

POP CULTURE

Jonathan Owens on meeting Simone Biles: 'I didn't know who she was at the time'

The NFL pro recently recalled connecting with Biles on a dating app and learning that she's a pretty big deal.



Simone Biles talks world championships, Olympics, Taylor Swift

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By Gina Vivinetto

Simone Biles may be the most decorated gymnast in history, but her NFL star husband, Jonathan Owens, says he had never heard of her when the two met — comments that sparked swift backlash on social media.

The newlyweds, who tied the knot in April, first matched in 2020 on the dating app Raya, Owens, 28, recalled during a recent conversation on "The Pivot" podcast.

"So literally, had been on the app for a couple of days, man, and it's like she pops up and I'm like, 'Let me see who this is' ... I had never really paid attention to gymnastics, so it piqued my curiosity," Owens told the podcast's hosts, former NFL stars Ryan Clark, Fred Taylor and Channing Crowder, as Biles, 26, sat listening nearby.

As the "Pivot" podcast episode made the rounds, Owens received backlash for his comments, including one part of the interview in which Clark suggested he was the "catch" at the beginning of the relationship, and Owens replied, "I always say the men are the catch."

"You'd better be giving that woman a sincere apology because that interview you just did was absolutely disgusting," one critic wrote alongside a months-old post of a wedding day photo of Owens on his Instagram page.

"Your wife is a world renowned athlete with millions of fans, she is a beautiful electric woman who deserves a man who is going to love her, hype her up, and never be jealous of her and her amazing career," the person added.

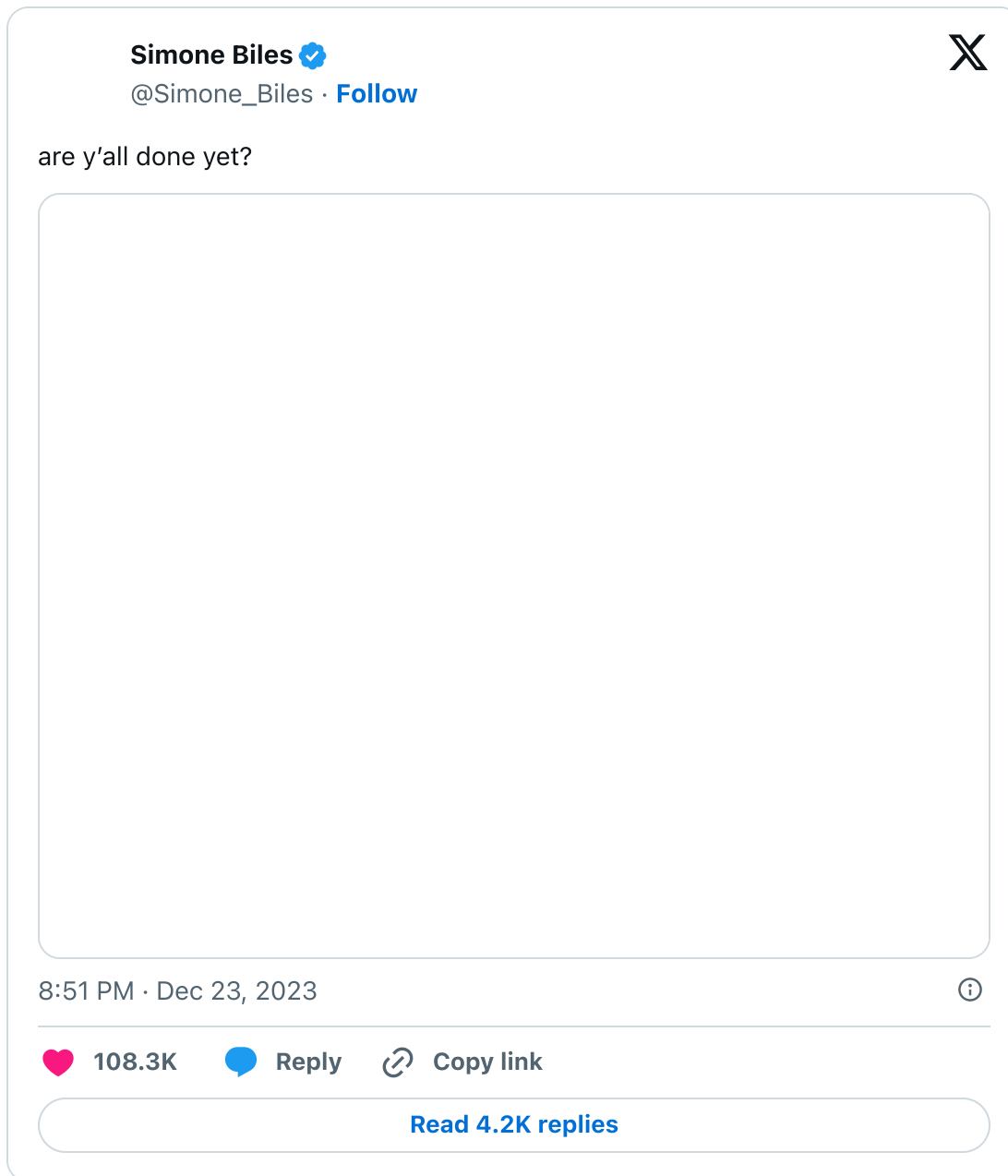
"You need to address the comments you made on that podcast and come back and speak highly of your wife because that wasn't it," added someone else.

"I didn't know of you until Simone Biles posted you sir," wrote another.

In what may have been a response to his critics, Owens posted photos from the couple's wedding day on Instagram on Dec. 21 and wrote, "Unbothered 🤔❤️ Just know we locked in over here," adding a fingers-crossed emoji at the end of the caption.

Biles used the same emoji in a comment, along with a lips emoji, and responded, "For life."

Biles also seemingly responded to the criticism on X Dec. 23, when she tweeted, "are y'all done yet?" next to an image of a kid looking confused.



During the interview on "Pivot," Owens opened up about the early days of his relationship with Biles.

The Green Bay Packers safety, who was playing for the Houston Texans at the time, said he swiped on Biles on the dating app and discovered they were a match. He then went to

the gym to work out.

When Owens returned, he noticed Biles had discovered his Instagram page.



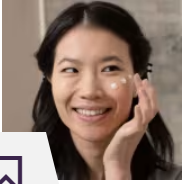
Simone Biles and Jonathan Owens in 2021. Carmen Mandato / Getty Images

“I go do my workout and I come back and I have some likes on my Instagram,” he said, laughing. He added that Biles later messaged him to say “hey.”

“Man, this gotta be fake,” Owens recalled thinking. “I didn’t know who she was at the time. But like, the first thing that I saw was that she just had a bunch of followers. So in my mind I’m like, ‘OK, she’s got to be good.’”

The future couple began texting one another before meeting in person days later in Houston.

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The football pro said that Biles initially worked harder than he did to make a romance happen. “I was fighting it,” he said, adding, “I was afraid to commit. I’m like, ‘Agh, man, this is my third year (as an NFL pro). It’s kind of early.’”

That all changed once the pair spent time together. “We hung out, man, it was like we hit it off instantly,” Owens gushed. “You know, we just laughed the whole night.”

Co-host Clark asked Owens if he told Biles he didn’t who she was.

“My question to her was, ‘Who is your competition?’” Owens recalled, again mentioning his lack of gymnastics knowledge, before adding, “She told me, ‘Myself.’ That’s the most vivid memory I have of that.”



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Owens realized that Biles was “the real deal” when the pair were out in public and a crowd gawked at Biles in awe.

“It was all these moms and they're there with their kids and we walked past and everybody stopped and just —” said Owens, staring with his mouth ajar.

“Kids were just shaking, like, ‘Oh, my God,’” he said, adding that he was a little surprised when people there asked him to snap their photo with Biles.

During the conversation, the show’s hosts repeatedly teased Owens about being the lesser-known athlete in the relationship.

When Clark joked that Biles was the “lucky” one because she “took a chance” and landed Owens, Biles interjected.

“We matched. I was just the first to message. As soon as I clicked, ‘Ooh I like him.’ It matched. So he had already liked my profile. ... I wasn’t scared,” said Biles.

“Yeah, she messaged me. She wasn’t scared,” agreed Owens.

“I know what I like and I know what I want,” replied Biles confidently.

Crowder couldn't help but rib Owens one more time.

“This man is a hell of a safety. (But) he will never be as good as a safety as this little motherf----- is as a gymnast,” Crowder said, gesturing to Biles.

Biles laughed before defending her husband.

“You know what, he might,” she said. “Because the other day I said, ‘You know what, in a couple of years nobody is going to call him Simone Biles’ husband. They’ll call me Jonathan Owens’ wife.”

Biles previously discussed the origin of their relationship with [WSJ. Magazine](#) in 2021.

She said at the time, “He would say I slid into his DMs. I saw him and I was like, ‘Oh, he’s pretty cute,’ so I said hi...and then I saw that he was in the Houston area, so we started chatting a little bit, and then we went to hang out a week or two later.”