



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with JP Mone & Dermot McArdle
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Pete Moore:

This is Pete Moore. I want to tell you about a company that is going to change the entire recruiting in the halo sector companies called game plan. We are game plan.com. What they do is they connect employer brands with D one D two D three athletes across the country. The power of the software that allows these employers to get in front of tens of thousands of athletes. If you watch the NCAA tournament, the hustle, grit, preparation, determination, and absolute desire to win, embodies every athlete out there. Now you're going to be able to put your brand in front of those athletes. Start to get them to understand after their college career, they can get into the halo sector, but work at a studio, a health club, fitness equipment, company, supplements, anything related to this industry. They can now parlay those skills and bring it into the sports and fitness industry that we are going to have the best athletes become the best employees and create the best companies. And that is the future of halo. 1, 2, 3, halo. We out game plan.com. Check it out.

Pete Moore:

This is Pete Moore on HALO Talks NYC. We are going international into Ireland with the punishers and we're going to talk about Spartan Ram. We've got

Pete Moore:

JP and Dermot coming in from Ireland to close out a week on a Friday. We're going to learn about what they're up to over there, and maybe some things

Pete Moore:

That we should do it over here.

Pete Moore:

So welcome to the show guys.

Speaker 3:

Cheers, Pete. Thanks. Thank you. Peace. Good to here.

Pete Moore:

Awesome. So why don't you give us some background on, you know, what brought you into the industry? I know you guys were athletes and athletes' kind of gravitate towards, you know, jobs that kind of feel like I'm on a team and I still want to win every day versus you know, maybe checking into an Excel model and a in a PowerPoint slide, which probably not up you guys' alley or not the first choice. So give us the, the sports accolades and we'll go from there.

Speaker 3:

Yeah, so we, we, we played sport at a high level here in Ireland. We played Gaelic games which is the national sports for maybe 15 years from our early twenties to our mid-thirties. And that was a, it was a, at a high level involved, a high level of training, a lot of dedication, and really takes up most of your life during that period of time. I suppose we were introduced to different modalities of training and power bags was definitely one of the, one of the tools that we would've used for a long time or, or sandbags. But we, we noticed a problem with them was that very simple problem is that they were always bursting. And as we came towards the end of our careers, we we'd started a different company called Gaelic performance, which was selling product into the Gaelic games market. And we decided that, look, we need to look at developing some sort of product that would suit the needs of, of the Gaelic games market, which was mainly a lot of outdoor training. A lot of wet weather, a lot of cold weather, and brought us around to developing the product of the Ram.

Pete Moore:

So I've got two Rams in my apartment in Manhattan beach. I'm not there right now, and I don't have a good security system. So I'm not going to give you my address for anybody listening here, but I got two Rams I believe I got a 25 and a 55 very simple product, but very, you know, smartly engineered. And so, so why don't you talk about, you know, from the bags breaking, but actually like the material that you used and, you know, the durability of that, and also you, you got size requirements, you got shipping, you know, and so on and so forth. So talk about engineering side of it.

Speaker 3:

Yeah, well first of all, we do have quite a strong greeny sauce to the company. You know, the world we need to, the way we live in the world, we all need to approach it slightly different. You know, we, we can't abuse it the way it has been abused for, for centuries now at this stage. So, so basically the, the concept of the actual Ram itself is what, what, sorry, Pete, before I, I, I carry on what Ram actually stands for which we get asked quite a lot is actually recycle and move. And the reason why it's actually called that is the Ram itself is made from recycled tires. Oh, okay. And then obviously it's a, it's a piece of exercise equipment. So movement is a big thing. So the Ram itself is very much functional movement piece of equipment. So that that's where Ram that's, that's how the name came about.

Pete Moore:

So yeah, we'll, we'll show some things on, on the on the show notes and maybe an image of the product, but ju just before we move on there, the product is very dense and very heavy. So talk about, you know, I don't know if it's like a concentrate to like add water too, but like how many tires are actually in there because it's pretty, yeah. It's not just one or two, I'm assuming I don't want to guess like a price. Right. But I want to know.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. Yeah. In, in each Ram, there's, there's two tires in each Ram. So up to 22 pounds, it's, it's solid rubber. And then obviously it's very important that we keep the, the sizes relatively the same size shoulder width, because you don't want to O over stream people as they lift them. Right. So how we actually get the extra weight and still leave them the same size is that we actually put recycle steel. We, we center there's quite a big engineering firm who is beside us at our factory where our factory's based in Ireland. So we take scrap metal from there, we reprocess it and then we center it within the actual Ram itself. And that's how we get the extra weight still leaving at the same size.

Pete Moore:

I gotcha. And do you, do you do you have to buy the used tires or do, do you, do you take them off people's hands?

Speaker 3:

There, there is a company that actually sources the tires force and actually grinds the tire down to the grid that we need. So if you can imagine if you're in a, on, on a football field in America, those we, little black things that get caught up in your shoe, when you come home, the house full of that's basically crumb rubber it's shredded tires. So the, the type of grid that we get is like a salt grid, nearly a sand type grid, which gives the around smooth surface,

Pete Moore:

Just as a completely side story. I used to play goalie in soccer and they started putting those little pellets out there. And there was, there was a ordinate amount of people that were soccer goalies that got some kind of rare cancer with the original tires that they were using because of like getting like, you know, like your little crevices or in your ears or what, whatever. There was like a 60 minutes video about that. But when you recycling tires with the tires that you're getting talk about like, well, one what that's doing to the environment, right. That tire's obviously not, you know, in the water and it's not on a beach somewhere where, where it could be. But is there anything that's going on with that rubber that's kind of been now you know, basically stabilized from an environmental standpoint or, you know, not emitting any issues of like, you know, waste.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. Obviously we're in Europe. And one thing about Europe is they're pretty strict on the regulations. So all our tires are sourced within Europe and, and that we, you know, you can, we're very conscious of that. And the company that we deal with who sources our tires force are very conscious of that as well. So as regards that there, there doesn't be an issue at all. There is, you know, in other parts of the world, you know, there's question marks over, over tires, but within Europe, you know, there's, there's not an it's heavily regulated.

Pete Moore:

Gotcha. So you developed this product because it's out of a frustration of something that you personally experienced. How did you then say, or did you say I was starting this company? Here's the size of the market? Here's our go to market strategy or, you know, ha did you kind of say, look, I know we need this, let's build it. And then like, let's go to this next sequential steps. So talk about how you built the business and what you learned from that or what you do differently.

Speaker 3:

Okay. So as I said, we, we built the product for our own needs. And so the market in Ireland for those similar needs is quite small. Right. and we sort of exhausted that fairly quickly and it's a very niche market that we have, we have in Ireland. So we had two choices either to go to the UK with the product next or go to the us. And as everybody knows that products to come outta the us have a much higher chance of being successful than, than, than most. So the us is, is where it's happening in, in the world of fitness. So we made a conscious decision that we were going to try and get some legs in the us and get some traction over there. And that's where, that's where we went with the, with, with the product. Do you want to tell?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, I suppose li literally what we did, Pete was I jumped on a plane and didn't know anything. Anyone just grasped them, whatever, whatever I could. And I ended, I went to a couple of trade shows and I met a guy called ya Culp. So I'm not too sure if you are familiar with that name, but within the OCR world the obstacle course racing world, he's a bit of, so I met this guy, this crazy guy who got the product straight away, met him at atha actually. Yeah. And 18. And I didn't know who this guy was, but he said, listen, I'm involved with this sport called Lucy. And I think this is a great product we could fit in really well. So I came back to Ireland. He reached back out to me and he said, listen, I'm going to introduce this to a guy called Joe.

Pete Moore:

Oh, sure.

Speaker 3:

And I knew a little bit about Spartan. Didn't know much about Joe DeSena but's introduction of the Ram to Joe DeSena was literally Joe texted him in the middle of the egg to do a workout with him as Joe does. And ya had the Ram with him, took it down into the hotel lobby and the two guys done a workout and that convinced Joe straight away, he said, what's this, I got to meet these guys told him about us. So yeah. So we, so we,

Pete Moore:

So take away, number one is find the craziest guy at the trade jail and get him as your brand ambassador and sales guy. Just see what happens.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. That's exactly how

Pete Moore:

That's take away. Number one,

Speaker 3:

That's exactly how you do,

Pete Moore:

But I'm paying somebody a hundred thousand dollars to do an Instagram post. We're going to about the most eccentric guy. He's going to open doors for us. Strategy, number one, successful, keep going.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. So Joe drew YY, Joe reached out to us, Spartan, reached out to us. We met with them. They liked what we were doing. Obviously we liked what Spartan was doing. And we sat down, we stuck a deal. So we rebranded the, the product as the Spartan ran. And that was back in late 2018. They introduced us basically with that done, that, that raised our profile straight away. They introduced us to the Spartan world, right? So rather than us being a product out there, trying to be everything to anyone, we, we soon discovered that we needed to get into a niche market and really drill down into that market.

Pete Moore:

Let me ask you a question. Let me ask you a question on that. Cuz, we got a lot of entrepreneurs listening to this and what you guys did was found a great partner and it sounded like you didn't hesitate to say, Hey, this is a, this is a pathway for me to go big and I'm going to give up my name and I'm going to, I'm going to borrow theirs. A lot of, a lot of entrepreneurs think like this is my company. I'm independent. Nobody gets a piece of my business. I'm going straight down the fairway. And you know, I'm not, I'm not doing these partnerships that kind of put me in very close relationship at an early stage. Right. Cause they think that they could create their own a hundred or \$200 million \$500 million company. So when did you, you realize that, Hey look, the pie's bigger and let's, let's leverage what somebody else is doing and you, we can still do what we want to do successfully.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. I, I think, I think we realized that just before we, we, I think we still realized that we didn't realize what we were doing was Spartan at the team, but looking back on it now, we were like that entrepreneur that thought we can go our own way. And one, one thing that we have learned from the Spartan partnership that, yes, we've a very, very good product, but at the end of the day, we're not going to revolutionize the world of fitness with, with our product. And that what benefits us is actually going out there and seeking these partnerships. And that's what, that's, what has accelerated our growth and which will help our growth in the future. Sorry, Darren.

Pete Moore:

That's great.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. I think when we did get talking to Spartan, we, we quickly realized that look from our beginnings was a niche market in games, the Spartan or OCR world was a, a niche market except it was a hundred times bigger than our original niche market. And we, we knew that if we could really make an impact in that, in that one, you know, if you want to call it inch wide mile deep market, but then we had way a better chance of succeeding. And that's the opportunity to

Pete Moore:

Spark just to, just to note here when entrepreneurs try to go and raise, you know, money from venture capital firms, one of the top 10 questions are like, what's the total addressable market, right? And if a big VC doesn't see like a billion dollar addressable market, they'll say, oh, this is not worth my time. Whereas some of the best companies that engineer the best products do exactly what you're talking about doing is like own the market, understand the customer, design the product, and then what we want to grow, we'll figure out an adjacent market to go to for what we've just learned by basically capturing a hundred percent market share of a niche market. So, you know, if you guys were a business

school, so wouldn't be like, Hey you know, JP, like you got to think bigger. And the answer is like, think like you did dominate it and then there's always growth.

Pete Moore:

There's always something else to do. Right. So I just want to make, I want to give you guys' credit for that. And also for the Spartan decision, which I think nine outta 10 entrepreneurs would say, you know what, I'm an early stage company. I'm not tagging on it onto somebody else. You know, I can do this by myself. And that's a naive way to think about it. You know, when you can land a large elephant like that, that's throwing on their own with a dynamic CEO. Like, you know, Joe's like, I mean, he's out there probably at the Starbucks, he's out there, you know, park his car, he's out. Like, he's, he's like your brand ambassador from IRSA man. He's going to get noticed. Right. So our product goes along with it, right?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, absolutely.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. So, so take us down the next path. So obviously spart reef did really well. Yeah.

Speaker 3:

So sorry. Yeah, we, we in two 19, yeah. We, we we'd done the deal of Spartan and they introduced us to Spartans through their races. So I'd done a few popups kind of shops, if you want to call that at some of the races and then we had this, they have the stadium race series. So they had this idea. Let's, let's get you into an obstacle as an actual obstacle. So in yeah, in April of 2019, or sorry, may of 2019, we'd done our first race stadium race in Arizona Cardinal stadium. And yeah, it went down really well. So basically up what it was, was 15 Ram buries. And what the Rambo is, is a bur with the 55 pound for the guys and a 33 pound for the, for the girls. So

Pete Moore:

You'll do 15 of them

Speaker 3:

Got to do 15 of them. Yeah. And people quickly realized they didn't know what the Ram was, but after coming outta the obstacle, they knew what the Ram was kind of thing. And we quickly became established as an obstacle in the stadium, real series, one of the most feared, but one of the most enjoyable as well, and one of the most testing. So, so on the back of that, it, it really raised our profile within that market. Fast forward to the end of the year, things went really, really well. Sales went really, really well. We, at the start of 2020, we were ready to kick off Spartan. We're ready to introduce us into more DS, more. There was other things had happened. We got introduced through, through people just coming up to us at the Spartan race races. We got introduced to other companies, other things happening, and then that thing called the pandemic kicked in. So it, at the time, just when, after all the work that we done, it seemed like, you know, wow, why did this happen? You know, the five years of you of trying to get to a reward. And then this thing called the pandemic happened,

Pete Moore:

Did what'd you do on that? I mean, you guys sent me a couple ramps again, I'm not telling people where I lived. I disclosed, I got two in the back bedroom in my gym and, and I use a, and I like, did you have a big rush of home equipment?

Speaker 3:

We, we, we had, we had some, but the problem we had is that we weren't established enough in the general fitness market. So when somebody went to look for a piece of home fitness equipment, they were searching for a kettle bell or a dumbbell, something that they

Pete Moore:

Knew. I got you. I got you.

Speaker 3:

So yeah, we, we got, we definitely sales, sales increased.

Pete Moore:

Did you, did Spartan have an e-commerce site where they were selling equipment that you guys tacked onto, but then that wasn't like the mainstream of like people going on? Were you on Amazon?

Speaker 3:

We weren't on Amazon. No, no. We were selling mainly on two channels to our own website and through Spartans eCommerce offering as well.

Pete Moore:

Got it. So you took like an 18 month break, right? Like all of us did. And like, I actually saw like flowers grow in the backyard and that there are animals that, that cohabitate with us. I never real realized that until a couple months into the pandemic and I wasn't on airplane and I'm like, wow, like I've seen this flower kind of grow up. And these squirrels see dull, hang out every Thursday, you know, at this one tree. And I was like, that's pretty cool. I didn't really appreciate nature. So during the pandemic, what did you learn about your own business and say, if there is another issue like this, that's probably once in a lifetime, you know, what did you guys do to re-engineer the business? Re-Engineer your brain? Just say like, Hey, shit happens and it's not going to happen again and just skip back in it.

Speaker 3:

So we, we very quickly decided to focus on people who, who are going to be outta work in the indoor fitness industry. So we, we put an offering together that we call our Spartan Ram package for trainers who wanted to start training people outdoors. And that went really successful for us. It was people who had been working at gyms who, who didn't have work. It was people who already had boot camps as well and wanted to offer something different. And it sustained us through the pandemic. We, we, and we actually blossomed as a result of that. I think we had, we had over, was it about 150 affiliates? Actually, we, we put together a package. We actually developed our own app as well. Which, which, which we still use. And it's still very much a big part of, of, of our business.

Speaker 3:

So we developed the app and what the app was, was the trainer led app. And so basically we put together a package where they could actually buy the physical product, but we also provided the affiliate with all the training, all the educational videos actually certification that came with CS as well. So it was quite a, quite a good package and a lot of people availed of it. And yeah, it, it, it really sustained us. And MC D said it helped us even blossom even more. And it probably allowed us to reach into another end of the market that other ways we probably wouldn't have concentrated on at the time. So it it's even further our expansion out into the fitness market, even more

Pete Moore:

Awesome. Well I, that you, you're doing things that are, you know, environmentally friendly, you know, taking products that are not designed properly and make 'em better. Right. And that's going to turn into more results for, for, you know, consumers. And I think the pandemic kind of made you think about, Hey, there's other avenues like this business model is not just a product, it's a service it's people that can use it. It's the training down. And I think I think every company needs to think about that now, you know, we're working with a business right now that makes products, but they've got a huge trainer network and they've also got a, a big commercial network and they've got a consumer network and each one of those end users has a different demand of what they're getting out of it. And you got to figure out how to, you know, cater to each one of them. You know, almost like equally,

Speaker 3:

I, I can fully understand, I can fully understand that Pete, because it, it actually gave us time to look at other ends of the market. Other ways we could have been just crazy, crazy busy with Spartan and, and not have looked at it. So during that time as well, we, the people who actually approached us who had seen us at, with Spartan during the race time approached us and we were able to develop certain things with them. So when the time PM that America opened back up to European travel last November, I was able to get back out. So, so we do a lot there. Now with camp gladiator, we actually establish a relationship with camp gladiator. They invited me out to their CG games then to their conference at the end of last year. And again, another partnership that we've gone into business with and it's, it's working out extremely well.

Speaker 3:

Like we're offering a whole new piece of equipment to, to their trainers, to what they offer, and it's offering us a whole new market and they're, they're big operators and furnace. They're an ideal company for us. Another very interesting part, hopefully it it's, it's going to really flourish. It's going really well so far is we've started doing quite a bit with the, with the military with the national guard in particular. And they've, they, they're great guys to work with great people to work with because they're brilliant at giving us feedback on the product, on how they use it and how they utilize it to the best of its ability. So we, we have other products as well that we're in development that we've, we've actually given the gaze at the national guard and the, and the military who are at, at this moment, you are giving us vital feedback on it. And we're very close to doing stuff, more stuff with them on that. So, so the military's another, another big thing. Another market that we've managed to get our toes in the door with.

Pete Moore:

That's great. We'll congrats on the success and the you know, stain power you know, making decisions that looking back were smart decisions, but you know, a lot of people, I don't think make those

especially when you, you know, it's like your first company you usually learn from the first company. So you guys, I think, you know, amazed this through, you know, as elegantly as you could to accomplish where you're at. So congrats on that. I think a lot of people could learn from the, the decisions you made, whether they were instinctual or, you know, very thoughtful. You could sit in a whiteboard and you can just say, we're doing this. Or you can like put a lot of things on a whiteboard, get to see answer. Great to see you look forward to seeing you in person great work on building the business. And I look forward to hearing more about the partnership as you guys take. Thanks for the product, by the way.

Speaker 3:

No,

Pete Moore:

You guys, bro. Check that out. <Laugh> later.