

A New Angle
MTPR Episode 15
Marty Mornhinweg

Justin Angle This is A New Angle, a show about cool people doing awesome things in and around Montana. I'm your host, Justin Angle. This show is supported by First Security Bank, Blackfoot Communications and the University of Montana College of Business.

Hey folks, welcome back and thanks for tuning in. Today, I speak with Marty Mornhinweg, University of Montana Hall of Fame quarterback and long time coach in the National Football League.

Marty Mornhinweg Playing quarterback at a really high level is sort of artistic and because everybody does it just a little bit differently.

Justin Angle During Marty's career, he coached five different Pro Bowl quarterbacks including Brett Favre, Steve Young and Donovan McNabb. He won a Super Bowl with the Green Bay Packers in 1997 and served as the head coach for the Detroit Lions in 2001 and 2002. Marty recently launched at the Camp Marty Quarterback School podcast, where he speaks with some of the most innovative offensive minds in football in 2021. Marty retired from coaching and now lives with his family here in Missoula, Montana. Marty, thanks for coming on the show today.

Marty Mornhinweg Justin, great to be here. Appreciate you having me on.

Justin Angle Absolutely. So where did you grow up? Where did your parents do?

Marty Mornhinweg Well, my dad was a claims manager for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company for many, many years. So, I believe his first job was in Tulsa, Oklahoma. We were all born in Oklahoma or Texas. We moved to Houston, Texas. Then we moved to Boston, Massachusetts. That's why my accent is all screwed up or I have none. And then it was 1974. I believe I was going into junior high school and we moved to San Jose, California. And then that's where everybody still is, and that's what we call home. So the Bay Area now, we moved there before it was a Silicon Valley.

Justin Angle And so how did University of Montana get on your radar screen? How do you decide to come up here to Missoula?

Marty Mornhinweg I'll tell you, it's a heck of a story, but basically I played on a great team with great coaches. We turned the program around. 120, some odd straight was being recruited by everybody USC, UCLA, Stanford, Notre Dame. They were all on the sidelines. Well, I'm 5 foot 10. And then all of a sudden, they got to be about two thirds of the way through the recruiting season, and the calls kind of stopped. And so I was waiting on people. I was waiting on Stanford, Oklahoma State, Washington, all these. There were six or eight that I was sort of waiting on. And then another wave came. Nevada, Reno. Stephen F. Austin offered me Santa Clara offered me, Cal Poly.

Justin Angle So a slightly lower tier school, but still coming after you.

Marty Mornhinweg Right. And the the service teams came in. And so Montana called one time I was working at the gas station, called my high school coach. I said, I'm kind of tired, worn out. I have no visits left anyway. I believe back then it was six. I'd already taken six. I turned down Cal. They called early and wanted me to play safety and there were two or three teams and I should have handled that differently. But the head coach, the new head coach for the University of Montana Griz, is called and said, Hey, I know you're waiting on all of these people. I've talked to all of them. I've coached a five 10 quarterback before. I'm not sure he had, but he told me that. But then he said, go where you're wanted rather than where you want to go, and things tend to work out. I hung the phone up, I said, Dad, let's get a map out and see where this place is. My first time seeing Missoula, Montana was flying in the night before training camp started because I had no visits left. My dad made a really good living, but we had four kids. My mom and dad were living in a very, very expensive place. We didn't have the extra money. Let's say that we had everything we needed. And so I flew in the night before it was dark. And, you know, for many weeks, I didn't even know there was mountains because I was just so entrenched in trying to win a job for the Griz.

Justin Angle Yeah. And you won that job starting as a Freshman. That's got to be quite an experience to come this place you'd never been before. And all of a sudden you're starting quarterback.

Marty Mornhinweg Well, football's football, right? And I was coached really well. I had great coaches here at the University and some great, great teammates. You know, athletics, you have sort of that bond that's almost unbreakable with the team, so especially football because the fellows were putting their bodies sort of on the line for each other. And many of my teammates are still my really good friends.

Marty Mornhinweg Yeah. And so talk about like that connection to the game. Because once you're playing, career ended, I mean, you went right into coaching. I mean, weren't you? I mean, when you played briefly and they really weren't you coaching at that point, too?

Marty Mornhinweg Right. I was a graduate assistant and really the first time I went, I went into the 49ers camp as a camp arm and I threw drills and so forth. And then when seven on seven and team started, I was pretty much done. And then post-practice 100 balls to John Frank, the tight end, or Dwight Clark was coming off of little scope on his knee extra there. So my arm was worn out by the time I went back to the University of Texas at El Paso, where I got my masters. I'm very proud of that. I'm not sure I've ever utilized it, but I acquired that there when I was a graduate assistant coach there.

And so I was desperately still trying to play. OK, and then the next year I went to the Arena League and I went, What a great league this is going to be. It's a great like a summer job. I'm coaching. I can play in the arena league and boom. I tore my ACL and that was the end of my playing days. But what a great experience. I told the fellows that I've coached, though you will never beat my percentage in pro ball because on three four four,

Justin Angle it's a good lifetime average.

Marty Mornhinweg Yeah, but it was so brief that it's a little misleading, but I don't tell them quite the whole story.

Justin Angle I mean, so many chapters in your coaching career, so many years, you know, in the in the NFL and the offensive side. I mean, there's a lot of things to talk about, but I'm curious about how you made decisions as to what was the right next job. I mean, because you've worked with a variety of super successful head coaches, variety of franchises. How are you navigating career choices to try to get to where you want it to go?

Marty Mornhinweg I really didn't.

Justin Angle OK.

Marty Mornhinweg You know, in the coaching business, the the football coaching business, my mentality was bust your butt at what you're doing right now, become the very best at what you're doing right now. I coached every level high school, small college, major college, NFL and then good things happen. If you just bust your butt, become the very best at what you're doing. It doesn't matter what your responsibilities are, become the very best and good things tend to happen, and that's what happened.

Justin Angle Yeah, talk about, you know, your approach to that becoming the very best you could and how you got recognized for doing that.

Marty Mornhinweg Well, I got recognized because I was fortunate enough to coach some great, great players. Yeah, couple of first ballot Hall of Famers right off the bat. And Brett and Steve. Brett Favre and Steve Young. And how different are they both on the field and off?

Justin Angle I'm sure.

Marty Mornhinweg And so what a great experience that was, and they're both very good friends to this day still. And you know, that bond we were talking about.

Justin Angle You know, having been a quarterback yourself, was that like a natural fit for your for your coaching is to work with quarterbacks and kind of that one on one mentorship role?

Marty Mornhinweg Well, that's a good point. I always perceive myself, visualize myself, as a quarterback skill position, type of coach, coordinating type of coach. However, by the time I think I was twenty nine years old, I had coached every position on offense. I had coached the line for two years. At Missouri, I've coached the tight end at Missouri. I coached the quarterbacks, the running backs, the receivers. So that was a really good experience and having coached every position by the time I was twenty nine, I believe.

Marty Mornhinweg And a lot of different places. I think your longest place you stayed was in Philly, right, for nine nine seasons?

Marty Mornhinweg A decade. 10.

Justin Angle OK. That's a lot of moving around. You know, you got a wife and four kids building a family during that time of life, like, how are you navigating those steps and those transitions?

Marty Mornhinweg I'll tell you what, it was a heck of a ride. We talk about it on occasion. Our wives are so important. And, we discussed, I moved around a lot when I was young. My wife, her dad, was in hotel management, so he was around. They moved around quite a little bit when she was young. So that might have built us just a little bit for the coaching career in the NFL, where we did move around quite a little bit and we loved every place we lived. My wife has a great mentality. She made every place we lived home for the kids. And, look, when the kids started growing up, there's pluses and minuses to moving around, but there are some great pluses like they need to meet new friends when we move. And that's that's a pretty good social skill to have. I think they all have it. And then widespread friends rather than just the friends that you went to kindergarten through 12th grade with. Now there's positives in that as well, but she made every place home for, oh, seven months.

You know, coaches just aren't at home much, but I try to get home every night, not too many times sleep in the office. It did occur on occasion because I really felt even if you came home after they were asleep and you were gone before they got up, they knew the dad was home. And so I thought that was important in the coaching profession. Make sure you get home. And then it was catch up in the off seasons. So, I didn't get to see many of their football games. Of course, I got to see it on film, but then I'd get to all the basketball and baseball and my daughter softball in the spring and all the summer leagues and all of that. I did tell the kids when they grew up, once they started getting into high school, once you get to your sophomore year, I can't promise anything because we've got to do what's best for the family. But I will try. I'll do everything I can to get you through the same high school because I think that sophomore to senior year was sort of important. And so we were in Philadelphia, and what a heck of a run. So we were good enough for me to be able to do that. And then I wanted to do that because back to back to back, the kids were going through high school and only my youngest didn't graduate in

Philadelphia. But I would think if you asked him, he would still say he's from Philadelphia. He graduated at a high school outside of Baltimore, and we were with the Ravens.

Justin Angle Not too far.

Marty Mornhinweg I'll tell you what, I miss those times because you have to run and gun with the kids and keep up with it. And I know I talked to my wife just the other day, and she said she misses those times just a little bit. She couldn't tell you what she did, but she was busy from the time she woke up to the time she went to bed.

Justin Angle I mean, that's got to be kind of a unique circumstance. I mean, you come off of the the head coaching opportunity in Detroit and then partner with Andy Reid in Philly. And Andy had such a long career there, and now he's had longevity with the Chiefs. Like, to be able to have the same head coach in that relationship had to be something about that stability that made you stick around.

Marty Mornhinweg Yeah. Well, and part of it was we were doing really well.

Justin Angle Right, right. Team was really good.

Marty Mornhinweg Yeah. And my kids were going through high school, so I was able to stay and then chose to stay. And then Andy and I, there was many, many big influences in my life and my high school quarterback coach, Mike Holmgren, who ended up being a great, great one of the very best NFL head coaches. He sort of grabbed me when I was 14 and taught me how to play. And then Andy grabbed me. We hired him at the University of Texas El Paso as the line coach, and he kind of grabbed me back when I was very young, still trying to play. We talked about and sort of taught me how to coach. And so our styles were very similar. We I believe I've coached for different places together and probably up near 20 years together. So we're very, very good friends. Our wives are very good friends. So what a big influence Andy has had on me did.

Justin Angle Indeed.

After the break, more with Marty Mornhinweg.

Welcome back to New Angle. Here today with coach Marty Mornhinweg.

Marty, question for you about the quarterback position itself. I mean, here at, you know, I teach business and one of the things we're interested in is, you know, in colleges, what are the attributes you can look at in a student that predicts success? I read this really interesting Malcolm Gladwell piece years ago about the quarterback position, and he essentially argued that according to the statistics, like very few metrics have any utility in predicting quarterback success. Yet working with so many incredibly successful quarterbacks, you have to have a sense. I would imagine, of the attributes that maybe unite the class of folks that are successful in that job, like what do you think makes for a successful quarterback?

Marty Mornhinweg Well, first of all, there's not many great ones. So really, you've got to have a certain amount of talent. And what is that? Everybody's talented in different ways. So then the coach has to put that and play directly to that quarterback strength. So that's first the talent. There's a character situation as well.

Justin Angle OK.

Marty Mornhinweg That goes a long, long way. Toughness and character. And then you get into the simple accuracy, decision making, timing, and then you couple that with gut instincts. And that's really what separates great quarterbacks from average to poor quarterbacks are the gut instincts. Now, how do you come up with these gut instincts? Well, yeah, I really think that much of it's natural and then much of it is the environment that you grew up in. I really think that that has a huge effect on it. There was I did a study one time. This was many, many years ago and may have changed. But up near two thirds of all quarterbacks in the NFL, now that includes the second team fella in the third team player, their Dads were either X Pro players, high school coaches. Why? Because the youngster grew up going to practice with his dad and in the gym with his Dad and around really good players that were older than them and they would talk about it. And then or college coaches, some of the Dads were so that environment is so important.

Justin Angle And you think just that very sort of deep fluency with how the game works is one of those predictors?

Marty Mornhinweg Well, you're getting into the artistic type of thought process. And I know that playing quarterback at a really high level is sort of artistic. Sure. And because everybody does it just a little bit differently. So as a coach, you have to factor this in and allow them to have some creativity as long as it stays highly productive. Mm hmm.

Justin Angle So let's press on a couple of those attributes you mentioned. You mentioned the gut instinct, which was sort of talked about there, but the character. What are the, you know, the character attributes? Because that's, you know, people in the outside and in the media say all that, you know, say all sorts of things about character and athletes and whatever. But on the inside, there's got to be a different sort of set of things that you think about.

Marty Mornhinweg Well, the quarterback position, I suppose you could debate it, but I know this: that that position is the most important position in all of sports. And in saying that that quarterback position is sort of the leadership part of your team. In many cases, he's the face of the whole organization for many, many years. So that ethics, the character. It just goes a long way with all players, but especially the quarterback spot. Now I'll tell you, I've coached in the NFL a long, long time. Ninety nine percent of the fellows that played in the NFL are great people, great community members, great husbands, great fathers, great people. They help other people. We don't read much about that, but that really occurs with most of the fellows in the NFL.

Justin Angle You know, during my time in Philly, you know, Donovan McNabb sort of seemed like that kind of guy. I met him at a few around a few events around town near the Steve Youngs, the Jeff Garcias. And then you got others, Brett Favre, probably just by virtue of being in the spotlight for so long, you got people thrown character accusations at him. But a guy like Michael Vick had his ups and downs with, you know, I guess, some of the associations he made and you worked with him. I don't know if it was during that time, but talk about your experience with Michael Vick. You must have had some of those character attributes.

Marty Mornhinweg Well, Mike Vick and I are very close. In fact, he was on my podcast. He was the lead. The first guest on a Camp Mardy podcast dot com. Mike Vick. I've got a lot of respect for because he started sort of at the bottom. And he made it to the top, the very top of what he was trying to do with

the Atlanta Falcons and then a crash and burn that few people have ever been through. I mean, it was ugly. 18 months in prison and I got him right then out of the can. Yeah. And then he goes from the bottom again, right back to the top. Very quickly and has since become a great father. He's a great dad, a husband, a good friend of mine. I know that there's a select few people out there that will never sort of forgive him for what he did. But what about the second and third chances? I know many people would not be where they're out at if there weren't second and third chances, and he took advantage of them and went back to the top. Now he's in the TV and he's done very well and he does many things for others. I really think this that he has saved more dogs than he harmed, and he did a bad. It was it was horrible. And now I think he's helped kids, and I think he's really saved dogs lives to some extent. So is it a make up? I don't know. We can get deep into that, but I know this. He has helped kids. He's helped his community. He's helped even the whole country as far as the dogfighting situation.

Justin Angle Yeah, I would have to say that that that quality of resiliency. You know, you have to have it as an athlete. And I would think. I mean, they said about pitchers, right? Like, you have to have a short memory. I would assume quarterbacks have to have a pretty short memory, too.

Marty Mornhinweg Well, all players do, and sometimes it depends on where you play. When we were in Philadelphia, coaches players, can they hold up to the media scrutiny and I've seen it through up coaches and players. So in a place like Philadelphia or New York, where the media is large and they're viciousm you will almost have to have that mentality of we don't care what anybody says or thinks outside of our building. And inside of our building, we care very deeply about what people think and say. And then you get that bond like it's you against the whole world and you can go for as long as you have that mentality.

Justin Angle I've got to ask you about some of the challenges facing the game. I mean, you've been out coaching a little bit here have maybe had some time to reflect. Think about concussion in particular. I mean, you've worked with so many quarterbacks, that's that's an at-risk position, a targeted position. The issues maybe died down in the media a little bit over the last year or so, but it is a challenge to the game in many ways. How do you think about the issue of concussions and other kind of catastrophic injuries that players sustained?

Marty Mornhinweg Well, first, the health is a number one. It's just that simple, and the doctors have to be in charge of that period when something happens on a field. And I think the game of football has

made such great advances in the medical deal. Most of it is very, very good, like the concussion. We are on top of that now. The NFL is on top of that. And then you go through this concussion protocol if you happen to have received a concussion. And so very, very safe that way. Much more than it was back in the day where you had a little concussion, a little dizzy and you needed to get back in there even though you weren't thinking properly. So that part I know this has been outstanding in the past, let's say, 20 years.

Justin Angle So I want to make sure, Marty, we get to talk about your new project. You mentioned it before Camp Marty podcast Camp Marty Quarterback School, I think, is the full the full title of the show. Tell us about this endeavor. I mean, you've had on Mike Vick, as you mentioned, you've had Auld Steve Young. Tell us about it.

Marty Mornhinweg Here's what happened. I had a thought where I did a podcast. It would be two or three things in a story. And within those two or three things I may talk about individual specific player or an individual specific quarterback or position or anything on offense, defense, special teams. And then maybe a current event and then an interview or a conversation with a friend of the Camp Marty Quarterback School. Mm-Hmm. Next player. Next coach of a player that played right now, a man is coaching right now, a personnel man. I even want to get some analytic looks onto the podcast. That's very interesting to me. So it's endless. And so we have a conversation and usually is what happens is the story or stories that are told, and look at those stories are a big part of athletics, right?

Justin Angle Oh, 100%.

Marty Mornhinweg I think players don't miss those stories, but those stories will come from myself or my guest, and I've had fun with it. Camp Marty podcast dot com.

Justin Angle Well, final question for you, Marty. As you know, you chose the University of Montana in Missoula for your college career and now you've moved back here with your family. Why come back to Missoula? What's special about this place for you?

Marty Mornhinweg Thank you for bringing it up. My family very proud of all my kids. Bobby Cade, my youngest, is playing ball at Carroll College and then my wife Lindsey, by gosh. It was probably 20 years

ago we came to visit it and on the plane ride home, she said. That's where I want to be when you're all said and done and I'm going. I played the devil's advocate just a little bit and she goes, No, you don't understand. This isn't about you. This is about me. And that's where I want to be. So we bought a little piece. I'll bet it's been going on 20 years and then we executed it pretty well because our thought was when our youngest, Bobby Cade, got to be like a junior in high school would build a little place on that piece of property. And so we executed that well. And we've Home-Based really from Missoula, Montana, for probably more than six years now. Yeah, my wife would spend off seasons here. The kids are all young, single and so they would come for Christmas. Of course, I'd be in a hotel or on the field in some cases during Christmas. And then we would usually get all of the kids back in Montana for about a week in the summer. And the corona kind of kicked that day out, although I got three here. But this year we're going to get all four back in, back in the game, back in Montana. In fact, June 26, the Montana Pro Football Hall of Fame is going to happen June 20. So we're all going to congregate there and it's going to be like sort of a family reunion starting in Billings and ending up back in Missoula.

Justin Angle Fantastic. Well, we're happy to have you back here. Best of luck with the podcast. Congratulations on the Hall of Fame induction. Just one more question if the phone rings, are you answering it?

Marty Mornhinweg Oh, absolutely. There are some things that I still want to do. In fact, we were talking about this. My wife and I. There's probably been three or four times during our thirty one year marriage where my wife has gone. Man, that was a heck of a run. And I just said, Girl, it's just started. And so we talked about that recently. This ride's just starting for us. And so I think if you have that mentality, good things tend to happen anyway. And so thank you for bringing that up. We also do a Quarterback school for really the Missoula High School quarterback. That's what the emphasis is. And there's others from the state of high school quarterback Sally. They come into the camp. I usually have a guest coach, had the great Joe Glenn. I've had Mike Vick, among others, come in and and help coach. And it's one day. So we usually meet go on the field and it's a bunch of drill work. And then we come in and have lunch meat, go on the field for some progression and read work. And hopefully they get home and they've got several things that they can work on and work on it really, really hard. And then it may help them this fall become the player that they want to become.

Justin Angle Well, your passion for the game is evident. It's been fun learning about you and learning about your experiences.

Marty Mornhinweg Best of luck, coach. Thanks, Justin. Appreciate you having me on A New Angle.

Justin Angle Thanks, Marty. Thanks for listening to A New Angle. We really appreciate it. And we're coming to you from Studio 49, a generous gift from University of Montana alums Michelle and Loren Hansen. A New Angle is presented by First Security Bank, Blackfoot Communications and the University of Montana College of Business, with additional support from Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Drum Coffee and Montana Public Radio.

Aj Williams is our producer. VTO, Jeff Ament, and John Wicks made our music. Editing by Nick Mott and Jeff Meese is our master of all things sound. Thanks a lot. We'll see you next time.