

Cari Champion: We're in for a treat today. I am going to sit here in this corner and hopefully I'm just going to get the gems that these lovely ladies drop for us because what they're doing is they're really are trailblazing. People often describe, describe themselves as disruptors or trailblazers, but these two ladies that I'm going to introduce to you now are most definitely trailblazers and disrupters in a world caught the NFL. Um, that doesn't necessarily, and that's just, these are my words, not theirs, that doesn't necessarily welcome women at all times and see them as equal. So I'm so proud to introduce Jen Welter, please come on up please.

Speaker 2: Good next to me any way you want to. I'm just going to give you guys a height

Jen Welter: perspective really quick because they didn't get this earlier. Um, as I played with Katie, you know, you find kind of in football have to find your own strategic advantage. And mine was never to out tall anybody. Um, I was so small when I played, they used to call me kids. So good. But my knee mighty, I'll say that. We'll give it a mighty. So Jen, can you introduce yourself to everyone here in the audience? Tell them about your background, your history, and what you all do. Um, yeah, sure. Um, well, Katie and I became football family, um, a long time ago. Uh, both the two of us and her sisters is sitting here as well. Hi sister for three of the best women to play football. Um, it's like we used to say one of the best kept secrets in sports and thankfully it's not necessarily as much of a secret anymore. Um, I played for 15 years women's pro football. Um, on the first and second US national team won four Superbowls, two gold metals and was an eight time pro bowler

Speaker 2: from, from

Jen Welter: the world of women's pro football. I got into men's pro football in the most painful way possible. Um, I actually played, um, I played a year for the Texas revolution, became the first female to play running back and men's pro football. Um, and then the following season we had a new head coach, uh, Wendell Davis, former Dallas Cowboy, and he saw how I related to the guys and how close we were. And the next day he called me and said, you have to coach my football team. Um, my immediate answer was no, because there was nobody I could look at and say, I want to be hurt. So it had never crossed my mind that I could coach football at the professional level. So I told him no. Um, he said, not a lot of guys are going to give you this opportunity taking this job. I hung up on him and the next day he called me back and told me about myself.

Jen Welter: He said, do you remember how I told you not a lot of guys were going to give you this opportunity or taking this job? I said, yeah. He said, good. I took it for you. Oh Wow. Your coaching for me. And by the way, you can't quit otherwise. The entire narrative surrounding coaching and men's professional football will be, we had a girl once and she quit. Um, from arena football. I ended up joining the Arizona cardinals in 2015, um, to become the first female to coach in the national football league. Uh, it was actually through the Bill Walsh minority coaching fellowship, which had traditionally been established for African-

American former players who were traditionally underrepresented in the coaching ranks. Um, one of probably the most important things that I would say happened as a result of that time was they changed the Bill Walsh Minority Coaching Fellowship to the Bill Walsh Diversity coaching fellowship.

Jen Welter: Um, and I knew it was going to happen and, and it really signified a shift in their culture, which I'll let Katie kind of take it from there. That was the last time. Um, I was in the NFL at this point. I went on from there to become the first head coach of the Australian women's national team. Um, there had never been a female head coach in international play before. So I thought that was a pretty awesome opportunity. I founded Gridiron Girls Cause Nobody was coaching the young girls. And we did 22 all girls camps in just over a year last year. And then when the alliance football league, uh, was founded, I was one of, I was actually the first female they talked to. Um, I took a position coaching the d line and I flew to the headquarters where I knew Charlie ever saw. And I said, it's not enough.

Jen Welter: You can't use me to just check off your box if you're saying that you want this lead to be different from the start, you need to hire more women than just me. And I don't care if it costs me a job. Um, and thankfully, uh, we ended up with three women on coaching staffs, which was really pretty awesome. See, uh, one of which now, um, coach Lo is with Bruce Ariens in Tampa, and that is the man who opened the door for all of the women. Uh, it's coach in the national football league. It's a great story. Yeah.

Katie Sowers: Well, first of all, you guys, I what happened to like sit in the front row and you teach your kids, like you have to sit in the front row or something. Um, Jen obviously very well accomplished. I don't feel like I have as many metals or anything, so I'm just, you know, I'm not gonna mention that, but my story is fairly similar. But I grew up loving football. I mean, from when I was this big, my twin sister and I, like every other normal girl would do. We just get pads on and we'd go like hit each other as hard as we can in the backyard. It wasn't, things never changed and we still, every once in a while, you never know. Uh, but I remember Sunday dinners, we'd go to my grandma's house every Sunday and Liz and I would make a list of all of the free agents, right.

Katie Sowers: That they could possibly come play on our team, all the neighbor kids and we'd list them all and then did them a lot of things with their free agents. They are the free agents. Yeah. All right. Yeah. There, you know, we had to take a week again. Yeah. Couldn't be picky now. Now, some of them tried to save face and started to, um, decide to be the referee, you know, uh, I think my tackling technique, I, I had this really cool tackling technique. I would take them by the shirt [inaudible] spin them around and throw them down. Yep. Work. They didn't like that very much. But I mean, literally it was from day one, my bad was about a college basketball coach. He never had the opportunity to play football. Uh, but I'm sure he would've killed it if he did. He's just a little right, don't you think?

Katie Sowers: But, uh, so I mean, I always knew I was on the path to coaching and so I ended up doing a random different sports in college and then, uh, through a bunch of, I guess, mistakes and scheduling and, and we can get into more detail. And kind of how that happened. A lot of mistakes led me to where I am today. And one of those mistakes was a mistake in scheduling. I was supposed to be, I was randomly coaching. Uh, I was an offensive coordinator for my women's team and I was playing quarterback. And I was the general manager. I no conflict of interest. I get it. It's fine. Do you have to do what you gotta do when you don't get paid? Right. I mean, it was a free job. So I did it for free is what I meant. Uh, so as I was doing that, I needed to make more money and I started to coach youth basketball.

Katie Sowers: I was set up to coach with the sixth graders and they said, is it okay if you actually coach with the fifth graders because we're so sorry. But we had a mistake in scheduling. Like I can't even tell the difference between fifth graders and sixth graders. So what's, you know, and it just so happened that Scott Pioli, who was the former general manager for the chiefs, then assistant general manager for the Falcons, was his daughter, played on that fifth grade team. Had it not been for that mix up and scheduling. I W I promised you I would not be here today. And Scott found out about my background playing football. I played football for uh, close to nine years, played for team USA. We won a gold together. I also had all American honors. Um, my hip was a little bad one year, so that's the only year I didn't make it.

Katie Sowers: I was a little a little upset about that. Um, actually there's probably other reasons but I'm digressing. But so then with, when I met Scott, it was interesting because Scott became kind of that father figure that engulf me into the NFL culture. And I think it was 2013 or 14 when Becky Hammon came into the n 2050th cause it was the same year I did. Yeah. So I remember seeing her on TV and posting a picture and saying like NFL, I'm coming for you. And Jen then broke down the glass ceiling, you know, getting that internship with the cardinals, which was amazing and kind of serving as a lead block for me. So I went from Atlanta and then now I'm in San Francisco where Kyle Shanahan is now the head coach. And I've been in the league now for four years. Your title low because we offer, so yet my, so my title is offensive assistant coach.

Katie Sowers: I work mainly with the receivers. So kind of the premadonnas like most people like to say, yeah, Gosh, we couldn't be more different [inaudible] dark side over here. I think it's interesting that Katie works with the, the white outs. I don't think they're divas, but some would say um, and you've been there for three years. We're in working with Kyle the year before you were an intern at Atlanta in Atlanta with the falcons. Talk to me about the day to day, and I don't want to call it difficulty, but just the day to day minutiae, the, the red tape, the, the, the difficulties I guess they are that you would have to do with as a woman, especially when you first get it. Yeah. I think a lot of people actually think it's a lot more of a disadvantage than it really is. And even, you know, I actually interviewed with an NFL team before going over to San Francisco, and I won't

name what NFL team it was, but they told me they, after the whole day of the interview, the head coach sat me down.

Katie Sowers: He was like, you know what? I actually liked you a lot more than I thought I would, but I don't think our organization is ready for a woman. Wow. And what struck me was I was so appreciative of that. He could have easily lied to me, but he said, you already have an opportunity in San Francisco to go with Kyle who has signed a six year contract. You should go with him. He his and he even said, I had an assistant coach that came to me and said, but where are we going to put her desk where all the other desk are, sir. Yeah. And, and so it was at that point though, that that that honesty helped me guide my path. And sometimes, I mean, helped you guide your path because there's, I think oftentimes we get so caught up in being politically correct, which is, it's, so I am, I'm one of the most open minded people.

Katie Sowers: But if I would've took that and listened to what he said and took it personal, I think that I wouldn't, I wouldn't have made it as far as I did and have because I took what he said as honesty. And he said, down the road when we're ready, I would not hesitate to hire you. And although it hurt and it sucked, and I felt like it was unfair because it is unfair. I would rather someone tell me that than tell me that there was someone else who was more qualified. People have different trains of thoughts on that. I, the honesty approach is good. It may not feel good, but it's good in terms of decision putting it on the table for you, Jen. And when she said that, when you got the, the internship with the cardinals and you, and she posted it was Becky too, you posted, she, you kicked open the door for so many people and made people feel like, okay, so it's possible you were everywhere all over ESPN.

Jen Welter: Tell me how that was be. Have your face in terms being the first, um, you know, it's interesting, I'm going to back up just a little bit. Um, it's important to realize that when you break down one barrier, right, glass ceilings, glass sidelines, whatever it is, it changes the way people start to think, right? It opens doors that you may not even be necessarily aware of at the time. Because I was coaching in arena football when another amazing woman was hired and that was Sarah Thomas. And so Sarah Thomas was hired as the first full time female rep in NFL history. And we lovingly say that like our Destiny's are intertwined. She has become a great friend of mine. But when she was hired, what happened is I'm a reporter cause y'all get there in there and ask the great questions asked Bruce Arians if he could ever see a female coaching in the NFL.

Jen Welter: And Bas response was the second woman proves that she can make these guys better, she'll be hired. So I called the cardinals on behalf of myself as if I wasn't myself that day. I was not an assistant coach, I was an assistant to the head coach and my head coach wanted to talk to their head coach. And apparently I made it sound really convincing because I worked my way all the way to his assistant. And I said, you know, um, at Deb Wyman, who at that time was, you know, head coach was also a former NFL player and he heard what Bruce said, he really wanted to talk to him about this amazing woman who coaching on her

staff. And though it was not the NFL, it was already pro football. Now mind you, the time it was terrible because it was like four days before the NFL draft.

Jen Welter: So teams are not taking any calls or I don't care about that movie draft day, no freaking way. All right. But what has kind of was like, you know, I think VA would really want to take this call. Let me get your head coaches number, I'll have him call you back. Completely thought I had gotten blown off, but I was like, where's really proud of myself that I called the guardrails? I was like, oh my gosh, that's really cool. I called an NFL team because at that point in my career, the closest I'd ever been to an NFL sidelines was the nosebleed section. Right? And about two weeks later I walked into practice and my coach, who was already six foot eight and we're talking to a lion's six foot eight not a basketball, six foot eight was larger than life is five o'clock in the morning.

Jen Welter: And he was like, you'll never guess who I talked to yesterday. I was like, I don't know, but I was scared. And he said it was Bruce Ariens and he said, tell me about this girl. So Ba eventually invited me out to training camp. We met and really hit it off. And he said at that time he said, I don't know yet if I can make this happen, but I want you to know it's in my heart to try. So it was really his belief that it should happen that allowed that door to be open. I didn't knock all the doors of NFL teams, it was me and him. And when I got to the NFL, like they announced it via an NFL press conference and you know, coming from women's football where you might get a student intern reporter who's passing to like, you know, do a project.

Jen Welter: Like in 2013 we were the ones blogging about the gold medal, right? Like that was the only coverage we had. So all of a sudden you're thrust into the spotlight of an NFL press conference. And I just remember being like, wow. And it was the funniest thing because at first I was like, Golly, I with my words, don't leave me. And there was a moment and it was like, you know, do you see yourself as a trailblazer? And I was like, um, well if you know this, consider it. And I didn't really know how to do it. And Ba just goes, yeah, she has trailblazer and it, it just smooth things over. And then it was like, I was really proud to be opening the door, um, because the thought of all of us, every woman and woman's football who had played for the straight love of the game, who remember getting our first paychecks, which were, you know, \$12, like on a good day, it was a dollar a game.

Jen Welter: You know, Katie said earlier, I'm still waiting on that \$12 check. It was on the \$1 trial. I mean, it was probably wouldn't have cashed anyway. You know, I say we, you know, as cash it or keep it at that point. And I kept it as a reminder, but it really was everywhere. And the thing I was really aware of was that there were a whole lot of people waiting for that. This is why moment for that other shoe to drop for something bad to happen, to give a narrative that this is why women couldn't coach in the NFL. You mean there were a whole lot of people lying to people, especially the media, um, minus myself rate. Well, you know, it's like, Eh, and I tell people, I'm like, you just, you can't read the headlines and stuff because I knew it wasn't going to help me be good.

Jen Welter: So I didn't have a TV hooked up in my room. Like I didn't look at anything because one day you'd be on top of the world and next day you'd be sucking your thumb under a desk. Right? Like it doesn't help. But knowing that like I remember the night before, the very first game when I was going to step on the sidelines as a coach, there were no other women around. So anywhere I would go, it felt like I had my own personal soundtrack. It was like pumped bump bomb. Like everybody would just watch. And I was just like, oh my gosh, you know, and to know that people were looking for that or to know that like the night when Sarah Thomas and I shook hands on the sidelines, I, she actually was roughing my first game. And if you think about a coach and a rough shaking hands, it is a normal occurrence in every level of football.

Jen Welter: Pregame from the peewees to the pros. And this was the first time in the history of the national football league that that handshake involved two women. So everywhere that we went, there was a narrative that wasn't about me. It was about every woman and who was going to grow up with a dream that I didn't have. I didn't have a sister and we wanted to play with me and I just knew that I was going to give them no reason to close that door tighter than it ever had been. And I remember the end press conference and didn't even give me any warning. They threw me up on that, that box at the end of training camp. And I'm surrounded by a sea of microphones. And I just looked at them as they all put it out. And I realized in that moment they had all been waiting for that moment where we proved it really was impossible.

Jen Welter: And we never gave him that reason. And I told them all, I said, I just remember I was like, we did it possible or we did the impossible and we did it well. And that was, that was the end of it. And I still had another game to coach, but it's, it's every time Katie's on that field, she's giving the next generation permission to see themselves differently. And that's not just girls, it's boys too. Yeah. And the boys used to tell me that all the time. I feel like the socialization of how our boys deal with women in these arenas, in these fields that were there, very few women really has more to do with how we start to make change. Because if they don't feel like it's weird and odd, then it's not weird and odd. The World Cup. Yeah. So a USA go USA. One thing.

Katie Sowers: The fact is that we all watched and absolutely. And so if you guys listened to this earlier than, I apologize for going repeating myself, but this is what drove me crazy and I don't know if anyone else noticed it, but the media. Yeah. [inaudible] good. We like to refer to the media as the turtles, the turtles on his head, all of them. I don't know. So what they kept saying was, these young girls are going to look up at this moment and it's going to change them. That those girls, those young girls watching. And I'm thinking, why the hell can't boys look up to women when y if we were watching men, we would never just say the boys because we get pissed about it. We were leaving out the girls. The girls can look up to. But why the hell can't boys look up to women?

Katie Sowers: And that show is the problem that we have in this society. So when I'm sure you're going to ask it, how do the boys do the, do the guys treat you well?

Right? I mean cause that's, that's not just you, but by the way, that's a normal question that we'll work with a bunch of men. And I'm always asked to mentor with me, well, exact the normal question ask. And sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. I'm sure it's the same for you. And let me tell you. So when I was in Kansas City, I went to watch the nutcracker, the play. Anyone seen ballet? And if we're going to stereotype a, I won't make the joke that I made earlier about the nutcracker. I'm a lesbian, so it's a cool play. Yeah. So she gets so embarrassed when get it on the lesbian. Okay. So I was watching ballet.

Katie Sowers:

First of all that I don't understand, but if we're going to stereotype it, would you say it's kind of a girly yet, right? We think of it girly football, boyish. I hate stereotypes, but I'm using it. Uh, and that was watching the director was a man and I thought to myself, what if I went up to him and said, do the women's Spec too. How do you deal with like, do they treat you well? We would never ask a man that because, well, why? Because we never [inaudible]. We should. Why not? We actually, you know what the thing is, it shouldn't matter. Matter whether you're a woman or a meeting. I do. We not your question. Women as teachers. We've never questioned. We have questioned women as leaders in general, but we, but we allow women to teach our children but, but yet we think women can't leave men or we're surprised when they do all coaching is leading and teaching.

Jen Welter:

Sure. And motivating people to move in one direction. I've never known anyone that requires a y chromosome for that, but it's not so much about what it requires. I think it's again, back to the question of how our boys are raised and how they're taught and what they see in the images there. So I would love jumping on that one because I feel like we asked this question all the time. I think first in any arena will be asked that question until it's no longer at first, which is why you guys are knocking down the doors and making it easier and holding the door open for other women. What do you want to weigh in on? I mean, first of all, I would love to just say, I wish everybody could see the men in the national football league like I have. And I'm sure Katie has, those guys have been some of my biggest champions now.

Jen Welter:

Not only did, did they not make it difficult, but they, they were so good. Like they knew that for example, for me, they were proud to be a part of history. Like they'd be like, man, like someday we're going to be in the boat. Right. And they'd be like, you know, coach, we thought it was hard for us to get here, but for you, like that's a whole new level of tough. And so it was different, but intertwined paths that really come together in, in what excellence is and overcoming. And I think when you overcome a lot, um, there's a lot that goes with that. Now to expand upon that, not only did they just think it was cool, right, and they're going to be in the movie, but yeah, of course you want the cameo shot. They want the [inaudible] altar story. I started in it.

Jen Welter:

They do. And you know, they would all pay it. Um, but the other thing was like this just for me, the communication that we were going to have was really important. Um, not only have I been in football a long time, but my master's is

in sports psychology and my phd is in psychology. So the importance of the coach athlete relationship was something that I had consulted in for a very long time. And I knew it not only as, um, a doctor, but as a player and that trust and the belief that somebody cares about you beyond what you can do for them, right, is something that always motivated me. And so I wanted all of my guys to know that I cared about them as, as people. And so we would talk about anything and they knew it. I'm like, hey, for volleyball life, if I can help you, I will. Whether it was somebody coming off an injury or one of my very favorites, which was often a coach. You got a minute. Yeah. What's up coach? My wife is so mad at me and I don't even know what I did. And I'd be like, listen, I am an expert in male- female translation. Let's talk. What did you do?

Jen Welter: Well coach, I mean, you know, I just said this and I'll be like, okay, so she heard that coach, why did she hear that? Okay, I don't have time for all of that. Want me to tell you how to fix it? Yes, coach. And when that I knew that I cared about them and I knew them well enough to know when something was off. I'm telling you what, everything I ever asked those men to do on the field was easy because we had trust and relationship. And when you're asking somebody to literally run through a wall for you and yet you've got to trust that that person has your best interest at heart at every level. So, so Katie engine this question for you. Both you, you say your experiences in the league being the first have been for the most part. Good. All Great.

Katie Sowers: We don't have any, we don't glazes. I've scanned the perception be to now the outside perceptions you're saying are more difficult than what it is inside of the actual locker room and dealing with the team that you're with. The outside perceptions are what you have a harder time dealing with or understand. We have a culture that we need to change. I mean it's, if you guys, this is not a plug for McDonald's, but if you go through the drive through and you ask for a happy meal, they ask, they ask you if you have a boy or a girl, right? Because that one question can define your kid's happiness and how much they're going to like that toy. So they think, I mean we have gender reveal parties where it's paint is for girls. Blue is for boys from a very, very early age. We are training our children and you guys like literally, I didn't even know how much we're training our children because if you guys can picture, but again him and he is a stereotype.

Katie Sowers: The girliest little girl ever. That's my niece, Clara. And growing up, I didn't realize that all she ever saw was women playing football. But she hates football. She lets us know all the time and she loves ballet and we have to try to do yoga poses with her. And it's very difficult when you have a now five-year-old kicking your ass at yoga poses. But I didn't realize what I was ingraining in my niece. And one day she was about three and actually Liz was the one that was there. And I think I've been telling the story wrong. It's actually a better story than the one I've been telling. So the, the story though is all she's seen with was women playing football, right. And then this is a girly girl. It's not a girl that just wants to go out and play football if we're going to stereotype and they're driving along.

Katie Sowers: And I think there were some boys out playing football and Liz looks over at her and is talking about the boys playing football. And she looks at her and she said, boys don't play football. And we had to explain to our niece that girls and boys can play football. And the next time we drove by a field, we were like, Hey Clara, who's on that field? She's like girls and boys and you know, she learned but, but we had ingrained in her from day one that only girls play football. And so the little things that we do with our children that we show our children, the commercials that we see, we are daily carving out what they think is normal for a woman, for a man. And it goes with politics, with, oh maybe women are just not as interested in, you know, being involved in politics.

Katie Sowers: No, they don't see as many. I didn't know that I could be a coach until I saw them. You never knew because there was no one in front of you. I mean, we will never know what we're passionate about until we see all the opportunities. You think of life as an aisle of toys and you have a boy and a girl aisle. How many opportunities are we limiting our children? If always say [inaudible] we'll go through the aisle. What else we go through. Yeah. When I, when I got out of the NFL, one of the things that struck me is now all of a sudden there was, there was like this cool factor, right? So all of these guys that I knew were coaching football camps, follow them. He wanted me to come coach and I was like, oh yeah, I bet. Of course that's what we do.

Jen Welter: We take care of each other. Or I would get a call and it might not be a camp that I was coaching at. Cause you can only be so many places. Don't. One time I'd be like, coach, I need you to be Yo. What's up coach? I don't know what to do. What you mean? Sounds serious, coach. We've got a girl. What do I do? I'm like, culture, Click. Right? But what became really apparent to me is that all of these football camps that I was going to, none of them were for girls. Now they might say they were Colette, but there were no girls on the posters. There were none of that. So all of a sudden I got this idea. I'm like, well, if nobody's doing football camps for girls, this is, this is what I have to do right at. My promise has always been, and it is my barometer for everything I do and that's why I've done so much crazy stuff is being the first is a responsibility and an opportunity to ensure you are not the last.

Jen Welter: So I looked at all these little girls and realize that they didn't have a place where they could go without being behind and learn the things that the boys were being taught. It's not like you throw like a girl or you catch like a girl. You either throw a football or you don't do right. You've either been taught or you haven't. And most of us had not been taught a lot of boys to have not been taught either. Right? So I start looking around and I was like, okay, I'm going to do this. And everybody was like, oh well that won't work. Girls don't want to play football. And I'm like, I could get no support. And I was getting frustrated and I was trying to get sponsors. All of the guys I knew who had these big sponsored camps, I couldn't get one. I was frustrated and then I was offering literature for the keep playing like a girl campaign and you know they wanted me to have these talking points and they were like, Oh, if you hit one you'll be good.

Jen Welter: I'm like, do you know who you're talking to? Let me see the research I put your doctor hat on and I want to see the research because I love research and there was a lot of things on there and some were very important but not relevant to my story necessarily. And four stats changed everything for me. He said for that number four. Okay, seven out of 10 girls feel like they don't belong in sports. Seven out of 10 girls feel society doesn't support them in sports. Seven out of 10 girls go there. Not enough visible female role models in sports. Five out of 10 will opt out of sports. For all of those reasons. At the time they finished puberty and that to me was a call to action. I knew right then and there if I was not one of those women who is out on the field in the trenches accessible, showing them something different than the wrong woman was the first amount of coach in the NFL.

Jen Welter: And not only did I announced that I was gonna do one camp, I did what my backers do and I'm sure Katie will tell you a lot about how I played linebacker. And I announced that I was going to do a national tour with just a couple of people who said they would help out when they could. And instead of our goal was to do 12 camps over the first year and in just over a year we did 22 including one for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, which was their first foray into having a girl's camp, one most recently for the Chicago bears and one at the super bowl this past year. And none of them had ever had girls experience. And we would have little girls out there and interviewing them every time like changed my world. That's like, you know, girls would say, you know, I can't play against them. And the girl would be like, then why have I scored against you?

Cari Champion: And I'm like, I mean that's really good. You know? Or another one who would say, I feel like I just got let in on the best secret because I didn't know girls were allowed to football, not just could play but were to yeah. Yeah. That's it. Yeah. I think that um, Katie and Jim highlights something that I'm pretty, I'm surprised that you said it's more about the outside perception as opposed to what you deal with on the inside and how welcoming the the organization has been. Do you find that, and I always ask this question especially to women who find themselves in a position with, with primarily men that you have to, and I dunno if try to fit in as the word, but try to be more one of the guys and really not that you're are a guy, but try to feel as if you have to be someone you're not.

Cari Champion: Are you, do you come to work? And this is I, and this is something you can ask your girlfriend. Do you come to work your authentic self? Say what you feel comfortable saying, how you feel comfortable getting in anybody's face and say you're doing this wrong. Whoever you, whoever you're coaching cause that's what it takes to be obviously a coach. You have to correct, you have to lead, you have to guide. Are you comfortable, especially when you first started and doing that. Katie? I, I know that I am and and part of it is, I have a good group around me but one of the things that I think is so important for any workplace is whether you're a man, woman, whatever, we all have differences. Me Being a woman in my coaching staff and all of the coaches will tell you the same thing.

Katie Sowers: We don't even think about it as an issue of her being a woman. We are all different. We come from different backgrounds, we come from different races. My gender is just one of my differences and I think it's important that I don't divide myself. I am my true self to them and they are and I allow them to be their true self to me and that's what creates a better working environment for everyone. If I was someone that they had to then change who they were around or vice versa or, or yet it would end up being locker room talk. They would close the door and keep me out. I would rather that talk happen around me and I'm not saying I, you know, just let em guys be guys and the grade wouldn't, no, I mean me being in the room changes the vocabulary right then and there.

Jen Welter: I don't even have to say a word about it. I've seen it change from day one. I think. Um, you know, I was looked at at this way and, and anybody who's been different in a room, nobody knows what they don't know. Right. How many of y'all had been on a first date? Okay. I like in being the different one into the room to like that first they awkward k like you don't even know. You're like, Oh, do I want to hold hands with him or is he going to have like that dead like dead fish palm, the driver's wedding, the, you know, the guys were scared. They don't know if they're allowed to open the door for you anymore. But should I date women? Right? Like you know, they don't know if they should just prop the door in your face or if you're going to get mad at them because they, there's all these questions they feel everybody tries so hard to like be on their best behavior that you now dated for like three weeks and you know less than you knew when you started and you started with a blinding.

Jen Welter: Okay. You're like, this is so awkward. Like who are you? Have we met? I know not. And I knew going in that we didn't have time for all of them. Great. So when you are off the odd human out, like I was the odd woman out, I could answer the questions before they were asked. I could set the tone in my behavior that set what was okay and what wasn't right. And I use a lot of humor. I think humor is one of the best medicines, right? And I also give people the benefit of the doubt that they're not going to say things that are intentionally eventive. However it happens. And so I always give at least one giving, which just assumes that at some point then there was this wonderful idea that happened up here, but by the time it was something that went horribly wrong and my fail safe phrase is always like, you know, you do realize he said that out loud.

Jen Welter: Right? And when somebody did not mean to be offensive, the instant reaction is like, oh my gosh, like that. That's not what I meant. Like, and I'm like, oh, you're right. I'm just going to say I know what you mean, but I'm just going to suggest that when you're outside this bubble, that that collection of words never joins together ever again. Right. And they would laugh. But what that allows for is the conversation to go forward because they know you're not going to freak out. You're going to get better. And when you'll get better, then they'll ask you. They'll be like, ah, so is this? And you're like, no, you don't. Yeah. Very important question. Are they allowed to open the door? Because I want you to open the

door for me. I don't know about you guys yet. I'm kidding. That wasn't a very important question.

Jen Welter: Yeah, of course if I said Buddy to drop him ladies, you guys can open the door. They can open the door for you ladies. That's what we've come up. This is what we're talking about. This is whole panel about when the door dropped face. It's going to be offended if you drop it in like that. Just be a good go at the end of the day. If we go through a human level, right and the rest become details, you'll probably be all right. Just be a good human w and it's underrated. Bingo. Get Humid these days. It would be nice. I completely agree about the humor thing though because in my experience a lot of times that's so gay is said a lot and if you think about it, if I were just to say stop saying that that gay, you shouldn't say that it's bad to be gay and left.

Katie Sowers: That's what it sounds like when I'm saying that. So when I first started, I did hear, I did hear that phrase, but you can kind of tell, but they were like, you got a gay girl in the room, at least we know about. And um, and yeah, mm hmm. Token and then, um, at least it's showing at and stop. So, you know, we were, so one of the guys actually came up to me and he said something about that's so gay. And I was like, why? Because he likes boys get. And he was like, oh no, I didn't mean it. And he started to realize that he was putting gay for something that didn't even make sense. And I actually led a summer camp prior to the NFL. I was the athletic director for the city of Kansas City. And I let all these kids through different sports programs and they could not stop saying that's gay.

Katie Sowers: And so I started to ask them what they meant by that because I, I'm totally against saying, don't say that because I think that totally, it teaches our kids the wrong thing. Right. And so instead I asked them to start saying less straight. And so it lasts for about half of your sister is so warm and so, yeah. And so for awhile they would say that. So yes, straight. And then it stopped all together because they realize how weird it was to use that. And I want you guys are both saying, and I don't know if he does party humor is important, but what you're doing without hitting them over the head is educating them in the best way possible and in a way where you know that they're not taking offense to it because you're not taking offense to it. Could you imagine living in a world if we weren't offended by everything someone said and then, and then trying to make everything about everything.

Jen Welter: But when you can make it a teachable moment, I have found that bald jokes can fix pretty much interesting. So my first year playing for one of them actually that I actually, I have decided that I may just leave a motivational speaking and go into comedy because most of my really good stories are better with cussing. Um, but while jokes really have fixed quite a lot in my life, I'm on my first team, and this may surprise some of you, but being a straight woman in football makes you a minority often. And on my first team I was one of three straight girls and the other two were married. So you know, I was like target, you know, it was like, Hey, can we get a toaster? Right. It used to be the conversion joke. Like if we convert enough girls, they'll get a toaster.

Jen Welter: Like that's a bonus. And so we've kind of like joke about it and I'd be like, Hey, I don't even eat bread when he talking about like I had just kid with them. And then one day we were in practice and it was early on and we were inside and it was just one of those kind of like funny thing. And like I'm a rookie, but we're running through and I was playing, running back and we're just rotating through. And it wasn't a, nothing personal, but no matter what it was, it was like I was not getting well. And I was either the black or the fake or something. And we had a quarterback who just said something, and I just looked at her at one point and I was like, listen, just because all the handle balls, my social life does not mean I can't do it here.

Jen Welter: And she started laughing so hard. We're indoors. She slid down the wall of the gym and then from that moment on it'd be like, Hey, you know, was my Jersey on street? I don't know as welter. She's the only one who knows about that. Right. So they gave you that. That's funny. But in the men's world, it wasn't much different. Right. When I played on the men's team for the first time, they needed to know two things. One that I belonged, I was there for the right reasons. I was there about football. It wasn't a publicity stunt. Like I'm going to get my butt whooped by these dudes, get back up and say I can do better. And the second was that we could get along, right. And so we're going from one drill to the to the next. And one of the coaches just literally is like, Yo run it guys, do you have your balls?

Jen Welter: So of course one of the linebackers had to say, yeah coach, I'll go welter. And I just walked up to him and I looked up at him and I patted his shoulder pads. I said, that's okay baby. When I need some balls I'll just get yours out of your wife's purse. End of story. Right, right. And you got it. And from that moment all the guys were like dying laughing and it was like, oh that'd be good. Yeah. That's the, that's the nature of sports and a locker room. Like you've got to be able to trash talk, you gotta be able to take it, you got to be able to receive it. Cause if you can't, like it's, you're in trouble. Like they want to know that they can give you a hard time and you're not soft and in a way that would make them feel as if they can't trust you in whatever situation. That's what they do with their guy from, that's what they, yeah. Giving them that all the time. Do you remember that guy who used to pull your pigtails on the pull too? He liked you guess what? They still do that? Yeah, in a different way. In a different way, but they still do it. We have just about, I just saw a time which is maybe about 10 minutes for Q and a. Does anyone want to ask any questions? Oh good. Great.

Speaker 3: Locally here, I think the next step [inaudible] knowledgeable women in the position [inaudible] you guys can do it but we've got three risk. What would it change? Be Receptive [inaudible] we do it already. Oh you already I was at the line. Absolutely. So we can be assigned to savers, linebackers, d line coach, linebackers d line and I've met at head was signed to a group t line me and so you're with them day and night. You know their plays and so yes, I think you need to emphasize that more in your presentation. One thing that things I was getting the idea that you're in phd psychology person helping the team commit more, generate more, but what you're really doing is also you're curving on the

nuts and bolts of what options of what time and what the blocking plans are. And we're going in here, but if it's a 35 and we sh and we changed the honorable you go. So that's correct. Night.

Katie Sowers: Yeah. That brings up a good point and I'm, I appreciate you asking that, but one thing that I've found is that we often, especially in male dominated fields, we often assume that women don't know something until they prove that they do. If we were two men's coaches sitting up here, there'd be no question. And I'm sure it wasn't just here I'll you get automatic credibility when you're a male and then yep. And then men. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 3: I felt like you were more of, you know, the head coach's assistant rather than being a, and I mean, Real, real coaching is done in those positions. It's,

Katie Sowers: it's hard to picture when it, when it doesn't happen very often. Yeah. And oftentimes men, even with the same titles, would sit here and it's assumed they know until they don't. And so I'm glad that that point was brought up.