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# **Global Nashville with Karl Dean**

## **A Conversation with Scott Hamilton**

**The Tennessee World Affairs Council in association with Belmont University  
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**Introduction by LCDR Patrick W. Ryan, USN (Ret) President,  
Tennessee World Affairs Council**

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**Patrick Ryan** [00:00:25] Hello and welcome to this special edition of Global Nashville with Karl Dean. I'm Tennessee World Affairs Council President Patrick Ryan. Today we welcome Scott Hamilton, the most recognized male figure skating star in the world. Scott Hamilton has won 70 titles, awards and honors, including an Emmy Award nomination, induction into the United States Olympic Hall of Fame and a privileged member of the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame. In 1984, Scott captured the attention of the world with his Olympic Gold Medal performances in Sarajevo, and since he shared his love and enthusiasm for the sport as an analyst, commentator, performer, producer and bestselling author. He is also the founder of the Scott Hamilton Skating Academy at the Ford Ice Centers in Antioch, Tennessee, and Bellevue, Tennessee, where he may frequently be found coaching learn to skate students and sharing his love of skating. You can take a look at [ScottHamilton.com](https://www.scotthamilton.com) for more details about his fascinating story and to check out his books. Now, onto our conversation. Mayor Dean.

**Karl Dean** [00:01:28] Thanks, Pat. And Scott, it's good to have you with us.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:01:31] Oh, it's good to see you again. We miss you. We loved having you as our mayor, that's for sure.

**Karl Dean** [00:01:37] I enjoyed it. I think some of the great highlights of my time as mayor for me was working with you on Ford Ice Center.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:01:46] And that's where I am right now.

**Karl Dean** [00:01:50] I guess I tried to think about affiliated with this, our first real ice center in Nashville that the city got involved in and what that means for the people of Nashville and particularly that area of the city. You just made a wonderful contribution to the city and a couple of weeks ago, I saw the Tennessean had a story about you and your contributions to Nashville and what you mean to Nashville that - it's very nice and well-deserved.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:02:19] Well, thank you. It's an easy city to fall in love with, and it's such an incredibly generous, welcoming city. It's got so many great qualities. You know, I think I heard it said best that it's big city amenities with small town accountability. And you know, again, just being offered that invitation by the Nashville Predators and you to get involved in the first Ford Ice Center in Antioch, and now Bellevue. It's been just such an upgrade in my life to be able to give back to, you know, figure skating and hockey and all ice sports to be able to build them and grow them and allow people to fall in love with something that has carried me through my lifetime and in so many different ways. And just and really just try to grow interest in skating in this community. We just had the US Figure Skating Championships here, which shows our U.S. Olympic team and how exciting that was to be able to see those skaters assembled on the ice receiving Gibson Guitars, commemorative guitars that will allow them to always remember a very special time they had in Nashville. And none of that would have been possible without the growth in figure skating interest and the learn to skate programs that you helped create. And now Nashville's poised to host more and more big events just like that. So I'm really excited about, you know, just being a citizen here and then being able to take my love of sport to, you know, to the city and to the surrounding areas and just allow other people to feel what I felt. And that's just the cool air hitting me in the face and just the challenge of strapping knives to your feet and trying to navigate them.

**Karl Dean** [00:04:21] How long have you been in Nashville, Tennessee?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:04:25] Well, we moved here 2006, I believe. It might have been 2005, so almost 16 years, around there.

**Karl Dean** [00:04:34] And so tell us a little bit about your background. Where did you grow up and how did you get into skating? How did you end up being Scott Hamilton?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:04:43] Oh, wow. Yeah, it's, you know, I'm old now, so it's kind of an evolved story. But I was fortunate to be adopted by two schoolteachers in northwestern Ohio, a man by the name of Sam Cooper built - he was a professor at the university where my dad was a professor and he convinced the athletic department to build an ice-skating rink to have a hockey team and classes for the university. And so I started skating there and my parents just invested everything they had and allowing me to be a skater because

my health was pretty bad as a young child. But skating somehow miraculously helped it. And so I became a skater living in Bowling Green, Ohio. And then, you know, training facilities started coming into focus. So I trained in northern Illinois for a while at the Wagon Wheel with Janet Lynn and Gordie McKellen, another kind of famous skaters of their time, and then moved to Denver and took from Dorothy Hamill's coach for a few years, then moved to Philadelphia. Took from a coach that showed incredible interest in me. We moved back to Denver. He and I took over that rink when Carlo Fossi moved to the Broadmoor and took over that program. And so lived in Denver for quite a long time and then survived cancer and just felt like I needed to kind of step away and figure things out and ended up in Los Angeles, where I met my wife and we had our first child there and just and just kind of felt like maybe it wasn't really the right place for us to raise him. And so dear friends Brad and Kim Paisley said why don't you come visit us in Nashville and see if you like that to raise your family. And we spent a few days here and decided this would be a great fit for us, and we had no idea how that decision would bless us. And just, you know, how it would change our lives for the better.

**Karl Dean** [00:06:52] Sort of the big moment in your career and sort of take the take off point - was that the Olympics in Sarajevo?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:06:59] You know, there's so many, you know, that's the biggest one. That's the most obvious answer would be, you know, the day you become an Olympian. And I competed in Lake Placid, the 80 games. But it's the day, you know, you sit on the podium that really changes the, you know, just sort of your relationship with the general public. And it changes how people look at you and it creates new opportunities to grow a life and a business and in skating and in the public arena. So yeah, I'd say Sarajevo and winning the Gold Medal was a huge opportunity for me to leverage that awareness and build a professional career, one that I thought would last two to four years if I was really fooling a lot of people, but it lasted 20, so I was able to tour as a professional skater for 20 years and what a blessing that was because, you know, it just opened so many other doors for me and broadcasting and speaking and my Cancer Foundation CARES that we've been able to grow and be able to honor not only my mother who lost her battle to cancer, but so many others that really are looking for better ways to treat their cancer and survive it.

**Karl Dean** [00:08:17] You, of course, won the Gold Medal in Sarajevo, and you mentioned you were there at Lake Placid. How many Olympics have you participated in?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:08:27] Well, two as a competitor, and then I went to two as a spectator, Los Angeles and Beijing, and then as broadcast this will be my ninth one. I believe it's my ninth one as a broadcaster coming up for the Beijing Games and it's about to open. Yeah.

**Karl Dean** [00:08:53] The Olympics in terms of - is it the biggest event in your in sport?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:09:00] Oh, definitely, yeah. I think it's, you know, for winter sports, especially, it's gigantic. I think the Olympic Games in general, I think the only sport that has more viewership is the FIFA World Cup. But the Olympic Games are really important as a movement in our world because I think it's the only, it's the only entity that can tell, you know, two warring countries to lay down your arms and they'll do it for 16 days. No other entity can do that. So I think it's the world coming together in peace and harmony to, not focus on their differences, but just celebrate their uniqueness, to also celebrate youth and excellence in sport and to celebrate the human condition. You know, the whole idea of

being better than you've ever been is a concept I think we can all relate to. And I think the Olympics is one of those shared moments, shared activities, shared, you know, kind of events that really just allow us to celebrate life in ways that inspire us to, to rise up to our own challenges and to really see people from other nations and other ideologies differently than just, you know, watching the news and all the horrific things that we deal with day to day.

**Karl Dean** [00:10:29] Now, as you go, will you be at the Olympics this year?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:10:32] No one is really except the athletes. You know, I think what you'll see from the coverage from NBC. You know, I'm creating a broadcast bunker in the basement of my house and I'll be a contributing person on a show called Olympic Ice. And we'll be talking about, you know, the Olympics, what's happened and what's about to happen. And it's a fine group of people and a lot of contributors and people are going to learn a lot about skating as they do every four years. And it's going to be a lot of fun. A lot of the Olympics are going to be broadcast out of studio in Stamford, Connecticut, which is kind of the broadcast home of the Olympics summer and winter. That's where all the offices are and a lot of their contributing studios. So they're going to turn that into what would be the international broadcast center. I think most of everything is going to be broadcast out of Connecticut. I think just, you know, sort of again, what we're dealing with as a global community with COVID, and hopefully, you know, seeing this sort of turn into something else I think offers this optimism, but it's still too soon for all of us to go and be in a country where, you know, things are a lot different than they would need to be in order for us to be able to broadcast these games properly.

**Karl Dean** [00:12:03] Do you have a sense of what the highlights might be in this game?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:12:09] Oh, you know, it's like every Olympics, you know you, you're caught off guard, you know, I was totally like, I was totally addicted to curling in the last Olympics and because I was working so hard the only event I was able to attend was the women's hockey final, which was exciting. It went down to a shootout between Canada and the United States and we were down in the two attacks zone where I like to sit for the Predator games and it was really fun to look across the ice and to see the American goalie during a shootout with a big, huge, radiant smile on her face like she knew exactly how this thing was going to come out. And the Americans came away with a gold medal, and it was really fun to see a rivalry deliver on that promise of being just down to the wire. Great game. So I'm a huge hockey fan. As you know, from my dedication, I think it was the second thing I did. First thing I did was buy a house in Nashville. The second thing I did was get season tickets to the Predators because I knew that I wasn't touring anymore and I could actually pull that off. And then I, you know, after that, it was just golf memberships and things like that. But, you know, it was a priority for me to get hockey tickets. And I love hockey. I grew up with hockey and my favorite thing at the Olympics is international hockey and all those great rivalries like Russia/United States, Canada/United States. My favorite is Finland/Sweden, because they're neighboring countries that have so much in common. But when it comes to hockey, they absolutely hate each other. And it's so much fun to watch, but yeah, it's the Olympics. So speed skating, figure skating, hockey, skiing and all the new kind of more X-Games type of skiing events that are so exciting and so head to head and to see the iconic athletes like Shaun White and Mikaela Shiffrin and Nathan Chen now favorite to win the Gold Medal in men's figure skating, which is, you know, we're all kind of all - I think there's 16 of us now in the club of living - every Olympic gold medalist ever in figure skating are still alive. And you know, we are strategizing on how we are going to welcome Nathan Chen to, you know, our circle. And it's surreal for me

to be there because, you know, the most unlikely person to ever win an Olympic gold medal. But to see Nathan, to see what he's done in the sport and to see him right there just on the precipice and favored, heavily favored to win the Gold Medal, it'll be exciting to welcome him into the fold and to celebrate his achievement further in the history of the sport. Very exciting.

**Karl Dean** [00:15:07] Well, it's interesting. You mentioned the Finns and the Swedes and you think about the Predators that - you know these hockey teams have, are made up of definitely very diverse multinational groups where you're going to have Swedes and Finns and Canadians and Americans and everybody else on one team and they all come together and work very well together, but then have these national rivalries that sort of preexisted and don't stand in the way, though, of friendship and teamwork.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:15:37] No, definitely not. I mean, when I look back, even when I see the year after year after year, you know, just that the broad representation of World Athletics and the Predators teams, you know, you look back even now, you know, we've got a European captain. We had a Finnish goalie. We've had, you know, Canadian captains. We've had, you know, Americans. I mean, all over the map, you know, people coming in and really contributing. And just, you know, again, they've grown up loving hockey and they've grown up as elite players and for them to bring their talents and their skills to this town and for a southern city like Nashville. I think it was always the smallest market team. I think it's, you know, markets growing fast enough where that may not be the case anymore, but for us to be competitive the way that the predators have been competitive and to see again, just the international flavor of this team, it's really remarkable to see all these styles come together because each style of hockey is different, you know, in the different regions, for them to come together and play as a unified force is really fun to watch.

**Karl Dean** [00:16:56] Can you - shifting gears - you mentioned when you talked about your background, losing your mother and your work in the field of cancer. Can you talk about that, how that is going and what your commitment to that?

**Scott Hamilton** [00:17:11] Well, you know, it started. My mom was the center of my universe. You know, I joke that she was a four by four. In fact, I got a picture of her right there. That's my mom. That's her high school graduation picture I have in my office here at the Ford Ice Center and I just I look at her and just her radiant smile and just how she was just beloved at the university. Everyone that knew her loved her. She was a very strong, kind, hilarious woman. And, you know, she fought cancer hard for about two and a half years and lost her battle. And it was then that I realized that, you know, if I could, if I could somehow fundraise and find that treatment for her cancer through fundraising and just funding research only then maybe I'd understand why I was born. You know, it's, you know, being an unwanted, unintended child adopted at six weeks of age by this incredible woman. Maybe if I could find a way to save another 18-year-old young man from losing the center of his life, maybe I'd understand better why I was able to occupy this Earth. But you know, 20 years after losing her, I became ill with cancer. And so I went from becoming a fundraiser to being more of an activist and trying to change the cancer experience for anyone going through it through psychological support with my fourth angel mentoring program, through intellectual support with, you know, the ChemoCare.com program that we created - took me a long time to fundraise for that bad boy. And then, you know, it just the research now and the people that we partner with to really focus in the cancer and sparing the patient harm. You know, I'm here twenty-five years later because of chemotherapy, and I can't wait to get rid of it. There's a better way. Science has been

proven that our immune systems offer so many miraculous ways of rising above different illnesses and so we invest in immunotherapy targeted therapies that that really just focus on the cancer and really just prevent harm to the overall patient. I mean, you know, when you think about chemotherapy and long-term effects, they're still studying those. We funded, you know, my wife and I funded a study at Vanderbilt of long-term effects for children that have been exposed to chemotherapy. And we're really excited to see what they learn and how we can prevent a lot of that long term damage by focusing more on allowing the immune system to fight the cancer. And over these last two nightmarish years of COVID, I think we've learned a lot about immune systems, and I think we understand that our bodies are miraculous in being able to fight things back. We just have to show them how. And so with CARES and we're, you know, it's no accident that our offices are at the Proton Therapy Center, one of thirty four proton centers in the country where proton therapy is a very specific, very precise form of radiation, where instead of having this big blast of radiation that creates a lot of collateral damage in the region where the treatment takes place, proton therapy is a particle, it's a proton from a hydrogen atom, and it's very precise. It's almost like a sniper instead of the grenade that we're used to with traditional radiation, and it treats the patient and spares all of the harm that comes with kind of what we've, you know, the status quo of cancer treatment options. So we fund, we fundraise and we fund, you know, immunotherapy research. And when you think of, you know, Jim Parsons, who just won the Nobel Prize for his work in immunotherapy, it's amazing how the promise that we stepped into sort of as a step, a little bit in the dark. Not totally, but it was before the first drug hit the market. We put our stake in the ground saying we're only going to fund immunotherapy research. It's amazing how far it's come in those seven years and how it is the promise that will treat all cancers in the future. And also, a lot of the ones that are big, nasty, horrible bullies that really have no hope like the one we're funding now, which is for glioblastoma multiforme, which offers very little hope. You know, you think of John McCain, glioblastoma, you think of Ted Kennedy glioblastoma. Think of Beau Biden, glioblastoma. It doesn't care what side of the aisle you're on. It doesn't care. It's going to - you know, once it hits you, you know, there's 12 percent one year survival rates on that form of cancer. And it's just heart wrenching to think that there is - really the only answer is probably immunotherapy, and we're investing in that now. It's an expensive one. So we're really hoping that we can leverage relationships and bring more people on board to help us meet our goals in funding this fully and raising the bar for people that are really looking for ways to survive this horrible disease.

**Karl Dean** [00:23:01] Well, thank you and your wife for all your hard work in this area.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:23:06] Yeah, she's the brains of the operation, you know? Yeah, I'm just the muscle, right? Yeah.

**Karl Dean** [00:23:14] COVID, probably - the pandemic presents whole new challenges for anybody with any preexisting condition or immune issues.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:23:23] And I do think, you know, my wife's background has always been in in body care and nutrition and homeopathy, and we've been able to really just hunker down and just feed our immune systems. And, you know, we've all been through it in our household and, you know, we've endured it and it, you know, it hits a couple of us harder than the others. It's definitely not for everyone, but you know, medicine is, you know, they practice medicine and, you know, we do the best we can. But you know, it's medicine isn't a one size fits all thing. We've got to - and that's what I love about Vanderbilt. They're into, you know, really precision medicine that is meant to be individualized. And so they look after each patient as an individual ecosystem and they try

to, you know, really treat them in the best way possible and the best hospitals do just that. You know, it's not just everybody just do this, you know. It's, you know, everybody's different, you know, we could stand next to each other and we have a lot in common. And then we have a lot of things that, you know, are unique and we need to, you know, really look at medicine in that way that, you know, we need to teach our bodies how to rise above affliction. And that's why we're so excited about the work we do in cancer. And I think we're going to learn a lot from this, you know, two plus year period of COVID, the response to it, what we did right, what we did wrong. And, you know, looking ahead to other things that hit our world hard like this because the world is just getting smaller and smaller, what we learned that worked and didn't work and how we can bring people together instead of divide them and how we can really just link arms and just look after something that in a way that allows people to live confidently and not just be, you know, living in fear. I saw so much of that, and fear is illogical. Fear is, you know, fear's a liar. We need to step into things with knowledge and with confidence. And we need to participate fully. And we have to do that ourselves. This is our lives that we're fighting for. So I think this is a really incredible time in our history, and I think we're going to learn a lot about not only just infectious disease, but I think we're in to learn a lot about cancer, our body's power to take on these different elements and use them to return to health. And it's important. I think we're going to learn a lot.

**Karl Dean** [00:26:10] Well, so in our closing minutes, I just wanted to ask, you've been here since the 90s - seen a lot of change. I am assuming from our conversation and what I know that you're happy here. What's your sense of how the city's - what's the city's future? Do you think it's going to continue along this line of, I think, becoming a more interesting, diverse, compelling place to be, but I think I know the answer, but I'd like to hear your thoughts on what you think.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:26:42] Oh, it's amazing. You know, when you look at, you know, how this city is now being populated, you know, people are coming in from all over the United States to live here. All different kinds of backgrounds, all different kinds of educations. Companies are seeking the economic relief from being in a business-friendly state, then getting out of some of the states that maybe aren't so friendly to business. And they're finding that, you know, I really love the fact that this is a compassionate city. It's a faith-based city. It is a city where people can come and feel whole. I mean, you know, we just lost a dear, dear family member a couple of weeks ago and the support we received. You know, I joke with my wife all the time, I go, this happens all the time in Los Angeles. It doesn't, you know, in Nashville, we have so much food that I'm finding like, I'm walking, you know what, the normal 20-minute drive would be to the rink. I have to walk it because I have to burn the calories from all of the unbelievable support that we've gotten. Flowers arriving daily, calls, prayer requests. It's just been extraordinary to see that this town is a town that's going to change for the better the way people live all around the world. I mean, you think of what Danny Thomas has done in Memphis with St. Jude and what Vanderbilt's doing here as far as health. But as far as business an example, it's extraordinary. I mean, you were amazing at building the Music City Center, knowing that Nashville is a destination city. And it's, you know, it's not just this really funny little few blocks on Broadway where they have honky tonks and country music. This is a dynamic community that is a health care center, it is an entertainment center, it's a hospitality center. It is a great place to do business. It is a great place to raise a family. You know, I was living in L.A. when they moved Nissan to Franklin. And you know, twenty-five hundred resumes hit the market all at once because they were afraid. They're like, how can we leave this? And then I meet people. When we when we moved to Franklin, we'd meet people ... It's like my kids, I mean, it's like it's so much easier and it's so much friendlier. And I'll tell you, it is my

favorite airport in the world. It just - it works. TSA is friendly, baggage, and everything works. Everything is smooth. Everything is easy, and the growth of it is logical and it's fun. And it's just easy. And I mean, Nashville, is - it delivers on the promise that it's a great place to raise a family. It's a great place to grow business. It's a great place just to be. And when I think about how when we're at capacity in Nashville, how Chattanooga and Knoxville and other cities in the United States are going to benefit, it's just a great - Tennessee is a great place, great culture and just a phenomenal place to live, and we couldn't be happier here.

**Karl Dean** [00:30:09] Yes, you've said it all very well and I think, I think this point about Nashville being such a friendly place, that's always struck me, this is the friendliest place I've ever lived or really spent any time in, and I think it's just a great city. And let me thank you for taking the time to do this. Wonderful conversation.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:30:26] Anything for you.

**Karl Dean** [00:30:26] I appreciate it.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:30:32] Yeah, your impact on this city is, was remarkable and you were a great mayor and you walked the walk, literally walked the walk. You know, you do walks with, you know, constituents and neighbors and whoever - you'd walk and you would be, you'd spend time with people and you are open and you're a great communicator, and your vision for the city was spectacular. So thank you for being our mayor and thank you for building these amazing facilities and allowing me to spread the love and grow the sport.

**Karl Dean** [00:31:09] That would, you know, that's one thing to think about. If you had said when I moved to Nashville in 1983 that we would have a hockey team and we'd have ice rinks and we'd have an Olympian teaching skating at our ice rinks in Nashville. I mean, who would believe that? But it's all -

**Scott Hamilton** [00:31:31] It's all about faith, all about.

**Karl Dean** [00:31:37] Well, thank you, Scott.

**Scott Hamilton** [00:31:39] Well, God bless you, Mayor. Good to talk to you.

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