

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to another installment of Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and in this case Louisville legends and offer some keen insights into how they see themselves but most importantly just what makes them tick. I'm host Kirt Jacobs of Leadership Landscape where former interviews have of involved former mayors, state politicians, nationally renowned sports writers, heads of business concerns, community activists and developers. Today our guest needs little to no introduction if you're born or been in Louisville for any length of time. His formal name is Denzel E Crumb we all know him as Denny Crum. He's the former UL Cardinals basketball coach and today he co-hosts the Joe B. and Denny Show. Allow me to read a bit of his bio to you and buckle in it's a statistical envy of many college coaches. He was born in San Fernando, California. Crum is best known for coaching the University of Louisville between 1971-2001 compiling a 675 win 295 loss record. Crum coached Louisville to 23 NCAA tournament appearances including 19 in a 24 year stretch. And he guided Louisville to two NCAA championships in both 1980 and 1986. and I as a young boy was here in Louisville both of those nights and I can tell you it was truly something to behold to be in this town on those nights.

Prior to coaching at Louisville his own sports history is nothing short of impressive. As a player at L A's Pierce junior college from 1954-56 he averaged 27 points a game. Crum then played for the UCLA Bruins under legendary coach John Wooden from 1956-58 earning the Irv Pulmeire, hope I pronounced that correctly, Memorial Trophy in 1957 which is an annual award presented to the outstanding first year varsity player and the Bruins Bench Award in 1958 as the team's most improved player scoring 346 points in 49 games at UCLA. Crum then served as an assistant to legendary UCLA coach John

Wooden from the 1958-60. Then from 1962-68 he became assistant coach and then head coach at Los Angeles Pierce College. Nothing else being inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame. He then landed back in 1968 as Coach Wooden's top assistant and chief recruiter for UCLA before beginning his legendary career as the head coach of the University of Louisville in 1971. Crum is widely credited with pioneering a now common team strategy of concentrating on strong fundamentals early in the preseason by scheduling tough non-conference matchups in order to prepare his teams for March's NCAA tournaments better known as March Madness or one defeat ends the season. Also he was an early user of the 2-2-1 zone press and his team's exciting style the play earned them the nickname the Doctors of Dunk. Crum's 1980 national champions are thought to have popularized the now infamous high five and Crum guided the Cardinals to six Final Fours between 1971 and his second national championship in 1986 earning him the monikers, I love this, Mr March and Cool Hand Luke. He was named College Coach of the Year three times during the 1980s. And of course he's enshrined in the UCLA's Hall of Fame in 1990. In 1993 Crum became the second fastest coach in history to win 500 games. In 1994 Crum was inducted into the Naismith, forgive my pronunciation, Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

In 2001 he finished his career with an NCAA tournament record of 42 wins 23 losses. He has coached 28 University of Louisville players who went on to play in the NBA. In 21 of his 30 years as a division one head coach he had 20 wins or more including 14 straight averaging 23 wins per year. In his retirement Coach Crum is not simply faded into basketball or between his passion for hunting and fishing he married local anchorwoman Susan Sweeney in 2001 and he has found the time to coach, excuse me, to co-host the Joe B. and Denny Show. Maybe Joe B. would think he's coaching it. A radio talk show with former collegiate college rival Joe B. Hall from the former University of Kentucky. Get this, he has laid aside one set of cards to pick up another. Crum's penchant for poker has led him to give his name to the Denny Crum Poker Open which is held annually at Caesar's Indiana in the Greater Louisville area.

Coach Crum if anyone had told me I would sit down with you for half an hour after graduating from that school that bleeds blue I would have laughed at them as a young kid. It is truly an honor to have you here on Leadership Landscape. Thank you us today.

**Denny Crum:** My pleasure.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you.

**Denny Crum:** Nice to be here with you.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What drives you to do what you're doing? I mean obviously you're an active guy. You're still active in post retirement from college.

**Denny Crum:** You know I think when you grow up in athletics competition is what pushes your buttons. I think you know it's a way of life and it's so extensive. It kind of bleeds over into everything else that you do. And you know I still play competitive poker and golf and fish a lot. And I compete in all those things. And I think it's just it's just part of your nature of your make up. In fact if you're not competitive you probably won't last long you know in the coaching business. And I think you you look at yourself and you say yeah I'm competitive sometimes probably too much. My wife says I need to tone it down a little bit sometimes. Whatever she says I do. She's got a black belt in karate.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Oh really. I may need to have her on here. Whom do you credit most influential in your life coach? Can be more than one person.

**Denny Crum:** Well I'd have to say there two in particular. My father who was also grew up in athletics and did a lot of things and was very instrumental in getting me started playing football and baseball. Kind of got basketball going on my own with another guy. But I but I would say probably if I could only pick one I would have to say Coach Wooden. When you get an opportunity to play for a coach like Coach Wooden and then you have an opportunity to coach with him and then against him.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I often thought of as a little guy watching you play.

**Denny Crum:** You just you just you have to consider yourself to be one of the luckiest human beings alive because nobody has ever done better collegiate basketball coaching than John Wooden. And his philosophies. The way he went about organizing everything in the and the teaching of the things that you have to teach young people to be good players and have good teams I mean he would tell you that basketball is a game of conditioning, fundamentals and team play. You get them in shape and you teach them the fundamentals of the game and then you get them to play together. And that's what basketball is it's and he and if you asked him what he would be he would tell you he's a teacher. And and that's what I did. I taught basketball also taught a lot of life's lessons.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Off the court

**Denny Crum:** Off the court and on the court too at times. But you know you look back on your career and you and you try to define what you did and and hopefully you had a big impact on the lives of a lot of young people. And I find that I'm a lot closer now to the players that played for me than I was when I was coaching them. That they look back and they kind of I think they have a better understanding of what you were trying to do when they get out in the real world and learn that it's not all peaches and cream and then isn't somebody there to help and you do everything.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I mean you sent a bunch of them to NBA so you haven't done all bad.

**Denny Crum:** But even the ones that you know I'm just proud of the ones that you know are attorneys or doctors or lawyers. It doesn't matter. Whatever they wanted to do as long as you know it was something that they wanted to do then you had to support them in those things.

**Kirt Jacobs:** What was the most defining moment of your life on the court or off?

**Denny Crum:** I would have to say probably when I was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 1994 for a couple reasons. One that it represented a career not just any one year of successful coaching. It does represent a career. It's a career achievement. And the other thing I think was the fact that when you are inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame you have to have somebody that's already in the Hall of Fame to present you.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Wow

**Denny Crum:** And Coach Wooden did that for me. So you know those two things probably. Would be hard to beat. I mean even more than any other single year or anything it would just it was...

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's great. If there is one Coach Crum, what is your biggest professional regret? In other words if you can armchair quarterback, well I shouldn't say that a basketball coach..

**Denny Crum:** That's alright.

**Kirt Jacobs:** ...or hindsight 20/20 you know. Can be professional and personal. You know regrets kind of a strong word. Some of our guest don't like it.

**Denny Crum:** But well I guess professionally I can think of a number of things that I I don't know that in some cases there's nothing that you can do about them. I can remember US Reed throwing in a 50 footer that kept us out of the Final Four one year. And we knew he was going to get the shot. And we've got had him double teamed but it didn't seem to matter he threw it in from mid-court line. And he said I threw up a prayer and it was answered. You know and sometimes you know you do everything you can and you're well prepared but sometimes things just don't turn out the way you wanted them to. And so I mean things like that in 1977 Larry Williams broke his foot and we had played Marquette at Marquette. Earlier in the season and we beat them on their own floor. And they were eventually won the National Championship that year. And we had the best team but after Larry Williams we

had gone and played in Las Vegas against Jerry Tarkanian's Runnin Rebels. They fouled out six of our top seven guys and then ended up beating us 96 to 93. And then we went to Tulsa after that I had to play our first conference game on the way home and and Larry Williams broke his foot in that game and we were just not the same you know after that. I mean you can all you can pick lots of things I guess in a 30 year career that that you would like to do different but you really can't do them different. You just do the best you can do.

**Kirt Jacobs:** On the flipside of that Coach what is your biggest professional triumph? Either again on the court or off.

**Denny Crum:** We'll probably I guess the national championships. There are a lot of great coaches that never won the National Championship and we we were fortunate I was really fortunate. I was part of three of them at UCLA as an assistant coach. And then won two National Championships here at Louisville. And and it would be hard to pick any career achievement that would have been overshadowed those. Final Fours are great and all that stuff. It's funny though you know when you if you think about it if someone told you at the beginning of the year you'd be in the Final Four you'd say ah great but you know once you get there it's not enough. and I mean you you get there but you want to... Now you want to win and your fans are the same way.

**Kirt Jacobs:** You can taste it.

**Denny Crum:** Yeah you know we have this opportunity let's take advantage of it but competition's tough. And the people out there there's a lot of great coaches and a lot of great players. And if you win one is hard to believe but to win two and being part of the five. I can just count my blessings.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It's coaching. I think coach is what it is. What do you find exciting about all those 30 years? You're doing the stuff with the poker. You know post retirement you have this show that's got a lot of popularity with I guess you could say your arch rival back in the day, Joe B Hall of University of Kentucky.



**Denny Crum:** I'm not sure I understand the question.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I guess what do you find exciting about all that you do? I'm sorry.

**Denny Crum:** Oh Ok. Well I guess it's the it's the competing. You know when you're you get to a game time you go through all your teaching and your practices and everything that you do. Then the game is kind of the showpiece. It kind of the shows the results of what you've been working and trying to accomplish. And and matching your wits against the other coaches to me always was the most fun. Most exciting I mean it. I still get so excited when I go to games and I know it comes down into the last two minutes of the game and I like there figure out what I think I would do. And course it's not going to be the same as what someone else would do. It doesn't mean I'm right and they're wrong or vice versa just it's just the way you did things. And that was always exciting and and just the competing itself excites me. I mean I when I go play in a poker tournament. I'm excited. I mean it makes me focus and makes me concentrate and it makes me want to. I don't care. There are three old ladies from Pasadena and there I'm competing again. I want to win.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Right

**Denny Crum:** In fact I get had took my mother on a cruise once to Alaska and every afternoon there wasn't a lot to do on the boat. We played bingo and I won along with this other lady who won the championship. So to speak. The coverall they call it I guess. And and we were up there getting ready to be introduced to everyone one else that had been playing because we both won on the same number on the same number and I I asked her if I said you want to flip a coin because there it was \$1600 prize. She said no my husband would kill me. And I did at that time I never thought about what the result would be on the other side of the coin but but it just seemed to me like you know you wanted to be the winner not share it with someone else. So the competing is part of been part of what I've always done. And I still do that on the golf course or in

the poker room or whatever I do fishing.

**Kirt Jacobs:** This show's about leadership and one thing I want to ask you are there any parallels between when you're sitting in that poker table and the basketball court. I don't know if you want to give away your hand you know a lot of people will see the show but is there any maybe one or two or three things that are very similar or is it just totally mutually exclusive.

**Denny Crum:** Oh there's a lot of things that are similar. I mean being prepared. The week before I played in the World Series of Poker I played online 14 hours on Saturday and 14 hours on Sunday because in the World Series of Poker you have to be able to do that you have to be able to just sit there. And course you have a break here and there and a dinner to dinner hour but you start at noon and you don't finish till three in the morning. So you have you have to learn to concentrate for long periods of time you. You have to have a world of patience. I always found that I was very patient about basketball but it's a stretch for me to say that that I'm patient at everything because I think about it because I'm not. But I learned to be patient professionally and it's carried over and I do have a lot of patience. The first World Series I played and I played three hands in seven and a half hours. I just didn't get any cards. I mean most people would go ahead and play some of those other hands even though you were going to get beat on them. I mean just because you couldn't sit there that long without doing that. So I just feel like you know that's a big part of what my whole life has been and and I feel like I've always been good at that.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Again this shows about leadership. Can you define leadership in one word coach? Can be more than one.

**Denny Crum:** Well coaching is leadership and coaching is also teaching. I think teaching is what we do as coaches. Some people teach English and social studies and things and we teach basketball and do a lot of teaching about life that kids are hopefully able to take advantage of. And some of them do I'm sure and some probably don't. But I've had a lot of them come back later on in life and tell me that now they realize exactly what I was trying to do.



What they're doing now they've got their own kids and they're got their own teams and you know and they're now going through the same things that you know as a coach. That's where I was so fortunate because I got to play for Coach Wooden and coach under him. And so I learned from both sides of the coin and I think it really gave me a big advantage in the coaching field.

**Kirt Jacobs:** This is a question that I want to ask specifically to you that if we wouldn't ask other guests. You know you had a 30 year history there at UL have coaching. I'm sure you had opportunities to coach in the NBA because of the track record you had and I think it's a certain testament to leadership that you never left. Was it by design or looking back on it just kind of happened that way.

**Denny Crum:** No you know I had number of opportunities that I turned down. I think you know you if you find someplace that you're happy and you get keep things in proper perspective. I could have made a lot more money coaching in the NBA but my love for Louisville and the the way of life here. The people that are here. The fact that they cared about basketball probably second to none was were the things that kept me here. The fact that I didn't take a pro job or go back to my alma mater when I had the chances. I originally thought I would do that. But the longer I was here the better I liked it and I just didn't want to leave here. I just love being here. Love being a part of this community.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I think I can speak for the community we're glad you stayed and I think it's an understatement. Again this show's about leadership. Could you describe in detail maybe a particular incident or scenario you know on or off the court in your professional or personal life where you a style or philosophy of leadership that only you seem to kind of see through your eyes.

**Denny Crum:** Well I did things a little different than most coaches. I think when I started out the first thing I wanted to do was upgrade the schedule here. Not that playing Georgetown and Bellarmine and that. There was nothing wrong with that except that I always felt like early in the year I wanted to play the toughest competition I could play. I think. My feeling was was that for me to know what

my team can and can't do I have to be I see them against other really good teams. If I see them against weak teams I don't think they learn anything and I don't think I learned anything about my team. It's hard to tell when you're in practice what you can't do because you don't present everything the same way that opponents do. And your opponents will exploit your weaknesses and you don't know what your weaknesses are unless you play against good teams. So I feel like that was the one thing that I probably did different than most of the other coaches in the country when I first started coaching. And I think it was really beneficial to our team. I thought our kids learned a lot and I learned a lot about them. So that was a part of the leadership that I provided to our team that I thought was really good for them. And you can't be hung up on your won loss record and stuff. But but in terms of how you fast you can learn and I felt that if I could learn in early December by playing some really good teams what we couldn't do that gave me an extra month to learn how to overcome those weaknesses. And so my philosophy you know about teaching and and leadership was simply I wanted to play the toughest that we could play.

**Kirt Jacobs:** And it's and I think it's safe to say you've perfected the strategy.

**Denny Crum:** It worked out good for us.

**Kirt Jacobs:** And this is a question where I guess even though the show's about leadership you could you apply it to coaching. Is there a difference today in our leaders or coaches and there were in pairs generations? I mean you've got to coach though several decades. Do you see a difference now than in the '80s, '90s, '70s

**Denny Crum:** I see a lot more coaches and teams playing watered down schedules. I see that a lot all over the country. And I think I have to feel like that that if they're doing that they must feel like they've got to win a certain amount of games to get into a post-season tournament or something because I don't really think it helps their teams. I still feel that way but there are exceptions to.. I know there's times when you have a real young team when you

have kids who don't have much experience and and you don't want to get their heads beat in every week so you know your schedule them a softer and bring them along a little bit slower. But I always wanted to do expose their weaknesses so I had more time to correct them and that was just the way I did it. But I think in terms of how coaches deal with young people I don't I don't think there's a whole lot of difference now and as compared to when I was coaching. I think most coaches have the best interests of their kids at heart and they do everything they can to see to it that they go to class and that they do what they need to do academically to get a degree and then there's going to be so many of them today that go early into the into the NBA draft and stuff that they don't get their degrees or else they left at the end of four years to play professionally somewhere and they didn't have a degree yet. Because most kids don't graduate in a four year period

**Kirt Jacobs:** Right.

**Denny Crum:** But and so I think all coaches have those kind of things. That they really do try to do the best they can with the kids they have.

**Kirt Jacobs:** This may not be a fair question because some of your former players may see the show as they are surfing along at night or whenever. Is there one team that you coach that just not necessarily stood out to just surprised you in their abilities. Maybe good or bad I don't know if you want to comment on that if there is there one maybe there's two. You coached a lot of teams.

**Denny Crum:** Well there was a number of them. My first team here. We went to a Final Four and that was I probably thought that that's the way it was supposed to be because I'd just been to three straight at UCLA

**Kirt Jacobs:** Right.

**Denny Crum:** And that's the way it was supposed to be and I probably thought the next year I probably thought the same thing. But the second year's team that I had we didn't have a single player

that ever started in a varsity game. And we ended up winning 23 games that year and that was probably one of the proudest years that we had. Obviously when you win championships or make Final Fours those are all special years. And but I just it's you can't hardly have favorites. Winning the First National Championship boy would be hard to beat that.

**Kirt Jacobs:** The 1980 team

**Denny Crum:** I mean the second one. The second one was easier for me because we had already in '80 we'd already been to two Final Fours and hadn't won a championship. So the question is always can Crum win the big one? And so once you get that monkey off your back and you do it. Now the next one was actually a lot more fun simply because I wasn't under the same pressure. But the first one is always very special.

**Kirt Jacobs:** They didn't make you Cool Hand Luke for nothing or Mr March. This is a question we ask all our guests. I know it's a little bit morbid but we we ask it of all of them. Coach, when the great day comes how do you want to be remembered? You know God forbid you walk out of here today something tragic was to happen. What would you like the players and the fans and everyone to remember?

**Denny Crum:** Well I hope they remember that I was more than just a teacher and a coach. I try to involve myself in this community as heavily as I can be. In fact I have I never learned to say no and my secretary gets on me all the time because I do I do so many different things. But to me giving back years when you love something and you're a part of it and if you can have a positive influence on the outcome of some things that are you know you try to do what you can and I think that's I think I would like to be remembered as more than just a coach. But I also probably feel that as a coach I would like to be remembered as having been successful by playing the toughest competition we could possibly play. I think that would make me feel good.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Coach you've got a heck of a legacy left Thank you coach for being on Leadership Landscape. Truly an honor to have you here.

**Denny Crum:** It's my pleasure.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you sir. Until next time on Leadership Landscape. I'm Kirt Jacobs. Thank you.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at [kirt@moxietalk.com](mailto:kirt@moxietalk.com) or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at [www.moxietalk.com](http://www.moxietalk.com)