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## "Motivation and Personal Success: The Mentors Speak" featuring Derek Parra

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Armando F Sanchez Production

## **Motivation and Personal Success: The Mentors Speak**

### **DEREK PARRA**

Olympian Speed Skater, Gold & Silver Medalist, 2002 Salt Lake City

In 1984, Derek Parra began roller skating, and by 1996, he had become the most decorated Mexican-American athlete in the sport's history.

Host: Armando F Sanchez

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*In 1984, Derek Parra began roller skating, and by 1996, he had become the most decorated Mexican-American athlete in the sport's history.*

*Derek is also the first-ever Mexican American to compete in and medal in the Olympic Winter Games.*

*As an in-liner, he was a three-time national champion, two-time overall World Champion, two-time World record holder (1500m and 42K), and earned eighteen individual gold medals. He was the most decorated athlete at the 1995 Pan-Am Games, winning five gold, two silver, and a bronze medal. He had everything but an Olympic Medal. So in 1996, he switched from inlines to ice skates to chase after that medal. He earned a spot on the 1998 US Olympic Team just two years later.*

*In February 2001, he won a silver medal at the World Single Distance Championships (1500 meters), setting a new American Record and marking himself as "one to watch at the 2002 Olympic Games". Later that year, in November, he won a gold medal at the World Cup competition in Den Hague, Netherlands. He became one of America's foremost medal contenders*

*heading into the Olympics. In Salt Lake City, he did not disappoint! After being selected to carry the World Trade Center flag into the opening ceremonies, the emotional evening inspired Derek through a remarkable 5000-meter performance on the opening day of the Games. He briefly held the world record en route to a silver medal finish. That set the stage for a stunning world record finish and Olympic Gold Medal in the 1500-meter event!*

**Armando F Sanchez:** Welcome ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for being on this program, Latina/o Role Models, and success. We asked very successful individuals to share with us sort of the formula that they use. Their mindsets, their principles of ideas, and philosophy of what has helped them to be successful. And there are persons that have overcome huge obstacles, fantastic obstacles, and have done a great deal by looking forward towards your goals and succeeding. And I'm always it's an honor always to interview these individuals and be able to share their lessons of life and experiences and professionalism with our listeners around the world.

Today's show is very special. I'm very, very pleased and this little bit of background history to the show and I want to provide that to you.

I had the honor and the pleasure of interviewing Olympian Derek Parra speed skater, 11 years ago, almost to the date, and it had been almost eight years since he had won his medals at the Olympics 2002 in Salt Lake City, and I got a chance to interview him and he was very gracious with his time. I also want to thank Patrick Quinn who helped us put the show together. And I asked them a series of questions. And I've been sharing that information for anyone that wants the text to the interview are welcomed to get it just email me at [LSACNational@hotmail.com/](mailto:LSACNational@hotmail.com/). And we have the pleasure again 11 years later, Derek Parra on the show today with us tonight. And we're just thrilled. We're just thrilled. And the lessons oh my god when I first saw his story back then I was just overwhelmed by how wonderful and I'll start with the question that I asked him back then at the beginning of this is, I understand you're from

San Bernardino, California. And knowing San Bernardino there's no snow there. So how did it happens to be in ice skating and you are an Olympic Gold medalist, also winning that Silver. Let's start the interview from there and sort of recapture some effect in his thinking process. And then we're going to come to the present to see what has transpired. Thank you very much for being on the program.

**Derek Parra:** Almost a little over a decade. It's crazy how time flies.

**Sanchez:** Let's not look at the mirror and look at each other I think we look a little older. I think we looked a little older back then. Now you know you given your notes from back then, you didn't start in ice skating as a young kid. You were already up in your 20s, late 20s if I remember correctly.

**Parra:** That's correct. I didn't start ice skating till I was 26. I grew up in Southern California, as you mentioned, there's not a lot of snow there. The earliest I've ever saw was usually from a distance up of looking at the Big Bear Mountain or Lake Arrowhead up in those mountains up there.

But I fell in love or had a passion for roller skating. I grew up in a roller rink and I went to rolling one evening and story goes that I went there my dad was very tight with money as all parents are back in the day there and he gave me \$4. He kind of kicked me out of the car to go to the roller rink for the night and after playing for admission and skate rental, which ended up being about \$3.75 and a quarter to my name. We didn't have an Atari or any kind of video system, video game system back then. So I wasn't very good at video games and I put a quarter in the machine and 30-seconds later all my men were dead and I just kind of sat there and you know really hot, hot and thirsty underneath skate underneath the hot lights, you know, of a roller rink, which back then they just had a disco ball and music and light like just like disco on skates and luckily every evening session there was a two-lap race with a DJ would clear the floor and put out four cones to mark off a track and

you got to ask to come out and your age group and I went out there and didn't win. I actually came in last and which made things worse because I was out tired and thirsty. But I had such a great feeling of being out there on that track on skates I'd never really skated before was one of my first few times skating and I just had an instant passion for it. It lit something inside me that still burns inside me today and through the years I had climbed the ranks of that sport, moved away from home followed a coach across the country to Florida then Maryland and Delaware. And in that time period of you know how many years that was? I become a world champion. I had won multiple world titles that several records but along that pathway had always dreamed about being an Olympian and walking behind my country's flag in the Olympic Stadium and representing my country and in that sport of roller skating. I just wasn't given the opportunity because it wasn't accepted as a summer Olympic sport. So at the age of 26 when I was I know what I felt was on my way out of being elite athlete. I thought I'd make one more run to try to get the 98 games in Japan. And I switched sports. I went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and I arrived in the day that it was 54 below zero with the windchill and then I was got back on the plane and went back to Delaware. It was so cold. I put some men's ice skating blades on my inline skating boots and I went out and tried it and wasn't like I was like angels were singing and doves were flying in the clouds parted by had a good run. I was a skater so I was skating but I was on ice skates which was different and awkward. But over a few weeks, I qualified for some championships and then I came back to Milwaukee and I've tried training for a year and a half and I made the Olympic team in 1998 and went to Japan but because of the clerical error, I wasn't able to skate and I came back to the US and decided I could go for four more years with some help of a work program sponsor for the Home Depot and that's why we called the Home Depot guy for a while. Four years later I won gold and silver and Salt Lake City and said I will record that is still as the Olympic records today. So it was quite a journey.

**Sanchez:** It was quite a journey. And I'm sure that journey still hasn't ended. But you know, let me also inform our listeners that I mentioned

the barriers that you had to overcome obviously lack of money to go into places you've never been to and probably didn't have many mentors in the Olympic arena area at the beginning of it. And on top of everything else, the one that always caught my attention I remember you mentioned it is that you're only five feet three and a half inches and where the average skater you compete against is six feet.

**Parra:** That's correct.

**Sanchez:** I can see you standing out there and who is this little guy down here in the middle of these guys.

**Parra:** Yeah, when I was on the top of the Olympic podium, both the silver and bronze medals were taller than me and they were below me on the steps. It's kind of funny now yeah. I was not laughing about it back then but now I am laughing about it.

**Sanchez:** Well, you earned the privilege of going out and doing it. Let me share a couple of ideas. I mean, there were many. And I want to sort of, again, we're reminding ourselves of some of the ideas you presented back then. And I was always very impressed by what you're saying. And I want to, you know, reiterate those things that you sort of said at that time that we choose we're very touching. It says here, let me read a couple of them. First of all, you said "Don't settle for average. Don't do that." The other thing you mentioned is "That people are just afraid of making a decision and making a commitment to it", which is something you have to overcome in order to get into the level that you're in.

The one that you also think that I that also left a very strong impression on me is, "Being corrected does not mean you are being picked on." And you were talking about your coaches. You were seeking coaches that would tell you constantly what you did wrong not someone who just kept telling you did it correctly. "The aspects and the importance of seeking perfection, knowing that you're never going to be perfect. You're

seeking upon that. And, you know, believing in yourself giving it 100% of your efforts at all times.” Would you like to add to that fantastic group of ideas you presented back then?

**Parra:** Well, I think I still believe the same principles. You know, when I think the mind is a powerful thing, and I not saying that when I was a kid, someone sat next to me and it was kept telling me, “You're gonna be great. You'll be you're gonna be famous or you're going to be spectacular”, wherever it might be. I guess somewhere along the way, I had some great examples of people I look at that I saw that were whether they're popular or athletic, or smart, they there was something about them that was contagious. That you can see people like being around them. They were just good fun people and fun. You wanted to kind of be their friends and so throughout my life, I kind of were meeting to meet these people. And I kind of discovered along the way was talking to them and sharing time with them that you know, they believe that they believed in themselves and they there was a certain I guess way in which they held themselves and their the open-mindedness and because of that they kind of had the door open wherever they were going and they were looking for opportunities and sometimes it's in my life there was the doors were when they were there and I had to push down or knock them down. But sometimes they were open but I had to be the one to step through that door. And without the belief or the courage to take a chance. It would have been difficult to learn from those people and I think everybody's afraid of change and through my life I've gone through many changes whether it's moving away from home, or you know, new friends, different skates, you know, moving from California to Florida, Maryland and Delaware to Wisconsin and different climates. It just it was I was there was a purpose for everything and I was doing it but like I I also believe that I was on a journey and it was a higher power that was guiding me because these people that were coming to my life.

were put there for a reason there are times where I couldn't go one more step forward, whether it's financially or physically or mentally or emotionally and at that moment, someone came into my life and helped

me take a step forward and got me to the next level or the next week or the next paycheck or to continue my dream and that's something I think that people don't really recognize sometimes there are people around us that will come into our lives and you have to be able to recognize them. And so as I was learning these about these people growing up and around me, I tried to surround myself with good people. They taught me this belief in myself and yeah, not no one's perfect, but you can always try to be better than you were yesterday and not only yourself but help someone else do better. So in my life, I've always tried to incorporate these people around me, because together we can lift each other up. It's so hard and there's a lot of cliches with sports and life and business-like perseverance whatever might be that all these different words that you see, you know, and all these like accessories, pictures and things like that. But I truly believe that if you are with a group of people that have the same belief, you can inspire them and they will inspire you.

I think it's one of the great things about sports and anyone sports as well as it you're you're only as fast as slowest skater. You're only as good as your worst basketball player or runner or swimmer. So if you can look at your committee like that your family like that your friends and bring each other up. You will always all rise to a higher level. No one is perfect again, but you're aware of what's around you your surroundings, what people are doing around you and you can build that up and build a greater foundation around yourself, which helps bring other people in they rise as well. So that all comes with the belief that there is good in people that there is good out there and that you have an ability to succeed. If you can truly believe and grasp it, I don't think there's anything that you can really can't accomplish.

**Sanchez:** What I'm learning from you is the idea that first of all, there is no such a thing as I did it all by myself that that concept doesn't exist. It's a team. Whether someone comes in for a second and helps you in one little thing or some major thing, but it's accumulation of a lot of people helping each other to become better.

**Parra:** Exactly. I mean, if anybody says they themselves are probably lying on the way there's always somebody and I've got in my skating career I got help from my teammates and my coaches but sometimes from the parents of my friends. And not only that, but if you look at your competitors, they make you better. So the more that someone makes you rise to the challenge and brings the best out of you, I guess you got to take your toughest competitors for making you better. I think of people that made me perform like I did because they were they were pushing me. And as I push them and together we make each other better? That's something I think people don't recognize. And they when they see that challenge or maybe someone who's challenging them or situation is challenging them. That's gonna make them better because they'll have to overcome that challenge and they'll learn so much. I learned so much more from all the losses that I had in from the wins that I had. And I gotta tell you only one a few times after the Olympics, the World Cup and the Olympics but I had so many races that I was learning from because you're trying something new you're trying to search that perfect race and you're missing a step here you're missing entry here your starts off or in training, you're looking for better ways to be better to be greater than everybody has a kind of a status quo program and we're trying to find what works better. What can we do that's different anybody else that will help me be better.

Our team be better at the Olympics, than that was you know, we were wearing oxygen tanks on our backs to simulate being at sea level while we are racing at an altitude. The thin air and altitude that lets you go faster on the ice. Like you can't take enough oxygen to go deep into an effort. You know taking so much oxygen so we were wearing oxygen tanks are back to simulate that feeling of being at sea level but have a speed altitude. So we were doing things like that, that no one really knew. Trying to push that envelope and use our imagination to see how can we be better.

**Sanchez:** Wow. And then I can say I can imagine for a little bit just hearing that tank in the back would throw you guys off because you

know you got his extra weight and just got is pushing you in different directions at the same time. So that must have been a challenge unto itself. But it sounds to me like you say you embrace change. You seek it. Part of you is fighting it because it's natural not to but yet your overall objective is to get better. So you have to embrace change and you have to work with it and just keep adapting. And like you mentioned before traveling, meeting with different people. It must have been a really exciting situation to mix all this together. But sometimes it's also very tiring.

**Parra:** Yeah, I mean, I like I said, no one likes change. I didn't like change. I mean, I didn't welcome change all the time. But I had to look at the big picture. You know, every time you know I had to move and think about why am I moving? Is this going to be better for me? What are the pros and cons? Were the sacrifices I mean, from leaving my family when I was 17. and you know, having a girlfriend that was that seemed huge to me when I left but then every time I go into a place I leave again there were more sacrifices I had to make. But there were also more bonuses why I had to leave whether it was to get better coaching or better training time or better ice or better, a better job to supplement my training with so I can continue to train. It's never easy. But again, you have to be able to look at the big picture and see the road down miles and miles ahead. Because if you're if you were walking around with blinders on, you're never gonna see what I would call outside of the jungle. And the jungle just can't see it and you have to take a step back to what the pattern really can be. And that's hard to do. And today's world people with the economy and people changing jobs and whatnot, that's something that you have to kind of take a step back and ask what's what. What can I do? Where can I go? This path might be redirected, but are you still on the same path? And I experienced that in my career after I retired I coached some skaters after a few years or after a year I retired I do development program of inside skaters who wanted to kind of follow my footsteps that went really well. And then I actually got asked to be the Olympic team coach in Vancouver in 2010. And that was ,well, my team members that won five medals, I believe.

And then I came back from the games and I was let go by the game federation. They were thinking about kind of revamping the coaching staff and I was like, oh, and that's what we thought, oh, maybe I'll get out of skating but by the way, the foundation that runs the two facilities in Utah that are part of the Olympic venues. As I'm walking out of the building they were walking beside me and said, "Don't pack your bags. We want you to come back. We want you to do your youth director sector." So that's when I was like, "What do I do?" I mean, it was a very exciting work with the youth once upon a time I was a little kid who needed some guidance, and a coach saw in me and needs to recognize or didn't see or couldn't even imagine. And now I've put in that role where I'm in charge of the you know, the development of this youth program to bring some kids building in our cooler sport. And try to get them passionate about skating, whether it's hockey or figure skating or speed skating, or curling or, or just fundamental movements in sport. You know, I'm kind of orchestrating that and, and here I am in a sport I love and ice skating with kids.

I can't think of a better job. And so every day I am inspired by these kids who are doing what I did searching for something new or passive. So they're just having fun. And that just keeps me young. And I got to tell you, every day when work is great.

**Sanchez:** Wow, that is fantastic. You are a teacher and a different teacher-coach and I'm sure you're also a personal friend to some of the youth.

I want to have our listeners know about the fact that there's a little part of you in the middle of your extremely busy schedule that somewhere in there. You became an author, and you wrote a book, *Reflections in the Ice - Inside the Heart and Mind of an Olympian Champion*. What in the heck do you have the time to write a book in the middle of all this?

**Parra:** I actually did it while driving. Not that I was writing while driving. Quinn, my best friend, and my agent, he heard me speaking after the games a little bit kind of telling my story and I'm a bit of a

talker as you can tell, and I would give it events that tell a bit of my story and it was they would always give me about five or ten minutes and I said I can't really share what I want to express I want to in five or ten minutes. So I started trying to orchestrate a little bit more time. I went to an event like thirty minutes, maybe forty-five minutes. And as I started to talk more, I started developing this with health is kind of storyline of telling people how I got started in you know what I was doing and the obstacles I overcame and finished up with, you know, passing the gold medals around it and this audience and so, at one point Pat hadn't seen me speak for a while and he came back and saw me and when he was talking to me after this presentation, a woman came up and said do some book on tape or anything and I said "no I mean I can't get my model idea here." Pat said to me, "I think you've got something here. Maybe you might want to put some sort of books." I responded, "What? I've never written a book before." We kind of talked about it and invited me to go and get a little tape recorder with those little mini-tape cassettes. And I wrote out an outline of what I thought was significant in my life which helped me get to where I was and I was when I was driving back and forth to work for an hour in the commute. I would just sit down and just start talking to these tapes. I've got through about ten tapes on both sides. Pat listen to them and highlighted what was unsuitable. So check them out on paper and we started going through some things back and forth. And one of the hardest things about writing the book is because I can tell a story but trying to get the true meaning behind why it is this moment significantly had to change my life or my direction in life an hour just kind of, you know, harping. Why why are you telling me this? Why did you why did it get you mad? Why did Why were you excited that kind of thing or why did it devastate you, and I had to bring these emotions out that I probably know is always my father I talked about about how my dad and I were distant from each other because when I was young, he was divorced. And, you know, it seems like a big kid and we were you know, I didn't feel like really I knew he loved me but he didn't recognize the way he showed he loved me and so I went through that period of time, you know, amongst other times where I was suppressing these feelings and I find myself in a car that

stopped like bawling my eyes out because I was reliving this these moments, these emotions and that's what the book. I think really did for me was therapeutic in a way. So I tell my life story and I'm reliving all these emotions and trying to connect with the reader that this is what I went through and this is how I felt, this is what affected me and because anything is similar in your life, whether it's getting a career or school. I've been there we were sharing together and you can overcome these obstacles and this is how I did it. This is my advice how I dealt with it. Hopefully, you can apply it to your life and that's why it's called *Reflections in the Ice* reflecting on the experience I went through how they move forward and hopefully share it with the audience that they can use that in their lives.

**Sanchez:** That must have taken a lot of courage to like you say walk through the doors of those demons of your past and life and surface that for yourself. And then on top of that, you know, we're just grateful that you shared it with all of us and they're just really honored that you did that. I want to respect your time and I know I've got 10,000 questions in here. I do want to share that I do have two questions from our listeners and I want to read one of them very quickly. And then I want to talk a little bit about where you are today and where you see yourself in the future. And let me ask the first one from Cande DeCorte, who is a film producer. His question is, "What was your toughest day? What was your biggest obstacle up to now?"

**Parra:** In sports or in life?

**Sanchez:** He didn't say so I'm gonna take it or leave it as is.

**Parra:** Well, in sports it was definitely I had you know there was a point in my career where I almost quit skating and that that's a couple of times actually but one that really changed the direction my life. That was September 11 and I think a number of us experienced that tragic day and the way it affected me in my skating career was I had put so much value on literally going around in circles for years. And when I was when

September 11 happened and took place in 2001. I was at the time married I was flying to see my wife on the way to a wedding in New York that weekend. And you know that woke up the next morning the world changed and I was devastated by that incident. I cried. I was stuck in water for 10 days because airspace restricted. Every time I heard a song in the radio or thought an image on TV of someone being pulled out a level I just sat there bawling and I felt very ashamed to be a skater. Because again, I was going in circles and I didn't but it was I was very, very proud of that time so I came back to the USA just literally five months for the games in 2002. And I came back and I spoke to my coaches and my employer Home Depot as I might I think I'm going to quit I just can't do this anymore. And my heart's not into it. And it took a while for me to talk to sport psychologists to refocus in my focus going forward after I had the session with it was split psychologists. This was too big of the game not so much about me but about the victims of that tragedy. And I knew that if I qualified for the race that I could possibly skate would be a two-minute race around and run a six-minute race but eight minutes that I had, that I was focused on taking this moment that tragic moment off the minds of those victims are left behind and the grandparents of fathers and mothers and children. Every time I had a bad day or a bad race or whatever it might have been I thought about those victims and it got me back on track. And so when I got to the games I'm sure you've mentioned this before I mean, I mentioned that in my textbook for I was one of the eight athletes to secure the World Trade Center flag in the open ceremonies. That ceremony still lives with me today. It's still in my heart. I'm getting emotional talking about it about the presence that I felt on that stage that night with the other seven athletes and how it inspires me and I felt like I had the breath of the victims was blowing the fire out of our hands at one point. I came back the next day and skated the race of my life and I had the most sound sleep ever had in my life. I had peace in my heart that never known after that moment on stage and the next 17-days and really like a part of my life has been really blessed with it. The knowledge of what is in for me what is out there and spiritually emotionally. It was just an amazing moment for me and that was one of my hardest moments I went through

and then flash forward a few years. Getting divorce, going through that divorce. I don't wish divorce on my worst enemy. And I went through, a very, very painful divorce and it crippled my faith in who I was and my who my friends were because divorce is a really sensitive, delicate thing when you're in a community and then you're connected with people and we're all connected and when something like that happens and breaks down and the epicenter of your foundation. It can be tragic and I went through a period of time where I just didn't know who I was anymore because I put my belief in something in someone and it wasn't what I thought and I was kind of challenged like who am I? what do I? what are my what is my foundation? what are my beliefs? and luckily I found that again. It actually has inspired me to be even better person that could be I tried to do more for people because of when the wall came crumbling down I had some people that were there with me who helped save me and helped me build myself back up. And that the friends I'm talking about the people you meet you're connected to and some of my best friends today and I'm very grateful for what who they are how they really are in my life and what they are in my mind. Those are those my two I'd say worst moments.

**Sanchez:** And and those are tough ones. And then on top of that to have it publicized constantly that must have been even worse than me. Yeah, that doesn't make it easier. Second question is from Dr. Refugio Rochin. He is Professor Emeritus from UC Davis. And he asks, as he normally does very punctually, he says “What's next?”

**Parra:** What's next? So currently right now I'm working with I have a couple of things going on. Like I do continue motivational speaking, you know, in different companies and groups. That takes up part of my time. I have a 12-year-old daughter now that I spend time with when she comes to visit me except for more of another part of my time and then again I'm the Director of Sports at the Tulsa in Kern, Utah and so I'm managing five sports. So at this point, my five-year plan is to continue to grow these programs, find better ways to engage youth in this court winter sport, and try to elicit the community I tried with charities and

community for people within the community to give back. I'm a true believer in Karma, what goes around comes around. So right now my plan rest my life extent Utah if I can because I love it here. The people here are great. I give them in a sport they love or sports with us in a great place. So if I can say here, that's my goal. Like right now, for the immediate future. It's making these programs better finding better ways for kids to have fun with sports, be active and help my fellow neighbors so to speak, when it comes to sharing my story and trying to inspire others.

**Sanchez:** Well, you absolutely have your story of your past and I'm sure the story of the future. Again, I want to respect your time. I've got a couple of one more question to ask you and then I'd like to give you some time to sort of close it with it whatever you want to share. This is a very deep personal question on my end and that is, you know, what is the you probably give a tons of different advice to you. But you know, is there something that stands out over all your positive affirmations that you give you that you give adults as well, that you can sort of present to our listeners right now given your fantastic and fantastic background? I can't share that enough. how excited we are to applaud your successes.

**Parra:** I think you're too kind. I feel like I was very lucky and fortunate to have found skating and it wasn't like you know again, like I was born to skate. It was a long road of changes to try to be technically better and fit and shape and everyone I think knows that like a cycle of an athlete how that works. But just like anything like anyone go to school if people don't get math, all right off the bat, but they study hard to be good at math. And that's kind of how I was. I think that the couple important things I like to point out.

I think one; passion to be successful is something. You have to have passion for it. I don't care what it is. If I wasn't passionate about skating, I wouldn't have continued to keep putting myself through all the challenges not knowing what the other side of that door. I had to have that passion for the sport and in order to continue driving because I think

passion will inspire you and nothing else and no one else will. It definitely is that driving force.

The second thing that I think is; really important, especially for I guess for all ages, but I really like to talk to the youth about it's just a pure belief in yourself. Again, when I was young I didn't like I didn't have lots of autonomy to believe in myself but along the way I gained this belief through others, watching others and the way they carried themselves and it took a while for me to believe in myself that some of these five-three Mexican American from Southern California could be on the top of the podium whether it was inline skating or ice skating. It took a while. I worked really hard on a great work ethic. I think they came from my heritage but at one point, I had to believe that I could succeed. And that is very difficult because you raise the bar of expectations within yourself. I see a lot of kids who say, "I'm not that good or I'm okay", or even some adults who are fantastic who don't give themselves enough credit to build off that. But there you have to be able to challenge yourself to be greater and greater and better and better. And that cycle will continue you can have small little improvements over time make a huge difference. Those for me those two things are very critical.

I'm passionate about what I do for the kids. Passionate about teaching them and trying to inspire them like I was inspired. There's no reason I can really think of that I should be in a place and today. It wasn't for relief from number of people but more importantly, I thank one and his name is man Virgil Julie, who was at a competition where I skated for some reason came up to me again, I had I didn't think I had talent because I'd never won a race. I was last almost every race but he came up to me because I think you have something. Later on he told me was hard. He thought I was determined because I think he got something if you ever want to get serious about skating. He shared, "getting give me a call". And that's when I moved from California to Florida and that I wouldn't have the validation by him. single-handedly changed direction in my life because I moved away from home and that started really

started my journey. And so if I can be that spark in someone's fire that have them discover something inside them that they didn't know they had, that would be amazing. But more importantly it was it would be a driving force, that child, that adults, whatever it is to continue to push themselves and believe in themselves. And when they reach to a higher level they're only going to bring the rest of the people in their community and their friendship group around them to a higher level and it's nothing wrong with that. It's absolutely incredible to be a part of that cycle.

**Sanchez:** You know, you've inspired my perception that words that we share with others and share it were words that we share with our youth, whether it be a sentence or two sentences, "Yes, you can or no, you can't" can make or break a life lifecycle of a person, like you said, and it's so easy sometimes to make opinions, not knowing the person. You say I don't think you're very good and you've actually destroyed that one balance of thought that's could have said, "Well, I want to try anyway" so I know personally I have to be very careful what I say from now on, or should I say more careful. So I want our listeners to once again know that they can go to *Reflections in the Ice- Inside the Heart and Heart of an Olympian Champion* and written by Derek Parra. Please, pick up the book. I'm very honored to read it also. And my friend also Curt Hahn and I as partners, we've sort of been talking about it a great deal, and you pass on a lot of information. If I may trouble you for one more question, which made me think right now is, normally we talk to the audience, talk to you, you talk to adults. What would be your advice to coaches, not necessarily in your field but just coaches in general, regardless of the sport, whether it be soccer, world rugby whatever. What would be your advice to coaches in the world?

**Parra:** It's a good one. Well, I tell you, one of our missions of our foundation is long-term athlete development. I think the back of the day with Dale growing up a number of us did a number of sports in high school. And junior high was played football. Baseball was fun to play

soccer ran track and it was your you're playing every sport and every season.

Today, I don't believe the research shows that there are not that many children in programs that are multi-sport. Kids are getting into a sport early on. They want to be a Tiger Woods or Michael Phelps and their parents and coaches are, I think are taking the children and their children one-dimensional and for coaches out there. I feel like there's a lot of travel teams so now you can be in soccer and play travel soccer school, soccer club soccer, elite soccer so you can be playing soccer year around.

I truly believe that will help you be a better skater was that I wrestled I played football. I ran track. I played baseball and all those motor skills that I learned agility, lateral movement, strength I gotten inserted into hips, my hips and my torso, my core. Those all played a role in this what I eventually chose and live later on in life. When I was 17-18 And again 26, that we see too many injuries and so now some kids are one dimensional. I truly believe that coaches and parents instead looking at the results of sports. I know it's difficult with tuition and college accepting things like that and scholarships, but to really focus on the process of what sports do for us. It's like the process of school and education. It's hopefully it sheds a different light that do allow kids to use their imagination to try and sample sports to see where they are because I could have been in baseball, you know, my whole life and never really tried skating. I would have never known my talent for skating. But I was passionate about skating, I wasn't passionate about baseball. I liked wrestling, I wasn't passionate about wrestling. I played football to get hit by somebody. No, I wasn't. I wasn't passionate about football. There. I see skater. I've seen athletes who do different sports for different for a number of years and find something and then the rest is history. They use those development skills or they haven't either sports, in their sports are passionate about they get better. So for coaches, be open-minded. Think of the process and encourage and support. That's one thing and then there's always talking about communicating that

athletes today are much more in-depth and complicated than they were back in my day. For us, it was like, okay, there's a ball. There's so many techniques on the ball. There's so much skill to it and they really teaching the process by being involved in that process. With an athlete, as a coach and as parents and also relating that to life as well. I mean sports, mirrors life, life mirrors sport. So try not to be too narrow-minded as far as too much in the jungle of only functional sports but help a child grow off the playing field of play. It's a natural progression and you'd be surprised with I think kids today can think of a imagine and or the confidence they have just by sharing your knowledge with them. Not demanding it but sharing it.

**Sanchez:** Wow. Well ladies and gentlemen is gonna argue with an Olympian with physical medal in the middle is a I'm not in a position to argue either. I just read it wrote everything down. Ladies and gentlemen, we're talking with Derek Parra who is Olympian. 2002 speed skating also offers *Reflections in the Ice - Inside the Heart and Mind of an Olympian Champion*.

I'm glad he wrote the book and I'm glad Patrick Quinn also encouraged you to do so. And with that, I'd like to close the show with any closing statements or thoughts that you may have. You've already given us a plethora of them. But can I pull one more out of you? I just I can't let go.

**Parra:** First of all, thank you for your time and I think this is listening. I wish the best place every one of them is taking time to listen to my story. I guess. The one thing I would like to leave everyone with is it is important. Maybe the realization that we are all connected in some way shape or form. And I and to hopefully find strength in that wherever you may be in whether it's in your family or your friends and community. We all have an effect on each other. We all inspire each other. So again, be aware of what you say what you do because again, like I said I was inspired by not only my teammates, my friends but you know family members of their friends, you know, parents of scares ice skating with and my competitors. Everybody has the ability to bring something out

and each one of us and we can share that energy, that passion, that drive commitment that we have for whatever it is we're passionate about. It can only inspire the ones around you. It can only lift them up and we're all sharing this world together. Let's be positive and what we're doing together and, and show that well to that belief.

**Sanchez:** Ladies and gentlemen, we've been talking with Derek Parra, Olympian, and a fantastic human because you've taken the time not only to bring together the formulas of success for yourself, but you've also taken the time as you have on this show and I know in many places to do public speaking, to get us all behind understanding how we must encourage each other to be better. And I'm just happy that you're also a coach and a human being. So I want to thank you, Derek, for being on the show today.

**Derek:** Thank you for your time. Maybe another ten or eleven years. We'll talk to you.

**Sanchez:** You got it. You got it. Thank you, and have a good day. You too. Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for being on our show. Let you know role models, you can contact me at [LSACNational@hotmail.com](mailto:LSACNational@hotmail.com). We want Derek Parra for his generosity of his time in the middle of his very, very busy schedule and also Patrick Quinn. Thank you and we'll see you in our next program looking for role models and success. Thank you. I'm Amando F Sanchez.