## Paleo Solution - 326

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Robb Wolf: Hey, folks. Six listeners can't be wrong. This is Robb Wolf, another edition

of the PaleoSolution Podcast. Today's guest is Nelson Puentes. Nelson is a Brazilian jujitsu black belt and he is also the founder of Inverted Gear,

one of my favorite Brazilian jujitsu suppliers in the world.

Nelson, how you doing?

Nelson Puentes: I'm doing great. I'm super excited to be there.

Robb Wolf: Awesome, man. Remind everyone where on the planet are you located

these days?

Nelson Puentes: We're located at Pennsylvania but we're doing quite a bit of traveling this

year. So we've been I think Austria, Costa Rica, Greenland, Iceland, Italy

so far this year.

Robb Wolf: Holy smokes, man. You're racking up some frequent flyer millage.

Nelson Puentes: Yeah. I'm trying to get in the fancy waiting room at the airport.

Robb Wolf: Nice. I think no matter how much you fly, you usually have to pay

somebody some sort of a bribe to sneak into that place.

Nelson Puentes: Oh, man.

Robb Wolf: That's awesome. I used to have that and any travel now where I'm not

getting preferred is kind of painful. But you do what you have to do.

Nelson, tell folks about your history of Brazilian jiu-jitsu. How long have you been doing it and when did you get into it and kind of what inspired you to get into a sport? You know I'm very focused on kind of health and longevity and every once in a while I kind of question what's a Brazilian jiu-jitsu is hoping health and longevity. So I'm curious what got you into

all these?

Nelson Puentes: I'm started training in 2007. I wrestled in high school. One of my best

friends was in the wrestling team with me. His name is Dave. And after high school, I played rugby for a little bit. I got really into Olympic weightlifting but like nothing really filled the hole that wrestling left. I love grappling. I loved the strategy and chess aspect of the sport. I liked

grappling, like the one-on-one sport and the camaraderie in the training room and I really miss that. In 2007, you know, Abu Dhabi was actually in New Jersey.

Robb Wolf:

Okay.

Nelson Puentes:

One day I'm just sitting around and YouTube and I'm came across Marcelo Garcia. Marcelo Garcia highlights from the tournament at the place in New Jersey like a few weeks ago. I was like wow! What is this? I have seen MMA before but I didn't want to get punched in the face so I never really got too much into it but yeah.

Robb Wolf:

You're a handsome a guy so I wouldn't want to see you get punched in the face either. Yeah.

**Nelson Puentes:** 

Yeah. So ran into the Abu Dhabi Highlight. I talked to my friend Dave. He looks into it. We looked into jujitsu and we keep talking about it but we never really pulled the trigger which happens a lot. One night, he called like midnight. He's getting off work. He's worked as a valet when he was in college and he's like, "Dude, I just talked to my friend. There's a jiu-jitsu tournament in a month. We should do it." I was like, "Okay, let's do it." So we actually signed up for Grapple Squads before we ever took a jiu-jitsu class.

Robb Wolf:

Just hoping that you're wrestling background and then some YouTube would carry you through?

Nelson Puentes:

Well we started training like 2 days after that and we're like okay we wrestled before. We can figure this thing out. We did okay. I forgot how Dave did. But I remember I got choked out on the semis and I fought back and got third place.

Robb Wolf:

Wow.

**Nelson Puentes:** 

After that experience, it was like whoa! This is awesome. I got really hooked into it and I was training. So I trained in jujitsu and judo then when the judo rules changed, I kind of fell off my judo a little bit. I still train takedowns all the time but I haven't formally trained judo in a long time. I just started training in 2007 and every year I feel like-- 2008 I was training 3, 4 times a week then went into a little bit more. At one point at purple belt I was training pretty much twice a day every day. So everything in my life started going through the how does this affect my jujitsu filter fast?

Robb Wolf:

Right. I want to talk to you about how you fuel all that performance because that's one of my ongoing questions because I feel good eating lower carb but I need a few more carbs to fuel my jiu-jitsu so I want to talk to you about that a little bit later. But Nelson, for folks that maybe aren't as familiar with Brazilian jiu-jitsu, could you kind of walk them through maybe the belting sequence and maybe some of the high points and low points of each step along the way?

It seems like a white belt, you're just used to clean the mat basically like you're in side control the whole time. If you get on top you like shout a mental hurray and then you're swept and your back on bottom and side control again and you kind of move through this process. Could you talk about that a little bit?

[0:05:08]

**Nelson Puentes:** 

Sure. I have like the distinct memory or being a white belt because I was lifting so much I was like 190. I think I was like 195 when I started and actually lost some weight when I stopped lifting. But I remember I was a big guy but I wasn't quite big enough to be considered the big guy in the room. So I remembered training with these giant blue belts that would just pass my guard and smash me and I just be in the bottom feeling miserable. So that was a big incentive to get my guard to work.

Robb Wolf:

Right.

Nelson Puentes:

So we started white belt. We were white belt to blue belt and then you're just learning basics. You're starting to figure out strategies, starting to figure out how to move. I think the one of the biggest things people realize when they start training jiu-jitsu is how stiff they are, how much mobility they lost. Unlike when I was teaching my warm-ups a lot of like animal movements like bear crawls, crab walks, forward rolls and you have people that couldn't squat like couldn't forward roll. The last time they did a cartwheel was in elementary school.

Robb Wolf:

Right. Right.

**Nelson Puentes:** 

So when you start-- White belt is a great place for people maybe haven't done much activity in a long time. It's just regaining movement on their body and like then you start figuring out this jiu-jitsu thing and like I choke here, I choke there, hip escape, how to get out an arm bar, how to get out of a choke. Then blue belt you start actually doing jiu-jitsu I would say. This is the second belt now. You got a pretty good idea of all the position, what mount is, what guard is. You figure out a takedown or two and then as you move up the ranks you're just refining and adding more positions to the ones you already know.

I think purple belt is when you start connecting the dots. I think that's a good way to explain what purple belt is. You already know most of the positions but now you got to figure out how to go from one to the other which a lot of blue belts don't know. Other times you see like a blue belt might have like a really good half guard but as soon as you stop that from his half guard, he's lost. Now when you're a purple belt he's like okay open guard, I'm going to go hiva, I'm going to go spider. I don't want to get too technical.

And then brown belt you start defining what your game is. What are the moves that you really like, what are the moves that really work for you and what you want to keep in your game. Like the things you like to do and then you're just refining everything you have been learning to that point and eventually that will get you to your black belt.

Robb Wolf: Nice. And how long did it take you to get to a black belt?

Nelson Puentes: I started 2007 and I got it a few years ago so it was about 7 years.

Robb Wolf: Which is reasonably quick. I mean 10 years is oftentimes a pretty

standard time for folks. So you're a little bit on the quicker side of that. Do feel like the wrestling background really helped accelerate that or did you just basically like sell your apartment and just live in the gym and

that was a the big factor or maybe a combination of both?

Nelson Puentes: Wresting background like being reasonably fit definitely helped especially

at the beginning but I was just training all the time. I was putting a lot of hours. I was living at my parents. I had a job I fit around my training schedule and I was going to school but I was still able to fit in one or two

training sessions a day. I was single.

Robb Wolf: That's a big factor.

Nelson Puentes: So I got all the time in the world to just train.

Robb Wolf: Right. Nelson, circling back around to that beginner part. So I'm

theoretically at the end of my blue belt run. Theoretically I'm getting close to my purple belt. But I've really been looking aback around our gym and I see a lot of people come in the gym that are similar to myself. They're professional, a little bit older. I still feel like for a 44 year old, I'm in pretty darn good shape and I look at people in my age cohort and they were in significantly less good shape and it seems like those people kind

And I've been really advocating for this fundamentals drills and skills program where the first maybe 30 to 60 sessions, the person is mainly just doing drilling kind of positional drilling. They're not getting thrown into the deep end of the pool with live rolling and just trying to keep a more aerobic pace, doing a lot of mobility breaks in between the drilling. What do you think about that? How do we on board people? Because I really do think jiu-jitsu can work for anybody and when that hook sinks in, it just sinks in deep. But I do think that the volume and the intensity can be too much for folks in certain circumstances. How do you manage that?

[0:10:16]

Nelson Puentes:

I'm not-- How am I going to put this? I'm not teaching anymore. I'm just training. But I used to see this a lot when I was running an academy. I think one of the biggest things is like a lot of people they don't understand you do not need to spar your first day. I really think you do not need to spar your first month of your training like you're saying. You need a few training sessions in you and you should really understand what you're doing. You do not need to spar if you don't know the best basic things like escaping an arm bar, doing an arm bar, doing a simple choke. It's like there's really no benefit for you sparing that early on. I have friends. Like I remembered having a conversations with a few black belt friends talking about maybe white belts shouldn't even compete yet.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Nelson Puentes: Why are they competing? What's a point of being a white belt? It's like

you're there to learn. When you have a blue belt means you have a very

basic foundation of what jiu-jitsu is, why not wait until then?

Robb Wolf: Right. It seems compelling to me and I've looked around at some of the

big successful schools and there's always a little bit of a chicken and egg part of this. Like I was checking out Alliance jiu-jitsu in Atlanta and they

have a really remarkable onboarding process like people get a--

Nelson Puentes: I was part of Alliance for a long time. Actually, I took the instructor course

which it will actually, Jacqurei and Fabio will take you through what their fundamentals classes are. They actually have a pretty set curriculum. I believe if it hasn't changed when I went through it, it was 25 classes.

Robb Wolf: It sounds right. Yup.

Nelson Puentes: It was 25 classes and the first 3 fundamental classes are meant to be one

on one session. So you would ask a person to come-- You set up like 15 minutes before class or 15 minutes after class or whatever you can fit

into the schedule. They can stay and watch the class afterwards but they're not supposed to take part. So you teach them very fundamental things like self-defense, like mounted arm bar, letting somebody roll through from your mount and taking a rear-naked choke, upa escape of mount. I think that's like the first lesson and then stuff like that. So you really introduce like very basic concepts like how your base looks, standing up from bases, basic self-defense from like over unders or I mean double overs like a bear hug .So stuff like that you introduce very early on and then you incorporate them into the class afterwards.

Then the problem is a lot of the jiu-jitsu classes, a lot of the jiu-jitsu instructors are like stretched very thin. So a lot of times like the new guy gets thrown into the wolf kind of thing. Maybe it's a small school. Maybe you only have 15 students doesn't really make sense to run a fundamentals and advanced class many times or like they're like smaller schools don't have access to the mat time. Maybe you're renting mat space somewhere. So it can be difficult. But yeah I really think fundamentals program if you can find a school with a fundamentals program, it will be a big help you're your development and get a good look at the sport without all the risk of injury of you sparring so early.

Robb Wolf:

Right. Well you know, we saw something similar when we were running a CrossFit gym. You would get a new person and you would do kind of a quick intake on them and you'd find out that they were a type 1 diabetic with an insulin pump or they had a bilateral hip replacement 5 years previously. And you're kind of like, "Oh man, what are we going to do with this person." So we usually recommend some personal training but sometimes that didn't fit in the schedule. Sometimes legitimately that was outside the price range for that person.

So my wife developed this thing called the on-ramp which was we didn't put names on the board. We didn't keep track on the performance but we exposed people to a really set curriculum that built week after week after week. It was really effective for us and then it's interesting to me. It helped our clients. It really helped them progress. That improved client retention and then clearly our business succeeded from that. But it's been challenging for me to see many, many gyms, jiu-jitsu or CrossFit or otherwise that seem really reticent to adapt a program like this. I know it becomes a little bit chicken and egg. They're like, "Well I only have 15 people so I don't know how I can allocate these resources" but then at the same time if they allocated the resources then they might have more than 15 people. But it is tough like that beginning stages of a new business is very tough in that regard.

[0:15:17]

Nelson Puentes: The other thing is a lot of times is sparing is kind of like your pay off, you

know?

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Nelson Puentes: That's when like people release all their stress and everything because

they kind of want to go there and just play. In order to play you got to all this work. You got to do your warm-up. You got to do all you drills and then at the end of class, you get to just free flow and do whatever. But, yeah, it's tough. I definitely think a good month before you start sparring is a good idea like an on-ramp like you say like a good fundamentals

program.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. That's great. I'm just curious how you would run that. How

long then-- You know what actually you just did an article recently on concept versus technique-based coaching and I would put myself in maybe the more kind of concept based camp and that it seems to jive with me. I don't know if it's being 44 and I just don't have a lot of CPU space left in my brain. But you know you have some basic techniques that you kind of understand but then if somebody gives you something like if I have somebody in my guard instead of having really specific techniques that I'm going after, if the concepts are break posture, get an angle or open guard and sweep or something like that. I basically have a couple of things and there's a zillion options I can do out of that. But if I'm just like okay break their guard, what do I need to, or break their posture what do I need to do with that? Like collect the back of their head, collect an arm something like that. Where are you on that spectrum of concept versus

technique coaching?

Nelson Puentes: That article my friend Marshall wrote it actually.

Robb Wolf: Okay, okay.

Nelson Puentes: But I am a believer teaching concepts. So whenever I teach class I try to

like pick out a concept and pick out whatever drills, techniques I'm going to use to build around what we're working on. Because in jiu-jitsu you have-- I don't even know. You really can't put a number on it anymore. I think. There's more and more things everyday but if you look on

concepts, it's a much smaller number.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Nelson Puentes: So if you can teach good concepts and show a few technique and let

people understand why the technique works and why we're drilling this

concept and then you can let them spar and you can see that they're applying the concept. The technique might not be the same but they're applying the concept you taught them.

And the other things is like a lot of the time it gets lost. I tried to talk to this quite a bit is like I'm 5' 10" but I'm like 200 pounds. I have very short legs. And if I teach jiu-jitsu and one of my students is 6' 4" with giant legs, it's like his jiu-jitsu is not going to be the same as my jiu-jitsu. We're going to be using the same concept but he's technique is going to look a little bit different because the biomechanics are different. I feel like that gets lost sometimes.

Robb Wolf:

No, I completely agree. That's been some of my challenge or drama of late. Again for a 44-year-old guy, I'm in pretty good shape. But I've been looking at this stuff and some of the schools that I see or say like very competition oriented which tends to be pretty attribute driven. Like a lot of cardio, really grip intensive and stuff like that. And although I can play that game now still, I've really been trying to build a game that is very non-attribute driven. Like I'm trying to figure out okay what can I still do when I'm 60 or 70 or hopefully beyond?

And so I've been trying to play a pressure game, a low movement game, more of a strategy base deal. It's sometimes a little flustering for the folks that I work with because we have a very competition oriented school and so they like a lot of movement and stuff like that. And I find that movement for the sake of movement ends up smoking me and I don't know that I move the needle forward that much whereas I've been trying to not smoke my hand so much. So instead of being so grip dependent doing over hooks and under hooks and stuff like that. Where are you on that spectrum? Because I know that competition is going to demand some different things because you've got some time limits and stuff like that to deal with. You don't have 10 minutes to break somebody's guard or break them down and guard or what not so it really changes things. But where are you in that spectrum?

[0:20:00] Nelson Puentes:

Well actually I'm just being moving I think inside the spectrum from where I was over the last 2 years. Coming up I competed a lot and purple belt on, I was part of Alliance. Our school has since left affiliation but I was part of Alliance and I was competing a lot. I was going to worlds, Pans. I won a few opens when I was a purple belt. I took second at the Pan-American as a brown belt. No, I took third at the Pan-American as a brown belt and I took second as a black belt in Pans no gi. So competition and the whole IBGF circuit thing was a big part of my life for 7, 8 years.

And recently I moved, started a business, I got married. I've been traveling so much. I kind of took a year away from competition. I've been training less so like my old game wasn't really working anymore because my cardio wasn't where it used to be. I started getting a lot of overuse injuries especially on my hands. I was like okay, I need to change it up a little bit. Like you said, I really want to be doing this when I 60.

My old judo instructor used to throw me around. He was 72 he's throwing me on my head so I want to be that guy. I really want to be on the mat when I'm in my 70's. So definitely I've been adding a lot of more pressure passing. But I used to do more a lot more open guard passing like standing up like leg drags and stepping over and back steps and stuff like that. I've doing a lot of smash passing. So setting it up a little bit differently. Like it's like a pressure pass and just taking my time with it. I like using gravity in my favor. Like you said doing things like close guard and half guard and just really slowing the game down a bit where I used to play a lot like more like open guard, hiva and lots of guarding and inversions. I started having a lot of rib injuries from inverting so much. So definitely I had to cut that way down for longevity standpoint. I was tired of getting rib injuries.

Robb Wolf: Right. Have you followed Henry Akins stuff much?

Nelson Puentes: Yes.

Robb Wolf: A little bit?

Nelson Puentes: I haven't went to seminars yet but I have friends that wherever he is in

the East Coast they would drive wherever he is. I would really like to take

a seminar when I get a chance.

Robb Wolf: It's kind of jaw dropping and again I'm a blue belt heading towards purple

so I'm still very new in this thing. But I've seen well-seasoned black belts that go to Henry's seminar and he shows them this stuff and like a good friend of mine Patrick. When Henry showed him a scissor sweep like Patrick literally had to sit on the ground put his face like in his hands and we just had to give him a couple of minutes because he was like I've been doing this 20 years and I've never ever seen that. He's a big strong dude

and he's never really make the scissor sweep work. Yeah.

It's interesting because Henry-- I think he said that there's about 10,000 plus catalogued moves in Brazilian jiu-jitsu now but he uses about 140 maybe 150. But it's a very non-attribute driven very one in two step type things and super simple. And I've found that as I've geared my training in

that direction and then also doing probably 80% maybe 90% of my work drilling a 5-minute timer, hit a position start off with medium to light resistance, get some success, have the person ratchet up their resistance, start failing a little bit and need to rejigger what I'm doing that I've made really, really good progress with that. And I'm uninjured and doing pretty good and interestingly also both Henry and I think a lot of the Straight Blast Gym guys really try to develop a non-cloth dependent game. Your grip is really quite similar whether it's gi or a no gi kind of situation. Like you might do a little collar, you might do a little sleeve, but not as massive reliance on the grips and I find that, funny enough, my hands feel a lot better.

**Nelson Puentes:** 

Yeah. I definitely feel like grip reliance can get out of hand especially some guys that never trained no gi. So because never trained no gi like they take the gi off and September, October when they go no gi Pans or the no gi worlds and then they realize it's like oh all my passing is very grip dependent.

Robb Wolf:

Grip dependent.

Nelson Puentes:

That happened to me when I trained for a no gi Pans as a black belt. I had been working a few things on my game into my brown belt begging a black belt and a lot of this stuff is really grip dependent. That was the point where like my hands were it's worse so I was like okay I really got to let go a little bit here.

Robb Wolf:

[0:25:04]

Nelson Puentes:

Right.

Like you were saying when Henry like the story of Henry Atkins showing details, I think that one of the things that makes jiu-jitsu so amazing you can do this thing for 10, 50 years. And then there's one guy who shows you this you're like whoa! How come I didn't figure that out in the 50,000 reps I've down on move?

Robb Wolf:

Right. And it's sitting right in front of you. It should be obvious until the person shows it to you. Yeah. Yeah.

Nelson Puentes:

I remember when I guess I work in a foot locks. I went to a Reilly Bodycomb seminar. His approach to foot locks is like simple. He's so systematic. He's like here, here, here. He's like this we'll build-- Here's the position. This is how we look at a position. This how we get to finish it. This is the entry we use. I was like this is so simple if you look at it this way. But the way I was taught and the way I was looking at it, I was like way off base and you have the guys in New York, John Danaher's system.

That's spreading. It's the amount of knowledge we have and amount of jiu-jitsu knowledge how much it goes forward every year is pretty amazing.

Robb Wolf:

Right. Right. What do you think our when people are progress... this is a very soft kind opinion based deal most likely but our blue belts and purple belt significantly better than what they were 10 years ago? Is that progression just kind of feeding up to the belt progress or do you think it's still similar?

**Nelson Puentes:** 

I can tell you this. All the blue belts I see competing now are much better than I ever was as a blue belt.

Robb Wolf:

Interesting.

**Nelson Puentes:** 

I tell my students the guys I used to teach when I was teaching in New Jersey. I would tell them all the time. It's like where you are now as a blue belt or an early purple belt, you're like light years away from where I was or Dave was, my friend. He teaches there as well. I think one of things we got to realize is the infrastructure is there that wasn't there before. Guys can train twice a day now. We're like very good world class training partners.

The amount of classes you had 10 years ago is nowhere near where it is now. Some schools would have classes 3 times a week unlike a 1, 2 hour class and that was it. Now we have these kids are training 6 a.m., noon and 7 p.m. So the amount of mat time they have is insane like the rival some-- By the time they get purple belt, brown belt, their rivals are black belts. The sheer amount of hours they spend drilling and sparring. So I definitely think the level is defiantly going up.

And then sometimes you can look at kids that are blue belts because they can't get the purple belt yet blue belt yet because of age requirement but they've been training since they were 5. And like they're starting to go into no gi tournaments and tap black belts. So it's like whoa! What's going to happen with that guy? Imagine being a blue belt has been training two years and then you run into this kid has been training since 5. So the level is definitely going up.

Robb Wolf:

Right. Nelson, so we're talking about a non-attribute driven game maybe being beneficial for the long haul but clearly developing attributes of strength, power, endurance, stamina are valuable. How do you allocate that? Where do you put your time? Some people like Olympic weight lifting. I've really been deadlifts and GymnasticBodies programing and

then doing some low level cardio to build my aerobic base. How are you allocating your non jiu-jitsu time for developing these other attributes?

**Nelson Puentes:** 

That's one of the things I've really-- I've been all over the place for the last 10 years. I was actually what going to school I was an exercise science major. At one point, I started a physics major. I got to calculus too. I was like what am I doing with my life? So I switched over to exercise science. At the beginning, I was lucky enough to work with guys like Zach Evanish and Jason C. Brown. I got my Kettlebell certification through him. So I did a lot of Kettlebells and a lot of strong men stuff at the beginning when I was still with Zach then I went more towards the Kettlebell side of things. I tried CrossFit for little bit.

Lately I've been doing more body weight stuff more than anything and like a little bit of deadlifting here and there. The last year I've been traveling so much. My strength training outside of jiu-jitsu fallen way off the way side. That's one of the things I'm looking forward when we move to the new house. I'm going to have a little garage gym.

Robb Wolf: [0:30:00]

Right.

Nelson Puentes:

But I really think it depends where you are and what's the amount of things like how many jiu-jitsu sessions are you getting in a week? Because I think the biggest thing I tried to get across when like people ask me this question is whatever you're doing outside jiu-jitsu shouldn't affect your jiu-jitsu class. You always see those guys that come that come to the gym they can barely move because they had some insane squat session the day before and then can barely drill whatever they were drilling like a guard pass like forget about it. They have the heaviest feet ever. They're not in the right position. Their hips are way too high. Their quads are too shaky from max effort squat the day before. So the biggest thing I can is just do as little as possible while you're still getting the result.

Robb Wolf:

Right. Right. I think when I was doing 2 days a week of jiu-jitsu, I was doing like 3 sometimes 4 gym sessions and now that I'm doing 4 days a week of jiu-jitsu, I'm doing one sometimes 2 gym sessions and the GymnasticBodies stuff like I'm able to drop it in during my work day. It's demanding but I don't find that I'm super sore, not beat up when I get into roll and then that 1 maybe dead lift or power clean day is the only thing that I really super need to monitor the volume and the intensity on that. Otherwise I'm pretty busted up for rolling.

Nelson Puentes: I've run myself into the ground before deadlift so I know how it feels.

Actually I'm excited. Actually just signed up for the GymnasticBodies.

Coach Sommers was in your podcast a few weeks ago.

Robb Wolf: Nice. Nice.

Robb Wolf: I haven't started yet. I ordered rings. I had a set of rings. I don't know

what happened to them. Actually when I was going through college I was going to Kean College in New Jersey. One of the requirements for my major was taking a gymnastics class. It was a 2 credit class and we got to play around with everything like the stall horse, the bars and the rings

and some floor stuff too. So I had a lot of fun with that.

Robb Wolf: Nice. Nice. That is super cool. I've just noticed that my thoracic mobility,

shoulder health and all that is just so dramatically improved from doing GymnasticBodies and I guess the one thing that I do a little bit more outside of even the volume that is prescribed within GymnasticBodies, we do so much kind of anterior ab centric type stuff in jiu-jitsu with all the crunching and shrimping and everything that I try to do a ton of reverse hypers and back extensions to just kind of balance that out, yeah.

Nelson Puentes: I feel like that's one thing whenever we get back to the gym I can notice.

Like my lower back needs a lot extra attention. It was just the front is getting so much work so whenever we go back to the gym is like a back extensions a lot like whenever we had like reverse hyper available we

would work on it.

Robb Wolf: Right. Very cool. So Nelson, let's talk a little about food. How have you

navigated your fueling for jiu-jitsu and how's that changed and evolved

over time?

Nelson Puentes: I mean it has changed a lot recently but for a while I was eating pretty

clean and then I kind of fell into I'm training 10 times a week, I can eat whatever I want. I was eating burgers and pancakes like it was going out of style. That was fine when I was like 22, 23 but then when I hit 27 things

changed.

Robb Wolf: Ripe old age of 27, huh?

Nelson Puentes: The ripe old age of 27, my body--

Robb Wolf: Let me tell you it doesn't get better.

Nelson Puentes: Yeah. My body was like we don't do that anymore.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Nelson Puentes: So I slowly like the weight side creeping up. I competed at middle heavy

weight most of my career and a brown belt. I think purple belt is like really top of brown belt. It was like I had to-- It was really tough to make 195 with gi on. I was like okay whatever. It's like I just move up to heavy weight I get to bulk. I get to put some weight on and then I went way too high. It was funny. I was like whoa! So over the last year I've switched over to like a more ketogenic approach. I definitely like it. I love my

butter coffee in the morning.

Robb Wolf: Nice.

Nelson Puentes: I would always force myself to eat in the morning and lot of times

especially when I was training at 9 a.m. it was really tough to eat in the morning. So this really works for me and I've lost a ton of weight. I think the biggest thing is like the first few weeks are definitely tough when you're going from carb adapted to fat adapted I guess. Those few weeks were tough but afterward it's been great. Actually, the last week we were running around all day and ended up two double sessions while fasting. So I mean I did a double session. I train at noon and then I trained at 6

o'clock and all I had was a cup of coffee in the morning.

Robb Wolf: Wow. Wow.

[0:35:31]

Nelson Puentes: And I got like-- Morning class is very light. It was mostly lower belts but at

night I had six 6-minute rounds with black belts and actually got through

it. So it's amazing what you can do once you're fat adapted.

Robb Wolf: Interesting. So you haven't had to use any type of targeted approach

with... Like I had Luis Villasenor from KetoGains on a couple of shows back and he was suggesting possibly the need to even just like 5 to 15 grams of carbs before something like being keto adapted and then doing CrossFit or jiu-jitsu something like but you're just motoring through with

just either bulletproof coffee or just totally fasted?

Nelson Puentes: Yeah. Even like if I know going to be a crazy session especially if it's in the

morning but it's usually I never eat in the morning anymore. I just have my coffee. Even if I have a spoonful of cashew butter on my way out the door and that has been powering me through. I think it's a good experiment to run on yourself when you train jiu-jitsu. Because one of the things everybody talks about especially at the beginning it's like using too much-- You tell people you're using too much strength, using too

much muscle and that is one of the hardest things to get in jiu-jitsu. It takes a long time for people to understand what they're doing especially if they're fit. They can get away with it because they have the engine to do it.

But let's say you're making that transition and going from carb adapted to fat adapted, your gas tanks is so much smaller than it used to be. So now if you have any bad habits, you see them clearly. As soon as a scramble goes on too long or you're trying to force something and using all these muscle you're feeling. You're turning blue from the-- You're start gasping right away.

It's definitely, you know, it was interesting for me because I had to change my game a little bit. I never play close guard. I had kind of given up on my half guard for a little bit. I was working all the parts of my game and then when I started doing this, I was like okay. It was like gas tank is small right now. It was like I love more close guard. I love more half guard and it's was a lot of fun to revisit those positions and work my game without using as much energy I guess.

Robb Wolf:

Interesting. Okay. And then now that you're fat adapted, are you still able to full off those scrambles or you just generally modified your game to fit a more modest energy output?

Nelson Puentes:

I think this ramp has been doing a lot better and especially these last few weeks we've been back. I've been traveling so I wasn't training as hard but like now that I'm back home, takedowns--I trained a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu United with Jared Weiner and it's a tough room and we start from feet every day. So lots of scrambles. I feel fine scrambling. I feel fine going for takedowns and is getting there. It took me a while but I think I finally turned the corner a little bit.

Robb Wolf:

Nice. Now shifting gears just a smidge, what are doing for the most of the supplemental work for your takedown. You said you've done some judo in the past, you have a wrestling game. Was that Greco? Was it freestyle? What stuff do you feel like really complements a Brazilian jiu-jitsu game well and I guess will be some variability whether it's gi or no gi but what are you cross training with or what have you stolen from other arts that you're using with your takedown game?

**Nelson Puentes:** 

Lately a lot of my cross training for takedowns have been Sambo. I have been hanging out with Reilly Bodycomb a little bit too much and I've doing a lot-- Whatever I get a chance to do Sambo, I'll do it. I actually competed a small tournament earlier this year and it was a blast. I

wrestled in high school. I do judo and I feel like there's every art like Sambo, judo and wrestling all the takedown arts if you want to put it that way, like you have something you can take away. I really feel sacrifice throws are a great for jiu-jitsu, like some Sumi Gaeshi and Tomoe Nagi variations like figuring it out how those fit into your game are great. Like double legs, single leg you need to understand. I feel maybe modifying the finishes a little bit so you end up in a better passing position.

[0:40:15]

Robb Wolf: Versus guard all the time which is great

Nelson Puentes: Versus guard all the time, yeah. So like understanding that and like

understanding under hooks work which a lot of people don't especially

like in the context of standing.

Robb Wolf: And you're drawing more Greco derived type stuff?

Nelson Puentes: I mean, I've been lucky. I've been truly lucky. I've trained with world class

guys in judo, wrestling and Sambo over the years so I've been able to pick a lot of brains and I've been extremely lucky. My first like when I started training jiu-jitsu, there was a guy. His name is David Ellis and he was judo guy. He was actually trying to get make the Olympic team. He was a black belt in judo. He trained at this place called Cranford Judo Club. And the instructor for the judo club was the Olympic team coach for the US for the '88 and '92 team and a lot of the old guys at the club they were in the

50s, they were in the Olympic team in the '80s.

I got to get thrown in my head a lot but I really soaked up some really good knowledge from very good people. When I trained in New Jersey, my instructor Kevin, Kevin Sheridan. He was I believe he's an All American at Rutgers. He was a divison one wrestler at Rutgers. He plays in the high school level. One of my training partners Andrew, he was an amazing Greco wrestler. Same thing he plays at stakes in high school, wrestle division 1. He was an academic all American. He was an amazing wrestler and I got to train for him for years and I just pick his brain every day about little things. When I set up in the single, why didn't it work or I shot

that double, why were you able shook it away easily?

Robb Wolf: That's fantastic. So clearly some super high level coaching and good

training partners tends to get all that.

Nelson Puentes: You got to ask questions. I wrote an article about cross training not long

ago. Every jiu-jitsu school has a local like judo or a wrestling guy. You just

got to find him and become his friend, buy him a beer and you just ask

him questions.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. No, I love it. I love it. I've been focusing a lot on some Greco

stuff.

Nelson Puentes: Nice.

Robb Wolf: I have a little bit of judo background. But just for me like the elevation

changes for freestyle and stuff I'm not as comfortable with.

Nelson Puentes: I think that's one of things that people get caught up with wrestling a

little bit. It like they get so caught up in their shot and put so much time into it. But if you learn how to grip fight and basic under hook, over hook principles, you can do snatch singles without ever shooting but most

people you get so...

Robb Wolf: Caught up in wresting.

[crosstalk].

Nelson Puentes: Yeah, and so caught up on the shot. That's another thing the old you get,

the less you going to shoot. That's one of the things I thank my friend Andrew Ford, he's like you don't have to shoot. He would show me things I could do without shooting how to get to the single position or how to

get double unders and do a different kind of takedown but yeah.

Robb Wolf: Nice. Nice.

Nelson Puentes: Like talking about staying on the game for a long time, it's like work on

your foot sweeps. That's one of the things the old guys use well all the time. It was like foot sweeps. I would ask how you get so good at this? They were like oh I'm getting older and it takes a very little effort to

throw a foot sweep out there but it's a huge payoff.

Robb Wolf: Right. And minimal risk on your part.

Nelson Puentes: Minimal risk and I think that's like hitting a clean foot sweep when the

guy goes flat on his back is one of the most rewarding feelings in

grappling.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right, oh yeah, yeah. No, I love that. So Nelson, you've clearly been

super busy this whole time with your coaching your own training. What on earth inspired you to start another business and found Inverted Gear?

Nelson Puentes:

At the time, I was a purple belt and I was teaching high school and they wanted Nelson Puentes jiu-jitsu patches. My students wanted them. So one of my students helped me out. We came out with an idea and we made t-shirts and patches that had the panda on them and they will say-For those that don't know the name of my company is Inverted Gear. It has an inverted panda as a logo. So we made t-shirts that said Nelson Puentes jiu-jitsu and had the upside down panda on the front of the t-shirt.

We started going through tournaments and people will come up to me and ask me to buy the t-shirt. They say hey man where did you get the t-shirt. I was like with me team or whatever. He's oh can I buy it? I was like what? I don't know you. It has my name on it. If you really want it, I guess I can sell it to you. And then one my students a few weeks this started happening one of the students said hey I loved the t-shirt whatever. He's like you think the gis made with the panda on them maybe? I was like huh? Maybe. And then at the time I've been reading a lot of business books and I read Tim Ferris's' 4-Hour Work Week. So I always wanted to have my own business. I always thought it's going to be a jiu-jitsu school but I was like maybe I can run an apparel company. So I started contacting factories and the minimum order was 100 across the board. I had like 25 students so I was like huh.

Robb Wolf: **[0:45:55]** 

That's a big buy end. Yeah.

Nelson Puentes:

It's like yeah I got to pivot. I got to pivot here. So instead of making Nelson Puentes jiu-jitsu gis, they became Inverted Gear gis and InvertedGear.com went up. We made a Facebook page. People started sharing the Facebook page. We put the preorders up and first preorder came in from New Zealand.

Robb Wolf:

Really? Oh, wow.

**Nelson Puentes:** 

Yeah. That was the moment. I was like maybe I can pull this off. It just grew from there. We're like in year 5 now. It's been 4 years since I've opened of the company. The 19th shipment of gis just landed and it's been a hell of a ride, man.

Robb Wolf:

That's awesome. That is so cool. Well you sent me some awesome gear and I love wearing it and then you sent me a medium sumo t-shirt which that's basically Nikki's bedtime shirt. I love that thing. So absolutely love that.

Nelson, it's been great having you on the podcast. Let folks where they can track you down on the innerwebs.

Nelson Puentes: Okay. Instagram and Twitter is invertedgearnelson. Invertedgear.com is

the gear website and invertedgear.com/blog has all the blog. I've been writing article just about once a week and we have a few collaborators that, a few writers on staff that a few writers on stuff that put something together on Tuesday and usually my blog was up on Thursday and we've

been putting up some pretty good stuff I think.

Robb Wolf: I've been loving it like you the piece but it was a friend of yours that did

the—No, you did the cross training piece and then your friend did the

piece on concept versus technique. I've been loving that stuff.

Nelson Puentes: Yes.

Robb Wolf: Awesome, man. Well I can't wait to meet you in real life and get some

training in with you so I'm looking forward to that.

Nelson Puentes: Yeah, man. We'll have to do it soon. Next time I'm up in the west coast.

Robb Wolf: That would be great and I will be out your direction at some point so ill

track you down.

Nelson Puentes: Okay.

Robb Wolf: Awesome, Nelson. Well thank you for being on the show and I'll talk to

you soon.

Nelson Puentes: Thank you.

Robb Wolf: Okay. Take care.

Nelson Puentes: Bye

Robb Wolf: Bye-bye.

[0:48:05] End of Audio