



# Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 688, Interview with Marcus Daniell

**Jasmin Singer:** Welcome to Our Hen House, Marcus.

**Marcus Daniell:** Lovely to be here. Thanks for having me.

**Jasmin:** So, what time is it in New Zealand right now?

**Marcus:** It's 11:36 AM on a beautiful summer's day.

**Jasmin:** When you look over, are you looking at the beach? Is that what's happening?

**Marcus:** Almost. I have a bit of a water view. We're sort of at the edge of a harbor, so it's very tidal, but at the moment, it's high tide, so everything's filled in, and the water color is absolutely stunning.

**Jasmin:** I'm not sure why we didn't do this interview in person. I mean, not that Rochester is not lovely, but next time we'll just do a follow-up in New Zealand.

**Marcus:** Just pop over. Quick trip.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, maybe for lunch...in three days.

So obviously, we have a lot to talk about. We want to talk about High Impact Athletes and what it is trying to accomplish in the world. But before we get into that, introduce us to your own athletic career.

**Marcus:** I am a professional tennis player. I have been doing that since I was very young. I guess I decided to try and devote a career to this when I was about 15 and went pro when I was 17. Moved over to Slovakia by myself and started playing in pro circuit tournaments. Very long, arduous process to get from there to actually making a living from the sport.

For the last, I guess, seven or eight years have been focusing on doubles and have had some success. Represented New Zealand at a couple of Olympic games and in Davis Cup. It's been a ride. It's been an exhausting, exhilarating ride for probably about 15 years now.

**Jasmin:** Well, I can't believe it, like, being 15 and knowing what you want to do. I mean, I'm saying that, and I kind of knew what I wanted to do.

Obviously, when I was 15 in the early nineties, I wanted to be a podcast host, naturally. I'm just kidding...what the heck was a podcast!?! \*Marcus laughs\*

But do you think you were born to do this?

**Marcus:** I don't think so. I had a very broad childhood in New Zealand.

I grew up in rural New Zealand and did everything I could get my hands on. My parents were very strict with academics, so I was doing school pretty seriously right throughout, even though at 15, I decided to try and really focus on tennis, but I played so many different sports.

I think it was at around 15; I actually had to make a choice between soccer and tennis. I'd got to sort of a national team level in both, and when I chose tennis, I had to give up something that I loved, and that sacrifice made me think, "Well, okay, I should probably actually get serious about tennis now because I've given up something so big in my life." That was when I started thinking, "Well, I should really try to make a career out of this."

But my mom tells me when I was sort of three or four, I wanted to be a juggler. Apparently, when I was five or six, I wanted to be the queen. So, you know, I've had a few different career paths. This is just the one that took root.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, amazing. The juggling career, though I am a little disappointed that you didn't pursue that.

**Marcus:** Yeah, I mean, both require hand-eye coordination. I think being the queen was always out of reach, not born into the right family, but... \*chuckles\*

**Jasmin:** There's that little detail.

When I was a child, I wanted to be a cat, and I was pretty young. \*Marcus laughs\* I was maybe in kindergarten. I kind of think I really was serious, though, which makes me concerned about myself because I was young, but

wouldn't a five-year-old maybe know that you can't... Anyway, that's for another podcast.

All right, so tell us about High Impact Athletes. What are its goals?

**Marcus:** I'd say the long-term goal is to make giving back in a really meaningful and significant way a norm in professional sport. So we want to make giving back cool.

And we're still at the very early stages. We're just a little over two years old as a nonprofit, but we have been growing really fast. We're already over 160 world-class athletes. I think around 38 different sports in around 31 different countries. So you know, it's already a global community, and it's really expanding. But we basically help athletes do more good with their careers. So we help them pick the best charities in the world to donate to.

We do that by working with the best research organizations in the world. And then, outside of that, and what might potentially be the biggest lever is we help them use their voices to spread good messages, to spread the message of giving back and donating to charity and trying to get the maximum impact out of each dollar that you donate or each hour that you spend trying to make the world a better place.

**Jasmin:** Wow, that is so cool. Obviously, you decided to focus on athletes because that's the world you inhabit, but was there also a sense that athletes, in particular, were either not donating or were not focused in their donations?

**Marcus:** Yeah, for sure. I think for a couple of different reasons.

One is a lot of athletes are completely consumed by trying to get to the top of their sport. Truly, it takes a lot of sacrifice and a lot of time and effort. I feel like a lot of athletes don't feel like they have much space, outside of this deep drive to get to the top of the world in whatever they do, to focus on other things.

And then the second part is, I think there's quite a widespread mistrust of the charity space in general. And that might not be unique to athletes, but it's something that I've come up against in many, many of the conversations I've had with athletes. So in some ways, I feel like High Impact Athletes is actually giving them almost a sense of relief where it's like, "Okay, here's something that is created by athletes."

You know, like we're speaking to peers rather than just another charity, quote-unquote. And so I've almost felt this sort of sense of relief from athletes that it's like, "Okay, here's something that I can trust in the charity space that has done the work, done the research." And the fear of the gotcha moment is reduced, and I think that fear of the gotcha moment is something that holds a lot of athletes back, and I assume probably a lot of other people who are in the public eye.

**Jasmin:** So a gotcha moment, as in the public kind of calling someone out on supporting the wrong thing.

**Marcus:** Yeah. So like, "Hey, this charity said that they were doing this, but they're doing something else." Or like, "Hey, you say that you are all for the climate, but you flew to your last tournament." Like giving them the education, giving them the resources, and connecting them with the charities that are transparent in what they do and have open books. So if someone tries to have a gotcha moment, it's like, "Hey, everything that I am supporting is transparent. If you can find a problem with the research or find a problem with the books, please be my guest."

The people doing the research would love that. You know, it's a scientific process. They're trying to continually figure out the best ideas rather than sort of set on something and hold that as the best answer forever. You know, it's like an updating process. I don't know if I've explained that well, but I think the fact that the research is transparent and the fact that the charities are transparent just lends a lot more trust and a lot more belief from the athlete's side.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I think that makes total sense. It's brilliant. Is there also potential to leverage the popularity and fame of athletes to make giving more popular?

**Marcus:** That's sort of the biggest lever that I see. There's this amazing study by MIT Media Lab that shows historical, cultural figures over the last couple of millennia. And athletes as a percentage of cultural figures in our society have absolutely exploded to the point where now they make up around 50% of all cultural figures. However you want to define that.

And what that means is that they have huge social influence. So we can use that social influence instead of selling another pair of shoes, we can use it to spread good messages and to make giving back cool. And ultimately, that's what we want to do.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, definitely. It's funny, especially with younger people, which I imagine most athletes are younger. By younger I mean like younger than 40. It's

funny because I don't really know how philanthropy has been messaged or communicated to the millennials, by and large.

I mean, obviously, I'm making a very broad statement right now, but can you speak to that at all? How does your average millennial...I'm speaking as a Gen X-er, so tell me what it's like.

By the way, I'm a Gen X-er by like a few months practically. I don't know. I'm 1979. That's Gen X, right?

**Marcus:** I actually don't know. I think I might be on the very, very tail-end. Wait, was a millennial before 2000?

**Jasmin:** Well, I know it's like age, like 37 and younger. Or, like, okay...I would say the age is 25 to 37. I'm going to get emails from people correcting me.

What would you say that demographic thinks about donating, and how are you looking to change their perspective?

**Marcus:** So I don't feel like I can speak for the demographic. I can only speak from my personal experience, but I went through this...

**Jasmin:** You can't speak for all the millennials!?! \*Marcus laughs\* I don't understand!

Wait. Now, by the way, are you a millennial?

**Marcus:** I think I am. I'm 33 now, so I probably fall directly in the middle.

**Jasmin:** I'm 43. So tell me about the world at 33.

**Marcus:** I'll tell you how us whipper snappers think.

My experience, actually, was one of mistrust as well. So I grew up with the charities that, you know, like A Dollar a Day or 40 Hour Famine, and it was sort of fun as a kid growing up with that stuff.

So 40 Hour Famine, for us, was for 40 hours we didn't eat food. We just got to eat these little barley sugars. I grew up in a pretty health-conscious family, so it was actually a bit of a treat for me to be able to have lollies for 40 hours.

When I got to a stage in my life where I could think about giving back or think about donations, those charities seemed more like a publicity stunt than something substantial. So that was my experience; I didn't feel like there was enough substance behind the charities that I'd grown up around. And I mean, what I did was basically just go to Google, like I think most millennials would... \*Jasmin laughs\*

**Jasmin:** Even Gen X-ers go to Google! \*Marcus laughs\*

**Marcus:** And just typed in like “how to give back best” or “how to donate best,” something trivial like that.

And I think it was on sort of the second or third page that I came across this idea of effective giving and really trying to quantify the impact that a donation has.

**Jasmin:** So, how do you quantify it?

**Marcus:** That's a really good question. At High Impact Athletes, we don't do the quantifying. So there are some incredible research organizations that spend all of their time doing this.

What might be considered the gold standard charity research organization on the animal side is Animal Charity Evaluators or Founder's Pledge also have some really deep research, and they spend literally tens of thousands of hours a year trying to find the best giving opportunities in these spaces. And I think the extra step that they take that a lot of evaluators or charities don't take is they not only measure the outputs of a charity, but they also measure the long-term outcomes.

So it can be nice to say, for example, “We did this many protests against factory farming.” But then, if you don't take the extra step of measuring what actual effect that had on the percentage of animals that are factory farmed, and if that number doesn't go down as a result of the protests, then maybe we need to rethink our actions and rethink the way that we go about things.

So, it's taking that extra step to measure the outcomes and really thinking, “Okay, how can we use the evidence and the reason and the data to do a better job of improving the lot of animals in the world?”

Yeah. So that's what I believe in as a way of going about donations, sort of trying to weave the heart in with the head and with the numbers and using both of them to try and make as much impact as possible.

**Jasmin:** So, what do you expect the fallout to be from the Sam Bankman-Fried scandal?

**Marcus:** It's been pretty terrible, to be honest. With High Impact Athletes, from the start, we've sort of semi-distanced ourselves from the term effective altruism, and that's mainly because what we focus on is present-day suffering.

So you know, that's the worst human issues in the world, the worst animal issues in the world, and climate change, which you could argue is a future problem as well. But it's also very much a current problem, and effective altruism, it seems, has gone further and further towards focusing on the long-term future. And I just feel like that's less accessible. So we focus on effective giving rather than effective altruism per se.

I really fear that those sorts of scandals and the association of someone who's acted so poorly with effective altruism is really going to deter people from engaging with the ideas, which I think is a huge tragedy because I do think the underlying philosophy is incredibly powerful.

And for me, what that boils down to is- how can we do the most good for the world given the resources we have at hand right now? And that's just such a sensible question in my mind.

**Jasmin:** It is definitely a sensible question. I totally agree with the type of assessment, the ways that it's being assessed, but I do feel like effective altruism has some real blind spots, and that is something we have discussed frequently on Our Hen House. So I just feel like kind of stating that for our listeners who are like, "What!?"

Obviously, we're not fans of ineffective altruism. But in particular, I think effective altruism doesn't focus on the arts the way I think the arts should be focused on. Media. You know, I'm a biased party there. And sanctuaries, to name some. But I also recognize the enormous advantage of having so much money supporting animals.

It's a quote-unquote problem that we never would've even conceived of 10 years ago. So that being said, I feel like most of the effective altruism money for animals is going to cage-free systems. Am I right? And if so, why do you think that that's the best way to make progress for animals?

**Marcus:** I think from what I know, I think you're right. I don't think I can speak with huge authority on where the total pot is going. I think I can have a good



guess at why that is the case, and in my mind, it's because it's the lowest-hanging fruit.

So if you consider that each animal's life is worth a life, so you don't sort of rank animals in terms of a moral hierarchy, then per dollar, you can probably improve the most lives if you focus on chickens because they are just so terribly sort of mass-produced or treated as a commodity. So if, with each dollar, you can improve the lives of 10 chickens versus one pig or cow, then perhaps it makes the most sense in terms of trying to reduce suffering to do that.

I really agree that effective altruism has blind spots. In my mind, one of the biggest ones is a lack of diversity. It's something that is an internal discussion within the EA community. But you know, if all of the thought leaders of a certain philosophy are of one demographic, you just will have a bit of homogeneity in thinking, and that's not a good thing long term. I'm just not entirely sure how to change that quickly.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, that's well said, I think, and I'm glad that you're going there because I think another part of the issue, as far as I've heard from people I've interviewed, is that there are many people who work within the animal protection movement who do see these shortcomings but don't necessarily feel safe to bring it up to their employer.

This is based on an interview I gave recently with Krista Hidemma, who has done a lot of research into what it is like, what the conditions are like to work within animal protection. And she's surveyed many, many people, and this was one of her findings. So that is concerning to me, but that's another subject.

The other animal-focused charity that you work with is The Good Food Institute. I'm a very big fan. How hopeful are you about replacing our animal-centric food system?

**Marcus:** Ugh, that's a big question. To be completely honest, I'm not hopeful that we'll 100% replace it. I think I have maybe quite a cynical view of human nature and behavior change.

The reason I love Good Food Institute is because I've banged my head against the wall for quite a few years talking about how athletes don't need meat and if Olympic-level athletes don't need meat to perform at that level, then no one does to perform at a high level. And a lot of people I've spoken to in the athlete space have agreed with that as a concept, but behavior doesn't change.



And the reason I get really excited about Good Food Institute is because maybe we don't have to change the behaviors; maybe we just change the product. And if the products are just as good taste-wise, if they're just as expensive or inexpensive, and if they're actually healthier for us, then who wouldn't change?

I mean, I think it's Bruce Friedrich who says this, like if you ask anyone on the street, "Hey, if you could have a piece of steak that had a huge amount of suffering attached to it, or a piece of steak without the suffering attached, which would you choose?" Everyone chooses without suffering, of course. I don't think there are that many disgusting humans in the world who'd choose the suffering just for the sake of suffering. But it seems to sort of get lost in the mix in people's minds.

Long-winded answer, but I'm not confident we'll 100% change from eating animals. My hope is that we reduce that to a really small percent.

**Jasmin:** I could not possibly agree with you more. I am among the cynical ones myself. I think that in the last 13 years of doing Our Hen House, I think that my perspective on this has shifted. I think I used to hold a lot more kind of wide-eyed hope that we can appeal to people's sensibilities. We can tug at their heartstrings, we can show them what's going on on factory farms, and now I just feel like people are selfish, for the most part.

You've got your outliers, but they're few and far between. And all we need to do, all we need to do in quotes too, is put cultivated meat on a menu in front of them, or plant-based meat on a menu in front of them and make it a no-brainer. Get to 10% tipping point, as we talk about, and that is the biggest hope I have for civilization.

It's not hope for the humanity of civilization. It's more hope for a strategy that's going to result in, in my perfect world, no animals being killed or exploited for the pleasure or profit of humans. But probably in a more realistic world, way, way fewer. So we are curmudgeons together.

**Marcus:** Can I ask you two questions?

**Jasmin:** Yes. Yeah, you can.

**Marcus:** Okay. So the first. How much hope do you have that cultivated meat will become economically viable for a regular consumer?

**Jasmin:** I have a lot of hope that it will. I just interviewed someone from Because Animals; I'm not sure if you're familiar with them, but if you're not, at the time we're recording this, it's airing this weekend.

They're starting with mouse meat for cats, so obviously, they're starting with pets. My cat, for one, is ready for the mouse meat. I think that it is among our only hope. And I'm saying this not as an expert in this particular area. Bruce, he'd be like, "Hold on, let me get out all these stats; they're in my wallet," but I feel like, anecdotally speaking, if you look at the popularity of Beyond Meat and Impossible Meat and the fact that it is now completely normal for like your average Joe Schmo to order it at the restaurant, it is going to take a minute to get past the ick factor, but I think we'll get past it. Just like we got past it for Beyond and Impossible.

What about you? What do you think?

**Marcus:** I was really, really hopeful, and I feel like I'm becoming a little more cynical about that as time goes on too. Not that it can't be done, just that it might not get down to a price point where it can be a viable option for sort of the general public, and I think if it doesn't reach that, then it's just going to be quite hard to replace a decent percentage of the food system with cultivated meat.

I mean, I'm hanging out for it. I would love for it to be the case. In full transparency, I grew up eating a lot of meat, and I do enjoy the taste. I just don't eat it because I hate the way animals are treated.

But if there was a way to eat meat without any of the suffering or environmental impact attached, I would. And I think, honestly, I hope that everyone I know, if it was the same price and everything, I hope they'd jump at it as well, and the ick factor be damned.

**Jasmin:** So, speaking of food and the tough questions, you are, I believe, almost, but not quite vegan. Can you tell us about your own diet and why you make the choices you do?

**Marcus:** Sure. So, I believe in 2017, I had a big revelation, I guess, in a sushi house in Tokyo where a friend of mine was ordering rounds of sushi and ordered a round of chopped whale for the table. And I had this huge revulsion at the idea of eating whale. And so I didn't eat it. I had this thought in my mind like, "How much of an asshole do I have to be to eat whale?" And then, walking back to the hotel from dinner, I got struck by sort of the cognitive dissonance,

like, “Why do I feel this way about a whale, but I don't feel it about all of the other animals that I've eaten over the last week?”

That sort of led me to examining diet. I took the step that I imagine is probably quite common in this movement, which is, I read Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. That put most of the final nails in the coffin for me. And then I actually went back to my base because I was worried about the effect it would have on my tennis if I went plant-based or vegetarian.

So I said, “Okay, I've got a two-week training block coming up. I'll cook vegetarian, I'll see how I feel, and if I don't feel worse, I'll carry on.” So I did that, I didn't feel worse, and so that was it for me in terms of not eating meat. One of the realities for me on tour was it was actually very, very difficult to get a complete vegan meal when I was traveling.

So on the road, I have to eat at restaurants basically all the time. Like we're put up in a hotel for a tennis tournament, we don't have cooking facilities, and so it's just whatever's nearby in terms of restaurants and also what's provided by the tournaments. So often, the only decent protein I could find was vegetarian protein if I didn't want to eat meat.

So that's like eggs and cheese, and as an athlete, you really do need to be thinking about macros and getting enough protein for muscle recovery and regeneration and that sort of stuff. So that was an issue for me and a big reason why I went vegetarian rather than vegan. Now as we're recording, I've been recovering from knee surgery and haven't played for close to a year now.

I'd say at home, I cook 99% vegan, and the only animal products I eat are eggs from a permaculture farm five minutes up the road. And I guess to sort of wrap this up, my personal philosophy of how I approach it is actually from Peter Singer as well. I really believe in trying not to cause unnecessary suffering and that's how I approach my food.

So I've spent time at that farm. I've seen the chooks, I know their practices around raising chooks, and I don't think that the chooks feel suffering if their eggs are taken away. Could be wrong about that. I'm very open to new evidence coming to light around that practice and if chooks actually do feel suffering around that, and then I think I'd update my thinking. But that's basically my approach. So I'd say, yeah, I'm almost vegan, but I definitely don't claim it because I don't want to dilute the vegan term.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. Well, first of all, appreciate your coming to Our Hen House because we had talked about it beforehand.

And you're certainly giving. You are generating so much money to go toward helping not only animals but also you focus on global health and poverty, and environmental concerns in addition to animal welfare. So don't worry; we're not going to start throwing tomatoes at you or something. If I can respond to the egg thing for just a second. Are you...

**Marcus:** Please.

**Jasmin:** Okay. And I am a nice person, despite what they say about me.  
\*Marcus laughs\*

**Marcus:** That's such a...I'm very anxious now. That's a premonition of some sort. \*both laugh\*

**Jasmin:** It's like, "Hey, can I tell you something? No offense, but..." and it's like, "Oh, okay. It's all erased because you said no offense..."

I think it's not necessarily the chickens feeling pain if their eggs are removed or feeling emotional turmoil. I think that the question that comes up is, where are the chickens coming from? In the US, certainly, it's hatcheries. It's the same hatcheries as the factory farm chickens. And then there's also the element of like when they're...and maybe this isn't the case at the farm you patronize, but there is the fact that when these chickens are no longer able to produce eggs, what the human equivalent of menopause is, they would have many more years of existing and most people don't have pet hens. So at that time, it's usually, unfortunately, that they get killed for meat.

I was a vegetarian for many years before I was vegan, and it was a long time ago, but I probably only ate cheese and eggs at the time. I think I ate fewer animals when I was a meat eater than when I was a vegetarian. So this is definitely not something I had ever thought about. But yeah, that was kind of the first thing that popped up for me. And then there's also the fact that the boy chicks are killed at birth since they can produce eggs.

**Marcus:** Yeah. So yeah, I don't think these male chicks are killed at birth at this farm. But to be honest, I don't know what happens to the hens when they've reached the end of their laying. I actually think they wouldn't be killed because they're just running around a big food forest, and I don't think they'd be able to tell which hens had stopped laying or not. I don't know that a hundred percent.

And you know, I think these are really valid questions. Actually, I will find out.

**Jasmin:** Amazing. Circle back and let us know if you want. I'm also curious about what happens to the males if they're not killed.

**Marcus:** So this, I don't quite understand either, but in looking around the farm, it seemed like they had quite a large number of roosters, and I don't know if that's even possible to have a flock of roosters without them fighting all the time or whether something needs to happen to them to not fight.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I think that a rooster is sort of assigned to a flock of hens, and I don't know. I know that there is a big problem with roosters fighting with each other. There are certain sanctuaries like Vine Sanctuary that does a lot of work rehabilitating fighting roosters. I mean, I do think there's probably something there that I am not...

**Marcus:** Yeah. But again, something I should find out. I made an assumption, and maybe it's a wrong assumption.

**Jasmin:** Well, I think it's great. I appreciate that you're having this conversation with me. I hope I'm not too scary yet. \*ominous voice\* Haha!

I'm just kidding.

**Marcus:** No, I love this stuff.

Like, I think the act of questioning what you've assumed or questioning what you've just held as truth is very, very healthy all the time. I'm sure my thinking around everything will change over time as I realize things or as I find things out. So, I appreciate it.

**Jasmin:** I appreciate your honesty too.

I also think like I am a liberationist, but I do understand that there's bad and there's not as bad. I personally am of the belief, and I think a lot of our listeners are too, that we should never use animal products for anything because they're not really ours to take. But I do recognize that there's a difference between getting an egg from the facility that you're describing and going to the grocery store and grabbing a pack of eggs.

I just sort of question the inherent systems that are at play within any kind of animal consumption, including eggs, in even the most benign circumstance.

**Marcus:** Yeah, I think that's fair. I mean, there's still an element of fencing them in or keeping them confined to a certain area, which has all of the connotations of ownership and all that sort of stuff, which I do think is problematic.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, there's also like do...and it sounds like your place would have this, but like they like to roost. Are there places for them to roost? Are there places...I remember...Mariann could attest to this, but we were once staying at a sanctuary, and we woke up, I think it was actually New Year's Day, we were staying there on New Year's Eve.

We woke up on New Year's Day, and there was like a chicken flying out of a tree, and I was like, "Chickens fly!?!?" I had no idea. And apparently, at the sanctuary, they were like building a nest up in a tree. The backyard birds that I've seen do not have that. They're like in this little enclosure, and they also like to hide their eggs. It's part of their social socialization, things like that. So it is just like...

I'm glad we're having this conversation, partly because I think a lot of our listeners have this conversation too, and I think we're doing a pretty good job. What do you think?

**Marcus:** Yeah, I think so. I mean, I think, ultimately, the vegan way of living is the only one that I can really think of that you can't poke holes in. And I'll probably get there, to be honest. I think it's been a bit of a journey for me, but philosophically, I think it's basically unassailable. Actually, the only philosophical question I have about it is that endpoint of cropping, or can we feed the world at scale without some sort of fertilizer? But again, that's based on ignorance rather than any sort of knowledge.

**Jasmin:** Well, I mean, the world hunger issues obviously wouldn't all be solved if we all went vegan. I think that talking point is unfortunately simplified by a lot of vegan advocates, but there are so many issues that would help the global poor and world hunger issues. And also not in developing countries only, but in like our backyards. I'm always inspired when there are little sidewalk lots kind of transformed into community gardens, for example. Things like that. I'm like, "Yes. This is how we do it, folks."

But you are passionate about global health and poverty. What percentage of the people you work with choose to give all or part of their donations to, let's say, animal causes or global health and poverty initiatives? Like how would you break that down?

**Marcus:** So, it's quite interesting. This has been fascinating watching it happen in real-time.

For me, it's about 40% to animal welfare, 40% to global health and poverty, and 20% to the environment. And interestingly, The Humane League has been, far and away, our most popular charity. So we try to sort of simplify the list of charities. We have 12 that we currently recommend across those three cause areas, and The Humane League, I think, in terms of donations, has attracted about twice as much as the next most popular organization.

**Jasmin:** Fascinating.

**Marcus:** And that might be saying something about my bias toward helping animals. But maybe not.

**Jasmin:** I like the bias. I love the Humane League and the work they do. How much have you generated for charities to date?

**Marcus:** Off the top of my head. I think end of 2022, it was something like 730-740,000 US dollars.

**Jasmin:** Wow. That's incredible. Truly incredible. I feel like you really are doing such amazing work paving the way for other athletes to not only get involved in High Impact Athletes but also to kind of change their thinking because there is, not in all sports, but my understanding is there's an ungodly amount of money in some of these athletics, especially being in the public eye. How wonderful it is to use that platform for the greater good.

**Marcus:** So, I will push back a little bit on the money side of things. I think there's a skewed perspective in The States because all of the big US team sports are just the best-paid sports in the world. Baseball, football, basketball, and ice hockey are paid far better than everything except soccer internationally. So there's a lot of money in those sports, but actually, the typical athlete is struggling to make ends meet, so it's a really steep pyramid.

**Jasmin:** Also, I like the sense when you're like, "There is a skewed perspective in The US."

I'm like, "Really? Why would you think that the US would have a skewed perspective of anything?!" \*both laugh\*



**Marcus:** I mean, let me give you an example of this. The guy who's now the managing director for High Impact Athletes he's a professional field hockey player and actually was the first guy who made the pledge with High Impact Athletes. So he's one of the best hockey players in the world, and he's been representing New Zealand for, I think, 13 or 14 years. For a long stretch of years, they'd go away on six-week tours for New Zealand, playing for the New Zealand team, and they would get paid a total of 200 New Zealand dollars for that six-week period.

So these guys train their butts off; they put everything into it. It's an absolute honor to represent your country. And then you're getting paid tens of dollars a week to do it. And so they all have to have normal jobs and try and do all of their training outside of it. So I mean, that's at a national level.

There are some athletes who make ungodly amounts of money, but (for) the average athlete, it's a passion thing rather than a profit thing.

**Jasmin:** Right. That's really good to know.

I know I've kept you for a long time. I do have just one more question for you, but I also hope you stay on and stick around for the bonus segment for our flock because I have some more personal questions I'd like to ask you during that.

So given your cynicism that we share, and given what you said about your skepticism about cultivated meat potentially not being affordable on a grand scale. What is it that gives you hope when you look at all the atrocities going on?

**Marcus:** I have this really deep belief that even if we don't get all the way to the world that I'd like to see, there's still a huge amount of progress that we can make, and every inch of progress that we make will result in a better world.

And by better, I mean less suffering. That, to me, is beautiful. Like there's the absolute cliché with something like, you know, if you shoot for the stars, you might land on the moon. Something like that, you know? Even if the vision is eutopic and idealistic. If we just keep pushing toward it, good stuff will happen.

And enjoying that journey and enjoying the good stuff that you see happening is extremely rewarding. For me, at least. I feel like it's rewarding.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I could totally see that. And it's also like the starfish story.

**Marcus:** You're gonna have to tell me that one

**Jasmin:** It's making a difference for that animal.

I interviewed someone recently. I have asked people that question probably a thousand times, like, what gives you hope? And I interviewed a scientist recently, and she said, "I'm gonna interrupt you. What makes you assume I have hope?" I was like, "Oh my God, she's a scientist. We are doomed."

It was actually a really fascinating conversation, and I started to think about it afterward, and I was like, "Hope really is a privilege that we could even be in the position where we can talk about having it." I mean, there are so many people who don't even have the time to think about that at all because they're just going from their first job to their second job and trying to make ends meet.

And the only thing available to them is the McDonald's from job one to job two. And I started to feel hopeless, and I was like, "Wait. This is really shifting my identity because I really have talked ad nauseum about being indefatigably positive, about choosing hope as a strategy. So what gives, like, I don't feel any of it today," and the scientists just kind of made me feel like I've been gaslighting myself for all of these years.

I think maybe I'm shifting around hope because maybe I sort of feel like hope doesn't matter as much as I thought it did. To the spirit of what you just said, I think it's possible we just have to keep moving anyway, regardless of whether or not we have hope because anything less than moving forward is going to create suffering. And along the way, we can try and find community and fulfillment and as many moments of joy as possible because we really don't know what the future's going to bring. Could be great, could be horrible, probably horrible, but what are we going to do about it today?

Does that make sense?

**Marcus:** It does. I do think, despite my cynicism about human nature and how selfish we are as a species. I do think, in my mind, one of the most beautiful things about humanity is this ability to find hope even in the most dire of circumstances, and I hope, pun intended, that even when feeling helpless and feeling like the state of the world is terrible it, I hope that people can find hope.

That maybe a spark will light up, or enough people will start having the same thoughts that a bit of a groundswell gets moving and creates change. One of the most helpless things that I often hear people say is like, "Well, I'm just one

person. What difference am I gonna make?" But, if everyone can just find that little tiny little spark of hope in themselves and just take an action themselves, then that can be the thing that triggers other people to take that little bit of action as well.

I don't really have a punchline for that, but I do believe in the power of hope and that, ultimately, it can win.

**Jasmin:** Another difference between our generation! \*both laugh\*

But I hear you, and I'm very inspired by High Impact Athletes. It speaks to the reason Mariann and I started Our Hen House 13 years ago, which was to basically leverage the voices of people from all over the world who are making changes in their own arena, so to speak.

And you are definitely doing that in a way that I, in all of this time of doing Our Hen House, haven't heard of. So. Well done. Thank you for all of your work. Can you please tell our listeners how they can support your efforts and follow you online?

**Marcus:** Absolutely. Before that, I want to hopefully make your day and maybe give you a little more hope because my wife is a huge fan of your work and Mariann's work.

She was extremely excited when she heard that we were having a chat, and actually, she went to Mariann's animal law class at university and is now working in animal welfare law. So what you guys are doing is creating real change in the world, and I think, if nothing else, that should give you hope.

**Jasmin:** Thank you.

**Marcus:** You're changing people's minds about things and changing what people spend their lives and their careers doing, which is really, really cool.

**Jasmin:** Thank you. I'll be sure to tell Mariann that as well. I think I do remember that your partner was in her class. I think I remember her mentioning that.

That is amazing. I really appreciate that so much. I'm glad that you, as someone who has worked in effective altruism, believes in the power of media. Because you're one of the few. \*both laugh\*

But anyway, back to you. Tell us about where we can follow you online and support you along your journey.

**Marcus:** Sure. So I'd love for people to get behind High Impact Athletes and shout out or support the athletes who are really making a meaningful commitment to doing good with their careers and their lives.

On Instagram, it's @HighImpactAthletes. You can check out our website at [highimpactathletes.org](https://highimpactathletes.org). You can see all of the athletes who are involved, the charities that we currently support, et cetera. I'm less active than I should be on social media. But if you wanted to follow me, I'm @MarcusDaniellNZ, I believe.

**Jasmin:** Okay. And we'll link to all of this in the show notes for our listeners. Marcus, thank you so much for spending time with me today, and please don't go anywhere. I am very excited to see where your journey leads you, so please stay in touch.

**Marcus:** Well, thank you so much for having me, and I really do appreciate the pushback and the questioning of my assumptions. It's how I learn. So, I really enjoyed this conversation. Thank you.