



Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Christian Ponder
Posted May 5, 2023

Pete Moore ([00:04](#)):

I want to thank all of our listeners for several years of dedicated and loyal listening throughout the Halo Talks 400 podcast completed to date. We're going to a thousand by 2024. If you're so inclined, we'd love to have you go to iTunes for us, fill out a review so we can keep this podcast rolling globally. We are now on Charitable's top lists and moving up the charts. Also, if you want to educate yourself on a new year, please go to the halo.academy.com. Take a look at, we'll be done with 150 executives in the halo sector to get them smarter, get them prepared for capital raises, and also more winning. Thanks, have a great season. Let's go.

Pete Moore ([00:58](#)):

([00:58](#)):

This is Pete Moore on Halo Talks NYC. I have the pleasure of bringing professional athlete, CEO, e founder of the Post, and someone who will be future quarterback for my tight end skills. I am currently undrafted, and in my next lifetime I'll have a LinkedIn resume that mimics Chris Ponder. So welcome to the show, Christian.

Christian Ponder ([01:20](#)):

I, I appreciate it, Pete. And what I actually appreciate you is that you're going to, you're willing to say that you want to be a tight end. I think most people will probably say wide receiver, that's the more, more glamorous position. But you're like the humility of being able to say, no, I'm, I'm a tight end, not a receiver.

Pete Moore ([01:33](#)):

Well, look, I probably had a 12 inch vertical leap back in high school, <laugh>, and people accused me of not being able to get separation. Yeah, yeah. I did one time run a, I was playing in the Hamptons, we'll start off this with a little personal story. I was playing five on three on three in the Hamptons back when I was 40, so 10 years ago. And I started hearing the wind and I'm like, guys, I think this is fastest as I've ever run. And I'm like, mark off 40 yards and I'll run it. So I drink a diet Coke, and then I run 40 yards and I clock in at 4.3. I'm like, yeah, guys, I told you like I'm fast. Like, no way, dude. Like, I must have done a stop watch that's like N f NFL combine, you know, running back. So I do it again. I run a four eight, and then we realized it was 33 yards <laugh>. So I tell people I ran at 4 3 33.

Christian Ponder (02:19):

I like that. That's good. Which is good because like, you know, they can't really apply the math and figure out what the extra seven yards was worth. So I think that's I like that. It's a good idea.

Pete Moore (02:29):

And I think I was accelerating. I think I was probably going to accelerate at the end. Yeah. <laugh> a horse. <Laugh>. Yeah,

Christian Ponder (02:35):

Maybe. Yeah, maybe not. That's good. That's

Pete Moore (02:37):

Good. Anyway, I'm currently, I'm currently undrafted. I got four years of eligibility left. So this is not about me though. It's about you. So thanks for coming on the show. Of course. You know, as our listener based knows, we use this term halo, you know, health, active lifestyle, outdoors. And during Covid we wrote a book that I think is probably like your playbook, if you will, for the post, which is basically run your organization and your business as if you're running a professional sports team and the people you bring in, they better be, winners are also not going to make the cut. So talk a little bit about, you know, what you're doing with the Post and, and how your professional career kind of guided you towards this as the next evolution of what you wanted to do and commit your time to.

Christian Ponder (03:19):

Yeah, well, I, I, I appreciate the, the question, Pete, and, and look, the, the, the Post really, it, it's a leadership network exclusive to athletes. You know, how it started was really in my own, my own experience and my own journey. My last year in the NFL was 2016 with the 49ers and, and moved to New York City in 2017, August, 2017 for me to start the next chapter of my life, which I was actually excited for. I, I got my undergrad in finance and got my MBA while I was still in school playing football Florida State. Then my, my father's in finance. And so for me, the natural bridge was just goki plugging the financial world, starting wealth management. And, and New York City made the best sense to go to go figure that one out. And so that's where I started bouncing around the financial world for a few years, tried my hand at calling a few games, college football games in the, in the booth, which did not go so well.

(04:08):

I did not enjoy it at all. Actually watched, I felt like I watched more film preparing for that experience and when I was actually playing. And so try that. But, you know, during, during that time just really felt this, this deep discontentment around the idea that I've been an athlete my whole life. It's the huge part of my identity and my story. But what I realized was even more foreignly is the community that I to I, I've been on teams and locker rooms since I was four, four years old. And so to be removed from the people that I get along best that I'm most comfortable around, that I think other than my immediate family, make me the best version of myself. That, that was the most difficult part. And so when I started looking for places to plug into and belong to in New York City, I joined soho House, I looked at Core Club, I looked at ypo, some of these other professional networks out there, and, you know so House is great, but I felt very out of place.

(05:02):

And these other organizations provide a lot of value to their members, but just didn't feel like they were for me. And that's when the light bulb went off in my head. It, you know, it, it just didn't make sense that I had to just stop being an athlete and I had to just reduce that part of my life to the stories I tell about my past self and how do we, how do we have a continuation of what it means to be an athlete? And that's where the post started. It originally was, let's just build a social club like soho House for Athletes, which actually got a lot of validation, but also felt like it fell really far short the opportunity. And we fully believe the opportunity to, for us is to build what we think is the most, is the strongest, most dynamic, most effective most diverse leadership and professional network out there through its exclusivity athletes, because we fully believe in, you just talked about it in the book that you wrote, then we think athletes are really uniquely gifted to do really well in life after sport.

[\(05:52\)](#):

And, and for us, we just want to create that next locker room. You know, that next team sport ecosystem we had when we're played, right? When we were playing team sports, that was all built around. You had your teammates, your peers, that support network, you had your coaches, right? All those resources that were built around making you the best athlete that you could be. And so how do we take that same group of people who are uniquely qualified and gifted to do extraordinary well in life after sport? And given that same ecosystem, you have your teammates, your peers, you have the resources, you have the coaches all built around making you the best professional and person in general that you can be.

Pete Moore [\(06:25\)](#):

Yeah, I mean, that's awesome. I think that, you know, the reason why we wrote the book, one is during Covid, you know, were advisors to the bricks and mortar health and fitness industry, not the best profession, given that all of our clients were closed basically on the brink of bankruptcy. And then we saw the last dance documentary on espn. I'm like, wow, there's so many analogies to how you run a successful and repeatable business. Yeah. A you know, a dynasty in sports, and why can't you replicate that? You know, there's not many companies out there right now that have position coaches. You know, the NFL would, you know, have your, you have a coach for every position, right? In business, you've got a, you know, a head of sales. There's no, there's no sales trainer that I could go to or who's like looking out to optimize me as a player.

[\(07:15\)](#):

And then I don't know why corporate America still uses this term human resources. Like, do I, do I feel like a human resource or am I, like every company should have a head of player personnel and I'm hiring you to play on my team and I'm going to optimize you. And you're either a project, right, and you don't need a lot, or I'm going to make you awesome. And I'm going to give you all the tools. So when you think about the post-game and what things are you bringing to athletes to say, don't abandon how we did things. Infuse it Yeah. And use it.

Christian Ponder [\(07:49\)](#):

Yeah, for sure. You done

Pete Moore [\(07:50\)](#):

Up it and use it. You can use that if you want. <Laugh>.

Christian Ponder [\(07:54\)](#):

I, look we fully embrace the idea, like, let's, let's lean into what it means to be an athlete, right? I think so many of us feel, and, and, and society kind of pushes us to feel this way. It, it's like being an athlete with some sort of liability. I mean, I think it's fully why we say things like you know, we of course like, oh, I'm more than an athlete, or the N F NFL PA puts out the athlete and campaign, which I look is completely valid tension. But the, the negative framing around being an athlete or the framing around being an athlete is so negative, right? It's not like we hear people say, I am more than a doctor, or I'm more than a lawyer, or I'm more than a teacher, or whatever. But, but we have to almost diminish what it means to be an athlete and say, oh, but I'm not just that, I'm almost to all these other things. And for us, like, gosh, if you played sport at the

Pete Moore ([08:39](#)):

Highest, it's not like a misnomer of

Christian Ponder ([08:41](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Like, yeah.

Pete Moore ([08:44](#)):

Are you saying like, basically like some people say like, yeah, I was an athlete and now I'm like a business person. It's like, yeah, I'm always an athlete. Always. I just happen to always play in like a different sport sports business, right?

Christian Ponder ([08:53](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Like, and business is sport. How is any different? It might not be the adrenaline rush we had when we were playing sports, but it requires the same exact things that made you, you know, win in, in sports and like, so if you were a great athlete, if you played, so the post is exclusive to former collegiate professional Olympic athletes. If you got that high, if you achieved that high level of, of sport then you have the qualities it takes to be successful. Any, anything else in life, right? It's the work ethic, the grittiness, the dedication, the determination. Hundred percent. You're dealing with success and failure and all those things. So that's why we say like, you have all the soft skills it takes to be successful. It's honestly the harder stop. The, you don't necessarily might not have the hard skills, but the hard skills are so much easier to learn.

([09:35](#)):

The soft skills are developed over time. And so, right. You know, the data actually proves it. I mean you know, I'd say way athletes make up less than 2% of the US population yet to count for 15 of the last 21 US presidents. 52% of women in the C-suite today and outpaces the number of Fortune 500 CEOs. That, that's like a, that's a tremendous outperformance compared to people who are not athletes at the collegiate level. I mean, that's, that's crazy. And so for us, how do we, how do we consolidate that group into one space that is able to support each other, but push each other to be better? I mean, we're so surround, we're often so surrounded by are, are most influenced by the people we surround ourselves with. So why not surround ourselves with people who are those athletes defined by those qualities who are going to push each other to achieve more and do better.

Pete Moore ([10:18](#)):

So going back to when you retired from the N F L and started working in finance and, and you know, started to get infused into business, what are some of the things that stood out to you? You know, to

use our, you know, my tight end, you know, let's pretend I'm my tight end for a second. You cool with that? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, thanks. If I'm doing a five, if I'm doing like a seven yard button hook or down and out, like, you know exactly where I'm going to be, I know exactly where you're going to throw to football. Yet in business, they hire somebody to give 'em a script, you know, and it's like, yeah, you could use a script or you could, yeah. You'll go off script or it's like, no, run the fuck, run the playbook. Like, I'm giving you a playbook and we have to execute on this playbook. This isn't Yeah. You know, free, you know, free freelancing your way through sales. So are, are there some things that you maybe were shocked by or taken aback, like how you guys run an organization like this without being Yeah.

Christian Ponder ([11:12](#)):

Look, I,

([11:14](#)):

Yeah, I think what, what, there is an adjustment period of like, it's a completely different dynamic, right? It's, it's very, it's very different than being in the locker room being in a high energy space. It, it's, it's, you, you had to navigate a complete different environment, right? And, and so and also like, we actually had, so one of our, one of our members recently, we, we hosted q and a and he was like, you know, I have such a hard time. He was an athlete of being around athletes. We were always holding ourselves to the highest level of accountability and, and we were holding each other to the highest level of accountability, right? Because we were all, my success depended on my teammate's success. And so we were, we knew we were in this collectively to try to pursue this, achieve this goal.

([11:59](#)):

And, and it's not necessarily that case in a work environment. And it's like, you know, he was asking questions like, how, how, how do I hold someone else to a higher level of accountability when they don't even hold themselves to a, like, low level accountability? And, and so there, there's just different ways of speaking and operating. And, and so there is a bit of a learning curve and like, what's appropriate and what's not appropriate. Like, you know, we're definitely not cussing people out in the office cause they <laugh> to do a good enough job. They do an inter exception or like, or drop the sales call or whatever. And so it's just, it's, it's a, it's a totally different dynamic that you have to learn and, and navigate through that's very different than sport. And that's why I do think every time members say, Hey, I want to hire athletes. And I think that's probably why I think we're so comfortable with those people in those environments that it does make, even taking that space and a and building it in a different way in business is, is helpful for a lot of people.

Pete Moore ([12:57](#)):

Yeah. You know, some of the things that I feel like need to be further infused as athletes and those stats that you gave were awesome. I didn't know that about, you know, 2% of college athletes and, and where those, you know, people have, have achieved and where they're at. You know, they're, they're health clubs that we work with in studios and they give somebody a shirt, but it doesn't have their name on it. You know, they're spending a thousand, \$2,000 hiring somebody and it's like, Hey, you're representing my brand. You, you are my team. Like you are my asset. You represent and we got to try and win together, yet I'm not willing to pay 70 bucks and put your last name on the back of a jersey. Right. And I feel like, you know, the last thing anybody wants to do if they're an athlete or if they're a post-it, you know, playing athlete is to get their jersey, they have to give back their jersey. That's what I tell them, the health clubs. If somebody leaves or you got to fire 'em, take their jersey, un-embroider the letters in public and then put the next person's name on the back.

Christian Ponder ([13:56](#)):

<Laugh>

Pete Moore ([13:58](#)):

I know when I put a jersey on whatever I'm do, man, if I put a jersey on, like, it's like, it's go time. Right?

Christian Ponder ([14:04](#)):

Yeah.

Pete Moore ([14:05](#)):

So when, when you think about, you know, how you're helping optimize athletes either becoming entrepreneurs or a network, you know, what are you providing with the post to say, here here's like the framework of like this new sport, which is business. Yeah. And here's kind of what I've taken my on it and here's the tools and the resources I've got to give you to win,

Christian Ponder ([14:28](#)):

Continue to win. Yeah. So, so what what's unique about us is, you know, a lot of these communities I think are, are built around or these services that are built around helping athletes in life after sport really focus on the transitional phase as athletes are leaving. So collegiate athletes who are 22 years old, who really are unsure where they want to start in, in business or professional athletes who, who are just getting you know, post sports career. For us, we're starting at the next step. We're actually building a community, what we call the veteran locker room, right? When I was a freshman at Florida State, or a rookie with the Vikings, I stepped into a space where, you know, there are veterans in the locker room who've been successful year after year and have been there for a long time and know what it takes.

([15:11](#)):

And so for us, we're starting to build the veteran locker room. So people who have transitioned really well from sport and applied it really successfully to business. And so primarily our membership is over the age of 39, they're DP level and higher in business and just still identify as athletes and miss that level of accountability and, and being around athletes to push 'em to be more. And, and so really that's the support group we're starting with the resources we provide. You know, we're kind of the two things that our pillars are. Value pillars are number one, the people, so the community and the network. And number two, it's about resources. And those resources, you know, are about a lot of what we believe in and like I said, is taking that athlete mentality and applying to the business. And so as athletes we're always really good at setting goals and coming up with plans and mapping how I achieve those goals.

([16:01](#)):

And part of mapping and how I achieve those goals is identifying obstacles. And so you know, for me, like, gosh, we're, we're playing a lot of three, four defenses this year. They're kind of a lot of exotic looks. I'm, I'm not as confident knowing a three, four defense, whereas a four three, well I got to invest in the time and understanding three, four blisses, I got to, or three, four defense. I got to start understanding more exotic blitzes that we're seeing and you know, and, and, and so spending the time investing to make sure that I'm getting better in those specific areas. And so how, how is that any different than what we should be doing in business? And so a lot of us, it's, it's about setting the right goals and identifying the obstacles and then for us, investing the resources to help you remove those obstacles.

([16:40](#)):

So like, you know, as a CEO, gosh, that'd be better be really good at communications. Well, maybe my communication kind of sucks. So how do we bring in someone who's going to help us remove that communications obstacle or help us in storytelling and telling a better story because that's so important. And in pushing the fundraiser it's so important in the sales call and all those things. And or, or optimization itself, like, gosh, like I lose focus at 2:00 PM cuz I love sugar and so I'm going to eat a donut three donuts in the morning and I'm going to pay for it at two o'clock in the afternoon. How do we optimize nutrition, right for work? Like all those things. And, and so, you know, we're committed to bringing those resources, those experts in, in a content form. You know, we're committed to, we'll do an annual conference every year. But really, I think what, what is important is being around, again, we're so influenced by the people who are, we surround ourselves with and surrounding ourselves with people who are already high performers, but who understand that like, my best performance is yet to come. I think that's what always made the best athletes, those people that knew that they had not achieved peak performance yet. And there's always opportunities to get better. And so being with that group to push ourselves to get better. Gotcha.

Pete Moore ([17:48](#)):

So just give us the, the, the business model here. So you're going to have a, a bricks and mortar location on 23rd Street,

Christian Ponder ([17:55](#)):

Correct?

Pete Moore ([17:55](#)):

Yeah. And then is it that's basically backed by an online platform to deliver the resources. And then would the idea be to go into other hub cities and have a bricks and mortar so you have a, a physical meeting space?

Christian Ponder ([18:08](#)):

Yep, exactly. So we are, we're launching a national membership this month in April. And but we're opening our first physical space in New York City. So right now, actually like 58% of our members are outside of New York. 42% are in New York City. You know, we've take a lot of inspiration from the y deal model. YPO has been around for over 70 years and you know, as a nonprofit they have 40,000 global members. So we take a lot of experie from that cohort model, right? That's, that's a proven model building these peer-to-peer advisory groups. And, and same thing for us. The, the beauty of those peer-to-peer advisory groups, they only work well when you could be vulnerable in those groups and ask for help or advice or like, Hey, you know, we're leaders, business leaders trying to solve similar issues or add similar experiences and relying on crowdsourcing that knowledge to help us solve these issues as we, as we face and as business leaders, as people, as you know, spouses, as parents, whatever it is.

([19:01](#)):

And so for us, really banking on the idea that there's so much commonality between athletes, the shared life experience, intersystem value systems that create so much connective tissue to build trust and relationships really quickly and, and therefore create vulnerability very fast. And, and to be able to rely on those peer advisory groups for, for you know, continued support and, and success as we all pursue to achieve more. And, and so we believe in that. So every, every member will get placed on a peer advisory group. YPO calls 'em forums. There's another group called Chief that took YPO, made exclusive women executives. They call them core groups, we call them teams. We're going to place you

on a team. And so we encourage those teams to meet on a monthly basis for a couple hours a month, but really, it's up for their, the team to decide for them how often and when they want to meet.

[\(19:47\)](#):

And then, and like you said, we have a, we have a we have an app that is instantaneous connection for the members where they can look through the member directory, you know, directly message somebody. We have a home feed that people can post questions or say, Hey, I'm traveling to Miami, Florida cause any members want to beat up or you know, I'm doing a golf outing, so you want to come play golf. We are Gotcha. And so, you know, add that to the content, content will be hosted there, but then a lot of in-person events you know, we believe in and, and minimizing the digital experience, I think people are tired of, of living digitally and, and how we get people together again in, in-person events. Whether that's a, you know, pickleball tournament in Central Park or pick basketball game and Chelsea Pierce or whatever it is. But how do we get, how do we bring people together?

Pete Moore [\(20:31\)](#):

Yeah, no, that's great. Once I started getting into meetings and off Zoom, I felt like there's way more follow ups, there's a lot more energy and ideas that flow in person. There's really no Yeah. You know, substitute for that. So, you know, if you take a look at, I think there's a hundred thousand N C A A, you know, college sports athletes, you know, in any given four year period you know, are you marketing to basically anyone from every, any sport should be part of the post. And that's kind of like your, your one requirement.

Christian Ponder [\(21:02\)](#):

Yeah. So basically we say our, our qualifications to be a member, or you had to be at least the NCAA athlete, so an NCAA Olympic or professional athlete. So like the few that never played in the NCAA but went professional or played on the National Olympic team, whatever, like you, you had to play in one of those three levels. And then we say you had to be at least a five year pro. So that five year pro could be you were, you know, professional athlete, you've played in the NFL for five years, or you've played the W N B A for five years or whatever it is. Or if you were a collegiate athlete and, and didn't play professional sport, you had to be at least in business for five years. This is, this is a network, right? A network. The, the value of the network is derived by the people in the network. We want our members to extract value of the network, but the network only has value by their contributions to the network. And so, you know, a 22 year old fresh out of college who we think we can eventually help isn't going to provide that much value. I think they're going to extract way more than they will provide, but we, we want leaders who will, who will provide and, and add to that, you know, advisory group, add to that crowdsource knowledge that people are looking for.

Pete Moore [\(22:02\)](#):

That's great. So, you know, in closing here, you know, any takeaways, you know, for, if you were to say to your younger self, you know, you know, before you went into the N F L here's things I need to prepare for after my career. Maybe you've done that, it sounds like you, you kind of float in here and that a smooth, you know, ascension slash transition. But you know, to, to athletes that elicit now, what should they be doing in order to prepare for, you know, their career's probably not going to end at 44 if you're a professional athlete. You know, there's only a couple, couple of guys that they're women that do that. So what, what would be some of the takeaways?

Christian Ponder [\(22:40\)](#):

Yeah, look, I think there's no better time to prepare for the transition than before the transition ever happens. I, I think one of the, one of the difficulties of, of that transition is we're so narrowly focused on our sport for so long, right? And, and that's really what we've invested all our interest in and, and, and everything. And so when it's removed, there's a lot of uncertainty around what, what am I interested? What are my strengths outside of being a quarterback or, or whatever. Yeah. And so doing some, some self-scouting work, right? Athletes are great at running self-scouting on our performance. Like, what went well, what didn't go well? How can I get better? And, and so same thing like run a self-scouting report on, on what are you good at? How does that translate into the business world? What could you be interested in and start trying things out, try to get internships, try to get introduced to people in those fields.

[\(23:26\)](#):

And, and, and if you have more of that figured out before you hit the transition, then, then that's going to be helpful. And then be confident. I think the other problem is we're so, we're so insecure and we lack so much confidence going into that transition because we were so secure and confident in who we are, specific to the scope of being an athlete and then going into those new environments and new responsibilities that that lack of confidence gets hard. And, and then also we're trying to do it by ourselves. So to get plugged into a community like the Post, to have confidence in, again, like being an athlete is, is a competitive advantage. It's not a liability. And then doing some self-scouting work to figure out what are, what are you actually interested or what are your strengths? And how does that transition in the business world in specific industries?

Pete Moore [\(24:09\)](#):

That's awesome. Well, look man, I, I love what you're doing. You know, we think athletes are, you know, the, the most appropriate hunting ground for halo companies. We use the term halo instead of wellness, health, active lifestyle, outdoors. What we want to do is create a feeder network of all these athletes, you know, spending five years and then becoming part of the post. And then a health club can say, Hey, you know, I'm Tallahassee, who, you know, who's your personal trainers? Oh, we got two wide receivers. We've got two, two women from the swim team. We've got a volleyball. You know, and that becomes like part of like the, the, the feed from, Hey, I want to work out, you know, with, with a college athlete. Like that person knows how to win and I, I want to win too. Yeah. You know, or you know, I, I had an affinity toward Yeah, for sure.

[\(24:55\)](#):

At that sport. So look, I, we'll look, we'll meet up in person. I'll meet you at Woman Rank Rink. We can we can play some pickleball. I'll bring my ball with me and my gloves. Great. Good. If you want to out the arm, <laugh>, just going to tell you my, my, my speed might not be at 4 3 33 anymore. That might be like 4, 6 33. But the other thing I want to just, just put out there is we run something called a Halo Academy, and it's five business school classes. We do it over a two week period. So basically breaks down the business model on Planet Fitness, CrossFit, soul Cycle, cycle for Survival and Peloton, and like understanding the, you know, how, what the special sauce is and how the business works. So is there, if there's anything we could do, yeah, I don't know if I could go back and get four years of college you know, to, to apply. I'm happy to be a guest speaker and you put me appreciate outside the post and I can just shout in <laugh>, so I

Christian Ponder [\(25:49\)](#):

Appreciate

Pete Moore ([25:50](#)):

That. Well, I love what you're doing. Thanks, Pete. Yeah. Let's be an exit between what you guys are doing and what this industry needs and, and give these athletes the respect that they deserve to transition in and not have to like, think that they're going lateral or down to go back home.

Christian Ponder ([26:06](#)):

For sure. I, I love that Pete.

Pete Moore ([26:08](#)):

Awesome.