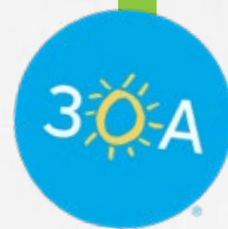


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HOME

Team

For Olympic Gold Medalist Shawn Johnson East and NFL Veteran Andrew East, the Biggest Win Is the One They're Living at Home

By Carmen Schober
Photos: Jessica Steddom

At first glance, their lives look like a highlight reel. A gold medal-winning gymnast. A professional football player. They've stood in stadiums, won medals, and lived in the public eye for years, but for Shawn Johnson East and Andrew East, the most meaningful victories now happen at home.

In this candid conversation, Olympic gold medalist Shawn Johnson East and former NFL player Andrew East open up about life after elite sports, falling in love, and raising a family. Today, they have three adorable kids and a booming online platform, but what makes Shawn and Andrew's journey so remarkable isn't just what they've accomplished. It's how they've grown through the transitions and who they've become in the process.

The Joy-First Approach

You'd never guess these two once lived on protein schedules and podium pressure. Behind their genuine smiles are stories of difficult changes, quiet courage, and a love that rewrote the definition of winning.

"My coach always told me to have fun," Shawn said of her early days as a gymnast. "He taught me that if the passion ever left, then it was no longer my sport." It's a surprising philosophy for someone who became an Olympic champion at just sixteen, but it's a mindset that shaped everything.

"I think we live in a culture that believes if you just push hard enough, you can force success on your kids," she added. "My story was the opposite. My coach wanted to protect my passion. And even at the Olympics, I was just a kid having fun."

Despite those humble beginnings, Shawn's rise was meteoric. At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, she won gold on the balance beam and three silver medals.

She grew up in West Des Moines, Iowa, in what she describes as a "classic blue-collar family." "My parents weren't trying to raise an Olympian," she laughed. "They'd actually beg me to skip practice to go get ice cream or shop." Instead, her love for gymnastics was entirely self-directed. "If I didn't get myself to practice, I didn't go."

That independence, encouraged by her coach and parents, built a deep well of self-motivation that carried her through elite competition.

Andrew, by contrast, grew up in a lively, athletic household in Indianapolis. His dad was a home builder who competed in Ironman races and triathlons for fun. "We were always doing something active—camping, hiking, biking. My brothers were elite athletes, too," he said. "It was normal to go climb a mountain or check out the beehives at a local orchard."

While Shawn achieved fame early, Andrew had to wait and trust the process. After playing football at Vanderbilt University, he went undrafted in 2015 but eventually signed with several NFL teams. He primarily served as a long snapper, a low-profile but high-pressure role.

"My high school coach used to say, 'Be comfortable being uncomfortable.' I didn't understand what that meant until later, when things didn't happen on my timeline," he explained.

The difference in their paths, they both agree, shaped the foundation of their relationship: patience and a shared belief in joy as fuel for resilience.

Different Roads, Same Destination

Shawn described herself as a quiet, shy perfectionist growing up. "I internalized everything. I was stubborn, and I hated messing up,"

she admitted. "I just wanted to fit in at school, but in the gym, I wanted to be the best in the world." That duality defined much of her early life, and today, she sees those same traits in her daughter.

Andrew was more go-with-the-flow, up for anything, and eager to keep up with his four siblings. Growing up in a house full of athletes taught him to be flexible and curious. "I like trying new things. I like being the tagalong."

That contrast—her seriousness and his playfulness—is what first drew them to each other.

"She made me want to be better without ever asking me to," Andrew said. "She's the most capable person I've ever met." But what impressed him most was her humility. "She could walk into a room and outwork everyone, and you'd still never know she's an Olympic champion."

Shawn lights up when she talks about Andrew's warmth. "He's so welcoming, so childlike in the best way. Nothing intimidates him. He made me feel safe to be silly and imperfect. That was brand new for me."

Andrew describes Shawn as radiant, grounded, and bold. "She's good at everything, but she's never arrogant. Watching her try new things made me want to try new things too. She has a tattoo that says 'grace with humility,' and that just sums her up."

Even now, with three kids and years of marriage, they still seem in awe of each other. There's admiration, but also a quiet comfort, the kind that comes from choosing each other again and again.

They met through Andrew's brother during the 2012 Olympics in London. "I was covering the Olympics for *The Today Show*," Shawn recalled. "At the end of our conversation, he told me I should go to Vanderbilt, and that I should meet his brother."

After one awkward first date in L.A. and nine quiet months, they reconnected in Nashville. The rest, as they say, was history.



"Sometimes, the biggest win is just being present for the little things—a good beach day, a sticky donut, a sleepy kid on your shoulder."





“I remember calling my mom after that date and saying, ‘I think this is the guy I’ll marry,’” Shawn said. It was a turning point, not just in love, but in identity.

A New Mission

After the Olympics and *Dancing with the Stars*, Shawn was still center stage in American pop culture, but something inside her had shifted.

“I think I was starting to realize that the thing I had spent my whole life doing was no longer who I was,” she said. “And that’s terrifying. Because when the noise dies down, you’re left wondering, who am I without all that?”

Letting herself step away wasn’t easy. “When you leave a sport, it’s like losing part of your identity,” she said. “I tried to fill that void instead of healing it.” That confusion surfaced as disordered eating and intense internal pressure. “It took years of healing to understand who I was beyond the gymnast.”

Andrew was going through something similar, in his own quiet way. After retiring from the NFL, he was left asking what came next. “I didn’t know what progress looked like anymore,” he said. “I didn’t know what I was good at.”

But the breakdown became a breakthrough, and uncertainty, a masterclass in self-discovery.

Searching for direction, Andrew returned to a long-dormant interest: making videos. “I loved editing back in high school,” he said. “So, I dusted off that old creative part of myself and started making YouTube videos. Eventually, I launched *Redirected*.”

What started as a podcast about major life pivots evolved into something far more personal. “I was looking for mentorship, and in the process, I started

learning the skills of content creation,” he said. “It became therapy, helping me process life after football.”

Shawn watched it unfold and eventually joined in. Their YouTube channel, once a side project, began to grow. They shared vlogs, parenting moments, marriage advice, and glimpses of real life beyond the filters. The more honest they were, the more people tuned in.

What began as Andrew’s search for direction became their shared mission: offering a refreshingly honest glimpse into the beautiful chaos of growing up and growing together.

Learning to Rebuild—Together

Working side by side wasn’t always the plan, but it became the path.

“At first, I was skeptical,” Shawn said. “Andrew was so excited about YouTube and podcasting, and I wasn’t sure I wanted to be that open, or online like that again.” But watching him rediscover a sense of joy shifted her thinking. “He lit up in a way I hadn’t seen since football.”

Working creatively as a couple took time, but once they found their rhythm, their purpose began to grow. Together, they set out to show what real love and growth truly look like.

“Couple Things” and Making Moments

Their podcast, *Couple Things*, began as a way to answer relationship questions, but quickly became what Shawn called “real-life therapy.” Rather than give advice, they share honest conversations about the work behind lasting love. “It’s not a how-to,” Shawn said. “It’s a we’re-in-this-with-you.”





“When the noise dies down, you’re left wondering, who am I without all that.”

The show reflects a bigger mission: to celebrate families as beautiful, imperfect works in progress. “Strong marriages and intentional parenting aren’t accidental,” Andrew said. “They’re built with love and often, a little mess.”

That same philosophy inspired the Moment Makers Foundation, which helps families experience defining moments together: from childcare for Olympic parents to custom experiences for families in transition. “Those little moments,” Andrew said, “they can change everything. And we want to help create more of them.”

Through their content, whether a podcast, vlog, or nonprofit event, the Easts are hoping to shift culture in one small, meaningful way.

“If we can help make strong, connected families feel aspirational again,” Shawn said, “that would be our biggest win.”

Family First, Always

If their twenties were about pushing forward, into elite sports, into marriage, into the wild world of digital media, then their thirties have been about slowing down, settling in, and savoring what matters most: family.

Now parents to three young children, this is their most demanding and rewarding chapter yet. “Everything else we’ve done—Olympics, NFL, *Dancing with the Stars*, even building our brand—none of it compares to this,” Shawn said. “Raising kids is the hardest and the best thing I’ve ever done.”

Their parenting style mirrors their broader values: grounded in faith, guided by humor, and laced with humility. Faith, they say, anchors everything.

“Kids make it simple,” Shawn said. “They don’t overthink. If something’s confusing, they say, ‘It’s in God’s hands.’ That childlike faith has strengthened my own.”

“Faith is a daily choice, like choosing to love your spouse. It’s about trust, hope, and knowing someone greater is orchestrating it all,” Andrew added.

They hope their story makes other families feel seen, not because they have it all figured out, but because they’re committed to the process.

“If we can make someone want to be a great parent the way they want a six-pack or a million-dollar brand,” Andrew said, “that’s the win.”

Why 30A Feels Like Home

That sense of peace is part of what keeps drawing them back to Florida’s Scenic Highway 30A, a coastal haven where life slows down and the moments that matter most come into focus.

“It’s so family friendly,” Shawn said. “You see generations walking together, kids on bikes, people slowing down. It’s beautiful.”

Andrew first visited in 2007 on a family camping trip. Now, it’s where they go to reconnect with each other and with their kids.

“We ride bikes to the shops. We go to George’s at Alys Beach. We grab sourdough at Black Bear Bread Co. There’s this smoothie place we love, but we never remember the name,” he said, laughing.

They’ve stayed with friends, visited state parks, and boogie boarded along the Gulf. “It’s easy to get to, beautiful, and full of good food and good people,” Andrew added.

30A is part of their rhythm now—a place to slow down, remember what matters, and savor how far they’ve come. For Shawn and Andrew, happiness isn’t just a feeling. It’s a choice—and a journey.

“Sometimes,” Andrew said, “the biggest win is just being present for the little things—a good beach day, a sticky donut, a sleepy kid on your shoulder. That’s the gold medal now.” 🏆

Catch behind-the-scenes moments, honest conversations, and a refreshingly real take on family life. Follow Shawn (@shawnjohnson) and Andrew (@andrewdeast) on Instagram. Tune in to their podcast Couple Things on YouTube (@shawnandandrewpods).