answering that question.

[**SYDNEY:** Chuckling]

SYDNEY: Absolutely.

CODY: But it sounds like good things ahead. One other thing I wanted to touch on you mentioned earlier with the racism and protests that are going on in the Black Lives Matter movement, getting some momentum here, much needed and much deserved momentum. I think for me personally, it's been a time of a lot of introspection and realization of there's more things that I need to be doing in my life. There's more times I need to be listening and being aware. One thing I was going to ask about was as somebody who is a WNBA player and someone who has a platform, what do you see as kind of like the responsibility of people with a platform and organizations with the platform to kind of comment and use their voice during moments of moral crisis like this?

SYDNEY: I actually was called out by Gabby Hansen because she I had to use my platform for a coronavirus when I had it. I was very vocal about my experience, and I wanted to be of service to others that were going through it or had questions about it. And so I wanted to use my platform for that. And then when Ahmaud Arbery when that happened, I didn't I didn't post much about it. I didn't really say anything. And obviously he wasn't the first. And then Breonna Taylor happened and she wasn't the second. And then George Floyd happened and he was not third. But when the when George Floyd took place, I wasn't I wasn't blind. I was aware of everything going on. I was I saw it on social media. I saw it on the news. But there was something within me that was like not allowing me to be vocal about it. And the next day, because I was really thinking about it, I was like, man, like, if I want to say something, I know what I would say, but I want to say something. I just. I don't know. I don't know. And she texted me, left me a voice memo the next day and basically said, like, you need to speak up on this, like you have this platform. [**CODY:** Mhm] I don't understand why you wouldn't you and she did it. I mean, it was completely respect, respectful, and it was out of love. And she started off by saying that, like, this is me coming from a place of love. And I just want to put this out

there for you. And I was so. I will always be thankful that she did say something because and I called her and I said, you know, I really have been thinking about this. I just, you know, all these different excuses that I could come up with. And I think the root of it was I was so ashamed that it took me this long to say anything and to really step into this reality and. I. I posted and it's truly not even about me posting or saying anything. I think what she told me is she said, you just gotta start where you are. And at least acknowledge that there is this reality, that there is this problem. And then, you know, that's it's not on me. It's not anybody else to judge your journey and what you're where you're starting from. And so to hear that from her, it sort of gave me that freedom of embracing where I was at. And I I can't go back to all these years that everything I mean, even since I was a kid, you know, like this has been around since before we were born. And I had to start. And she helped me start. And she helped me see. There is no right way. But it's gotten to a point where you can't just sit back and be silent. You have to be vocally anti-racism. And I had to start and I have been in regards to starting within. And so I listen to a podcast that taught me so much. It's called 16 19. And it's a project by The New York Times. And that was that was a great place for me to start. My teammate, one of my teammates on the Sparks team, she actually led me to that podcast. And then I bought a bunch of books that I am planning on reading. I'm starting on the new Jim Crow right now. And then, obviously, social media is an amazing opportunity to repost and learn and look up petitions, look up ways you can donate, be involved, support black owned businesses, organizations, charities, different things. And so I think I just had to open my eyes to all of this. All of these resources that have been under my nose the whole time. And I never saw it. I never paid attention to it. And so now I'm stepping into that, stepping into the real empathy and trying my best to understand as a white person that I will never fully understand. But I can stand and with them and I can stand with black people, people of color, people of different backgrounds. And I think another thing, too, I have such a unique vantage point because I am surrounded by a lot of black people and I've been a part of a lot of different cultures overseas. And so I've been able to listen to so many perspectives and stories and see through lens that are not my own. And that has really helped me. And now my next step was to at least vocalize and acknowledge. And so that's where I was at a couple of weeks ago when everything was happening at its height with George Floyd. And a lot of people continued to open up about their perspective and where they stand on being vocal with racism as well. And I think, you know, it wasn't just me and it's not about me, but so many people have stepped into this realm of wanting to talk about

it and wanting to be uncomfortable with it so we can we can change things. You know, we I feel like we we have the opportunity to be real and authentic in this reality and hopefully bridge the gaps and make it make it a better reality for all of us. So I just had to start. And starting involved being vocal.

CODY: Thanks for sharing that. And I think if anybody who's listening to this too, that that can be the point that I think a lot of people and even myself was that of I don't know what my what my step forward is on this or what do I need to comment or and I think popping the bubble and realizing, OK, I need to I need to listen. I need to understand. And like you said, I'll never understand. But, you know, let let me let me start with listening and using the empathy, like you said. [SYDNEY: Mm hmmm] So I appreciate you sharing that story.

SYDNEY: Mm hmm. Yeah. Thank you.

[QUICK MUSIC TRANSITION]

CODY: Hey, Beavs. The last couple months have been tough. We've all been faced with the realization that our efforts to build a diverse, equitable and inclusive world have fallen short. It's time to speed up the gears of change. I've personally been reading *How to Be Anti-racist*. A book by Ibram X Kendi, and I'm holding myself accountable to be proactive, not reactive in fighting against systemic racism and inequality. Change starts within, and I invite you to join me in being introspective and evaluating the role that we all play in extinguishing these problems. This time for good. If you're needing a place to start OSU, you have set up a diversity, equity and inclusion hub on the Beaver Lodge site with statements, stories and toolkits for diving into these issues. To access these resources, visit osualum.com/beaverlodge and click the DEI tab. Now let's finish out with Sydney.

[QUICK MUSIC TRANSITION]

CODY: Ok. So I want to. We just got a few more minutes here of your time. We appreciate you coming on. Our last couple sections here are some quick hitter ones. The first one is this is something we've been asking are our guests on here. But just a little bit of a look under the hood into your life. Whether you're a Netflix or Hulu junkie,

podcast super-fan or whether you're the voracious reader type. What's that thing that you're consuming content wise?

SYDNEY: So I, I. Let me just start off by saying 'The Office' is the greatest show of all time.

CODY: [Chuckling] Truth.

SYDNEY: And I thank you so much for agreeing with that. I watched that for the first time when I was a freshman at Oregon State. And during everything the last few months, I needed some consistency in my life. And so I turned to 'The Office.' And so that is what I was binge watching, as well as on Amazon Prime. I don't know if it's on Hulu, but I've been watching 'Suits.' I normally am not into lawyer shows, but this one has my heart and my teammate in Spain. She was actually watching it during our season. And I remember, like, we're getting ready for a road trip and I'm sitting next to her in a van on a van ride and she was bawling. It was like, you OK? She was watching the finale of Suits. And so that was like my first exposure to it. And so I started watching it a couple of months ago. So that's what I've been watching. And then usually I am a reader, but I haven't been reading as much lately. But I like I said earlier, I've just bought a bunch of books that I'm excited to dive into so that I am a reader. That is also a fact.

CODY: That's great. I was gonna say I watched the first episode of what is it called? 'Space Force.'

SYDNEY: Space Force?...

CODY: It's the new one with Steve Carell. Anyway, Steve Carell has like gray hair now and stuff, but I watched it...

SYDNEY: He is a silver fox.

CODY: All I could think of, though, is like, why is Michael Scott on this other show?

[SYDNEY: Laughing, oh my gosh.] And so I turn it off to the like. I can't. I can't. I just it's this Michael Scott to me.

SYDNEY: You know, it's so cool, though, because Steve Carell is an amazing actor, if he is able to go from 'The Office,' Michael Scott, to I've seen him in like super serious movies like that he's made me cry because he's so somber. And so that I'm like, you know what, respect Steve Carell. You have the whole spectrum of talent.

CODY: Have you listened to The Office Ladies podcast with Angela Kinsey and Jenna Fisher where they do recaps of office episodes?

SYDNEY: Marie actually suggested it to me. [**CODY:** Ok] And I haven't tuned in yet, but I want to.

CODY: Ok. Would highly recommend. [**SYDNEY:** Ok] It's a little walk down memory lane.

SYDNEY: Oh gosh, I can I already am just so happy thinking about that. [Light laughing]

CODY: Ok. This next segment is since social distancing, these times kind of have us all chilling at home a lot. What's been kind of your go to. Do you have like a local food spot that's been your go to take out during these months?

SYDNEY: Two things. I my favorite food is chicken wings and pizza with a gallon of ranch on the side. And that's not like Hidden Valley Ranch. I'm talking like. Like you could drink this ranch like. And I would. And so that's...

CODY: Wait, not like the little packet that you with powder where you add the water. Not that right?

SYDNEY: That's probably what it is. I don't know.

CODY: That was my grandparent's all growing up.

SYDNEY: I hope it's a little bit more elaborate than that because this whatever this is, it's amazing. But I, I will hold true to the fact this is a fact. Phoenix, Arizona, has the best chicken wings. Come at me about that and...

CODY: You heard it here.

SYDNEY: Thank you. Yes. And we live basically on a road that has like three of the best, in my opinion, wing places and pizza places. So I was eating. We were eating chicken wings, like I probably have like three out of the seven days of the week, chicken wings was like an appetizer for us. So I'm not complaining about that. And then I also love poke bowls.

CODY: Oh yeah.

SYDNEY: So I will have like, yeah, that is like my. Oh, my gosh. Like, I could eat that every single day.

CODY: You feel healthy afterwards too.

SYDNEY: And full, like I love poke bowls. So I was just introduced to those probably like last year and ever since then because like I was very concerned about like the raw part, like the raw salmon. But for whatever reason I tried it and I was like, this is now my life. So that was also what I was partaking in whilst in quarantine.

CODY: Ok. Phoenix, a new destination for wings and poke.

SYDNEY: Yes. [**CODY:** I will put it on the list] Please listen to me. Buffalo Wild Wings is not the answer people. [**CODY:** Laughing] You Need to come to phoenix and I'll show you how it's done.

CODY: I will admit in Corvallis, I frequented the Buffalo Wild Wings. But, you know.

SYDNEY: I did, too. But we didn't. We don't have a choice. We didn't have a choice. [**CODY:** Yeah, right] I'm telling you, this is the solution.

CODY: Ok, this last little quick segment, we're coming up here on time, but this one is called Globe or Garage. And so the point of this one is whether you're an avid traveler or a proud homebody, whichever one you are, when it's safe to travel again what's a

place that's currently on your travel bucket list that you'd like to go to or if you're more of the homebody type? What's a project or hobby that you're taking on?

SYDNEY: I am. I would like to say I'm both because I am not really home much when I am home. I am like home and, but I love traveling. I think it is I am so fortunate that the game has led me to so many places around the country and around the world. On one of my flights, I was back and forth from Spain a lot during the season that I was there. And one of the flights that I took was Air Tahiti. And I've never been more relaxed on an airplane. And I started to look into Tahiti. I was like, where is this place? I need to go there. And so Tahiti is like where I want to go whenever it's safe. And whenever I can like that, I might never return. If I go to Tahiti and I'm ok with that. So that is like I love being home. I love being with family. I love being able to have time with my people in person. But Tahiti is definitely on the list for when traveling is pk Again.

CODY: I love it. That's cool. And I actually Tahiti had not been on my personal radar.

SYDNEY: Add it.

CODY: So I'm going to go ahead and look that up after. I'm going to Phoenix to get some wings and poke.

SYDNEY: Chicken wings pit stop.

CODY: And there might be direct flight to Tahiti. So that's the new destination right there.

SYDNEY: It's the only way to do it. Yeah.

CODY: Ok, great. Well, Sydney, I really appreciate you hopping on here, sharing about your story from all the way from OSU. But then also we've enjoyed catching up and hearing what what's been going on at your time at the WNBA. And obviously I'm waiting for what's next here. But yeah, I appreciate your time and for coming on the podcast and sharing your What's Next? story.

SYDNEY: Thank you so much for having me. And always and forever, Go Beavs!

[Bouncy theme music plays.]

CODY: Hey, listeners, just an update here. This episode was recorded on June 12th. And since talking with Sydney, the WNBA put forth the plan to start their season on Saturday, July 25th, with all teams together at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida. We wish Sydney and her fellow WNBA players health and safety as they start their season. And also our goal at OSU Next and the Alumni Association is to build community. And that includes creating connections and sharing these unique stories with the rest of Beaver nation. If you found this episode of the What's Next podcast valuable, you can help us achieve this goal by writing a quick review, leaving a rating and subscribing to the show and your preferred podcast player. We're thankful for your support.