

Shannon Sharpe Talks to Mad Dog Russo About His Relationship with Skip Bayless



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For nearly two decades, *Mike and the Mad Dog* was an institution of sports talk radio. Together, Mike Francesa and [Christopher "Mad Dog" Russo](#) re-wrote the blueprint for the genre with their encyclopedic knowledge of historical statistics in American professional sports, boisterous hot takes on the country's most polarizing playoff moments, impromptu debates that had nothing to do with sports and their back and forth banter, which would often get personal on the air. Sports fans tuned into WFAN religiously to hear this thought-provoking duo with larger-than-life personalities give their blatantly honest opinions on sports' most consequential coaching decisions, overrated athletes, and each other. To this very day, the introductory theme song of *Mike and the Mad Dog* remains embedded in the hearts of their supporters and the litany of radio broadcasters that remain influenced by the classic long-running program. Ultimately, egos, the show's popularity, and a deteriorating work relationship contributed to the show's demise in 2008. The rapport between Mike Francesa and the "Mad Dog" became so irremediable that the two National Radio Hall of Famers rarely spoke to one another while off-camera in the show's final months.

Needless to say, Christopher "Mad Dog" Russo fully understands the intricacies of maintaining a healthy work relationship between a pair of prideful celebrities who co-host a popular show together. In addition to hosting his own program on Sirius XM Radio called *Mad Dog Unleashed*, the 63-year-old currently works with [Stephen A. Smith](#) as a contributor on *First Take* every Wednesday morning. During Super Bowl LVII week in Glendale, Arizona, the spirited radio personality interviewed another member of a famed on-air duo, [Shannon Sharpe](#). The sit down between the two sports analysts provided sports fans with a rare moment where co-hosts from competing sports debate shows, *First Take* (on ESPN) and *Skip and Shannon: Undisputed* (on Fox Sports) had a candid on-air discussion with one another about the job. Skip and Shannon were recently subjected to a bevy of highly controversial incidents due to an ill-timed tweet and a number of arguments during the airing of their widely popular show. But, when "Mad Dog" asked Shannon about the current status of his working relationship/friendship with [Skip Bayless](#), the NFL Hall of Famer explained how they were able to get past the emotional turbulence.

"Is the relationship better now?" Asked the Mad Dog.

"We're great," answered Shannon. "We don't have the type of relationship that Skip and Stephen A [Smith] had. Because Skip and Stephen A [Smith] came from the same world, they're both writers, both journalists...they see what they see through the journalists' eyes. I'm an ex-athlete, I see things through an athlete's eyes, and so for me, we see things differently; that's why we work on the show. He sees things one way, I see things another way. But I think the thing that I conveyed to Skip is that 'Look, we can disagree. But I want to color between the lines. I don't want the disagreement to go outside of the lines.'"

"And you thought there for a little while it did?" replied Mad Dog.

"Yeah, I did," Shannon said. "I think everybody thought that."

"I did not realize that," Mad Dog said. "Skip has an up-and-down reputation. Overall though, he's done a great job for your career. Stephen A [Smith] swears by him too."

"Yeah, [he's] done a great job for my career...I needed this format where I can talk about a lot of different things and give my opinion...and so Skip gave me this opportunity and the platform that I have, the *Club Shay Shay* podcast, and *Skip and Shannon: Undisputed*," Sharpe said. "More people know me now from *Skip and Shannon: Undisputed* than know me from the 14 years that I played in the NFL."