

**Oral History Interview of  
Jesus Arenas**

**Interviewed by: Daniel U. Sánchez  
July 30, 2012  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Sports History***

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## Interview Series Background:

The Southwest Collection/Special Collection Library's Sports History Initiative aims to collect, preserve, and make available athletic history. Oral histories are an important component in the archives efforts to document sports. The individuals interviewed as part of this series provide information on the role athletics plays on and off the fields.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Jesus Arenas talking about his experiences playing and becoming a basketball coach in the Lubbock area.

**Length of Interview:** 01:39:51

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### Keywords

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**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sanchez. Today's date is July 30, 2012, and I'm in the office of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library with Jesus Arenas. Jesus is part of our oral history program interviews in conjunction with sports history. Jesus, the first thing, thank you for coming in for this interview.

**Jesus Arenas (JA):**

Thank you for having me.

DS:

And could you please state your complete legal name?

JA:

Jesus Arenas Jr.

DS:

Okay. And where and when were you born?

JA:

Lubbock, September 21, 1978.

DS:

Could you tell us something about your parents? Their names and where and when they were born?

JA:

My dad is Jesus Castillo Arenas. He is from Camargo, Chihuahua in Mexico. He came over when he was about eighteen years old, I think. He was born in 1955. My mom is Mary Bryan Arenas. She is originally from Corpus Christi, and she was born in 1948.

DS:

Ok. Do you have any siblings?

JA:

I have 3 older brothers. Peter Tello, James Tello, Louis Arenas and then a younger sister, Ofelia Arenas.

DS:

And how about your grandparents? Start with your dad's side.

JA:

Oh man. Ezekiel Arenas and Ophelia Arenas are my grandparents on my dad's side. And my grandma's still alive; my grandpa passed away I guess about '96 or so. Grandma still lives in Camargo, Chihuahua. My mom's parents I never met. They both had passed away by the time—I think by the time I was born. So I never—I think there's one picture of my maternal grandmother. That's about it.

DS:

Ok. Well you know. Let's talk a little bit about you dad's side. You mentioned he had come into the States when he was eighteen. Do you know what prompted him to come into the US?

JA:

You know, he was the oldest of fourteen kids. And you know living in Mexico is just rough and we've gone back. We used to go every summer as our vacation. The drive was horrible, but the time there was fun. It's just like you're in another world. But, you know, the main thing for him was just he just wanted to come and just make things better. Especially financially and future-wise and all that, and I think that was his goal there. And I mean, I think to leave a country and go to a whole another country at the age of eighteen is pretty amazing to me especially now that I get older and I think about it. When I was little, I kind of didn't really think much about it. But especially now, I couldn't leave the states and go somewhere else. You know I'm thirty-three now.

DS:

Has he ever talked about what was that like for him?

JA:

You know he's told us stories about how they had to jump on trains, and you know he's real adamant about letting everybody know that he never actually swam across the river. That he jumped over the fence, or went under the fence, and rode trains and kind of just walked the whole way. And he talked about killing rattlesnake, and eating it, and that kind of deal as they found their way. I think originally he got to Brownfield, and they would work like in little towns like that like in the field, and eventually got to Lubbock. And that's how he met my mom and all that.

DS:

And once he got to Lubbock what kind of work was he doing?

JA:

I think at that time they were just doing a lot of just field work. You know working with cotton, and you know just kind of being I guess field hands, farm hands, and, but you know, it was



always a group of them. I think that's how they used to do it; I guess that's how they still probably do it.

DS:

So I guess that would have been the early seventies then?

JA:

Yeah. Yeah. I guess about '72 '73 yeah.

DS:

And so when you came along, we know that we're interviewing you about your sports background. How did it transition from your fathers beginning to where when you were around sports was an emphasis?

JA:

Man you know, you know he just wasn't an athletic guy. And, you know, neither was my mom. I never did any camps. I never did; I was never on any AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] teams or anything till I was about fifteen, I think.

DS:

Wow.

JA:

My first competitive game I guess was when I started seventh grade at O.L. Slaton. And now I now I see all these little kids, like I had my camp a couple months ago, and I have all these second graders and first graders, and they're doing camps and I was like, Man, you know. I wonder if that would have helped me if I would have been able to do—just have those little skills by the time I was in seventh, eighth grade and that kind of deal. But that's why I encourage that so much for them to get to those camps early on. Like my daughter now she's been playing sports; she's twelve now, and she's been playing sports since she was four.

DS:

Wow.

JA:

That's just something that I guess we just couldn't afford with five of us all pretty much being two or three years apart and that kind of deal. But I think it was at an age where we had to park across the street, and we played street football that kind of deal. And we played basketball out there, and we ran, and we played tackle football, and all that kind of stuff. And you don't see kids doing that anymore. They're all inside.

DS:

Yeah. And when you were doing that did you at some point notice that, “Hey I’m not a bad athlete.” Did you ever?

JA:

You know, I was always taller than everybody. And I think that was one of the things that stood out so much because my family, the next tallest person, I’m 6’4”, the next tallest person is 5’10”. And that’s my dad and my middle brother. And actually my mom’s 5’3”. And then my two older brothers are like 5’5”, 5’7”, and then my sister’s like 5’5”. So for some reason God chose to bless me with height, which I appreciated throughout the sports career, but it was one of those things. I was always taller than everybody and naturally I started leaning towards basketball and that kind of deal. And but then I also happened to be fast and jump. A lot of people still, that’s kind of how they remember me, that I was always able to jump really good, and it was just one of those—that, and I think I kind of worked a little harder at that. But the height was of course something natural that happened, but I think early on I just figured basketball—and what I tell my kids now, that I coach, I mean it was the era of Michael Jordan. And he was the number one athlete in the world when I was growing up. And it was just—everybody wanted to be like Mike, you know. Just like the commercials at that point, and I wanted to be like Michael Jordan. I wanted to dunk like Michael Jordan and all that. And that’s what I kind of started working towards.

DS:

So you mentioned your first experience was in junior high, can you talk about that—trying out for those teams. Were you a multi-sport athlete or just a one sport?

JA:

In middle school, they always make you—and it’s so true today—they make you try everything. There are a couple of seasons that overlap. Like basketball and wrestling go on at the same time for example. And so usually the kids that don’t want to play basketball, they’ll wrestle and vice-versa. You don’t get to have—you don’t get to just say, you’re a football player at twelve years old. You don’t know what you’re going to be good at. So I did football and basketball. And I did track, and I mainly did high-jump and all the other jumps—triple jump, long jump. And I ran the longer races like the quarter, and I was never really sprinter but my endurance was always pretty good. So I could run the four hundred and the mile relay and that kind of stuff. I thought it was just fun to finally get in there and compete. And I always liked winning. There was just something about winning that I always just wanted to win. It was one of those things that—I wanted to be the best at everything, and it was just something—that’s always what drove me. I mean, I think sports are so important now. And I think God allowed me to become a coach and get an education and all that because I think it’s been something that’s always been part of my



life and just something that has helped mold me and taught me a lot of things and hopefully I'm helping to do the same for the kids that I teach and coach.

DS:

Well let's talk a little bit about that. How did you use athletics to further your academic career? Were you thinking of that early on?

JA:

You know, I'm the first in my family to go to college and to graduate from college and all that. And college was just never talked about. And I vividly remember turning eighteen and fixing to graduate from high school. And I had gotten a scholarship originally to play at Wayland Baptist. And I had turned some other ones down because they were so far away and there were a lot of other schools, but they were all over the country. And I mean at that point, like I said, I've never been out of Lubbock other than when we could go to Camargo. So for me I just—it was hard for me to go anywhere else. Wayland Baptist was one that was always on me; so I had chosen to go there. But I remember my dad and I getting into a big old argument about why was I going to go and keep on playing basketball. High school was over; sports should have been over. And I remember him telling me it was time for me to get a job and get to work. And I was always a good student. I think being part of sports, you had to pass in order to play. You had to be a good student. And of course again I think the competitiveness; I think that's always been something I've always had. I wanted to make straight A's, and I wanted to be the smartest, and I wanted to pass all my classes and all that stuff. But you know honestly I never really had a goal of going to college. It just was something so foreign. One of the first times that I ever stepped on the campus of Texas Tech was when I came and enrolled. And we lived half a mile from here or less for however many years. The only time we would drive by was just down 19<sup>th</sup> street or 4<sup>th</sup> street or whatever. I had never really gone to a football game or we went to a basketball game one time when I was like a senior in high school and that was it. That was other than when I first enrolled, that was the only time I had really been. But that was just to the coliseum. I never considered it the campus.

DS:

And the thing is, that sounds really odd, but it's really unfortunately this is the story for a lot of people in this city.

JA:

Yeah. And not to get off topic, but it's kind of just like a closed campus pretty much. And I had been gone, and I just worked down the street, and it's kind of like you almost feel unwelcome sometimes. I've come through here one time, and I got told to turn around and go the other way. And I think, I graduated from here, and I have two degrees from here. And I played here. And I spent six, seven years of my life here and I feel unwelcome. So I can't even imagine someone

from the community that—it's a wonder a lot of kids don't want to come to Texas Tech sometimes. They don't know anything about it. I think if they opened it up a little bit more/

DS:

We can come back to that, but I really want to touch up on that point where you mentioned you and your dad had this discussion about high school is over, give up sports. How did you handle that? Because that's really just a cultural change, from you grew up here where sports was so dominant and your dad came here to work.

JA:

You know, I must have been about nine or ten when I realized that we didn't have a lot of money. And my dad was working. He was pretty much a fork lift driver at a cotton co-op, and I remember him working just working long hours. And I just remember us just not having stuff that like other families had. And I just remembered being like nine, ten, I don't know, maybe eleven years old and just telling myself at night whenever I was in bed or whatever like I wasn't going to be poor. And I really didn't have an understanding of what poor and rich and all that meant, but I knew we weren't rich. And I just hated kind of the things that we went through and the struggles and all that. And I would see it taking a toll on my dad and my mom, and I just remember—like I tell my daughter now, one of my first jobs was when I was ten years old, and I started mowing lawns just so I could have money because I felt like almost a burden to my parents. And I kind of started using that money and feeding myself and that kind of deal and I mean I was ten. And it was just something that I think God just put in me, and I just didn't want to—I just remember my coaches telling me, you know, and my teachers of course—education was the key and all that. And I really bought into that because I didn't know anything else. And I knew that conversation or argument whatever with my dad that time, I mean it was kind of like, if I wouldn't have gone to college and just worked I'd still be working my tail off for very little money now and probably for the rest of my life. My grandpa worked till the day he died. He was like seventy years old.

DS:

Oh.

JA:

That was one of those things, I was fourteen years old, fifteen years old and just seeing that – he'd literally been at work the day before he died. And it was one of those things, I just don't think that's the way it's supposed to go. And I figured right away at an early age that education, being smart, that's what I thought education meant was just being smart and knowing things and studying and making good grades was kind of how to get out of that. But I never had anybody to get advice from or anything. I think God—the one thing about my parents is they were always good Christians, and they were always praying, and we were always in church. And of course

you know we all rebelled at some point or another, but I think God was always looking out, especially for me. I didn't always make the right decisions and stuff, but it's just something that—I mean I didn't get a scholarship. I didn't make a decision until like May of my senior year. And then from then everything just kind of started falling into place.

DS:

Well did you go to Wayland after that?

JA:

I did go to Wayland.

DS:

What was that like your first day going to college?

JA:

At that point I was a pretty good basketball player. And I was just excited just to—I mean I was still kind of like, “Man. You know I made it to college. I’m on the college basketball team.” And you know at that point I think your eighteen years old or whatever, and you’re still dreaming about making the NBA, and that kind of stuff. And so you know that kind of was still on my mind, and I just ate it up man. And just had fun and played and that’s all I was always just focused on basketball and—what back in the day we used to call getting out of the ‘hood’. And that was my goal man. I just didn’t want to struggle and be poor my whole life and struggle for little things. I remember growing up we would run out of gas in the middle of the street or something like that. We didn’t have electricity. And I was like, My kids aren’t ever going to know anything about that. Even though I learned a lot, and I think it made me tough and all that. But you know it was just, I was like, I just didn’t think that was the way life was meant to be lived. And so I remember just fighting everyday man that that was my ultimate goal.

DS:

Let’s talk a little bit about Wayland. What the basketball experience was like there. And then how you wound up coming to Tech.

JA:

Wayland was a very good experience. It was a small school, small town, and like I said I—had never really gone to many—we had gone a lot for some of the AU teams I played later on in high school. We had gone to some of the cities, but it was always we were pretty much in the hotel or the gym that we were playing. We never went and explored. Wayland was perfect for me right away because it was just small, and I would come home every weekend or my parents would go watch me play, my family would go watch me play. Right away I ended up being a starter, and it was just one of those things that I just had fun, man. And it’s one of those things where I was just

getting better and better and I was kind of just amazed at what I could do. And I hadn't been playing pretty long at that point. I had only been playing about five year, I guess, and you know it just seemed like things would just going and then eventually I just decided Wayland wasn't for me. So I transferred to another school, Harris-Stowe State College, I think its State University or something now, in St. Louis. And it was an NAIA [National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes] school like Wayland and LCU, and I went there and I played there for a year and that was too far away. And I just couldn't do it anymore, and I got homesick and my—who we called grandmother—ended up getting sick and is she was here in Lubbock and I couldn't come see her. So eventually I just moved back to Lubbock. And I was just going to come to Tech and just finish my degree, and I enrolled, and I just started taking classes. And I was going to be a [journalist]. I became journalism major. I figured I was done with basketball so the next best thing for me at that point in my mind was to be like a sports reporter or just a reporter; I ended up not liking the sports reporting stuff. I liked the hard news reporting, and that's what I started doing. I actually started working at the *University Daily* which I guess is not the *University Daily* anymore. But I became a columnist there the fall of '99. And one day I had gone in there in the office, and there was a little note or someone was writing a story that there was going to be tryouts for the men's basketball team because a couple of guys had broken their ankles or their foot or something like that. And so I was like man. And of course I was still playing and working out and all that, and so I was like I might as well give it a try. And that day came, and we went out there, and there were about seventy guys out there trying out, and I got lucky and got chosen as one for the guys to make the team that year. And from then on I was a walk-on for two years and then Coach Knight got hired, and eventually he put me on full scholarship, and that one year with Coach Knight, which was the best year. That year was just awesome, just all the hype and the media and all that stuff. Every game was sold out. I actually got into some games that year and played and all that and scored and that was a really fun way to kind of finish up your playing career there.

DS:

Well let me back up to when you first walked on. You mentioned the arena was new and of course that was after Coach Dickey had had those great teams in the early—

JA:

Yeah. The mid-nineties.

DS:

Actually like the '96 squad was when you had Ham and all those guys playing there.

JA:

Yeah.



DS:

So y'all had a pretty intense legacy for Dickey's teams. What was it like when you were a walk-on and started playing for him?

JA:

I had met him a couple times because one of my AAU teammates was Brandon Smith, and he was really good and every school in the country wanted him. He was a six seven point guard. He ended up choosing Michigan, and that was kind of around the time that the Fab Five with Chris Webber and all those guys had just finished their career, and Michigan was kind of the hot school. Coach Dickey and I had kind of known each other and all that, but Coach Dickey was always one of those guys—he was little, but he was just kind of intimidating. And you knew that he knew his stuff, and you respected him. And Shannon Hays, the softball coach, was actually an assistant coach. And then Will Flemons, who I had grown up watching play also, was an assistant coach, and there was just a lot of respect. And for me it was—we all knew about Darvin Ham, and you know he broke the backboard. And all those—Tony Battie and Cory Carr and all those you know—it's one of those things where you watch them on TV, and like I said I had seen them play one time live. And then all of the sudden you're kind of in the same locker room that they were in, and you're being coached by the same guy that coached them, and it's just almost a surreal kind of feeling. For me it was just kind of just, I was just very—grateful—I guess is the word at that point. Just a Lubbock kid, I don't know how many kids from Lubbock have actually played at Tech. But I had another teammate, Dorian Pitts, that played football. We went to high school together. We were on the same AU basketball team. And he played football, and so we kind of would talk about that all the time. But it was just, to me I was just kind of like just so happy that I had made the team. And Tech—I bleed black and red, and it's just one of those things. And then I remember one of the first days I got there they were like, one of the managers came up to me and he goes, "Hey." We're fixing to practice. I didn't even have a jersey or anything. And actually I got the message from Coach Hays late that I had made the team and that I needed to be at practice like at 3 o'clock or something, and it was like 2:30. And it was back then we didn't have cellphones and you had the answering machine. So I had to gone home and hit the answering machine, and it was Coach Hayes and he had left at like 11 in the morning I think had been at work or something. And I was like, "Oh man." So I run up there, and they were pretty much walking on the floor, and one of the managers goes, "Hey. What number do you want?" I go, "I don't care; just give me a jersey." And he ended up giving me the jersey, and it wasn't until later that I saw that it was number thirty-five. And I grew up on 35<sup>th</sup> Street. My parents still live on 35<sup>th</sup> Street. So I thought it was just perfect. I still have those game jerseys and all that. To me I was just living a dream at that point.

DS:

You mentioned how the arena was going to open up. So what was it like playing in the first game there? And then playing Indiana as the opponent?

JA:

You know, like I said, they kind of took a little longer to build it and all that or finish it. And we finally, I know it was like late September, maybe even October when we moved into the arena. And we used to be over at the “Bubble” [the Lubbock Municipal Coliseum.] And then we would, we played one of the first exhibition games at the coliseum which I thought was very cool. Otherwise I’d never been able to play. We used to play the Caprock Tournament Championship at the coliseum, if I remember, yeah. And so anyways—I had to sit out that year, that was my redshirt year; I was considered a transfer. And so anyways, one of the stories I like to tell is when we moved in to the arena we all got our stuff from the bubble and we got on a bus. And we all came over, and so I had this planned you know. And I didn’t know if I was going to happen, but I was determined to get the first dunk in the arena. So I had a ball and I was just kind of acting like I was walking to the locker-room, and we all kind of got to that little corner where you go left and it’s that arena floor and you go right and there’s the locker rooms. And everybody kind of just started walking right. And I just threw my stuff down, and I ran full speed with the ball, and I just went and dunked it. And I started yelling, “That’s the first dunk.” You know, in this arena, and I mean it was literally had just opened. And everybody was mad at me because they hadn’t thought of that, and that kind of deal. And so we still talk about that. So I’ll tell my kids, “Now hey, you know who got the first dunk in that arena.” Even though—

DS:

Well who got the first dunk in the game?

JA:

Probably Andy Ellis. That guy was always dunking. But yeah, you know that first game we were all excited because it was going be against Indiana and Coach Knight, and they had a good team. And and I had met Coach Knight a couple years earlier at an AAU tournament. And he’s just a big old guy and celebrity and everybody wants to meet Coach Knight. So we were all excited, and it was just a fun game. And there was a picture of that game that’s in the office there at Tech, and you know it’s just kind of an aerial shot kind of—of that first game in the arena. And I think I wore like an orange shirt because I had to—I couldn’t suit out. I think that my daughter remembers, but I pointed out that’s to me that little dot that little dot right there in the bench. It’s just good memories man and like I said being a Lubbock guy, this is just a dream come true kind of thing.

DS:

What was is it like not being able to suit-out that first year?

JA:

It was tough not being able to play, but I still got—I practiced every day, and I did everything else. And I was just part of the team; the friendships that I made and the players that I played



against or played with. Andy Ellis, and Rayford Young, and Mario Layne, and on and on. Those guys were even guys that I had watched on TV also. Rayford, I mean he had been a good player forever. And Mario Layne and Andy Ellis and so it was kind of, now I was friends with these guys and teammates and we're still friends, and we keep up with each other and that kind of deal. So to me it was just a neat thing, and I was always kind of just happy to go out there and workout and help them. And all that kind of stuff.

DS:

How about your second year on the team? What was that like?

JA:

The second year I finally was eligible to play, and we just—we were pretty good, but we didn't—we couldn't win. (laughs) Some of the close games and I didn't—I don't think I played at all. And then I ended up getting in trouble. This is where that, I didn't always make good decisions part. But I ended up getting in a little bit of trouble with Coach Dickey, and I broke some team rules. And I mean I was out past curfew was what it ended up being one night, and he found out. And so I got suspended for a week or so, and then you know I just didn't play very much, especially after that. And then like a month later was when he got fired and Coach Knight got hired. After that there were only like—Coach Knight kicked about four guys off right away, I think three guys. And so there were only like eight of us to work out until the new guys came in like in the summer. And so that was the really fun time because it was just kind of one-on-one stuff with Coach Knight and Pat.

DS:

Can you talk about that transition? I mean, because that happened pretty quickly as far as him and the decision—Dickey was leaving and they pretty much knew Knight was going to be the guy from day one, it seemed like. And so can you talk about what that transition was like on a player as far as like, life changed quickly?

JA:

Yeah. It's tough because as players, we kind of felt like we had let Coach Dickey down. We had gone, I think, nine and twenty-one two years in a row. We just—I know there were a lot of guys that took it really hard, but you're still dealing with teenagers pretty much. I think I was probably the oldest one on the team I was probably twenty or twenty one. And a bunch of those guys were eighteen and nineteen. And you don't really think about people getting fired, based on what you're doing or not doing. And so I remember a lot of us kind of took it like, we let him down. But at the same time we were excited that Coach Knight was going to be our new coach. And from day one Coach Knight came in and he was just—I think he was also turning a new page in his book. He had been fired at Indiana, and now he was getting another chance. And I think he was excited, and we were excited, and then that next year was just great year. We just turned

things around and had a lot of fun and won a bunch of games. But yeah, I think that's always a tough bittersweet kind of deal.

DS:

I think one of the things changed for you, though, you also went from being a walk-on having a scholarship didn't you?

JA:

Yeah that was like I said, Coach Knight got rid of a few guys and there were only, oh gosh, seven or eight guys, I can't remember exactly. And we just practiced every day and the rest of that March and April and then a little bit in May and some of the new guys started coming in for summer school. And I guess about August of that year, he called me in and said he was going to put me on full scholarship. And I mean there were two walk-ons—me and this other guy. And he called both of us in, and he tells you, "Put you on full scholarship." and that he liked how hard we worked and our dedication and all that kind of stuff. And it was just great for me; at that point I had just been on academic scholarships and kind of just working. I would work the midnight shift at a Town and Country, which I guess is Stripes now. I'd go from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. And I'd go to class in the morning or sometimes we would work out early in the morning and that kind of deal. And I'd adjust my hours. And then I had a daughter, and she was like one at that point. And so I was having to support her and take care of her. And now-a-day I look back I don't know how I ever did it. I mean I remember we'd have games and the game would be over and I would have to go work. And so getting on that full scholarship was a blessing because it gave me some meal money and gave me some living expenses money and all that kind of stuff. It just helped, and I started getting some of the academic scholarship money, and it just had a little but money at that point. That was really important to have that little bit of extra money. Especially at that age.

DS:

And let's talk about the difference, what was the difference for playing for Knight and playing for Dickey as far as preparation and working out and all that. Was there any difference?

JA:

They're both professionals. And they both had a lot of success. I thought they were both great coaches. I thought they both knew their stuff. Of course every coach is going to be different, and they're going to have different philosophies and all that. I think what helped Coach Knight—he had obviously won three national championships. He had the undefeated team—I think '76, which is still the only undefeated team to win a national championship on the boy's side because the Baylor girls did it this past year on the girl's side. But look how long that has lasted. No one else has ever gone undefeated and won a national championship. So it was a lot of that stuff. He had the celebrity status, and then he's just huge. I don't think a lot of people realize how tall and

big he is. Then he's got that big old voice, and so it was just—you know, obviously he did something right and knew how to win a bunch of games and championships and all that. I think Coach Dickey was a great coach, though. But I think the main—I remember saying the minute Coach Knight walked on the Tech campus, we just became in our minds better athletes, a better team and better program just because of our coach. And I think we all had been proud and all that to play for Coach Dickey. But all of a sudden you bring in someone like Coach Knight, and I don't know how many reporters were at that little announcement thing that they had the day before. And just the attention and all the hype and all that just kind of made us feel a little more important. And so from day one it was like, I mean, we did exactly whatever he told us to do.

DS:

I was listening to a game one time and Coach Knight was the analyst, and he was talking about players. And he was breaking somebody down, and he was talking about how, I can't make him quicker but I can tell him how to anticipate. Do you know of anything like that that he helped you on to understand the game a little better?

JA:

Yeah, it was just little things—like we would go set a screen, and he was real adamant about shoulder to shoulder. The cutter had to come off of my shoulder. And then we were this close—if our shoulders were this far apart, it was a mistake—because the defense can get through that. And you don't want to give an opening. Shooting, it was always left, right if you're right handed. A lot of guys liked to just catch it, and they kind of already had their feet set, but he was real about left foot down right foot back and stepping into it. But yeah I mean everyday there as just little things like that. Posting up above the block. A lot of coaches you would hear them say, "Post up, post up." His was, "Post up above the block." because then you can go either way, and you're not going to be behind the backboard if you make a baseline move. If you just post up post up there's—and it's stuff that like, the impact you see is that's what I teach my kids. And it's been ten, eleven years since I started learning that stuff. And I'll always teach it. On defense it was the same thing. You were supposed to be in a certain position when the ball was in a certain place, and if your man was over here. And if you weren't then it was a mistake, and you could correct it. But I think that it was just a lot of that. The other thing about Coach Knight was, he was always bringing in other celebrities to talk to us, and we got to meet Dick Vitale and Brent Musburger and D. Wayne Lukas—you know the horse trainer, I think his horse had just won the Kentucky Derby that year or previous year. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, you know, and then he'd tell us stories about one time when he was coaching the Olympic team in '84, I think. Or whatever year it was with Michael Jordan. He told Michael Jordan to do this, and we're kids you know. We're twenty, twenty-one but we're still like, Wow. He would talk about Isiah Thomas. The deal is he talked, he wouldn't say the whole name, he just say, "Oh one time I was telling Michael to do this, and then I told Isiah to do this." And it's just kind of like, we always just thought that that was pretty cool and just the stories he would tell us about like hunting with

President Bush and that kind of stuff and there were some other leaders—world leaders that he would go hunting and fishing with. So that always put him in a different level than the other coach especially that I had had. It was one of those things.

DS:

That senior year was there a memorable experience you had that senior year at all playing for the team?

JA:

Just the fact that I actually got into some games and played and made some good plays and scored. And my family was there and we kind of had a little section where the players' families and girlfriends. I remember looking up to that section when I would get in the game and see my parents up there and that kind of deal. That was always special to me. I think my daughter was one or two at that time. I just thought it was really cool. And again it just graduating from Monterey and playing at Monterey a few years earlier, and now I'm playing literally down the street.

DS:

Still on Indiana.

JA:

Still on Indiana Avenue. One story I always tell my grandpa, which I call my grandpa but we were never blood. He used to be a custodian at the coliseum when I was little. The joke about me was ever since I was like ten years old I had a big foot. So when I was ten I wore size ten. And when I was eleven I wore size eleven. When I was twelve I wore size twelve. And up until I was sixteen and that's when it stopped growing. But he was a custodian at the coliseum and I don't know. I must have been about eleven, twelve and one day he called me and said, "Hey I got some shoes for you." And I said, "Okay." So I went over to his house, and he pulls out this big old box and there's probably about eight or nine pair of high-top basketball shoes but they're all about size fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. And at that point, I'm wearing size eleven, twelve, whatever. And they were just huge. And I go, "Where'd you get these?" He goes, "Well the Tech guys kind of play in them for a few weeks and just throw them away." And I told him, "Let me have them." and that kind of deal. At that point, I guess I was in middle school or so, but I just remember putting them on and they were just huge but at that point that's kind of when you had Darwin Ham and those guys kind of playing. So I always kind of thought well maybe these are like Darwin Ham's shoes or something like that. So I would wear them every once and a while and then a few years later there I am and had those shoes, and I always remember that. Just a lot of little special little memories and little stories like that. I guess will always be with me.



DS:

Now about the time you're wrapping up your college career, you're also realizing the pros wasn't going to be a possibility for you. So how did you start to map out your life then?

JA:

When we finished playing there, that's another thing. We're not ever really prepared for it. I know like Andy Ellis started trying out for some of the NBA teams, and then we had had guys that had graduated before like Rayford Young and Cliff Owens and all those guys, and they were playing overseas and making good money, and so that was always an option. And I thought about kind of going that route. And in my mind I thought I could go and make some team somewhere, but September 11<sup>th</sup> had just happened a few months earlier. And I remember when that happened I thought about joining the military. I was really mad. And even at that point when basketball was over this is what March of 2002 that I'm thinking this. I kind of wanted to join the military. But I kind of also wanted to try the overseas thing. I just—in my mind I thought I could go and make a team somewhere, but I was a little scared that I would end up in some country that I didn't want to end up in and that kind of deal. And then also I had my little girl, and I knew if I went away for eight months or whatever, I wasn't going to see her. And so I was confused for a few weeks, and finally, I called Coach Knight and asked if I could talk to him. And so I went the next day, and I kind of pretty much told him all that was going on, and I had no idea what I wanted to do. I was a month or so away from graduating with my journalism degree, and I told him I really didn't want to be a reporter anymore. And then he asked me if I had ever thought about coaching. And I said, "No I never really have but—" and he pretty much said that would be a good way to stay involved with the game and with kids and all that. So he sent me to the education department to find out what I'd have to do, and it was pretty much take five education classes in the summer, and student teach in the fall, and pass the test, and so I went back to him and I told him that. And we pretty much decided right there that that's what kind of what I was going to do. And he paid for that summer, I think out of his own pocket, for me to do the education classes and all that and I knocked five classes out in those two summer sessions, and I student taught at Lubbock High the Fall of 2002. And about a week before I finished student teaching, a teaching position came open at Dunbar and one of the superintendents in L.I.S.D., who was a big Tech fan—we had kind of met a few times before. I ran into him, and he pretty much offered me that job, and it was actually seventh grade girl's B team basketball job. That was my first job. We were terrible. I think we won a couple game, but the talent was just terrible. But those girls, I see them now, now they're in their early twenties. But to me I think it's still neat that that was my first job. I gladly took it. I started; I finished student teaching on a Friday and the next Monday I was a teacher. And I was just excited. And it all started with a little conversation with Coach Knight. I never would have thought I'd be a teacher or a coach. Like I said, I never had any guidance from anybody. There's nobody in my family that's ever been a teacher or a coach or anything professional. So I was just kind of doing what I thought I should be doing and that kind of deal. I think it all worked out in the end.

DS:

You mentioned that other aspect where he paid for it. And that's not something you hear a lot about. You hear about the incidents where, you know, someone loses their cool, but you never hear about what else they do.

JA:

That was another thing. I remember someone saying something about that chair incident. That's something that happened in like 1986 or something like that. And that's something that they still show now. The little tirades and all that, and of course at that point the fresh thing was the whole incident at Indiana. But even that that was kind of old footage and old news and all that, but there were so many things that I think he did for me I know. He didn't have to let me stay on that team. I mean I was just a walk-on. He could've gotten rid of me, and then to give me a full ride. I mean, he didn't have to do all that. I appreciated it all, and I always will. I just thought those were things, of course yeah, people don't really hear about that kind of stuff. And I thought he did a good job on a lot of those things and took care of a lot of guys. Even now especially when I was applying for head coaching jobs, he would call the superintendents and the athletic directors and put in a good word for me, and he would be wherever he was, and as busy as he still is, and he'd take the time to put in a good word for me and that kind of deal and so yeah.

DS:

Your first job was a girls' team. What was it like when you realized that was going to be your first job? Did you have any anticipation about coaching young girls?

JA:

I've always thought that I'm good with kids, but it was kind of—I just wanted to get my foot in the door, so to speak. And I knew that I was done with student teaching, and so I knew I wasn't going to be able to get a job until like the next August or you know. And this is—we're in November of 2002. And so I was like going to have to work somewhere. So when that job got offered I didn't care what it was. And I took it, and it's just one of those things now. Its ten years later, and I look back, and I'm glad I did. I learned a little bit of patience there and just how to coach and just how to care. And you're talking about six, seven months earlier, I'm playing for one of the greatest coaches ever—with some pretty good athletes and against some pretty good athletes. And all of the sudden I'm coaching seventh grade B team girls that can't dribble and can't shoot and don't understand anything about basketball. And it just kind of, I remember it was just like—I really enjoyed it and just teaching them the proper way to do things and watching them learn and get better, and have fun and win. I think we won like, I'd say one or two out of ten or twelve games. Just to see how excited they were to work. The score would be like fifteen to eighteen. That would be the final score. I really enjoyed it; I'm glad that it's part of my coaching history there.



DS:

And what was the job after that?

JA:

The next year I ended up being the ninth grade basketball coach at Estacado. It was a transition period where L.I.S.D. was fixing to go to ninth through twelfth grade campuses, and so they kind of the pilot school was Estacado. And so the ninth graders at Dunbar, they could still attend Dunbar, but they could compete as ninth graders at Estacado. And there were ninth graders at Estacado, and they could stay there and academically and athletically. So we just kind of combined them that year, and that was a good year because that year we ended up—you know, I was an assistant for the varsity guys. And the varsity guys ended up going to Austin for the first time I think in like thirty-six years or something like that. And they had a really good team, really good coach—Tim Thomas was a really good coach. He still is, and I learned a lot from him. And I've been blessed just to have had a really, really good coaches that I've played for and just learned things and to hopefully help us and my team win at some point and get there also.

DS:

Yeah. In fact let me turn off the tape here and we can start off tape 2, and I really want to talk about how you got onto the current position now where you're at Lubbock High and building upon this past year.

JA:

Ok. Sounds good.

**(break in recording)**

DS:

This is Daniel Sanchez, and this is tape two of my interview with Jesus Arenas. Jesus we were talking about your career as a coach, and you had talked about Estacado. Let's transition from there and get to where you are currently as a basketball coach.

JA:

From Estacado I ended up becoming the JV [junior varsity] coach for the Lubbock High boys. And couple years earlier when I was student teaching at Lubbock High, I went and volunteered with the boys basketball program. And the coach there had been the coach there when I was in high school at Monterey, and so we had played against each other and that kind of deal, and so he knew who I was. I knew who he was. He was a Tech grad; he had been a manager for Gerald Myers back in the day, and so we kind of had that little connection. So a couple years went by, and I had been at Dunbar and Estacado, and then he needed a JV coach. So he called me, and you know I saw it as a step up, and I said sure. And so I went and worked with him for two

years. Again, it was a good experience and learned a lot and that kind of thing. And then I went and worked on the girl's side for three years with the Coronado girls, and they're one of the best girls' programs in the state. My second year there I had to be the interim head coach—the head coach got sick, and I coached the first eight games. And I had been in charge pretty much all of September, October, November. And so it was one of those deals—and that team that year ended up being—we were number two in the state at one point. We ended up being thirty-three and four, which was a school record. We should have been state champs; we lost to the eventual state champs in the playoffs. We didn't have the right, well I had the right game plan in mind, and we just didn't do it. But that was lot of really good girls on that team—just good athletes. And then at that end of my third year, that head coaching position came open and but so did the Lubbock High boys—pretty much like days apart they came open. This was 2010, the end of the school year. And I think the Coronado girls head coaching position came open like on a Monday and the Lubbock High boys came open on a Thursday or a Friday. And so I applied for both, and I became a finalist for both, and Lubbock High offered first. And I had just been praying about it, and I think that it was something—that's where God wanted me. And you know, I think I missed the boys. I love the girls; I missed the boys and the athleticism, and they just run faster and jump higher and play faster. Girls play hard, and they're really smart, and they're more coachable than boys easily. Boys are always thinking about something else. But it was something that I was looking forward to. Coach Baugh offered me the job and that's what I took, and that's where I've been for two years.

DS:

So what's that decision like on from a successful girls team to a boys team that you're really going to have to—

JA:

Yeah, I think that's where the challenge was. The girl's team had won like seven Caprock Tournament Championships in a row. We were always winning the district championship. We were always going three rounds deep in the playoffs. We pretty much were the best team in West Texas. And so it was really fun to be a part of that—kind of going into a game and knowing you pretty much going to win. And on the other side of it was the Lubbock High boys, where you just knew the tradition of winning wasn't really there, and they hadn't won a playoff game in eighteen years. Hadn't won a district championship in like thirty something years. They actually won a state championship like in 1951, but it had been—they had never been back to Austin since then, and that actually was what kind of drew me towards that job. I've always thought I could develop kids and make them better and just go in there and turn things around. I think we're there. I think we'll be there this next year in the beginning of my third year. But it took a whole lot longer than what I thought it would. That of course is something that you just learn each day and each year, and I thought it would be something that we'd be awesome my first year. And we did. We started off ten and one my first year. And everybody is excited and all that

we had beat Frenship and some other schools—Monterey in the tournament. And then kids started getting hurt, and a couple kids got in trouble and I had to kick them off the team, and the wheels fell off. There's something there to build on and so on. I think this third year will be really good year for us.

DS:

So what was that initial challenge you wanted to try to change when you went to Lubbock High?

JA:

Just the mentality. I talked about that—I still talk about that. But I think now they got it, and they understand in terms of the boys. They understand what I'm talking about, but the mentality was when I started playing I wasn't cocky or arrogant or anything like that. I was just confident, and I loved the challenge. I remember just wanting to dunk on people even big guys. One time I dunked on a seven foot guy that actually ended up playing for the Longhorns and then he played for the Lakers. When we were in high school he was seven feet tall in high school. It was just one of those things that the gym would go crazy. I remember just being in slam dunk contests in the summer. One time we were in a slam dunk contest in the middle of Saint Louis at a Hoop It Up Tournament. I don't think they have those anymore. No one wants to be outdoors anymore. There were thousands of people out there, and here's this Mexican guy out jumping everybody. I used to eat that up, man, and I loved it. I knew from when I student taught at Lubbock High and when I was the JV coach at Lubbock High that one of the biggest things at Lubbock High, really in all the sports, was just the mentality—that the kids didn't think they were good enough. They kind of thought, "Well we're Lubbock High, we're not supposed to win anything. We're not supposed to be good." I knew that some of the good years were kind of few and far in between. When I was in high school, they had a couple good teams. We were playing at Monterey, and we would always beat them. They were still good, and one of those guys ended up being my brother-in-law. And that's kind of, you know we still talk trash to each other. Yeah y'all were pretty good, but we still beat y'all. I knew it was one of those things that they hadn't had a lot of good teams. There hadn't been a lot of success. And it was just something that I really wanted to get in there and turn it around. And I think we're heading the right direction and just overall program. I don't want to be successful one year and then wait five years to have a good team. I want to have a good team every year. I think we'll finally be there this upcoming year.

DS:

What are some of the changes you have made that have made a difference?

JA:

Being honest with them. I've always kind of said this, and I think it's pretty true, at least from my experiences. You could get one of the best girls, and she won't think that she's good. Or she'll think that she's terrible. We had three division 1 players that one year that I was telling

you about. All three of them knew they were good. They didn't really act that way, they still kind of—self-doubt, but I mean they were good, they were D-1. On the flipside boys are different. They could be horrible, and they think they're awesome. And that's one thing that's driven me nuts. I put them in their place right away. They start thinking that—and I think they like that. But then of course I also tell them how to get good and how to do things right and one thing that I'm really big on is showing them a lot of film. We watch a lot of film, and what they're supposed to be doing. A lot of times I'll show them film from Coach K [Mike Krzyzewski] at Duke. And he's teaching the same stuff that I'm teaching. And then it kind of helps them buy into it a little bit. They see guys at Duke doing the same thing. Or I'll put in a play or like our fast break system is the old Loyola Marymount fast break system. I put that up there on the screen—you know look up YouTube. And then I think it's important to educate them about—you know some of these guys, and we forget this, but like some of these guys are too young to have ever watched like Michael Jordan play. Their heroes are LeBron [James] and Kobe [Bryant]. So I'll stick some Michael Jordan highlight tapes up there, and you know of course and Michael Jordan is always on TV and stuff. But they don't know about some of those heated games between the Bulls and the Pistons or the Bulls and the Jazz. So I try to educate them about, you know, some of the old, good college basketball teams. Another system we run is the old Roy Williams—Kansas, when he was at Kansas—little fast break system. One of the offenses we have is the Bill Self high/low, which is pretty much Gillespie and Bill Self, coached together. And Coach Gillespie pretty much does the same thing. You know Coach Gillespie brought the Tech guys, and they worked out at Lubbock High over Christmas break this past year. I made my guys sit there and take notes and just watch them. And you know, they're doing a lot of stuff that we're doing and Coach does a lot of things that I say. And you can just tell that they're kind of picking it up and just becoming students. I think basketball's got to be a year round kind of thing. And they're starting to play year round. You know, when I got there none of them were playing AAU. None of them were in summer league. And now, pretty much my whole varsity group, they play year round. And they're in the gym every day. It's just one of those things; I think you got to work, work, work, and the success will happen.

DS:

You mentioned that AAU ball, and I think that's been so important because baseball has always had that year round mentality for top athletes, and now with basketball that's one way they get involved.

JA:

It's just important. Next year all of my varsity guys, I will have had them for an entire year. None of them play football, none of them play baseball, they just play basketball. I think that's going to be huge when we play other teams because some of those guys that play football, I don't see them from March through October pretty much. And they're only in basketball November through February, and that's just not enough time. You know, and you kind of teach



what you know, and all I know is what I've gone through and what I've been taught and all that. And I just tell them things that I used to do, and every day was working out and lifting and running and playing and running around the neighborhood, running down 34<sup>th</sup> street, running down the interstate, dribbling. If I didn't have weights, it was climbing up a tree branch or climbing down or hanging upside-down at the park on the monkey bars and doing sit ups that way. And that's how I got good. I wasn't born good. It's something you've got to work at.

DS:

Part of that is you have to have that internal drive.

JA:

Yeah, I think a lot of them do. A lot of my kids are single mom households. A bunch of them don't have dads for different reasons. I think we got a lot of good relationships there, and to me it's always been more than about teaching them basketball and winning basketball games. I think we're building lifelong relationships and helping them and going to college and thinking about their future and being successful and that kind of stuff. A lot of them are kids just like me, man. They're the first in their family to go college, and that kind of deal, and I think that's a neat part of it for me.

DS:

In fact, I was going to ask about that—because you mentioned how you didn't have anyone, and now you had an opportunity to be there for kids who were in the same spot? What do you hope to do on that aspect?

JA:

Just kind of guide them. Advise them. For me it's important to be a good role model, a good Christian person. We don't cuss at them. Of course, I yell at them and get onto them, but they know I care about them and they know I love them. I don't know if they get that stuff all the time at home. And then some of them come from great families and their parents are college educated, but the thing at Lubbock High I kind of have both extremes. I think it's neat, and I got to learn how to deal with both extremes. I think I've been at both extremes. It kind of helps me there. I want all my kids to go to college and find something that they're passionate about and chase that and be successful at it. Hopefully we can just help them get there, and to me it's just little stuff that I think—you know, like just being tough. Just being tough—and like I tell them, there's going to be days when life is going to get tough and rough and all that. And you can't quit. My first year, man, I must have had ten kids quit the first month or two because it was just too hard. They had been in basketball for two or three years. And I let them quit because obviously it was too easy before and life's not going to be easy all the time. The guys that stuck around, and I was trying to make them quit, because that's when you find out what they're made out of. The guys that stuck around, you know they saw that. Those guys, they were pretenders. We gladly got rid

of them, but now they know I don't have to deal with that anymore. There's no more quitting. There's no more missing practice. I mean, oh my gosh, you should have—the first few months. Guys wouldn't show up to practice, they always wanted to quit, they wanted to talk back all the time. And I knew what I was getting into. That stuff doesn't happen anymore. And I think that kids like that. So it's just a process and hopefully I make a difference in their lives. I got coached by Vic Self and Steve Gomez and Tye Rogers. And Vic Self and Steve Gomez are now with the LCU women, and Tye Rogers is the principal at Plainview High School. And I mean, talk about three great Christian coaches there. Every time that I think about what I'm doing, I kind of go back and think about what those guys did for me. And I still call them up and just a couple weeks ago I met with Coach Self and Coach Gomez and we just talked. I always ask them basketball stuff and so on. Bubba Jennings is another one that we talk. That's kind of the standard I hold myself up to; hopefully I'm being a good person and good coach like those guys were to me.

DS:

Do you have a kid right now that has potential to go to the next level?

JA:

I think my best group right now are my juniors, incoming juniors. I think out of those guys there could be two or three at least college basketball players. One is borderline could be a D-1 player; hopefully he can just grow a couple more inches. He's kind of in between positions right now, but that's a good group, and they've worked hard. And that's kind of my first group. They were all ninth graders. They've only known me as the head coach. Some of those other guys still remember the other coach. That junior class, they were my first class. So they're just a really good group, they work hard, and I think that's when we'll start really start getting kids playing college basketball and all that. And I think that will happen for sure.

DS:

What did you see this past season that gives you promise for this upcoming season?

JA:

It was just the old, what I tell them is the Lubbock High mentality. They had no confidence—there was no confidence. It was—I call scared, and that probably sounds rude. But they just were scared to play other teams sometimes. Oh those guys are too big, or that's Estacado we're playing. Or that's this other school that has a winning tradition. And we all know that at that age, a lot of the time it's just the tradition that almost beats you. When I was at Coronado, I think we were good pretty much every year, but we'd go play another team and had them beat—you could just tell in warm ups. You could just tell the other team's body language, "Oh, we have to play these guys." We'd beat them by forty, fifty points. But now it's the opposite—I have to change my kids' mindset, and that's all it was this past season. There was a lot of progress, and we lost a bunch of games; we lost games at the buzzer. We had games where we blew, we had twelve,



fifteen point leads, they were a bunch of sophomores. They just couldn't hang on to the lead. We'd have two free throws to take the lead with thirty seconds to go, and we'd miss both free throws. We were scared. That's going to happen when they're that young. But I think like I said, now that core group, they're going to be juniors, and I think they learned a lot from that. But the one thing with them—they play hard, they compete, they're at practice every day. I hate losing, and it was tough. But one thing I told them—I don't know, when I used to lose in high school, I mean I'd cry. I'd be so mad. I would be mad at myself or my teammate or whatever. Especially like a close game. And that was one thing, my first year we could lose, and it didn't bother these guys. I remember like that red shirt year at Tech, I couldn't even play, and when we would lose it would drive me nuts. And I had nothing to do with it. I felt like maybe I could have helped. And I think like you said, it's kind of just what you're born with, but I think maybe I can instill a little bit of that into them, and I think I am. I'm starting to see when we do lose, it bothers them and they're mad and some of them do cry now. I think they probably thought it wasn't okay to cry. But I don't want them crying because they're scared of feelings, I want them crying because they're mad that they lost. But I think it's getting there. I'm really excited about especially these next few years. I can see it's becoming what I envisioned so I'm excited.

DS:

Excited—looking forward to it. Do you think it help that you could have these experiences that you can relate to your teams about the process that you went through?

JA:

Oh, yeah.

DS:

You went NAIA first, then you came to Tech walk-on—.

JA:

Yeah, that's what I talk to them; it's just that hard work, how much you want it. We can all sit on the couch and dream about things but not everybody gets up and actually starts working towards it, and I just think there are just a lot of things that helped me as a coach. I think like I was saying the way we looked at Coach Knight when I was a player and the stories he had and I think that show they see me sometimes. They see me as "Oh this guy played for Coach Knight. Oh this guy played at Texas Tech." In the NBA finals Nick Collison plays for Oklahoma City, and I told the guys, my guys I had played against Nick Collison my senior year. And he guarded me, and I guarded him. And they were like, "No you didn't, no you didn't." And so I found the tape and put the tape in one day there towards the end of the school year. It was Tech versus Kansas. Nick Collison and I go shoot the ball, and he just stuffs my shot. (laughs) And they go down and dunk it. The kids were laughing at me, but at the same time you could see it in their eyes that they thought that was pretty cool. Their coach is playing against the guy that's now playing against

LeBron. You can just tell. Little things like that. One time I pulled up a video when I was at Monterey. Because like I said, there have been some really good Lubbock High teams in the past and that was one of them. I said, "Man when Monterey and Lubbock High—when I was in high school, it used to be packed. I mean it would be standing room only. We beat them both times that year and blah, blah, blah. And actually we beat them three times—beat them in the Caprock Championship Game. But it was always packed, standing room only. Good players on both teams. And they didn't believe it. Because they were like no, Lubbock High's never won anything. And I showed it—and that gym was packed. I had a couple dunks in that game. You can just see it—it does something for them when they see. I don't know what they're thinking before that. They're probably thinking I have no clue. They saw me dunking or winning and the gym is packed, and they've never seen the gym that packed before. You can just tell—it just kind of lights a little fire in them each time I do something like that.

DS:

You were talking about the mindset earlier. And I don't know if it was such a problem with the teams since they've never had that tradition. But at the other places they have a sense of entitlement—

JA:

Yeah. You know, like I was saying it's those two extremes. You just got to learn to work with both of them. And that's something that I've been thinking is we're going to be really good this upcoming year. I've already kind of been thinking, like I know it's going to go to some of those guys' heads—especially if we start off undefeated. My first year we started off five and O [zero] and you should've—to me it was nothing, because I think that with Estacado and Coronado we would go on like ten game winning streaks. Then we would lose one and then we'd win eight more in a row and maybe we'd lose one. And I just remember everybody was—I mean teachers and administrators, parents, I was getting emails and text messages that we were five and oh and how great that was, and I was like—and at one point I got asked, "When's the last time Lubbock High basketball started off five and O?" And I was like, Is that really such a big deal? To me it's just something I've always kind of just—that's how it's supposed to be done. I didn't know it was that big of a deal. Then we were ten and one. And it was just like, "Has Lubbock High ever won ten of their first eleven games?" I was like, "That's what we're going to try every year." I could see if we were to start off undefeated, which I think we have a good chance of starting off undefeated this upcoming season, I could see where it might go to some of my younger kids' heads, and then I'd have to—but I know how to deal with that.

DS:

Because y'all went through the same thing at Tech, where y'all would have a great preseason, but then when the conference started, that's where the tough games really came.

JA:

Yeah. You've just got to keep things in perspective, and I heard somebody one time, You can't get too down or too high. You got to kind of—when you win you can't let it go to your head and when you lose you can't get too down on that and just kind of try to keep that balance, and that's just what we got to do. Because there were a lot of games this past year. Oh man. Like the one we lost to Coronado by two, pretty much at the buzzer. Lost another one at the buzzer. And those games just kind of will get you down, but you can't get too down because you've got another game a couple days later. But the same thing if you win, you know you can't—

DS:

And hopefully this year those games will go in your way.

JA:

Yeah. Yeah, and I think they will. There's just little things we just didn't do, and it's just experience, you know. Some of those kids have never been in that position before. And that's where I think AAU basketball is important, or at least summer basketball. You know, by the time I was a sophomore in high school, I had played five hundred basketball games. And some of these guys, by the time they're sophomores in high school, they only have fifty games under their belt, because they don't play any summer stuff. And they're pretty good, I mean you could play five, six games in one weekend in the summer stuff. Some of these guys are just playing the middle school games, and that's it. And the more games you play, the more situations you're in, the more things you learn and how to handle all that stuff. And I just think, that's just literally experience.

DS:

And we've been going on for about an hour and a half probably today. If you were to have to try to sum up what your career has meant to you so far, what would it be?

JA:

To me it's just, it's still surreal. I'm one of those guys, I try to be humble and grateful for everything, and as I get older. Like I said, I'm thirty-three now, and as I get older and I look back, I kind of see how God was always looking out for me. And how things turned out, and how he always causes my dreams or desires to come true. I mean, I would have never thought that I would play basketball at Texas Tech. or much less for Bobby Knight. And then to be the head coach at Lubbock High. You know, one of the cool things, there's a picture of me my senior year, I think, we're playing Lubbock High at Lubbock High, and I remember I kind of got like a fast break and I dunked it. And somebody, I don't know who, took a picture and somehow I ended up with that picture. But it's an older picture, and I kind of have it in a little collage at home and it's just eighteen year old me, dunking, in a game at the Lubbock High gym that I'm now the head coach at. And it's just—there's another picture of us when I was at Monterey,

playing at Coronado. I'm shooting a layup in the game, and then you know, years later, I was a coach there also. And then years later, we go and be the head coach against them. I still kind of pinch myself sometimes, and just appreciate everything that has happened. And I think it's something that, you know, you just got to work towards and have some kind of vision or dream and that's kind of what I tried to teach my kids and work towards. Anything can happen if you work at it, and it's just one of those things that I'm just—with the career and just how things have happened and people—we could sit here for weeks, if I told you all the little things of how they happened and how I met people, and how this fell into place and how that fell into place. But for a guy, and I say this a lot, and people probably get annoyed with it. But for a kid that was born and raised and lived in Lubbock, and I've pretty much been here my whole life, I mean I don't know many other coaches in LISD that are from Lubbock. There are a lot of teachers that are from Lubbock, but—so to me, that's just, like I said, that's just neat. And like the kids—I mean I see me in those kids, you know. And you know, I think I'm happy there at Lubbock High, and I'd like to build that program into a state powerhouse.

DS:

That would be great. As a Lubbock High grad, I'm all for that. (laughs)

JA:

Yeah, yeah. There you go. That's the thing, though, a lot of people are Lubbock High grads, you know. And I just don't ever really meet a lot of like Coronado grads. I'll meet some Monterey grads, but a lot of people that I meet are just Lubbock High grads, and they're proud. And something from that—I played golf with a guy the other day and he goes, "Yeah I played basketball at Lubbock High." And I go, "When?" He goes, "The early seventies. I think that was the last time we were good at basketball." (laughs) I go, "I think you're right!" That's probably the last time that there was—

DS:

Yeah, I think the mid-seventies, they were fairly good. I think Self might have been out there at the time, as an assistant or a coach out there.

JA:

Wow. Yeah.

DS:

Because they had quite a few guys—I mean they were good athletes, but they had off the field problems.



JA:

Yeah, yeah. No, that's—we still have some of those. You know, but I think that's where I've always had that little talent, you know, where I can get a kid that's having problems, and straighten them up a little bit, and talk to them a little. Because I think they relate to me, and I relate to them, and I've got several of those guys on my team that I'm really proud of—that they went from kind of being knuckleheads and want-to-be thugs and always in the principal's office to like now, they're A and B students, and they don't get in trouble anymore. And I kind of just, they wanted to play college basketball, oh no you can't play college basketball if you're always in trouble. You know, and so it's just put those things in perspective for them and I think that they'll relate to it and hopefully it'll change their little path that they're on.

DS:

How about on the personal side. You mentioned your daughter, who was sitting in here earlier today. How do you think your life has progressed? Has it—are you going to be able to provide for her what you think you wanted to do for her?

JA:

You know, I've had custody of her since she was two. So it's been ten years, and I think it's the best thing that happened to me. You know, I kind of—I was young when I had her; it's just a lot of things, you know that—you know I've never been married. And I've been single for I don't know how many years. And that's something that just I just kind of—just try to take care of her, and provide her the opportunities. You know, and I tell her stuff too—you know like the other day when the electricity went out. You know I said something about, “Hey, the electricity used to go out at our house all the time, but it wasn't because of a power outage.” You know, it's just stuff like—and I ended up saying something at one point, “Well you won't ever know anything about that.” because she's never had to go to bed hungry. I remember, oh my gosh, we'd always have to go to bed hungry. And I'd have like a game the next day, and I just remember thinking about whether I'd have energy. But we just did it, man. And I think it's made us tough and stuff, but definitely it's something that I think every parent wants to provide the best for their kids. You know, but the one thing with her is—she's already thinking about college. She's been thinking about college since she was like ten. And like I said, she's done camps; I thought one of the cool ones, she did a Lady Raider camp like two years ago. And I took a picture of her the last day of camp, outside of the men's locker room. And I told her, “You know that's where daddy used to get dressed.” and all that. And so she thinks that cool, and of course I think that's cool. And she wants to be a Lady Raider when she grows up. You know it's just stuff where she thinks, “Well my dad did it; I think I can do it too.” And I remember early on kind of thinking, I have to start that cycle. Someone at some point every successful person started something, you know.

DS:

And that's so true.

JA:

Yeah. And as I get older, I look back, and I reflect sometimes, and I'll kind of think, what if my dad had never come to the states? You know, I think that's kind of where it all started. Just being tough and brave; no one in his family had ever come. And I think he kind of—I'm a lot like him. He kind of was thinking more about the future and all that. And he figured nothing was ever going to change if he stayed there in Mexico. And he came over here, and so I'm just pleased that my daughter just kind of—you know, she'll get on the internet. And she wants to be a veterinarian, too. Right now she wants to be a Lady Raider, but go to veterinarian school at Texas A&M—because there's no veterinarian school here. So I was like, Yeah. But hopefully that'll change and she'll just stay here. But I think that's all it is, you know breaking that cycle.

DS:

I think we probably reached a pretty good spot to stop right now. And I really thank you for coming in. There's a couple of things I want to talk about off.

JA:

Okay. Appreciate it.

[end of interview]

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